

Exploring the Factors Contributing to Poor Academic Performance among Senior Secondary School Students: A Case of Wamakko Local Government Area, Sokoto State

Kamal Muhammad Sani^{a,*}, Maryam Mamman Adam^b, Safiya Garba Nadama^c, Fatima Abdullahi Muhammad^d, Madina Sani Udu^c, Fatima Mohammed^e, & Abdulmumini Yusuf Datti^f

^aDepartment of Sociology, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Northwest University Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria

^bDepartment of Business Administration, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Northwest University Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria

^cDepartment of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto State, Nigeria

^dDepartment of Public Administration, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Northwest University Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria

^eDepartment of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Sokoto State University, Sokoto State, Nigeria

^fLibrary Unit, Northwest University Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria

Abstract

The principal aim of this research paper was to examine the social, psychological, and economic factors that contribute to poor academic performance (PAP) among senior secondary school students with special reference to Wamakko Local Government Area (WLGA), Sokoto State, Nigeria. We utilized a semi-structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews (IDI), and focus group discussions (FGD) to collect data from 220 enrolled senior secondary school students, 10 teachers, and 5 school principals. The statistical results revealed that numerous factors harm the academic performance of students in secondary schools. The results indicate that poor time management (75%), language barriers (74%), and financial constraints (70%) adversely affect the academic performance of senior secondary school students in WLGA. The study concludes with suggestions aimed at improving students' academic performance.

Keywords: Poor academic performance; Secondary school; Students; Wamakko; Sokoto state; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Poor academic performance (PAP) among senior secondary school students presents a significant challenge to Nigeria's education system. A country's development is directly connected to the academic performance of its students' (Singh et al., 2016). Academic performance of students has a direct impact on a country's (Owan, 2018; Bah, 2021). Despite government initiatives such as free school feeding, free tuition fees, free school uniforms, and free text and note books, PAP among students of senior secondary schools in Nigeria continues to climb.

Academic performance is "the extent to which an institution, a teacher, or a student achieves long- or short-term educational goals." (Hellas et al. 2018, as cited in Al-Tameemia et al. 2023, p. 1). This performance is typically measured by continuous assessments and the overall cumulative grade point average (CGPA) achieved by the student." Studies indicate that students with good academic records and successes typically have a better chance of finding work and being promoted. (Tentama & Abdillah, 2019). In contrast, PAP refers to a student's or candidate's inability to reach a set of standards of achievement in a given evaluation exercise such as continuous assessments or examinations (Asikhia, 2010). Students with low academic performance typically have low self-esteem, experience depression and anxiety (Wan Ab Razak & Abdullah, 2019), and are more likely to be involved in negative behaviors such as drug and substance abuse, smoking, sex delinquency, truancy, and fighting with teachers, among others (Nuhroho et al., 2020).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: kamalmsani92@gmail.com

There are multiple factors that can influence students' academic performance. They include: academic-related factors such as academic disengagement, classroom climate, teachers' attitude, a lack of motivation, teaching methods and assessment, medium of instruction etc. (Rosenbaum and Rochford, 2008; Makondo, 2012; Mynbayeva et al., 2016; Mackenzie et al. 2018; Chetty et al., 2019; Salamonson et al. 2020), psychological-related factors including anxiety, depression, hopelessness, discouragement, and doubtfulness etc. (Wan Ab Razak & Abdullah., 2019), personal-related factors including health problems, emotional problems and, personality traits etc. (Bolshakova et al., 2011; Asawa et al., 2017; May et al., 2017), social-related factors such as parental involvement, peer pressure and influence, language barrier, etc. (Fryberg et al., 2013; Reynolds et al., 2015; Drake, 2014), and demographic-related factors such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Williams, 2006; Kenyatta, 2012; Levine et al., 2019). These and other related factors can lead to significant consequences like anxiety and academic procrastination (Al-Tameemia et al., 2023). Eckert et al. (2016) describe academic procrastination as the delay or avoiding of an intended course of study-related action. Studies have established a strong correlation between academic procrastination and PAP, such as low grades in assessment and examination and poor quality of work (Klassen et al., 2008; Grunschel et al., 2013).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian educational system is losing its past glory, with PAP steadily increasing, especially in Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) results. For instance, there had been cases when schools presented a considerable number of candidates for either the West African Examination Council (WAEC) or National Examination Council (NECO), and more than half of them would fail, and those who managed to pass did so with weak grades. This raises questions about the role of examination bodies, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students in contributing to PAP. There are both external and internal factors that contribute to PAP, especially among senior secondary school students. Understanding these causes and addressing them can enhance students' academic performance. Hence, this study will examine the factors contributing to PAP among senior secondary school students in WLGA, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to explore the factors contributing to PAP among senior secondary students within WLGA, Sokoto State. The specific goals are to:

- a. Examine the social factors that affect the academic performance of senior secondary school students in WLGA.
- b. Examine the psychological factors that affect the academic performance of senior secondary school students in WLGA.
- c. Examine economic factors that affect the academic performance of senior secondary school students in WLGA.
- d. Assesses the impacts of PAP on secondary school students in WLGA, Sokoto State.
- e. Provide recommendations to enhance academic performance among secondary school students.

2. Literature Review

Maney and Bunto (2024), "Factors Affecting Students Academic Performance in Mathematics: A Comparative Study between Boarding and Non-Boarding Secondary Schools in Monduli District, Tanzania." This research employed a correlational study design to explore the relationship between teachers' qualifications, socio-economic status, school environment, and students' performance in mathematics. The results revealed a positive relationship between teachers' educational qualifications and students' performance in mathematics subjects, although this impact was not deemed significant. Also, the school environment emerged as a significant factor, suggesting that socio-economic factors and teachers' qualifications play a significant role. The study recommends placing more emphasis on these factors due to their significant influence on academic achievements.

Al-Tameemia et al. (2023), "Determinants of poor academic performance among undergraduate students—A systematic literature review." This systematic literature review explored factors contributing to PAP in students by using the EBSCO and ScienceDirect databases. The review examined fifty past studies (both qualitative and quantitative) from 1990 to 2020. The researchers identified several factors influencing the academic performance of students, including academic, personal, social, and demographic. They recommend that, if utilized properly, social and management techniques can enhance students' academic performance and could yield better results.

Bah (2021), “Poor Performance in Mathematics Among Senior Secondary School Students: Lessons for Education Planners and Parents.” This survey explored the factors causing poor academic performance in mathematics among senior secondary school students. The results confirmed that the poor performance in mathematics among students can be attributed to numerous factors, including inaccurate beliefs, teachers, students, teaching methods, teaching and learning aids, schools, social environment, infrastructure, government policies, parental involvement, and language competence. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that underperformance in mathematics among senior secondary school students prevents students from gaining admission into tertiary institutions, pushing them to engage in criminal activities.

Ghosh and Panigrahi (2019), “Identifying the Factors Affecting Performance of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools in India.” This study assessed the factors contributing to poor academic performance of secondary and tertiary schools in West Bengal, India. Carried out online with a sample of 136 sampled respondents, including working and retired teachers with five years to twenty-five years of experience. The scholars found that students’ attendance is positively correlated to teachers’ motivation to teach and the attitude of the teachers. Also, the study also established that teachers’ motivation to teach is influenced by factors such as teaching materials or aids, teachers experience, class size, curriculum, and pedagogy.

Alami (2016), “Causes of Poor Academic Performance among Omani Students.” According to this study, PAP is a major challenge to the educational system, especially in non-English-speaking nations. The scholar examined 151 essays written by students enrolled in post-foundation programs at Salalah College of Technology in Oman. Factors contributing to PAP were categorized into those connected to students (laziness, dislike to study, etc.), factors connected to teachers (boring teacher, teacher attitude, lack of knowledge about the subject, etc.), factors connected to family (broken family, uneducated parents, poverty, etc.), and other factors like marital status, peer pressure and influence, health challenges, drug abuse, distance, etc.

Makworo, Wasanga, and Olaly (2014), “Psychological factors that affect girls’ academic performance in secondary school in Kenyena, Kissi County, Kenya.” This paper investigated the psychological factors affecting girls’ student behavior towards education. The scholars found that teachers learning attitude is significantly related to students learning in the sampled secondary schools in Kenyena, Kissi County, Kenya.

Komba, Hizza, and Jonathan (2013), “Factors Influencing Academic Performance of Ward Secondary Schools: A Case of Selected Schools in Moshi Municipality and Moshi District.” This study examined factors affecting students’ academic performance in Moshi Municipality, Tanzania. The scholars identified factors such as inadequate teaching aids, inadequate qualified teachers, an unfavorable learning environment, inadequate books in the libraries, poor communication, and frequent absences by teachers that typically affect the academic performance of secondary school students in the study area.

2.1. Motivation Systems Theory

The motivation systems theory (MST) was developed by Martin Ford’s in 1992. MST “focuses on the individual as a unit of analysis, but embeds the individual in the biological, social, and environmental contexts that are crucial to development” (Michael, 2016 p. 67). Ford’s used a simple mathematical formula to represent all these factors in a single model. According to him, the formula for an effective person-in-context is: **Achievement = (motivation x skill) x responsive environment**. Ford posits that academic success and capability are the outcomes of a motivated, skilled, and biologically capable individual interacting with a responsive environment (Michael, 2016).

Nonis and Hudson (2006) reported that Pinder et al. (1984) used a similar formula (**Performance = ability x motivation**) to describe performance as a multiplicative function of both ability and motivation. According to this formula, a student with high ability but low motivation is not likely to perform well, whereas a student with low ability but high motivation is more likely to perform well. Thus, the variability in motivation across students may dampen the association between ability and performance (Michael, 2016).

3. Research Methods

3.1. Study Area

This study was conducted in WLGA, Sokoto State, Nigeria, which is at latitudes 13°2’16” N and 5°5’37” E. It has an elevation of approximately 226 meters above sea level. WLGA covers an area of 697 square kilometers and has a

population of 179,619, according to the 2006 population census. WLGA shares borders with Sokoto North, Sokoto South, Dangen Shuni, Bodinga Binji, Yabo, Kware, and Tangaza local government areas.

3.2. Study Design

The study design is defined as “the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived so as to attain answers to research questions and to control variables” (Ogunbameru & Ogunbameru, 2010, p. 109). This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect relevant first-hand information regarding the factors contributing to PAP among secondary school students in WLGA. Mangal and Mangal (2013) wrote that descriptive survey technique is widely used in educational, social, and management sciences to evaluate and present the status of a given situation or phenomenon, such as academic performance.

3.3. Study Population

Mangal and Mangal (2013) describe the study population as the group of individuals who meet specific criteria and are accessible for a study. Defining the study population is crucial for the validity of study results (Ogunbameru & Ogunbameru, 2010). In this study, the target population comprises all senior secondary school students in WLGA, Sokoto State, Nigeria.

3.4. Sampling Techniques

Given that the entire study population could not be reached, a sample was drawn. Firstly, simple random sampling was employed to select 2 private and 3 government senior secondary schools in WLGA. Secondly, stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select 220 senior secondary school students, comprising 136 males and 84 females aged 13 to 25 from the selected senior secondary schools. Additionally, for the qualitative data, the purposive sampling technique was used to select participants comprising 10 teachers, 5 school principals for the IDI, and 20 students from the 220 sampled students for the FGD.

3.5. Method of Data Collection

In this study, the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. A semi-structured questionnaire, IDI, and FGD were the major tools used to gather data from the sampled respondents. The study instrument utilized the Likert scale to collect quantitative data, with ratings as follows: strongly agreed = 5, agreed = 4, neutral = 3, disagreed = 2, and strongly disagreed = 1. For the qualitative data, a questionnaire was developed primarily for the IDI participants, including 10 teachers and 5 school principals. Also, 20 students were selected from the 220 sampled students for the FGD. The study instrument was self-administered by the researcher. Informed consent was obtained from all questionnaire respondents, IDI, and FGD participants. However, the study ensures confidentiality and anonymity for all participants; personal details that might reveal the participants identities were not collected.

3.6. Method of Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics to analyze and present the collected data in this study. Microsoft Word and Excel (2016) and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20, were utilized for data entry, coding, editing, and quantitative data analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Data in Table 1 and 2, the sampled respondents of the study comprise two hundred and twenty (220) senior secondary school students. Of these, the majority (61%) were males, while 38.1% were females. With regards to age of the respondents, the majority (60.3%) fall within the age bracket of 13 to 19 years, and the remaining 39.4% fall within the age bracket of 19 to 25 years. With regard to the religious practice among the sampled respondents, the majority (63.1%) are Muslims, while 36.8% are Christians. This religion distribution highlights the dominant religion within WLGA. With regard to the class of the sampled respondents, statistical findings show that nearly half (48%) of the students are in SS II, followed by SS I (23%), and SS III (28.1%). Further, results show that 42% of the sampled

respondents are art students, 32.3% are science students, and 28.1% are commerce students. Lastly, the majority (56.8%) of the sampled students attend government secondary schools, while the remaining 43.1% attend private secondary schools.

Table 1. Questionnaire, IDI, and FGD Distribution

Sampled Respondents	Questionnaire		IDI		FGD		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Students	136	84	-	-	10	10	220
Teachers	-	-	6	4	-	-	10
School Principals	-	-	4	1	-	-	5
Total	136	84	10	5	10	10	235
Percentage	61.8%	38.1%	66.7%	33.3%	50%	50%	

Note: M stands for male respondent, F stands for female respondent, and % stands for percentage of respondents.

Table 2. Demographics of the Sampled Senior Secondary School Students

	Details	N	%
Gender	Male	136	61.8
	Female	86	38.1
	Total	220	100
Age	13-15 years	62	28.1
	16-18 years	71	32.2
	19-21 years	45	20.4
	22- 25 years	42	19
	Total	220	100
Religion	Islam	139	63.1
	Christianity	81	36.8
	Traditional	-	-
	Total	220	100
Class	SS I	50	22.7
	SS II	105	47.7
	SS III	62	28.1
	Total	220	100
Department	Art	92	41.8
	Science	71	32.3
	Commerce	57	25.9
	Total	220	100
Type of school	Government	125	56.8
	Private	95	43.1
	Total	220	100

Note: N stands for number of respondents, and % stands for percentage of responses. Source: Field survey (2024).

The first objective of this study was to identify the social factors affecting the academic performance of senior secondary school students in WLGA. As shown in Table 3, the sampled respondents expressed their perceptions on numerous social factors influencing academic performance. Results indicate how various social factors, including parental involvement, societal support, and personal challenges, impact students' academic performance. Quantitative data reveal that two-thirds of the sampled respondents (74% combined SA and A) reported that language barriers affect their academic performance. These results are consistent with the arguments put forth by Ogundel (2014), who emphasized that the reliance on English as medium of instruction, especially in African nations, can hinder students' performance, particularly for those who are not fluent in the language. Similarly, Abdulrahman and Ayyash (2019) contend that when English is used as the medium of instruction, students who are not proficient may experience a disconnect with the material, leading to a decline in their academic performance. These findings were further corroborated during the IDI and FGD, where participants shared:

“I observe that language barriers affect students’ academic performance. In my classes, I have noticed that some students who struggle with the English language don’t participate fully in class discussions or even ask questions.” Teacher 4 IDI.

“I think language barriers negatively affect my education. I still struggle a lot. In most of my classes, there are many technical terms that I don’t understand. Sometimes I don’t participate in class discussion because I am scared of making mistakes in English. I feel frustrated.” Student 18 FGD.

Table 3. Students opinion regarding social factors influencing academic performance

No.	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SDA (%)
1	I feel my parents or guardians are involved in my educational studies (such as attending meetings, assisting with assignments, etc.).	30 (13.6)	25 (11.3)	11 (5.0)	71 (32.2)	83 (37.7)
2	I feel my parents or guardians provide me with necessary school materials (such as text and note books, pens, school bags, etc.).	43 (19.5)	31 (14.0)	15 (6.8)	69 (31.3)	63 (28.6)
3	I feel my parents or guardians have more expectations for my academic performance.	55 (25.0)	37 (16.8)	22 (10.0)	63 (28.6)	43 (19.5)
4	I feel social problems such as insecurity, crime, etc. distract me from my studies.	65 (29.5)	29 (13.1)	40 (18.1)	37 (16.8)	49 (22.3)
5	I feel my community provides educational resources such as study centers for students like me.	20 (9.0)	30 (13.6)	10 (4.5)	64 (29.0)	96 (43.6)
6	I feel my cultural background influences my behavior towards education.	84 (38.1)	49 (22.2)	33 (15.0)	20 (9.0)	34 (15.4)
7	I feel language barriers affect my understanding of lessons and school materials.	102 (46.3)	60 (27.2)	5 (2.2)	29 (13.1)	24 (10.9)
8	I feel bullying at school affects my academic performance.	85 (38.6)	50 (22.7)	16 (7.2)	32 (14.5)	37 (16.8)
9	I feel my friends at school help me in my academic activities.	30 (13.6)	27 (12.2)	40 (18.1)	72 (32.7)	51 (23.1)
10	I feel the time spent online instead of studying affects my academic performance.	89 (40.4)	62 (28.1)	34 (15.4)	15 (6.8)	20 (9.0)

Note: SA stands for strongly agreed, A stands for agreed, N stands for neutral, D stands for disagreed, SD stands for strongly disagreed, and % stands for percentage. Source: Field survey (2024).

Furthermore, the survey found that a significant proportion of the students (70% combined D and SDA) indicated that their parents or guardians are not fully involved in their educational studies, which affects their academic performance. These results align with the work of Bah (2021), who noted that parental involvement plays a critical role in academic success. When parents or guardians do not actively engage in their children’s education, they may struggle to find the motivation and support they need to excel academically (Ogundel, 2014; Alami, 2016). Supporting these findings, participants during the IDI and FGD stated:

“Social factors play a crucial role in shaping students’ academic outcomes. For instance, parental involvement is very important because when they actively participate in their children’s education, it positively improves motivation and performance. However, I always see students whose parents or guardians are less involved often struggle, and this lack of support can lead to academic underperformance.” Principal 1 IDI

“My parents are always busy with work, so they don’t have time to assist me with school. I sometimes feel like I am on my own when it comes to studying. I wish they could be involved, but I understand they are trying to provide for the family. I find it very hard to focus on my studies when I don’t feel that support from my parents.” Student 10 FGD.

Additionally, results show that two-thirds of the respondents (76% combined D and SDA) feel that their community ignores their educational studies, which contributes to their PAP. These findings align with the views of Jameel and Ali (2016), who argue that the value communities attached to education can significantly improve the academic performance of students. When communities’ members are not actively engaged in supporting local schools, students

may lack motivation to concentrate on their studies (Sule, 2018). Furthermore, these findings were corroborated during IDI and FGD sessions. Participants share their views as follows:

“Sincerely speaking, a lack of supportive community can hinder students’ academic performance. The majority of our students come from backgrounds where academic achievement is not valued, which can discourage them. Without support from their families and community, they often lack the motivation to excel.” Principal 3 IDI.

“I agree that a lack of community support affects how we do in school. I have seen some of my friends who have solid support at home and in the community succeed, while others who don’t struggle a lot. It is frustrating because I know I have potential, but without encouragement and support from my family and community, it’s difficult to stay motivated and focused on my studies.” Student 16 FGD.

On the other hand, a significant proportion (69% combined SA and A) acknowledged that spending much time navigating the internet and social media instead of studying distracts them from their academic activities. Numerous studies found that the excessive time spent online can distract students away from their studies. A study by Kuppuswamy & Narayan (2010), found that students who spent much time on social media may struggle to manage their time, leading them to neglect their studies, and are prone to cybercrime victimization (Ndubueze & Abdullahi, 2019). Accordingly, qualitative data from the IDI and FGD affirmed these findings. Participants opined that:

“In today’s digital world, I am concerned about the negative impact of social media on students’ academic performance. I observe that the majority of students are spending much time online instead of focusing on their studies. I have had conversations with them about how their grades are affected by the time they spend online. Some students confirmed that they lost track of time, which led to late-night reading before a test or examination.” Teacher 1 IDI

“Social media is a big part of my life. I definitely spend too much time on social media like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. It’s hard to focus on studying. I will start my assignments, then get distracted by notifications. Sometimes I end up doing my assignments late at night, early morning, or in the class.” Student 1 FGD.

Table 4. Students opinion regarding psychological factors influencing academic performance

No.	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SDA (%)
1	I have academic goals that motivate me to perform better in school.	49 (22.3)	37 (16.8)	19 (8.6)	80 (36.3)	35 (15.9)
2	I feel motivated to study hard, even when I am aware it is important.	60 (27.2)	29 (13.1)	22 (10.0)	56 (25.4)	53 (24.0)
3	I believe that my efforts will lead to achievement in my studies.	39 (17.7)	65 (29.5)	31 (14.0)	40 (18.1)	45 (20.5)
4	I am confident in my ability to succeed academically.	55 (25.0)	48 (21.8)	20 (9.0)	50 (22.7)	47 (21.3)
5	I frequently doubt my academic capabilities, which affects my academic performance.	68 (30.9)	45 (20.5)	17 (7.7)	46 (20.9)	44 (20.0)
6	I feel I can improve my grades with effort and practice.	70 (31.8)	31 (14.0)	40 (18.1)	39 (17.7)	40 (18.1)
7	I feel stressed about my academic performance.	59 (26.8)	50 (22.7)	21 (9.5)	47 (21.3)	43 (19.5)
8	I find it difficult to manage academic stress.	77 (35.0)	61 (27.7)	24 (10.9)	28 (12.7)	30 (13.6)
9	I struggle to manage my time effectively when it comes to studying.	100 (45.4)	66 (30.0)	10 (4.5)	24 (10.9)	20 (9.0)
10	I feel procrastinating my homework and assignments affects my academic performance.	80 (36.3)	59 (26.8)	19 (8.6)	39 (17.7)	23 (10.4)
11	I find it difficult to comprehend the materials presented in school.	99 (45.0)	50 (22.7)	12 (5.4)	40 (18.1)	19 (8.6)

Note: SA stands for strongly agreed, A stands for agreed, N stands for neutral, D stands for disagreed, SD stands for strongly disagreed, and % stands for percentage of responses. Source: Field survey (2024).

The second objective of this present study was to identify the psychological factors affecting the academic performance of senior secondary school students in WLGA. Table 4 shows the students responses regarding

psychological factors contributing to PAP. Participants, including principals, teachers, and students, shared their perspectives on how psychological factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, stress level, etc. affect students' academic performance. Results indicate that the majority of the respondents (75.4% combined SA and A) struggle with time management for studying and other extracurricular activities, which lead them to procrastinate their homework and assignments. These results align with Beharu's (2018) assertion that effective time management is crucial for students' academic success. According to Ames (1992, as cited in Beharu, 2018), students who manage their time well are more likely to establish a consistent study routine and achieve academic success. Conversely, a lack of effective time management can hinder students from establishing study routines, leading to missed deadlines and poor grades, among others (Alami, 2016). These findings are corroborated during the IDI and FGD. Participants opined that:

"Psychological well-being is directly related to academic achievement. Students who are struggling with mental health problems like anxiety find it hard to focus on their studies." Principal 2 IDI.

"Time management is a recurring challenge. Some students have extracurricular activities or even take part-time jobs. This situation complicates their ability to focus on their academic activities. I see how struggling with time management led to higher stress among students, which in turn affects their academic performance." Teacher 7 IDI

"I struggle with time management, especially when I have sports practice or other after-school activities. I try to balance everything, but I end up procrastinating on my assignments. I feel like I have a lot to do, and I don't know where to start." Students 14 FGD.

Also, the results indicate that a significant proportion of the respondents (68% combined SA and A) reported difficulty to effectively comprehend the lessons they have been taught in school, which significantly influences their academic performance. Alaimi (2016) identified factors including absenteeism, a lack of intrinsic desire to learn, and not understanding lessons thought in school as critical factors contributing to students' underperformance. Bah (2021, p. 13) argued that "students lacking sustainable interest in the subject have equally contributed to the huge failure because it is only with interest, among other things, that they can nurture and develop the necessary skills to understand and solve mathematical problems." The inability of students to comprehend, recall, and make connections between what they learned and taught increases the rate of poor performance (Varaidzaimakondo & Makondo, 2020). Affirming these findings, IDI participants and FGD discussants share their views, stating that:

"One of the major psychological factors contributing to poor academic performance is when students find lessons difficult to comprehend. In my mathematics classes, I observe that many students struggle with numbers and concepts. When students find lessons difficult to understand, it can lead to anxiety and disengagement." Teacher 6 IDI.

"I struggle to comprehend most of the lessons at school, especially mathematics and science subjects. Honestly, when I don't understand something right away, it discourages me. Sometimes I feel ashamed to ask questions in the midst of my classmates. Sometimes I just give up." Student FGD 8.

Furthermore, the survey results indicate that 52.2% of the respondents (combined D and SDA) feel that they lack clear academic objectives that motivate them to put more effort into achieving academic success. Academic goals, according to Bah (2021), are educational aims and objectives that students set for their studies and overall academic achievement. Wu and Xin (2019) argue that the absence of academic goals can lead students to struggle with time management, poor motivation, and procrastination, as they may not see the reason for their studies. Further, responses from IDI and FGD participants substantiated these findings. They opined that:

"Academic goals are very crucial for students' academic success. Students' who have clear academic aims and objectives tend to stay focused and motivated. Also, students without specific academic goals often struggle with their studies, which can lead to poor academic performance." Teacher 3 IDI

"I think having academic goals and objectives makes a big difference. I have observed that when I set goals, I am more engaged and motivated to study. However, sometimes I find it difficult to set those goals because I don't always know what I want to achieve." Student 20 FGD.

The third objective of this present study was to identify the economic factors affecting the academic performance of senior secondary school students in WLGA. The data presented in Table 5 above indicate that the majority of the sampled respondents (70% combined SA and A) indicated that having to miss classes and other school-related activities due to financial stress in their family prevented them from concentrating on their studies. This is in agreement with Leghara and Mbah's (2010) study which highlight that financial constraints due to the economic

crisis in Nigeria have negatively affected education and students' academic performance. In their study, Bamigboye, Ede, and Adeyemi (2016) found that nearly all (82%) of the respondents, including students and parents, attested that their purchasing power has declined, making it difficult for them to afford the necessary educational materials, such as notebooks, text books, school uniforms, school bags, and other supplies. These findings were further supported by the views of participants during the IDI and FGD. They expressed:

"Truly, financial stress is a problem that affects many students. Many of my students are concerned about their family's financial condition, especially in this difficult time when families are struggling to provide food to their children. It can be difficult for students to focus on their studies. In many instances, I have seen our students come to school distracted, unable to focus on lessons because they are preoccupied with thoughts about their family financial situations." Principal 4 IDI.

"Financial stress has affected my academic performance. My parents work really hard to provide for our basic needs, but it is quite difficult to cover everything. I am worried about how I can help, and that makes it hard to stay motivated and focus on my studies." Students 5 FGD.

Table 5. Students opinion regarding economic factors influencing academic performance

No.	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SDA (%)
1	I feel my family can afford additional education resources such as tutoring, online courses, etc.	29 (13.1)	40 (18.1)	30 (13.6)	73 (33.1)	48 (21.8)
2	I have access to an uninterrupted internet connection, laptop, and smartphone for my studies.	50 (22.7)	31 (14.0)	24 (10.9)	46 (20.9)	69 (31.3)
3	I feel financial stress in my family affects my ability to concentrate on my studies.	88 (40.0)	66 (30.0)	18 (8.1)	34 (15.4)	14 (6.3)
4	My parents or guardians work multiple jobs to support the family, leaving little time for academic support and assistance.	97 (44.0)	49 (22.3)	20 (9.0)	22 (10.0)	30 (13.6)
5	I had to miss classes and other school-related activities like excursions and extracurriculars due to financial constraints.	70 (31.8)	84 (38.1)	35 (15.9)	20 (9.0)	11 (5.0)
6	I feel I can improve my grades with effort and practice.	69 (31.3)	71 (32.2)	17 (7.7)	37 (16.8)	28 (12.7)
7	I feel the exorbitant cost of school fees is a burden for my parents or guardians.	100 (45.4)	50 (22.7)	10 (4.5)	29 (13.1)	31 (14.0)
8	I feel the financial demands of education affect my academic performances.	81 (36.8)	65 (29.5)	20 (9.0)	24 (10.9)	30 (13.6)
9	I have to do part-time jobs to assist my family financially.	65 (29.5)	50 (22.7)	22 (10.0)	46 (20.9)	37 (16.8)
10	I felt navigating work and school affected my academic performance.	67 (30.4)	78 (35.4)	21 (9.5)	20 (9.0)	34 (15.4)

Note: SA stands for strongly agreed, A stands for agreed, N stands for neutral, D stands for disagreed, SD stands for strongly disagreed, and % stands for percentage of responses. Source: Field survey (2024).

Additionally, the survey found that a significant proportion of the sampled respondents (68.1% combined SA and A) and (63% combined SA and A) believe that the exorbitant cost of school fees and monetary demands of education is a burden on their families. moreover 52.2% (combined SA and A) reported doing part-time work to assist their parents or guardians financially, which detracts them from concentrating on their studies. However, a substantial proportion of the students (55% combined D and SDA) believe that financial stress prevents their parents or guardians from providing additional educational resources. Also, (52.2% combined D and SDA) indicated a lack of access to necessary technology like the internet, laptop, etc. which is crucial in today's digital educational environment, negatively affecting their academic performance. Supporting these findings, participants of the IDI and FGD further expressed their perceptions on how economic factors negatively affect students' academic performance. They shared:

"The high cost of education in Nigeria can be discouraging. The majority of my students come from low-income families and face challenges in paying their children's school fees, uniforms, and other materials. I have had students

express that they feel not worthy because their parents cannot pay their school fees. This mindset can negatively affect their motivation and academic performance.” Teacher 9 IDI.

“The cost of school fees is an issue for me and my family. I have to stay at home for one month because my parents can keep up with the cost of education. When my parents can’t afford to pay school fees and materials I need for studies, I feel left out, and it affects my academic performance.” Student 12 FGD.

“I have had to take on part-time work to help my family with some expenses. I feel exhausted to study after work, and end up abandoning my homework and assignments. Sometimes I have to miss school because I don’t have time. I want to do well in my studies, but balancing work and studies is difficult.” Student 3 FGD.

Table 6. Students opinion regarding the impacts of poor academic performance

No.	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SDA (%)
1	I often recorded low grades in all my subjects.	70 (31.8)	67 (30.4)	30 (13.6)	33 (15.0)	20 (9.0)
2	I have failed once or more subjects.	89 (40.4)	50 (22.7)	40 (18.1)	11 (5.0)	30 (13.6)
3	I feel poor academic performance has affected my self-esteem and confidence.	92 (41.8)	55 (25.0)	27 (12.2)	20 (9.0)	27 (12.2)
4	I feel discouraged to put more effort into school due to my poor performance.	55 (25.0)	58 (26.3)	40 (18.1)	34 (15.4)	33 (15.0)
5	I feel poor academic performance affected my relationship with my parents and siblings.	97 (44.0)	43 (19.5)	19 (8.6)	29 (13.1)	32 (14.5)
6	I feel left out of school activities because of my academic performance.	80 (36.3)	61 (27.7)	20 (9.0)	33 (15.0)	26 (11.8)
7	I worried about being judged by my peers due to my poor academic performance.	70 (31.8)	59 (26.8)	30 (13.6)	31 (14.0)	30 (13.6)
8	I feel less motivated to pursue higher education because of my poor academic performance.	45 (20.5)	77 (35.0)	21 (9.5)	43 (19.5)	34 (15.4)
9	I am worried about my future due to my academic struggles.	71 (32.2)	66 (30.0)	23 (10.4)	27 (12.2)	33 (15.0)

Note: SA stands for strongly agreed, A stands for agreed, N stands for neutral, D stands for disagreed, SD stands for strongly disagreed, and % stands for percentage of responses. Source: Field survey (2024).

The fourth objective of the study was to examine the impacts of PAP on secondary school students in WLGA, Sokoto State. Table 6 indicate that more than half of the respondents (67% combined SA and A) agree that PAP has negatively affected their self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, qualitative findings from the IDI and FGD corroborated these findings as follows:

“Self-esteem is a catalyst for academic success. As a teacher, I have seen the consequences of poor academic performance on students’ self-esteem. For instance, some of my students who perform below expectation often internalize that failure, leading to a lack of confidence in their studies. I easily noticed that they usually avoid participating in class discussions and are afraid of asking questions.” Teacher 10 IDI.

“Honestly, when I get low grades, it really affects how I see myself. I felt embarrassed and avoided discussing school about studies with my parents, friends, and siblings. I think it is difficult to stay focused and motivated when you feel like you are failing.” Student 9 FGD.

On the other hand, a significant proportion of the students (64% combined SA and A) indicated that academic underperformance has affected their relationships with their parents or guardians and their siblings, which further alienating them from their friends at school. Also, 62.2% (combine SA and A) feel less motivated to pursue higher education due to their PAP, with the majority (62.2% combined SA and A) being worried about their future. These results were supported by the views of IDI and FGD participants who shared:

“Poor academic performance may lead to blame and frustration in families. There are instances where parents or guardians overreact out of concern because their children are underperforming in school. For example, there was a time when one of our students became defensive because his parents expressed concern about his grades. This situation leads to misunderstandings.” Principal 5 IDI.

“I used to have a good relationship with my parents and siblings. But when I received lower grades, they started to worry and get frustrated. My father always has high expectations for me, and when I couldn’t meet them, I felt like I disappointed him. Hmm! It creates a lot of tension and concerns between us.” Student 4 FGD

Table 7. Students opinion on measures to improve poor academic performance

No.	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	I suggest that schools should provide more tutoring programs for students struggling with their studies.	58 (26.3)	72 (32.7)	36 (16.3)	20 (9.0)	34 (15.4)
2	I believe extracurricular activities would help improve my academic performance.	70 (31.8)	53 (24.0)	40 (18.1)	36 (16.3)	21 (9.5)
3	I suggest that schools should increase access to online learning resources like educational videos, e-books, etc.	100 (45.4)	48 (21.8)	33 (15.0)	20 (9.0)	19 (8.6)
4	I suggest that teachers should give much assistance and support to students who are struggling academically.	89 (40.4)	57 (25.9)	29 (13.1)	25 (11.3)	20 (9.0)
5	I suggest that teachers should integrate modern, engaging teaching methodologies to help students understand the study materials better.	76 (34.5)	69 (31.3)	31 (14.0)	15 (6.8)	29 (13.1)
6	I believe that collaboration between parents, guardians, and teachers would help enhance academic performance.	91 (41.3)	49 (22.3)	39 (17.7)	20 (9.0)	21 (9.5)
7	I believe that parents or guardians constant support is important for academic success.	67 (30.4)	78 (35.4)	40 (18.1)	20 (9.0)	15 (6.8)
8	I suggest that schools should provide more counseling services to help students cope with academic stress.	86 (39.0)	73 (33.1)	32 (14.5)	18 (8.1)	11 (5.0)
9	I believe that programs focused on building self-esteem would help improve my academic performance.	50 (22.7)	99 (45.0)	55 (25.0)	11 (5.0)	10 (4.5)
10	I believe that workshops and seminars on study skills and time management would be helpful for students.	75 (34.0)	83 (37.7)	39 (17.7)	17 (7.7)	9 (4.0)

Note: SA stands for strongly agreed, A stands for agreed, N stands for neutral, D stands for disagreed, SD stands for strongly disagreed, and % stands for percentage of responses. Source: Field survey (2024).

Finally, the study aims to provide recommendations for improving secondary school students’ academic performance. The students’ opinion on measures to address the identified problems are presented in Table 7. The results illustrate that the majority of the students (72.1% combined SA and A) believe that provision of counseling services can help students manage academic stress and improve their academic performance. Additionally, (68% combined SA and A) believe that programs focused on building self-esteem would help students have more confidence and improve academically. Also, results indicate that 65% (combine SA and A) agree that parents-teacher partnership would enhance students’ academic performances, with a significant majority (66% combine SA and A) feeling that unwavering support from parents or guardians is key for academic success. Furthermore, results indicate that more than half (67.2% combine SA and A) believe that schools should increase access to online learning resources, including educational videos and e-books, and two-thirds (72% combine SA and A) believe that workshops and seminars on study skills and time management can help students in learning and other endeavors.

5. Conclusion

In this research paper, we examined the social, psychological, and economic factors that can harm senior secondary school students’ academic performance in WLGA. Utilizing a mixed method approach (semi-structured questionnaire, IDI, and FGD), the sampled respondents, including school principals, teachers, and students, expressed their views on numerous social, psychological, and economic factors influencing academic performance. Out of these

factors' findings revealed that language barriers, poor time management, and financial constraints were the major reasons that led to academic underperformance among senior secondary school students in WLGA.

Moreover, the results of this current study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge, help policymakers at both the local, state, and federal levels in formulating educational policies in Nigeria, help teachers and school administrators in both public and private schools understand factors influencing students' performance and come up with strategies to address them, and help parents or guardians to understand the reason for their children's low performance, especially when they perform poorly in their assessments and examinations.

Despite the significance of this paper, it is pertinent to state that this study was primarily conducted in WLGA, Sokoto State, Nigeria, using two private and three government secondary schools as representative of other senior secondary schools. Hence, its findings may not be generalized. To expand the scope beyond the study area, forthcoming research should consider a comparative study of PAP across other secondary schools in the twenty-three local governments areas of Sokoto state.

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