

**INFLUENCE OF FAMILY DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES
ON PUPIL'S DEVELOPMENT OF BASIC SOCIAL SKILLS**

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Introduction

Effective and productive living involves application of basic life skills. Life skills refer to those skills necessary for the child to grow, develop and mature into a responsible adult citizen and be able to contribute their quota in the development of the society. Life skills are diverse and may include physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills. Also, they are interrelated and involve a systematic, gradual and progressive process of differentiation and integration.

Development of life skills begins from birth and becomes more sophisticated as one moves from one stage of life to another. Among the life skills, social skills appear to be the bedrock upon which all other life skills gravitate. According to Ngwoke and Eze (2010), social skills refer to those life skills that enable a child to effectively function as a person in a group of interacting and interrelating human beings. By implication, social skills relate to those competencies which an individual requires to live a responsible life within the society; and broadly, they include communication, etiquette, nuances and psychomotor skills. In this study, social skills will cover relational skills, personal care and hygiene skills. Relational skills comprise skills like punctuality, attentiveness, perseverance, carrying out assignment, politeness, self control, spirit of cooperation (sharing and working well with peers and others), and organizational ability; while personal care/hygiene skills include cleanliness, tidiness, orderliness, neatness of self and study material, care of body parts among others. The development of basic social skills enables a child to be pro-social in behavior. Mares and Woodard (2001) explained pro-social behavior to mean friendly interactions, aggression reduction, empathy and selflessness among others. A child who is not pro-social may be unsocial or anti-social in their behavior.

An anti-social child may often display a non-compliant behavior which can be detrimental to classroom learning and instruction by distracting pupils from engaging in academic activities. Sullivan; Johnson; Owens & Conway (2014) observed that anti-social behaviors were highly detrimental to classroom order, making the teachers to spend an enormous amount of time teaching pupils how to behave.

The behavior of pro-social children on the other hand typically makes them to be accepted as group members because their behavior is often amenable to expectations in the home, school and in the wider society. Teachers also seem to prefer pupils who are pro-social as minimal time and energy are spent on class control thereby reducing the teachers' stress. The development of basic social skills therefore is important for ensuring that children acquire early in life, the rudiments for effective social contact and

social intercourse which according to Posse and Melgosa (2002), are the pre-requisite for productive and happy life at school, adulthood and other stages of human development. A child who is accepted by the teacher as well as his peers may be more teachable. The child has more chances of staying on and completing a learning task successfully and on time too. Such a child would also fit better as a global citizen in an emerging world in which relational skills are valued. Ronald, (2012), defined global citizen as someone who identifies with being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building the core values and practices of such community. One may therefore posit that social skills are essential for proper adjustment, learning, and wellbeing of the child.

The development of social skills is influenced by two major factors: nature and nurture. It has been established that nature and nurture have almost 50/50 influence on human development (Moore, 2001). While nature refers to the child's inherited characteristics, nurture refers to the physical and social environment that the child encounters at home, school, neighborhood and community, that impact on their genetic endowment. Nurture therefore includes family demographic variables, school and school environment, government policies, social norms among others. The focus of this study is on family demographic variables which refer to the peculiar characteristics of each family which may impact on the child's development of basic social skills. Examples of family demographic variables include physical features, socio-economic status, parent's educational level, family structure, parental occupation and family size. This study will focus on two of these variables namely: parental occupation and parents' level of education. The researchers were also interested in ascertaining the moderating influence of pupils' gender on their development of basic social skills.

Parents are the primary caregivers and the first socializing agent the child encounters in life. A parent can be either the father or the mother. Naturally and especially in the traditional African society, children are closer to the mothers than the fathers; thus mothers may have more responsibilities than fathers in helping children develop social skills. Therefore, parents in this study will be taken to mean mothers as the researchers conjecture here that the influence of the mothers' occupation and level of education on pupils' development of basic social skills will be more than that of the fathers.

Mother's occupation is here described in terms of the work mothers do for a living. Some mothers are self employed while some others are engaged in paid employment. Self employment, according to Investopedia, (2017), is a type of employment in which an individual works for himself/herself and get rewarded in terms of profit instead of working for an employer for salary or

wage. On the other hand Wikipedia defines paid employment as that form of employment that involves a contract which entails the doing of a work(s) by the employee and in turn, getting rewarded with a pay by the employer. Whether self employed or engaged in paid employment, time is of essence. In a family where the mother is engaged in a full time paid employment for instance, they may have dual family income; however the researchers conjecture that they may not have quality time for parent-child interaction which has been identified as one of the key elements in development of social skills by children especially at early and middle childhood stages (Ugwu & Onyekonwu, 2015; Umeano, 2015). Self employment of mothers on the other hand, though may offer limited income to augment family resources, but may provide mothers with better opportunities to give due priority to domestic roles and so play a critical role towards pupils' development of basic social skills. The influence of mother's occupation on pupils' development of basic social skills is indeterminable however, partly because while the mother is not at liberty to manage her time and resources in a paid employment, self employment may not always be a better option as the mother may even spend more time and resources in other to sustain the investment or business.

Mothers' level of education is another family demographic variable that may influence children's development of basic social skills. Mother's level of education may have direct link with the kind of work the mother does for a living. Educational level describes a mother's educational attainment and may be classified as high, moderate or low. In this study, mothers' level of education will be classified as follows: **low** - mothers with no Formal Education, and mothers with Basic Education such as First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) and Trade Test Certificate only; **moderate**- mothers with maximum of Secondary Education such as West African School Certificate (WASC), Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) and General Certificate in Education (GCE); and **high**-mothers who attended any Tertiary institution and hold any of the following: National Certificate in Education (NCE), Ordinary National Diploma (OND), Higher National Diploma (HND), Degree and above.

Mothers who are classified as high in educational attainment may have better understanding of the value of social skills in general education and in life endeavours, and as such may strive to provide all that is needed by children to be successful (Carneiro, Menighir, & Parey, (2011). Casual observation however has shown that among families with highly educated mothers, children are more likely to be cared for by house helps as mothers are more likely to be engaged in paid employment outside home for the greater part of each working day. The high educational level of mothers may

also increase the probability of their being employed and living outside their traditional homes where grand-parents and other extended relations may help in bridging the gap created by mothers working outside the home. On the other hand, low or moderate educational level may make mothers to be more at home, providing more time for quality mother-child interaction. However, it may be argued that it may limit their knowledge of the developmental needs of children in a changing world where technological compliance and global competitiveness constitute the bedrock for economic survival and upward social mobility.

Mothers' occupation and level of education appear to have one common denominator which is the amount and quality of time and resources available for mothers to help children develop the needed social skills. Currently in Enugu State, Nigeria, families place greater emphasis on scholarship than family values. Such societal changes are evident in near extinction of extended family system, both parents engaging in fulltime paid employment, unhealthy competition and hurrying children in purely scholarship activities and poor value orientation.

The researchers also conjectured that gender may be a factor in the influence of the key variables discussed above on development of basic social skills. Onwuka and Obidike (2010) defined gender as the social functions and expectations assigned to the individual because of his or her sex that is boy or girl. Gender issues have been orchestrated so much by the society. Males are often motivated into choosing careers that are deemed masculine such as Medicine, engineering and other careers that are technical in nature while females are advised to go into teaching, nursing and other careers relating to child rearing and home making. Gender discrimination could be against men or women. Dikku as cited by Ihediwe-Okoro (2010) opined that the discriminations are often more in favour of the men. However, Ateji (2009) earlier posited that women were beginning to penetrate every facet of the economy due to improvement in their educational attainment. Gender issues therefore demands re-orientation in our values, attitude and sex stereotype roles. Umoh (2004) observed that when we stereotype roles, we directly or indirectly limit full participation of individuals as well as limit the full development of the child's potentials. The need to minimize stereotyping roles may have informed the current clarion call by many countries including Nigeria for gender equality in educational opportunities for children.

In view of the foregoing and considering the potential influence of the current changes in family characteristics on the early years in the life of children, the Federal Government of Nigeria approved the establishment of pre-primary education in the country to prepare children for the primary level

of education. According to the National Policy on Education, (FRN, 2014), the specific purpose of pre-primary education includes:

Effecting smooth transition from home to school; preparing children for the primary level of education; providing adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work; inculcating social, moral norms and values; developing sense of cooperation and team spirit; and stimulating in the child good habits, including good health habits (p. 8-9).

The policy also articulated the purposes of primary education to include: inculcating permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively; laying sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; giving citizenship education as a basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society; moulding the character and developing sound attitude and morals in the child; and also developing in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment (p.10)

The education policy equally mapped out strategies for achieving the stated objectives; however, the implementation is problematic. The early childhood education, for instance was intended to serve as a panacea for the problem emanating from changing family characteristics but some parents appear to have seen it as an opportunity to even hurry children the more, as some no longer observe school dismissal time for pupils; rather they extend the dismissal time by registering the children in after school learning programmes popularly known as "lesson". Some other parents prefer to register their children in privately owned schools and care-centers, where they even pay more with less qualified teachers and caregivers; but where the dismissal time may be extended to 3.30pm or 4.00-5.00pm.; all in the bid to free themselves from the encumbrances of appropriate parenting responsibility.

In the circumstance, children appear to have little or no time to play with their peers or to interact with parents, siblings and other significant adults as parents appear too busy and the children's time is tied on completing assignments for both the regular classroom teacher as well as for the lesson teachers. Sometimes children may not also get enough sleep. The little time children have may in addition be spent watching unlimited television programmes because parents are scarcely available. While the schools, child-care centres and lesson organizers are busy smiling to their banks, the children are left in unfettered environment to themselves. To make the situation worse,

Ibiam, Ugwu, Ifelunni and Otti (2015) observed that the Federal Government of Nigeria who issue approval to private individuals for establishment of private schools and pre-primary education centres is not making enough effort to ensure compliance to the National Minimum Standard for early childhood education programmes.

In the prevailing scenario, especially in Enugu State, one begins to worry over the feasibility of instilling in children early pro-social behaviours necessary for healthy development. It is also not clear what influence gender would have on the development of pupils' social skills, especially in Enugu State where male dominance is still a core value in the family psychodynamics, and gender stereotype is still being observed in family life, school related activities and wider social activities.

In the contemporary Nigeria society, family characteristics have experienced a lot of changes ranging from both parents engaging in fulltime paid employment, over-emphasis on pupils' performance by class position rather than skill development and proper value orientation. The age-long cherished core values and family living are hardly imparted to the young because there is no longer time for quality interaction at the family level. Casual observation reveals that majority of the primary school pupils lack the basic social skills needed for healthy interaction with peers, teachers and other adults especially in a learning environment. This then suggests that these children lack needed life skills for successful engagement in a community of human relations. The problem of this study therefore put in question form is: what is the influence of family demographic variables on pupils' development of basic social skills?

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of family demographic variables on pupils' development of basic social skills. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. the influence of mothers' occupation on pupils' development of basic social skills.
2. the influence of mothers' level of education on pupils' development of basic social skills.
3. the moderating influence of pupils' gender on the influence of mothers' occupation on pupils' development of basic social skills.
4. the moderating influence of pupils' gender on the influence of mothers' level of education on pupils' development of basic social skills.

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The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of mothers' occupation on pupils' development of basic social skills?
2. What is the influence of mothers' level of education on pupils' development of basic social skills?
3. What is the moderating influence of pupils' gender on the influence of mothers' occupation on pupils' development of basic social skills?
4. What is the moderating influence of pupils' gender on the influence of mothers' level of education on pupils' development of basic social skills?

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of probability.

1. Mothers' occupation has no significant influence on pupils' development of basic social skills.
2. Mothers' level of education has no significant influence on pupils' development of basic social skills.
3. pupils' gender has no moderating influence on the influence of mothers' occupation on pupils' development of basic social skills.
4. pupils' gender has no moderating influence on the influence of mothers' level of education on pupils' development of basic social skills.

Method

The study adopted an ex-post facto design. The population of the study was 2287 primary five pupils comprising 1,080 males and 1,207 females in the 79 primary schools in Nsukka Central within Nsukka Local Government Education Authority of Enugu State, Nigeria (50 public schools and 29 government- approved privately owned schools). The choice of primary five pupils was based on the researchers' casual observation that most children in schools within the study area especially among the privately owned schools end their primary education at primary five and migrate to secondary level. The researchers also assumed that primary five pupils could give valid information about their mothers' occupation and level of education. That information guided the researchers in classifying the respondents according to their mothers' occupation and level of education. Out of the 79 primary schools in the study area, eight schools were selected using random sampling technique. From the selected schools, the researchers randomly selected 320 pupils comprising 128 males and 192 females who formed the sample for the study.

The instruments for the study were Family Demographic Variables Inventory (FDVI) and Scale of Acquisition of Basic Social Skills (SABSS).

The FDVI and SABSS were constructed by the researchers and validated by specialists in childhood education and educational psychology from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. FDVI sought information from the pupils on their family demographic variables (mother’s occupation and level of education) while SABSS sought information on the degree of pupils’ development of basic social skills. The class teachers in the selected schools were required to complete the SABSS in respect of each member of the sample for the study in their respective classes on a five point scale of excellent, good, fair, poor and very poor (5,4,3,2,1). For data analyses, means and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, t-test was used to test hypotheses one and two and analysis of variance to test hypotheses three. Data from FDVI was only used by the researchers to group the pupils according their mothers’ occupation and level of education.

Results

The results of the study are presented in line with the research questions and the corresponding hypotheses.

Table 1: t-test Analysis of Influence of Mothers’ Occupation on Pupils’ Basic Social Skills Development

Mother’s Occupation	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Zt	Significance	95% CI	Decision
Paid Employment	152	4.00	0.61	318	-1.55	.123	-0.225, 0.028	NS
Self Employment	168	4.10	0.52					

Results in Table 1 revealed that pupils whose mothers were self-employed had a mean score of 4.10 and standard deviation of 0.52 and pupils whose mothers were in paid employment had a mean score of 4.00 and standard deviation of 0.61 on SABSS. Data in Table 1 also showed that mothers’ occupation did not influence significantly pupils’ development of basic social skills (t= -1.55, p =.123.)

Table 2: ANOVA on Influence of Mothers’ Level of Education on Pupils’ Development of Basic Social Skills

Mothers’ Level of Education	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	F	Sig.	95% CI	Decision
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*LLE	56	3.46	0.58					
*MLE	153	4.02	0.60	2, 317	26.83	000	3.894, 4.028	Sig
*HLE	111	4.36	0.55					
Total	320	3.98	0.61					

***LLE= low level of education *MLE= moderate level of education
*HLE= high level of education**

Results in Table 2 revealed that pupils whose mothers had LLE had a mean SABSS score of 3.46 and standard deviation of 0.58. Pupils whose mothers had MLE had a mean score of 4.02 and standard deviation of 0.60, while pupils whose mothers had HLE had a mean score of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 0.55. Data in Table 2 also revealed that mothers' level of education influenced significantly the pupils' development of basic social skills $F(2,317)=-26.83, p < 0.05$. A post-hoc analysis using *Sheffe* test was done to determine the direction of the significant difference.

Table 3: Scheffe test of pupils mean scores on SABSS

(i) Mothers' level of education	(j) Mothers' level of education	Mean difference (i-J)	Std Error	Significance
Low	Moderate	-.55612*	.09865	.000
	High	-.62666*	.08641	.000
Moderate	Low	.55612*	.09865	.000
	High	-.07054	.07582	.049
High	Low	.62666*	.08641	.000
	Moderate	.07054	.07582	.649

***the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level**

Table 3 showing the results of the Scheffe test comparison indicated that high and moderate levels of mothers' education explained the source of the significant difference in the mean scores of the groups on SABSS. The observed significant mean difference of the three groups of pupils favoured the groups in the following increasing order of mothers' level of education: LLE < MLE < HLE.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Moderating Influence of Pupils' Gender on Pupils' Basic Social Skills Development

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Significance	95% CI.	Decision
Male	128	3.96	71	318	.171	-0.228, -0.237	NS
Female	192	4.06	51				

Results in Table 4 show that females had a mean score of 4.06 and standard deviation of 0.51 while males had a mean score of 3.96 standard

deviation of 0.71 on SABSS. The data also revealed that pupils' gender did not significantly impact on their basic social skills development of ($t=-1.37$, $p=.171$).

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that mothers' occupation did not significantly influence pupils' development of basic social skills. The results support the finding by Carneiro, Meghir & Parey, (2011) that the type of mother's occupation – self or paid employment alone will not significantly determine pupils' level of basic social skills development. To the authors, the mother's parenting style and level of educational attainment would create more impact than type of occupation. The findings of this study equally agree with the findings by Abedini, Zamani, Kheradmand & Rajabizadogh (2012) in their study of impact of mothers' occupation status and parenting styles on social skill development and educational progress. Their findings indicated that analysis of the relationship between mothers' occupation and children's social skills development and educational progress depends on other contextual and personal variables such as age, gender and satisfaction levels of mothers and their children. The results of the study equally showed that mother's level of education had significant positive influence on pupils' basic social skills development. Based on the pupil's mean SABSS score, the study revealed that the influence of mother's level of education on pupils' basic social skills development was in ascending order of low < moderate < high in favour of mothers with high level of education. This result supports the finding by Carneiro, Meghir & Parey, (2011) that high level of mothers' education impacted positively on children's social skills development. They observed further that mothers with high level of education showed greater understanding of the value of basic social skills among children.

Finally the findings from the study revealed that pupils' gender had no significant moderating influence on pupils' development of basic social skills. This finding tends to give credence to the environmentalists' age long belief that in a rich, safe, responsive and nurturing environment, being male or female will not significantly create much difference in the patterns of human growth and development, (Montessori, 1912; Watson, 1930). However, Gome & Pereira (2014) in their study on influence of age and gender in acquiring social skills observed that there were gender differences in the level of basic social skills among children. Their findings indicated that girls showed behaviours based on social cooperation and social interaction while boys showed attention problem and overactive and anti social behaviours,

Conclusions

The researchers therefore conclude that high level of mothers' education is a necessary tool for pupils' development of basic social skills. In other words, when mothers attain at least moderate level of education, their involvement in labour market either as a paid employee or self employed will not negate their roles in helping children develop their basic social skills. The researchers further conclude that children will develop the needed social skills when provided with equal opportunities not minding the gender.

Recommendations

Finally, the researchers recommend that effort should be made by government, families, non-governmental organizations and all child advocates to enhance girl-child education with the hope that educated mothers will use their education and general awareness to help children in developing needed basic social skills

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