

Influence of Mother's Level of Education on the Life Achievement of Children in Edo South Senatorial District

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of mothers' level of education on the life achievement of children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria. The study was guided by four research questions and two hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a correlational survey research design, and a total of 120 mothers selected through a multi-stage sampling technique constituted the study's sample. A self-designed questionnaire was used for data collection and was structured on a four-point Likert scale. After experts' validation, the instrument produced a reliability index of 0.73 using the test-retest method. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r). The results revealed that the majority of mothers in Edo South Senatorial District have attained tertiary education, and educated mothers employ various strategies including educational, social, financial, and emotional support to enhance their children's academic performance. The study also revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between mothers' level of education and the life achievement of their children, as well as a significant inverse relationship between mothers' educational attainment and the number of children they are likely to have. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to enhance female education, parental empowerment, and family planning interventions in Edo South Senatorial District.

Keywords: Maternal education, life achievement, educational attainment, family size, parental support.

INTRODUCTION

A mother's level of education or maternal education refers to the academic qualification attained by a mother, which significantly shapes her parenting style, decision-making, and the developmental outcomes of her children. A mother's level of education is widely recognised in the Social Sciences as one of the most influential determinants of child health, education, and socio-economic status (Cleland & van Ginneken, 2013). The mother's education is a strong predictor of achievement. The adult parents particularly the mother has tremendous influence over the educational and life achievement of the child, perhaps even greater than educational programmes for children. The more highly educated the parents, the more successful primary education will be for the child. Research has shown that the educational level of the mother is the strongest variable affecting the child's school achievements (Cleland & van Ginneken, 2013; Magnuson & Duncan, 2016; Okpala & Ogbuanya, 2019). Parents can increase children's chances to succeed in school through such means as reading to children or modeling good reading habits. But, if parent themselves are unable to read the children miss the extra boost. According to Imel, in Olomukoro (2012), literacy levels of children and strongly linked to those of parents. The greatest predictor of a child's future academic success is the literacy of the child's mother.

Mothers with higher education are more likely to provide intellectually stimulating environments, access health services, and support their children's schooling. As a concept, maternal education encompasses both the level and quality of education received, including literacy, numeracy, and critical life skills. Scholars have emphasized that maternal education has both direct and indirect implications on a child's upbringing. Directly, it enables mothers to read to their children, assist with school assignments, and interact effectively with teachers. Indirectly, it influences household decisions, income, and exposure to modern child-rearing practices

(Dubow, Boxer, & Huesmann, 2010). In developing nations, including Nigeria, maternal education often correlates with family planning, child nutrition, and immunization adherence all of which contribute to a child's readiness and ability to learn (UNESCO, 2016). Therefore, maternal education is not only an academic variable but also a developmental asset. In fact, children of educated mothers are more likely to remain in school, avoid early marriage, and develop greater aspirations (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016). Thus, a mother's level of education serves as a powerful social determinant capable of breaking cycles of poverty and illiteracy across generations.

Life achievement in children is a broad, multidimensional construct encompassing educational, occupational, social, and psychological outcomes that are realised as a result of developmental experiences. These outcomes reflect the degree to which an individual attains personal goals and societal expectations in adulthood. According to Heckman and Kautz (2012), the key indicators of life achievement in children include academic performance, highest level of education attained, employment status, career progression, income level, and personal life satisfaction. The development of these indicators is often rooted in early childhood experiences, home environment, parental influence, and the quality of education received. Educational attainment remains one of the most universally accepted indicators of life achievement, given its role in shaping employment opportunities and socio-economic status. Research has shown that a child's academic progress and eventual school completion are predictive of broader success in adulthood, including access to well-paying jobs and social mobility (Duncan & Murnane, 2014). Another key indicator is occupational achievement, which is often assessed by the type of employment a child secures in adulthood, their professional advancement, and job stability. According to Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2016), parental aspirations especially from mothers significantly influence children's career choices, with higher maternal education levels associated with children pursuing professional and high-skill occupations. Life achievement also includes psychological and behavioural components such as self-efficacy, perseverance, social skills, and moral development, which are essential for long-term personal and professional fulfillment. Life achievement should therefore be viewed not as a single outcome but as a cumulative result of multiple interrelated indicators.

The relationship between maternal education and children's educational attainment has been widely acknowledged in educational and developmental research. Educated mothers are more likely to enroll their children early in school, provide academic support at home, and monitor school progress closely (Dubow, Boxer, & Huesmann, 2010). These actions result in stronger academic foundations and higher levels of achievement across schooling years. Thus, maternal education is not just a background factor but a strategic driver of educational success. The home learning environment is often richer when mothers possess formal education. Such mothers engage their children in cognitively stimulating activities like reading, storytelling, and problem-solving games, which significantly enhance early literacy and numeracy skills (Magnuson & Duncan, 2016). These experiences accumulate into educational advantages that persist into later schooling stages. In a study by Ermisch and Pronzato (2017), maternal education had a statistically significant effect on children's cognitive scores and educational progression, even after controlling for household income and paternal education. According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2018), children of mothers with secondary or higher education are significantly more likely to complete primary and junior secondary education. Studies in Southern Nigeria, including Edo State, also show that maternal education correlates positively with regular school attendance, higher test scores, and better academic performance (Okpala & Ogbuanya, 2019). These findings affirm the central role of maternal education in breaking the intergenerational cycle of low educational attainment.

The Education For All (EFA) Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2018), indicated that more literate parents whether through formal schooling or adult programmes, and more likely to send their children especially girls to school and help them with their homework. Mother's literacy helps to support enrollment of the girl child and achievement in school. Children with parents (most especially mothers) who can read and write, stay in school longer and achieve more. The child's schooling performance is largely dependent on the level of education of his or her parents. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school than the uneducated ones. Studies from Bangladesh and Nepal showed that children's school attendance increased when their parents participated in adult literacy programmes (Cawthera, 1997; Burchfield, 2002; in Olomukoro 2012). Literate parents are more likely to be able to support their children in practical ways, such as meeting with teachers and discussing progress with their children as found in Nepal (Burchfield, 2002).

Women or mothers spend more time with their children than men. It is through the mother that child receives his or her first perception of the world. Mothers transmit habits attitudes, values and knowledge to their children. Mothers continue to play an important role as educators; the higher the educational level of the mother, the more effectively she is able to transmit the knowledge required for the children to achieve a better quality of life (Ballara, 2005). Education does not only prepare the women to participate in development, it enables them to prepare their offspring for participation in educational activities. Education has intergenerational effect on women. An empowered woman via education, shares in the responsibility of family life especially in the upbringing of the children. It reduces women dependency level on their partners; it promotes their wellbeing and self-esteem. It is the most influential factor in improving child health and reducing using infant mortality. The Global Action for Children Report (2002) stated that women with some formal education and more likely to seek medical care, ensure that their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's requirements and adopt improved sanitation practices. In addition, Okojie (2011) postulated that educated women are more likely to educate their children especially their daughters, thereby increasing productivity and incomes of the next generation. In a similar vein, Boliva (2010) states that investing in women's literacy carries very high returns, it improves livelihoods, leads to better child and maternal health and favours girls' access to education. There is evidence that women with less education and generally more likely to experience violence than those with higher levels of education (UNICEF, 2000). The Commission of the African Union (2005) in its "Strategic Framework for Deadline 2015" further stated that "it is well known that enlightened, well-informed, educated, skilled, socially, economically and politically empowered women do exert a strong influence on the education and survivor of the young". This is why the issue of women literacy should be taken with all the seriousness it deserves by all the agencies involved the promoting literacy.

Furthermore, a mother's level of education has a profound influence on the occupational aspirations and eventual achievements of children. According to Moulton, Flouri, Joshi, and Sullivan (2019), educated mothers tend to instill a greater sense of ambition, confidence, and career orientation in their children by exposing them to a wide range of professional opportunities. Schoon and Parsons (2018) resonated this fact when they reported that children whose mothers have attained higher levels of education often set more ambitious career goals and are more persistent in pursuing them. A study by Iroegbu and Ijeoma (2019) found that children of educated mothers in Southern Nigeria were more likely to pursue careers in medicine, engineering, and finance, compared to their counterparts from less-educated households. This underscores the long-term economic and developmental benefits of maternal education, not just for individual families, but for society at large. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the influence of mother's level of education on the life achievement of children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Educated mothers are more likely to invest in their children's education, offer academic guidance, create stimulating home environments, and model behaviours that encourage lifelong learning. In spite of this well-established linkage, the extent and pattern of this influence particularly in Edo South Senatorial District has remained under-researched. A preliminary investigation by the researcher suggests that there is a growing gap in children's life achievements that may have been influenced by their mothers' educational background. While some children excel in school and transition into promising careers, others struggle with low academic performance, poor career choices, and limited opportunities for advancement in life. If maternal education serves as a foundational pillar for shaping these outcomes, then understanding its influence is therefore crucial to all education stakeholders. It is on the basis of this that the study investigated the influence of mother's level of education on the life achievement of children in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of educational attainment among mothers in Edo South Senatorial District?
2. What strategies do educated mothers employ to enhance their children's performance in school in Edo South Senatorial District?

3. Is there a relationship between mothers' level of education and their children's life achievement in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State?
4. Does a mother's level of education influences the number of children she is likely to have in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State?

Research Hypotheses

The research questions 3 and 4 were reformulated into the following hypotheses and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between mothers' level of education and their children's life achievement in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State.

H₀₂: A mother's level of education does not significantly influence the number of children she is likely to have in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationship between mothers' educational attainment and their children's life achievements, specifically in terms of educational attainment and occupational or occupational aspirations.

The target population for this study comprised all mothers residing in Edo South Senatorial District who have at least one child that has completed tertiary education programme within the last 15 years. This target population selection allowed the researcher to comprehensively assess the children's educational attainment as well as and their current occupational or career status. The sample size of the study was a total of 120 mothers drawn from four Local Government Areas in Edo South Senatorial District namely: Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Egor, and Ovia North-East. These mothers are purposively selected because they have at least one child who completed a tertiary education programme school between 2010 and 2024 (i.e., within the past 15 years). This selection enabled the study to effectively explore the link between maternal education and long-term life achievement of their children. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample as follows: At the first stage, the four selected LGAs are stratified to ensure equitable representation from different parts of Edo South. At the second stage, 2 communities were randomly selected in each LGA, yielding a total of 8 communities across the four LGAs. At the third and final stage, a purposive sampling was used to select 15 mothers from each of the 8 communities based on the following inclusion criteria:

- The mother must currently reside in the selected community
- Must have a child who has completed tertiary education programme within the past 15 years
- Must be available and willing to provide responses regarding their educational background and the current life achievements of their child.

To ensure content and face validity, the instrument was reviewed by three experts in adult education, educational psychology, measurement and evaluation. Ambiguities and irrelevant items were revised or eliminated. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test involving 15 mother-child pairs from a neighbouring senatorial district (Edo Central). The test-retest method was adopted and it produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.73 which confirmed the instrument's stability. The data were collected by the researcher in company of three other trained research assistants who visited or reach out to the sampled mothers and administer the questionnaires in person. The respondents received clear explanations, and informed consent was obtained. The process lasted approximately four weeks. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, using a criterion mean of 2.50 for decision making. The null hypotheses one (H₀₁) and two (H₀₂) were tested using Pearson's r. All null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

RESULTS

The data collected were analysed based on the two (2) Research Questions that were answered and the two (2) Hypotheses tested. The results are systematically presented in tables and discussed.

Research Question 1: What are the levels of educational attainment among mothers in Edo South Senatorial District?

To address this research question, data on the highest level of education attained by mothers in Edo South Senatorial District were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Mothers by Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
NCE/OND or equivalent	17	14.2%
HND/B.Sc/B.A or equivalent	74	61.7%
M.Sc/M.A/PGD	18	15.0%
Ph.D	9	7.5%
Total	120	100%

Source: Survey Data, 2025

The results in Table 1 showed that the majority of the mothers (61.7%) possess HND, B.Sc, B.A or their equivalent. This was followed by 15.0% who either hold a Master's degree (M.Sc/M.A) or a Postgraduate Diploma (PGD), and 14.2% who possess NCE, OND, or an equivalent qualification. It was also found in the survey that a smaller proportion (7.5%) of the mothers have attained a Ph.D. From the foregoing data, it was concluded that a large proportion of mothers in Edo South Senatorial District have attained tertiary education. This result suggests a relatively high educational profile among mothers in Edo South Senatorial District.

Research Question 2: How does a mother's educational attainment influence the child's learning environment in Edo South Senatorial District?

To answer this research question, four broad categories of strategies were measured, namely: Educational Support, Social Support, Financial Support, and Emotional/Psychological Support. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Strategies Educated Mothers Employ to Enhance their Children's Performance in School

S/N	Measured Variable	Number of Items	Mean Score	Remark
1	Educational Support	6	3.10	Accepted
2	Social Support	5	2.94	Accepted
3	Financial Support	5	3.09	Accepted
4	Emotional/Psychological Support	4	2.73	Accepted
	Weighted Mean Score		2.96	Accepted

Criterion Mean: 2.50

The results in Table 2 reveal that all four categories of strategies were accepted by the respondents. Specifically, Educational Support had the highest mean score of 3.10, indicating that activities such as assisting children with homework, providing learning materials, and ensuring a conducive home environment are key strategies adopted by educated mothers. Financial Support recorded a mean score of 3.09, showing that mothers also make significant financial investments to promote their children's education. This includes paying for extra lessons, setting aside educational savings, and encouraging access to scholarships or sponsorships.

Furthermore, Social Support, with a mean score of 2.94, suggests that mothers actively participate in school-related activities, engage with teachers, and monitor their children's social circles to support their academic progress. Lastly, Emotional/Psychological Support had a mean score of 2.73, indicating that mothers also play a role in building their children's confidence, discipline, and career guidance, though this category had the lowest mean among the four. With the weighted mean score of 2.96, which is above the benchmark of 2.50, it was therefore concluded that educated mothers in Edo South Senatorial District actively employ a variety of strategies to enhance their children's academic performance.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between mothers' level of education and their children's life achievement in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State.

To test this hypothesis, data were collected on the educational attainment of mothers and the current life achievements of their children who had completed tertiary education within the past 15 years. The mothers' educational levels were classified into four categories, while children's life achievements were coded based on career success indicators provided in the instrument. The data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) to determine the degree of relationship between the two variables. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson's r Analysis of the Relationship between Mothers' Level of Education and Their Children's Life Achievement

Variables	N	Pearson's r	p -value	Decision
Mothers' Level of Education	120	0.62	0.000	Significant
Children's Life Achievement				

Source: SPSS output from survey data, 2025.

$\alpha = 0.05$

The result in Table 3 shows a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.62, which indicates a strong positive relationship between mothers' level of education and their children's life achievement. The p -value obtained is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p -value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This result therefore implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of education attained by mothers and the life achievement of their children in Edo South Senatorial District.

H₀₂: A mother's level of education does not significantly influence the number of children she is likely to have in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State.

To test this hypothesis, data were collected on the mothers' highest educational attainment and the number of children they have. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. The educational attainment of mothers was coded as follows: NCE/OND or equivalent = 1; HND/B.Sc/B.A or equivalent = 2; M.Sc/M.A/PGD = 3 and Ph.D = 4. The number of children was recorded as provided by respondents, with "6 or Above" coded as 6 for analysis purposes. The results of the Pearson's r analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Pearson's r Analysis of the Relationship between Mothers' Level of Education and Number of Children

Variables	N	Pearson's r	p -value	Decision
Mothers' Level of Education	120	-0.48	0.001	Significant
Number of Children				

Source: SPSS output from survey data, 2025.

$\alpha = 0.05$

The result in Table 4 shows a negative Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of -0.48, which indicates a moderate inverse relationship between mothers' level of education and the number of children they have. The negative

value suggests that as the educational attainment of mothers increases, the number of children they have tends to decrease. The p -value obtained is 0.001, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and this implies that a mother's level of education significantly influence the number of children she is likely to have in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of mothers in Edo South Senatorial District possess tertiary education qualifications, with over 84% of respondents holding NCE/OND, HND/B.Sc/B.A, M.Sc/M.A/PGD, or Ph.D degrees. This aligns with Cleland and van Ginneken (2013) when they reported that a mother's level of education significantly shapes her parenting style, decision-making, and the developmental outcomes of her children. The relatively high educational attainment recorded among mothers in this study area may therefore explain, in part, the observed positive life achievements among their children.

The study also established that educated mothers employ a combination of educational, social, financial, and emotional support strategies to enhance their children's academic performance. This finding agrees with the work of Magnuson and Duncan (2016), who argued that mothers with higher education levels are more likely to create intellectually stimulating home environments that facilitate their children's cognitive and academic development. Similarly, Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2010) emphasized that educated mothers are better positioned to assist with school assignments, interact effectively with teachers, and model positive learning behaviours; which are all critical factors in promoting children's academic success.

Furthermore, the significant positive relationship found between mothers' level of education and their children's life achievement further reinforces the well-established link between maternal education and intergenerational mobility. The finding suggests that as mothers attain higher levels of education, their children are more likely to experience success in key life achievement indicators such as educational attainment, occupational status, and socio-economic well-being. This finding echoes the conclusion of Glewwe and Muralidharan (2016), who reported that children of educated mothers are more likely to remain in school, avoid early marriage, and aspire to greater accomplishments in life. The findings of the study is also consistent with the position of Ermisch and Pronzato (2017), who found that maternal education has a statistically significant impact on children's cognitive development and educational progression, even when controlling for household income and paternal education. Furthermore, Okpala and Ogbuanya (2019) found a similar trend, revealing that children whose mothers possess higher education levels exhibit better academic performance and are more likely to transition successfully into adulthood.

Finally, the study established a significant inverse relationship between mothers' educational attainment and family size. This finding has provided additional empirical support to existing research on the role of maternal education in fertility behaviour. This finding agrees with UNESCO (2016) which highlighted this relationship, noting that maternal education is often associated with improved knowledge and utilization of family planning methods, reduced fertility rates, and better child health outcomes. Similarly, the Global Action for Children Report (2002) emphasized that women with formal education are more likely to make informed reproductive decisions, seek medical care, and ensure improved sanitation and health practices for their families. In addition, the findings resonate with Ballara's (2005) assertion that the higher the educational level of the mother, the more effectively she can transmit knowledge, values, and attitudes to her children, which ultimately contributes to their better quality of life. The inverse relationship between maternal education and family size, therefore, not only reflects informed reproductive decisions but also creates a conducive environment for investing more resources including time, finances, and emotional support into fewer children, thereby enhancing their life achievements.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that maternal education is a critical determinant of children's educational, occupational, and overall life achievements. Therefore, the impact of maternal education goes beyond academic success; it extends to family well-being, socio-economic advancement, and intergenerational development. When women's access to quality education improves, they become more

empowered and serve as a strategic investment in the human capital development of children, families, and the society at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are hereby made based on the findings from this study:

- Given that a significant proportion of mothers in the study area have attained tertiary education, efforts should be intensified to sustain and improve this trend. Therefore, the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should implement targeted scholarship schemes, adult literacy programmes, and community sensitization campaigns aimed at encouraging more women, especially those in rural or underserved communities, to pursue formal education beyond the basic level.
- To maximize the positive impact of mothers' educational attainment on children's academic performance, schools, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and community groups should organize regular parental empowerment workshops. These workshops should focus on equipping mothers with practical strategies for providing educational, social, financial, and emotional support to their children.
- In view of the significant positive relationship between maternal education and children's life achievement, the Edo State government should incorporate maternal education as a key component in the state-level child development policies.
- Given the significant inverse relationship between mothers' level of education and the number of children they are likely to have, reproductive health and family planning education should be further integrated into existing educational and community development programmes. In addition, access to affordable reproductive health services should also be expanded, especially in rural and low-income areas.
- Community leaders, religious organizations, and civil society groups should collaborate to promote widespread awareness of the long-term benefits of maternal education for child development and societal advancement. Public campaigns should emphasize how educated mothers contribute to better-educated, healthier, and more successful children.
- In addition to educational interventions, economic empowerment programmes such as skill acquisition schemes, micro-credit facilities, and entrepreneurship training should be provided for mothers. This is because, financially empowered mothers are better positioned to invest in their children's education, health, and wellbeing.

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