

**IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON THE  
EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
STUDENTS, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA.**

**BY**

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BENIN CITY**

**APRIL, 2024**

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**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL  
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THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE [B.SC.] (HONS)  
DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK**

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**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this original research work was carried out by Chioma Vivian Okafor with matriculation number SSC1909948 under our strict supervision and has been approved as adequate in scope and content in partial fulfillment for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) Degree in Social Work, University of Benin.

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(Project Supervisor)

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Date

.....

DR.Sunday, Ofili,Ibobor  
(Head of Department)

.....

Date

**DEDICATION**

To God Almighty for his loving kindness and affection towards me; giving me life ,good health and strength to deliver this project.

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My profound appreciation goes to God Almighty for the grace and wisdom

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## ABSTRACT

The study looked at the impact of socio-economic status on educational performance of University of Benin students, Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria. The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of socio-economic status on educational performance of University of Benin students, Benin city. The research questions asked to achieve the objective of the study were as follows; To what extent do socio-economic factors such as family income and parental education level correlate with academic performance metrics like GPA and graduation rates among students at the University of Benin, What are the roles of income on the academic performance of students at the University of Benin, What are the impact of family background on academic performance and In what ways do socio-economic factors interact with other student success factors, such as study habits, learning styles, and access to mental health resources, to influence academic performance at the University of Benin. The sample size was 301 participants chosen from the study population using the Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling, the research instrument utilized was the questionnaire. Conclusion drawn from the analysis of the data retrieved from the questionnaire indicates that Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing targeted interventions aimed at fostering a more equitable learning environment at UNIBEN. The proposed interventions fall within three broad categories: financial support, academic support, and social support. Financial support initiatives range from need-based scholarships and grant programs to financial literacy workshops. Academic support services can include tutoring programs, supplemental instruction sessions, and writing center resources. Social support interventions encompass mentorship programs specifically designed for low-SES students, fostering peer support groups, and creating racially inclusive student organizations. Recommendations were made based on the findings and one of the recommendations: Universities should prioritize expanding need-based scholarships and grant programs specifically designed to support low-SES students. These programs should account for the full cost of attendance, encompassing tuition fees, living expenses, and the cost of essential academic resources like textbooks and technology. Partnering with corporations, foundations, and alumni associations can further bolster scholarship opportunities.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The University of Benin (UNIBEN) stands as a beacon of academic excellence in Nigeria, nurturing the minds that will shape the nation's future (Chukwu, 2021). Admission to this prestigious institution represents a significant achievement, signifying intellectual potential and the culmination of years of dedicated study. However, educational attainment within the hallowed halls of UNIBEN transcends raw intellectual ability. A growing body of research points towards a crucial and often overlooked factor influencing student success in higher education: socio-economic status (Burger & Naude, 2019). This academic research paper delves into the potential impacts of SES on the academic performance of UNIBEN students, highlighting the multifaceted ways in which socio-economic background can shape a student's journey within the university.

Understanding the concept of SES is paramount. It encompasses a range of factors that influence a person's access to resources and opportunities. These factors include family income, parental education level, occupation, and social class (Blustein, 2018). Students from higher SES backgrounds typically enjoy greater access to financial resources, educational support systems, and quality pre-university education, all of which contribute significantly to academic success. Conversely, students from lower SES backgrounds often face a multitude of challenges that can hinder their academic performance (Alam & Mohanty, 2023).

The financial burden of university education poses a significant challenge for students from lower SES backgrounds. Beyond tuition fees, students require access to essential academic materials like textbooks, software, and reliable internet access (Colvard,

2018). These resources can be prohibitively expensive, forcing students to make difficult choices between academic needs and basic necessities like food or housing. A study by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2022 revealed that 40.1% of Nigerians live below the national poverty line. This translates to a significant portion of UNIBEN's student body potentially grappling with financial constraints that can severely impede their studies.

Financial limitations also have a bearing on a student's ability to access essential academic support services. University life often necessitates additional tutoring, academic counseling, or specialized learning materials beyond what the institution provides. These services, while often invaluable for academic success, often come at an additional cost (Bekkouche, 2021). Students from high-SES families are more likely to be able to afford such support, granting them an advantage over their less fortunate peers.

Furthermore, parental involvement and educational support play a crucial role in a student's academic journey. Parents from higher SES backgrounds may have more time and resources to dedicate to their children's education. This can manifest in various ways, from providing academic guidance and fostering a stimulating learning environment at home to actively participating in school activities and advocating for their children's academic needs (ŞENGÖNÜL, 2022). A study found a positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement, highlighting the significant role parents play in shaping their children's academic success (Evans, 2019). Unfortunately, parents from lower SES backgrounds often face greater time constraints due to demanding work schedules or may lack the educational background themselves to provide effective academic support.

The quality of pre-university education also plays a critical role in shaping a student's preparedness for the rigors of university life. Students from underprivileged backgrounds often attend under-resourced primary and secondary schools. These schools might lack qualified teachers, updated curricula, and adequate learning facilities (Ngalo-Morrison, 2017). A 2020 World Bank report on education in Nigeria noted the disparity between urban and rural schools, with rural schools facing a higher teacher-student ratio and a lack of essential learning materials. This uneven pre-university foundation can put students from lower SES backgrounds at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers from high-SES backgrounds who may have benefitted from a more well-rounded and well-equipped primary and secondary education (Muskens, 2019).

The impact of SES on academic performance can manifest in various ways. Students from lower SES backgrounds may struggle with lower grade point averages (GPAs), experience higher dropout rates, or face difficulty securing internships or research opportunities crucial for future career prospects (Berkowitz, 2020). A 2022 study by Iwemi investigating the influence of parental SES on UNIBEN students' academic performance found a correlation between lower income and lower GPAs. Understanding the specific areas where SES has the most significant impact can pave the way for targeted interventions aimed at bridging the equity gap.

The interplay between SES and other factors influencing student success also merits exploration. Learning styles, study habits, and access to mental health support can all interact with SES to influence a student's academic performance (Harding, 2019). For instance, a student from a lower SES background with a strong work ethic and effective study habits may be able to overcome some of the challenges associated

with limited resources. However, the cumulative impact of these challenges can create a significant barrier to academic success.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Higher education serves as a cornerstone of opportunity and upward mobility, offering individuals the knowledge, skills, and credentials needed to thrive in today's complex society (Mountjoy, 2022). However, despite its promise of inclusivity and empowerment, a persistent issue undermines this ideal: the stark disparity in performance and outcomes experienced by students from different socioeconomic backgrounds (SES) (Merolla & Jackson, 2019). This research paper investigates the critical link between social economic status and university performance, examining the complex interplay of economic resources, academic preparation, cultural capital, and social networks that contribute to unequal educational experiences and outcomes.

Students from higher social economic status backgrounds often enter universities with significant advantages that translate into academic success. Their families' financial resources enable them to attend well-resourced schools with smaller class sizes, experienced teachers, and advanced coursework, providing a strong foundation for university-level work (McKay & Devlin, 2020). Additionally, access to cultural enrichment activities, travel, and exposure to diverse perspectives foster critical thinking skills, adaptability, and cultural literacy, valuable assets for university success. Furthermore, social networks connecting them to professionals and university graduates offer valuable mentorship, internship opportunities, and career guidance, paving the way for future career success (Benson, 2019). In contrast, students from low social economic status backgrounds often face significant hurdles that impede their academic progress

and overall university experience. Financial constraints may force them to work multiple jobs, juggle childcare responsibilities, or choose less expensive universities, limiting their access to quality resources and contributing to stress and distraction. Inequities in education often mean they enter university with weaker academic preparation, lacking the foundational skills and knowledge required to excel in rigorous coursework (Rhijn, 2019). Limited access to cultural capital further restricts their exposure to diverse experiences and perspectives, potentially hindering their critical thinking, communication skills, and adaptability (Guillory, 2023). Moreover, the absence of established networks with professionals and university graduates can limit access to mentorship, internship opportunities, and career guidance, impacting their future career prospects.

These disparities translate into concrete outcomes with significant implications for individual lives and social mobility. Research consistently demonstrates a correlation between social economic status and university performance. Students from higher social economic status backgrounds tend to have higher GPAs, graduation rates, and academic achievement across various disciplines (An, 2019). Conversely, students from low social economic status backgrounds often face higher dropout rates, lower GPAs, and struggle to cope with the academic demands of university life. These disparities extend beyond grades, impacting their mental health, sense of belonging, and career aspirations (Archambault et al., 2020). Financial stress, academic pressure, and social isolation can contribute to higher rates of anxiety and depression among low social economic status students, further hindering their academic performance (Abbo, 2023). Feeling different or isolated due to economic background can negatively impact engagement and participation in campus life, hindering the development of a supportive social

network. Ultimately, limited access to internships, mentorship, and networking opportunities can restrict career choices and limit access to high-paying jobs after graduation, perpetuating the cycle of inequality (Stofer, 2021).

The persistent and multifaceted impact of social economic status on university performance demands immediate attention and action from various stakeholders. Universities, policymakers, and educators must work collaboratively to ensure equitable access to higher education and its transformative potential (Hussain, 2019). This necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses the systemic and individual factors contributing to the achievement gap. Expanding and refining financial aid programs, providing targeted academic support services, promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives, and building partnerships with community organizations are crucial steps towards creating a level playing field for students from all backgrounds (White, 2021). By shedding light on the complex interplay between social economic status and university performance, this research aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies that ensure an equitable and inclusive higher education system, empowering all students, regardless of their background, to achieve their full potential (McCowan, 2019).

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of socio-economic status on educational performance of University of Benin students. The specific objectives to:

- i. quantify the relationship between socio-economic factors (e.g., family income, parental education level) and academic performance (e.g., GPA, graduation rates) of students at the University of Benin
- ii. examine the role of income on academic performance of students at the University of Benin.
- iii. determine the impact of family background on academic performance.
- iv. investigate potential interactions between socio-economic status and other student success factors (e.g., study habits, learning styles, access to mental health resources) at UNIBEN.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- i. To what extent do socio-economic factors such as family income and parental education level correlate with academic performance metrics like GPA and graduation rates among students at the University of Benin?
- ii. What are the roles of income on the academic performance of students at the University of Benin?
- iii. What are the impact of family background on academic performance?
- iv. In what ways do socio-economic factors interact with other student success factors, such as study habits, learning styles, and access to mental health resources, to influence academic performance at the University of Benin?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Higher education holds the promise of upward mobility and individual empowerment. Yet, this promise remains unfulfilled for many students due to the persistent issue of socioeconomic disparities that impact their university

experiences and outcomes . This research delves into this crucial topic, aiming to shed light on the complex interplay between socioeconomic status (SES) and university performance. By understanding the challenges faced by low social economic status students and the effectiveness of current interventions, this study aims to contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive higher education system.

Research consistently shows a correlation between social economic status and academic performance. Students from high-social economic status backgrounds often enter universities with significant advantages, leading to higher GPAs, graduation rates, and academic achievement. In contrast, low social economic status students face numerous hurdles like they have limited resources restrict access to quality education, technology, and support services, contributing to stress and impacting academic focus, schools in low-income areas often lack resources and experienced teachers, leading to weaker academic preparation for university-level work and they also have less exposure to enriching activities and diverse cultural experiences can hinder critical thinking skills and communication, impacting academic success.

Lower academic achievement and limited career guidance can restrict access to well-paying jobs, perpetuating the cycle of socioeconomic inequality it also leads to financial stress, academic pressure, and social isolation can contribute to higher rates of anxiety and depression among low-social economic status students. The persistent and multifaceted impact of social economic status on university performance demands immediate attention from various stakeholders. Universities, policymakers, and educators must work collaboratively to ensure equitable access

to higher education and its transformative potential. This necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses the systemic and individual factors contributing to the achievement gap.

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to a future where university success is not predetermined by socioeconomic background. By fostering understanding and promoting action, this study seeks to unlock the full potential of higher education to empower individuals and transform societies.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

While this study explores the general impact of socio-economic status (SES) on educational performance at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), it will delve deeper by focusing specifically on students within the Department of Social Work. This focus allows for a more nuanced understanding of the issue within a particular academic discipline.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

- **Socio-economic Status (SES):** A multidimensional concept encompassing a range of factors that influence a person's access to resources and opportunities. These factors include family income, parental education level, occupation, and social class.
- **Academic Performance:** The success a student demonstrates in their academic pursuits. This can be measured through various metrics such as Grade Point Average (GPA), course completion rates, graduation rates, and performance on standardized tests.
- **University of Benin (UNIBEN):** A prestigious public university located in Benin City, Nigeria.

- **Financial Burden:** The difficulty an individual or family faces in affording basic necessities or essential expenses.
- **Parental Involvement:** The active participation of parents in their children's education. This can include providing academic guidance, fostering a stimulating learning environment at home, attending school meetings, and advocating for their children's academic needs.
- **Pre-University Education:** The formal education a student receives before entering university, encompassing primary and secondary education.
- **Learning Style:** An individual's preferred way of acquiring, processing, and retaining information.
- **Study Habits:** The consistent and effective practices a student employs to learn and retain information. These can include time management strategies, note-taking techniques, and preferred study environments.
- **Mental Health Resources:** Services and support systems available to students to address mental health challenges that might impact academic performance. These can include counseling services, support groups, and mental health professionals.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Conceptual Framework

#### 2.1 Introduction

Higher education is often touted as a pathway to social mobility and individual empowerment. Universities equip students with knowledge, skills, and credentials deemed essential for success in the modern world. Yet, despite the promise of inclusivity and upward mobility, a persistent disparity disrupts this ideal: the stark differences in academic outcomes experienced by students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds (SES). This literature review delves into the intricate relationship between SES and academic performance at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), a prestigious Nigerian institution. By examining existing research, we aim to illuminate the multifaceted ways in which socioeconomic factors influence the educational experiences and achievements of UNIBEN students.

The concept of SES encompasses a range of factors that influence a person's access to resources and opportunities. These factors include family income, parental education level, occupation, and social class (Pensiero & Schoon, 2019). Students from high-SES backgrounds often enjoy significant advantages that translate into academic success. They may benefit from greater access to financial resources, allowing them to afford quality pre-university education, essential academic materials like textbooks and technology, and potentially, additional tutoring or educational support services (Ghasia et al., 2018). Furthermore, families with higher SES may have more time and resources to dedicate to their children's education, fostering a stimulating learning environment at home and providing consistent parental involvement (Şengonul, 2022).

Research suggests a positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement, highlighting the crucial role parents play in shaping their children's academic journeys (Boonk et al., 2018). However, students from low-SES backgrounds often face a multitude of challenges that can hinder their academic performance (Boonk et al., 2018). The financial burden of university education can be a significant obstacle. Beyond tuition fees, students may require essential resources like reliable internet access, specialized software, and up-to-date textbooks, which can be prohibitively expensive (Şengonul, 2022). A study by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2022 revealed that 40.1% of Nigerians live below the national poverty line (Oyebamiji & Khan, 2023). This translates to a significant portion of UNIBEN's student body potentially grappling with financial constraints that can severely impede their studies. Limited financial resources can also restrict access to crucial academic support services like tutoring, academic counseling, or specialized learning materials (Şengonul, 2022).

The impact of SES extends beyond financial limitations. The quality of pre-university education plays a critical role in shaping a student's preparedness for university life. Students from underprivileged backgrounds often attend under-resourced primary and secondary schools. These schools might lack qualified teachers, updated curricula, and adequate learning facilities (Wagner et al., 2022). A 2020 World Bank report highlighted the disparity between urban and rural schools in Nigeria, with rural schools facing a higher teacher-student ratio and a lack of essential learning materials (Koech, 2021). This uneven pre-university foundation can put students from lower-SES backgrounds at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers from high-SES backgrounds who may have benefitted from a more well-rounded and well-equipped primary and secondary education (Wagner et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the cultural capital possessed by families plays a significant role in influencing student success (Koech, 2021). Students from high-SES backgrounds may have greater exposure to enriching activities such as travel, museums, and cultural events, fostering critical thinking skills, adaptability, and cultural literacy – valuable assets for university success. In contrast, students from low-SES backgrounds may have limited access to such experiences, potentially hindering their development of these skills (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2020). Social networks also play a part in shaping educational outcomes. Students from high-SES families may benefit from connections to professionals and university graduates, offering valuable mentorship, internship opportunities, and career guidance (Williams et al., 2023). These connections can pave the way for future career prospects, further amplifying existing inequalities.

The impact of SES on academic performance can manifest in various ways. Students from lower-SES backgrounds may struggle with lower grade point averages (GPAs), experience higher dropout rates, or face difficulty securing internships or research opportunities crucial for future career prospects (Pensiero & Schoon, 2019). A study by Iwemi (2022) investigating the influence of parental SES on UNIBEN students' academic performance found a correlation between lower income and lower GPAs. Understanding the specific areas where SES has the most significant impact can pave the way for targeted interventions aimed at bridging the equity gap.

The interplay between SES and other factors influencing student success also merits exploration. Learning styles, study habits, and access to mental health support can all interact with SES to influence a student's academic performance. A study by Iwemi (2022) investigating the influence of parental SES on UNIBEN students' academic

performance found a correlation between lower income and lower GPAs. For instance, a student from a lower-SES background with a strong work ethic and effective study habits may be able to overcome some of the challenges associated with limited resources (Boonk et al., 2018). However, the cumulative impact of these challenges can create a significant barrier to academic success.

This review aims to shed light on the complex interplay between SES and academic performance at UNIBEN. By synthesizing existing research and identifying knowledge gaps.

## **2.2 The Impact of Socio-economic Status on Academic Performance**

Education, particularly higher education, is often touted as the great equalizer, a pathway to social mobility and individual empowerment. Universities equip students with the knowledge, skills, and credentials deemed essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world. However, despite its promise of inclusivity and upward mobility, a persistent disparity disrupts this ideal: the stark differences in academic outcomes experienced by students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds (SES). This essay delves into the intricate relationship between SES and academic performance, with a particular focus on the University of Benin (UNIBEN), a prestigious Nigerian institution.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a multidimensional concept encompassing a range of factors that influence a person's access to resources and opportunities. These factors include family income, parental education level, occupation, and social class (Pensiero & Schoon, 2019). Students from high-SES backgrounds often enter universities with significant advantages that translate into academic success. They may benefit from greater access to financial resources, allowing them to afford quality

pre-university education, essential academic materials, and potentially, additional tutoring or educational support services (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2020). Furthermore, families with higher SES may have more time and resources to dedicate to their children's education, fostering a stimulating learning environment at home and providing consistent parental involvement, all of which are crucial for academic achievement .

However, students from low-SES backgrounds often face a multitude of challenges that can hinder their academic performance. The financial burden of university education can be a significant obstacle, with costs extending beyond tuition fees to encompass essential resources like internet access, specialized software, and up-to-date textbooks (Shotton et al., 2023). Considering that a substantial portion of Nigerians live below the national poverty line, it becomes evident that financial constraints can severely impede the studies of low-SES students at UNIBEN. Limited financial resources can also restrict access to crucial academic support services such as tutoring, academic counseling, or specialized learning materials, further exacerbating these disparities (Shotton et al., 2023).

The quality of pre-university education also plays a critical role in shaping a student's preparedness for university life. Students from underprivileged backgrounds often attend under-resourced primary and secondary schools that might lack qualified teachers, updated curricula, and adequate learning facilities (Wagner et al., 2022). This uneven pre-university foundation can put students from lower-SES backgrounds at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers from high-SES backgrounds who may have benefitted from a more well-rounded and well-equipped primary and secondary education.

Beyond financial limitations and educational disparities, cultural capital also influences student success (Wagner et al., 2022). Students from high-SES backgrounds may have greater exposure to enriching activities like travel, museums, and cultural events, fostering critical thinking skills, adaptability, and cultural literacy – valuable assets for university success. In contrast, students from low-SES backgrounds may have limited access to such experiences, potentially hindering their development of these crucial skills (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2020). Social networks further complicate the equation. Students from high-SES families may benefit from connections to professionals and university graduates, offering valuable mentorship, internship opportunities, and career guidance (Oyebamiji & Khan, 2023). These connections can pave the way for future career prospects, further amplifying existing inequalities.

The impact of SES on academic performance manifests in various ways. Students from lower-SES backgrounds may struggle with lower GPAs, potentially due to the aforementioned challenges. Research by Iwemi (2022) specifically investigating UNIBEN students supports this correlation between lower income and lower GPAs. Furthermore, financial constraints, academic difficulties, and a lack of support systems can contribute to higher dropout rates among low-SES students (Oyebamiji & Khan, 2023). Limited access to internships, research opportunities, and career guidance can further restrict future career prospects for low-SES students, perpetuating the cycle of social inequality.

The relationship between SES and academic performance is a complex and multifaceted one. While a university education is often seen as a pathway to social mobility, students from low-SES backgrounds face a multitude of challenges that can

hinder their academic success. Understanding the interplay between SES and academic achievement at UNIBEN is crucial for developing targeted interventions and fostering a more equitable learning environment. By acknowledging these disparities and implementing effective support systems, universities like UNIBEN can strive to fulfill their true potential as equalizers, empowering students from all backgrounds to reach their full academic potential.

### **2.3 Challenges Faced by Low-SES Students**

Higher education holds the promise of a brighter future, equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly competitive world. However, for students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (SES), the path to academic success can be an uphill battle. This essay explores the multitude of challenges faced by low-SES students in higher education, highlighting the obstacles that can hinder their academic progress and social mobility.

Financial constraints are a pervasive challenge for low-SES students. The rising costs of tuition fees, coupled with living expenses, books, and technology, can create a significant financial burden. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that students from low-income families are more likely to borrow heavily to finance their education, leading to higher student loan debt upon graduation (Luna-Torres et al., 2018). This debt burden can have a long-term impact, limiting career choices, delaying homeownership, and hindering overall financial security (Letkiewicz & Heckman, 2017). Furthermore, beyond tuition fees, essential academic resources can be out of reach for low-SES students. Reliable internet access, specialized software for coursework, and up-to-date textbooks can be significant expenses that many low-SES students struggle to afford. Limited access to these

resources can put them at a disadvantage compared to their peers from high-SES backgrounds.

The quality of pre-university education also plays a significant role in shaping a student's preparedness for higher education. Students from underprivileged backgrounds often attend under-resourced primary and secondary schools. These schools might be plagued by a lack of qualified teachers, outdated curricula, and inadequate learning facilities (Ogunode & Musa, 2020). A 2020 World Bank report highlighted the disparity between urban and rural schools in developing countries, with rural schools facing a higher teacher-student ratio and a lack of essential learning materials. This uneven pre-university foundation can leave students from low-SES backgrounds lagging behind their peers in terms of foundational knowledge and academic skills, making it more difficult for them to succeed in the demanding environment of higher education (Hannon et al., 2017).

Beyond financial limitations and educational disparities, low-SES students often lack access to crucial support systems that can significantly impact academic achievement. Parental involvement, a key factor in student success, can be limited for various reasons. Parents from low-SES backgrounds may have lower levels of education themselves, making it difficult to provide academic support or guidance. Additionally, long working hours and the need to juggle multiple jobs to make ends meet can leave parents with little time for their children's academic pursuits (Luna-Torres et al., 2018). Furthermore, low-SES students may have limited access to academic advisors, tutors, and mental health services that can provide essential support and guidance during their university studies (Koech, 2021). The absence of these support systems

can leave low-SES students feeling isolated and overwhelmed, hindering their ability to navigate the complexities of university life.

Social networks also play a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes. Students from high-SES families may benefit from connections to professionals and university graduates, offering valuable mentorship, internship opportunities, and career guidance (Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2020). These connections can expose students to potential career paths, provide invaluable advice, and enhance their resumes, giving them a significant advantage in the competitive job market. In contrast, low-SES students may lack access to such social networks, limiting their exposure to career opportunities and hindering their future career prospects (Shotton et al., 2023).

The challenges faced by low-SES students in higher education are multifaceted and have a profound impact on their academic trajectory. From financial constraints and limited resources to a lack of adequate pre-university education and support systems, these students face an uphill battle towards academic success. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing targeted interventions and fostering a more equitable learning environment. Universities can play a vital role by providing financial aid programs, academic support services, and mentorship opportunities specifically aimed at supporting low-SES students. By acknowledging these disparities and implementing effective support systems, universities can help level the playing field and ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have the opportunity to succeed in higher education.

## **2.4 Interventions to Support Low-SES Students**

The promise of higher education as a pathway to social mobility and a brighter future can feel out of reach for students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (SES).

Financial constraints, uneven pre-university preparation, and limited access to crucial support systems create formidable obstacles on their academic journey. These disparities can hinder their achievement, perpetuate social inequalities, and ultimately limit their opportunities for success. This essay explores a range of interventions that universities, policymakers, and educators can implement to bridge this equity gap and empower low-SES students to thrive in higher education.

### **Addressing Financial Obstacles:**

The financial burden of higher education is a significant barrier for low-SES students. To address this challenge, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. Universities can implement a combination of:

- **Need- and Merit-Based Scholarships:** Need-based scholarships directly target financial hardship, ensuring cost doesn't prevent access to education. Merit-based scholarships, however, require careful design. Standardized tests, often skewed towards high-SES students, should not be the sole criteria. Alternative measures of academic potential should be explored.
- **Grants and Work-Study Programs:** Grants provide crucial financial support without the burden of repayment, while work-study programs allow students to offset costs through part-time on-campus jobs. It's vital to ensure work hours don't negatively impact studies.
- **Financial Literacy Workshops:** Equipping students with financial literacy skills empowers them to manage student loans effectively, create budgets, and navigate financial aid processes, fostering responsible financial decision-making throughout their academic journey.

### **Bridging the Pre-University Gap:**

Disparities in pre-university education can disadvantage low-SES students. Pre-college and bridge programs can bridge this gap by offering targeted academic support and skill development. These programs can focus on strengthening foundational knowledge in core subjects like math, science, and writing, alongside essential academic skills such as study habits, time management, and critical thinking – all crucial for university success.

### **Enhancing Academic Support:**

Universities can provide a spectrum of academic support services to empower low-SES students:

- **Tutoring Services:** Free or subsidized tutoring, either one-on-one or in small groups, allows students to receive focused support on challenging subjects.
- **Supplemental Instruction:** Sessions led by peers or instructors offer additional explanations of complex concepts, review challenging material, and provide a platform for asking questions in a safe space.
- **Academic Advising:** Regular meetings with advisors help students navigate course selection, identify academic resources, and develop effective study plans.
- **Writing Centers:** Feedback on writing assignments and assistance in developing writing skills are crucial for academic success. Writing centers provide this valuable support.

### **Mentorship and Peer Support:**

Mentorship programs offer invaluable guidance and support. Connecting low-SES students with professionals, faculty members, or alumni from similar backgrounds provides role models and access to career advice. Mentors can also offer support in

navigating university life. Research suggests such programs can improve academic performance, increase retention rates, and enhance career aspirations for low-SES students (Sadowski et al., 2017). Peer support groups create a sense of community and belonging. Sharing experiences, offering advice, and fostering a collaborative learning environment provide critical support for this student population.

### **Technology and Resources:**

The digital divide can exacerbate existing inequalities. To address this, universities can provide:

- **Computer Labs and Internet Access:** Ensuring readily available computer labs and reliable internet access creates equal access to online learning resources, research tools, and online assignments.
- **Discounted or Loaner Technology Programs:** Discounted or loaner programs for laptops, tablets, and essential software close the technological gap and ensure all students have the necessary tools for success.

### **Investing in Early Intervention:**

Early intervention programs can be transformative. Targeting low-income K-12 schools with resources to improve educational quality can ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds reach university better prepared. This includes providing qualified teachers, updated curricula, and adequate learning facilities, minimizing the pre-university disparity.

### **Advocacy and Collaboration:**

Universities can advocate for policies that increase federal and state funding for need-based financial aid programs and higher education initiatives specifically designed to support low-SES students. Additionally, collaboration with community organizations and K-12 institutions can foster a pipeline of support from early education through university graduation.

By implementing a comprehensive framework of interventions that address the financial, academic, social, and technological challenges faced by low-SES students, higher education institutions can fulfill their true potential as equalizers. Closing the equity gap is not only about social justice; it enriches the educational environment by fostering a diverse and vibrant student body. When all students have access to the resources and support they need to succeed, universities can empower individuals from all backgrounds to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

### **Bourdieu's Theory in Supporting Low-SES Students**

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction offers a powerful framework for understanding the challenges faced by low-SES students in higher education (Diamond, 2020). This theory posits that the education system functions as a mechanism for reproducing social inequalities through unequal distribution of cultural capital (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) and social capital (networks of relationships). However, while Bourdieu's theory provides valuable insights, it can be further enriched by considering the role of race and ethnicity through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

### **Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality:**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) offers a critical perspective on how race and ethnicity intersect with socioeconomic status to create and perpetuate educational inequalities. CRT posits that race is not merely a biological category but a social construct used to justify and maintain power structures. Intersectionality, a key tenet of CRT, emphasizes how various social identities, such as race, class, and gender, interact to shape individual experiences. A low-SES student of color, for example, may face a unique set of challenges in higher education that are distinct from the experiences of a white student from a low-SES background.

### **Race and Cultural Capital:**

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital can be further nuanced by considering the racialized nature of knowledge and education systems. The dominant culture, reflected in educational institutions, often privileges the knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with the white middle class [1]. Students of color from low-SES backgrounds may find their cultural capital, shaped by their racial and ethnic backgrounds, undervalued or even misrecognized within the university environment.

This can manifest in several ways:

- **Linguistic Mismatches:** Students whose first language is not English may be perceived as lacking essential communication skills, even if they are highly proficient in their native language. This disconnect can hinder their ability to participate effectively in class discussions and written assignments.
- **Culturally Irrelevant Curricula:** Traditional university curricula often center the experiences and perspectives of dominant cultures, neglecting the histories, contributions, and knowledge systems of people of color. This can lead to a sense of

alienation and disengagement for students who do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

- **Stereotypes and Microaggressions:** Students of color may face racial stereotypes and microaggressions, both subtle and overt, that can undermine their confidence and academic performance. These microaggressions can range from seemingly innocuous comments to assumptions about their intellectual abilities or belonging in academic spaces.

### **The Intersection of Race and Social Capital:**

Social capital, the networks of relationships that can provide access to resources and opportunities, is also shaped by race and ethnicity. Students of color from low-SES backgrounds may be limited in their social capital due to historical and ongoing racial segregation. This can lead to a lack of connections to professionals, university graduates, or alumni who share their racial background and could offer valuable guidance and support. Furthermore, even when students of color do have social capital within their own communities, these networks may not be recognized or valued within the predominantly white university environment.

### **The Case for a Combined Approach:**

Bourdieu's theory provides a strong foundation for understanding the challenges faced by low-SES students. However, by incorporating the insights of CRT, we gain a more nuanced understanding of how race and ethnicity intersect with socioeconomic status to create additional barriers. This combined approach allows for the development of interventions that are more effective in addressing the unique needs of low-SES students of color.

### **Implications for Interventions:**

By integrating CRT with Bourdieu's framework, we can identify key areas for intervention:

- **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:** Adopting culturally responsive teaching methods that acknowledge and value diverse cultural backgrounds can create a more inclusive learning environment for students of color. This includes incorporating diverse voices and perspectives into the curriculum and using teaching styles that resonate with different learning styles.
- **Anti-Racist Education:** Universities can implement anti-racist education initiatives that address racial biases within the institution and promote cultural competency among faculty, staff, and students.
- **Mentorship Programs for Students of Color:** Mentorship programs that specifically connect low-SES students of color with mentors who share their racial background can provide valuable social capital and foster a sense of belonging in a predominantly white institution.
- **Racially Inclusive Social Networks:** Universities can facilitate the creation of student organizations and support groups specifically for low-SES students of color, fostering a sense of community and offering opportunities for peer support.

Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction offers a valuable lens for understanding the challenges faced by low-SES students in higher education. However, through the additional insights provided by CRT, we can see how race and ethnicity further complicate the equation. By acknowledging the intersection of these social identities, universities can develop more effective interventions

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the various methods that will be employed in both collections and analysis of data in this study. These include:

- Research Design
- Area of Study
- Population
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity and Reliability
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design to be used in this study is the survey research design. This research design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be a representative of the entire group. It also involves the use of instruments such as test, questionnaire, observation etc.

#### **3.2 Area of the Study**

University of Benin is located in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. It is a prominent federal research university established in 1970. Originally an Institute of Technology, UNIBEN has grown into a comprehensive institution with a strong emphasis on research and academics. As one of the first-generation federal universities in Nigeria, UNIBEN has played a significant role in shaping the country's educational landscape.

UNIBEN offers a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across fifteen faculties, encompassing diverse fields like Arts, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Sciences, and Social Sciences. This extensive selection caters to a wide range of student interests, fostering a well-rounded academic environment that encourages intellectual exploration and cross-disciplinary learning.

The university operates across two campuses: Ekehuan and the main Ugbowo site. The campuses provide dedicated facilities and resources for each faculty, ensuring a conducive learning environment for students.

### **3.3 Study population**

The Population of the University of Benin is 167,759. The target population for this study will be '1220' full-time undergraduate social work students enrolled in the Social Sciences Faculty at the University of Benin (UNIBEN). This specific group is chosen because of their unique perspective on social issues, their potential career paths in social services).

### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The simple random sampling technique was used for the study as it provides an equal opportunity for all individuals within the study population to be selected, minimizing biases and increasing the generalizability of the findings. Simple random was used to select the quantitative sample of 301 respondents. This was calculated using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size estimation. A 95% confidence level and level of maximum variability ( $P = 0.05$ ) were assumed. Hence, the formula for the sample size estimation is given as: Where:  $n = N1 + N (\epsilon)^2$

n = the sample size

$N$  = the population size

$e$  = the level of precision (allowable error) that is 5% or 0.05.

Therefore the sample size is calculated as:

$$n = 1220 / 1 + 1220 (0.05)^2$$

$$n = 1220 / 1 + 1220 (0.0025)$$

$$n = 1220 / 1 + 3.05$$

$$n = 1220 / 4.05$$

$$n = 301$$

### **3.5 Research Instrument**

The researcher developed a structured questionnaire on the impact of empowerment programs on women community development participation which was taken into consideration as the instrument of data collection. The survey will be formatted in a Likert-style fashion with two-point scales for "agree" and "disagree" (A and D). To indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statements in the instrument, respondents will be given instructions. The questionnaire contains two sections. The section A of the questionnaire contains demographic data of the respondent. The section B of the questionnaire focus on the objective of study.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument**

To ensure the validity of this research instrument, Content Validity will be employed. Content Validity involves the evaluation of the instrument by experts and individuals with extensive knowledge in the relevant field. In this study, the Research Supervisor

along with other professionals in the domain will be consulted to confirm the instrument's validity.

For assessing the reliability of the instrument, the Spearman-Brown Split-Half technique was utilized. This method involves splitting the instrument into two halves and correlating the results to measure internal consistency. The outcomes from respondents, both positive and negative, were analyzed to derive the reliability coefficient.

### **3.7 Method of Data Collection**

The questionnaire will be distributed personally to the respondents, who will be able to answer the questions honestly after administering the questionnaires to them. The researcher will also guide the respondents with regards to filling questionnaires. The respondents will be informed that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

The quantitative data collected will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software application. The hypotheses will be tested using the chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ).

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

**Preamble**

This chapter contains the data presentation, analysis and interpretations of the various data collected for this study. Consequently, it entails the application of both mathematics and statistical techniques to provide the basis for analyzing the research objectives listed in chapter one. Hence, it is a vital part of this study since it forms the basis for conclusion and policy recommendations.

**4.1 Data Presentation and Analytical Techniques**

Tables and percentages were used in this chapter in this research work; the use of table was the most appropriate means of interpreting information for easy understanding. In analyzing the data, judgment was based on the number of favorable or unfavorable responses received on each statement in the questionnaire. Generally, the favorable responses are, “strongly agree” and “agree” while the unfavorable responses are “disagree” and ‘strongly disagree’. The results of the data collected were analyzed below based on each research questions.

**Section A: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondent**

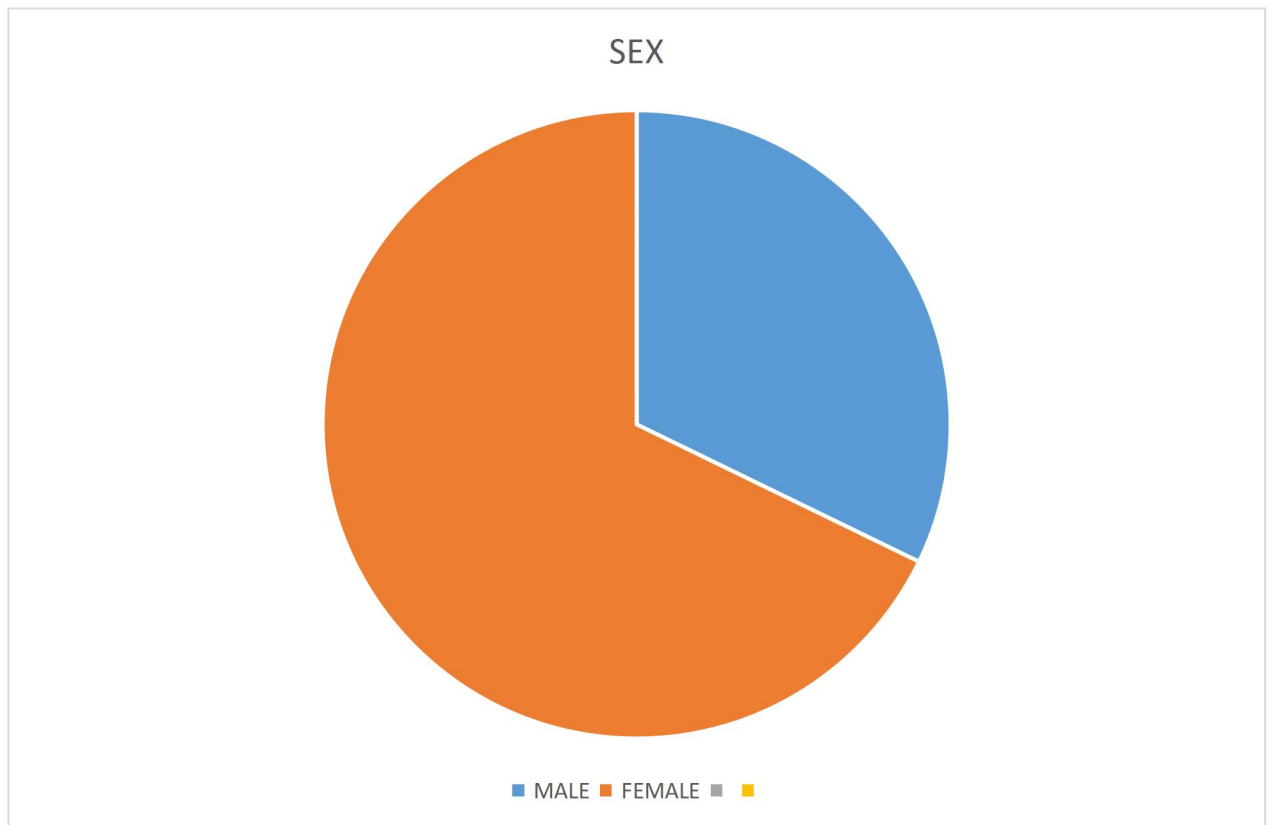
**Table.1 demographic of respondent**

1	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Males	97	32.2%
	Females	204	67.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100%</b>
2	<b>Age</b>		

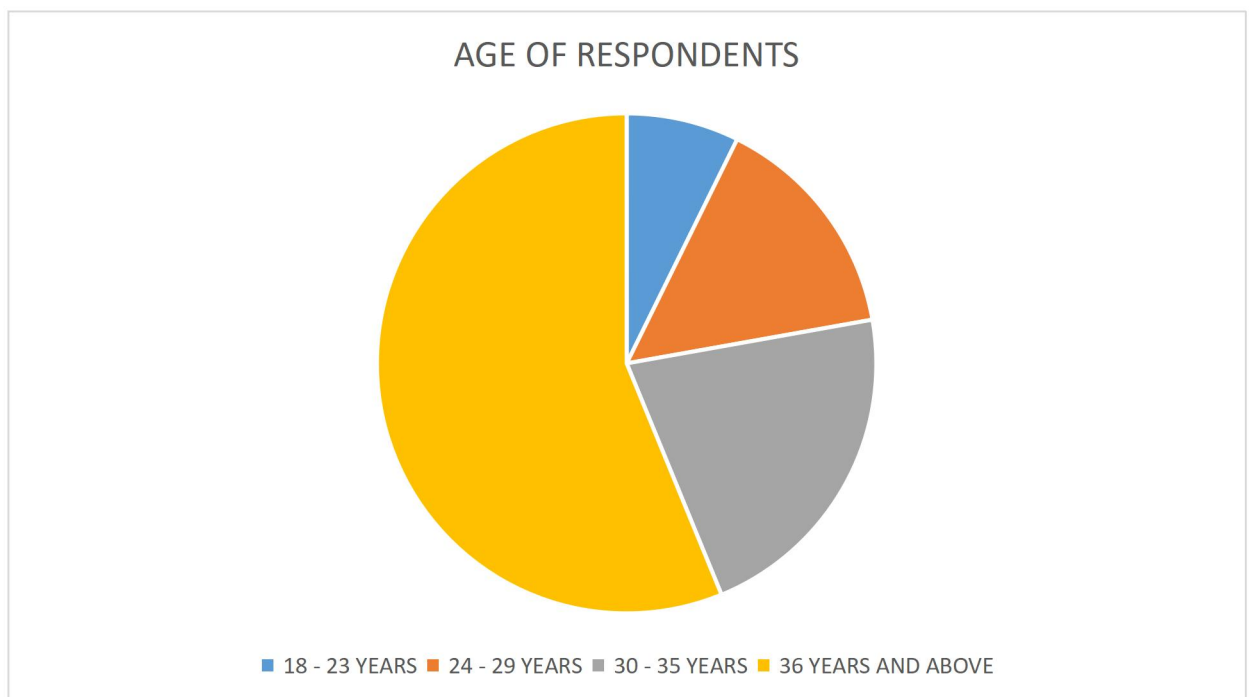
	18 - 23 years	22	7.3%
	24 – 29 years	45	14.9%
	30 - 35 years	65	21.6%
	36 years and above	169	56.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Single	94	31.2%
	Married	178	59.1%
	Divorced	29	9.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Religion</b>		
	Christians	188	62.5%
	Muslims	75	24.9%
	Traditional Worshippers	38	12.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field work, 2024**

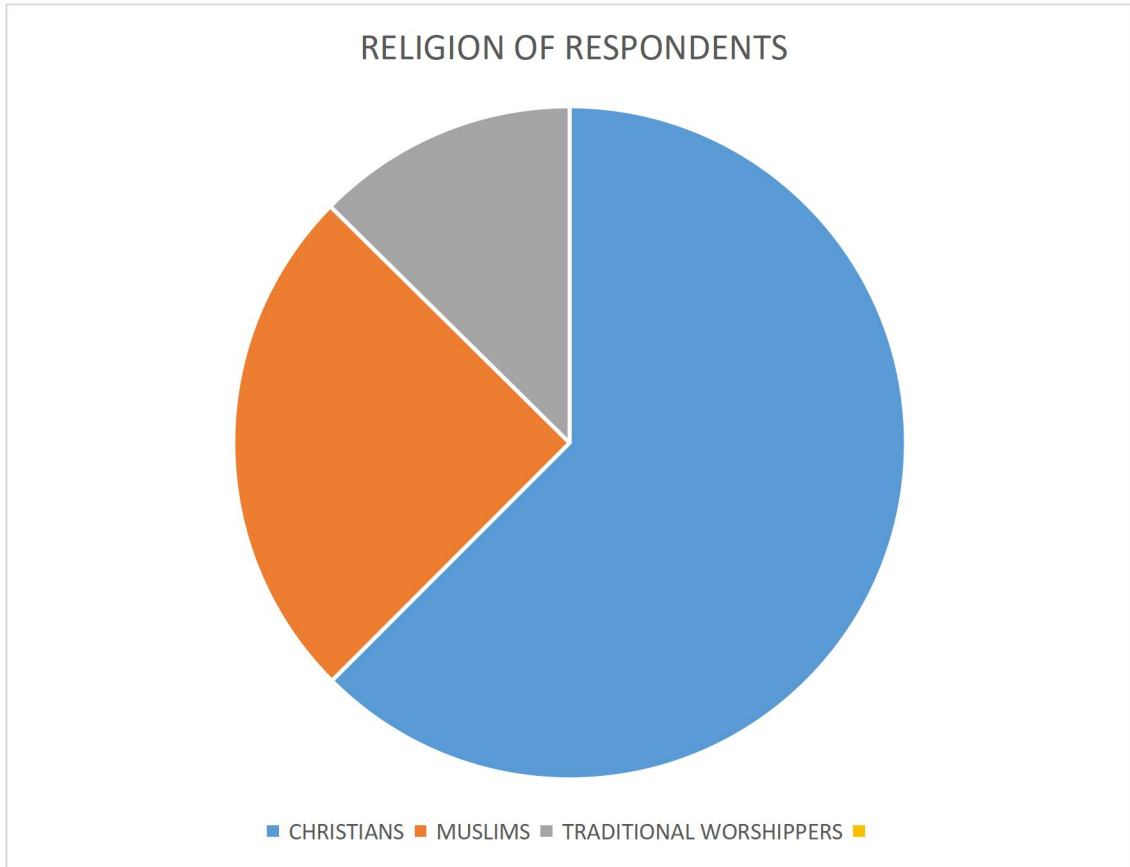
**FIG 1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY SEX**



**FIG 2: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**



**FIG 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY RELIGION**



**FIG 4: MARITAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**

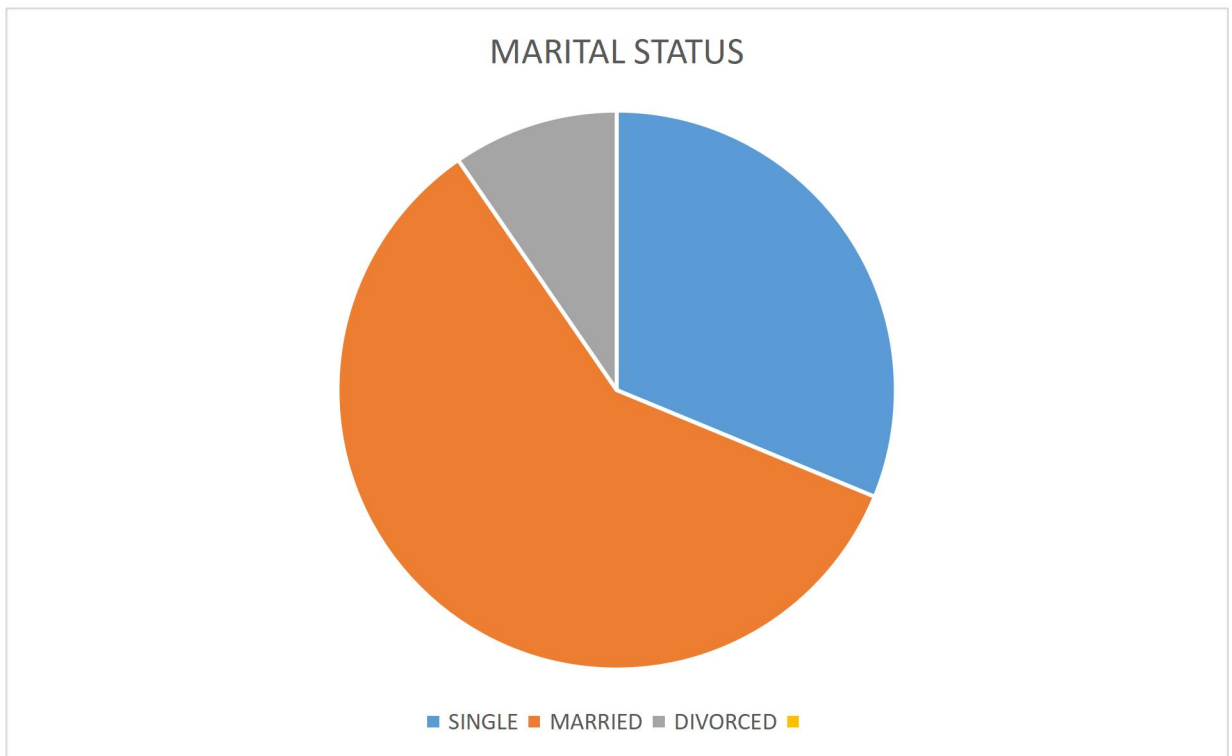


Table 1 and the accompanying graph provide a detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of our survey respondents. This information is crucial for understanding the makeup of the group and assessing potential biases or limitations in the data.

### **Gender Distribution:**

The survey reflects a higher participation rate from females, with 67.8% of respondents identifying as female compared to 32.2% identifying as male. This gender skew is worth considering when interpreting the results, particularly on topics that might have gender-based biases.

### **Age Breakdown:**

The age distribution reveals a concentration of respondents in the mid-to-late working years. The largest segment falls within the 36 and above age range (56.2%), followed by 30-35 year olds (21.6%). Younger age groups (18-23 and 24-29) comprise a combined 22.2% of respondents. This suggests the survey may be more representative of established adults than younger demographics.

### **Marital Status:**

The data indicates that a majority of respondents (59.1%) are married. This is followed by single individuals (31.2%), divorced individuals (9.6%). Understanding the marital makeup of the respondents can be important when analyzing responses to questions related to finances, household dynamics, or leisure activities.

### **Religious Affiliation:**

Christianity emerges as the dominant religion among respondents, with 58.8% identifying as Christian. Islam follows with 24.9%, then Traditional worshippers at 12.6%. This information can shed light on potential cultural influences or values that may have shaped respondents' answers.

### **4.2 Research Question one: To what extent do socio-economic factors such as family income and parental education level correlate with academic performance metrics like GPA and graduation rates among students at the University of Benin?**

**Table 4.5: Students from families with higher incomes tend to have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	82	27.2%
Disagreed	7	2.3%
Strongly Agreed	188	62.5%
Strongly Disagreed	18	6.0%
Undecided	6	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.5 shows that 27.2% of the total respondents agreed that students from families with higher incomes tend to have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin; 2.3% of the total respondents disagreed that students from families with higher incomes tend to have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin; 62.5% of the total respondents strongly agreed that students from families with higher incomes tend to have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin; 6.0% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that students from families with higher incomes tend to

have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin; and 2.0% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that students from families with higher incomes tend to have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin

**Table 4.6: A student's financial limitations have little to no impact on their academic performance at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	32	10.6%
Disagreed	10	3.3%
Strongly Agreed	59	19.6%
Strongly Disagreed	181	60.1%
Undecided	19	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.6 shows that 10.6% of the total respondents agreed that a student's financial limitations have little to no impact on their academic performance at the University of Benin; 3.3% of the total respondents disagreed that a student's financial limitations have little to no impact on their academic performance at the University of Benin; 19.6% of the total respondents strongly agreed that a student's financial limitations have little to no impact on their academic performance at the University of Benin; 60.1% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that a student's financial limitations have little to no impact on their academic performance at the University of Benin; and 6.3% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that a student's financial limitations have little to no impact on their academic performance at the University of Benin.

**Table 4.7: Access to financial resources can provide students with advantages that improve their academic performance at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	46	15.3%
Disagreed	13	4.3%
Strongly Agreed	212	70.4%
Strongly Disagreed	6	2.0%
Undecided	24	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.7 shows that 15.3% of the total respondents agreed that access to financial resources can provide students with advantages that improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; 4.3% of the total respondents disagreed that access to financial resources can provide students with advantages that improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; 70.4% of the total respondents strongly agreed that access to financial resources can provide students with advantages that improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; 2.0% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that access to financial resources can provide students with advantages that improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; and 8.0% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that access to financial resources can provide students with advantages that improve their academic performance at the University of Benin.

#### **4.3 Research Question two: What are the roles of income on the academic performance of students at the University of Benin?**

**Table 4.8: Students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate from the University of Benin on time?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	55	18.3%
Disagreed	6	2.0%
Strongly Agreed	209	69.4%
Strongly Disagreed	12	4.0%
Undecided	19	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.8 shows that 18.3% of the total respondents agreed that students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate from the University of Benin on time; 2.0% of the total respondents disagreed that students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate from the University of Benin on time; 69.4% of the total respondents strongly agreed that students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate from the University of Benin on time; 4.0% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate from the University of Benin on time; and 6.3% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate from the University of Benin on time.

**Table 4.9: Parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate from the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	50	16.6%
Disagreed	2	0.7%
Strongly Agreed	4	1.3%
Strongly Disagreed	219	72.8%
Undecided	26	8.6%

<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
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*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.9 shows that 16.6% of the total respondents agreed that parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate from the University of Benin; 0.7% of the total respondents disagreed that parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate from the University of Benin; 1.3% of the total respondents strongly agreed that parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate from the University of Benin; 72.8% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate from the University of Benin; and 8.6% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate from the University of Benin.

**Table 4.10: The educational background of a student's parents can influence their support system and impact their chances of graduating from the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	70	23.3%
Disagreed	18	6.0%
Strongly Agreed	155	51.5%
Strongly Disagreed	29	9.6%
Undecided	29	9.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.10 shows that 23.3% of the total respondents agreed that the educational background of a student's parents can influence their support system and impact their chances of graduating from the University of Benin; 6.0% of the total respondents

disagreed that the educational background of a student's parents can influence their support system and impact their chances of graduating from the University of Benin; 51.5% of the total respondents strongly agreed that the educational background of a student's parents can influence their support system and impact their chances of graduating from the University of Benin; 9.6% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that the educational background of a student's parents can influence their support system and impact their chances of graduating from the University of Benin; and 9.6% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the educational background of a student's parents can influence their support system and impact their chances of graduating from the University of Benin.

#### 4.4 Research Question three: What are the impact of family background on academic performance?

**Table 4.11: A student's family background (income, education level) is the single most important factor influencing their academic performance at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	57	18.9%
Disagreed	7	2.3%
Strongly Agreed	213	70.8%
Strongly Disagreed	18	6.0%
Undecided	6	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.11 shows that 18.9% of the total respondents agreed that a student's family background (income, education level) is the single most important factor influencing their academic performance at the University of Benin; 2.3% of the total respondents

disagreed that a student's family background (income, education level) is the single most important factor influencing their academic performance at the University of Benin; 70.8% of the total respondents strongly agreed that a student's family background (income, education level) is the single most important factor influencing their academic performance at the University of Benin; 6.0% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that a student's family background (income, education level) is the single most important factor influencing their academic performance at the University of Benin; and 2.0% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that a student's family background (income, education level) is the single most important factor influencing their academic performance at the University of Benin.

**Table 4.12: Family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are equally important?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	55	18.3%
Disagreed	6	2.0%
Strongly Agreed	209	69.4%
Strongly Disagreed	12	4.0%
Undecided	19	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.12 shows that 18.3% of the total respondents agreed that family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are equally important; 2.0% of the total respondents disagreed that family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are equally important; 69.4% of the total respondents strongly agreed that family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are equally important; 4.0%

of the total respondent strongly disagreed that family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are equally important; and 6.3% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are equally important

**Table 4.13: There is no clear connection between family background and academic performance at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	82	27.2%
Disagreed	7	2.3%
Strongly Agreed	188	62.5%
Strongly Disagreed	18	6.0%
Undecided	6	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.13 shows that 27.2% of the total respondents agreed that there is no clear connection between family background and academic performance at the University of Benin; 2.3% of the total respondents disagreed that there is no clear connection between family background and academic performance at the University of Benin; 62.5% of the total respondents strongly agreed that there is no clear connection between family background and academic performance at the University of Benin; 6.0% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that there is no clear connection between family background and academic performance at the University of Benin; and 2.0% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that there is no clear connection between family background and academic performance at the University of Benin.

**4.5 Research Question Four: In what ways do socio-economic factors interact with other student success factors, such as study habits, learning styles, and access to mental health resources, to influence academic performance at the University of Benin?**

**Table 4.14: A student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	82	27.2%
Disagreed	7	2.3%
Strongly Agreed	188	62.5%
Strongly Disagreed	18	6.0%
Undecided	6	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.14 shows that 27.2% of the total respondents agreed that a student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance at the University of Benin; 2.3% of the total respondents disagreed that a student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance at the University of Benin; 62.5% of the total respondents strongly agreed that a student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance at the University of Benin; 6.0% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that a student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance at the University of Benin; and 2.0% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that a student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance at the University of Benin.

**Table 4.15: Access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic performance at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	32	10.6%
Disagreed	10	3.3%
Strongly Agreed	59	19.6%
Strongly Disagreed	181	60.1%
Undecided	19	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.15 shows that 10.6% of the total respondents agreed that access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; 3.3% of the total respondents disagreed that access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; 19.6% of the total respondents strongly agreed that access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; 60.1% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic performance at the University of Benin; and 6.3% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic performance at the University of Benin.

**Table 4.16: Learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than a student's socio-economic background at the University of Benin?**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agreed	46	15.3%
Disagreed	13	4.3%
Strongly Agreed	212	70.4%
Strongly Disagreed	6	2.0%
Undecided	24	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4.16 shows that 15.3% of the total respondents agreed that learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than a student's socio-economic background at the University of Benin; 4.3% of the total respondents disagreed that learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than a student's socio-economic background at the University of Benin; 70.4% of the total respondents strongly agreed that learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than a student's socio-economic background at the University of Benin; 2.0% of the total respondent strongly disagreed that learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than a student's socio-economic background at the University of Benin; and 8.0% of the total respondent were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than a student's socio-economic background at the University of Benin.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The aim of the discussion of findings is to discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter in relation to the research questions and objectives outlined in

Chapter One. This will also compare the study's findings with existing literature, providing a comprehensive analysis of how socio-economic factors influence academic performance at the University of Benin.

The findings from this study suggest a significant correlation between socio-economic factors such as family income and parental education level with academic performance metrics like GPA and graduation rates among students at the University of Benin. This is consistent with existing literature, which indicates that socio-economic status (SES) plays a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes. The data presented in Table 4.5 reveals that a majority of respondents (62.5%) strongly agreed that students from families with higher incomes tend to have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin. This aligns with the findings of Sirin (2005), who conducted a meta-analysis and found a strong positive correlation between family income and student academic performance. Higher family income often translates into better educational resources, access to private tutoring, and a conducive learning environment, all of which contribute to better academic outcomes. Moreover, 60.1% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that financial limitations have little to no impact on academic performance (Table 4.6). This supports the argument by Haveman and Wolfe (1995), who noted that financial constraints limit students' ability to purchase necessary educational materials and participate in enriching extracurricular activities, thereby adversely affecting their academic performance.

Table 4.8 indicates that 69.4% of respondents strongly agreed that students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate on time. This is supported by the work of Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2009), who found that parental education level is a significant predictor of children's educational attainment.

Educated parents are more likely to value education, provide intellectual stimulation, and possess the skills to help their children navigate academic challenges. Furthermore, 72.8% of respondents strongly disagreed with the notion that parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate (Table 4.9). This is consistent with findings by Davis-Kean (2005), who emphasized that parents with higher educational levels are better equipped to create an environment that fosters academic success through high expectations and effective educational support. Table 4.11 shows that 70.8% of respondents strongly agreed that family background (income and education level) is the single most important factor influencing academic performance. This finding is corroborated by the work of Bradley and Corwyn (2002), who demonstrated that children from higher SES backgrounds tend to perform better academically due to more favorable home environments and greater access to educational resources. However, it is important to note that while family background is significant, other factors such as study habits and learning styles also play crucial roles. This is reflected in Table 4.12, where 69.4% of respondents strongly agreed that family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are equally important. This aligns with the findings of Zimmerman and Schunk (2001), who argued that self-regulated learning and effective study strategies are critical components of academic success.

The study also explored how socio-economic factors interact with other student success factors such as study habits, learning styles, and access to mental health resources. Table 4.14 highlights that a significant majority of respondents (62.5%) strongly agreed that a student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance. This finding is supported by the work of Walstad and Robson (1990), who found that financial literacy and management

skills are essential for students to avoid stress and maintain focus on their studies. Moreover, Table 4.15 shows that 60.1% of respondents strongly disagreed that access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic performance. This suggests a recognition of the importance of mental health services, yet a perceived lack of their efficacy in bridging the SES gap in academic performance. This contrasts with the findings of Eisenberg, Golberstein, and Hunt (2009), who highlighted the positive impact of mental health services on academic outcomes, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Finally, the study examined the impact of learning styles on academic performance relative to socio-economic background. Table 4.16 indicates that 70.4% of respondents strongly agreed that learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than socio-economic background. This finding supports the view of Dunn and Griggs (2003), who emphasized that aligning teaching methods with students' learning styles can significantly enhance academic performance. However, it is also essential to consider the interaction between learning styles and SES, as SES can influence access to environments that support different learning preferences. The findings of this study underscore the significant influence of socio-economic factors on academic performance at the University of Benin. Higher family income and parental education levels are strongly correlated with better academic outcomes, supporting existing literature on the subject. Additionally, while family background is a critical determinant of academic success, other factors such as study habits, learning styles, and access to mental health resources also play essential roles. Future research should further explore these interactions to develop comprehensive

strategies that address both socio-economic and individual factors to enhance student success.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the results of the findings.

#### 5.1 Summary

This study was structured into five chapters to effectively carry out this research. The study raised three objectives that guided the study. Based on these objectives, research questions and hypotheses were formulated, the assumptions and significance of the study were highlighted, area of study and scope were also discussed. Chapter two reviewed literature related to the research topic. The review critically examined and analyzed the views of some social workers and other concerned scholars on the concepts. In chapter three the design and methodology of the study were discussed. The research design was a cross-sectional survey design, the population of the study comprised of the aged people living in the area of study. A total of 301 persons were sampled using Expert sampling technique. One instrument was used for data collection, the questionnaire. The returned questionnaires were analyzed using simple percentage table for the demographic response collected from the respondents through the questionnaire. Chapter four presented the analysis of the data collected which were analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics.

#### 5.2 Conclusion

The persistent disparity in academic outcomes experienced by students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds (SES) remains a pressing challenge in higher education. This research has explored the intricate relationship between SES and academic performance at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), a prestigious Nigerian institution.

By examining existing research and incorporating the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), this study has shed light on the multifaceted ways in which socioeconomic factors influence the educational experiences and achievements of UNIBEN students.

The findings highlight the significant disadvantages faced by low-SES students. Financial constraints present a major hurdle, with students grappling with tuition fees, living expenses, and the cost of essential academic resources. The uneven quality of pre-university education further disadvantages low-SES students, leaving them with weaker foundational knowledge and academic skills compared to their peers from high-SES backgrounds. Beyond financial limitations and educational disparities, low-SES students often lack access to crucial support systems, including parental involvement, academic advising, and mentorship opportunities. These factors collectively contribute to lower GPAs, higher dropout rates, and limited career prospects for low-SES students at UNIBEN.

However, this study also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the intersection of race and ethnicity with SES. Through the lens of CRT, we recognize that students of color from low-SES backgrounds face unique challenges. Racialized knowledge systems, culturally irrelevant curricula, and the prevalence of stereotypes and microaggressions can create a sense of alienation and hinder their academic performance. Additionally, social capital, often limited for low-SES students, may be further restricted by racial segregation, leaving students of color with fewer connections to potential mentors and role models.

Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing targeted interventions aimed at fostering a more equitable learning environment at UNIBEN. The proposed interventions fall within three broad categories: financial support, academic support,

and social support. Financial support initiatives range from need-based scholarships and grant programs to financial literacy workshops. Academic support services can include tutoring programs, supplemental instruction sessions, and writing center resources. Social support interventions encompass mentorship programs specifically designed for low-SES students, fostering peer support groups, and creating racially inclusive student organizations.

Furthermore, universities can advocate for policies that increase funding for need-based financial aid programs and higher education initiatives tailored to support low-SES students. Collaboration with community organizations and K-12 institutions can establish a vital pipeline of support from early education through university graduation. By implementing a comprehensive framework that addresses the financial, academic, social, and technological challenges faced by low-SES students, UNIBEN can strive to fulfill its potential as an equalizer.

However, achieving true equity requires a multi-faceted approach that extends beyond the university walls. Addressing the root causes of educational disparities necessitates broader societal efforts. Investments in improving the quality of primary and secondary education, particularly in under-resourced communities, are crucial. Early intervention programs that target K-12 schools with limited resources can help ensure students from disadvantaged backgrounds reach university better prepared. Additionally, dismantling racial inequalities within the education system requires ongoing efforts to promote cultural competency among faculty and staff, and fostering inclusive learning environments that value diverse perspectives and experiences.

In conclusion, the relationship between SES and academic performance at UNIBEN is complex and multifaceted. While financial constraints, pre-university educational

disparities, and limited support systems pose significant challenges for low-SES students, acknowledging the intersection of race and ethnicity with SES adds another layer of complexity. By implementing a comprehensive framework of interventions at the university level, coupled with broader societal efforts aimed at improving educational equity from K-12 onwards, universities like UNIBEN can take significant strides towards leveling the playing field and ensuring that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or ethnicity, have the opportunity to succeed in higher education. This will not only promote social justice but also enrich the university environment by fostering a diverse and vibrant student body. As universities embrace their role in dismantling educational inequalities, they can empower individuals from all backgrounds to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Bridging the equity gap in higher education and ensuring all students have the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their socioeconomic background (SES) or ethnicity, necessitates a multi-pronged approach. This section outlines recommendations for universities, policymakers, and K-12 institutions, fostering a collaborative effort to dismantle systemic barriers and cultivate a more equitable learning environment.

#### **Financial Support Programs:**

- **Expand Need-Based Scholarships and Grants:** Universities should prioritize expanding need-based scholarships and grant programs specifically designed to support low-SES students. These programs should account for the full cost of attendance, encompassing tuition fees, living expenses, and the cost of essential

academic resources like textbooks and technology. Partnering with corporations, foundations, and alumni associations can further bolster scholarship opportunities.

- **Financial Literacy Workshops:** Equipping students with financial literacy skills is crucial. Workshops on budgeting, managing student loans, navigating financial aid processes, and exploring scholarship opportunities empower students to make informed financial decisions throughout their academic journey.
- **Emergency Aid Funds:** Establishing emergency aid funds can provide short-term financial assistance to low-SES students facing unexpected financial hardships that could threaten their academic progress.

#### **Academic Support Services:**

- **Comprehensive Tutoring Programs:** Offering a robust tutoring program with free or subsidized options ensures all students have access to academic support. This can include one-on-one tutoring, small group sessions, and peer tutoring initiatives. Tutors should be well-versed in core academic subjects and possess strong communication and instructional skills.
- **Supplemental Instruction (SI) Sessions:** SI sessions, led by peers or instructors, provide opportunities for students to review complex concepts, clarify challenging material, and ask questions in a safe and supportive environment. These sessions can be particularly beneficial for low-SES students who may lack strong foundational knowledge or require additional support in specific subjects.
- **Academic Advising:** Regular meetings with academic advisors are essential for low-SES students navigating course selection, identifying academic resources, and developing effective study plans. Advisors can play a crucial role in ensuring students stay on track for graduation and achieve their academic goals.

- **Writing Center Resources:** Strong writing skills are fundamental for academic success. Equipping students with these skills is vital. Universities can establish writing centers staffed by qualified writing specialists who can provide feedback on writing assignments, guide students through the writing process, and offer support in developing strong writing skills across disciplines.
- **Technology Loaner Programs:** The digital divide can exacerbate existing inequalities. Universities can bridge this gap by offering loaner programs for laptops, tablets, and essential academic software. This ensures all students have the necessary technological tools to participate fully in online learning platforms, access digital course materials, and complete online assignments.

#### **Social Support Initiatives:**

- **Mentorship Programs:** Mentorship programs connecting low-SES students with professionals, faculty members, or alumni from similar backgrounds can provide invaluable guidance and support. Mentors can offer career advice, share insights into navigating university life, and serve as positive role models. Research suggests that such programs can improve academic performance, increase retention rates, and enhance career aspirations for low-SES students.
- **Peer Support Groups:** Creating peer support groups fosters a sense of community and belonging for low-SES students. Sharing experiences, offering advice, and collaborating on academic endeavors can provide a valuable support network. These groups can be facilitated by student leaders, faculty advisors, or professional counselors.

- **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:** Universities should cultivate inclusive learning environments by adopting culturally responsive teaching methods. This involves acknowledging and valuing diverse cultural backgrounds, incorporating diverse voices and perspectives into the curriculum, and utilizing teaching styles that resonate with different learning styles. Faculty development workshops focusing on cultural competency and inclusive pedagogy can equip instructors with the necessary skills to create classrooms that celebrate diversity and foster a sense of belonging for all students.
- **Anti-Racist Education Initiatives:** Universities can implement anti-racist education initiatives that address racial biases within the institution and promote cultural competency among faculty, staff, and students. This can involve workshops, seminars, and diversity training programs designed to raise awareness of implicit biases, dismantle stereotypes, and foster a more inclusive campus climate.
- **Racially Inclusive Student Organizations:** Facilitating the creation of student organizations and support groups specifically for low-SES students of color provides opportunities for peer support, cultural celebration, and fostering a sense of belonging within a predominantly white institution.

#### **Advocacy and Collaboration:**

- **Policy Advocacy:** Universities can leverage their influence by advocating for policies that increase federal and state funding for need-based financial aid programs and higher education initiatives specifically designed to support low-SES students. Engaging with policymakers and lobbying for increased funding can create a sustainable source of financial support for low-SES students seeking higher education.



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**APPENDIX**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**  
**BENIN CITY**

Dear Respondent,

I am a final year student of the department of Social Work, with degree in view B.SC Social Work. The objective of this questionnaire is to obtain relevant information which will help in providing answers to the research questions of the study. Upon completion of this study, you are invited to read my findings because it will be useful to government agencies; non-government organization- international, national and local; policy makers. You are hereby assured that information gathered with this questionnaire is basically for academic purpose and it will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

**Socio Demographic Profile**

- AGE: 18 -23 years( ) 24 – 29 years( ) 30 – 35 years( ) 36 years and above( )
- GENDER: Male: ( ) Female: ( )
- RELIGION: Christian: ( ) Muslim: ( ) Traditional Worshipper: ( )
- Marital Status: Single : ( ) Married : ( ) Divorced : ( )

**Section B; Research questions**

Nos	To what extent do	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
<b>I</b>	<b>socio-economic factors such as family income and parental education level correlate with</b>					

	<p><b>academic performance metrics like GPA and graduation rates among students at the University of Benin?</b></p>					
1	Students from families with higher incomes tend to have significantly better GPAs at the University of Benin?					
2	A student's financial limitations have little to no impact on their academic performance at the University of Benin?					
3	Access to financial resources can provide students with advantages that improve their academic performance at the University of Benin?					
<b>Item II</b>	<p><b>What are the roles of income on the academic performance of students at the University of Benin?</b></p>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>

4	Students with parents who have higher levels of education are more likely to graduate from the University of Benin on time?					
5	Parental education level has no bearing on a student's ability to graduate from the University of Benin?					
6	The educational background of a student's parents can influence their support system and impact their chances of graduating from the University of Benin?					
<b>Item III</b>	<b>What are the impact of family background on academic performance?</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
7	A student's family background (income, education level) is the single most important factor influencing their academic performance at the University of Benin?					
8	Family background plays a role in academic performance, but other factors like study habits are					

	equally important?					
<b>9</b>	There is no clear connection between family background and academic performance at the University of Benin?					
<b>Item IV</b>	<b>In what ways do socio-economic factors interact with other student success factors, such as study habits, learning styles, and access to mental health resources, to influence academic performance at the University of Benin?</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>10</b>	A student's ability to manage their finances can influence their study habits and overall academic performance at the University of Benin?					
<b>11</b>	Access to mental health resources can help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds overcome challenges and improve their academic					

	performance at the University of Benin?					
<b>12</b>	Learning style preferences have a greater impact on academic performance than a student's socio-economic background at the University of Benin?					