



Access and Equity: The Relationship Between Parent's Socioeconomic Status and Secondary School Student's Academic Achievement

Randhir Parkash Raj

Vice Principal, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji, rprrlyn@gmail.com

Satish Prakash Chand

Asst. Prof., College of Humanities & Education, Fiji National University, Fiji, satish.chand@fnu.ac.fj

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of socioeconomic status on the academic achievement of students at a rural secondary school in Fiji. The research employed a mixed-methods design. This study included participation of 21 teachers, 117 students, and 32 parents. Quantitative data were collected through the use of a questionnaire, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and observations. The findings of the study revealed that parent education level and occupation have a negligible effect on students' academic performance in school. It has also been established that the home environment and family income have a significant impact on the student's academic achievement. The study suggests that in order to improve students' academic performance, parents and teachers should continuously monitor their children's work, improve their discipline, create a conducive learning environment at home, become more involved in their children's learning process, and implement a variety of teaching strategies.

Keywords: socioeconomic status, academic achievement, access and equity, quality education, education

INTRODUCTION

Access and equity in education refer to the provision of equal opportunities to all students, regardless of socioeconomic standing, race, or physical or mental disability. Both principles affect the education of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between socioeconomic background and children's academic achievement (Cedeno, et al., 2016; Gobena, 2018; Li & Qiu, 2018; Memon, et al., 2010; Muchunku, 2008; Okiogo, 2013; Rodriguez-Hernández, et al., 2020; Tomul & Polat, 2013; Yinusa & Basil, 2008). These studies have consistently found that a nation's development is contingent upon the quality of education provided to its citizens, and that socioeconomic background predicts academic achievement in schools. In Fiji, one of the seven educational

Citation: Raj, R. P., & Chand, S. P. (2023). Access and equity: The relationship between parent's socioeconomic status and secondary school student's academic achievement. *International Journal of Instruction*, 16(3), 1013-1032. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2023.16354a>

principles of the Ministry of Education, Heritage, and the Arts [MEHA] is access and equity (MEHA, 2004). In an effort to increase access to quality education, the Fijian government has provided competent teachers, minimised the teacher-student ratio in classrooms, provided free education and free textbooks to subsidise the cost of education, implemented a number of educational policies, and paid for students' transportation to school (MEHA, 2016). The government is also committed to providing equitable resources to increase access, retention, and completion rates for all students, regardless of gender, ethnicity, culture, geographic location, or socioeconomic status (ibid). While significant effort has been made to improve access and equity, the students' academic achievement continues to be a concern for the majority of teachers, parents, and stakeholders. To understand this phenomenon, this study examines the effects of socioeconomic status on the students' academic achievement in a rural Fijian secondary school. The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the relationship between the socioeconomic status of parents and the academic achievement of students of a rural secondary school in Fiji?
2. What social factors influence the academic performance of students in a rural secondary school in Fiji?
3. What economic factors influence the academic performance of students in a rural secondary school in Fiji?
4. What steps can be taken to improve the academic performance of secondary school students?

Literature Review

Education and Issues of Low Socioeconomic Background

Family is the most important unrestrained structure affecting the education of the children (Cetin & Taskin, 2016). Studies show that even though parents expect a lot from their children, it is the family' socioeconomic status that has an impact on children's academic achievement (Li & Qiu, 2018). Family uses their socioeconomic resources to support its members, and this in turn affects the provision of quality resources for children's education.

Socioeconomic status of a family is a principal factor in students' academic attainment (Caldas & Bankston, 2004; Liu et al., 2020). People living in low socioeconomic backgrounds have developed a low perception about education and believe that higher education is not for their children. This has a negative influence on their children since they start to believe that university courses will not give them a rewarding career (Okiogo, 2013).

People with low socioeconomic background are exposed to lack of opportunities, violence and conflicts which makes them unable to interact with society in which they live (Doll & Lyon, 1998; González & Vives, 2019). Family economic scarcity puts a lot of stress, which narrows the ability to make good choices (Shah et al., 2012). Carmona-Halty et al. (2019) explained that the demand to provide the basic needs describes why people make different decisions. Disarray of low socioeconomic status generates high

levels of stress, and harsh parental discipline arises which causes maltreatment and neglect of children (Fairchild et al., 2019; Mahlangu et al., 2021). Under this situation, the expectation of attaining academic success is highly minimized (Hanushek et al., 2019). Studies reveal that family income, parents' level of education, parents' occupation, family ethnic roots, acquired behaviour and talent have an effect on students' academic achievement (Ewijk, 2006; Li et al, 2020).

Gan and Bilige (2019) emphasise that parent education, occupation, income, family size and culture at homes greatly influence children's academic performance. His study indicated that ninety percent of the school dropouts belong to the families of low socioeconomic background. Moreover, Qamar (2017) highlighted that poverty, illiteracy, homelessness, crime and violence and unemployment are the major socioeconomic issues in a rural community. People living in rural areas are restricted in their choice of occupation without education, and this greatly affects parents' decision making towards their child's education (Hossain, 2006).

Parent's education, occupation and resources provided at home affect the students' performance (Bhat et al., 2006; Mafi, 1997; Okiogo, 2013). Mukonyi (2020) observed that indiscipline, substance abuse, pregnancy, lack of interest in school and sickness are some of the social factors that negatively influence the performance of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In the local context in Fiji, Dakuidreketi (1995) argued that performance of Native-Fijian students is characterized by school. The findings of his study revealed that Native-Fijian students have low academic achievements because the school's emphasis is on sports rather than the academic work.

Parent Education and its Effects on Academic Achievement

Parent's education plays a very important role in the children's access to education. Educated parents understand the importance of education, and they ensure that their children attain the highest level of qualification. Meanwhile, uneducated parents are not very supportive, and this leads to their children's poor performance in examinations (Rabgay, 2015). Usually, uneducated parents hardly interact with the schools and thus are unable to provide support to their children (Cetin & Taskin, 2016).

Cano et al. (2018) pointed out that less educated parents do not pay attention to their children's education, therefore, the children are less motivated to perform. Qamar (2017) stated that uneducated parents also do not value education since they are unable to understand the challenges or causes of problem that is taking place in their daily lives. Illiterate parents are unaware of the values of education. It is their children who usually drop out in primary school and the parents prefer to get their children married at a younger age (Ansary, 2017). Ansary also found that uneducated parents contributed to a huge number of school dropouts. Furthermore, Hossain (2006) stated that parents who cannot decide what is wrong or right for their children are deprived of information needed to break the socioeconomic barriers.

Uneducated parents fail to spend time with their children. Parents who are aware of the importance of education provide conducive learning environment, which motivates

children to progress towards higher education (Saritas & Akdemir, 2009; Tomul & Polat, 2013). Uneducated parents with poor educational background give more importance to social obligations, so they don't have time to spend with children (Puamau, 1999). Children of such parents hardly study at home, and thus do not complete their homework. This further demoralize students as they feel neglected in school as the teacher penalizes them for incomplete schoolwork (Tomul & Polat, 2013). A study by Qishan et al. (2018) further expounded this by stating that children of uneducated parents are unsuccessful in school because parents are unable to guide them in their studies.

Aud et al. (2013) found out that parents with high educational level have better language skill. Educated parents usually interact with their children using open ended questions, long sentences with good vocabulary which enhances high-order thinking and using more encouraging statements. This motivates the children to take interest and learn more (Anwar et al., 2021). Barriers for education are usually responsibility conflicts, devaluation of education, difficulty in assessing resources and disabilities. According to Meraz (1983), responsibility conflicts are minimized greatly if mothers are educated. Education of mother is more important for the cognitive development of children (Hunt et al., 2017). Hossain (2006) also argued that the higher the level of education of the family heads, the better their children perform at school.

Family Income and its Effect on Academic Achievement

Low family economic status plays an important role in students' life (Ford, 2013). Financial barriers restrict parents and family members to provide basic needs for the children and other family members. This limits the children to participate in extracurricular activities, and thus the feel of social inclusion is reduced (Johnstonbaugh, 2004). Pettigrew (2009) suggested that family members need to sensitize the value of education and provide their children with school materials, instead of using money unnecessarily on other forms of entertainment.

Because of their inability to invest in their children's education, parents are unable to provide the facilities needed to support their children's education (Li & Qiu, 2018). Children of poor families have inadequate access to resources in community that support for preschool preparations (Okiogo, 2013). The children's daily struggles to access school resources make them believe that parents will not be able to support their education in universities. This dampens their interest in schoolwork and thus affects their academic performance and entrance to universities (Okiogo, 2013).

Chophel and Choeda (2021) stated that student's learning skills are related to their parents' socioeconomic background. Parents with low income are unable to provide a conducive learning environment and resources for their children. This affects the development of their children's brain (Chen et al., (2018). Children from low-income family have a small brain surface area, and this is the major reason why they cannot perform well academically (Noble et al., 2006). Increase in the financial state of family facilitates the improvement in literacy (Tomul & Polat, 2013). However, Chevalier and Lanot (2002) argued that there is not enough research which reveals that families' economic state reduces the opportunities of learning.

Home Environment and its Effect on Academic Achievement

A child's home background determines how they react to school (Junaidi, et al., 2022; Muller & Kerbow, 2018). The majority of the families in rural setting consists of either extended family or a lot of siblings. In such cases the younger children usually have good chance of being educated while the older children help the parents in field to contribute to family's income (Tomul & Polat, 2013). The other reason for elder children not attending school is that they have to share the resources which is actually enough for only one sibling. Dayat (2020) revealed that even if the elder children get an opportunity to go to school, they have to help their parents in fields or shops after hours. This keeps the student away from school and affects their academic performance.

Many students with poor performance in schools either have a lot of siblings at home and have too much domestic duties or are not living with the parents (Olufemi & Adediran, 2018). These students develop conditions such as having habits of copying homework, feeling sleepy, feel tired, bored, and feel hungry in class. Some students come from a single parent family background. Students from such families deal with the absence of mother or father and thus are usually psychologically affected (Schalekamp & Mthombeni, 2015). Children who are psychologically affected by their parents' separation due to divorce or death may play truant or engage in other problems such as sex networking or juvenile delinquency. These attitudes usually take lot of school time and thus affect school performance (Yinusa & Basil, 2008).

Veramu, (n.d) elaborated that many Fijian parents with low socioeconomic background leave their children on their own. He further mentions that fathers send their children to buy yagona or mix yagona while the child is studying. Children from such background are often seen studying in a room filled with visitors consuming yagona and talking loudly which greatly impacts the child's academic achievements. Yunus et al. (2014) argued that family environment does not play any role on academic achievement. However, they suggest that it might influence on how children adjust themselves in classrooms. They further elaborate that children are controlled by their past; therefore, they fail to identify their own purpose of life.

Parents Occupation and its Effect on Academic Achievement

Parents' occupation is a necessary component of socioeconomic status and educational attainment (Avvisati, 2020). Parents with good occupation are able to provide resources, emotional support, and socialize with children. This allows children to focus on classroom work and perform well. Parents from low socioeconomic background often work long hours in tiring jobs or with uncertain employment. They spend a lot of time and energy and are thus unable to support their children's education (Chen et al., 2018; Milner et al., 2017).

Faisal (2014) revealed that parents who are civil servants, or have other superior jobs easily identify their children's problems and are able to give them the best solution. They help children in doing homework by providing them with the necessary resources. Such parents also ensure that their children take healthy lunch or have enough pocket money to buy lunch from schools. Tokalauvere (2008) identified the influences of home and

school situations on the performance of Year 13 iTaukei students. He stated that some students play truant to school because they look for food as parents are unable to buy food or they miss classes because they don't have lunch. These students opt not to attend class and end up roaming around in the village.

Parent's occupation impact on the children's education is an area of concern for many researchers. Students whose parents have good employment perform better than the children of wage earners (Qaiser et al., 2013). The studies of Qaiser et al. (2013) also indicated that parents with good occupation were able to provide better resources to support the learning of their children. On the other hand, the children of casual workers have challenges which hinder them to participate in classrooms. Parents without a good occupation are always concerned about how to fulfil the family necessities, so they neglect the academic progress of their children.

Memon et al. (2010) highlighted that students whose fathers have highly paid jobs did better in examinations than those whose fathers are low wage earners. They found that fathers who are highly paid provided their children with preferable resources and supported them morally, intellectually, and psychologically. On the other hand, the low wage-earning fathers were unable to provide more advanced facilities to help their children in schoolwork.

Support for Students from Low Socio-Economic Background

Cetin and Taskin (2016) suggested that through regular meeting of parents with the teachers and the school administrators, parents could be informed about the role of family in their children's education. They suggested that organizing activities will fill the communication gap, and parents will be better aware of how to provide support to their children regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Boutte and Johnson (2014) stated that working with local community partners will also help support the children in need. However, the authors suggested that in order for this partnership to function, the participants must show the willingness to learn with each other and that this partnership must build trust among each other. Furthermore, Ansary (2017) suggested that teachers should visit the houses of those students who are absent daily from schools. This will create public awareness and promote equity and accessibility to education. Pettigrew (2009) suggested that government must invest more by providing quality resources to facilitate learning in rural schools. Marburger (2006) and Sahin et al. (2016), recommend that in order to reduce absenteeism and enhance exam performance, parents must support their children's education, and a mandatory attendance policy must be imposed.

METHOD

Research Design

A mixed-method design was used to conduct this research. It was chosen since it provided the researchers an opportunity to create multifarious picture on the issues of socioeconomic background and its effect on the student's academic achievement. Combined quantitative and qualitative methods also provided a better understanding of

the multiple variables of low socioeconomic background which affect access to quality education and academic achievements of students.

Questionnaires were used to collect the quantitative data, while interviews and observations were used to collect the qualitative data. Before the study began, the questionnaires were piloted on five non-participants, and the interview guide was trialed with another two non-participants. The trialing enabled the researchers to make edits and ensure that the instruments used were highly valid. The questionnaire and the interview guide were further validated by an assistant professor in education.

Questionnaire was given out to all the 129 students enrolled in the school under study. This is due to a smaller population size and since all of these 129 students came from different families, a rich and more reliable data was collected. These 129 students came from 17 different villages. This provided greater insight into the realities of the students' backgrounds that are affecting their academic success at the secondary school under study. Of all the questionnaires given, 117 were returned and all were deemed complete. 21 teachers also completed the questionnaire and returned it.

A total of 32 parents were interviewed. The parents chosen for the interview were selected through simple random method. Open ended questions were used to collect detailed information. The interview took place in the parents' homes. All interviews were conducted in English and each lasted between 10 - 20 minutes. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim.

Participant observation was used to understand the parents' lifestyles, the families' socioeconomic background, family size, daily routines of family members, difficulties faced, the study environment of children, neighbourhood, views of family members towards education of their children and their satisfaction towards their children's educational achievements. A total of 27 families were observed. All the data collected through observation were recorded as field notes and were then analysed.

FINDINGS

Parents Education and its Effect on Academic Achievement

The mark ranges from 20-29 to 60-69, and the educational level of students' fathers and mothers is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Students' achievement and fathers and mothers' level of education

Percentage score of Participating Students	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		None		Don't know		Total
	Fathers' education level	Mothers' education level									
20-29	3	7	16	9	2	3	1	5	2	0	24
30-39	0	3	14	10	1	3	3	8	8	2	26
40-49	11	10	7	15	3	3	5	1	4	1	30
50-59	6	10	4	3	8	5	3	4	1	0	22
60-69	2	4	1	2	3	6	5	1	2	0	13
Total	22	38	42	39	17	20	17	19	17	3	115

The results of this study show that the father's or the mother's educational level does not have a direct effect on the student's achievement. The study shows that mothers with both high education and no education at all had children scoring high as well as low grades. It clearly indicates that even uneducated parents are now conscious of the importance of education and thus children's low academic achievements are not solely dependent on the parent's level of education.

4.3 Parents Occupation and its Effect on Academic Achievement

Participating students were asked to indicate the occupation of their parents which was then compared with the percentage scores in their examination. The data collected for fathers' occupation and mothers' occupation are shown in Tables 2 and 3 below:

Table 2

Father's occupation

Percentage score of Participating Students	Private jobs/ Wage earner	Farmer	Civil Servant	Unemployed	Total
20-29	12	6	3	3	24
30-39	6	3	2	15	26
40-49	18	6	2	4	30
50-59	12	2	3	5	22
60-69	8	3	4	0	13
Total	56	20	14	27	115

Table 3 shows the mothers occupation and the academic achievement of children.

Table 3

Mother's occupation

Percentage score of Participating Students	Domestic Duties/ Unemployed	House Girl	Salesgirl	Civil Servant	Total
20-29	9	8	4	3	24
30-39	7	7	8	4	26
40-49	7	5	10	7	30
50-59	12	3	2	5	22
60-69	5	1	4	3	13
Total	40	24	28	22	115

Table 2 shows that the most common occupation of the fathers are private jobs or wage earners (49%), while 23% are unemployed. 17% are farmers, while only 12% (n =14) work as civil servants.

From Table 3, it is apparent that large number of mothers (35%) perform domestic duties or are unemployed. These are the mothers who are probably uneducated or have a low academic qualification. 21% of the participating mothers earn a living by working as a house girl, 24% work as salesgirls, whereas 19% are civil servants. The results indicate that parents' occupation only has a slight effect on the academic achievement of the participating students.

When students were asked whether the parent's occupation affects their achievement at school, a few of the participants (35%) indicated that their parent's occupation does affect their academic achievement. In addition, the participating students also indicated

that parents with low-paying jobs were at times unable to provide lunch and spare uniforms. This leads to children being absent from schools. Having only one pair of uniform also forces the child either to wear dirty uniform or stay home. Wearing dirty uniform distracts their attention in classrooms as well.

The study also indicated that children whose parents are farmers are regularly absent from school as they are asked to help their parents to harvest the produce or assist them to sell the produce in the markets. Another interesting finding was on the relation between students' academic performance and parent's occupation. It was noted that 32% of the participating students whose parent's occupation is farmers are doing academically well.

Home Environment and its Effect on the Students' Academic Achievement

The students were surveyed to find out if they had appropriate learning facilities at home. The findings are presented in Figure 1 below.

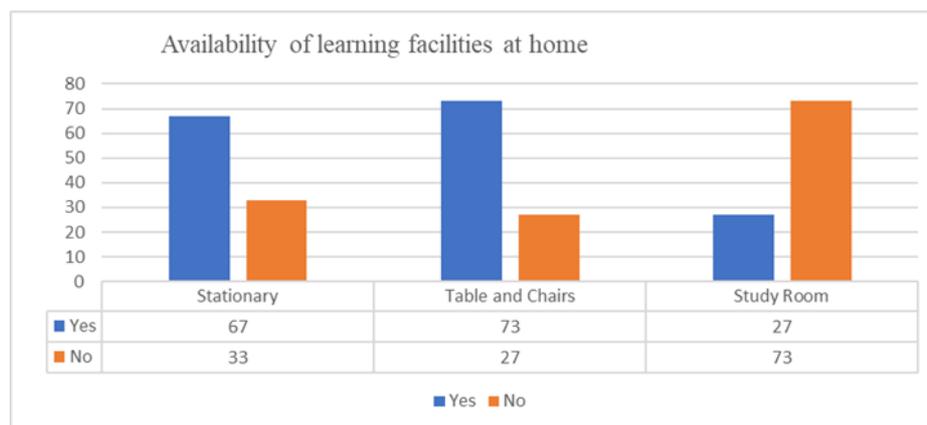


Figure 1
Learning facilities at home

It is apparent that the majority (67%) of the parents are able to provide the necessary stationaries to their children, while 73% of students have a desk and a chair to study at home. What was most surprising was that 73% of the participants indicated that they do not have a separate study room at home.

The number of people living in different households were investigated, and this is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Number of people in a household

Number of people staying together	Number of households	Percentage (%)
3 to 4	14	12
5 up to 7	50	44
8 up to 10	35	30
11 up to 15	16	14

Table 4 shows that the majority of households (44%) have 5 – 7 people living together followed by 8-10 people (30%), 11-15 people (14%) and 3-4 people (12%).

Children Living with Both Parents, Single Parent and Guardians

Figure 2 shows the percentages of children living with both parents, single parent, and their guardians.

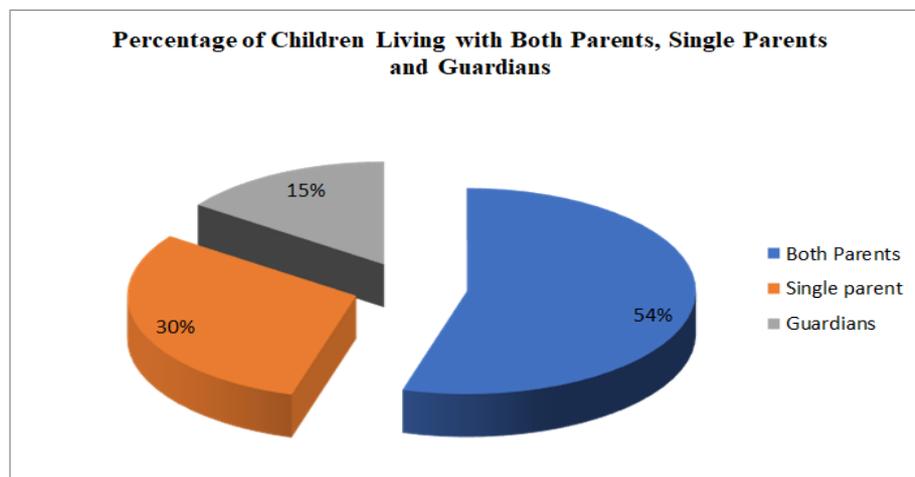


Figure 2

Percentage of children living with both parents, single parent, and their guardians

As shown in Figure 2, the majority of the participants (54%) live with both parents, 30% of the students live with single parents, while 15% of the participants live with their guardians.

Family Income and its Effect on Academic Achievement

The teachers' perspective on how family income affects the students' academic performance is shown in Figure 3 below.

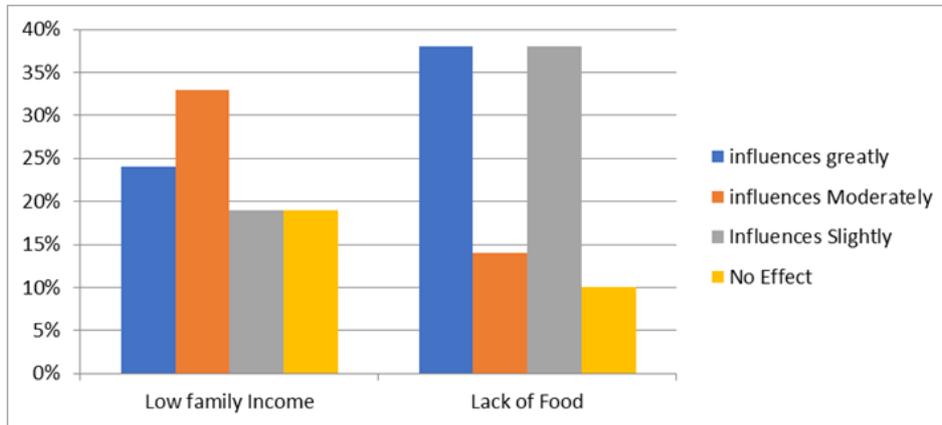


Figure 3

Teacher's perceptions on how family income affects the academic achievement of students

Twenty-four (24%) percent of the participating teachers agreed that low family income has a great influence on the students' academic achievement. 33% indicated that low family income has a moderate influence while 19% mentioned that low family income either influences slightly or has no influence at all. Furthermore, 38% of teachers mentioned that lack of food influences the academic achievements to a great extent, 14% indicated that it influences moderately, 38% mentioned that it has a slight influence while 10% indicated that it has no effect on academic achievement of students.

The majority of the participants agreed that low family income affects academic achievement of the children. Commenting on the issue of single source of income for the family, one of the interviewees stated "*it is difficult to provide the basic need for every member in the family. Therefore, sometimes my son is absent from the school as he is shy to take boiled cassava for his lunch.*" Findings also revealed that most single parents only served boiled cassava and dalo to their children for dinner. Children from such families are found to have low academic achievement at school.

Measures to Improve Academic Achievement and Promote Access and Equity

Responses were also sought from participating teachers and parents to share their views on improving the students' academic achievements. These are presented in Figure 4 and Figure 5 below.

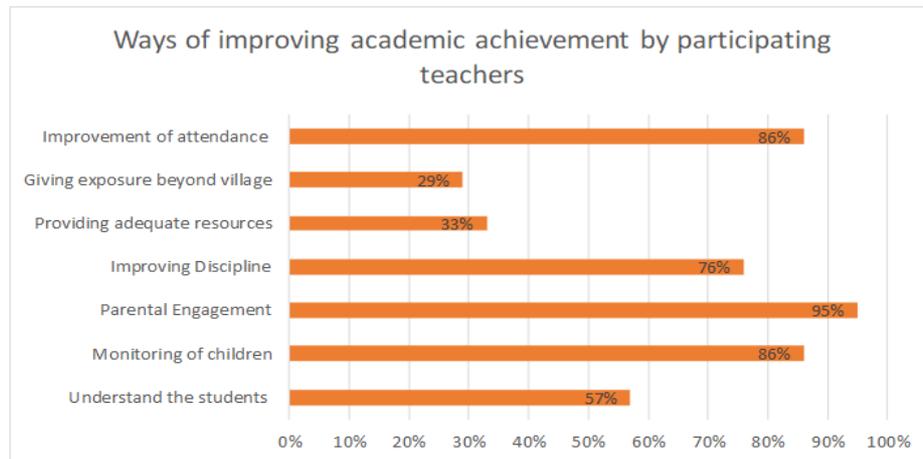


Figure 4

Ways to improve academic achievement as perceived by participating teachers

Ninety-five (95%) of the teacher respondents suggested that parental engagement is one of the most important factors to improve the academic achievement of children. The study further established that 86% of the participating teachers mentioned that parental monitoring and school attendance also contribute to improved academic achievement of children. The results show that 57% of the participants feel that understanding and involving students in teaching affects the children's performance at school.

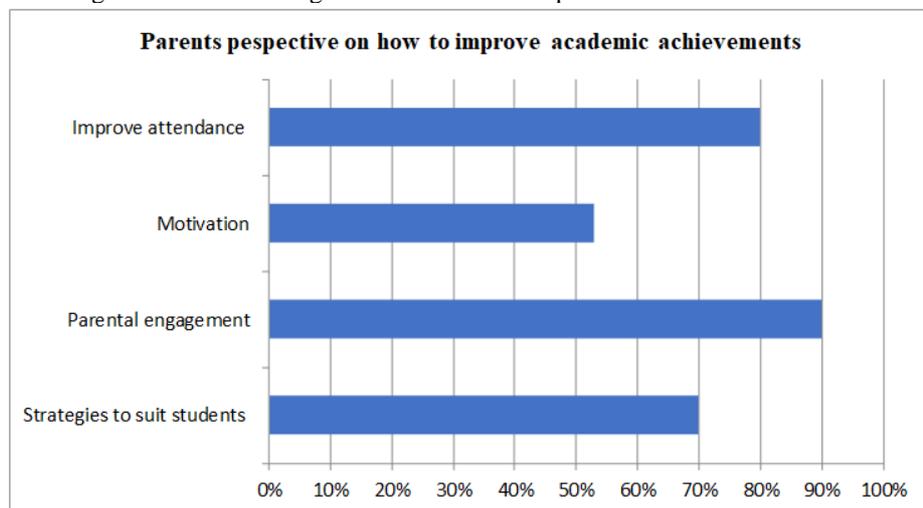


Figure 5

Ways to improve academic achievement as perceived by participating parents

The majority of the interviewees (90%) suggested that parental engagement is a major factor that could improve the students' academic performance. The participating parents' sentiments seem to concur with the teachers' finding and therefore may be construed to be a strategy to improve the academic performance of the students under study.

Another interesting finding reveals that teachers must employ teaching strategies that suit the students. Emphasizing this issue, an interviewee stated, "*teachers must realize that not all students are privileged; hence there will be a few students who are mentally disturbed and must be considered in classrooms*" (Participant 16).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the father's or the mother's education level does not have a direct effect on the student's achievement. Hunt et al. (2017) suggested that mother's education is more important for cognitive development of children. This does not appear to be the case in this study because mothers with both high education and no education at all had children with both high and low grades. A possible explanation for this might be that now the parents are able to discuss their issues of low socioeconomic status with the children. This might have motivated the students to work hard.

Avvisati (2020) found out that parents' occupation is a necessary component of socioeconomic status influencing academic achievement of the children. When asked whether the parent's occupation affects their achievement at school, a few of the participants (35%) indicated that it does affect their academic achievement. In addition, the participating students also indicated that parents with low-paying jobs were at times unable to provide lunch and spare uniforms. This leads to absenteeism of children from schools. Having only one pair of uniform also forces the child to wear dirty uniforms which distracts their attention in class. Absenteeism and absent mindedness ultimately lead to poor performance at school. This result reflects the work by Tukulauvere (2008) who found that iTaukei student's play truant or are absent because they look for food as the parents are unable to buy food.

The study also indicated that children whose parents are farmers are regularly absent from school as they are asked to help their parents to harvest the produce or assist them to sell the produce in the village markets. These findings support earlier work of Milner et al., (2017) who stated that parents from low socioeconomic background work long hours in tiring jobs and are thus unable to support their children's education.

Another interesting finding was on the relation between students' academic performance and parent's occupation . It was noted that 32% of the participating students whose parent's occupation is farmers are doing academically well. A possible explanation for this might be that the government's effort to provide free education in Fiji and the transport allowance scheme could help these parents to cope with educational expenses. However, some parents are still struggling to support their children, and it can be assumed that parent's occupation is a factor affecting the academic achievement of the participating students in this study.

Comparison of the findings with previous studies confirms that family income does affect the academic achievement of the participating students. The findings are consistent with Shalu's study (2006) which found that low income and financial constraints have negative impact on parent – child interaction. The findings also support the claims made by Shah et al. (2012) that the economic scarcity puts lots of stress on children which narrows the ability to make good choices.

Ninety-five (95%) of the teacher respondents suggested that parental engagement is one of the most important factors to improve the academic achievement of children. The findings are consistent with research by Cetin and Taskin (2016) which indicated that parental engagement in the form of regular meeting with teachers could improve their child's education. The study further established that 86% of the participating teachers mentioned that parental monitoring and school attendance also contribute to improved academic achievement of children. These findings are in line with Marburger's (2006) assertion that policies that are rigorously implemented significantly reduce absenteeism and enhance exam performance, as well as Ansary's (2017) finding that visiting the homes of students who miss school every day will raise accessibility and public awareness, which will ultimately boost students' academic performance.

The results show that 57% of the participants feel that understanding and involving students in teaching affects the children's performance at school. This is in line with Weinstein et al. (2004) argument that teachers should take into account students who are poor and how their lessons will address their issues in order to promote equity and access.

The majority of the interviewees (90%) suggested that parental engagement is a major factor that could improve the students' academic performance. The participating parents' sentiments seem to concur with the teachers' finding and therefore may be construed to be a strategy to improve the academic performance of the students under study. However, as suggested by Boutte and Johnson (2014) in order for this partnership to be effective, there must be a willingness from the participants to learn with each other, and the partnership must build trust.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of parent's socioeconomic background on student's academic achievements in a rural secondary school in Fiji. In addition, the study investigated ways to improve understanding of how these students can be supported in school to increase access and equity for better academic outcomes.

The findings suggest that parents' education and the types of job they did have very little impact on students' academic achievement. However, the findings showed that home environment and family income have a great influence on the achievements of the students in school.

In the light of the findings of the present study, recommendations are made to improve access, equity and academic achievement of students. Firstly, there is a need for parents to take greater interest in the education of their children. This will in turn allow the

children to improve their achievements in school. Secondly, the community must work together to provide a suitable and conducive learning environment. This can be accomplished by using the village halls, where a few parents can be rostered for the supervision of their children. There is also a need for schools to plan intervention programmes and allow for more parental involvement. Fourthly, the teachers need to understand the outside-of-school experiences of students. It is essential for teachers to understand student and family homelessness and to increase their own knowledge, beliefs, and conceptions of people living in poverty in order to modify their teaching strategies to improve students' access, equality, and academic achievement. Fifthly, moral values need to become a significant component of secondary curriculum and the MEHA needs to realign its curriculum to suit students from low socioeconomic background. Finally, there is a need for greater workshops and professional development by MEHA to train teachers on how to deal with students from poverty-stricken families.

Since the study focuses on a rural setting with a small population size, similar research needs to be carried out in an urban area with a larger population size to find out if there are any similarities in factors that affect the students' academic achievement. Secondly, the current research only focuses on socioeconomic factors affecting the performance of students. Another research needs to be conducted to find out how the cultural factors affect the academic achievements of students in rural secondary schools.

REFERENCES

- Ansary, R. (2017). Socioeconomic Factors of Dropout Situation in Rural Education: A Study of Two Villages in Rajshahi District. *Sociology and Criminology*, 5(2). <http://doi:10.4172/2375-4435.1000176>
- Anwar, K., Asari, S., Husniah, R., & Asmara, C. H. (2021). Students' Perceptions of Collaborative Team Teaching and Student Achievement Motivation. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(1), 325-344. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1282190.pdf>
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., Kena, G., Roth, E., Manning, E., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2012). *The condition of education 2012 (NCES 2012-045)*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012045>
- Avvisati, F. (2020). The measure of socioeconomic status in PISA: a review and some suggested improvements. *Large-scale Assessments in Education*, 8(1), 1-37. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40536-020-00086-x>
- Bhat, A., Joshi, J., & Wani, A. (2016). Effects of Socio-Economic Status on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(4), 32-37.
- Boutte, G. S., & Johnson, G. (2014). *Community and family involvement in urban schools*. In H. R. Milner & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *Handbook on urban education* New York, NY: Routledge. 167-182.

- Caldas, S. J., & Bankston, C., (2004). Effects of School Population Socioeconomic Status on Individual Academic Achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 90(5), 269-277.
- Cano, T., Perales, F., & Baxter, J. (2019). A matter of time: Father involvement and child cognitive outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(1), 164-184. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12532>
- Carmona-Halty, M., Schaufeli, W. B., Llorens, S., & Salanova, M. (2019). Satisfaction of basic psychological needs leads to better academic performance via increased psychological capital: A three-wave longitudinal study among high school students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2113. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02113>
- Cedeno, L.F., Arias, R.M., & Bueno, J.A. (2016). Implications of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Competence: A Perspective for Teachers. *International Education Studies*, 9(4), 257-268. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n4>
- Cetin, S.K., & Taskin, P. (2016). Parent Involvement in Education in terms of Their Socioeconomic Status. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 66(6), 105-122. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.66.6>
- Chen, Q., Gao, W.Y., & Mo, L. (2018). *Effects of socioeconomic status, parent –child relationship, and learning motivation on reading ability*. Guangdong key Laboratory of mental health and cognitive science, Center for studies of Psychological Application, School of Psychology, South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China.
- Chevalier, A., & Lanot, G. (2002). The Relative Effect of Family Characteristics and Financial Situation on Educational Achievement. *Education Economics*, 10(2), 166-180.
- Chophel, T., & Choeda, U. (2021). Impact of Parental Involvement in Homework on Children's learning. *Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science*, 6(34), 35-46. <https://doi.org/10.9734/jesbs/2021/v34i630334>
- Dakuidreketi, M.R. (1995). *Factors contributing to academic under-achievement of first year ethnic Fijian students in science courses at the University of the South Pacific*. Unspecified.
- Dayat, D., Anwarudin, O., & Makhmudi, M. (2020). Regeneration of farmers through rural youth participation in chili agribusiness. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 9(3), 1201-1206.
- Doll, B., & Lyon, M. (1998). Risk and Resilience: Implications for the delivery of education and mental health services in the schools. *School of Psychology Review*, 27(3), 348- 363.
- Ewijk, R. (2006). *The effect of ethnicity and SES in the class on achievement: a meta-analysis*. Paper ICO-toogday 2006 SCO- Kohnstamm Institute, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.

- Fairchild, G., Hawes, D. J., Frick, P. J., Copeland, W. E., Odgers, C. L., Franke, B., ... & De Brito, S. A. (2019). Conduct disorder. *Nature Reviews Disease Primers*, 5(1), 1-25. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41572-019-0095-y>
- Faisal, M.A. (2014). The influence of parental socioeconomic status on their involvement at home, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(5), 1 – 21.
- Ford, Y.P. (2013). *The relationship Between Socio-Economic Status and the Academic Achievement of Culturally Diverse Students*. Dissertations, Theses and Capstone Project Paper 585.
- Gan, Y., & Bilige, S. (2019). Parental involvement in home-based education and children's academic achievement in China. *Social Behavior and Personality: an International Journal*, 47(12), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.8491>
- Gobena, G. A. (2018). Family socioeconomic status effect on students' academic achievement at college of education and behavioral sciences, Haramaya University, Eastern Ethiopia. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, 7(3), 207-222. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/654337>
- González, G., & Vives, A. (2019). Work status, financial stress, family problems, and gender differences in the prevalence of depression in Chile. *Annals of Work Exposures and Health*, 63(3), 359-370. <https://doi.org/10.1093/annweh/wxy107>
- Hanushek, E. A., Peterson, P. E., Talpey, L. M., & Woessmann, L. (2019). The achievement gap fails to close. *Education Next*, 19(3), 8-17. <https://www.educationnext.org/achievement-gap-fails-close-half-century-testing-shows-persistent-divide/>
- Hossain, M. (2006). Impact of education on socioeconomic development of rural people of Bangladesh. *Journal of Bangladesh Education*, 5(1), 1 -75.
- Hunt, T. K., Slack, K. S., & Berger, L. M. (2017). Adverse childhood experiences and behavioral problems in middle childhood. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 67, 391-402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.11.005>
- Johnstonbaugh, M.G. (2004). *Status Inequalities: A Study of the Impact of Socioeconomic Disparities on Educational Experience*, (Unpublished masters Dissertation). Wellesley College, London.
- Junaidi, F., Suwandi, S., Saddhono, K., & Wardani, N. (2022). Improving students' social intelligence using folktales during the covid-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Instruction*, 15(3), 209-228. https://www.e-iji.net/dosyalar/iji_2022_3_12.pdf.
- Li, S., Xu, Q., & Xia, R. (2020). Relationship between SES and academic achievement of junior high school students in China: The mediating effect of self-concept. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2513. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02513>

- Li, Z., & Qiu, Z. (2018). How does family background affect children's educational achievement? Evidence from Contemporary China. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology*, 5(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-018-0083-8>
- Liu, J., Peng, P., & Luo, L. (2020). The relation between family socioeconomic status and academic achievement in China: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 32(1), 49-76.
- Mafi, M. (1997). *Factors affecting Educational Achievement of Tongans in Auckland*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Department of education. Massey University. New Zealand.
- Mahlangu, P., Chirwa, E., Machisa, M., Sikweyiya, Y., Shai, N., & Jewkes, R. (2021). Prevalence and factors associated with experience of corporal punishment in public schools in South Africa. *PLoS One*, 16(8), e0254503. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0254503>
- Marburger, D. R. (2006). Does mandatory attendance improve student performance? *The Journal of Economic Education*, 37(2), 148-155. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JECE.37.2.148-155>
- Memon, G. R., Joubish, F. M., & Khurram, A. M. (2010). Impact of parental socioeconomic status on students' educational achievements at secondary schools of district Malir, Karachi. *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research*, 6(6), 678-687.
- Meraz, G.M. (1983). *A study of the Relationship of Socioeconomic Status and Student Perceptions of School Effectiveness to Academic Achievement of engineering Students. Masters Theses and specialist Project. Paper 1535.* <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/1535>
- Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2009). Risk factors for learning-related behavior problems at 24 months of age: Population-based estimates. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 37, 401-413. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10802-008-9279-8>
- Muchunku, J. (2008). *Effects of Socioeconomic factors on pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Chuka Division, Tharaka-Nithi Country, Kenya.* (Unpublished Master's Thesis. Kenyatta University, Kenya.
- Muller, C., & Kerbow, D. (2018). *Parent involvement in the home, school, and community.* In *Parents, their children, and schools* (pp. 13-42). Routledge
- Noble, K. G., Farah, M. J., & McCandliss, B. D. (2006). Socioeconomic background modulates Cognition-achievement relationships in reading. *Cogn. Dev*, 21, 349-368. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2006.01.007>
- Okiogo, C.K. (2013). The Impact of Students' Socioeconomic Background on Academic Performance in Universities, a Case of Students in Kissi University College. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 2(2), 38-46.

- Olufemi, O.T., & Adediran, A.A. (2018). Factors Affecting Students' Academic Performance in College of Education in Southwest, Nigeria. *British Journal of Education*, 6(10), 43-56.
- Pettigrew, E. J. (2009). *A study of the impact of socioeconomic status on student achievement in a rural east Tennessee school system*. East Tennessee State University.
- Puamau, V, Q. L (1999). *Affirmative action and racial inequalities in education: the case of Fiji*.
- Qaiser, S., Hassan, D.A., Ishtiaq, H., Muhammad, S., Farid, U.K., & Zaib, U.N. (2013). Effect of Socioeconomic status on the academic achievement of secondary school; students in Karak district, Pakistan. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 2(4).
- Qamar, K.H. (2017). Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors Responsible for Illiteracy in Rural Areas of District Mandi Bahauddin Punjab, Pakistan. *Language in India*, 17(3), 138-148.
- Qishan, C., Kong, Y., Gao, W., & Mo, L. (2018). Effects of Socioeconomic Status, Parent-Child Relationship, and Learning Motivation on Reading Ability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1297. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01297>
- Rabgay, T. (2015). A Study of Factors Influencing Students' Academic Performance in a Higher Secondary School in Bhutan. Rabsel. *The CERD Educational Journal*, 16(2), 74 - 97.
- Rodríguez-Hernández, C. F., Cascallar, E., & Kyndt, E. (2020). Socio-economic status and academic performance in higher education: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 29, 100305.
- Sahin, S., Arseven, Z., & Kiliç, A. (2016). Causes of Student Absenteeism and School Dropouts. *International Journal of Instruction*, 9(1), 195-210. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1086967.pdf>
- Saritas, T., & Akdemir, O. (2009). Identifying factors affecting the mathematics achievement of students for better instructional design. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and distance learning*, 6(12), 21-36. https://www.itdl.org/Journal/Dec_09/article03.htm
- Schalekamp, C.V.Z., & Mthombeni, P. (2015). Social – Background Factors Affecting the Academic Success of First Year Sociology Students at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. *Journal of Sociology Soc Anth*, 6(1), 31-44.
- Shah, A.K., Mullainathan, S., & Shafir, E. (2012). Some consequences of having too little. *Science*, 338(6107), 682-685. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.1222426>
- Tokalauvere, M. (2008). *Exploring Home and School Factors Affecting the Performance of Form7 Fijian Students* (Doctoral dissertation, School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Law, The University of the South Pacific).

Tomul, E., & Polat, G. (2013). The Effects of Socioeconomic Characteristics of Students on Their Academic Achievement in Higher Education. *American Journal of Education Research*, 1(10), 449-455. <http://doi:10.12691/educatio-1-10-7>

Veramu, J.C. (n.d). Fijian Education. *The Community and the Teacher*. 122 – 129. <http://www.directions.usp.ac.fj/collect/direct/index/assoc/0769938.dir/doc>

Weinstein, C. S., Tomlinson-Clarke, S., & Curran, M. (2004). Toward a conception of culturally responsive classroom management. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55, 25–38. <http://doi:10.1177/0022487103259812>

Yinusa, M.A., Basil, O. (2008). Socioeconomic Factors Influencing Students' Academic Performance in Nigeria: Some Explanation from a local Survey. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(4), 319-323.

Yunus, S.A., Samuel, L.B., & Wai, P.S. (2014). Effect of Family Environment on Student Academic Problems in School. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(19), 1-7.