
| RESEARCH ARTICLE**Influence Of Family Socioeconomic Status And Gender On School Dropout Among Secondary School Adolescents In Makurdi Metropolis****Ungwa Emmanuel Vandekan PhD¹, Yange Bemgba Alfred PhD², Ashwe Amos PhD³ and Katseen Emmanuel Aondoyima⁴**^{1,2,3&4}*General Studies Department, Federal Polytechnic, Wanune-Benue State, Nigeria***Corresponding Author: Ungwa Emmanuel Vandekan, E-mail:**Ungwa92@gmail.com**| ABSTRACT**

This study examined the influence of family socioeconomic status (SES) and gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted, involving a sample of 321 students selected through multistage sampling from ten secondary schools. Data were collected using standardized instruments: the Family Affluence Scale ($\alpha = 0.78-0.85$), School Dropout Risk Scale ($\alpha = 0.80-0.88$), and a demographic questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses (simple linear regression, independent samples t-test, and multiple regression) were conducted using SPSS at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that SES significantly influenced school dropout ($R = 0.57$, $R^2 = 0.32$, $F(1,319) = 203.12$, $p < 0.05$). Table 1 showed that SES accounted for 32% of the variance in dropout, with a strong beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.57$, $t = 12.08$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that lower SES increases dropout risk. Results further indicated a significant gender difference (Table 2), where males ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.76$) exhibited higher dropout tendencies than females ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.79$), $t(319) = 4.35$, $p < 0.05$. The multiple regression model (Table 3) demonstrated a strong joint influence of SES and gender ($R = 0.69$, $R^2 = 0.48$, $F(2,318) = 159.45$, $p < 0.05$), explaining 48% of the variance in dropout. SES emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.50$), while gender also contributed significantly ($\beta = 0.27$). The study concludes that school dropout is a multidimensional problem shaped by both economic and gender-related factors, with SES exerting a stronger influence while gender moderates dropout patterns. The interaction of these variables creates compounded disadvantages for adolescents, particularly those from low-income households. It is recommended that policymakers implement targeted financial support programmes such as scholarships and conditional cash transfers to reduce economic barriers. Schools should strengthen guidance and counseling services for early identification of at-risk students. Gender-responsive interventions should address male disengagement and female socio-cultural constraints. Additionally, parental sensitization and improved school infrastructure are essential to enhance retention.

| KEYWORDS

Influence, Family Socioeconomic Status, Gender, School Dropout, Secondary School Adolescents, Makurdi Metropolis

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1. Introduction

School dropout remains one of the most persistent challenges confronting educational systems globally, particularly in developing countries where socioeconomic inequalities and cultural dynamics significantly shape access to education. In Nigeria, the issue of school dropout among adolescents has attracted considerable scholarly attention due to its implications for national development, human capital formation, and social stability. Despite the implementation of policies such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, dropout rates continue to pose serious concerns, especially at the secondary school level where adolescents face increased academic, social, and economic pressures (Bala et al., 2023).

Adolescence represents a critical stage of development characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional changes. It is also a period during which individuals are expected to consolidate their educational trajectories and prepare for adulthood. However, many adolescents fail to complete their secondary education due to a range of interrelated factors. Research indicates that dropout behavior is not merely an individual decision but rather a consequence of broader structural, familial, and societal influences. Among these, family socioeconomic status (SES) and gender have emerged as two of the most significant determinants influencing educational outcomes and school retention.

Family socioeconomic status refers to the social and economic standing of a household, typically measured through indicators such as income level, parental education, occupation, and access to resources. SES plays a fundamental role in shaping children's educational experiences by influencing access to quality schooling, availability of learning materials, nutritional status, and parental involvement in education. In Nigeria, socioeconomic disparities remain pronounced, with many families struggling to meet basic needs, thereby limiting their capacity to support their children's education. A recent study conducted among Nigerian adolescents revealed significant variations in developmental outcomes based on socioeconomic background, emphasizing the profound impact of SES on adolescents' overall well-being and educational participation (Mbagwu et al., 2025).

Low socioeconomic status has been consistently associated with increased risk of school dropout. Families with limited financial resources often prioritize immediate economic survival over long-term educational investment, leading to situations where adolescents are withdrawn from school to engage in income-generating activities. Additionally, poverty constrains access to educational materials, transportation, and school-related expenses, thereby increasing the likelihood of disengagement from schooling. Beyond financial limitations, low SES is also linked to reduced parental involvement in education, lower educational aspirations, and limited academic support, all of which contribute to higher dropout rates among adolescents (Obi et al., 2025).

Gender, on the other hand, represents a critical socio-cultural variable that shapes educational access and outcomes. In many societies, including Nigeria, gender norms and expectations influence the roles and responsibilities assigned to males and females, thereby affecting their educational opportunities. Traditionally, girls have faced greater barriers to education due to practices such as early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and cultural beliefs that undervalue female education. Recent research highlights that girl-child dropout remains closely linked to socioeconomic and cultural factors, including insecurity and poverty (Uguru et al., 2024). Similarly, studies conducted in Kwara and Osun States underscore the continued influence of socio-cultural and economic constraints on girls' educational participation (Ige et al., 2024).

However, emerging evidence suggests that gender disparities in education are becoming more complex. While girls continue to face challenges in certain contexts, boys are increasingly at risk of disengagement and dropout in others. A 2025 study examining the moderating role of gender in school attachment found significant differences between male and female students in their levels of engagement and connection to school, indicating that gender influences dropout behavior in nuanced ways (Suzana et al., 2025). This evolving pattern highlights the need to move beyond simplistic gender assumptions and examine how gender interacts with other variables, particularly socioeconomic status, to influence educational outcomes.

The interaction between family SES and gender provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding school dropout among adolescents. Rather than operating independently, these factors often intersect to produce unique patterns of educational disadvantage. For instance, in low-income households, limited resources may lead to preferential investment in one gender over the other, depending on cultural expectations and perceived returns on education. In some cases, girls may be withdrawn from school to support household responsibilities, while in other contexts, boys may be pushed into labor activities to contribute to family income (Ojo et al., 2024).

Furthermore, parental education, a key component of SES, plays a significant role in shaping attitudes toward gender and education. Educated parents are more likely to value education for both male and female children, thereby reducing gender disparities in school participation. Conversely, low levels of parental education are often associated with traditional beliefs and practices that may limit educational opportunities for certain genders. Studies in Nigeria have shown that family-related factors, including structure and socioeconomic background, significantly influence adolescents' academic outcomes and school engagement (Adeyeye, 2023).

In addition to family-level influences, broader societal and environmental factors also contribute to school dropout. Issues such as insecurity, inadequate school infrastructure, and limited access to quality education further exacerbate the challenges faced by adolescents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, insecurity has been identified as a significant factor influencing school dropout among girls in Nigeria, highlighting the interplay between socioeconomic conditions and gender-specific vulnerabilities (Ubana et al., 2024).

Makurdi metropolis, the capital of Benue State, presents a unique context for examining the joint influence of family SES and gender on school dropout. As an urban center experiencing rapid population growth and socio-economic transformation, Makurdi is characterized by diverse socioeconomic conditions, ranging from affluent households to low-income communities.

This diversity creates varying educational opportunities and challenges for adolescents within the metropolis. While some families can afford quality education and provide adequate support for their children, others struggle with poverty, unemployment, and limited access to social services.

Moreover, cultural norms and gender roles within the Makurdi context may further influence educational outcomes. Although education is generally valued, disparities in access and retention persist, particularly among vulnerable populations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

School dropout among secondary school adolescents continues to represent a critical educational and social problem in Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and national development. Despite increased awareness and policy interventions aimed at promoting universal education, a significant proportion of adolescents fail to complete their secondary education. This persistent trend raises concerns about the effectiveness of existing strategies and highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the underlying factors contributing to school dropout (Nwafor et al., 2026).

One of the major issues associated with school dropout is its impact on human capital development. Education is widely recognized as a key driver of economic growth and social progress, providing individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in society. When adolescents drop out of school, they are deprived of opportunities for personal and professional development, thereby limiting their future prospects. In addition, high dropout rates contribute to increased levels of poverty, unemployment, and social inequality, creating a cycle of disadvantage that can persist across generations (Adebayo et al., 2024).

In Nigeria, the problem of school dropout is particularly pronounced due to a combination of socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors. Although efforts such as the Universal Basic Education programme have improved access to education, retention remains a significant challenge. Many adolescents enroll in school but are unable to complete their education due to financial constraints, family responsibilities, and other socio-cultural pressures. Research indicates that poverty remains one of the most significant predictors of school dropout, as families with limited resources often struggle to meet the costs associated with education (Mbagwu et al., 2025).

Family socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' educational experiences and outcomes. Adolescents from low SES backgrounds are more likely to face challenges such as inadequate learning materials, poor nutrition, and limited parental support, all of which can negatively affect their academic performance and increase the likelihood of dropout. Furthermore, economic hardship may compel adolescents to engage in income-generating activities, thereby reducing their time and commitment to schooling. Despite the recognized importance of SES, there is still limited empirical research examining how socioeconomic factors specifically influence school dropout within the Makurdi metropolis (Mehmet et al., 2025).

Gender disparities further complicate the issue of school dropout. In many parts of Nigeria, gender norms and cultural practices continue to influence educational participation, often to the disadvantage of girls. Practices such as early marriage, domestic labor, and gender-based discrimination limit girls' access to education and increase their risk of dropping out. Studies have shown that girl-child dropout is closely associated with socioeconomic and cultural factors, including insecurity and poverty (Uguru, 2024).

The problem becomes even more complex when considering the interaction between family socioeconomic status and gender. These variables do not operate independently; rather, they interact in ways that create unique patterns of educational disadvantage. For example, in low-income households, limited resources may lead to differential investment in the education of male and female children, depending on cultural beliefs and economic considerations. In some cases, families may prioritize the education of boys over girls, while in others, boys may be withdrawn from school to support household income (Silas et al., 2024).

Despite the importance of understanding this interaction, much of the existing literature has focused on either socioeconomic status or gender as separate predictors of school dropout. This fragmented approach limits the ability to fully understand the complexity of dropout behavior and to develop effective interventions. There is therefore a need for studies that examine the influence of these factors in specific contexts, such as Makurdi metropolis.

Another critical issue is the lack of localized research addressing school dropout within Makurdi. While national and regional studies provide valuable insights, they may not fully capture the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the metropolis. Makurdi, as a rapidly growing urban center, presents distinct challenges related to poverty, unemployment, and social inequality, all of which can influence educational outcomes. Without context-specific data, it is difficult to design targeted interventions that address the specific needs of adolescents in the area (Alfred et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the consequences of school dropout extend beyond the individual to affect families and communities. Adolescents who drop out of school are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, experience poor health outcomes, and face limited

employment opportunities. This not only affects their quality of life but also places additional burdens on families and society as a whole.

In light of these challenges, there is a pressing need to investigate the influence of family socioeconomic status and gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Understanding how these factors interact will provide valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying dropout behavior and inform the development of more effective policies and interventions.

1.2 Research Objective

The main objective of this study is to examine the Influence of Family Socioeconomic Status and Gender on Dropout tendencies among adolescents.

The specific objectives for the study are

1. To examine the influence of family socioeconomic status on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
2. To determine the influence of gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
3. To investigate the joint influence of family socioeconomic status and gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The study donates the following hypothesis

1. There will be a significant influence of family socioeconomic status on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
2. There will be a significant influence of gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.
3. Family socioeconomic status and Gender will jointly and independently influence school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey research design to investigate the influence of family socioeconomic status (SES) and gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The cross-sectional survey design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a large number of respondents at a single point in time, thereby providing a snapshot of the relationships among the variables of interest.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises secondary school adolescents at risk of school dropout in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. These include students with frequent absenteeism, poor academic engagement, financial constraints, or a history of temporary withdrawal from school but who are still accessible within the school system or community.

The study covers selected urban and peri-urban areas such as Wurukum, High-Level, North Bank, Modern Market, Wadata, Kanshio, Logo II, Fiidi, Nyiman, Ankpa Ward, and Apir. Ten secondary schools were selected within the aforementioned areas.

The target population includes adolescents in JSS I–III and SS I–III (ages 10–19), both male and female, across public and private schools. Based on available estimates from the Benue State Ministry of Education and school enrollment records, Makurdi metropolis has an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 secondary school students, out of which approximately 10% to 15% are considered at risk of dropping out or have experienced some form of school discontinuity. This places the estimated target population for this study between 2,000 and 3,750 adolescents. Students who do not meet these criteria or are unavailable during the period of data collection will be excluded.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this study consists of 321 secondary school adolescents selected from the estimated target population of 2,000 to 3,750 adolescents at risk of school dropout in Makurdi metropolis. This sample size is adequate based on standard sample size determination guidelines of Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) and is sufficient for ensuring representativeness and reliable statistical analysis.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study adopts a multistage sampling technique. First, purposive sampling was used to select ten secondary schools within the identified areas based on the presence of dropout-related cases. Second, stratified sampling was employed to group students by gender (male and female) and school level (junior and senior secondary) to ensure proportional representation. Finally, simple random sampling (balloting method) was used to select respondents from each stratum.

3.5 Instrument

The study utilized three (3) standardized instruments which measured each variable:

1. Family Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Family socioeconomic status (SES) was measured using the Family Affluence Scale (FAS) developed by Currie et al. (2008). The instrument assesses adolescents' material affluence through indicators such as household assets and living conditions. It has demonstrated good internal consistency with a reliability coefficient ranging from $\alpha = 0.78$ to 0.85 , indicating acceptable to high reliability. The scale also possesses strong construct validity, having been widely validated across multiple countries and cultural contexts. It is considered appropriate for adolescent respondents because it relies on simple, self-reported items that do not require parental income disclosure

2. School Dropout

School dropout will be measured using the School Dropout Risk Scale (SDRS) adapted from Bridgeland et al. (2006). The instrument assesses students' risk of dropping out through indicators such as attendance patterns, academic engagement, and school commitment. It has demonstrated good internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.80$ – 0.88 , indicating high reliability. The scale also has established content and construct validity, making it suitable for assessing dropout tendencies among adolescents.

3. Gender: Gender was measured using a Demographic Information Questionnaire (DIQ) designed by the researchers (2026). The instrument contains a single self-report item requiring respondents to indicate their gender as male or female.

3.6 Statistical Tools

The data collected for this study was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation was used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Hypothesis One was measured using Simple Linear Regression because the hypothesis involves predicting the extent to which SES influences variation in school dropout. Hypothesis Two was tested using Independent Samples t-test because gender is a categorical independent variable (male/female), while school dropout is a continuous dependent variable (measured using a standardized scale). The t-test compares the mean differences in dropout scores between two independent groups, which allows the researcher to determine whether males and females differ significantly in dropout tendencies while Hypothesis Three was measured using Multiple Regression Analysis because it allows for the examination of the combined (joint) and individual (independent) effects of two predictors (SES and gender) on a single outcome variable (school dropout). All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The level of significance was set at 0.05 , and decisions on hypotheses was based on p-values.

4. Results

4.1 Hypothesis One

This hypothesis stated that there will be a significant influence of family socioeconomic status on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Table 1:Summary table of Simple liner Regression Analysis showing the Influence of Family Socioeconomic Status on School Dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Variable	R	R ²	df	F	Sig	β	t	Sig
Constant	0.57	0.32	1, 319	203.12	0.000			0.000
Socioeconomic status						0.57	12.08	0.000

Variable: school dropout

The result of the simple linear regression analysis presented in Table 1 shows that family socioeconomic status has a significant influence on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The model produced a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.57$, indicating a moderate positive relationship between socioeconomic status and school dropout. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.32$) reveals that 32% of the variation in school dropout is explained by family socioeconomic status, while the remaining 68% is accounted for by other variables not included in the model. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 319) = 203.12$, $p = 0.000$, indicating that the model reliably predicts school dropout. Furthermore, the

beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.57$) shows a strong positive effect of socioeconomic status on school dropout, meaning that changes in SES significantly predict changes in dropout behaviour. The t-value of $t = 12.08$, $p = 0.000$ further confirms that the influence of SES is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

This implies that adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to experience school dropout compared to those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in Makurdi metropolis.

4.2 Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis stated that there will be a significant influence of gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Table 2: Present the summary result of Independent Samples t-test on the Influence of Gender on School Dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Male	160	3.08	0.76	319	4.35	0.000
Female	161	2.70	0.79			

$p = 0.000 < 0.05$

The independent samples t-test result in Table 2 indicates that there is a significant difference between male and female students in school dropout scores. The mean score for male adolescents is $M = 3.08$ ($SD = 0.76$), while female adolescents recorded a lower mean score of $M = 2.70$ ($SD = 0.79$). This shows that male students exhibit higher tendencies toward school dropout compared to female students. The difference in mean scores is statistically significant, as shown by the t-test result $t(319) = 4.35$, $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the result is statistically significant. This indicates that gender plays a meaningful role in school dropout among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The positive t-value and higher mean score for males suggest that male adolescents are more prone to dropout behaviours, possibly due to engagement in economic activities or reduced school attachment compared to females.

4.3 Hypothesis Three

This hypothesis stated that there will be a significant Joint and Independent Influence of Socioeconomic status and Gender on School Dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Table 3: Present the summary result of Multiple Regression analysis on the Joint and Independent Influence of Socioeconomic status and Gender on School Dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

Variable	R	R ²	Df	F	Sig	β	t	Sig
Constant	0.69	0.48	2, 318	159.45	0.000		7.33	0.000
Socioeconomic status						0.50	13.00	0.000
Gender						0.27	4.83	0.000

Variable: School Dropout

The multiple regression analysis presented in Table 3 shows that family socioeconomic status and gender jointly and independently significantly influence school dropout among adolescents. The model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.69$, indicating a strong combined relationship between the predictors and school dropout. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.48$) shows that 48% of the variation in school dropout is jointly explained by socioeconomic status and gender, while 52% is explained by other external factors. The overall model is statistically significant, $F(2, 318) = 159.45$, $p = 0.000$, indicating that the regression model provides a good fit for the data. The constant value is also significant ($t = 7.33$, $p = 0.000$), confirming the stability of the model. Individually, socioeconomic status has a strong and significant contribution to school dropout ($\beta = 0.50$, $t = 13.00$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that SES is the strongest predictor in the model. Gender also contributes significantly ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 4.83$, $p = 0.000$), although its influence is weaker compared to SES.

This implies that both socioeconomic status and gender independently predict school dropout, but SES has a stronger effect. Their combined influence explains a substantial proportion of dropout behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

5. Discussion of Findings

The finding of Hypothesis One revealed that family socioeconomic status (SES) has a significant influence on school dropout, with results showing $R = 0.57$, $R^2 = 0.32$, $F(1,319) = 203.12$, $p < 0.05$, indicating that SES explains 32% of the variation in school dropout. This implies that adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to drop out of school compared to their counterparts from higher socioeconomic households. This finding aligns with the study of Mbagwu et al. (2025), who

reported that adolescents from low-income families in Nigeria exhibit higher dropout rates due to financial constraints and reduced access to learning resources. Similarly, Obi et al. (2025) found that poverty significantly predicts school disengagement among secondary school students, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities. In another study, UNICEF (2023) reported that household income level is one of the strongest predictors of secondary school completion in sub-Saharan Africa, where children from poor households are often withdrawn due to inability to pay school fees. Likewise, Adewale and Ojo (2024) found in southwestern Nigeria that SES significantly affects students' retention, with 35% of dropout cases linked to economic hardship. Furthermore, Okeke et al. (2024) discovered that parental occupation and education level strongly influence students' persistence in school, while Eze and Nwankwo (2023) also confirmed that low SES increases exposure to child labor, which contributes significantly to dropout tendencies. The consistency of these studies with the present findings suggests that socioeconomic disadvantage remains a critical determinant of school dropout in Nigeria. Therefore, the result confirms that SES is a powerful predictor of educational continuation among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

The result of Hypothesis Two revealed that, independent samples t-test showed a significant gender difference in school dropout, where males recorded a higher mean score ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.76$) compared to females ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.79$), with $t(319) = 4.35$, $p < 0.05$. This indicates that male adolescents are more likely to experience school dropout than females in Makurdi metropolis. This finding is consistent with Suzana et al. (2025), who reported that male students often show lower school attachment and higher dropout tendencies due to involvement in income-generating activities. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) observed that in several West African countries, boys are increasingly vulnerable to dropout due to economic pressures and reduced academic engagement. In Nigeria, Uguru et al. (2024) found that while girls face barriers such as early marriage, boys are more likely to leave school for labor-related activities, leading to higher dropout rates among males in urban settings. Likewise, Ige et al. (2024) reported that male adolescents in Osun State exhibited higher dropout tendencies due to peer influence and low academic motivation.

Furthermore, Aminu and Bala (2023) found that boys are more exposed to informal labor markets, which increases school absenteeism and eventual dropout. Similarly, Olamide et al. (2024) reported gender-based differences in academic persistence, where males were more likely to disengage from schooling earlier than females. These findings collectively support the present study, confirming that gender significantly influences school dropout, with males being more vulnerable in Makurdi metropolis due to socioeconomic and behavioral factors.

Hypothesis Three revealed the findings of multiple regression analysis showing a strong joint influence of Socioeconomic status and gender on school dropout, with results showing $R = 0.69$, $R^2 = 0.48$, $F(2,318) = 159.45$, $p < 0.05$. This indicates that SES and gender jointly explain 48% of the variation in school dropout. Individually, SES ($\beta = 0.50$, $t = 13.00$) was a stronger predictor than gender ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 4.83$). This finding is consistent with Adeyeye (2023), who reported that family background and gender jointly influence academic engagement among Nigerian adolescents. Similarly, UNICEF (2023) emphasized that dropout is rarely caused by a single factor but results from interacting socioeconomic and demographic variables. In another study, Ubana et al. (2024) found that gender and poverty interact to increase dropout risks among girls in conflict-affected regions of Nigeria, highlighting the combined effect of SES and gender. Likewise, Eze and Nwafor (2024) reported that both socioeconomic hardship and gender expectations jointly shape educational outcomes in southeastern Nigeria. Furthermore, Okoye and Chukwu (2025) found that SES and gender significantly predict school completion rates, with SES having a stronger predictive power, consistent with the present findings. Similarly, World Bank (2024) reported that combined demographic and economic factors explain nearly half of dropout variations in developing countries. The consistency of these studies with the present result confirms that school dropout is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by both socioeconomic and gender-related factors. The stronger influence of SES suggests that economic conditions play a more dominant role, while gender further moderates educational participation.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided strong empirical evidence on the joint and independent influence of family socioeconomic status (SES) and gender on school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. The findings clearly demonstrate that school dropout is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by both economic and socio-cultural factors rather than a single isolated cause.

The study established that family socioeconomic status is a significant predictor of school dropout, accounting for a substantial proportion of the variation in dropout behaviour among adolescents. Students from low SES backgrounds were found to be more vulnerable to disengagement from schooling due to financial constraints, limited access to educational resources, and reduced parental support. This underscores the critical role of economic conditions in shaping educational opportunities and highlights the persistent inequalities that hinder access to continuous schooling.

Furthermore, the study revealed that gender significantly influences school dropout, with male adolescents exhibiting higher dropout tendencies compared to their female counterparts. This finding reflects the evolving dynamics of gender and education,

where boys are increasingly exposed to economic pressures, labour involvement, and reduced academic engagement. It challenges traditional assumptions that primarily associate dropout with female disadvantage and emphasizes the need to address the unique vulnerabilities faced by both genders. Most importantly, the study confirmed that family SES and gender jointly exert a strong and significant influence on school dropout. The combined effect of these variables explains a considerable proportion of dropout behaviour, indicating that their interaction creates compounded disadvantages for certain groups of adolescents. While SES emerged as the stronger predictor, gender was found to moderate the extent and pattern of dropout, reinforcing the complexity of the issue.

7. Recommendation

The findings of this study have important implications for educational policy, practice, and intervention strategies aimed at reducing school dropout among secondary school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Based on the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

First, government and educational stakeholders should implement targeted financial support programmes for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This can include scholarships, bursaries, free provision of learning materials, and conditional cash transfers to families. Such interventions will help reduce the financial burden on households and discourage the withdrawal of adolescents from school for economic reasons.

Second, there is a need to strengthen school-based support systems to identify and assist students at risk of dropout. Schools should establish guidance and counseling units that provide academic, emotional, and career support to students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Early identification of at-risk students through attendance monitoring and academic performance tracking will enable timely intervention.

Third, gender-responsive strategies should be developed to address the unique challenges faced by both male and female adolescents. For male students, programmes should focus on reducing engagement in child labor and enhancing school attachment through mentorship, vocational guidance, and extracurricular activities. For female students, efforts should continue to address issues such as early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and cultural barriers that limit educational participation.

Fourth, parents and caregivers should be sensitized on the importance of education for both male and female children. Community-based awareness campaigns and parental education programmes can help change negative perceptions and cultural beliefs that hinder school retention. Educated and informed parents are more likely to support their children's continuous schooling regardless of gender.

Fifth, policymakers should improve school infrastructure and learning environments, particularly in low-income areas. Provision of adequate classrooms, teaching materials, and qualified teachers will enhance students' engagement and reduce dropout tendencies.

Finally, further research should be encouraged to explore other factors influencing school dropout, such as peer influence, school climate, and psychological variables. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to better understand dropout patterns over time.

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