



**FAMILY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AS A PREDICTOR ON THE
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUPILS WITH LEARNING
DISABILITIES IN THE BUEA MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH WEST
REGION OF CAMEROON**

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Abstract

The study investigated “Family socio-economic status as a predictor on the academic performance of pupils with learning disabilities in the Buea Municipality, South West Region of Cameroon.”. Twenty (50) pupils were sampled across schools in the municipality and 12 teachers were interviewed to get their opinion on the study under investigation. A survey research design was used and the sample of the study emerged through a purposive and convenient sampling techniques. A questionnaire was administered on pupils and an interview guide on their teachers for data collection. The questionnaires were analyzed based on research hypotheses. From the findings, it is obvious that that home socio-economic status acts as a predictor for academic performance for children with learning disabilities. The implication of this is that though parents, teachers and state are aware about the importance of home environment as far as the education of children with learning disabilities is concerned some home factors like the socio-economic factors, parental involvement, parents level of education and home location of the pupils are factors to be looked in to when considering the academic performance of children with learning disabilities. It was recommended that, parents and all the significant others at home should make home environment to be learning stimulatory and study friendly for pupils. Further similar study may be replicated at any other level of Cameroon’s educational system in any part of the country. It is also recommended that schools administrations should involve parents during teacher’s seminars so that they will know how to better help their children at home.

Keywords:

Family Socio-Economic Status, Academic Performance, Pupils, Learning Disabilities Buea, Municipality, South West Region of Cameroon.

Introduction

Success, in an educational institution is measured by academic performance. Over the years, the importance of pupils with learning disabilities doing well in school has become the common concern of parents, legislators, teachers, counselors, and psychologists. Parents devote a lot of resources to their children's education because they believe that good educational attainment will produce a stable future for them. The family background from which the pupils come from is one of the factors that play a very important role in determining his/her level of educational attainment. This article therefore focuses on Family socio-economic status as a predictor on the academic performance of pupils with learning disabilities in the Buea Municipality, South West Region of Cameroon

Background to the Study

The history of learning disabilities can be traced as far back as April 6, 1963, when Professor Sam Kirk and others coined the term learning disabilities at a meeting of parents and professionals in Chicago. The effort began in the elementary schools and was later extended to high schools. It continues to expand today, as more special programs for post-secondary students and adults with disabilities are developed. The study of learning disabilities, however, started long before 1963 (Hammill, 1990; Weiederholt, 1974). During the 1920s and 1930, Samuel Orton, a specialist in neurology, developed theories and remedial reading techniques for children with severe reading problems, whom he called 'dyslexic' and believed to be brain-damaged. In the 1930s, Helen Davidson studied letter reversals-writing some letters [such as b d q and g] back words, a problem consistently observed with many pupils with learning disabilities (Davidson, 1934, 1935). In the 1930s and 40s, Sam Kirk, who worked at the Wayne Country School helped to develop a set of word drills such as A B C D and other teaching procedures he referred to through-out his career. In 1961 he and his colleagues published the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) which sought to identify individual's strengths, weaknesses, learning styles, and learning achievement. This test was used for many years to identify pupils with learning disabilities. Also in the 1960s, Marianne Frostig developed materials designed to improve pupil's visual perception, which is the ability to understand information that is seen. Her notion was that if visual perceptual skills were enhanced, reading abilities would also show improvement (Frostig, 1978).

The 1970s saw the field of learning disabilities embroiled in heated debate, and at the heart of the controversy was what approach for treatment of learning disabilities was most effective. In what was called the 'process/product debate', one group promoted instruction directed at improving pupils perceptual abilities to improve their academic skills (for example explicitly teaching pupils to read) as the best approach. The dispute was resolved when (Hammill& Larsen's (1974) research analysis showed that perceptual approaches were seldom effective in teaching academic skills but direct instruction techniques do not make a difference (Hammill& Larsen, 1974)

Byoung-suk (2012) stated that children need safe, healthy and stimulating environment in which to grow and learn. In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of studies on the empirical aspect of the home influence on the development of children, and trends have emerged which analyze the effects of household structural and dynamic indicators on pupils with learning disabilities (Xia,2010).Result shows that home socio-economic level (Dear, McCartney& Taylor,2009, Gil,2011,Liuand Lu,2008; Part,2008), its typology characteristic

(Burnett &Farkas, 2003; Gennetian,2005),a suitable home environment (Barkauskiene,2009;Bodovski and Youn,2010;Campbelland Berne ,2007;Ghazarian& Buehler,2010;Khan,Haynes, Armstrong, and Ronher,2010), parents positive outlook on education, their active involvement in it (Fiouri& Dumas, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

For most children, interior of the home and its immediate surrounding are the first environment they are exposed to throughout their early years. This is because young children, spend a majority of their time in the home surrounded by all environmental factors. It has been noted from literature review that the home environment of children with learning disabilities has not been taken into cognizant for the past years especially in developing countries including Cameroon as such children with learning disabilities are often seen left behind as their peers continue in education. This can be due to the poor financial status of some parents, which makes children with learning disabilities often see themselves as children who cannot achieve as their peers in education. It is against this backdrop that the researcher seeks to investigate the impact of family socio-economic status on the academic performance of children with learning disabilities.

Research Objective

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which family socio-economic status act as a predictor on the academic performance for pupils with learning disabilities in the Buea Municipality, South West Region of Cameroon

Research Hypothesis

H₀; There is no significant relationship between the family socio-economic status and academic performance for children with learning disabilities.

H_a; There is a significant relationship between the family socio-economic status and academic performance for children with learning disabilities

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are of great importance to the policy makers, curriculum planners, special educators and children with learning disabilities.

Policy makers Curriculum planners and special educators may use information from this study to provide quality guidance in making appropriate guides for teaching for teaching children with learning disabilities. It will also be of great importance to the teachers and parents as they are informed on the type of cooperation, for example, follow up of children after school by parents that need to exist among the teachers and parents of children with learning disabilities before they can achieve academic success in school.

Findings of this study have added knowledge to existing literature in this area of the study. This study also serves as a reference document for future researchers in this area. This work has also enriched the knowledge base of special educators in providing the needed guidance in teaching children with learning disabilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Learning Disabilities

Learning disability is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulty in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems of self-regulatory behavior, social perception and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities, but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other impairment conditions (for example sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the results of these conditions or influences (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, NJCLD, 1988, 1993).

Similarly, Hammill, (1990) has put the concept of learning disability (Learning disabilities that can affect reading are more prevalent than people think. In an article by the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities, this fact was addressed along with why it is important that every parent and educator become aware of the symptoms, effects on reading and necessary intervention for certain learning disabilities. Becoming aware of the warning signs of learning disabilities and getting children the necessary help early on can be key to a child's future. Learning disabilities affect one in seven people according to the National Institutes of Health. Parents, therefore, need to be familiar with the early indicators of a learning disability in order to get the right help as soon as possible. Both dyscalculia and dyslexia are serious public health concern. This is because Dyscalculia is a disability which which affects the child's ability to understand mathematics which is very vital in the society and Dyslexia which affects the child's ability to read. Without help, children with learning disabilities could develop persistent problems with learning. Although most children with learning disabilities grow up to be productive citizens, left untreated these conditions have been associated with a higher risk for mental illness, social and emotional problems, behavior problems at school, and time in prison.

Children with dyslexia generally have trouble with phonological processing that is, using Phonological information, especially the sound structure of oral language, in processing written and oral language. Recently, brain imaging studies have demonstrated albino logical basis to this difficulty. During reading exercises, good readers show activity in three areas on the left side of the brain. In dyslexic readers, there is much less activity into of these three areas. There is strong evidence that both environmental and genetic factors affect the likelihood that a child will develop dyslexia. Environmental influences can include the complexity of the orthography of the language being learned as well as reduced stimulation experienced by children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The influence of genetics on the risk for dyslexia has been made clear in studies demonstrating that children with parents, siblings, or other close relatives who have dyslexia are at dramatically increased risk of developing the condition themselves.

Concept of Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to the ability of students to study, remember facts and be able to communicate their knowledge verbally or through writing (Mwaniki, 2012). In other words, academic performance refers to how learners deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers. Academic performance refers to

how well a learner is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies (Scott, 2012). Grades are certainly the most well-known indicator of academic performance. Grades are the student's "score" for their classes and overall tenure. Grades are most often a tallying or average of assignment and test scores and may often be affected by factors such as attendance and an instructor opinion of the learner as well. Grading systems vary greatly by country and school, common scales include a percentage form 1-100, lettering systems from A-F, and grade point averages (GPA) from 0-4.0 or above.

According to Ward, Stocker and Murray-Ward in Erickson (2011), academic performance refers to the outcome of education; the extent to which the student, teacher or institution have achieved their educational goals. Academic performance is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate one's knowledge verbally or written on paper (Answers, 2010). It refers to a person's performance in a given academic area (e.g. reading or language arts, mathematics, basic science) and other areas of human learning. Academic performance relates to academic subjects a child studies in school and the skills the child is expected to master in each (Kathryn, 2010). It refers to excellence in all academic discipline, in a class as well as extra-curricular activities. It includes excellence in sporting behaviour, confidence, communication skills, and others.

Academic performance as measured by the GPA (grade point average) or by standardized assessments designed for selection purpose such as the SAT Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) determines whether a student will have the opportunity to continue his or her education (e.g., to attend a university). Therefore, it defines whether one can take part in higher education, and based on the educational degrees one attains, influences one's vocational career after education. Besides the relevance for an individual, academic achievement is of utmost importance for the wealth of a nation and its prosperity.

The strong association between a societies' level of academic performance and positive socioeconomic development is one reason for conducting international studies on academic performance, such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) administered by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The results of these studies provide information about different indicators of a nation's academic performance; such information is used to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a nation's educational system and to guide educational policy or decision. Given the individual and societal importance of academic performance, it is not surprising that academic performance is the research focus of many scientists; for example, in psychology or educational disciplines.

Family Socio-economic Status (SES) and academic performance of pupils with learning disabilities

Socio-economic status is a term that describes variations among people based on income, family background and relative prestige in society (Sadker & Sadker, 1991). It also refers to grouping of people according to their occupation, level of education and income (Dehart, Sroufe & Cooper, 2000). In the Western world, more paying prestigious jobs such as medicine and engineering are more likely to be done by the upper- or middle-class people- the majority of which are white. On the other hand, the less prestigious or menial jobs that are less paying are likely to be done by the lower class or the working-class people (Bowes, Gleeson & Smith, 1990). By implication, the working classes are the low-income earners while the middle and

upper or high class are the high income earners. Because the high and middle class are rich, and can pay for educational facilities, they tend to be the more educated in society while the working class, who cannot afford to pay for better schools remain at the lower side of the educational ladder.

Several researchers have investigated how SES of parents' influence children's educational attainment and found that parents' income, occupation, and level of education are related as far as educational attainment is concerned. They affect children's education directly or indirectly (Dehart, Sroufe & Cooper, 2000). Children may be directly affected when members of low-income families are not able to acquire basic needs such as good housing and health care, Dehart and others assert. Children may also be affected indirectly through their parents' behaviour. A low-income parent is likely to be stressed by hardships of poverty or job loss to the extent that the quality of childcare may be reduced. The effects of parental childcare can possibly be reflected in students' motivation to learn as such their academic achievements.

According to Kozol (1991) cited in Zinn and Eitzen (1999), it is affirmed that underachieving is a likely consequence of poverty. Also, Johnson et al. (1991), concludes that there is strong evidence that poor children who are likely to be hungry, ill house and unhealthy, will not do as well as their privileged peers in school. On the contrary, Ogbu (1974) investigated the high rate of failures in a study done on the minority culture of Burgher-siders (Black and Mexican-American), and found that these failures were attributed more to, social background than to poverty, (Bern, (1989).

Children from lower class background are often identified as slow learners. In a study conducted by Hess and Shipman (1965); Scar et al. (1983), comparing the relative intelligence of children from low status and high status homes, those from high status homes scored higher on IQ (intelligent quotient) tests than did children from low status homes.

Also, Hess and Shipman (1964) observed that in poverty-stricken homes (low socio-economic homes), parents lack good child care techniques which can motivate the children to learn. Mothers, as they observed, were often inattentive and unresponsive to the child, used impoverished languages, tended to lack self-confidence, were disorganized in the way the home was run and functioned quite often at the preoperational stage of development. This is a likely impediment to academic achievement.

In a further comprehensive study of all graduating seniors in Wisconsin's public school and private high schools, Little (1967) observed that children from lower socio-economic homes had significantly lower motivation and aspirations for further academic achievements than those of rich homes. It has been observed that generally, children from rich homes, who receive sound encouragement and motivation from their parents, often take their academic work seriously and are generally identified as fast learners. Such children often become ideal students and impress their teachers and parents. Money can be seen therefore to make a difference in children's educational attainment. Coleman's (1966) comprehensive studies reveal that the socio-economic status of parents is a significant determinant of children's academic achievement. As Coleman (1966) observes, the home environment which is generally affected by the family's socio-economic status helps mold the cognitive skills valuable in schools. Students from "culturally rich" homes, for example, those with many books tend to be more oriented than students from "culturally deprived" homes, he said.

Sewell (1991) holds that the average high-status child stays in school longer and does better while there, than the average low status child. Sewell (1991) followed the fortunes of some randomly selected school pupils for fourteen years. He divided his sample into four groups based on the SES of the pupils and found that those in the highest group were four times more likely to attend college and six times more likely to have a lower average in educational achievement. This is explained by the fact that race and class overlap in the U.S. In a similar way, it is probable that students within the Limbe municipality could score either low or high, depending on their family background (that is, the parents' SES).

Harwood and others (2002) cited in Santrock (2004) state that ethnic minority parents are less educated and are more likely to be low-income earners than their white counterparts. Educated parents who have experienced what their children are going through, stand a better chance of guiding and motivating their children in school work more than the uneducated parents. All these are as a result of poverty. Poverty could be regarded as the most common primary and contributory reason for many children to be out of school. Glewwe, (2010) call poverty, a plausible explanation of school disruption.

In African traditional societies including the study area, several studies indicated that the children's schooling has been found to have links with socio-economic factors. According to Barrera-Osorio et al., (2008) the most important of these factors include; direct and opportunity costs of schooling, limited employment opportunities, lower socio-economic status, parental and family investment behavior, rural and urban residence, and the level of parental education. The major reasons parents offer for not educating their children or for removing them from school are no more than the fees for registration and admission, examination, Parent Teachers Association (PTA) fees, the cost of books and uniforms, the provision of other daily monetary demands to their children, and the cost of transportation to and from the school on daily basis.

However, some lower-class children aspire to and achieve high-level educational and occupational goals despite the limitations imposed on them by their social-class origins. This suggests that not only do some lower-status families allocate their limited resources disproportionately to higher education, but they also socialize their children to high levels of aspiration and achievement. As impoverished as minority families would be, some ethnic minority families still manage to raise competent children, Harwood et al. (2002) reiterate. This brings hope to other poor societies who believe that they can equally make it despite all odds. From all that has been said, it can be seen that socio-economic status whether high or low, is likely to make a difference in children's academic progress. Taking this into consideration, it can be said that children from high socio-economic backgrounds who receive maximum attention, encouragement and motivation from parents are likely to perform better academically than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Theoretical Review

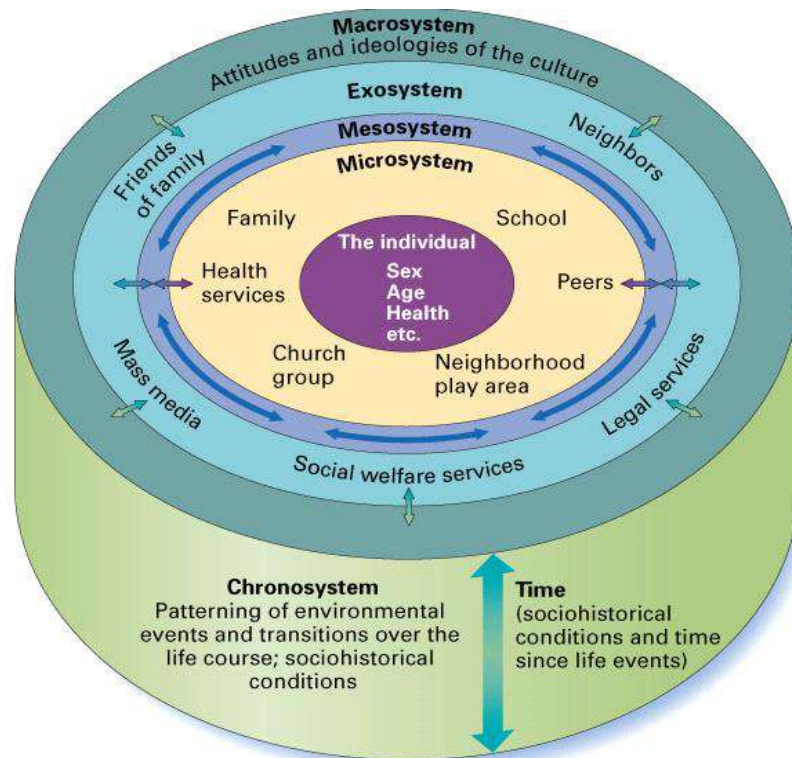
Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, and 1992) encourages researchers to study the changing relations between children and the environment in which they live. Bronfenbrenner's theory deals with the ecology of child development or the environmental systems that affect the way children develop. He believes that the interactions between a child and its family are the main focus of human development. Bronfenbrenner proposed five major types of environmental systems and has increasingly given attention to the microsystem as an important environmental

system which impacts greatly on children's development. According to the ecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate micro system break down, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of his environment.

The Five Types of Environmental Systems

Bronfenbrenner's five different environments are summarized in figure one below.



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Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development, showing the Microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem.

Source: Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) Context of Child Rearing: Problems and Prospects. P. 34, 844, 850

Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner distinguishes five levels of children's environment. The lowest and most important of Bronfenbrenner's levels, the microsystem, is the small, immediate environment in which the child lives. Children's microsystems will include any immediate relationships or organizations they interact with, such as their immediate family or care givers, their peers in school, etc. How these groups interact with the child will have an effect on how the child grows; the more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and places are, the better the child will be able to grow. Furthermore, how the child acts or reacts to these people in the microsystem will affect how they treat her in return. Each child's special generic and biologically influenced personality traits, what is known as temperament, end up affecting how others treat them. The microsystem deals partly to the setting for a child's behaviour and partly to the activities, participants, and roles in that setting. For instance, one micro system might include a backyard in which a 7 year old girl is throwing a ball with her 9 year old brother. The microsystem has a specific setting (the backyard) with specific participants (two siblings) in specific roles (playing

ball). For Bronfenbrenner, the child is not a passive recipient of experiences in these settings, but is someone who reciprocally interacts with others and helps to construct the settings.

Mesosystem

The next level of Bronfenbrenner's ethological theory is the mesosystem which involves linkages between Microsystems. It describes how the different parts of the child's microsystem work together for the sake of the child. It is defined by the connections among micro systems. In other words, the mesosystem reflects the relations among the various settings in which children spend their time. For many children, the mesosystem includes the links between homes, school or child care center, neighbourhood, church, athletic teams or other extra-curricular activities. All these subsystems play a vital role in the child's development. For example, if a child's care givers take an active role in a child's school, such as going for Parent Teacher meetings (P. T. A.) and watching the child play, this will help ensure the child's overall growth. In contrast, if the child's care takers disagree how to best raise the child and give the child conflicting lessons when they see him or her, this will hinder the child's growth in different channels.

Exosystem

The third level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, the exosystem ; includes settings that children do not enter but that affect them indirectly such as the parents' work places, extended family members, etc. For example, if a child's parent gets laid off from work that may have negative affects on the child if her parents are unable to pay rent or her school fees. On the other hand, if her parent receives a promotion and a raise of salary at work, this may have a positive affect on the child because her parents will be better able to provide her with her needs. Exosystem influences also include those of television, radio, and other mass media. Few children contribute directly to the content of mass media programs, but all children are affected by the programmes that they watch or hear.

Macrosystem

According to (Goodlad, 1984; Stevenson, 1992) quoted in Berndt (1997), the most global level of the environment is the macrosystem. It is the largest and most remote set of people and things to a child but which still has a great influence over the child. It refers to the consistencies in the systems at lower levels across an entire society or culture and includes freedom permitted by the national government, cultural values, customs, traditions, wars, etc. For example, schools are similar in their structure and operation throughout Cameroon, but Cameroon schools are different from those in other countries. The similarities in social institutions like schools partly define the macrosystem.

In addition, (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) affirms that the macro system includes the values and beliefs that accompany and maintain the similarities in social institutions. In Cameroon, values and beliefs differ among people who differ in social class and ethnicity. They also differ among people who live in cities and rural areas. People in each of these groups can be viewed as living in somewhat different macro system.

Chronosystem

The final level of Bronfenbrenner's model deals with variations not in space or extent but in time. The chronosystem refers to the patterns of stability and changes in children's environment over time. As children grow older, they typically move from preschool to elementary schools and so on. Many children also experience changes in the home environment when their mother has a new baby or an older sibling leaves home. Such life transitions must be considered in the ecological model because children can be affected not only by their current environment but also by a change in environments.

Bronfenbrenner's theory has recently been renamed "the Bioecological systems theory" to emphasize that a child's own biology is a primary environment fueling her development. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his development. Changes or conflicts in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. To study a child's development then, we must look not only at the child and his immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well. This theory is significant to the study in that it contextualizes human development and shows a variety of influences on the development of children in different ethno-cultural settings.

Bronfenbrenner (1992) does not only state that children are greatly influenced by their environments, but he also assumes that children play an active rather than a passive role in their own development. In short, Bronfenbrenner asserts that both nature and nurture have significant effects on development. More than any other theorist, Bronfenbrenner's (1992) argument is in favour of cultural specificity in development. His theory considers the differences between geographically separated cultures like those of Cameroon and India, and those among ethnic groups in one country. He expects the aspects of a culture that define a macro system to influence the characteristics of other ecological systems. Therefore, he believes researchers should take as their highest goal the understanding of children's development in specific social and cultural contexts (Berndt, 1997).

As far as the present study is concerned, it is obvious that the family background from which children emanate have very important roles to play in their education. Children from stable family backgrounds like those whose parents are financially stable and assist the children with school needs are most likely to develop a positive attitude towards school, do well in their academics and also view life from a positive perspective than children who emerge from unstable homes. As such, parents have the paramount responsibility to assist their children in whichever way they can to help them reach their goals and aspirations.

Theory of hierarchy of Needs by Maslow (1943)

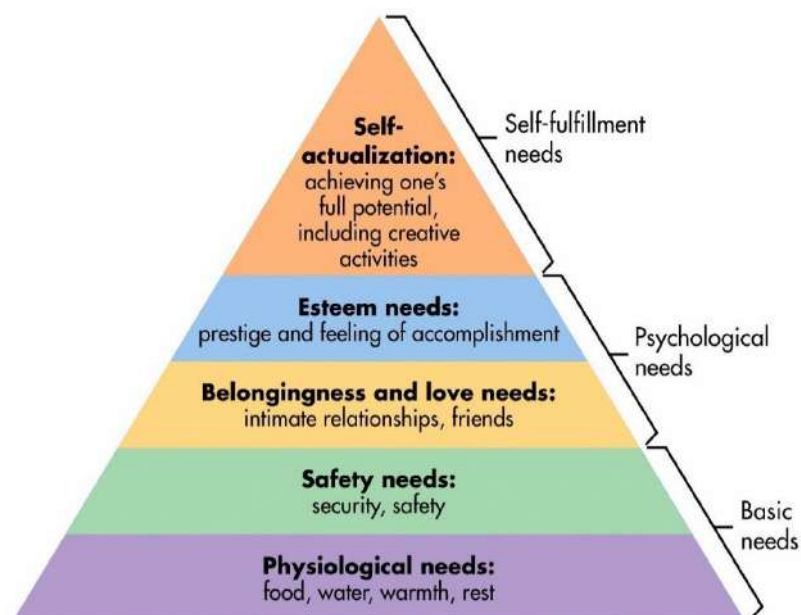
Maslow (1943) proposed that healthy human beings have a certain number of needs, and that these needs are arranged in a hierarchy, with some needs (such as physiological and safety needs) being more primitive or basic than others (such as social and ego needs). Maslow's so-called hierarchy of needs is often presented as a five-level pyramid, with higher needs coming into focus only once lower, more basic needs are met. Maslow's so-called hierarchy of needs is often presented as a five-level pyramid, with higher needs coming into focus only once lower, more basic needs are met. Maslow called the bottom four levels of the pyramid 'deficiency needs' because a person does not feel anything if they are met, but becomes anxious if they are

not. Thus, physiological needs such as eating, drinking, and sleeping are deficiency needs, as are safety needs, social needs such as friendship and sexual intimacy, and ego needs such as self-esteem and recognition. In contrast, Maslow called the fifth level of the pyramid a growth need because it enables a person to self-actualize or reach his fullest potential as a human being.

According to Maslow, the first four needs (physiological, security, belonging, esteem) are often referred to as deficiency needs because they motivate people to act only when they are unmet to some degree. The physiological needs include: pay, food, shelter, clothing, education and comfortable work conditions. Maslow's opinion is that until these needs are satisfied to a degree to maintain life, no other motivating factors can work. Security needs are those needs such as, need to be free from physical danger and of the fear of losing a job, property, food and shelter. It also includes protection against any emotional harm. Belonging or social needs include: need for attention, acceptance and friendship. Esteem needs include the need for recognition, respect, achievement, autonomy, independence etc. Self-actualization, by contrast, is often called a growth need, because people constantly strive to satisfy it. Basically, self-actualization refers to the need for self-fulfillment – the need to develop all of one's potential talents and capabilities. It is the highest in the level of Maslow's need theory and includes: realizing one's full potential of self-development.

According to Maslow, once a need is fulfilled, it is no longer a need. It ceases to motivate employees' behaviour and they are motivated by the need at the next level up the hierarchy. Self-actualization needs would automatically be activated as soon as esteem needs were met, but he changed his mind when he encountered individuals whose behaviour did not fit this pattern. He concluded that individuals whose self-actualization needs become activated held his high regard such values as truth, goodness, beauty, justice, autonomy, and humour.

According to Eke (2003), he stated that Maslow believes that, once a person has met his deficiency needs, he can turn his attention to self-actualization; however, only small minorities of people are able to self-actualize because self-actualization requires uncommon qualities such as honesty, independence, awareness, objectivity, creativity, and originality. However, these needs can be arranged as follows.



Physiological needs

Physiological needs are the physical requirements for human survival. If these requirements are not met, the human body cannot function properly and will ultimately fail. Physiological needs are thought to be the most important; they should be met first. Air, water, and food are metabolic requirements for survival in all animals, including humans.

Safety needs

With their physical needs relatively satisfied, the individual's safety needs take precedence and dominate behavior. In the absence of physical safety due to war, natural disaster, family violence, childhood abuse, etc. people may experience post-traumatic stress disorder or trans-generational trauma. In the absence of economic safety—due to economic crisis and lack of work opportunities – these safety needs manifest themselves in ways such as a preference for job security, grievance procedures for protecting the individual from unilateral authority, savings accounts, insurance policies, reasonable disability accommodations, etc. This level is more likely to be found in children because they generally have a greater need to feel safe. Safety and Security needs include: Personal security, financial security, Health and well-being, Safety net against accidents/illness and their adverse impacts.

Love and belonging

After physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the third level of human needs is interpersonal and involves feelings of belongingness. This need is especially strong in childhood and can override the need for safety as witnessed in children who cling to abusive parents. Deficiencies within this level of Maslow's hierarchy – due to hospitalize, neglect, shunning, ostracism, etc. – can impact the individual's ability to form and maintain emotionally significant relationships in general, such as, friendship, Intimacy Family.

According to Maslow, humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance among their social groups, regardless whether these groups are large or small. For example, some large social groups may include clubs, co-workers, religious groups, professional organizations, sports teams, and gangs. Some examples of small social connections include family members, intimate partners, mentors, colleagues, and confidants. Humans need to love and be loved – both sexually and non-sexually—by others. Many people become susceptible to loneliness, social anxiety, and clinical depression in the absence of this love or belonging element. This need for belonging may overcome the physiological and security needs, depending on the strength of the peer pressure (Shawn & Dag, 2000).

Self esteem

According Mikua (2012) Maslow believes that humans have a need to feel respected; this includes the need to have self-esteem and self-respect. Esteem presents the typical human desire to be accepted and valued by others. People often engage in a profession or hobby to gain recognition. These activities give the person a sense of contribution or value. Low self-esteem or an inferiority complex may result from imbalances during this level in the hierarchy. People with low self-esteem often need respect from others; they may feel the need to seek fame or glory. However, fame or glory will not help the person to build their self-esteem until they accept who they are internally. Psychological imbalances such as depression can hinder the person from obtaining a higher level of self-esteem or self-respect.

Most people have a need for stable self-respect and self-esteem. Maslow noted two versions of esteem needs: a "lower" version and a "higher" version. The "lower" version of esteem is the need for respect from others. This may include a need for status, recognition, fame, prestige, and attention. The "higher" version manifests itself as the need for self-respect. For example, the person may have a need for strength, competence, mastery, self-confidence, independence, and freedom. This "higher" version takes precedence over the "lower" version because it relies on an inner competence established through experience. Deprivation of these needs may lead to an inferiority complex, weakness, and helplessness (Falk, 2001).

Self-actualization

“What a man can be, he must be.” This quotation forms the basis of the perceived need for self-actualization. This level of need refers to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential. Maslow describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, to become the most that one can be. Individuals may perceive or focus on this need very specifically. For example, one individual may have the strong desire to become an ideal parent. In another, the desire may be expressed athletically. For others, it may be expressed in paintings, pictures, or inventions.

Applying these concepts to the current study, it means that, highly motivated and satisfied pupils can create a good social, psychological and physical climate in the classroom. Exemplary pupils appear able to integrate professional knowledge (being approachable, happy and punctual), and intrapersonal knowledge. Addressing basic physiological needs is still a key concern in today's classroom. Lack of proper nutrition, personal hygiene and even sleep affect many of today's learners.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design used for this study was a survey. Survey research collected data from a few people or items considered to be a representative of the entire group. It is an ex-post factor correlation survey, because the study involved seeking opinion of the pupils in their natural setting and correlating the finding with pupils' performances in school.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study consisted of fifty (50) pupils with learning disabilities aged between 7-12 years. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the schools and the classes that constituted the target and accessible population respectively. Fraenkel and Norman (2000), define purposive sampling as a technique in which the researcher assumes that he/she can use his/her knowledge of the population to judge whether or not a particular sample will be representative of the study. This is done based on a previous knowledge of a population and the specific purpose of the research. In this type of technique therefore, personal judgment is used to select a sample. This method was chosen because the researcher could only work with children with learning disabilities and therefore identified Government Practicing Primary School Molyko, Redeemer International Primary School and Catholic School Molyko. Classes four and five were also selected purposively firstly because it is at these classes that words building are completely mastered. Secondly, remediation programs implemented at this level will be effective if these pupils are identified.

The pupils used were gotten by checking their birth certificates in schools in order to get the pupils who were at the age 7-12 years. This was because at these ages the children who could not reason like their peers. Using documented literature on learning disabilities as well as the experience gotten from practicum and with the assistance of their class teachers the researcher also checked their note books which comprises of their writing books, spelling, mathematics and understanding and response books, and also their first and second term results through the reading exercises spellings mathematical test. This was done after the researcher had observed the pupils for some weeks. Thus, a purposive sampling technique was used as only those selected by the class teachers and the researcher were involved. Thus, those who had difficulties in these areas and were below average during the first and second term examination were said to be pupils having learning disabilities.

Table 1; Distribution of sampled school

Schools	Frequency	Percentage of pupils per school
GPS Molyko	6	12.0
Redeemers International Primary School	17	34.0
Catholic School Molyko	27	54.0
Total	50	100.0

Three schools were sampled for the study among which Redeemers International 12.0% (6) a lay private school, Catholic School Molyko 34.0% (17) a confessional school and GPS Molyko 54.0% (27) a government school. Percentage represents the percentages of the pupils selected from the three schools that the researcher used. Both the male and the female were well represented in the sample whereby they were (24) 48.0% of the male and (26) 52.0% for the female. Children with learning disability were sampled in class three with a proportion of (4)8.0%, class four (26) 52.0% and class five (20) 40.0% The sample population for parents were 10 in number which were randomly selected from the schools concern on the day the researcher when to the filed to administer her questionnaire the parents who happened in school were interviewed and their responses were taped, which were later on written down by the researcher.

Instruments used for Data Collection

Two instruments were used for data collection in this study. These included a structured questionnaire for pupils and an interview guide for parents of children with learning disabilities.

Questionnaires for pupils

The scale used for the study was developed by the researcher with the aid of literature. This scale matched with the variables under study and answered the research questions. The questionnaire was made up of section A-E. Section A was made up of items on general information and sections B C D and E were measuring the main research variables which where, socioeconomic status of parents of pupils with learning disabilities with seven items, parental involvement of parent of children with learning disabilities with eight items, education level of the parent with seven items and the location of the home of children with learning

disabilities also seven items. The questionnaire items were developed on a four point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Interview guide for parents

The interview guide was designed to gather information from parents in order to get their verbal opinions on how they are involved in their children's education. The guide was based on the construct of the role of parent or their responsibility towards the enhancement of their children's education. The interview guide was structured following the four variables used for the research which were parental socio-economic status with three items, parental involvement, three items, parental level of education three items and the home location which was made up of two items.

Procedure for administration of instruments

Before going to the field the researcher took a letter of authorization from the delegate of CRRRI South West Region of Cameroon indicating that a term of Researcher were conducting a research on parent socio-economic background as a predictor of academic performance of students with learning Disabilities and seeking permission to be allowed to work with the pupils in the institutions and equally seeking the collaboration of the school administration and teachers upon showing the letter to the administration. The researchers were asked to submit a copy of the letter and the questionnaire for evaluation was presented. A letter of concern was also given to students and parents. The researcher established a schedule of five weeks for the study. The first two weeks were used to identify the pupils in the school and the parent participants who fitted into the study explaining to them about the study. This did not involve parents whose children were above 12 years and those below 7 years. After the identification process, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the pupils and programs were scheduled to meet with parents individually at their convenience to administer the interview. In the course of administering the questionnaires, the researcher did some explanation in areas where pupils faced difficulties understanding or reading the questionnaires items.

The interview lasted for three weeks. This was because the researcher met them in their homes and thus, she moves from house to house seeking permission and administering the interview to the parents of pupils with learning disabilities who constituted the sample. The interview was face to face where the respondents were interviewed and questions explained in case of difficulties understanding them. Face to face administration of the interview was important because it gave room for high return rate and it also supported explanations in areas of difficulties.

Methods of data processing and analysis

Open-ended questionnaire and interview items were analyzed using the process of thematic analysis whereby concepts or ideas were grouped under umbrella terms or key words. As for the quantitative data, a pre-designed EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData Association, Odense Denmark, 2008) database which has in-built consistency and validation checks was used to enter the data. Further consistency, data range and validation checks were also performed in SPSS version 21.0 (IBM Inc., 2012), to identify invalid codes. Data were made essentially of categorical variables and they were analyzed using frequency and proportions and Multiple Response Analysis to aggregate responses within conceptual components. Reliability test was

performed to assess the internal consistency of responses using Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis. Chi-Square test was used to compare proportions for significant difference.

FINDINGS

Table 2: Socio-economic status of family as perceived by children with learning disabilities.

Socio-economic status of family	Agree	Disagree	N
My parents are able to pay my school fees in time	88.0% (44)	12.0% (6)	50
I always go to school with all my books	82.0% (41)	18.0% (9)	50
My home environment is very conducive for me to study	82.0% (41)	18.0% (9)	50
My family structure is such that my parent easily provides me with good health care.	74.0% (37)	26.0% (13)	50
My parents' social status in the society is such that they constantly instruct me on how to study.	66.0% (33)	43.0% (17)	50
My parent's culture of reading and studying has been inculcated in me	64.0%(32)	36.0% (18)	50
My parents level of education has greatly influenced my studies in school.	58.0% (29)	42.0% (21)	50
MRS	73.4%(257)	26.6%(93)	350

In aggregate, a greater majority of children with learning disabilities with a proportion of 73.4% (257) agreed to the characteristics of socio-economic factors as being influential on their academic performance. In detail, 88.0% (44) agreed that their parents are able to pay their school fees on time, 82.0% (41) agreed that they always go to school with all their text books and the same proportion agreed that their home environment is very conducive for them to study. Also, 74.0% (37) of the children agreed that their family structures were such that their parents easily provide them with good health care, 66.0% (33) agreed that their parents' social status in the society is such that they constantly instruct them on how to study, while 64.0% (32) agreed that their parents' culture of reading and studying had been inculcated in them and 58.0% (29) agreed that their parents' level of education had greatly influenced their studies in school.

Research hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the family socio-economic status and academic performance of children with learning disabilities

Table 3: Perceived effect of socio-economic status on academic performance

		Socio-economic status	Academic performance
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.265*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.048
	N	50	50
Academic performance	Correlation Coefficient	-.265	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.063	.
	N	50	50

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

There was a negative and significant correlation between socio-economic status of the family and academic performance ($r=-0.265$; $P=0.048$) therefore implying that the more the socio-economic status of the family was perceived as good, the lower was the academic performance. Parents generally (8/10) pay fees and provide school need for their children (Yes, pay school fees on time and provide school needs'. Two of the parents said they did not engage much in financing the child's education because the child stays away from school ('No child stays away from school'). Hence, the null hypotheses were rejected while the alternative hypotheses were retained.

The results gotten from the interview carried out on parents revealed that parents face several problems as far as educating their children are concerned with one of them being lack of finance. Most of the parents interviewed said they find it difficult in paying their children's school fees and providing them with other school needs. This can be seen in some of the quotations that follows; *"Sometimes there is no fish so there is no money in financing my children's education"* *"The money I earn is not enough to care for all their needs and sometimes the crops don't do well in the farm"*.

"My level of income is unstable and small. Presently, my husband is unemployed so it's difficult for us to pay fees on time"

Inability to provide transport facilities

Parents expressed the fact that the schools their children attend is far so children need transport money of which the parents complained that they face difficulties paying the transport as expressed by one of them *"The school is far so I find it difficult paying their transport fares at times so sometimes they only trek to school"*. Parents also expressed signs of disappointment given the fact that their salaries are always delayed; that is, not paid on time as expressed by two of them: *"The school fees are high and there is late payment of salary"* *"Since I live and depend on pension, at times the money is delayed so it is difficult for me to pay my children's school fees"*.

Parents' views on how they encourage children's learning

It was realized that some parents encourage their children in several ways while others don't as express in the reasons below:

Motivation

Responses gotten from parents showed that they motivate child learning through the provision of gifts of encouragement as some parents' said: *"I give them money to go outings whenever they do well in their studies"* *"I give them money to buy whatever they want and also by give him roasted fish to eat"* Some were of the opinion that they take their children on outings/excursion to encourage learning as quoted by some parents: *"I take them out on picnics and amusement parks to enhance their learning"*. *"I take them to the zoo, amusement park for them to enhance their learning"*.

Discussions

The findings on whether the family socio-economic has an influence on the academic performance of children with learning disabilities revealed that a significant number of pupils accepted that their parent socio-economic factors enable them to pay their school fees bought their text books and also take care of their health during school periods. These findings are in conformity Azikwe (2008), who opined that for pupils to continuously successfully especially those with learning disabilities, basic materials needed by the pupils must not be in short supply. Rthman (2004), also reported that differences in socio-economic background of pupils breed performance gaps. Chopra (1969), of Lucknow University conducted a similar study on the relationship between socio-economic background and performance of pupils in schools. It was realised that high socio-economic group pupils were more significantly higher than those of the pupils from middle and lower socio-economic group.

This finding is also supported by the views of Abraham Maslow (1970), on hierarchy of needs according the needs of human beings are arranged physiological need, safety needs, self-extreme and self-actualization Once children with learning disabilities are provided with all the basic then the result is good performance in academics. Thus, the positive response of the pupils on socio-economic items such as parents' abilities to pay their school fees buy their text books and also provided their health care texts revealed and confirmed Abraham Maslow views that once human need are mate then they can be successful in other areas such as education.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, taking into consideration the results from the three selected schools, and in relevance to other schools in the country, when looking at children with learning disabilities, parents should yearn for higher educational qualification statuses since it will translate into better occupations and higher wages, that is higher socio-economic status, thus better educational choices and offerings can be provided for their children. Again, parents and all the significant others at home should make home environment to be learning stimulatory and study friendly for pupils. Further similar study may be replicated at any other level of Cameroon's educational system in any part of the country. It is also recommended that schools administrations should involve parents during teacher's seminars so that they will know how to better help their children at home.

It is recommended that to enable pupils with learning disabilities to be productive in society and become inclusive, all stakeholders must forge ahead to put forward policies and logistics towards gratifying the needs of pupils with learning disabilities.

Special teachers in the area of learning disabilities should be trained and recruited in schools so that these children can be given enough time and individualized teaching in their classrooms and follow up at home at home. In addition, enough learning tools such as text books good health care provisions both in schools and at home must be taken in to consideration.

From the study findings, it was realized that these pupils like any other normal child needs follow up after school to master skills but it should be noted that just as parents often help their gifted and average children to learn at home, most parents and caregivers are unable to read and cannot readily offer the same types of support at home to children with learning disabilities. Helping parents participate in their children's own reading and writing by encouraging them to be involved in their children education by helping them at home after school.

The government and other organisations in charge of the education of learners with learning disabilities should try to provide teachers with adequate instructional materials suitable for the adaptation to the varying needs of the learners for example text books, I T C braille.

Also, the government, and the educational system of Cameroon should come out with a standard learning grade that the learners must master to fully and effectively learn. The existing laws and policies in regard to the education of children with learning disabilities should also be reviewed in relation to the standards laid by the governing authorities.

Conclusion

From the findings, it is obvious that that home socio-economic status acts as a predictor for academic performance for children with learning disabilities. The implication of this is that though parents, teachers and state are aware about the importance of home environment as far as the education of children with learning disabilities is concerned some home factors like the socio-economic factors, parental involvement, parents level of education and home location of the pupils are factors to be looked in to when considering the academic performance of children with learning disabilities.

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