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Socioeconomic determinants of child Schooling in selected slums in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Access to education is a critical factor for human capital development and overall economic development. Yet, many peculiar challenges inhibit school attendance in slums across the world, particularly developing countries. Therefore, this study examines the socio-economic determinants of child schooling in some slums in Lagos State. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 400 Households. Descriptive analysis was used to explain the distribution of respondents across various demographic and socioeconomic characteristics; while logistic regression was used to estimate the empirical relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. The study found that the age of the respondent, household size, years of formal education, and income significantly influenced child schooling. The study also revealed that respondents were willing to allow their male and female children to pursue tertiary education, indicating no bias or discrimination against female children. The findings have important implications for policy and practice, emphasizing the need to encourage older parents not to desist from enrolling children in their care in school. Also, educational infrastructure gaps in the slum should be addressed and parents should be encouraged to utilize free education opportunities offered by nearby government schools.

Keywords: child schooling, socioeconomic factors, determinants, education, slums

Introduction

The importance of education for human capital development in any nation cannot be overemphasized. According to the human capital theory, investing in education improves the productivity and potential of individuals, leading to overall national development. Therefore, education is crucial for the development of a country's human capital. It is through education that individuals gain the tools to innovate, work efficiently, and drive economic growth,

benefiting both themselves and their communities (OECD, 2001). Given this context, early childhood education has been advocated for over the years. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal aims at achieving quality education for all school-age children across the world. Compared to countries with low literacy rates, highly literate countries are more likely to successfully address development difficulties by bolstering economies, political systems, and social structures (Bano et al., 2022; Razia, 2021; King et al., 2015). The literacy rate is high globally, but the developed nations have a literacy rate of 96% while the literacy rate in developing countries averages 65%. South Asia, West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa regions constitute the larger part of countries with low literacy rates and also fall under the category of poorest countries in the world (World Population Review, 2024). Various studies have been conducted to address the problems, for instance, Million and Metasebya (2019), recommends parents, schools, governments, and non-government organizations need to work together support young people.

In many low-income countries, many children have little access to quality education due to several barriers (Eze, 2016). However, the slum areas are worse off. For instance, Mugisha (2006) revealed that school enrolment is higher in urban non-slum areas than in urban slum areas, and the quality of primary education in slums is often inadequate. Contrarily, Ferreira et al. (2016) was of the view that due to increased urbanization, the rate of schooling in urban slums is higher than in rural areas but lower than that of the formal city. Despite these varying findings from different studies, focusing on slums in this study remains critical because children in slums are still disproportionately affected by different challenges compared to their counterparts in the city or rural areas (Chugh, 2005).

Slums refer to overcrowded urban areas where housing is substandard, living conditions are poor, and access to essential services such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare is limited (UN-Habitat, 2006). These areas are often home to low-income individuals and families who face considerable social and economic difficulties. Schools in slums tend to be underfunded, with children in these areas encountering numerous challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, poorly qualified teachers, financial hardships, child labour, and restricted access to secondary education (Bano et al., 2022; Razia 2021; Sattar and Zhang, 2017).

Lagos State, located in the southwestern region of Nigeria serves as the focal point for this study. Specific focus is given to some selected slums in the following communities: Makoko, Ilaje-Bariga, and Amukoko. Lagos, being the economic hub of Nigeria, presents a diverse

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socioeconomic landscape characterised by rapid urbanisation, varying income levels, and a variety of educational opportunities. Socioeconomic status is significant in determining access to quality education in Lagos State. Children from wealthy families often have access to better educational opportunities. In contrast, children from low-income families, particularly those residing in slum areas, face barriers such as low literacy of parents, poor infrastructural amenities, and financial constraints, amongst others which may affect their schooling experience (Popogbe et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2021). Specifically, Rotinwa (2017) noted that 10.5 million school children are out of school in Nigeria with those living in slums being more vulnerable.

Furthermore, cultural and traditional beliefs in many societies dictate that education for girls is not a priority, emphasizing instead their primary role within the home (Nayak et al., 2016). As a result, females in these areas experience gender prejudice frequently and are less likely than boys to enroll in and attend school (Kunnuji and Esiet, 2015; Popogbe et al., 2021). Boys' schooling is sometimes given precedence over girls' because families frequently think that boys will have more economic potential and are more likely to provide for the family in the future. Girls in slums are also prevented from pursuing education by early marriage and childbearing (Arowolo, 2022; Olabisi, 2017). This would force them to leave school and provide them with little options for the future.

From the foregoing, this study focuses on the socioeconomic characteristics that impact child schooling in the selected slums. The aim of this paper is to provide empirical insights into the barriers to education experienced by slum residents and to guide practice and policy targeted at enhancing educational results for children living in slums.

Methodology

Study area

Lagos State is located in South-western Nigeria. Lagos is a bustling metropolis and a significant economic hub of Nigeria. It is also one of the most populous states in the country, with a diverse range of cultural backgrounds represented. The state is cosmopolitan in nature and can be referred to as “mini-Nigeria” because all the three major ethnic groups; Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo domicile in Lagos. Lagos State has a population growth rate of 600,000 per annum and a population density of 4193 persons per square kilometre (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Sampling technique

Three communities- Makoko, Ilaje-Bariga, and Amukoko are purposively selected as they house some of the largest slum areas in Lagos State (World Bank, 2014). The population of the study comprises all households which consist of at least one school-age (6-17 years) child living in the selected slums. This age group has been selected because it falls within the age range of children in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

In order to ensure proper representation, a multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents across the slum. The first stage was the cluster sampling of densely populated areas in the slums, which was aided by the community head. Five densely populated areas were identified in the Makoko slum, three densely populated areas in Ilaje-Bariga and five densely populated areas in Amukoko. A second stage of simple random sampling was done to select 135 respondents in Makoko, 88 in Ilaje-Bariga and 177 respondents in Amukoko. This sampling was done relative to the willingness of respondents to participate in the survey and the population of each area.

Methods of data collection

A structured close-ended questionnaire was administered to collect data from the respondents. The first section of the questionnaire focused on the socioeconomic and demographic features of respondents, while the second part asked questions relating to the educational skills and preferences of the respondents. Altogether, 400 responses were generated, however, five (5) questionnaires were not filled appropriately and therefore, not used for analysis.

A pilot study was conducted involving 10 household heads (5 males and 5 females) from Ebute Ero, a slum community located in Oworonshoki, Lagos. The pilot study was carried out to test the reliability and clarity of the research instruments and data collection procedures. This preliminary exercise helped identify potential challenges and ensured that the research tools were well-suited for the study's objectives. Feedback from participants informed necessary adjustments to the survey questions, improving their comprehension and relevance for the target population. These refinements enhanced the overall reliability and validity of the main study.

Method of data analyses

Some studies have identified various determinants of schooling (Sattar and Zhang, 2017). Such factors include the age and gender of the household head, family size, literacy level of the

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household head, proximity to a school, and other related variables. However, for the analysis, an empirical analysis was performed on the continuous variables, while a descriptive analysis was conducted on the categorical variables to determine their impact on the schooling experience of children in the household.

Table 1. Definition of variables

Dependent Variable	Regressors	Description
School-age children attending school? (SAS), 1 = Yes, 0 = No	AGE	Age of the respondents
	HHS	Household Size
	YFE	Average years of formal education of household members, average years of schooling of household members
	YLS	Number of years of living in coastal slum
	INC	Income

Based on the information in Table 1, the following model was specified:

$$SAS = \propto + \beta_1 AGE_i + \beta_2 HHS_i + \beta_3 YFE_i + \beta_4 YLS_i + \beta_5 INC_i + \mu_i \quad (1)$$

Where $\propto$ = constant term

β_1 - β_{10} = coefficients

μ_i = error term

Both descriptive and empirical analyses were carried out in this study. The descriptive analysis described the distribution of respondents across various demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. It was also used to analyse other factors that contributed to child schooling in the communities. On the other hand, logistic regression was used to estimate the empirical relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables, given the categorical nature of the dependent variable (schooling) and the continuous nature of the independent variables.

Results and discussion

This section presents the results of the study, beginning with the descriptive statistics of the respondents, which provide insight into their socioeconomic characteristics. This is followed by the presentation of the results of the logistic regression analysis, which reveals the relationships

between the various socioeconomic variables and the likelihood of children's school enrolment in the selected slum communities.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AGE	395	20	84	38.6101	14.1459
HHS	395	3	20	5.3848	2.54578
YFE	395	0	16	6.8759	6.36753
YLS	395	1	80	15.6937	10.9461
INC	394	0	50003	2467.911	3636.1529
Valid N (list wise)	394				

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables used for analysis. The average age of respondents is approximately 38.61 years, with ages ranging from 20 to 84. The standard deviation of 14.1459 indicates that there is a moderate spread in the ages of respondents around the mean. The average household size is approximately 5.38 members, with sizes ranging from 3 to 20 members. The standard deviation of 2.54578 suggests some variability in household sizes among the respondents. On average, respondents have approximately 6.88 years of formal education. The range is from no formal education to 16 years, with a standard deviation of 6.36753 indicating a wide range of educational attainment levels.

Furthermore, respondents have lived in the slum for an average of approximately 15.69 years, with a range from 1 year to 80 years. This indicates that some people were born in the slum. The standard deviation of 10.9461 reflects significant variability in the duration of residence in the slum. The average daily income is approximately 2467.911 (about $1.6), with a range from 0 to 50,003 (about $33.3). Responses on the overall socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents were also collected and the analysis of responses is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 presents the socioeconomic features of the respondents. On the gender, in Makoko, males account for approximately 52% of the population, while females make up about 48%. However, in Ilaje-Bariga and Amukoko, females had a higher rate of participation (55% and 59% respectively). The percentage distribution of the age range show that in Ilaje-Bariga, individuals less than 25 years constitute approximately 15% of the population, while those aged

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26-35 years represent around 28%. In Makoko, over 45% of respondents are less than 25 years old. Across all the communities, people older than 65 years constitute the lowest proportion. Again, across all the communities, people with household members of 5-7 constitute the largest proportion of respondents.

Table 2. Socioeconomic features of respondents

Demographic/socioeconomic characteristics		Makoko (%)	Ilaje-Bariga (%)	Amukoko (%)
Gender	Male	52	45	41
	Female	48	55	59
Age	<25	48	15	7
	26-35	23	28	29
	36-45	17	24	30
	46-55	5	17	17
	56-65	5	7	11
	>65	2	8	5
Years of formal education	none	56	29	22
	1-6	20	12	20
	7-12	21	42	46
	13-16	2	17	12
Household size	<5	32	28	43
	5-7	53	53	47
	7-10	8	15	7
	>10	7	3	2
Employment status	Salaried	3	3	11
	Self-Employed	92	85	80
	Retired	2	7	4
	Unemployed	3	5	5
Years of living in community	Less than 10	35	44	38
	11-20	48	31	37
	21 and above	17	24	25
Daily income	below N2000	66	73	64
	N2000-N4000	21	22	21
	above N4000	13	5	15

The self-employed formed a larger percentage of respondents, while the least was the retired in Makoko and Amukoko. In Ilaje-Bariga, the unemployed formed the lowest population. Notably, the majority of respondents have lived in their communities for over 10 years. Lastly, the responses on income generated showed that most of the respondents earned less than N2,000

(less than $1.5) a day. This shows that most of them live below the poverty line and experience severe poverty.

Table 3. Are school-age children in the household attending a school?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	307	77.7
No	88	22.3
Total	395	100

The majority of respondents (77.7%) confirmed that school-age children in their household are attending school, suggesting that a significant proportion of children in these households have access to education. However, a substantial minority (22.3%) indicated that school-age children are not attending school (Table 3). This finding is in line with that of King et al. (2015). Their study also suggested that parents regard education highly and would allow their children to have access to it, provided the challenges to accessing education are surmountable.

As presented in Table 4, the coefficient for the age of respondents is -0.035, indicating that as the age of the respondent increases by one year, the log odds of a child being enrolled in school decrease by 0.035 units. This result is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The odds ratio (Exp(B)) is 0.966, meaning that for each additional year of the respondent's age, the odds of their child being enrolled in school decrease by approximately 3.4%. This implies that older respondents are slightly less likely to have their children enrolled in school compared to younger respondents.

Table 4. Logistic regression

Variables		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	AGE	-0.035	0.01	11.233	1	<.001	0.966
	HHS	0.251	0.069	13.148	1	<.001	1.285
	YFE	-0.042	0.021	4.131	1	0.042	0.959
	YLS	-0.018	0.013	1.836	1	0.175	0.983
	INC	0	0	7.496	1	0.006	1
	Constant	1.454	0.514	8.017	1	0.005	4.28

The coefficient for household size is 0.251, suggesting that as the household size increases by one member, the log odds of a child being enrolled in school increase by 0.251 units. This result is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The odds ratio is 1.285, meaning that for each additional

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household member, the odds of a child being enrolled in school increase by approximately 28.5%. Therefore, larger households have a higher likelihood of having more children in school.

The years of formal education has a coefficient of -0.042, indicating that as the years of formal education of the respondent increase by one year, the log odds of a child being enrolled in school decrease by 0.042 units. This result is statistically significant (p = 0.042). The odds ratio (Exp(B)) is 0.959, meaning that for each additional year of formal education, the odds of a child being enrolled in school decrease by approximately 4.1%. Higher levels of formal education among respondents are associated with a slight decrease in the likelihood of their children being enrolled in school. This counterintuitive finding suggests that more educated households may incur additional expenses in sending all school-age children to school, resulting in younger children staying at home while older ones continue their education. This differs from the findings of Sattar and Zhang (2017) and Abuya et al. (2017) which showed a positive and significant relationship between the literacy of household heads and school attendance. The findings by Landersø et al. (2018) could shed light on this seemingly paradoxical result. Some parents might deliberately delay early child schooling and stagger the schooling of their children within the household to take advantage of certain inherent benefits.

The coefficient for years of living in the coastal slum is -0.018, showing a slight decrease in the log odds of child enrolment in school for each additional year of residence in the slum. However, this result is not statistically significant (p = 0.175), suggesting that the number of years living in the slum does not have a significant impact on child schooling in this context. It can be deduced that the duration of residence in the slum does not significantly affect the likelihood of child enrolment in school.

Lastly, the coefficient for income generated daily is 0.000, indicating no practical change in the log odds of child enrolment in school for each unit increase in daily income. However, this result is statistically significant (p = 0.006). The odds ratio (Exp(B)) is 1.000, suggesting that the effect of daily income on the odds of child enrolment is negligible.

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	368.888[a]	0.118	0.181

The Cox & Snell R Square value of 0.118 and the Nagelkerke R Square value of 0.181 both suggest that the model explains a modest proportion of the variance in the dependent variable. Specifically, the Cox & Snell R Square shows that about 12% of variations in school enrolment are accounted for by the independent variables. On the other hand, the Nagelkerke R Square indicates that about 18.1% of the variability in child enrolment in school is accounted for by the independent variables included in the model.

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	49.632	5	<.001
	Block	49.632	5	<.001
	Model	49.632	5	<.001

Given the significant Chi-square values, we reject the null hypothesis that the coefficients for all predictors are zero, concluding that the predictors improve the model fit.

The study also examined other factors that likely contributed to child schooling experience in the communities. These factors include the literacy level of parents/guardians, their ability to afford the school fees and other educational supplies, and the desired highest level of education for their female children. The responses gotten are explained below.

The distribution in Table 5 indicates that nearly half of the respondents are unable to read in English, which may have implications for communication, education, and access to information within the community. Additionally, a notable portion of the population can read in English to varying degrees, with about one-third doing so without difficulty and one-fifth with some challenges. Similarly, Nayak et al. (2016) found low literacy rates among parents living in the slums.

The table also shows that the largest group (53.2%) of respondents cannot write in English, highlighting a significant literacy challenge within the community. A smaller but still notable group (29.1%) can write in English without any difficulty, showing a solid proficiency in writing skills for this portion of the population. A moderate group (17.7%) can write in English but with some difficulty, indicating that while they have some writing skills, they may need additional support to achieve full proficiency.

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Table 5. Educational capabilities and preference of respondents

Response	Frequency	Percent
Ability of the Respondent to Read in English		
Yes, and without difficulty	125	31.6
Yes, but with difficulty	75	19
No	194	49.1
No Response	1	0.3
Total	395	100
Ability of respondents to write in English		
Yes, and without difficulty	115	29.1
Yes, but with difficulty	70	17.7
No	210	53.2
Total	395	100
Ability to afford school fees		
Yes	147	37.2
Usually	116	29.4
Rarely	64	16.2
No	68	17.2
Total	395	100
Ability to afford school Supplies		
Yes	137	34.7
Usually	126	31.9
Rarely	64	16.2
No	68	17.2
Total	395	100
Highest level of education female children would likely attain		
Postgraduate	80	20.3
Tertiary	256	64.8
Secondary	7	1.8
Primary	1	0.3
None	51	12.9
Total	395	100

A substantial portion of respondents (37.2%) indicated that they can consistently afford school fees. This suggests that over a third of the households are in a relatively stable economic position, allowing them to manage educational expenses without significant difficulty. Close to a third of respondents (29.4%) reported that they can usually afford school fees. A notable segment (16.2%) indicated that they rarely afford school fees. This highlights that these

households face significant economic challenges, which could lead to intermittent school attendance or reliance on alternative means to support their children's education. A significant portion (17.2%) of respondents stated that they cannot afford school fees at all. This reveals the extent of financial barriers that prevent children from accessing education, potentially leading to higher dropout rates or children not enrolling in school at all.

Table 5 further reveals the findings on the ability of respondents to afford school supplies. These responses mirror those regarding the affordability of school fees. Approximately one-third of the respondents (34.7%) indicated that they could consistently afford school supplies. This suggests that a significant portion of households are in a relatively stable economic position regarding educational expenses. Nearly another third (31.9%) reported that they can usually afford school supplies, implying that while they can generally manage educational expenses, there might be occasional financial strains or variability in their ability to pay. A notable portion (16.2%) indicated that they rarely afford school supplies. A significant 17.2% of respondents stated that they cannot afford school supplies at all. This barrier may potentially cause the children to experience low self-esteem. These findings to some extent corroborate those of Chugh (2005) and Bano et al. (2022).

Lastly, a few respondents (20.3%) believe that their female children will attain a postgraduate level of education. This indicates a few respondents have high educational aspirations for their female children. A total of 256 respondents (64.8%) believe that female children will attain tertiary education. This is the majority response, suggesting that most respondents expect their female children to complete college or university. Chugh's (2005) findings also confirmed that residents of Sanjay Colony, a slum in India, are equally committed to ensuring that their female children receive an education, just as their male children do. Only 7 respondents (1.8%) believe that the female children will attain only secondary education. This small percentage reflects lower educational expectations for female children in a few households. Only 1 respondent (0.3%) believes that the female children will attain only primary education, indicating very low educational expectations in this case. About 12.9% believe that female children will not attain any formal education, suggesting that some respondents still have a bias for education for the girl-child. These findings are also in line with those of Nayak et al. (2016) and Kunnuji and Esiet (2015), whose findings showed prejudice for girl-child education.

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Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the socioeconomic determinants of child schooling in the slum areas of Lagos, specifically focusing on the communities of Makoko, Ilaje-Bariga, and Amukoko. The study found that older respondents were slightly less likely to enroll their children in school. This reluctance of older parents to enroll their children is concerning, and suggests that older generations may prioritize immediate economic survival over long-term educational benefits. Programmes such as UNICEF's "Education for All" campaign have similarly noted that older parents, especially those in low-income areas, need targeted interventions to shift these priorities. This suggests a need for targeted educational campaigns and support programmes aimed at older parents to emphasise the importance of education for their children. Also, larger households were associated with a higher likelihood of child enrolment in school. Interestingly, higher levels of formal education among respondents were associated with a slight decrease in the likelihood of their children being enrolled in school. This could be a result of other forms of barriers. Moreover, the study found that the duration of residence in the slum did not have a significant impact on child enrolment, highlighting that other factors might play more critical roles in influencing educational outcomes. Although statistically significant, the effect of daily income on child enrolment was negligible. This indicates that improving income alone is not sufficient to enhance school enrolment rates. Comprehensive support systems addressing various family needs might be more effective in promoting education. Notably, the study found that most respondents are willing to allow their female children tertiary level of education and this is a good signal for the socioeconomic development of the country. Higher levels of formal education among respondents were linked to a slight decrease in school enrolment challenges the traditional view that more educated parents automatically prioritize education. This might be reflective of a complex issue, where these parents, though educated, face practical barriers such as high school fees, lack of quality education, or economic pressures. Lastly, the willingness of respondents to allow their female children to reach tertiary education levels is an optimistic sign, contrasting with many studies that show gender-based barriers in education.

The findings from this study have important implications for policymakers, educators, community leaders, and parents in slum areas. To improve educational access and outcomes for

children in slums, specific actions and targeted interventions are necessary by the following stakeholders. Community leaders play a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of education. They need to organise community meetings, educational workshops, and local campaigns that encourage parents to prioritize their children's schooling. While many parents are already making efforts to enrol their children in schools, more awareness is needed about the benefits of education, particularly among older parents who may not fully grasp its long-term value. Parents should take advantage of free education provided by government schools nearby. In cases where private schooling is a preference due to perceived higher quality, parents could explore scholarship opportunities or seek support from NGOs where available. The government and policymakers must address the socioeconomic barriers that prevent children from attending school. Policies should aim to improve the business productivity of slum dwellers, providing them with better job opportunities and access to microloans or grants that can enhance their income. By boosting household incomes, families would be better equipped to afford school fees, uniforms, and supplies. Teachers, school administrators, and education authorities need to work together to improve the quality of education for children in slums. This could involve providing additional training to teachers, reducing classroom overcrowding, and ensuring that educational materials are available and up to date.

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The author declares no potential conflict of interest.

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