



**FAMILY DYNAMICS AND PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF  
PRIMARY SIX PUPILS' PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN  
PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR METROPOLIS,  
CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the influence of family interaction on the academic achievement of social studies by primary 6 pupils in public primary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The goal was to examine the direct effect of family size and family religion on students in the same sample as the previous study on achievement in the research domain. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A survey was an apt methodology for the study. One hundred and sixty-two primary six pupils selected by a simple random sampling technique (balloting) from four government primary schools in Calabar City, Cross River State, formed the sample for this study. Two instruments were used to collect the data. At the beginning, a "Family Dynamics Questionnaire (FDQ)" and a Social Studies achievement test (SSAT). To test the hypotheses under examination, simple linear regression analysis was used. The analysis revealed that family size and family religion are significant predictors of the academic achievement of primary six pupils in social studies in Public primary schools in the study location. Based on the findings, the researcher further suggested that the Government should strengthen its birth control policy, which will be disseminated to its various agencies. At the same time, Parents should engage in family planning so that they can have the number of children they can cater to, and religion should not be a hindrance to the education of the children. However, religion should promote cohesiveness, unity, and integration among students, irrespective of their religious background.*

**Keywords:** Family Dynamics, Primary Six, Pupils, Family Size, Family Religion, Academic Performance, Social Studies."

**Introduction**

An individual's family can be defined in various ways, depending on their culture. Families are the fundamental building blocks of social structures and the focal point of many social activities. As usual, parents have the primary responsibility for their child's upbringing. This supports sociologists' widely held belief that home-based education might serve as a tool for bringing about cultural change (Stone, 2016). It is reasonable to imagine that parents' backgrounds could have a substantial impact on their children's

school performance, considering that the family represents the primary setting for early education and socialisation experiences prior to formal education. The home is a child's first experience of the world, and so it has an enormous impact on his character, values and perspective on life. Whether it is a social, emotional, psychological, or economic factor, if it influences a child's developmental environment, it is likely to influence their educational experiences and, by extension, achievements. The academic success and life-coping skills of a child depend heavily on the stability and quality of the child's home life.

The way that social studies is planned and organised in elementary school has a profound impact on the moral and intellectual development of adolescents. This educational project is motivated by a deliberate choice to impart crucial facts, as well as the values and skills necessary to foster national unity and cohesion (Achieng-Evensen, 2016). Therefore, the primary objective of social studies development is to gain a deep understanding of students' roles in fostering a good society. This is achieved through guiding them through a transformational process that transcends academic domains and is accomplished through the primary social studies curriculum.

The social studies curriculum comprises a range of carefully planned teaching activities conducted in a classroom setting. According to Ganira (2018), these experiences are broken down into numerous modules, resulting in a well-planned curriculum. With social studies serving as the primary subject, the syllabus acts as a roadmap for the subject matter. The subject enables students to actively engage with their environment, both within and outside the classroom, according to Matthews (2011). It is intimately related to comprehending individuals and their circumstances. It spreads principles, information, and abilities necessary for harmonious collaboration in local communities, nations, and the international arena. According to Boadu, Tetteh-Osei, Appiah, and Bassaw (2022), in order to make learning outcomes achievable, national goals, objectives, and aspirations should be incorporated into a social studies curriculum. However, when teachers employ teaching strategies that undermine competence-based learning, issues arise, and a lack of critical skills and value systems essential for a cohesive society results (Akala, 2021). These shortcomings are necessary to keep society together. Unsuitable content presents obstacles to people acquiring the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for making informed decisions, solving problems, and embracing important social values. Consequently, this leads to a less cohesive community.

Section four of the National Policy of Education (F.R.N., 2014) states that the purpose of primary education is to educate children to develop extremely durable proficiency, numeracy, and the ability to convey knowledge clearly and effectively. It is thus anticipated that all Nigerian primary schools will work vigorously toward these goals to graduate students who possess all the necessary skills to succeed in the rapidly evolving global economy. As a result, one of the curriculum options designed to improve the achievement of these goals is social studies. Social investigations were highlighted

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by the Public Agreement on Education (FRN, 2014) as a key topic in Nigeria's educational system.

Even though it is often recognised that social studies may help young people develop into independent and progressive societal members. Research indicates that some students struggle with the material (Biriye, 2011). Numerous elements have been linked to the issues, including the socioeconomic conditions of the parents, the school environment, the personalities of the instructors and students, and the parents' domestic history. All learning starts at home, even though there may be other possible explanations for why children perform well academically in school. Parents, family members, and the home environment are additional sources of knowledge from which one can learn, in addition to teachers. Hence, the researcher was poised to determine whether the family setting holds significant importance in influencing the academic performance of pupils (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2018).

In this context, the phrase "family dynamics" refers to a comprehensive concept that encompasses economic standing, parents' educational backgrounds, family size, family structure, social class or status, employment, and participation in school activities. Nonetheless, family size, parent income, and family structure would all be considered aspects of domestic background in the context of this study. In light of this, the researcher was prepared to investigate the home environment and the academic achievement of elementary school students in the subject of social studies in Calabar, Cross River State.

Student academic performance is somewhat impacted by family size. As stated by Barrows and Rouse (2016), children report greater academic accomplishment when their families are smaller. This is because parents who have fewer children tend to focus more on them than those who have numerous children. According to some research, a child's family structure has a significant impact on their whole life trajectory, particularly on their academic achievement (Dalton & Glauber, 2015). These studies assume that larger families allocate their financial, cultural, and practical resources more widely than do families with fewer children. According to Eamon (2015), a child's academic achievement is influenced by their family size, regardless of its size. Furthermore, a child's IQ is heavily influenced by their family's situation. According to the author, family size and assessed intellect do correlate. Additionally, he points out that because unskilled manual labourers typically have the greatest family sizes despite having the lowest incomes, there must be a contradiction between the cultures of the home and the school. Thus, Eamon (2015) concludes that poverty and family size hurt children's academic development.

Generally speaking, religion is a broad category of social and cultural systems that link people to spiritual, transcendental, and supernatural elements. Prophecies, ethics, worldviews, scriptures, sacred sites, values, beliefs, and organisations are a few examples of these systems. Religion is the conviction that there is one or more gods, and the rituals that accompany it, such as worshipping or praying in a place like a church or temple. *Family and religion have robust and distinctly varied inter-institutional linkages compared to other types of interactions. Zhang, 2017. observed that kinship had a strong*

*religious connotation in premodern communities, and that religion still has a strong influence on families and children's scholastic achievement in modern countries.*

According to Deton (2016), religion is defined as a permanent bond between the divine, the God who is just, the ultimate, the self-existent, the holy, or the supernatural. Regardless of how developed a society is or whether it is populated by Black or White people, religion is a beautiful worldwide phenomenon that exists in all societies. Shishu (2012) asserts that men give up obedience and loyalty in exchange for peace and security through a covenant with supernatural powers; consequently, they worship these powers, which leads to a religious exercise. People or groups who practice religion engage in social behaviour that is aimed at the forces or powers they believe have ultimate and long-lasting control. According to Shishu (2012), students who participate in religious activities have demonstrated their ability to filter other forms of social media.

### **Statement of the problem**

Several concerns have been expressed over the poor academic performance of pupils in Social Studies in public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis. It provides the basis for civic responsibility and national development, as well as the foundation for subsequent educational success; however, students' achievement in this area is still poor. This ongoing underachievement poses critical questions around what is affecting students' progress. Some of the possible factors include family structure, family size, and religious affiliation, which are expected to have a direct effect on students' academic achievement. However, little is known about the particular mechanisms by which these family factors contribute to pupil achievement in SS, and there is a need to investigate the interplay of these factors.

Public primary schools in Calabar Metropolis are facing several challenges, including inadequate teacher preparation, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of funding. Furthermore, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of the city may result in different family arrangements and relationships, which can influence children's educational outcomes. The lack of empirical data on the connection between family dynamics and academic achievement impedes the development of effective, targeted interventions. As low performance in Social Studies has far-reaching implications (from reducing the chances of further education to eroding active involvement in and development of the nation), there is a need to find out what is truly behind this. This study aims to address the knowledge gap by examining the dynamics of family and school influences on the academic performance of Primary Six pupils in the subject of Social Studies. In this study, the researchers aim to gather empirically grounded findings that can be utilised in providing evidence-based policy and practice needed to enhance pupils' academic outcomes in Calabar Metropolis.

### **Theoretical Background**

#### **Parental involvement theory by Epstein (1995)**

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This study is further based on Epstein's (1995) Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, which provides a broad-ranging perspective on various aspects of parent involvement in a child's education. Epstein identified six major categories of parental involvement, which occur at the home, school, and community levels: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration. In her analysis, productive home-school partnerships are important aspects of creating a home learning environment that supports schooling, homework completion, and an approach to learning.

Schools also have an important role to play in instructing parents on how to create a supportive learning environment at home, Epstein said. For Brewer, who proposed parenting as an act of parents creating nurturing, secure, and structured physical and emotional environments for their children as a framework, this includes parent factors that facilitate their children's academic and personal growth. Schools can actively facilitate this by providing training opportunities, workshops, and meetings that equip parents with tools to create educationally enriched homes. These types of activities support the relationship between home and school, reminding children and parents of the value of education within the home context (Epstein et al., 2019).

Epstein's model is of interest in this research due to the convergence between it and the central focus on family dynamics as they impact academic achievement in Social Studies, particularly at the Primary Six level. Her theory offers an organised way to view the influence of certain factors (i.e., family size and religious tradition) on parent involvement and student performance. Using this framework, the study aims to provide information not only about the relationship between family engagement and student academic achievement but also to highlight evidence-based practices for increasing parent involvement in ways that lead to academic success. In conclusion, Epstein's framework provides a practical conceptual framework to shape policy and practice, and consequently a means to influence the lives of students, staff and, indeed, the entire education community in Calabar Metropolis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

"Investigating the impact of family dynamics on the academic achievement of primary six students in social studies at public primary schools in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, is the aim of this study. In particular, this research aims to determine the impact of:

1. Family size on primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies
2. Family religion on primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies

### **Research Questions**

1. How does Family size influence primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies
2. To what extent does family religion influence primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies



### **Research Hypotheses.**

1. There is no significant influence of family size on primary six pupils' academic performance.
2. There is no significant influence of family religion on primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies

### **Methodology**

#### **Research design**

The study population consists of all Primary six pupils from government schools in the Calabar South Local Government Area. Data sourced from the Calabar Primary Education Board (2023) shows that the number of primary six pupils for the 2023/2024 session is 1,633. The study design was a survey, and a simple random technique was used to select the schools. The list of names of all government primary schools in Calabar South and Calabar Municipality Local Government Areas was written on pieces of paper, folded, and put in a container. Applying the hat-and-draw method, six schools were randomly selected without bias, and the knowledge of the study's sample was obtained. The "Family Dynamics Questionnaire (FDQ)" was administered to the pupils of primary six by the researcher, with the teacher acting as the research assistant, after permission had been obtained from the head teacher to carry out the research in the sampled schools. It was administered to the primary five pupils to measure their level of understanding of family dynamics, specifically concerning family size and family religious affiliation, assisted by the researcher and trained assistants. The Family Dynamics Questionnaire (FDQ), an instrument comprising 40 items, and the Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) were used for data collection in this study. The FDQ consisted of two parts and was created to collect data on the sub-dimensions of the independent variable, namely, family size and religious denomination. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert-scale structure, ranging from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD), with intermediate options of agree (A) and disagree (D).

The SSAT, however, consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions, each with choices marked A through D, which were designed to measure pupils' classwork in Social Studies. Responses to the FDQ were coded and scored as follows ( $\pm$ positively worded items): 4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree. For negatively worded items, the direction of scoring was reversed to ensure uniformity. Each correct answer on the SSAT was given a score of 1, and incorrect answers were scored as 0. The coded data was further analysed through simple linear regression to explore the association between family dynamics and the academic performance of students.

### **Analyses and Results**

**Hypothesis 1:** "There is no significant influence of family size on primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1:** Simple regression analysis of influence of family size on primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies (N=162)

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	p-value
Regression	112.048	1	112.048	13.184*	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	2409.053	160	8.412		
Total	2521.101	161			

\*significant at .05 level, Adj. R<sup>2</sup>=.116

To analyse the data in Table 1, simple linear regression analysis was used. The analysis in Table 1 indicated that the Adj R<sup>2</sup> is 0.116. This implies that 11.6% of the variance in the pupils' performance in social studies could be accounted for by the influence of family size. Although the percentage contribution is small, a cursory examination of the table revealed that F = 13.184 (p < .05) is significant. Moreover, since p (.000) is smaller than p (.05), it means that family size significantly influences the academic performance of primary six pupils in social studies. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is adopted forthwith.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant influence of family religion on primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2:** Simple regression analysis of the influence of family religion on primary six pupils' academic performance in social studies (N=162)

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	p-value
Regression	98.272	1	98.272	10.457*	.003 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	2422.829	160	5.443		
Total	2521.101	161			

\*significant at .05 level, Adj. R<sup>2</sup>=.094

To analyse the data in Table 1, simple linear regression analysis was used. The analysis in Table 1 indicates that the Adj R-squared value is 0.094. This implies that 9.4% of the variance in the pupils' performance in social studies could be accounted for by the influence of family religion. Although the percentage contribution is small, a cursory look at the table shows that F = 10.457 (p < .05) is significant. Furthermore, since p(.003) is smaller than p(.05), it means that family religion significantly influences the academic performance of primary six pupils in social studies in the research area. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis adopted forthwith."

### Discussion of findings

The data in Table 1 demonstrate that, in Calabar City, Cross River State, the academic achievement of primary six students in social studies is significantly influenced by their



family size. This result is consistent with research by Eamon (2015), which suggests that a child's academic achievement is influenced by the size of their family, regardless of the family's size. Furthermore, a child's IQ is heavily influenced by their family's situation. According to the author, family size and assessed intellect do correlate. Additionally, he points out that because unskilled manual labourers typically have the greatest family sizes despite having the lowest incomes, there must be a contradiction between the cultures of the home and the school. Thus, Eamon (2015) concludes that poverty and family size hurt children's academic development.

The data in Table 2 demonstrate that the academic achievement of primary six students in social studies in Calabar City, Cross River State, is significantly influenced by the size of their families. This result aligns with Deton's (2016) conception of religion, which posits a fixed connection between the holy, supernatural, self-existent, absolute, or simply God and non-human phenomena. However, religion is such a lovely global phenomenon that exists in all societies, whether they are developed or not, and whether they are inhabited by Black or White people. According to Shishu (2012), religion is a social behaviour that people engage in to express their devotion to a power or force that they believe to be supremely powerful. Men make a covenant with supernatural powers in exchange for security and peace, which leads them to worship these powers as the culmination of a religious practice.

Shishu (2012) demonstrated that students with a religious orientation are generally perceived as withdrawing from social media. The argument presented by the author is that if a student has frequented religious observance, they are less likely to adopt behaviour that is part of a bad peer (e.g., hanging out at bars). Furthermore, such students are found to be more organised and committed to schedules, as shown through their willingness to complete academic work promptly.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, the researcher recommends that family size and religious affiliation are significant determinants of the academic performance of Primary Six pupils in Social Studies in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. Such a conclusion highlights the significant role that family factors play in the academic achievement of students in the subject.

1. The government should intensify birth control policy through relevant agencies, And Parents should embark on family planning to be able to have the number of children they can comfortably take care of.
2. Religion should not be a barrier to caring for children's education; instead, religion should encourage students' unity, integration, and cohesion regardless of their religious affiliation.

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