



**Influence of Inter-Ethnic Marriage on Students Academic Performance: A Case
Study of Public Secondary School Students in Some Selected States in Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of inter-ethnic marriages on the academic performance of public secondary schools students from such homes in four purposefully selected states in the Southern part of Nigeria. To achieve this aim, the study adopted the survey type of research design. The major instruments used for the primary data collection was a self-designed structured type of research questionnaire and personal interview guide. Data collected was analyzed with mean scores and the Chi square statistics. The analysis of data collected revealed that inter-ethnic marriages by sheer composition do not have any influence on the academic performance of public secondary school students in the study area. Based on this finding, it is concluded that the academic performance of students from inter-ethnic marriage homes in the area is influenced by other factors including the couples belief, values and attitudinal disposition towards their children education.

KEYWORDS: Inter-ethnic marriage, Influence, Academic Performance, Secondary School Students.

1.1. Introduction

The psychological, socio-economic and cultural conditions that surrounds and influence the growth and development of the child is the home environment. It is in the home that children foundation for learning and socialization are laid by their parents, care givers and other members of the extended family in Africa. The underlying factor that determines the pattern many parents use to nurture their children is the belief and value system of their own ethnic group (Amos, 2013), and most parents learn their parenting practices from their own parents (Santrock, 2006). To sustain this trend, members of the different ethnic groups are known to participate in activities in which common origin and culture are significant variables (Otite and Oginwo, 2016), which are shared or transmitted from generation to generation (Sibani, 2014). This is apparently why Hale (2004) in Otite and Oginwo (2016) opines that the ethnic group is the social radar with which members learn, identify and impose socio-cultural possibilities and potential constraints.

One of the socio-cultural possibilities is for any member of an ethnic group to marry a partner of his or her choice from another ethnic group and when this happens it is called inter-ethnic marriage. Inter-ethnic marriage is one in which the couples are from different ethnic groups. It is a form of exogamy or marriage outside of one's social group (Ewelum, 2016). Inter-ethnic marriage is also known as inter-racial marriage or mixed marriage when it involves people of different race or in the case of an immigrant marrying a native. Nevertheless, marriage is an institution where the activities of couples are regulated by socio-cultural practices and values. Given this maxim, to nurture children in an inter-ethnic marriage home the couples erstwhile norms, folkways, and language, arts, foods and craft would take the combined cultural traits approach and this mixed method or parenting practice could have implications for the children that is worthy of investigation. Therefore, gathered information about the influence of inter-ethnic marriages on children academic performance

becomes imperative if we must understand the interactions and interrelationship between couples and the children from inter-ethnic marriage homes.

Culturally, there are ways in which parents brings up their children so that they can learn and imbibe the norms, mores and values of their own ethnic group as they grow up in the family home. Some of these include story telling (folktales), visiting siblings to show the children their extended family system structure and participation in traditional rites/ceremonies/festivals as well as the constant show of love, care and attention by the mothers (Amos, 2013). As of today, in spite of the increasing influence of Western culture and the socio-economic challenges associated with the 21st century parenting style of nearly absent fathers and absent mothers due to money worries, these strategies are still used in many homes irrespective of whether the union is intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic marriages. The unique aspect of inter-ethnic marriages in Nigeria compared to their counterparts in inter-racial or mixed marriages in the Western world is that there is no room for any form of discrimination against the couples and their children in the polity. Also, as Nigerians they have their rights, duties and obligations to the State like anyone else. As such, being a married man or woman to another person whose ethnic category is different from yours is of no official relevance but cultural therefore, it will be instructive to note that inter-ethnic marriages like any other in Nigeria, only has implications in the home environment.

Children home environment have been found to influence their learning capacities. According to Gniewosz and Eccles (2013) learning and its outcomes do not occur in a vacuum. So also, the process leading to positive or negative academic outcomes can be influenced in many places including the home environment. Several studies have shown that there are many ways in which the home environment can influence children's academic achievements (Karthick and Ramakrishnan, 2004), and inter-ethnic marriage homes cannot be an exception. The differences in the cultural background of couples that characterize

inter-ethnic marriages can positively or negatively impact children's learning and their level of social adjustments. It is indisputable that the composition of inter-ethnic marriages makes it a lot easier for the children to have access to many members of the couple's families [paternal and maternal side] thereby having a wider social network which can be exploited whenever the need arises for socio-economic and academic gains.

In their discussions of the influence of the home environment on students learning outcomes Gniewosz and Eccles (2013) quoted several studies to support the assertion that parental background characteristics and parental inputs such as positive attitude and beliefs, values and motivation collectively help to enhance children's academic achievement. Similarly, Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratliffe, and Traynor (2017) in their study finds that there are academic, personal and social benefits when parents show interest in the education of their children, has ability to participate and support their learning needs, while Daniels and Shumow (2003) finds that when parents participate in the educational activities of their children it enhances their academic performance.

A major gap existing in our knowledge is the absence of studies on the influence of inter-ethnic marriages on students' academic performance in Nigeria, even though inter-ethnic marriages are pretty common among the over 250 ethnic groups that make up the polity. The few studies available tend to stress the advantages and disadvantages or the problems associated with inter-ethnic marriages. For instance, Ewelum (2016) examined the socio-cultural impact of inter-ethnic marriages in Nigeria and recommended strategies that could encourage and sustain such a union. Popoola (2016) in comparative terms, investigated the attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages among the Hausa's, Fulani's and Kanuri's all in Northern Nigeria and found that the people's attitude was poor due to problems like insecurity, low level of education and religion. Olalekan (2020) adopted the case study approach to explain the cordial relationship that exist among inter-ethnic marriage couples:

an Idoma (Ete) and Yoruba (Ekiti) couple and concludes that the union has helped to strengthen kingship ties, relationships between clans and communities in the area.

Despite these few studies reviewed in Nigeria and the findings of other studies done elsewhere on the effects of mixed marriages on children academic performance, the concern to find out the influence of inter-ethnic marriages on children academic performance is borne out the desire to address the hazy situation of insufficient data on the issue in the country and to compliment previous studies in the area. The fundamental research question, therefore, is does inter-ethnic marriage influence students' academic performance?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Effects of Mixed marriages on Students Academic Performance

Several studies have been carried out on the effects of inter-racial or mixed marriages on the academic performance of students by different scholars. However, the results obtained from such studies have been inconsistent. For instance, Karthick and Ramakrishnan (2004) in their study finds that inter-racial/ethnic marriage has a positive effect on children's educational performance, while Chiswick and DebBurman (2004) finds that in the United States of America inter-marriages has a higher likelihood of children dropping out of high school and lower educational attainment. Dang and Nguyen (2015) study on whether inter-ethnic marriage is associated with educational performance of children in Vietnam, finds that inter-ethnic marriage is associated with educational attainment of children, as children from inter-ethnic marriage tend to have better education and lower disability incidence than children with parents from one ethnic minority group. On the contrary, in Germany, Tutunculer (2023) study shows that it is difficult to generalize the effect of inter-marriages on children's educational attainment, as there were different results for each type of marriage, and that for inter-marriages, the result shows that the effects on the children are not due to the

structure of mixed marriage but to the unique characteristics of the mixed-marriage fathers and mixed-marriage mothers.

3.0. Research Methods

The study adopted the survey type of research design. This chosen research design is considered appropriate for a study of this nature because the aim was to find out the influence inter-ethnic marriage has on the academic performance from randomly selected students and parents over a wide geographical area. The major instruments used for the primary data collection exercise was a self-designed structured likert type of research questionnaire and the personal interview guide. The questionnaire was administered in sixteen (16) public senior secondary schools to 243 students of both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic marriage homes with the use of four (4) research assistants in Oyo, Ondo, Edo and Delta states, while the snowball sampling technique was used to select 69 parents that were interviewed from these states within a period of 6months, to arrive at a total of 312 respondents who participated in the study.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the research ethics committee of the Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Edo State – Nigeria. Also, the participant consent was sought through the use of a self-designed participant consent form attached to each research questionnaire which was attended to before such instrument was administered and to aid the data collection exercise, in many cases the essence of the study was first explained to the participants by the research assistants and classroom teachers in all the schools visited. Data collected was analyzed with mean scores and the Chi square statistics.

4.0. Data Analysis

The socio-demographic characteristics of respondent's shows that out of the 243 public secondary school students 57% were male, and 43% were female. Majority of the students were within the age bracket of 14 and 15 years old, 84 of the students representing 34.5% were from inter-ethnic marriage homes, 134 representing 55% were from intra-ethnic marriage homes and 25 representing 10.2% were from single parents' homes. This means that majority of the students were living with their parents. The second group of respondents consisted of 49 parents working in different vocations and 20 public schools classroom teachers. To assess the respondent's background characteristics, the student's response to the items in the research questionnaire was used as shown in Table 1. In this context, values were assigned to each of the twelve items using the Likert scale format as follows: Strongly Agree [4], Agree [3], Disagree [2] and Strongly Disagree [1]. Thereafter, the mean score for each item that is ≥ 2.50 and above was used as the yardstick for decision making.

Table1. **Parental Attitude and Participation in Children School- Based Activities**

S/N	Students' Academic Influence Variables	X	Remarks
1	My parents pay my school fees provides my school needs and believe in children education	4.0	Consensus
2	Do you have a home lesson teacher/or you attend extra lessons after school hours	3.0	Consensus
3	My mother assist me to do my take home assignments	2.0	Variation
4	It is from my parents that I learnt so much about my future career	3.0	Consensus
5	My parents believe I can excel in all my academic activities	3.0	Consensus
6	My parents value education and also wants the best for me	3.0	Consensus
7	Do your parents usually attend your school PTA's meetings?	3.0	Consensus
8	Have you ever been rewarded for earning good grades or for a very good end of term result by your parents?	3.0	Consensus
9	Do any of your parents sometimes check your books?	2.0	Variation
10	Is your mother from the same ethnic group as your father or both are from different ethnic group?	2.0	Variation
11	Do you think couples of inter- ethnic marriages have a major influence on the academic performance of their children? Or	1.0	Disagree
12	Do the couples of inter- ethnic marriages influence the academic performance of their children more than other couples of the same ethnic group?	1.0	Disagree

Table 1 shows that there is the general consensus among the respondents response to items 1 to 3, and 5 to 9 that tend to stress parental values, belief, attitude and participation as well as motivation. From the results presented in Table 1, it is very clear that majority of the respondents understand the extent to which parental inputs help the process leading to positive or negative academic outcomes. On the influence of inter-ethnic marriages on students’ academic performance, the summary of the respondent’s response was analyzed with the Chi-square statistics as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-square Analysis of the Relationship between Inter-ethnic Marriage and Academic Performance

Variables	Respondents Level of Response				DF	X ² cal.	X ² crit.
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
					3	0.89	7.815
Observed	12	70	135	95			
Expected	39	43	108	122			

Significant @ P < 0.05 level of significance

The results in Table 2 shows that only 12 out of 312 respondents strongly agree and another 70 agree that inter-ethnic marriages has influence on students’ academic performance while 135 with the expected value of 108 disagree and 95 with the expected value of 122 strongly disagree respectively. This implies that majority of the respondents are of the opinion that inter-ethnic marriages by their composition have no influence on students’ academic performance. In statistical terms, the calculated Chi square value of 0.89 is lower than the critical value of 7.815 under 3 degrees of freedom and @ 0.05 level of significance and therefore not significant. This means that the academic performance of students from inter-ethnic marriage homes is influenced by other factors.

5.0. Discussion of Results

The study investigated the influence of inter-ethnic marriages on students' academic performance in sixteen (16) purposefully selected public senior secondary schools in Oyo, Ondo, Edo and Delta states all in the Southern part of Nigeria. A total of 312 respondents participated in the study. The finding shows that inter-ethnic marriages by composition or structure have no influence on academic performance of public secondary school students' in the study area. It was concluded that the academic performance of public secondary school students from inter-ethnic marriage homes is influenced by other factors including couples belief, values and attitudinal disposition towards their children education. This finding affirms the result of the recent study carried out by Tutunculer (2023) who finds that the effects of mixed marriage on students' academic performance are not due to the structure of mixed marriage but to the unique characteristics of the couples involved but it contradicts the findings of Karthick and Ramakrishnan (2004) who finds that inter- racial/ethnic marriage has a positive effect on children's educational performance and the study of Dang and Nguyen (2015) who finds that inter-ethnic marriage is associated with educational attainment of children.

6.0. Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that the influence of inter-ethnic marriage on children academic performance in Nigeria is different from that of inter-racial or mixed marriages of the Western World as a result of the cultural differences in all the places where these studies were carried out. It is concluded that culture has been, is and will continue to have an enduring influence on children learning capacities but unfortunately, as a major component of the students' home background characteristics the influence of culture is not fully acknowledged in research and educational reform programmes in Nigeria.

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