



# Poverty and Early Childhood Education Among Basic Five Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated poverty and early childhood education among five basic pupils in public primary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria. A descriptive research design of a survey type was used for this study and two null hypotheses guided the study at a 0.05 significance level. 102 sample were selected from 10 public primary schools across the state. This study explored how poverty (socioeconomic status) influenced access to learning resource and academic performance in early childhood education. A research instrument titled: *Poverty and academic performance instrument (PAPI)* used to collect data on the pupils' academic performances, access to learning resources and poverty level with reliability coefficient using Cronbach's Alpha test was 0.79. The findings revealed that the Person Product Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) of the variable was .0645 at  $p$ -value= 0.000, which means there was a strong positive relationship between poverty and academic performance and also there was positive relationship between poverty and access to learning resources at  $r(102) = .0472$  at  $p$ -value= 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance. It was concluded that there is a need to address the unfairness in early childhood education in public primary School in Lagos State, through implementing planned support systems and policies aimed at alleviating the effects of poverty. The study recommended regular counselling to parents, school, stakeholders and government through a way of improving access to quality education for children from low-income families, early childhood education and Nigerian could take a bold step towards reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development.

## KEYWORDS:

early childhood education,  
poverty, public primary  
schools.

## WORD COUNT:

246

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## HOW TO CITE

Adeyemi O.M, Tahir M.B, Akiode A.O & Agbojeyin I.A. (2025). Poverty and Early Childhood Education Among Basic Five Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Educational Perspectives*, 13(2), 342-349.



## Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is all-important for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development in their early years. The public primary schools also play a vital role in providing foundational education to young children in Lagos State, Nigeria. However, the prevalent issue of poverty posed a significant challenge, thereby affecting the effectiveness of early childhood education programmes.

Poverty has been identified to be a significant predictor of access to education globally and, more importantly, in Lagos, Nigeria; this happened from generation to generation, but receiving and having access to quality education could be traced to financial stability. In other words, education and poverty are directly linked, as Oduolowu (2020) has opined. We cannot erase the financial involvement of parents when it comes to early childhood education, as it is the foundation upon which other forms of education were built. The spirit of catching them young must take its place, and as opined by Browne, 80 percent development of the brain occurs between ages 0-8 years while the remaining 20 percent takes place later in life. It is important to use this development, which was what early childhood education emphasised.

## Literature Review

Early childhood education in public primary schools as it affects Nigerian sets the stage for lifelong learning and development. Several studies have shown that Early Childhood Education ECE is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak; children are highly influenced by the environment and the people that surround them. It is the foundation of the child's development holistically, social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a lifelong learning and wellbeing (Naija Scholar, 2024; Lemea-Adorna, 2024). This could be pointed to the quality of primary education can lead to better academic performance, acquisition of social skills, and emotional well-being among the pupils

in public primary schools (Muraina et al., 2022). However, the quality and accessibility of early childhood and primary education varies widely as a result of several factors which poverty is one, particularly in public primary schools in Lagos State.

Poverty is a major barrier to educational attainment (Rodriguez, 2020). It makes many pupils from poor homes skip classes even a few pupils among the children of the poor (Bestwick & Schmuecker, 2024), also such pupils started attending schools late due to the family's economic power, making the children from low-income families lag behind when it comes to access to essential resources, including nutritious food, educational materials, and safe learning environments (Munir et al., 2023; Odebowale, 2022; Tamiru et al., 2023). These deficiencies can negatively impact the cognitive development and academic performance of the pupils under review. This also corroborated what Abidogun et al. (2024).

Then, this study also indicated that there is a relationship between early childhood education and poverty both globally (Shay et al., 2023) and locally especially in a country like Nigeria. Adebayo and Yusuf (2020); Adewusi et al., 2023; Concern world US (2023) agreed that child receiving early education has advantage because it plays a pivotal role in poverty reduction by providing children with the skills and knowledge necessary to improve their socio-economic status. Yet, poverty remains a significant barrier to educational access and achievement in the country, particularly among primary school pupils (McKenzie, 2019). This pointing to link between poverty and early childhood education among primary school pupils in Nigeria, focusing on access, quality of education, and the broader socio-economic consequences.

Also, the impact of poverty on early childhood education, when children from impoverished backgrounds gain access to education, the quality



of education they receive is often substandard. Therefore, schools in low-income communities typically face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of teaching materials, and poorly trained teachers (Akinwale & Aluko, 2021; Ayoko et al., 2023; Lombo & Subban, 2024). These factors contribute to poor learning outcomes, further perpetuating the consequence of poverty. It is equally indicated that primary school pupils from low-income families in rural areas are less likely to achieve literacy and numeracy benchmarks compared to their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Obadare & Adedoyin, 2023). This leads to lack of access to quality education as well limiting their opportunities for further education and future employment, thereby reinforcing intergenerational poverty. Furthermore, the socio-economic implications of the link between poverty and early childhood education are acute. Many children from families living below poverty line fail to complete primary education are more likely to experience future social exclusion in adulthood (Eze & Nwagwu, 2019). This adds to the continuity of living in poverty at both the household and community levels.

In addition, narrow educational attainment among primary school pupils has broader societal implications, including reduced economic productivity and increased reliance on social welfare systems and many others (Ogunleye et al., 2021). Addressing the educational challenges faced by children from poor households is, therefore, essential for breaking the rotation of poverty and promoting sustainable developments.

Also, gender as a moderating factor, plays a significant role in shaping the relationship between education and poverty among primary school pupils in Nigeria. Socio-cultural norms, economic disparities, and systemic biases often create differential educational experiences and outcomes for boys and girls. This garnered dimension impacts access to education, quality of education

received, and future socio-economic opportunities. In many parts of Nigeria, particularly in rural areas, girls face more significant barriers to accessing primary education compared to boys. Cultural norms often prioritise boys' education over girls, as boys are considered future breadwinners, while girls are expected to fulfil domestic roles (Adebisi & Adeyemi, 2021). Consequently, girls from poor households are more likely to be withdrawn from school to assist with household chores, care for siblings, or to get married earlier (UNICEF, 2022). United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2021), the primary school enrollment rate for boys in Nigeria is 62%, compared to 55% for girls. This gender gap is even more pronounced in economically disadvantaged regions, where poverty outshined educational inequality.

Furthermore, gender influences the quality of education that pupils receive. In some schools, boys may receive more attention and encouragement from teachers, while girls may be discouraged from participating in class due to gender stereotypes (Eze & Nwogu, 2020). This can lead to lower academic performance and reduced self-confidence among female pupils.

A study found that girls in underprivileged communities in Nigeria consistently score lower in subjects compared to boys as a result of restricted access to facilities (Okonkwo & Chukwu, 2022). This makes many girls drop out of school or receive a substandard education, and are more likely to experience early marriage and early childbearing owing to living in poverty; this reduces later economic growth and higher rates of maternal and child mortality (World Bank, 2022) while boys managing to engage in vocational training in order to escape extreme poverty (Akinyemi & Yusuf, 2023). Gender significantly affects the relationship between early childhood education and poverty among primary school pupils in Nigeria, particularly girls who are from low-income households, face more significant barriers in



primary school and difficulties in accessing quality basic education because of poor socio-economic outcomes compared to boys. Addressing these gender disparities through targeted policy interventions which is critical for ensuring equitable educational opportunities and reducing poverty in Nigeria (Abidogun 2024).

### Statement of the problem

Poverty significantly affects children in accessing primary education in Nigeria. According to UNESCO (2021), Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world, with approximately 10.5 million children not enrolled in school. A significant proportion of these children come from poor households, where parents prioritise survival over education (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2020). At the same time, the inability to afford school-related expenses, such as uniforms, textbooks, and transportation, further limits children's ability to attend school regularly (Amoo et al., 2022). Poverty forces many children into child labour, which directly conflicts with school attendance and performance (Umaru & Mohammed, 2021). This study aims to examine the impact of poverty on the education of basic five pupils in public primary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria.

### Hypothesis

1. Poverty does not significantly affect the academic performance of basic five pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between poverty and access to learning resources among basic five pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

### Methodology

The research design employed in this study was a descriptive research design of a survey type for data collection. The study sample consisted of 100 basic five pupils from ten (10) public primary schools

across Lagos State. The schools were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure equal representation of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds. The instruments used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: Poverty and Academic Performance Instrument (PAPI) with 13 construct items *as a research instrument to elicit information about poverty and academic performance* among basic five pupils in public primary schools, this was administered individually with the assistant of the teachers to the basic five (5) pupils in public primary schools to gather data on their academic performance and access to learning resources. The research instrument was validated by two experts in the field of psychometrics and its reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha and its reliability coefficient was 0.79.

After the instrument was retrieved from the respondents, the data obtained was analysed using Pearson Product Correlational Moment for the two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and set at a p-value <0.05.

**Results****Tables****Hypothesis 1:****Table 1:** Correlations Between Poverty and Academic Performance of Basic Five Pupils in Public Primary Schools

		<b>acadperf</b>	<b>Poverty</b>
Acadperf	Pearson Correlation	1	.0645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	102	102
Poverty	Pearson Correlation	.0645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 revealed that the Person Product Correlation Coefficient (r) of the variable was 0.0645, which means there is a strong positive relationship between Poverty and academic performance and that the correlation p-value= 0.000. Therefore, the correlation was significant at

0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of basic five pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

**Table 2****Hypothesis 2:****Pearson Correlations Between Poverty and Access to Learning Resources of Basic Five Pupils in Public Primary Schools**

		<b>Access to resource</b>	<b>Poverty</b>
Access to resource	Pearson Correlation	1	.0472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	102	102
Poverty	Pearson Correlation	.0472**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level (2-tailed).

Table 2 revealed a significant positive correlation between access to learning resources and poverty,  $r(102) = .0472$ ,  $p < .01$ . This indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that pupils' from home living below poverty line tend to have lesser access to educational resources. Hence, there is significant relationship between poverty and access to learning resources among basic five pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

**Discussion**

The findings of the study from hypothesis one align with previous research suggesting that pupils who are from families living below property line often have lesser access to educational resources, better learning environments, and parental support, which can negatively influence pupils' academic outcomes (Bestwick & Schmuecker, 2024; Muraina et al., 2022; Oduolowu, 2020). The





significant correlation implies that introduction of interventions which was aimed at improving poverty conditions may also contribute to enhanced academic performance of the pupils in basic five public primary schools in Lagos Nigeria. Moreover, to improve the academic performance of these pupils some other confounding variables like school quality, motivation and a few among others may also plays a significant role in academic performance. This finding could be associated with the fact that the resultant effect of poverty breeding lower academic performance of pupils in primary schools and threatens their welfare and well-being (Munir et al., 2023; Odebowale, 2022; Tamiru et al., 2023).

The findings from hypothesis two align with existing research that highlighted the impact of poverty on educational resource availability. Students from families with lower socioeconomic status often deny access to better learning materials, technology, tutoring, and school infrastructure, which can deprived them of educational experiences. This is in line with (Adekunle 2023). Although the correlation is significant, it is moderate rather than strong, suggesting that poverty influences access to resources, other factors such as government policies, school funding, and community support programmes may also play a role in resource availability. In line with Amoo et al., 2022; Umaru & Mohammed, 2021, that the inability of the pupils to afford school-related expenses, such as uniforms, textbooks, and transportation, further limits children's ability to attend school regularly in public primary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

### Conclusion

This study highlights the urgent need to address the unfairness in public primary school education caused by poverty in Lagos State. This is possible through implementing planned support systems and policies aimed at alleviating the effects of poverty, as well as improving educational outcomes for all children, regardless of their

poverty line as well as background they received a high-quality public primary education. Also, the link between poverty and education among primary school pupils in Nigeria is undeniable. Poverty not only limits access to education but also affects the quality of education received, leading to poor learning outcomes and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

### Recommendations

1. Giving regular counselling to parents, school, stakeholders and government by way of improving access to quality education for children from low-income families; and Nigeria can take a significant step towards reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development.
2. Government should initiate increase in enrollment and retention in schools
3. by easy access to scholarships, free school meals, and safe learning environments

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