Effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode local government

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ABSTRACT

Poverty poses significant challenges to academic performance among school children, particularly in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. This study delved into the effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode. Employing a descriptive survey design, data was collected from junior secondary school students using Students Poverty Scale (SPS) and Student Achievement Test (SAT). Findings revealed a high level of poverty among students, with many families struggling to afford basic necessities and educational resources. Academic performance was predominantly low, with a majority of students scoring below average. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between poverty and academic performance. These results underscore the detrimental impact of poverty on students' educational outcomes. Recommendations include efforts to alleviate poverty, strengthen teacher-student relationships, create inclusive classrooms, and provide adequate school resources. Addressing poverty is crucial for improving academic performance and narrowing the achievement gap among students.

Keywords: *Poverty, academic performance, school children, child development.*

Introduction

Education is a process that helps people develop their abilities, attitudes, and skills. Every child has the right to an education,

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whether it be western or traditional. As a result, education is seen by humans, other people, and the global community as a part of culture. This underscores the need for man to educate himself and his progeny in order to succeed in society. One of the things that prevents man from performing his educational tasks to the best of his abilities is poverty.

Poverty has been seen as a way of life marked by low calorie intake, lack of access to adequate health facilities, a low-quality education system, low life expectancy, unemployment, and underemployment (Ogwu, 2021). Children raised in poverty are more likely to face emotional and social challenges, chronic stressors, and cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion (Brito & Noble, 2019; Jensen, 2019). As educators, we must be aware of the effects of poverty in order to put these strategies into practice and lessen the likelihood of lower academic achievement.

Children reared in poverty have numerous obstacles to overcome. Long-term barriers including persistent stressors and structural alterations in the brain that affect emotion and memory are examples of hurdles. Some difficulties are more situational, leading to emotional and interpersonal difficulties. Among the mental health problems are significant rates of depression among low-income parents and kids (Jensen, 2019). Students who have encountered emotional and social difficulties could exhibit disruptive behaviors in the classroom (Jensen, 2019). They could also lack impulse control and be impatient. Because they were raised by a caregiver who was insensitive to their needs, their behavioural reactions may be restricted. Jensen (2019) identified multiple causes for this occurrence. A considerable number of these students may have grown up with an adolescent mother. Having to work several jobs to make ends meet frequently results in parents or caregivers being overworked. As a result, parents or guardians become less understanding of their children's needs, feelings and instead impose harsher discipline. It is less common for parents or guardians who have previously struggled in school to participate in extracurricular activities or meetings with their

parents. An increase in disruptive behavior in the classroom may be the result of poor mental health brought on by a lack of parental support.

Furthermore, kids who grow up in poverty might not have learned social graces and manners (Jensen, 2019). It's possible that they are not empathetic. As a result, many pupils find it challenging to collaborate effectively with their peers in cooperative groups. Because they can't collaborate well with their peers, these kids frequently end up as unwelcome group members, which exacerbates their feelings of inadequacy and causes them to give up on a task before they can finish it. Academic achievement may suffer from poor social skills since they make classmates reject them.

Previous studies on the causes and consequences of poverty have been carried out in both industrialized and developing nations. Income inequality has been found to be crucial in poverty reduction measures, as previous studies have shown that the degree of poverty depends on the income level and the degree of inequality in income distribution (Bradshaw, 2022; Aigbokhan, 2021; Obadan, 2021; Bourguignon, 2020; Adams, 2019; Bulama, 2019; Kalwij and Verschoor, 2017; Obi, 2017).

Looking at child development from Piaget's theory (1896 – 1980), according to this theory, cognitive development in a child as to be continuous process of unfolding, but with recognized stage or level. At this presence stage of learning student should be given good life in a conducive environment. To him, cognitive development is a progressive reorganization of mental processes which can only be achieved in a through biological maturation and environment experience. It has been established that is only through interacting directly with the environment that student can be able to construct within he or herself a schematic understanding of his physical and social word. All these cannot be materialized in a poor environment where poverty ravage the land. How can a student give their best when their immediate needs are not met? It mighty be a shocking story that students went to school in Nigeria

without taken breakfast and such students is expected to be active in class (Ajayi, 2018).

The question of whether there is a causal relationship between school children's academic performance and poverty this has received less attention in Nigeria, despite the fact that numerous studies have looked at the relationship between inequality and poverty (Bourguignon, 2020; Adams, 2019; Kalwij and Verschoor, 2017; Ogbeide and Agu, 2015). Thus, in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, this study examined the effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode Local Government.

Objectives of the Study

The study ultimately investigated effects of poverty on school children academic performance in Ijebu-Ode Local Government. The specific objectives are to determine:
i. the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government;
ii. the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government; and
iii. the relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government.

Research questions
i. What is the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?
ii. What is the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?
iii. Is there any significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

Methods

This study used a descriptive survey design as its primary research method. The population for this study is made up of junior secondary school students from Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State. Ijebu-Ode was specifically chosen for this study because it is an urban area and the researcher is acquainted with the locality. From the schools in Ijebu-Ode, ten were chosen at random. From each of the

chosen schools, which had 300 students total, thirty junior secondary school students were chosen at random. Due to the nature of the study, schools with both male and female pupils were chosen. For this study, two research instruments were used, namely: Students Poverty Scale (SPS) and Student Achievement Test (SAT).15 scale statements on the SPS (Students Poverty Scale) were self-designed and were based on the Likert 4-point scale of Strongly Agree(SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Positively worded phrases receive 4, 3, 2, and 1 points on the scales (SA), (A), (D) and (SD), correspondingly.

For remarks that were phrased negatively, this was reversed. To ensure their suitability with regard to the targeted learners, the 20 item scale instrument was reviewed by peers and experts. JSS 2 students were given the test by the researcher with help from the teachers of JSS in the schools. The reliability of the system was estimated using the Kuder-Richard 21 Formular, which produced a coefficient of 0.72.The data were coded, and descriptive analysis, including frequency count, mean, and standard deviation, were used to analyze the data.

The instrument, SAT, was developed by the researcher to measure students' achievement in Mathematics, English and National Value Education and this consists of two sections. Section A sought for the background information of the students such as name, school, sex and local government. Section B consisted of thirty multiple choice items focusing on three general areas: English (10 items) National Value Education (10 items), and Mathematics (10 items). The content validity of the instrument was ensured by giving it to experts in the field of Sociology and Social Studies Education. The reliability of the instrument was ensured by trial testing it in two public schools that were not part of the study. The researcher with the assistance of the JSS 2 teachers in those schools administered the instrument on JSS II students. Meanwhile, Kuder- Richard 21 Formular was used to estimate its reliability which gave a coefficient of 0.76. The discriminating indices and average difficulty levels for each of the twenty items were computed. The

average difficulty index obtained was 0.48 which showed that the instrument was neither too difficult nor too simple. The test-retest reliability conducted on the theory aspect of the achievement test revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.72.

The correct response earned one mark while an incorrect response earned zero mark since they were multiple-choice objective type. No correction was made for guessing because sufficient time was allowed for the students to work on the questions.

Results

Table 1: Gender distribution of the students

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	146	48.7
Female	154	51.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 4.1 presents the gender distribution of the students. It can be seen that 48.7% (146) of the students are males while 51.3% (154) are females.

Research question 1: What is the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

Table 2: Level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government

S.No.	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	My family often struggles to afford basic necessities like food and clothing.	122 40.7%	104 34.7%	61 20.3%	13 4.3%	3.12	0.88
2	I frequently worry about my family's financial situation.	119 39.7%	149 49.7%	27 9%	5 1.6%	3.28	0.69
3	I have ample money for extracurricular activities or school-related expenses.	44 14.7%	95 31.7%	85 28.3%	76 25.3%	2.36	1.02
4	I have access to the same educational resources as my wealthier classmates.	33 11%	85 28.3%	165 55%	17 5.7%	2.45	0.76
5	I sometimes skip meals due to lack of food at home.	128 42.7%	140 46.7%	24 8%	8 2.7%	3.29	0.73
6	I feel embarrassed about my family's financial status.	68 22.7%	162 54%	56 18.7%	14 4.7%	2.95	0.78

7	I disagree that my family has enough funds to cover unexpected expenses.	88 29.3%	98 32.7%	86 28.7%	28 9.3%	2.82	0.96
8	I receive adequate healthcare when needed.	31 10.3%	34 11.3%	146 48.7%	89 29.7%	2.02	0.91
9	I often experience anxiety related to financial issues.	156 52%	88 29.3%	28 9.3%	28 9.3%	3.24	0.97
10	I must work to contribute financially to my family.	85 28.3%	165 55%	16 5.3%	34 11.3%	3.00	0.89
11	My family can consistently pay bills on time.	67 22.3%	79 26.3%	103 34.3%	51 17%	2.54	1.02
12	I have the same opportunities for success as my wealthier peers.	14 4.7%	36 12%	161 53.7%	89 29.7%	1.92	0.77
13	I worry about how my family's financial struggles may impact my future.	119 39.7%	149 49.7%	27 9%	5 1.6%	3.28	0.69
14	I sometimes feel excluded because of my family's financial situation.	98 32.7%	151 50.3%	17 5.7%	34 11.3%	3.04	0.92
15	My family can easily afford school supplies and textbooks.	34 11.3%	56 18.7%	94 31.3%	116 38.7%	2.03	1.02
16	My school adequately supports students from low-income backgrounds.	115 38.3%	131 43.7%	48 16%	6 2%	3.19	0.78
17	I have experienced housing instability or homelessness.	68 22.7%	50 16.7%	86 28.7%	96 32%	2.30	1.14
18	Poverty significantly affects my academic performance.	126 42%	82 27.3%	70 23.3%	22 7.3%	3.04	0.98
19	I have equal access to technology and the internet compared to my wealthier classmates.	72 24%	68 22.7%	78 26%	82 27.3%	2.43	1.13
20	I feel comfortable seeking help when needed.	54 18%	120 40%	66 22%	60 20%	2.56	1.01
TOTAL						2.74	0.90

Key: VH–Very High (4.00-3.26), H –High (3.25-2.51), L–Low (2.50-1.76), VL – Very Low (1.75-1.00)

Table 4.2 reveals the result of the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, Ogun state. It can be seen that 75.3% (226) of the students responded that their families often struggled to afford basic necessities like food and

clothing, 89.3% (268) opined that they frequently worried about their family's financial situation while 60.7 (182) of them believed that they did not have access to the same educational resources as their wealthier classmates. It can equally be seen from the table that 89.3% (268) of the students responded that they sometimes skipped meals due to lack of food at home, 83.3% (250) supported they must work to contribute financially to their families while 70% (210) of them opined that their families could not easily afford their school supplies and textbooks. Moreover, the table also reveals that 69.3% (208) of the students believed that poverty significantly affected their academic performance while 58% (174) of them responded that they felt comfortable seeking help when needed. Based on this analysis, with weighted mean ($\bar{x}$) value of 2.74 and standard deviation (SD) of 0.90, it can be concluded that the level of poverty among the school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government, Ogun state was high.

Research question 2: What is the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

Table 4.3: Level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government

S.No.	Marks obtained by students in the SAT	Frequency	Percent	Remark
1	1 – 14	184	61.3	Failed
2	15 – 30	116	38.7	Passed
	TOTAL	**300**	**100.0**	

Key: SAT – Students Achievement Test (Min. Score = 5, Max. Score = 21)
Total Marks Obtainable (n) = 30, Grand Mean ($\bar{x}$) = 13.217, Standard Deviation (SD) = 3.685
Very Low =1 - 24%, Low = 25 - 49%, High = 50 - 74%, Very High = 75 - 100%

Table 4.3 presents the level of academic performance of students in the SAT (Mathematics, English and National Value Education) in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. With grand mean score of 13.217, standard deviation of 3.683, it can be seen that 61.3% (184) of the students scored below average marks (1 - 14) in the Students Achievement Test while remaining 38.7%

(116) scored above average marks (15 - 30) i.e. passed the test. This means that majority of the students did not perform well in the test. Hence, it can be concluded that the level of academic performance of students in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State was low ($\bar{X}$=13.217, SD= 3.685).

Research question 3: Is there any significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government?

Table 4.4: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	DF	r	Sig.	Remark
Poverty	300	53.692	3.352				
Academic Performance	300	13.217	3.685	298	0.174*	0.039	Significant

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.4 presents the result of the significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State (r=0.174, df=298, p<0.05). This implied that poverty is significantly related to the students' academic performance in Ijebu-Ode Local Government. This means that the level of poverty among the students will determine the level of their academic performance in junior secondary schools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Discussion

The result of the first research question in Table 4.2 revealed that the level of poverty among the school children in the local government was high. It was found that majority of the families were oftenly struggling to afford basic necessities, school supplies and textbooks for their wards due to their financial situations. As a

result many of these children had to work or support the family in way or the other. Majority of them sometimes skipped meals due to lack of food at home and did not also have access to the same educational resources as their wealthier classmates. All these will have impact on the thinking, memory, attitude and behaviour of the students. This result is in support of the findings of Brito and Noble (2019) and Jensen (2019) who in their studies reported that children raised in poverty are more apt to experience emotional and social challenges, chronic stressors, and cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion.

The result of the second research question in Table 4.3 on the level of academic performance of students in the SAT (Mathematics, English and National Value Education) in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State revealed that majority of students did not perform well in the test. This poor performance of students in the test may be linked to lack of access to basic needs and educational resources that could have hitherto been of great assistance to their academic prowess. This result is tandem with the findings of Bolarin (2011) who in his study found that low achievement is closely correlated with lack of resources, and numerous studies have documented the correlation between low socioeconomic status and low achievement, several strategies exist to assist teachers in closing the poverty achievement gap for students.

Moreover, from the result of the third research question as presented in Table 4.4, showed that there was a significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of school children in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State. This implied that poverty is significantly related to the students' academic performance. This means that the higher the level of poverty among the students, the lower the level of their academic performance and vice versa. This result is in agreement with the findings of Elumu, Zikusooka and Gibson (2023) who found that poverty of students at home is positively associated with academic performance. They also reported the variables that were found to

be significantly associated with academic performance to include feeding conditions, provision of facilities and equipment at school and home related factors. Limited poverty in form of being well equipped with all the needs does not only stop students from failure but also enhances students' brains and attention in class. On the other hand, students whose families are totally poor and do not get enough resources to facilitate their academics will lack attend and focus and which may affect their academic performance negatively.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that poverty has the potentials of affecting the academic performance of students negatively. High level of poverty among students will deprive them the opportunity to have access to basic needs at home and educational resources at school. This may lead to lack of assimilation, attention, focus and concentration in the classroom and which may eventually result to poor academic performance among the students.

Recommendations

In order to improve the academic performance of the students and close the gap created by poverty, the following actions should be taken. The parents should strive and work hard in order to provide the basic needs for their children. The teachers should endeavour to build strong relationships between themselves and their students. They should also create inclusive classrooms where children from both the rich and poor homes have equal opportunity. The government should intensify efforts in organize poverty reduction programmes in order to eliminate poverty among parents and should support the schools with the necessary school equipment and resources in order to improve the management of school activities thus improving the academic performance.

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