



Socio-Economic Status, Determinant of Access to Quality Education and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract. In Nigeria socioeconomic disparities often lead to unequal access to education thereby limiting the potential for upward mobility and contribution to persistent poverty. A survey research design was employed in this work as it's a design type that affords the researcher the ability to study a very large population in order to discover varied characteristics. Population comprised staff of Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. A sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was used in the conduct of this work. Through purposive random sampling technique, academic and non-academic staff was selected from various departments across the institution. A self-designed instrument titled, "SESANDAQEENGNO" Socio-Economic Status and Determinant of Access to Quality Education for Economic Growth in Nigeria Questionnaire was used to gather data needed in the study. This instrument was divided into three subscales of 20 items in all. Content and construct validity was determined by two experts in the department of Educational Foundations, Delta State University. Cronbach alpha reliability was used to determine how reliable items in the scale are with r-value of .863, internal consistency was met. Frequency and percentage analysis was used to analyse bio-data of respondents while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for items and hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed access to educational resources, teacher quality and availability of school facilities and infrastructures determines Quality Education needed for Economic Growth in Nigeria. It then concluded that SES determines the quality of living standard in Nigeria which ultimately impact economic growth. The study recommended that Government should allocate more funds for public education in order to be accessible to all.

Keywords: Socio-Economic Status, Quality Education, Economic Growth, Teacher Quality, Standard

1. Background to the Study

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental pillar for sustainable development and economic growth. In Nigeria, access to quality education remains a significant challenge, with the socioeconomic status (SES) of individuals and households being a key determinant of educational opportunities. Socioeconomic status refers to the social and economic factors that influence the position of individuals or families within society, such as income, education level, occupation, and wealth. Research indicates that socioeconomic disparities often lead to unequal access to education, limiting the potential for upward mobility and contributing to persistent poverty (Koomson, 2020). As Nigeria strives for economic growth, addressing the relationship between SES and education is crucial for unlocking human capital development.

The importance of education in fostering economic growth cannot be overstated, as it is a direct driver of productivity, innovation, and competitiveness (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). However, access to quality education in Nigeria is unevenly distributed, with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often facing significant barriers in accessing education. This disparity is most apparent in rural areas where poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited educational resources exacerbate the challenges faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Okebukola, 2018). The impact of socioeconomic status on educational attainment is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where the education system is often plagued by inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and overcrowded classrooms, which disproportionately affect students from lower SES households.

The influence of SES on educational outcomes in Nigeria has been well documented, with studies showing that children from wealthier families tend to perform better academically than their peers from

poorer households (Adebayo, 2021). In Nigeria, children from high SES families are more likely to attend better-equipped schools, receive additional educational support, and have access to opportunities such as private tutoring and extracurricular activities. Conversely, children from low SES backgrounds are often confined to underfunded public schools that lack basic amenities such as textbooks, qualified teachers, and safe learning environments. This unequal distribution of educational resources perpetuates the cycle of poverty, as individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to acquire the skills and qualifications needed to secure well-paying jobs.

The role of government policy in addressing the SES-related disparities in education is critical for fostering equitable access to quality education. Nigeria has made several attempts to address these issues, including the introduction of free education policies and the establishment of various scholarship programs aimed at increasing enrollment in schools. However, these efforts have been largely ineffective due to issues such as corruption, mismanagement of resources, and inadequate implementation strategies (Ademola & Olawale, 2019). Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive data on the impact of SES on educational outcomes has hindered the development of targeted policies and interventions that could effectively address these disparities.

One key challenge in addressing the SES-education gap in Nigeria is the limited role of private sector investment in education. While the private sector plays a significant role in providing educational services, it primarily caters to the affluent, leaving children from lower-income families with limited options for quality education. According to studies, private schools often offer better facilities, teaching resources, and a higher standard of education, but their high tuition fees make them inaccessible to most families (Oluwatayo & Adesina, 2020). This leaves many children from low SES households trapped in a cycle of subpar educational experiences, which significantly limits their future economic prospects.

The impact of low SES on access to education extends beyond the individual level to affect national economic development. Educated individuals are more likely to contribute to economic growth by engaging in productive employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation. In contrast, those who are denied access to quality education are more likely to remain in low-income, unskilled labor sectors, limiting their ability to contribute to the broader economy (Gershberg, 2022). In Nigeria, this

lack of human capital development is one of the factors that has contributed to the country's slow economic growth despite its large population and abundant natural resources. Closing the education gap for low SES children is therefore essential for fostering inclusive growth and reducing poverty.

Furthermore, the gender dimension of SES and education in Nigeria cannot be ignored. In many Nigerian communities, girls from low-income families face additional barriers to education, such as early marriage, cultural norms, and household responsibilities. Studies have shown that girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out before completing their education (Adebisi, 2021). Addressing the intersection of gender and SES in educational access is essential for ensuring that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have the opportunity to benefit from quality education and contribute to economic development. Hence, the study tries to investigate socio-economic status and determinant of access to quality education for economic growth in Nigeria, using staff of Delta State University, Abraka.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the socioeconomic status (SES) of individuals significantly influences their access to quality education, which in turn affects the country's potential for sustainable economic growth. Despite efforts to improve the education sector, there remains a stark disparity in educational opportunities between individuals from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Lower-income households often face significant barriers, such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of educational resources, and inability to afford school fees, which limit their access to quality education. This inequality not only hampers the educational outcomes of these individuals but also undermines the nation's overall economic development. Understanding how socioeconomic status impacts access to quality education is crucial for devising policies that can bridge this gap, foster human capital development, and ultimately drive economic growth in Nigeria. Thus, this study seeks to examine how different levels of socioeconomic status serve as a determinant for access to quality education and its implications for economic progress in Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to justify how Socio-economic status determines access to quality

education for economic growth in Nigeria. However, its specific objectives are targeted at:

- State how teachers' quality determines the quality of education.
- Narrate how availability of school facilities and infrastructures determine the quality of education.
- Examine if access to quality education has impact on economic growth.

1.3 Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were structured and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₁: Teacher quality will not significantly determine the quality education.

H₂: Availability of school facilities and infrastructures will not significantly determine the quality of education.

H₃: Access to quality education will not significantly have impact on economic growth.

In the course of acquiring quality education which spurs economic growth in Nigeria, unlike other economies, SES has been found to play significant roles, including:

• Access to Educational Resources

Children from higher SES families are more likely to have access to essential educational resources such as textbooks, internet access, and private tutoring. According to the World Bank (2018), students from wealthier households in Nigeria are more likely to perform better academically due to better access to learning materials and supplementary educational support. Conversely, children from lower SES backgrounds may struggle to afford these resources, which significantly affect their learning outcomes.

• School Facilities and Infrastructure

SES also affects the infrastructure of schools. Wealthier areas tend to have better-funded schools with modern facilities, such as libraries, computer labs, and science laboratories, which can enhance the learning experience. In contrast, schools in poorer regions often suffer from inadequate infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms, which can hinder effective teaching and learning.

• Teacher Quality

SES impacts the quality of teachers, as schools in wealthier areas often have access to better-trained and more experienced educators. Teachers in affluent areas are also more likely to receive professional development opportunities, leading to improved teaching practices. On the other hand, schools in economically disadvantaged areas may struggle to

attract qualified teachers, resulting in lower-quality education.

• Parental Support and Involvement

Parental involvement is closely linked to socio-economic status, with children from higher SES families benefiting from more active parental engagement in their academic progress. SES influences parental involvement in a child's education. Higher-income families tend to be more involved in their children's schooling, offering additional academic support and resources, while lower-income families may face challenges in providing similar levels of support due to time constraints or lack of education themselves. This discrepancy can impact student performance.

• Health and Nutrition

Health and nutrition disparities, which correlate with socio-economic status, significantly affect the educational outcomes of children, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Children from higher SES families are more likely to receive proper nutrition and healthcare, which are vital for cognitive development and academic performance. Poor nutrition and health issues are more common among children from lower SES backgrounds, and these factors can negatively affect their ability to focus and perform well in school.

• School Choice and Equity

Families with higher SES have the ability to choose schools with better facilities, more qualified teachers, and a more rigorous curriculum. This creates an educational divide, where children from wealthier families often attend private or well-funded public schools, while children from lower SES families have limited school options, usually attending underfunded schools with fewer resources. Oketch et al. (2010): "Socio-economic status is a key determinant in school choice, with wealthier families able to access better educational institutions and poorer families constrained to low-quality public schools.

• Peer Influence and Social Capital

According to Adegoke (2012), social capital, including peer networks, is strongly linked to socio-economic status, with higher SES students having access to more supportive academic environments and peer groups. Children from higher SES families often benefit from attending schools with peers who share similar social and academic expectations. This positive peer influence can enhance motivation and academic performance. In contrast, students from lower SES backgrounds may face challenges related to peer influence, such as disengagement or lower academic expectations, which can negatively affect their performance.

However, socioeconomic status is a critical determinant of access to quality education in Nigeria, with profound implications for individual and national

economic growth. While various interventions have been made, the persistent disparities in educational access between high and low SES households highlight the need for comprehensive and targeted policy reforms. A focused approach to addressing these inequalities, including improved funding for public education, greater investment in teacher training, and enhanced private sector involvement, is necessary for Nigeria to fully leverage its human capital potential and drive sustainable economic development. Addressing the SES-education link will not only improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children but also contribute to reducing poverty and fostering inclusive economic growth in the country. Again 8 12 targeted policies that ensure more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across different socioeconomic groups should be encouraged.

2. Quality of Education and Economic Growth

In the study of Hanushek and Wobmann (2007), it was observed that role of improved schooling, as a central part of most development strategies, has become debatable, in the sense that expansion of school attainment is yet to promote improved economic conditions. Further, it was evidenced that cognitive skills of graduates, other than mere school achievement correlates with individual earnings, to income distribution, and ultimately to economic growth.

In the same vein, empirical outcomes show the significance of both minimal and high-level skills, the complementarity of skills and the quality of economic institutions, and the soundness of the relationship between skills and growth.

Accordingly, Musibau, Vespignania & Yanottia (2024), investigated the impact of education quality on economic growth in 37 OECD countries, by developing a new dataset that combines mixed-frequency data, including low-frequency data (every three years) from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and annual data from the World Development Indicators (WDI), over the period from 2000 to 2018. It was found that a 1% increase in educational quality contributes to an annual economic

growth rate of 2.8%, which was significantly higher than previous research, resulting on growth rates ranging from 0.4% to 2.3%, based on cross-sectional PISA data.

Growth in economic indicators has been found to determines the future well-being of many societies, although, attempt to influence it has proved to be difficult to many nations (Hanushek & Woessmann (2021). Empirical evidences of different growth rates reach a simple conclusion: long-run growth in gross domestic product (GDP) is largely determined by the skills of a nation’s population (Hanushek, 2015). Furthermore, education according to Khan, Sarwar and Niazi (2023), impacts positively on economic growth in developing countries, owing to investigation carried out on the outcome of education system on economic growth in Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed the use of survey research design since this design affords the researcher the ability to study a very large population in order to discover varied observations. Population comprised all married persons in Nigeria as target group consisted of staff of Delta State University, DELSU, Abraka Delta state. The reason for the choice of this group is centred on them been classified as the middle class in the employment chain in Nigeria. A sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was used in the work. With the use of purposive random sampling technique, the researcher selected respondents from both academic and non-academic department of the institution. A self-designed instrument titled, “SESANDAQEEGNQ” Socio-Economic status and determinant of Access to Quality Education for Economic Growth in Nigeria was used to source for data needed in the study. This instrument was divided into three Sub-scale with 20 items in general. Content and construct validity was determined by two experts in the department of Educational Sociology, Delta State University. Cronbach alpha form of reliability was used to determine how reliable items in the scale are. With r-value of .863, internal consistency is met. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) was used to analyse bio-data of respondents while mean and standard deviation was used to analyse items.

4. Presentation of Data and Interpretation

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis on Gender

Variables	Gender	F	Percentage
1	Male	55	46%
2	Female	65	54%
Total		120	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

The above table shows that male participants accounted for 55 (46%) and women 65(54%). It is obvious more female are involved in this study than their male counterpart.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis on designation (Academics)

Variable	Designation	F	Percentage
1	Professor	1	3%
2	Senior Lecturers	5	17%
3	Lecturers I	9	30%
4	Lecturers II	15	50%
Total		30	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

From table 2, one Professor representing 3%, 5Senior Lecturer (17%), Lecturer1 (30%) and Lecturer II (50%); the data shows that Junior lecturers were mainly involved in this study as they accounted for 80% of the study frame.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis on Designation (Non-Academics)

Variable	Designation	F	Percentage
1	Senior Assistant Registras	8	8%
2	Principal Assistant Registras	12	13%
3	Assistant Registra	30	33%
4	Higher Executive Officers	40	44%
Total		90	100

Source: Field Work (2025)

Information on Table 3 shows that Senior Assistant Registras accounted for 8(8%), Principal Assistant Registras 12(13%), Assistant Registras 30(33%) and Higher Executive Officers 40(44%). It reveals that lower officers in the non-academic cadres were more involved in this work as they account for 70(77%).

Testing of Hypotheses

H₁: Teacher quality will not significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth

Table 4: Correlation analysis showing relationship between teacher quality and quality education

Variables	N	Mean	SD	P	r-cal	Sig	Remark
Teacher quality	120	3.62	.87	.05	.842	.004	Significant
Quality education	120	2.96	.69				
Total	120						

Information from Table 4 reveals that 120 respondents were captured in this work as teacher quality maintained a relatively higher mean and standard deviation value than quality education with r-calculatedvalueat.842, it shows positively strong relationship between both variable, howeveratsigvalueat.004lowerthanthe P-value (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative which states that teacher quality will significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth is retained.

H₂: Availability of school facilities and infrastructures will not significantly determine the quality of education

Table 5: Correlation analysis showing relationship between availability of school facilities and infrastructures and quality education

Variables	N	Mean	SD	P	r-cal	Sig	Remark
Availability of School Resources & Infrastructures	120	3.07	.79	.05	.779	.008	Significant
Quality education	120	2.96	.69				
Total	120						

Information from Table 5 reveals that 120 respondents were captured in this work as availability of school resources & infrastructures also maintained a relatively higher mean and standard deviation value than quality education. With r-calculated value at P-value (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative which .779, it shows positively strong relationship between both variables, however at sig value at .006 lower than the states that availability of schoolresources&infrastructureswillsignificantlydeterminequalityeducationaimedeconomicgrowththis retained.

H₃: Quality education will not significantly have impact on economic growth

Table 6: Correlation analysis showing relationship between educational resources and quality education

Variables	N	Mean	SD	P	r-cal	Sig	Remark
Educational resources	120	3.11	.84	.05	.822	.019	Significant
Quality education	120	2.96	.69				
Total	120						

Also, Table 6 reveals that 120 respondents were captured in this work as educational resources also maintained a relatively higher mean and standard deviation value than quality education. With r-calculated value at .822, it shows positively strong relationship between both variables, however at sig value at .019 lower than the P-value (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative which states that educational resources will significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth is retained.

5. Discussion of findings

From hypothesis 1 the result revealed that teacher quality will significantly determine quality education aimed at economic growth in Nigeria. Teacher quality is improved when manpower they are privy to in-service trainings, exposure, seminars and workshops. Teachers in rural and low-income areas often face challenges such as low morale, insufficient professional development, and lack of resources, all of which contribute to lower teaching quality. The outcome of this finding corroborates with that of National Teachers Institute (2015) that noted SES impacts quality of teachers in school settings. Schools in wealthier environment often have access to better trained and experienced teachers/educators. Teachers in wealthier climes are more likely to receive professional developed opportunities leading to improved teaching exercises. On the alternative schools in economically disadvantaged environment would likely struggle to attract competent and qualified instructors which of course result in lower quality of education.

Also, in hypothesis 2, the finding revealed availability of school facilities and infrastructures will significantly determine quality of education aimed at promoting economic growth. Economic growth

thrives well when quality education 2 is assured. The disparity in educational infrastructure between urban and rural schools in Nigeria is a result of socioeconomic inequalities, with urban schools typically offering better facilities and teaching resources. The findings conform to a study by UNICEF (2017) who affirmed that availability of school facilities and infrastructures goes a long way to determine the quality of education in a school. They reiterated that wealthier areas and communities tend to have better funded schools with modern facilities such as libraries, computers laboratories and scientific equipment for learners to internalise content mastery. The availability of these facilities and infrastructures enhance learning experience. In contrast, schools located in poorer cities and communities suffer from lack and inadequate infrastructures, overcrowded classrooms among others which can prevent effective teaching and learning exercise. Also in hypothesis 3, the result revealed that access to quality education will significantly has impact on economic growth. These quality education in terms of adequate resources contribute towards an enriched teaching and learning environment which fosters economic growth. Income inequality and the unequal access to education resources are significant contributors to disparities in educational outcomes in Nigeria. The result of this work agrees with that World Bank (2018) that claimed pupils from wealthier homes are more likely to perform better academically due to better access to learning materials and supplementary educational support. Children from higher SES families are more likely to have access to essential educational resources like textbooks, internet access and private tutoring. Meanwhile, children from lower SES would likely struggle to afford these resources which significantly affects their learning abilities and outcomes.

6. Conclusion

Every nation of the world work towards achieving economic growth and development since countries that attain this level often enjoy an improved Socio-Economic Status (SES) through improved quality education, functional security network that guarantees security of lives and properties, quality labour force, robust human resource management system, technology driven economy among others. From this work, the researcher concluded that SES determines the quality of living standard of citizens living in a geographical climate. It also concluded that SES maintains positive relationship with quality education because the spectrum of SES met determines the quality of education to be exposed.

7. Recommendations

At the end of this study the researchers recommended the following:

- Government should allocate more funds for public education so that its reach can be accessible to all
- More investment should be put into teacher training and development so as to improve on quality of teaching and seasoned information.
- More Public-Private Partnerships should be encouraged in the educational sector in order to maximise limited resources.

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