

# Household Conditions on Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in Ghana

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## Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of household conditions on academic performance of Junior High School Students in the Upper West Akim District. The study adopted the quantitative approach and specifically used the descriptive survey design. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used for the selection of schools and respondents for the study. Questionnaire and School Based Assessment (SBA) records were used by the researchers as instruments for data collection. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software version 22 was used for descriptive and inferential analysis of data gathered. The study indicated that, parents who ensure that their children study at home, provide their educational needs, discuss their progress with their teachers and attend PTA meetings regularly have children who perform better academically as compared to children whose parents do not see to it that their children study at home, provide the educational needs of their children, discuss their children's learning with teachers and attend PTA meeting regularly. It is recommended that, adult literacy should be enhanced by government to improve the level of education of parents to improve participation of parents in children's education.

## Keywords:

Household, Academic, Students, Parents

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## 1. Introduction

Children coming from different family backgrounds are affected differently by such variables and that is why some children have good family background while family backgrounds of others are poor. The way a child is raised has a great impact not only to oneself but to the whole society. Growing up, a child spends most of the time at

home and so the type of environment that the child is brought up is crucial to his or her total development. Academic performance is the outcome of education, the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Academic performance as the knowledge obtained or skills developed in the school subjects usually designed by the teacher. The academic performance of an individual is influenced by various environmental factors such as household conditions of the student [1]. The academic performance of any student cannot be separated from the home environment in which the child lives; healthy home environment offers emotional security to a child. Education has as one of its basic tasks the training of young people to become useful members of the society; this training begins at home and in the informal way. The home environment is the immediate surroundings in which the pupils find themselves. It is also referred to as the physical and psychological conditions that affect children [2].

The definition of a house as a structurally separate and independent place of abode such that a person or group of persons can isolate themselves from the hazards of climate such as storms and the sun [3]. The definition covers any type of shelter used as living quarters such as separate houses, semi-detached houses, flats/apartments, compound houses, huts, tents, kiosks and containers. Information collected on housing by the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC) in Ghana include the type of dwelling unit, main construction materials used for walls, floor and roof, household/tenant arrangement, ownership type, type of lighting, source of water supply and toilet facilities and method of solid and liquid waste disposal [4]. The 2010 PHC also defined a household as a person or a group of persons, who live together in the same house or compound and share the same catering arrangements. In general, a household consists of a man, his wife, children and some other relatives or a house help who may be living with them. However, it is important to remember that members of a household are not necessarily related (by blood or marriage) because nonrelatives (e.g. house helps) may form part of a household [4].

Households are important units in the developmental agenda of nations all over the world. This is because it is one of the units which measures the impacts of development interventions. This is where wealth and poverty conditions of a country are often expressed. Since households have members, it is also the unit for supplying members with the needed resources for survival. Household has been defined severally by various authors but in general, it is the unit where members depend on one common pool of resources. Household conditions therefore mean the family background of the students which include all the human and material resources present in the home that affect the student's education and living, such as the parent's level of education, their occupation, economic status, family size, parents' involvement in children's education and socializing facilities available in the home. Thus, the home is the basic institution for providing the child's primary socialization and laying the educational foundation for the child upon which the other agents of socialization are built. The education received by a child from parents and others at home is most likely to have a highly significant and dominant effect on the behaviour of the child later in life. What the child learns at home and how his/her family motivates him/her towards education contributes to the child's success or failure [4].

In Ghana, children can be from vastly different cultures, and have different background experiences which contributes to the different levels of academic performances. Family socio economic status (SES) can be classified as High, Middle and Low SES depending on variables such as parental education, parental occupation

and household resources or possessions [5]. In addition, research has shown that in Ghana, 87 percent of students from low socioeconomic homes enter primary schools, but only 72 percent graduate, compared to 100 percent enrolment for children from high socioeconomic homes, of which 80 percent graduate. Moreover, 60 percent of children from low socioeconomic homes enter primary school at least two years older than the official age, compared to 32 percent of children from high socioeconomic homes [6]. In the past two decades, several social intervention programmes, including the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), Capitation Grant, School Feeding Programme, Free distribution of school uniforms, exercise books and textbooks, elimination of schools under trees, and now Free Senior High School have been implemented with the aim of ensuring universal access to education in Ghana. Other projects aimed at improving health care delivery have also been implemented. These include the establishment of Community-based Health Planning Services (CHPS), national immunization against polio and indoor residual spraying against malaria carrying mosquitoes. Again, since the last Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS5), the Ghanaian economy has continued to benefit from strong economic growth leading to the achievement of lower middle income status. However, it remains to be seen whether this growth has benefitted all sections of society.

The involvement of parents in the education of the child is very crucial. Parents are very important in providing environmental, social and economic factors, which have powerful effects on pupils' academic lives. Research has consistently indicated that parental involvement is integral to high student academic achievement. The challenges of single parenthood, poverty, family crises and the ever increasing involvement of women in various areas of community and national development make one to ask questions as to whether parents are still able to be committed to their wards; or whether they are putting enough efforts towards developing effective learning habits among their children. In this world, the role of parents in the education of their children cannot be underestimated. Parents help to ensure that their children complete their homework, assignments and study for tests and quizzes and exams. Parents also encourage their children to seek additional help from their teachers. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world, and the reality is that many parents are not as involved in their children's education as they could be.

In recent times teachers have been criticized for the dwindling performance of pupils in schools forgetting that education is not only a teacher or school affair. The education of the child is a collective responsibility of the home of which the parents play a major role, the school and the wider society. Parental attitude towards education is very critical and affects the child's performance. Children learn first by mimicking behaviours they see modelled for them. Children who have parents who encourage academic success are more likely to develop their own aspirations for higher education. In this way, parent education is a good predictor of a child's academic success. Over a period of time, it has been observed that students exposed to the same lessons by the same teachers perform differently when they are evaluated [7]. This shows that outside the school environment, other factors influence students' academic performance. Also differences in the academic performance of gifted and non-gifted children cannot be traced to school environment [8]. Hence, many other uncontrolled variables can be responsible for academic performance of students. Family background as the most important and most weighty factor in determining the academic performance attained by the student. Among family factors of greatest influence are social class variables and the educational and family environment [9].

The environmental condition and the nature of social interaction that goes on in the family may have some positive or negative influence on the academic achievement of a child [10].

The menace of academic failure among the young school graduates has stared both the government and other stakeholders in the face. There is a consensus of opinion about the falling standards of education as a big problem that is hindering the posterity of the nation in terms of quality man power resources. Most students in Junior High Schools (JHS) in Ghana experience academic problems that manifest in the form of poor academic performance. Many researchers have sought to find out the reasons for the downward trend in the academic performance of students. Effect of family type and poor funding on students' academic achievement as a result lack of good home foundation for pupils [2, 7]. A study posited that factors resident in the child, family, society, government and the school may be composite causative effects for these downtrend [8].

In the United States (US), the gaps in achievement among poor and advantaged students are substantial [11]. Through multiple studies, the U.S. Department of Education has indicated results that demonstrated that student and school poverty adversely affected student achievement [12]. Students from low-income families consistently, regardless of ethnicity or race, scored well below average [13]. For example, in one study, 43.5% of low-income students did not successfully meet any of the required subject area assessments while only 13.2% of low-income students met all of the required subject area assessments [13]. Similarly, "children who lived in persistently poor families scored 6 to 9 points lower on the various assessments than children who were never poor" [14]. The extent of poverty has a significant effect. Children from very poor households with income below 50% of the poverty line scored 7 to 12 points lower than children from near-poor households while children in poor households with income between 50 to 100% of poverty line, scored 4 to 7 points lower [14]. A study asserted that one reason why children from single-parent families are less likely to finish high school is due to the precarious economic position of their families [15]. The pressure on children from poor background in particular, to withdraw from school increases as they get older, particularly as the opportunity cost of their time increases [16]. In African traditional societies including Ghana, several studies indicated that the children's schooling has been found to have links with socioeconomic factors. The most important of these factors include direct and opportunity cost of schooling, limited employment opportunities, parental and family investment behaviour, rural and urban residence and the level of parental education, which all affect the income level of the household [16]. It has been found that the major reasons parents offer for not educating their children or for removing them from school in African societies are the fees for registration, examination, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fees, the cost of books and uniforms, the provision of other daily monetary demands and the cost of transportation to and from the school on daily basis [17]. It is clear from existing research that children from poorer backgrounds have worse educational attainment than their better-off peers. Low income families contain adults with characteristics that are inimical to the social, behavioural and moral development of children. In the view of Blande and Gregg there are certain characteristics associated with low income families which significantly have negative consequences on their child's education. One of such characteristics is low parental education. The extent of financial constraints also significantly affects the harmony in the home leading to series and increases in conflicts leading to marriage/family break

ups. All these affect the parents' ability to effectively parent their children to bring the best out of them [18].

Household condition is the prevailing circumstances in the child's household that affect his or her academic life. The household conditions that this study considered are parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement in the education of their children. The researcher acknowledged the fact that, apart from the household conditions that this study considered, several other factors such as inadequate school facilities, inadequate qualified teachers, level of intelligence, indiscipline, self-efficacy and motivation, students' attitude towards learning to mention but a few have been found as contributing factors to students' poor academic performance. On the issue of school facilities and students' academic performance, a study contended that in an educational environment, such as secondary schools, it is indisputable that school plant and facilities such as furniture, laboratory equipment and materials have a great influence on the teaching and learning process because without them, the empty buildings and structures no matter how attractive they are, cannot be used for educational purposes. Hence, school plant and facilities are no doubt an essential part of educational planning without which students' academic achievement cannot be enhanced [19]. While, these factors have been identified as possible factors that contribute to variation in academic performance, the household conditions of students are hardly mentioned in the Upper West Akim District in particular. The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of household conditions which are socioeconomic status and levels of parental involvement on the academic performance of Junior High School Students in the Upper West Akim District. The study was guided by two hypotheses Ho 1: Parents of high socioeconomic status would be more involved in the education of their children than parents of average and low socioeconomic status Ho 2: Parental socioeconomic status will account for more variance in students' academic performance as compared to parental involvement in their children's education.

## 2. Materials and Methods

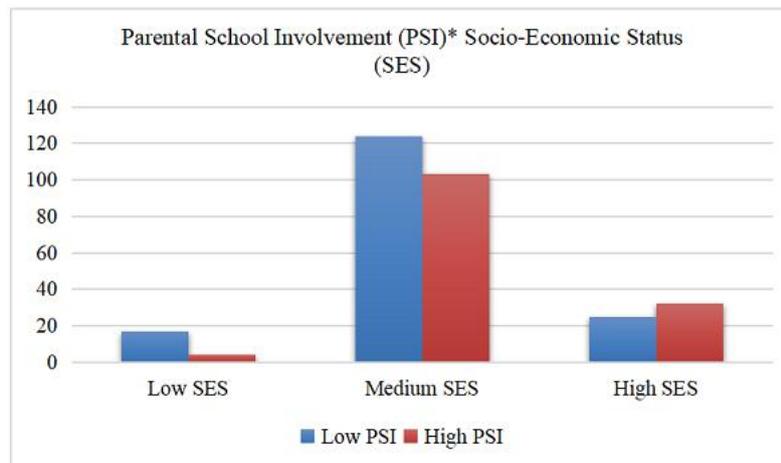
This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population for the study were the social studies teachers teaching in the Aowin and Wassa Amenfi West Districts THE Population of study were Junior High School Students in the Upper West Akim District. purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the district, circuits, schools, and students for the study. The sample size for this study therefore was four hundred and sixteen (416) comprising forty-two (42) teachers and three hundred and seventy-four (374) students were sampled for the study. The respondents of the representing 11.4 percent of the target population were based on Kreejie and Morgan assertion that at least 10 percent of a study population gives a proportional representation [20]. The main instrument used for data collection in this study were questionnaire and School Based Assessment (SBA) records of students. The teachers' questionnaire also consisted of twenty-four (24) main items with two (2) sections- A and B. Section A dealt with background information of respondents and section B covered information on students. The questionnaire was preferred because of the number of respondents, cost, time and the nature of the topic which had to be analysed quantitatively. Again, the questionnaire was able to keep respondents on the subject, it was objective, fairly easy to make frequency counts and was the easiest means of reaching respondents and obtaining desired information in a limited time available. The scoring procedure adopted was response counting. Items were scored

by counting the number of responses in which the respondents ticked or supplied answers to. Data collected were analysed in tables and percentages. Correlation and cross tabulation were used to establish the relationship among variables. Again, summary of means, standard deviation and independent t-test was used to indicate difference in academic performance and household conditions.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This section of the study presents results and discussion of the study. The study was guided by two hypotheses *Ho 1*: Parents of high socioeconomic status would be more involved in the education of their children than parents of average and low socioeconomic status *Ho 2*: Parental socioeconomic status will account for more variance in students' academic performance as compared to parental involvement in their children's education.

*Hypothesis one: Parents of high socioeconomic status would be more involved in the education of their children than parents of medium and low socioeconomic status*



**Figure 1.** Parental SES and their Involvement.

It can be seen from Fig.1 above that in the low socioeconomic status (SES) group majority of parents exhibited low parental school involvement (PSI). The situation was the same in the case of medium SES group. In the case of the high SES group parents exhibited high PSI. Therefore, there was a positive relationship between parental socioeconomic status and parental involvement in the education of their children. The higher the SES of parents the more they get themselves involved in the education of their wards and the lower parental SES the less their involvement in their children's education. It can also be seen from the graph that at least some parents in the low SES group have also shown some involvement in the education of their children. In the same vain, quite a number of parents (18) though in the high SES group, showed less involvement in the education of their children. In spite of the positive relationship that exists between SES of parents and their involvement in the education of their children, the result of the study again shows that SES of parents alone does not account for their involvement in the education of their children but other factors such as the wish for the ward to obtain a level of education that he or she (parents) could not attain and the motivation for the child to get a good job in future to take good care of the parents in their old age and to break the vicious cycle of poverty in the family.

***Hypothesis two: Socioeconomic Status would account for more variance in students' academic performance than parental involvement***

**Table 1.** Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of Parental Involvement, Socio-economic Status and Academic Performance.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	24.00	3.97		6.04	.00
	Parental Involvement	.78	.16	.28	4.94	.00
	Socio-Economic Status	.31	.13	.13	2.29	.02

$R^2 = .10$ ,  $***p < .001$ ,  $**p < .01$ ,  $*p < .05$ ,  $F=16.35***$ ,  $N=296$

From Table 1 above, parental involvement ( $\beta = .28$ ): this value indicates that as parental involvement increases by one standard deviation (SD = 5.18), academic performance increases by 0.28 standard deviation. The standard deviation for academic performance is 14.46 and so constitutes change of 4.05 scores (0.28 x 14.46). Therefore, for every 5.18 increase in parental involvement in their children's school activities, there is an increase of 4.05 scores in terms of their children's academic performance. In addition, parent socio-economic status ( $\beta = .13$ ): this value means that as socio-economic status increases by one standard deviation (SD = 6.15), academic performance increase by 0.13 standard deviation. The standard deviation for academic performance is 14.46 and so constitutes change of 1.88 scores (0.13 x 14.46). Therefore, for every 6.15 increase in parental socio-economic conditions, there is an increase of 1.88 scores in terms of their children's academic performance. Examining the contributions made by these two variables (parental involvement and socio-economic status) on academic performance scores of the students, it was identified that parental involvement gave the strongest contribution of 4.05 scores as compared to parent socio-economic status which contributed 1.88 scores. This means, both variables are significant in the life of the students but parental involvement made the strongest contribution within the setting in which the study was conducted. Therefore, the hypothesis that 'socio-economic status will contribute more than parental involvement in terms of students' academic performance' is not supported by the current data.

*Relationship among predictor and criterion variables*

**Table 2.** Summary of Inter-Correlation Matrix on the Relationship among the Predictor and Criterion Variables.

	Academic Performance	Parental Involvement	Socio-Economic Status
Academic Performance	-		
Parental Involvement	.29***	-	
Socio-Economic Status	.16**	.12*	-

$***p < .001$ ,  $**p < .01$ ,  $*p < .05$ ;  $N=296$

Table 2 examined the relationship that existed between Academic Performance, Parental involvement and socioeconomic status. The bivariate Pearson r correlation was used to analyse these relationships. The values in the table are the correlation coefficients of relationships. The asterisks also represent the level of significant of the relationships. The three asterisk means the relationship is significant at 0.001 level of significance meaning the confidence level of the value of the relationship is 99.9 per

cent. The two asterisk suggest that the coefficient of relationship is significant at 0.01 level of significance meaning the confidence in the value of the relationship is 99 percent. The one asterisk suggest that the coefficient of relationship is significant at 0.05 level of significance meaning the confidence in the relationship is 95 percent.

Again, the result from the above table showed that there was a significant positive relationship between parental involvement and academic performance  $r(296) = .29, p < .001$ . This means that as parents get themselves involved in their wards educational activities, the better these students perform in their academic works. Therefore, the hypothesis that, '*there is significant positive relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance*' is supported by the data. In addition, there was a significant positive relationship between parental socio-economic status and academic performance  $r(296) = .16, p < .01$ . The result suggests that the better the socio-economic conditions of the parents, the better the academic performance of the students. This could be attributed to the fact that parents were able to afford academic materials such as books, educational equipment, extra classes etc. hence provide the student with adequate information to perform better academically. Therefore, the hypothesis that, '*Students from high socioeconomic status families perform better academically than those from medium and low socioeconomic status families*' is supported by the data.

Also, there was a significant positive relationship between parent socioeconomic status and parental involvement  $r(296) = .12, p < .05$ . This result suggests that parent with higher socioeconomic conditions do involve him or herself in the academic activities of the ward. Therefore, the hypothesis that '*Parents of high socioeconomic status would be more involved in the education of their children*' is supported by the current data.

**Table 3.** Summary of Means and Standard Deviations of Academic Performance, Parental Involvement and Socio-economic Status.

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Performance	46.11	14.67
Parental Involvement	21.59	5.18
Socio-Economic Status	17.30	6.15

Table 3 gives a brief summary of how much participants reported the engagement of these behavioural patterns. On the average, the academic score of any student is 46.11 showing that most of the student hard a score lower than 50 percent. These suggest that most of the student performed below average hence something needed to be done. Parental involvement was reported to be 21.59. The value represented how much parents on the average get themselves involved in their wards education. The minimum score of contribution is 8 and the maximum score is 40. So 21.59 average score suggest that parental involvement in terms of education was above average. On the grounds of socioeconomic status, 17.30 was the average socioeconomic status of parents when measured on a continuous level using parents' education, occupation and economic power.

The result of the study indicated that, there was a significant positive relationship between parent socioeconomic status and parental involvement  $r(296) = .12, p < .05$ . The results suggest that parents with higher socioeconomic conditions do involve themselves in the academic activities of the children. Parents with higher education do get involved in the education of their wards because they understand the essence of education better and have high aspirations for their children than their uneducated

counterparts. Again, high-income parents are more involved because they are able to meet all financial requirements in the school such as payment of PTA dues and other levies, buying of the educational needs of children and therefore confidently and frequently visit schools to find out how their children are faring with learning than their low-income counterparts. The findings are in line with the assertions that the level of education achieved by parents determine if parents will be actively involved in their children's work [21]. Again, parents with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid contact with schools [22]. They may be less involved because they do not feel confident to contact school staff. Similarly, a study found that the parent with higher college degree have more attendance in the meeting organized at school and talk more about educational issues. Parents are more involved in their children's work because they know the learning requirement and can set high expectations for their children [23]. Similarly, with low level of literacy, parents were said to lack the knowledge and skills needed to help their children with school work. On the other hand, it was said that parents who are educated are more likely to be involved in their children's work than illiterate parents [24]. Additionally, transportation problems and lack of resources associated with low-income families may hinder parents' involvement [25].

Nonetheless, the result of the study as it can be observed from Fig. 1 shows that 38 students from high SES households indicated that their parents were less involved in their education as well as 15 students from low SES indicated that their parent were more involved in their education. Parental SES alone do not account for parental involvement in the education of their children but other factors also influence the involvement of parents. A previous research supported current study the revealed that some parents with lower level of education do become involved because of a desire for their children to have upward mobility in the world and so their children achieve things they themselves could not.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study indicated that, parents who ensure that their children study at home, provide their educational needs, discuss their progress with their teachers and attend PTA meetings regularly have children who perform better academically as compared to children whose parents do not see to it that their children study at home, provide the educational needs of their children, discuss their children's learning with teachers and attend PTA meeting regularly. Nevertheless, some children with less involved parents who depend on colleagues and others put up performances that were in parity with children with highly involved parents. The study also revealed that, some students though from low socioeconomic background had parents who were more involved than those from high socioeconomic status, this is because the two independent variables; socioeconomic status of parents and parents' involvement in children's education have all shown significant positive relationship with academic performance of JHS students.

It is recommended that parents should be encouraged to get themselves engaged in economic activities to improve their economic power and educate themselves to be able to meet the educational needs of the children which will result in high academic performance of students. This will improve the socioeconomic status of parents and will intend improve the academic performance of students in the study area since the improvement in income of parents to a large extent results in improved students' performance. It is also recommended that, adult literacy should be enhanced by

government to improve the level of education of parents to improve participation of parents in children's education and hence improve their academic performance.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

### **Data Availability Statement**

Data is available on request from the corresponding author.

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