



INFLUENCE OF POVERTY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

The study was carried out to investigate the influence of poverty on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Lagos State. The study adopted a causal-comparative research design type. The population of the study comprises primary school pupils in Lagos State. The total sample of the study consists of two hundred and eighty-nine (289) participants who are pupils in public primary schools. Multistage sampling technique was employed for the study. Three research hypotheses were formulated in the study. One self-designed instrument titled: "Pupils Poverty and Academic Performance Questionnaire" (PPAPQ) was used to collect the data. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument and a reliability index of 0.84 was obtained. Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings reveal that there is a positive significant relationship between economic status of the nation and academic performance of pupils, also there is a positive significant relationship between education background of parents and pupils academic performance. Based on the findings the study recommended that, teachers should establish positive relationships with their pupils to build trust and encourage engagement. Lastly, Government should invest in education by allocating substantial resources to the education sector, ensuring adequate funding for schools, infrastructure, and teacher training.

Keywords:

Academic Performance, Classroom Environment, Economic status, Poverty

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Introduction

Primary schools in the Nigerian context generally encompass the initial years of formal education, commencing with kindergarten and extending through the basic classes up to basic 6, depending on the specific region's educational system. These institutions predominantly serve children aged 5 to 11, although variations exist based on the country or educational framework. The national policy on education emphasizes that primary education is foundational. It underscores the importance of building a strong base for critical thinking, science, and computer education. The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) begins at the primary level to enhance knowledge and skills for global participation.

The primary school curriculum, as outlined by (Okebukola et al., 2013; Mannathoko & Mamvuto2018), incorporates subjects such as mathematics, language arts (reading and writing), science, social studies, physical education, and art. Designed to establish a foundational base of knowledge and skills for pupils, the primary school curriculum is structured to facilitate learning. According to Barlow and Marolt (2022), classroom settings are deliberately configured to be child-friendly and conducive to the educational process. Primary schools often feature vibrant decorations, age-appropriate learning materials, and a diverse array of teaching aids aimed at captivating young learners. Educators in these institutions are typically trained to specialize in working with young children, offering instruction across various subjects.

The pivotal role of primary school teachers in fostering the learning and development of pupils has been underscored by Veldman et al. (2020). Emphasizing play and social development is a common approach in primary schools, as noted by Taylor (2019). This involves incorporating recess or break times for physical activity and creating opportunities for young children to interact with their peers. In the Nigerian educational system, primary school is regarded as a transitional phase, preparing students for the more advanced and specialized subjects they will encounter in secondary or middle school, as outlined by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2013). It is considered every child's right to receive an education that equips them with the necessary skills, competencies, and attitudes for a fulfilling life free from poverty.

Poverty poses a significant barrier to individuals fully engaging in educational pursuits. Due to the multifaceted nature of poverty, achieving a universally agreed-upon definition is challenging. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000) defines poverty simply as the state of being poor. Okunola and Ojo, (2019), interprets poverty as a way of life characterized by factors such as low calorie intake, limited access to adequate health facilities, a low-quality education system, reduced life expectancy, and unemployment or underemployment. Oyebamiji & Khan, (2023), identify poverty as a major risk factor, linking the concept to Nigeria and emphasizing its broader implications. In this context, poverty is viewed from various perspectives, encompassing national, state, and home backgrounds.

At the national level, a nation may be deemed impoverished when its economic standards are notably low, resulting in an automatic classification as underdeveloped. This designation is often



ties to the country's failure to reach a certain stage of development concerning infrastructure and other developmental indices (United Nations, 2020; WTO 2021). Addressing poverty at the family level involves considering the home background. Even preceding the advent of indigenous or Western education, the home has consistently served as the primary agent through which individuals acquire diverse aspects of knowledge, enabling them to lead meaningful lives in their environments (Woodall et al., 2023). Recognized as the traditional method of educating the young, the home retains its status as the first school for a child before they step into the broader society. Canudas-Romo, (2018) underscore the crucial role of the home, emphasizing that the prevailing assumptions linking family or home poverty significantly influence the educational and there is no doubt that substantial education stands as the most powerful tool for mitigating and ultimately eradicating poverty (Eleagu, 2018)

The school environment encompasses both tangible and intangible elements within the educational setting, including teachers, peers, the overall cohesiveness of the school, the subjects taught, and instructional methods employed. An optimal school environment, which is physically inviting and conducive to learning, can instill a sense of pride among students and sustain their interest in school (Muzakki & Efendi, 2021; Kadhim & Naji, 2022). The quality of the environment where individuals learn and live plays a crucial role in a child's academic performance. Learning goes beyond formal education, with the broader community and environment significantly influencing learners' motivation, curiosity, and desire to develop competence (Belanger, 1996). This concept is reinforced by Graff (1987, as cited in Nwizu, 2003), who highlights that the environment in which knowledge is acquired profoundly impacts a learner's cognitive achievements.

Concept of Poverty

Poverty in Nigeria is a widespread socio-economic challenge that significantly affects a large segment of its population, particularly children (Berberova–Valcheva, 2019). This complex problem includes economic difficulties, restricted access to crucial resources, and a decreased quality of life. The repercussions extend far and wide, exerting a substantial influence on a child's educational path. Children raised in impoverished environments frequently face obstacles that impede their academic advancement, such as insufficient nourishment, a lack of access to educational materials, and exposure to environmental stressors (Abidogun et al., 2019).

Poverty, as defined by the United Nations (Turayeva & Kurbanova, 2023), goes beyond financial insufficiency, encapsulating a deprivation of choices and opportunities that infringes on human dignity. It signifies incapacity to participate effectively in society, encompassing the absence of essential means for family provision, education, healthcare, sustenance, employment, and credit. This state induces feelings of insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion, making individuals vulnerable to violence in unstable environments without access to clean water or sanitation (Ozili, 2022).



Sharafi, (2021) emphasizing poverty as a deficiency in essential capabilities, not just low income. The World Bank (2021) defines poverty by the inability to attain a basic standard of living, often measured in terms of income, with an international poverty threshold set at \$1.90 per day for extreme poverty. Oscar Lewis (1967) introduces the "culture of poverty" concept, viewing it as a way of life with values passed down through generations. Chambers (Thompson & Cannon, 2023) underscores participatory approaches in understanding poverty as an experience of powerlessness. Galbraith, (2019), sees poverty as a threat to human dignity and a challenge to the human spirit. Notten & Kaplan, (2021), describes poverty as lacking the socially acceptable amount of money or possessions, an absolute deprivation of life necessities like food and clothing.

The Need for Poverty Alleviation

The global commitment to alleviate and eliminate poverty is evident in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, with eradicating poverty as the top priority (Ozili, 2022). The urgency of this goal reflects the significant challenge at hand. A key focus is the deficiency in human capital comprising education, skills, and health which is both a cause and consequence of poverty (Ma et al., 2022). Human capital is foundational for breaking the cycle of impoverishment. Notably, the impact of poverty on children is alarming, with studies indicating that growing up in low-income families adversely affects their development and well-being (Jerrim et al., 2020). Inadequate resources allocated for their education and overall growth pose a barrier to their future prospects.

Children grappling with emotional and social adversities may display disruptive behaviours in school (Badejo & Tairu, 2022). Those from impoverished backgrounds may lack instruction in social etiquette, hindering empathy and effective collaboration (Hurley et al., 2021; He, 2023). These deficient social skills contribute to a lack of acceptance, leading to academic declines (Wiborg & Gratz, 2022). Children in poverty face persistent stressors, such as unsafe neighborhoods, minimal parental wages, separated families, and overcrowded living conditions. These stressors contribute to academic and behavioural challenges, including higher absenteeism, focus and concentration issues, comprehension difficulties, and motivation problems (Jabbarov, 2023). Limited parental interaction and cognitive stimulation further diminish self-confidence, resulting in future academic struggles (Ma & Song, 2023).

Research by Abidogun et al. (2019) indicates that poverty adversely affects children physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively, leading to developmental delays. (Lee 2017; Lillard, 2020; Shay et al., 2023) supports the idea that poverty significantly impacts a child's life, aligning with Maria Montessori's belief in early learning influencing later development. Consequently, children raised in poverty exhibit more frequent poor performance, behavioural issues, mental health concerns, and emotional challenges (Nichol, 2018 & Teall, 2019).



Statement of the Problem

The issue of poverty remains a significant challenge affecting various aspects of human life, including education, in Lagos State, Nigeria. A significant portion of the population lives below the poverty line, and this affects children as well. Poverty often leads to disparities in academic achievement among primary school pupils due to limited access to essential educational resources such as textbooks, learning materials, and quality teachers. This situation can have adverse effects on the future and prosperity of the pupils. Despite numerous poverty alleviation programs initiated by both the government and non-governmental organizations, desired results have not been achieved. Some of these unsuccessful programs include the Farm Settlement Option introduced in the 1960s, the National Accelerated Food Production Project in 1972, Operation Feed the Nation in 1976, the Green Revolution Programme in 1980, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 1999, and many others up to the present day. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the influence of poverty on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Lagos State.

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between economic status of a nation and academic performance of pupils
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between education background of parents and academic performance of pupils
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between environmental factors and academic performance of pupils

Methodology

The study adopted a causal-comparative research design type. The target population comprised of all primary school pupils in Lagos State. The sample of the study was made up of 288 primary school pupils of public primary school in Lagos State. Multistage sampling technique was used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to selected all primary school pupils in three local government education authorities LGEAs these include among others; Alimosho, Ojo and Badagry. This was based on the criterion that they were primary school pupils. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 96 pupils from each of the local government education authorities. Simple random sampling technique was used to select six (6) schools from each of the local government education authorities with sixteen (16) primary school pupils from each of the school. One self-designed instrument titled: “Pupils Poverty and Academic Performance Questionnaire” (PPAPQ) was used to collect the data. Face and content validity of the instrument was established by experts in the field of early childhood education at the



department of Educational Foundation and Counseling Psychology, Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos. Cronbach's Alpha technique was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument and a reliability index of 0.84 was obtained. Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the hypotheses at 0.5 level of significant.

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between economic status of a nation and academic performance of pupils

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between economic status of a nation and academic performance of pupils

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	r	Sig.	Remark
Economic Status of The nation	289	29.987	12.861			
Pupils academic performance	289	24.451	9.605	.564	.000	significant

Table 1 illustrates a significant positive correlation between the economic status of a nation and the academic performance of pupils ($r = 0.56$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, we reject the hypothesis. This positive correlation suggests that a nation's economic status is closely linked to the academic performance of its pupils. The findings indicate that when the economic status of a nation is favorable, the academic performance of pupils tends to be higher. This aligns with previous studies (Lee 2017; Lillard, 2020; Shay et al., 2023) and supports Maria Montessori's belief that early learning influences later development. Consequently, children from impoverished backgrounds often experience more frequent poor academic performance, behavioral issues, mental health concerns, and emotional challenges (Nichol, 2018; Teall, 2019).

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between education background of parents and academic performance of pupils

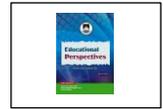


Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between education background of parents and academic performance of pupils

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	r	Sig.	Remark
Education background of parents	289	26.222	10.861			
Pupils academic performance	289	24.451	9.605	.426	.000	significant

Table 2 confirms a significant positive correlation between the education background of parents and pupils' academic performance ($r = 0.426$; $p < 0.05$). Consequently, we reject the hypothesis. This positive correlation suggests that the education background of parents plays a crucial role in determining the academic performance of pupils. This finding is consistent with research indicating the alarming impact of poverty on children, with studies showing that growing up in low-income families adversely affects their development and well-being (Jerrim et al., 2020). Insufficient resources allocated for their education and overall growth pose significant barriers to their future prospects.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between environmental factors and academic performance of pupils

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between environmental factors and academic performance of pupils

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	r	Sig.	Remark
Environmental factors	289	27.248	11.582			
Pupils academic performance	289	24.451	9.605	.490	.000	significant

Table 3 illustrates a significant positive correlation between environmental factors and pupils' academic performance ($r = 0.49$; $p < 0.05$). Consequently, the hypothesis is rejected. This positive correlation indicates that the quality of the environment where individuals learn and live plays a crucial role in a child's academic performance. The school environment encompasses both tangible and intangible elements within the educational setting, including teachers, peers, overall school cohesiveness, subjects taught, and instructional methods employed. An optimal school environment, which is physically inviting and conducive to learning, can instill a sense of pride among students and sustain their interest in school (Muzakki & Efendi, 2021; Kadhim & Naji, 2022). Learning extends beyond formal education, with the broader community and



environment significantly influencing learners' motivation, curiosity, and desire to develop competence (Belanger, 1996).

Conclusion

Academic performance not only reflects individual achievement but also plays a crucial role in a nation's prosperity and development. High-achieving children often contribute to a country's economic growth and reduction of poverty. Academic success is closely tied to a pupil's future opportunities and can greatly influence a nation's social and economic progress. In Nigeria, poverty is a widespread issue that significantly affects children's educational journeys. Factors such as insufficient resources, unstable home environments, and limited access to educational materials can impede academic progress. The school environment, including teachers, peers, and physical infrastructure, also plays a significant role in shaping a child's academic performance. A supportive and conducive environment fosters learning and motivation, whereas an unsupportive one can hinder it.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Teachers should focus on establishing positive relationships with their pupils to foster trust and encourage engagement. When students feel cared for and supported, they are more likely to thrive academically. Teachers should also consider incorporating social skills training into the curriculum, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, to help them develop better interpersonal skills.
2. The government should prioritize investment in education by allocating significant resources to the education sector. This includes ensuring adequate funding for schools, infrastructure development, and teacher training. Adequate funding is essential for creating an environment conducive to learning. Additionally, the government should develop and implement comprehensive policies aimed at addressing poverty-related challenges in education.
3. Curriculum planners should integrate social skills training into the curriculum to ensure that pupils develop essential interpersonal skills alongside academic knowledge. These skills are valuable not only for academic success but also for future life and career prospects.

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