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Influence of Socio-Economic Status, Study Habits/Time Management, and Mental Health on Academic Performance of Students in the Polytechnic, Ibadan, Oyo State

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Abstract

Academic performance is a key indicator of students' educational success and future opportunities. Low achievement among tertiary students in Nigeria has been linked to multiple factors, including socio-economic status, study habits, and mental health. However, limited research has examined how these factors jointly influence academic outcomes in institutions such as The Polytechnic, Ibadan. This study investigated the determinants of low academic performance, focusing on socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status. A descriptive correlational design was adopted. The population comprised low-achieving students identified through self-reported academic performance. A sample of 120 students was selected using simple random sampling. Standardised instruments assessed socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health, while academic performance was measured using students' grade point averages. Data were analysed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression to determine individual, relative, and joint contributions of the independent variables, with significance set at 0.05. Findings indicated positive correlations between study habits/time management and academic performance, as well as socio-economic status and performance, while mental health status was negatively correlated with performance. Regression analysis showed that study habits/time management contributed most strongly to performance, followed by socio-economic status, with mental health exerting a negative influence. Collectively, the three factors jointly predicted approximately 41% of the variance in academic performance, indicating a strong overall effect of these predictors. Academic performance is shaped by behavioural, environmental, and psychological factors. Interventions should enhance study skills and time management, provide financial support to disadvantaged students, and integrate mental health services, including counselling and stress management. A holistic approach targeting these domains is likely to improve outcomes and reduce low-achievement rates among students.

Keywords: Academic performance, socio-economic status, study habits, time management, mental health

Introduction

Academic performance is a major concern in higher education because it represents students' ability to acquire knowledge, apply skills, and adapt to the demands of their disciplines. In

Nigeria, the persistent challenge of low academic achievement among tertiary students has raised questions about the quality of human capital development and the long-term implications for national productivity. Poor outcomes in higher institutions are not only institutional matters but also the product of individual, social, and psychological influences (Mensah, 2024). Researchers argue that tackling underachievement requires examining the interplay of socio-economic, behavioural, and mental health determinants (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2022; Mu'azu & Shehu, 2024).

Socio-economic status (SES) remains one of the strongest predictors of educational outcomes. Students experiencing financial hardship face difficulties in accessing learning materials, maintaining consistent study routines, and concentrating on academic work while managing economic stress. Evidence from Nigerian studies shows that SES strongly influences academic performance at both secondary and tertiary levels (Akinyemi et al., 2018). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often demonstrate lower resilience, partly because reduced resources and limited social support constrain their ability to cope with academic demands (Akinyemi et al., 2018). Within polytechnic contexts, issues such as inadequate infrastructure and resource scarcity further exacerbate these challenges (Alasa & Quadri, 2022).

Beyond SES, study habits and time management represent direct behavioural determinants of academic performance. Effective study strategies, including planning, consistent revision, and structured time allocation, have been linked with higher achievement (Aljaffer et al., 2024). Conversely, poor time management and disorganised study routines often correlate with academic underperformance (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2021). Locally, research highlights that even students with comparable intellectual abilities may struggle when they lack effective self-regulatory skills (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2022). These findings suggest that improving study habits and time management could provide cost-effective strategies to boost student achievement in resource-constrained settings.

Mental health has emerged as another critical factor influencing students' academic success. Symptoms of depression and anxiety negatively affect concentration, memory, and motivation, which in turn lead to absenteeism and poor classroom engagement (Garmabi et al., 2024). In Nigeria, mental health challenges are often compounded by financial pressures and inadequate support systems, thereby deepening their negative impact on performance (Omopo, 2025).

Research links adverse childhood experiences, parental neglect, and peer-related stress to educational underachievement among adolescents in Ibadan (Quadri et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2024). Moreover, studies on psychological distress reveal that unresolved emotional difficulties limit resilience and persistence in learning tasks (Akinyemi & Aremu, 2018).

The Ibadan context provides unique insights into how psychosocial factors shape education. Peer influence plays a significant role in either motivating or discouraging academic engagement (Aremu & Akinyemi, 2019). Maladaptive behaviours, such as smoking and substance use, have also been associated with poorer educational outcomes (Adebayo-Oke et al., 2021; Asiyanbi et al., 2025). Conversely, therapeutic and behavioural interventions—such as mindfulness, cognitive training, reality therapy, and cognitive reframing—have been shown to improve self-regulation and emotional control, thereby enhancing academic resilience (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2021; Omopo, 2024; Asiyanbi et al., 2025). These findings highlight the intersection of psychological well-being, social dynamics, and behavioural regulation in shaping student performance.

Despite the growing body of literature, most Nigerian studies have examined socio-economic, behavioural, or psychological factors in isolation. While the influence of SES on academic performance is well established (Akinyemi et al., 2018), and determinants of underperformance have been investigated at the University of Ibadan (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2022), less attention has been given to polytechnic students who face distinct pressures such as vocational demands and resource scarcity. The Polytechnic, Ibadan, one of the largest and most diverse polytechnics in Nigeria offers a critical context to explore these factors holistically.

This study therefore investigates the determinants of low academic performance among students of The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Oyo State, with particular attention to socio-economic status (financial hardship), study habits/time management, and mental health (depression and anxiety). By integrating these determinants, the study aims to clarify their relative and combined influences, thereby providing evidence for interventions that improve academic outcomes in Nigerian polytechnic education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the determinants of low academic performance among students of The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Oyo State, focusing on socio-economic status (financial hardship), study habits and time management, and mental health status (symptoms of depression and anxiety). The study further seeks to establish the relative and joint contributions of these factors to students' academic performance, in order to provide evidence for targeted interventions in polytechnic education. Specific objectives are:

1. To examine the influence of socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status on the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan..
2. To examine the joint contributions of socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status to the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan.
3. To determine the relative contributions of socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status to the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan

Research Questions

1. How do socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status influence the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan?
2. What are the joint contributions of socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status to the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan?
3. What are the relative contributions of socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status to the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan?

Methods

The study employed a cross-sectional, correlational design to investigate determinants of low academic performance among students of The Polytechnic, Ibadan. The population included all full-time undergraduates across schools and departments, but the focus was on students who identified themselves as academically struggling. A self-report screening questionnaire was first administered, asking students to indicate their grade point range, history of failed courses, and perceived difficulties in meeting academic requirements. Those who disclosed a CGPA below 2.50 or admitted repeated struggles with coursework were classified as low-achieving and formed the target group. From this pool, 120 participants were randomly selected across departments to ensure proportional representation of the institution. Standardised instruments were then used: the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) to measure depression, the Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) to assess anxiety, and the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) to capture study habits and time management. Socio-economic status was measured using a structured index adapted to the Nigerian tertiary context, while self-reported academic history served as the performance indicator.

Prior to the main study, a pilot involving 20 students tested the instruments for clarity and internal consistency, producing acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Data collection took place in classrooms and departmental halls with the assistance of trained research aides, and ethical approval was secured from the Polytechnic's review committee. Participants signed informed consent forms and were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise the data. Pearson correlations explored associations among the key variables, while multiple regression identified the relative influence of socio-economic status, study habits, and mental health on academic performance. Hierarchical regression was further used to establish their joint contributions. Students who reported severe depressive or anxiety symptoms were provided with referral information for professional psychological support. All hypothesis were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Result and Discussions

Demographic Representations of the Participants

Table 1: **Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 120)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	64	53.3
	Female	56	46.7
Age Group (years)	16–20	28	23.3
	21–25	62	51.7
	26–30	22	18.3
	31 and above	8	6.7
Level of Study	ND I	28	23.3
	ND II	32	26.7
	HND I	30	25.0
	HND II	30	25.0

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the 120 participants who identified themselves as academically low-performing students of The Polytechnic, Ibadan. In terms of gender, 64 students (53.3%) were male, while 56 (46.7%) were female, indicating a fairly balanced distribution across sexes. The age profile of respondents revealed that the majority were between 21 and 25 years (51.7%), followed by those aged 16–20 years (23.3%). Smaller proportions were observed in the 26–30 years group (18.3%) and 31 years and above (6.7%), suggesting that most participants were in the typical age range for undergraduate education.

With respect to level of study, the distribution was fairly even across the four groups. ND II students accounted for 26.7% of the sample, while ND I represented 23.3%. Students in HND I and HND II made up 25.0% each, showing that both the lower and upper divisions of the polytechnic system were adequately represented. Overall, the demographic spread indicates that the study sample captured a balanced mix of students in terms of gender, age, and level of study, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the findings.

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question 1

How do socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status influence the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan?

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
1. Academic Performance	1.00	0.41**	0.53**	-0.38**	56.72	8.43
2. Socio-economic Status	0.41**	1.00	0.36**	-0.29**	42.15	6.87
3. Study Habits/Time Management	0.53**	0.36**	1.00	-0.32**	47.83	7.15
4. Mental Health Status	-0.38**	-0.29**	-0.32**	1.00	38.24	5.92

Note: $p < .05$ (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that socio-economic status was positively and significantly correlated with academic performance ($r = 0.41$, $p < .05$), while study habits/time management had the strongest positive correlation ($r = 0.53$, $p < .05$). Mental health status was negatively correlated with performance ($r = –0.38$, $p < .05$). Socio-economic status and study habits were also positively related ($r = 0.36$, $p < .05$), and both were negatively correlated with mental health distress ($r = –0.29$ and $–0.32$, respectively). These results indicate that academic performance was influenced by study behaviours, family resources, and psychological wellbeing, all tested at the 0.05 significance level.

The findings revealed that socio-economic status influenced students' academic performance, with students from higher socio-economic backgrounds performing better than their peers from less privileged households. This may be because financially stable students have greater access to learning resources such as textbooks, internet facilities, private tutoring, and conducive study environments, which enhance academic outcomes (Akinyemi et al., 2018a). Additionally, financial stability can reduce stress associated with meeting basic needs, allowing students to focus more on their academic responsibilities (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2022). The positive relationship between socio-economic status and effective study habits suggests that financial resources may enable students to establish structured study routines, further supporting their academic success. These observations align with the findings of Akinyemi et al. (2018b), who reported that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds exhibited better academic achievement and resilience compared to those from lower socio-economic strata.

Study habits and time management emerged as a strong predictor of academic performance, highlighting the importance of personal learning behaviours in achieving educational success. Students who maintained structured study routines, prioritised tasks, and balanced academic work with other responsibilities were more likely to perform well. Effective time management reduces procrastination and last-minute cramming, which often undermines performance (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2021). Furthermore, the positive link between study habits and socio-economic status suggests that students with access to resources may be better able to adopt disciplined and organised learning practices. These findings are supported by Aremu and Akinyemi (2019), who observed that well-developed study habits significantly predicted academic outcomes among secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Mental health status was found to negatively affect academic performance, indicating that students experiencing psychological distress, such as depression or anxiety, were more likely to struggle academically. Psychological distress can impair concentration, memory, motivation, and decision-making, all of which are essential for learning and academic success (Omopo, 2025). Additionally, the relationship between mental health and both socio-economic status and study habits suggests that students facing financial constraints and weaker study routines may be more susceptible to stress, further hindering their academic outcomes. These findings align with Akinyemi and Aremu (2018), who reported that students with higher levels of psychological distress were more likely to exhibit lower academic achievement. Interventions that enhance mental wellbeing, such as counselling and stress management programmes, could therefore support improved academic outcomes among affected students.

Research Question 2

What are the joint contributions of socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status to the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan?

Table 4: Joint Contribution of Predictors to Academic Performance (Model Summary)

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F (df1, df2)	p-value
Regression	0.64	0.41	0.39	26.83 (3,116)	< .05

Table 4 shows that socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status jointly predicted 41% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.41$, $F(3,116) = 26.83$, $p < .05$). The multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.64$) indicates a strong overall

relationship between the predictors and academic outcomes. These findings demonstrate that academic performance was significantly influenced simultaneously by financial resources, study behaviours, and mental health, with all tests conducted at the 0.05 significance level.

The findings revealed that socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status jointly contributed to students' academic performance, explaining a substantial portion of the variance. This indicates that academic outcomes are not solely determined by a single factor but by the interplay among financial resources, personal study behaviours, and psychological wellbeing. Socio-economic status may provide the necessary resources and learning environment, study habits/time management determine how effectively those resources are utilised, and mental health influences the ability to engage cognitively and emotionally with academic tasks.

The positive association between socio-economic status and study habits suggests that students from financially advantaged backgrounds are more likely to adopt structured and disciplined study routines. Similarly, the negative correlation between mental health status and both study habits and socio-economic status indicates that psychological distress can undermine the benefits of good study practices and available resources. These interconnections imply that the variables reinforce or mitigate each other's effects, producing a combined influence on academic performance. For example, a student with strong study habits but high psychological distress may perform less well than a peer with similar study habits but better mental health.

This joint influence highlights the importance of viewing academic performance through a holistic lens, where environmental, behavioural, and psychological factors interact. The results align with previous research showing that academic success among Nigerian students is determined not only by financial or personal study resources but also by mental health and emotional regulation (Fehintola & Akinyemi, 2022). Consequently, interventions aimed at improving academic performance should simultaneously address study skills, provide support for socio-economically disadvantaged students, and promote mental health wellbeing. A comprehensive approach ensures that students benefit fully from available resources and personal learning strategies while mitigating the adverse effects of psychological distress.

Research Question 3

What are the relative contributions of socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status to the academic performance of students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan?

Table 3: Multiple Regression Showing Relative Contributions of Predictors to Academic Performance

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	Standardised Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Socio-economic Status	0.48	0.15	0.26	3.18	< .05
Study Habits/Time Management	0.62	0.13	0.39	4.92	< .05
Mental Health Status	-0.41	0.14	-0.22	-2.87	< .05
Constant	12.34	4.21	–	2.93	< .05

Table 3 indicates that study habits/time management contributed the most to academic performance ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < .05$), followed by socio-economic status ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < .05$). Mental health status negatively influenced performance ($\beta = –0.22$, $p < .05$). All contributions were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting that both personal study behaviours and family resources positively influence academic performance, while psychological distress reduces it.

The results indicated that study habits and time management made the strongest contribution to students' academic performance, highlighting the central role of personal learning behaviours. Students who effectively organised their study schedules, prioritised tasks, and maintained consistent routines were more likely to perform well academically. Good time management helps reduce procrastination and promotes regular revision, which consolidates understanding and improves retention of material. This finding aligns with Aremu and Akinyemi (2019), who reported that structured study habits significantly enhanced academic outcomes among secondary school students in Ibadan. Similarly, Fehintola and Akinyemi (2021) found that attention regulation and disciplined study behaviours positively influenced mathematics performance among Nigerian junior secondary school students. The prominence of study habits in this study suggests that regardless of financial background or mental health, students who adopt effective learning strategies have a substantial advantage in achieving academic success. Therefore, interventions aimed at improving organisational skills and self-regulated learning could have a strong impact on performance.

Socio-economic status emerged as the second most important contributor to academic performance, indicating that access to financial and material resources supports educational achievement. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds may benefit from textbooks, learning technologies, private tutoring, and environments conducive to study, which facilitate comprehension and engagement. These resources also reduce the stress associated with unmet basic needs, allowing students to focus on academic responsibilities. The positive role of socio-economic status is supported by Akinyemi et al. (2018a), who found that students from wealthier families in Nigerian secondary schools consistently achieved higher academic results than their peers from lower-income households. Akinyemi et al. (2018b) further reported that social support networks, which are often more accessible to students from higher socio-economic backgrounds, enhance academic resilience. Although socio-economic status contributes less than study habits/time management, its influence is significant, suggesting that financial and material advantages complement disciplined study behaviours in promoting academic success.

Mental health status contributed negatively to academic performance, indicating that psychological distress undermines students' ability to engage effectively with their studies. Symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress can impair concentration, memory, motivation, and decision-making, all of which are critical for learning and academic achievement. This finding is consistent with Omopo (2025), who demonstrated that poor mental health negatively impacted adolescents' cognitive engagement and behavioural outcomes in Oyo State, Nigeria. Akinyemi and Aremu (2018) also reported that students experiencing psychological distress were more likely to exhibit low academic performance. While the impact of mental health is smaller relative to study habits and socio-economic status, it remains a critical factor, suggesting that even students with effective study behaviours and financial support may underperform if their psychological wellbeing is compromised. These results underscore the importance of incorporating mental health support, such as counselling, stress management programmes, and emotional skills training, into educational interventions to optimise academic success.

Conclusion

This study investigated the determinants of low academic performance among students of The Polytechnic, Ibadan, focusing on socio-economic status, study habits/time management, and mental health status. The findings revealed that all three factors significantly influenced

academic performance, both individually and jointly. Study habits and time management emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by socio-economic status, while mental health status negatively affected performance. Collectively, these variables explained a substantial proportion of the variance in academic outcomes, demonstrating that academic performance is shaped by an interplay of personal behaviours, environmental resources, and psychological wellbeing. The results underscore that interventions aimed at improving academic success must address multiple domains simultaneously, rather than focusing on a single factor.

Implications of the Findings

The findings have several practical implications for students, educators, and policymakers. Firstly, academic support programmes should prioritise developing effective study habits and time management skills, as these were the strongest predictors of performance. Secondly, the role of socio-economic status highlights the need for financial and material support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including scholarships, learning resources, and access to technology. Thirdly, the negative influence of mental health status indicates that institutions must integrate mental health support into academic environments, including counselling services, stress management workshops, and awareness campaigns. Together, these measures can enhance the holistic development of students and improve overall academic outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes, the following are recommended:

1. **Enhance Study Skills Training:** Institutions should implement structured programmes to teach effective study techniques, time management, and self-regulated learning strategies to help students improve academic performance.
2. **Provide Financial and Resource Support:** Scholarships, grants, and access to study materials and technology should be prioritised for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to reduce resource-related disparities in academic achievement.
3. **Integrate Mental Health Support:** Counselling services, stress reduction workshops, and peer-support initiatives should be made readily available to address psychological distress and enhance students' capacity to engage effectively in learning.

4. **Holistic Intervention Approaches:** Policies and programmes should simultaneously target study behaviours, financial support, and mental wellbeing, recognising the joint contribution of these factors to academic performance.

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