

**THE INFLUENCE OF POVERTY ON THE ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OVIA  
NORTH-EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

**BY**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
B.A(Ed.) IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE.**

**JANUARY, 2023**

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that the project work was carried out by Ugonna Precious CHIBUIKE of the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, in partial fulfilment for the award of B.A (Ed.) in English and Literature.

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**DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to God Almighty her Maker, for His supremacy over her life.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, her superlative gratitude goes to the Almighty God for the gift of wisdom, knowledge, understanding and assimilation, and for His saving and sustaining grace in all ramifications of her life, especially throughout her days in University of Benin.

Her sincere gratitude goes to Mr. S.I. Ugonoh for the fatherly guidance, encouragement and support he has provided throughout her time as his student. May Gods protection be with you and your family.

To her parents, Mr. and Mrs. I. C Erondu. She sees all the sacrifices you make to give her a good start in life. Your unending love and support will forever be appreciated and will never be taken for granted.

To her siblings Chinonyerem, Ikenna, Iheoma, and Akunna. You guys have been there for her right from childhood. Thanks for the love, and for the regular check-ins. We did this together! To her sweet niece, she loves you!

To her best friend David, thank you for being her emotional rock. She doesn't take your prayers and words of encouragement for granted.

Her heartfelt thanks go to her best girl Mmesoma, for her moral and academic support throughout her education life at UNIBEN. To her friends Peter, Princess and Anderson, thank you for walking this journey with her. May God bless each and every one of you!

Lastly, she puts forward her regards to Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley Onaiwi for their encouragement and financial support towards the success of this project. Thanks to Mummy Ray for her devotion to this work. May God bless every contributor who ensured the success of this work.

To God be the Glory.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of poverty on the academic performance of secondary School students in some selected schools in Ovia North-East Local Government Area, Edo State. The research aims to identify the relationship between poverty and students' academic performance. The research was carried out as a survey using relevant literature from journals, textbooks, magazine and the internet.

To achieve the purpose of the study, three research questions were raised. The sample size of fifty secondary school teachers from five secondary schools was used for the study. Data was collected with the aid of well-structured and valid questionnaire; the data collected were analyzed using simple percentages.

The findings showed that there is a significant relationships between academic performance and poverty under feeding conditions, provision of school facilities and equipment and home related factors .The study inferred that poverty affects academic performance of students and the day to day management of the school. From the study it is evident that parents do not have stable sources of income as they don't pay fees in time. This negatively influences students' academic performance.

Based on the findings, the study generally recommended that the government at all levels should create employment opportunities among parents to reduce the rate of poverty, and also establish social welfare scheme for the poor and needy.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

Poverty is commonly defined as a situation of low income or low consumption

Such situations lead to non-fulfilment of basic human needs such as clothing, food, shelter, affection, security, cultural identity, protection, freedom, participation, and leisure (Fernandez 2000; Firman and Herlina).

Economically, poverty can be seen as the lack of resources that can be used to meet the needs of life and improve the welfare of a group of people.

Socially, poverty can be observed as a condition of community members who do not/have not participated in the process of change because they do not have the ability, both the ability in the selection of production factors and the quality of production factors. The inconsistency of

development plan with the ability of the community concerned results inefficient results (Arsyad: 2004).

Without a doubt, poverty has a negative influence on student achievement. Poverty matters! Education bureaucrats who say poverty should not be an excuse for children “not learning” are technically correct. Poverty is not an excuse for not learning but it certainly influences the learning process, and it influences academic achievement mightily. Poverty accounts for up to 60 percent of the variance in standardized test scores (Sirin 2005).

Access to education is one of the most important basic human rights in all societies. In Nigeria, the provision of education has been one of the most critical issues of government social policy of which poverty has however remained a stumbling block for most people to attain this basic right. Poverty is a universal social problem that cuts across nations, race, locations, culture and religion. Poverty stricken members of the human race have always struggled in a number of ways to attain decent living standards. Poverty present a number of challenges to its victims such as access to

proper health facilities, education, nutrition, employment and realization of personal ambition.

According to MC Kenzie, poverty has become one of the most prevalent indicators of academic achievement in schools today. Some studies have found the correlation between living in poverty and low academic achievement. There are dozens of factors contributing to students' low academic achievement, but poverty is the most influential factor. Poverty plays a tremendous role in students' academic achievements in all the student learning years (Kapur, 2018; MC Kenzie, 2019).

Furthermore, family incomes, no matter high or low can directly create the environmental impact on the students learning. Children coming from a poor family have obstacles that hinder them from learning as fast as their peers. Children learn vocabulary at their homes, but vocabulary learned by students coming from high-income families are much more than students from low income families. Then, the way students coming from rich homes learn and comprehend are different from poor student as their families may not assist them at home (Yawan, 2022). When parents do not have sufficient money,

they have to work all day for the children, and in turn, their will be no time for the parents to give the children assistance in doing their homework.

Poverty provides number of challenges for students such as accessing better health facilities, sound education, clean water and stress which is one of the most important things that the children and the parents may have at home. (Miller, Votruba-Drzal and Coley, 2019). These will give a direct impact on their grades because nobody wants to help them or even care about their success in school. (Grinon, 1999; Unity, 2013; Fortner, 2021).

Children living in poverty have commonly physical health problems than children from high-income families. There is a greater incidence of such situation as asthma, the infection of tuberculosis, respiratory diseases, cough, flu, fever, diarrhea, and even hearing loss (Mc Kenzie, 2019).

According to May (2000), a child who experiences poverty is exposed to the risk of impaired physical and mental development. But even if the child suffers no permanent physical damage, he or she is clearly at a disadvantage. Some children from poor households are kept out of school to help at home, others take the burden of poverty to school with them. If

children are hungry, they cannot concentrate properly at school. Poverty is about not having enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing and shelter.

The World Bank Organization describes poverty in this way: “poverty is hunger, poverty is lack of shelter, poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having job, fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape, “so poverty is a call to action,... for the poor and the wealthy alike,... a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education an health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities”.

In spite of the efforts of the government towards ensuring sound education in secondary schools, outputs from WASSCE results has not been encouraging. As such, studies on the relationship between poverty and

academic performance of students are needed especially now that poverty has taken multidimensional phases.

Sociologists and researchers came to conclusion: for the vast majority of children born in poverty, the chance of success in education is lower, therefore results a higher probability of failure of education. Following this failure, their chances of success as an adult are limited, which can make us think of social exclusion.

Government and some other stakeholders have over the years been putting effort in reducing the rate of failure especially in secondary schools, yet there is no remarkable improvement. This may be due to problem of misplacement of priorities or lack of identifying the main problem because government seems not to lay much emphasis on poverty as one of the likely cause of students poor performance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to National center for Education Statistics (2001) “Academic success is important because it is strongly linked to positive

outcomes”. Not surprising, research shows that “adults with high level of education are more likely to be employed and to earn higher salaries”

Poverty has become one of the most prevalent indicators of academic achievement in our schools today. As the number of students raised in poverty increases, it is vitally important that educators beware of the influence of poverty on student behavior and learning capacity in the classroom. There are many challenges faced by children raised in poverty. Some challenges are long term obstacles such as chronic stressors and changes in brain structure that affect emotion and memory.

Other challenges are more situational causing emotional and social struggles. The mental health issues include high levels of depression among parents and children living in poverty. (Jensen, 2009). Student who have experienced emotional and social challenges may demonstrate acting-out behaviors during school day (Jensen, 2009). They may also be impatient and have poor impulse control. Their behavioral responses may be limited due to having a caregiver who was not sensitive to their needs as an infant. Jensen (2009) pointed several reasons for this phenomenon.

Parents or guardians are often overworked due to working more than one job to make ends meet. This situation, in turn, causes parents or guardians to inflict harsher discipline and be less sensitive to their children. Parents or guardians who have experienced difficulties with school in their pasts are less likely to attend parent-teacher interviews or to be involved in any extra curricular school activities.

Poor emotional health, caused by lack of parental support, may cause an increase in indisciplined behavior in classroom.

In addition, students raised in poverty may not have been taught to be polite, and may not be socially gracious. They may lack the ability to be empathic with others. This lack of empathy, in turn, makes it difficult for these students to work well in cooperative groups with their classmates. The inability to work well with classmates often result in students becoming unwanted participants in groups, adding to their feeling of inadequacy and resulting in the students giving up on the task just before they complete it. Poor social skills, which result in lack of acceptance from peers, may cause decrease in academic performance.

Students living in poverty see many chronic stressors, including unsafe neighborhoods where there are high levels of crime, living in a public yard and also living in a household that are overcrowded (Johnson, Riis, and Noble, 2009). All of these stressors create a bridge in the lives of students raised in poverty, and result in academic and behavioral issues in school. Students raised in poverty have a higher level of absenteeism, they struggle with focus and concentration, they have significantly more difficulty in comprehension and memory, and they struggle with motivation (Jensen 2009). In addition, living in homes where there is little parental interaction, fewer books to read, and fewer chances for cognitive stimulation will reduce the students' confidence which in turn, will lead to future academic failure (Cederio et al, 2016). Chronic stressors will cause students to underperform in school and either give up or become disinterested in their school work. For all of these reasons, chronic stressors have a significant influence on academic performance.

Lastly, children raised in poverty are more apt to experience cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory

and emotion. Poverty may make it difficult for parents to purchase toys and books to promote cognitive stimulation for their children, thereby causing the children to have a lesser vocabulary and a more directed speech (Johnson et al, 2016).

Development delays are more prevalent for children raised in poverty as opposed to those raised in more affluent homes. Poor performance in tests when asked to show their knowledge, behavioral problems in the classroom, mental health issues, and emotional problems are also viewed more frequently in those children who have been raised in a lower socioeconomic home. Children raised in poverty experience changes in brain structure in area related to memory and emotion (Brito and Noble, 2009).

Living in poverty upsets brain development and will result in behavioral problems in the classroom (Dike, 2017). Stress causes our body to release a chemical called cortisol (Jensen 2009). The build up of cortisol in our body results in sending weaker neuron signal to the prefrontal cortex and the hypothalamus. Both the prefrontal cortex and the hypothalamus are crucial for learning, cognition and working memory. Recurring stress can

result in shrinking of the neurons into the frontal lobes of a child's brain. This area of the brain is responsible for the child's ability to make judgements, plan and control impulse.

Children raised in poverty experience many emotional and social challenges, chronic stressors and cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion, which results in poor academic performance and more behavioral issues in classroom. The government and educators must incorporate proven strategies in order to help close the gap in academic performance between those raised in poverty and those raised in more affluent homes.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- To what extent does the economic status of parents affect students' performance in Secondary School?
- What are the effects of poverty on students' performance in Secondary Schools?

- Does parents' income influence the level of education ultimately attained by the child?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is as follows:

It helps in finding out the roles economic status of parents play in the academic performance of students for a better academic achievement.

It helps in finding out the effect of poverty in the academic performance of students for a better academic achievement.

It also helps in finding out if parents income is a determinant of students level of education.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is aimed at finding out ways of improving the academic performance of secondary school students.

The information from this study will help the federal and state government to see the need for them to provide the necessary school amenities for all students in the secondary school.

It will also help the parents with low economic status to see the importance in providing all educational needs for their children, so as to perform better academically.

It will focus on the need for government to incorporate parents in planning for students.

This study will enable the government to know how much of a serious problem poverty is, so as for them to put in the necessary alleviating measures.

Finally, the result of this work will be of great help to future researchers as this work will be a source of reference, research material or empirical data for them.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This investigation was carried out in some selected secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area in Edo State where some families and the socioeconomic conditions of the home and the students were examined.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

**Influence:** This refers to the capacity of having an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself.

**Poverty:** Not having enough money to meet basic needs including food, clothing and shelter. Poverty includes the primary aspects of poor assets, sociopolitical organization and knowledge and skills, and secondary aspects of poor social networks, financial resources and information.

**Academic:** Relating to education and scholarship.

**Performance:** The act of performing, execution, accomplishment.

**Academic Performance:** This is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has attained their short or long-term educational goals. It is the measurement of student achievement across various academic subjects.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Literature Review**

This chapter focuses on review of related literature. The review will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

Concepts and definition of Poverty

Theories and models of Poverty

Causes of Poverty

Academic Performance

Influence of Poverty on Academic Performance

Summary of literature reviewed

### **The Concept and Definition of Poverty**

Poverty is commonly defined as a situation of low income or low consumption. It can also be viewed as a situation in which individuals are unable to meet the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, education, security and health (Mustapha, 2011, p.189). In this lens, while low income is a cause, low consumption and poor performance become the effects thereof. Poverty is "...a situation in which an individual is unable because of economic, social, political and psychological incapacitation, to provide himself and his family the barest basic necessities of life (Mustapha, 2011, p.189)." Interestingly, Ajaikaye and Adeyeye (2000) conceptualized poverty as "a function of education, health, child morality and other demographic variables." What else do we say about poverty? "A culture of poverty is not just a matter of deprivation or disorganization – a term

signifying the absence of something. It is a culture in traditional anthropological sense in that it provides human beings with a design for living, or ready-made set of solutions for human problems, and so serves significant adaptive functions (Jeremy, 2014).” Operationally, poverty is a state of acute deprivation of essential needs, which could be in form of money, water, shelter, food, security, land, education, and other basic essentialities to good and considerable standard of living. Also, it is a condition of lack of money useful for the provision of study materials needed for the training of a child or ward in school. Based on this, it is the students that suffer the poverty of the parents, because this condition in one way or the other affects the performance of students.

### **Theories and Models of Poverty**

Several theories and models of poverty have been identified and have been grouped in the following categories.

#### **Individual Deficiencies Theories**

These theories focus on the individuals responsible for their poverty situation. In general, individual deficiencies theories argue that poverty can be avoided by working harder and making better choices. They also contend that poor lack incentives for improving their own condition because of an over-reliance on welfare systems. These theories have received a lot of attention and have been cited in writings on how to improve one's well-being through well planned goals. Critics of these theories argue that they are a lame excuse for social inequality (Fischer *et al.*, 1996).

### **The Culture of Poverty Theories**

These theories state that, it is the characteristics of poor themselves, their values and culture that cause poverty. Poverty is created by the transmission over generations of a set of maladaptive beliefs, values and skills that are socially generated but individually held (Bradshaw, 2006). These theories hold the poor responsible for their fate. However, they are questioned over their explanation of blaming the poor for their poverty as if to imply that if the poor would change their values, then poverty would cease.

## **Economic and Political Distortions**

These theories attribute poverty to the economic, political and social system which causes people to have limited opportunities and resources with which to achieve income and well-being (Bradshaw, 2006). They argue that the economic system is structured in such a way that poor people fall behind regardless of how competent they may be. These theories also explain poverty in terms of the inability of the poor to influence and take advantage of the political system. Research has shown that the poor are less involved in political discussions, and their interests are more vulnerable in the political process and they are excluded at many levels.

## **Causes of Poverty**

There are few explicitly named “theories”, and little explicit theoretical debate. If a theory of the causes of poverty is articulated, it is usually only compared against the null hypothesis of no effect. Studies rarely compare two or more theories against each other. Even more than other fields, poverty researchers often focus on descriptive or normative claims without explaining poverty’s causes (Desmond & Western 2018). It

remains unclear if poverty is simply a subset of status attainment or if it can be explained by broader theories of the income distribution. Also inhibiting theoretical progress, poverty research is deeply fragmented. There is far too little interdisciplinary and international conversation even though poverty research exists in several disciplines and most countries (Brady & Burton 2016). Poverty researchers often study only one case with little effort to generalize beyond the case.

Explanations of the causes of poverty can be classified into three broad families of theories:

- behavioral
- structural and
- political

### **Behavioral Theory**

Behavioral theories concentrate on individual behaviors as driven by incentives and culture. Behavioral theories are represented in Panel A of Figure 1. In these theories, behavior is the key mechanism directly causing

poverty (AEI-Brookings 2015; Sawhill 2003). According to this explanation, the poor are poor because they engage in counter-productive, poverty-increasing behavior or “risks” like single motherhood or unemployment (Bertrand et al. 2004; Durlauf 2011). Poverty is high in a context because there is a high prevalence of those with demographic characteristics indicating such behaviors (Cruz & Ahmed 2018; Kaida 2015; Ku et al. 2018; Milazzo & van de Walle, 2017). According to behavioralists, for example, racial disparities in poverty result from a disproportionate amount of problematic behavior among racial minorities. To reduce poverty, we need to reduce the prevalence of people engaging in such behaviors (AEI-Brookings 2015; Jencks, 1992; McLanahan, 2009). Major versions of behavioral theories tend to present incentives and culture as the principal sources of behavior (Bertrand et al. 2004; Durlauf 2011). By incentives, scholars emphasize rational responses of goal-oriented individuals that result in problematic behavior. By culture, the focus has been on schemas and repertoires that guide the poor’s behavior. The literature on behavioral causes of poverty also often allows for interactions between incentives and

culture (see Dohan 2003; Harding 2010). For a long time, poverty scholars have investigated how incentives shape the poor's behavior (Katz 2013; Levine 2013; Lichter et al. 2003; O'Connor 2001, 2016).

### **Structural Theories**

In structural theories of poverty, “structure” refers to macro- and meso-level demographic and economic contexts representing available opportunities and constraints (Rank 2005, 2011; Tomaskovic-Devey 1991; Wilson 1987, 1996). Structural contexts cause problematic behavior, which causes poverty. Second, these structures directly cause poverty, even net of behavior. Third, structural contexts interact with behavior to moderate the behavior-poverty relationship. Hence, structuralists differ from behavioralists because economic and demographic contexts do not solely operate through behavior. Also, structuralists tend to highlight the contextual effects of demographic/economic structures while behavioralists tend to focus on demographic/economic composition. According to structuralists, for example, racial disparities in poverty are caused by differential exposure to deleterious structural contexts. Economic context typically includes

economic growth and development, industrialization and deindustrialization, and spatial and skills mismatches. Demographic context usually includes neighborhood disadvantage, age/sex composition, residential segregation, urbanization and demographic transitions. Structural theories have a long history, and may be the most subscribed to theory in sociology (O'Connor 2001, 2016). These theories partly originate from scholars like Clark (1965), who were trying to explain deep-seated racial inequalities in the U.S. (Sugrue 1996).

### **Political Theories**

Political theories contend that poverty is a political outcome driven by power relations over and collective choices about how to distribute resources (for a review of political theories, Brady et al. 2016). These theories contend that power and institutions cause policy, which causes poverty and moderates the behavior-poverty link. Power and institutions reinforce each other, and institutions also directly shape poverty and moderate the behavior-poverty link. Poverty is lower in rich democracies where Left parties have controlled government, unionization is higher, and women are a

greater share of parliaments (Brady 2009; Moller et al.2003). In Latin America, Leftist governments in periods of stable democracy resulted in generous social policies and lower poverty (Huber & Stephens 2012). In multilevel models of individuals within the U.S., working poverty is significantly lower in states with higher unionization (Brady et al. 2013).

### **Academic Performance**

Academic performance defies single line definition. We thus view it from different angles. Anthony (2018) operationalized academic performance as “the results obtained by a student at end of a specific term in all subject.” Scott (2012) defined academic performance as how well a student is accomplishing his task in school. Be that as it may; *ceteris paribus*, academic performance is basically the extent to which students have achieved the set educational objectives over a specific period of time – per term or session. In educational institutions success is measured by academic performance or how well a student meets standards set out by the institution (Bell, 2011). Ayodele, 2015 posited that, “Academic performance is commonly measured by examination and continuous

assessments, usually given at specific periods in an academic session.” Also, we bear in mind that: In relation to educational research, academic performance of a student can be regarded as the observable and measurable behaviour of a student in a particular situation. We can equate academic performance with the observed behaviour or expectation of achieving a specific statement of or statement of educational intention in a research.

Academic performance of students consists of scores obtained from teacher-made test, first term examination, mid-semester test and so on (Yusuf, 2002). Additionally, “quite a number of factors determine the level and quality of students’ academic performance. They include grades, attendants, extracurricular activities and behavior (Scott, 2012).” The factors influencing student performance are classified into two: “(1) Academic factors and (2) Non-academic factors. Academic factors include teaching methods, self-learning efforts, and student previous results, whilst nonacademic factors are those like health factors, personal factors, financial factors, and even the environment and its composition like people and culture (Laurel, Wrong, Chan and Safiyyah, 2008).” Poverty when

microscopically examined is among the non-academic factors capable of influencing student academic performance.

### **Home Facilities and Academic Performance**

Kristina Birdsong (2016) highlighted 10 surprising facts of poverty and its influence on school going children. In highlighting, there is a fact involved which is the condition at birth. In view of the Cognitive capacity which is not just a matter of genetics, but can be strongly influenced by external influences like prenatal drug use, environmental toxins, poor nutrition, and exposure to stress and violence. All of these are more prevalent in low income households, and affect cognitive development from the prenatal stage through adulthood. In addition, the verbal exposure renders some influence in the child's vocal power.

A famous 1995 study by Hart and Risley confirmed that by the age of four, children from deprived households hear 32 million fewer spoken words than their better-off peers. Investigation has revealed that excellence of conversation varies as well. Parents with higher education and income are more possible to involve children with questions and dialogue that offer

creative responses, while parents in poverty often lack the time and energy for anything more than simple and goal oriented directions. Furthermore, the environmental sensation determines the thought and analysis of issues. Children brought up in deficiency often experience life as a sequence of unstable situations over which neither they nor their caregivers have any mechanism. As such, they fail to improve an idea of themselves as free personalities talented of creating choices and acting on them to shape their lives, as an alternative reacting to emergencies that are only magnified by their underprivileged ability to plan ahead or imitate. This doesn't just upset academic performance, but also has a key health effects in all areas of one's life.

### **School Facilities and Academic Performance**

Jacoby (2004) stated that School facilities play a vital role in the actualization of educational goals and objectives by satisfying the physical and emotional needs of the students of the school. Henceforth, school plant can be regarded to as everything within the school premises which include

the site, buildings, equipment and all essential structures. In other words school plant is the sum total of building, equipment, textbooks including the surrounding where teaching and learning takes place. By human resources, we mean the personnel employed in the school to ensure the learning. They include the principals, the headmistress, the teachers and the administration staff. The human resources can also be seen as the greatest and most useful facilities a school can ever have, the reason being that no matter how a school is physically facilitated, if there are no human resources in it, there can be no learning invariably, there will be no school. While physical resources can be seen as those materials which can give help or comfort to school, organization, country or an individual. For example, the buildings, the libraries, chairs, books, chalkboards, sports field environment.

The subject of school facilities had received great attention from the public as well as educators in recent times. According to building educational success together (BEST 2005), it was reported that the responsibility of every administrator is to ensure that every child had access to quality education with the presence of school plant that, and that every

administrator provides an educational setting that was suited for teaching, learning and effective management of facilities in schools. A study carried out by Hale (2002) revealed that students in classrooms with large windows, natural lightening and well -designed skylight were found to perform well from 19% to 25% better than their peers in classrooms without proper facilities.

The school facilities are the physical expression of the school curriculum. That is, the school curriculum determines to a large extent the nature of school facility to be erected and the purpose it will serve. School facilities are expected to be adequately and carefully planned, developed and maintained in order to ensure their relevance to the school curriculum and towards effective teaching and learning in educational institutions. Well designed and functional school buildings with a wide array of teaching aids therefore provides effective delivery of the school curriculum and are positively related to students' academic performance. In Edo state and Nigeria, dilapidated blocks of classrooms, inadequate books and furniture in government owned schools and private schools are the order of the day. This

has become a source of worry to parents and teachers in Edo state and Nigeria as a whole. Students in Secondary schools have to scramble for few school facilities, a development that has often affected the quality of teaching and learning. It was gathered that due to the limited or no school facilities, students perform below expectation in all major examinations, including standardized examination like NECO and WAEC.

To achieve excellent academic performance in Secondary schools, there will be rehabilitation of schools, construction of examination halls, libraries, supply of science laboratories, furniture across all Secondary schools in Edo state and Nigeria.

### **The Environmental Conditions and Academic Performance**

The environment is critical to the development of individuals in the society. In the school system, for instance, environment determines whether a child will be happy and ready to learn or become a deviant. The physical,

social and psychological or emotional environments must be such that every aspect of human behaviour is warmly accommodated. Education is an important industry for social, political and economic development and it is affected by the environment within which it is conducted (Adediran, Ojomo & Adeyanju, 2015). The physical environment can determine the comfort of students and thereby their learning ability (Falsario, Muyong and Neuvaespana, 2014). When students are uncomfortable, they are easily distracted and are not likely to learn faster than their peers whose environments are quite comfortable.

Wagner (2017) posits that students' behaviour towards academic performance can be influenced through provision of an environment that balances and controls stimulants to the five human sensory organs: sight (what learners see), hearing (do they hear their teacher or noise from outside?), touch (is the temperature too hot or too cold?), smell (does the scent from deodorant or cleaning liquid support or disrupt learning?), and taste (there should be provision for food and drinks because hunger can disrupt learning). Wagner further alludes to substantial evidence that

educational objectives like reading comprehension, multiplication and reading speed can be influenced by the study environment. According to Olufemi, Adediran and Oyediran (2018), environmental conditions affect students' academic performance by several factors which include students' learning skills, school environment, parental background, peer influence, teachers' quality, learning resources and infrastructure, among others.

The school environment, for instance, supports the acquisition of academic knowledge. School environment refers to the quality and characteristics of school life, both social and physical aspects of the school, which can positively promote behaviour, school achievement, and the social and emotional development of students. Proximity, accessibility and the serene nature of the environment of a school can encourage learning. Kenzo (2014) asserts that some researchers have studied the mechanisms by which school accessibility could affect test scores and found a positive correlation. UNESCO (2001) posits that the Nigerian child is a product of several environments, all of which contribute to his development and learning process. A child comes from a home, attends a school, lives in a community

and belongs to a larger society (such as a town, state, or a country).

### **Influence of Poverty on Academic Performance**

Poverty negatively affects academic achievement in a number of ways. Poverty retards proper human development in physical, mental language and social domains. One's educational achievement is also grossly affected by poverty in sense that poor parents fail to provide adequate financial and material resources that are a pre-requisite to admission at school. Gibson (1981) says that, "...the poor tend to suffer from severe health problems directly linked to mental and physical impairments and other birth defects." This means that the shortage of adequate nutritional food leads to malnutrition which impedes proper mental and physical development. Davidoff (1987) points out that poverty is associated with a number of educational disadvantages that entail poor attitudes to school, low academic skills, little interest in formal lessons and pessimism on the part of parents. In this way, lack of motivation on the part of students and parents leads to academic incompetence by poor students and active parental support. The absence of these two aspects yields low levels of academic achievements.

What emerges from this review is that poverty is an overall forum of deprivation cutting across the physical, mental economic and social needs. There are many challenges faced by children raised in poverty. Some challenges are long-term obstacles such as chronic stressors and changes in brain structure that effect emotion and memory. Other challenges are more situational causing emotional and social struggles. The mental health issues include high levels of depression among parents and children living in poverty (Jensen, 2009). Students who have experienced emotional and social challenges may demonstrate acting-out behaviours during their school day (Jensen, 2009). They may also be impatient and have poor impulse control. Their behavioural responses may be limited due to having a caregiver who was not sensitive to their needs as an infant. Jensen (2009) pointed to several reasons for this phenomenon. Many of these students have come from homes where they may have had a teen mother. Parents or guardians are often overworked due to working more than one job to make ends meet. This situation, in turn, causes parents or guardians to inflict harsher discipline and be less sensitive to the feelings and needs of their children.

Parents or guardians who have experienced difficulties with school in their pasts are less likely to attend parent-teacher interviews or to be involved in any extra-curricular school activities. Poor emotional health, caused by the lack of parental support, may cause an increase in disruptive behaviour in the classroom. In addition, children raised in poverty may not have been taught to be polite and may not be socially gracious (Jensen, 2009). They may lack the ability to empathize with others. This lack of empathy, in turn, makes it difficult for these students to work well in cooperative groups with their classmates. This inability to work well with classmates often results in students becoming unwanted participants in groups, adding to their feelings of inadequacy and resulting in the students giving up on a task just before they successfully complete it. Poor social skills, which result in a lack of acceptance from peers, may cause decreases in academic performance. Children living in poverty see many chronic stressors, including unsafe neighbourhoods where there are high levels of crime, parents who are making minimum wage which causes a financial strain on the family, parents who are separated or divorced, siblings living in different households,

and households that are overcrowded (Johnson, Riis & Noble, 2009). All of these stressors create a void in the lives of children raised in poverty, and result in academic and behavioural issues in school. These students have a higher level of absenteeism, they struggle with focus and concentration, they have significantly more difficulty in comprehension and memory, and they struggle with motivation (Jensen, 2009). In addition, living in homes where there is little parental interaction, fewer books to read, and fewer chances for cognitive stimulation will decrease the children's confidence which, in turn, will lead to future academic failure (Cedeno, Martinez-Aries & Bueno, 2016). Chronic stressors will cause students to underperform in school and either give up or become disinterested in their school work (Jensen, 2009). For all of these reasons, chronic stressors have a significant effect on academic achievement. Lastly, children raised in poverty are more apt to experience cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion. Poverty may make it difficult for parents to purchase toys and books to promote cognitive stimulation for their children, thereby causing the children to have a lesser vocabulary and a more

directed speech (Johnson et al., 2016). Developmental delays are more prevalent for children raised in poverty as opposed to those raised in more affluent homes.

Poor performance on tests when asked to show their knowledge, behavioural problems in the classroom, mental health issues, and emotional problems are also viewed more frequently in those children who have been raised in a lower socioeconomic home. Children raised in poverty experience changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion (Brito & Noble, 2009). Living in poverty upsets brain development and will result in behavioural problems in the classroom (Dike, 2017). Stress causes our bodies to release a chemical called cortisol (Jensen, 2009). The amygdala is also affected by the effects of stressors in the body (Jensen, 2009). The amygdala is the area of the brain that is responsible for controlling emotions. All of these alterations to the neurons in the brain cause an imbalance in the healthy status of the brain. This imbalance, in turn, may shape the patterns of communication and language. Children raised in poverty who have significant changes in brain structure are faced with many

academic and behavioural challenges. Children raised in poverty experience many emotional and social challenges, chronic stressors, and cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas related to memory and emotion, which result in lower academic achievement and more behavioural issues in the classroom.

### **Summary of the Reviewed Literature**

In order to conquer academic challenges faced by secondary school students in poverty, teachers need to develop strong relationships with their students, embody respect in their interactions with students, embed social skills in lessons, promote inclusive classrooms, recognize the signs of poverty, empower students, alter classroom environments, build core skills, provide accurate assessments, and recruit caring and empathetic staff. Building caring and supportive relationships with students is the first and best strategy to increase student effort and motivation (Budge & Parrett, 2018). Many students raised in poverty come to school without the necessary social-emotional responses needed to be successful at developing relationships with their peers and teachers (Jensen, 2013). Students raised in

poverty need to develop relationships with teachers who give them a reliable and positive role model that they can count on and trust. Inappropriate emotional responses in the classroom can be diminished and engagement increased by taking the time to nurture a strong student-teacher relationship. This relationship between the student and his/her teacher is the precursor to any learning happening in classrooms (Budge & Parrett, 2018). If the student does not perceive that this relationship exists, there will be no learning. There is a saying that students will not care what the teachers know until they know that the teachers care. Students who know that their teachers care about them will be more likely to follow what their teachers are modelling, and will feel more confident taking risks and trying out new behaviours in the classroom. This relationship can be nurtured by offering the student the opportunity to learn how to be respectful and develop appropriate social skills. Providing an environment where the students feel included and valued as members of their classroom community will also help to improve their overall mental health. These efforts can assist in closing the achievement gap for students facing emotional and social challenges (Jensen, 2009).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the methods that was used in conducting this research work. The description of the procedure is done under the following subheadings :

Research Design

Population of the Study

Sample size and Sampling Procedure

Research Instrument

Validity of the Instrument

Reliability of the Instrument

Method of Data Collection

Method of Data Analysis

### **Research Design**

In this study, the researcher made use of the survey design. Survey method is useful scientific tool to employ when one is interested in the opinion and attitude of people as well as the relationship of these attitudes to respondents overt behavior. It makes use of the questionnaire as its main

instrument.

### **Population of the Study**

The study populations were consisted of senior secondary schools students in some selected Secondary Schools in Ovia Northeast Local Government Area of Edo State. The estimated population of the senior students was two thousand nine hundred (2900).

### **Sample size and Sampling Procedure**

The researcher used the simple sampling technique to select one hundred (100) respondents for this study in Ovia Northeast Local Government Area of Edo State, four Public Secondary Schools were selected out of all.

### **Research Instrument**

Structured questionnaire was specifically designed for the study and used to source for data. Selection 'A' of the questionnaire was used to collect data on respondents' background such as age, class and sex while section 'B' was used to collect data on respondents opinion on the Influence

of Poverty on the academic performance of Secondary School Students in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

The instrument was submitted to the supervisor for validation. The comments suggestions and corrections from the supervisor improved the construction and final draft of the instrument.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was tested using the test-retest method. The result was calculated with the application of Pearson correlation co-efficient formula. The instrument realized a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.78 which is deemed reliable.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher after explaining the purpose of the study to the principals of the various schools selected and asked for permission to administer the questionnaire to the student in their various classes. The

questionnaires were retrieved as soon as they were completed. This ensured hundred percent rate of retrieval.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics. This include the use of Simple percentages and tables.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This chapter deals with the presentation and the analysis of data collected by the researcher through the use of questionnaire. This will enable the researcher determine the influence of poverty on the academic performance of secondary school students. The data collected were analyzed and tabulated using simple percentage. The findings were discussed between each table.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does the economic status of parents affect students' academic performance?

**Table 1: Effect of Parents Economic Status on Students' Academic Performance**

S/N	Items	Frequency		Total	Percentage	
		Yes	NO		YES	NO
1.	Most parents cannot afford to pay their children school fees and it affect the students' performance.	50	0	50	100	0
2.	Economic status of parents contribute to students low performance	39	11	50	78	22
3.	Students run away from the class because their parents could not afford to buy their writing materials	43	7	50	86	14
4.	Some students hawk for their parents before coming to school in order to raise money for payment of schools	45	5	50	90	10
5.	Family from low income background prefer a mush room schools for their children	46	4	50	92	8

Source: field work 2022

From table one, on question 1 all the respondents agreed to the question representing 100% of the total respondent, this shows being unable to pay school fees affects students academic performance. On question 2, thirty-nine respondents representing 78% of the total respondent agreed while eleven respondents representing 22% of the total respondent, this would

indicate that economic status of parents contribute to students low performance. On question 3, forty-three respondents representing 86% of the total respondent agreed to the question while seven respondents representing 14% disagreed, this indicate that students miss classes due to unavailability of writing materials. On question 4, forty-five respondents representing 90% of the total respondent agreed with the question while five respondents representing 10% of the total respondent disagreed, this would indicate that some students hawk for their parents before coming to school in order to raise money for payment of school fees. On question 5, forty-six respondents representing 92% of the total respondent agreed while four respondents representing 8% of the total respondent disagreed which would mean that Family from low income background prefer a mush room schools for their children.

**Research Question 2:** What are the effects of poverty on students' academic performance?

**Table 2: The Effects of Poverty on Students' Academic Performance**

S/N	Items	Frequency		Total	Percentage	
		Yes	NO		YES	NO
6.	Some students experience chronic stressors like being emotionally in balance in the class and thus affect their performance	37	13	50	74	26
7.	Students from poor background feels inferior in the class with the students from affluent homes and this affect their academic performance	40	10	50	80	20
8.	When in the class, some of the students who hawk around before coming to school sleep in the class	44	6	50	88	12
9.	Some students become a truant due to inadequate supply of their school needs	46	4	50	88	12
10.	Students tend to become irrational to their studies due to inability to meet with the financial demands	47	3	50	94	6

Source: field work 2022

The table above contain the questions that were raised from research question two, from the table question 6; thirty-seven respondents representing 74%, of the total respondent agreed while thirteen respondents representing 26%, of the total respondent disagreed, from this is can be seen that excessive stress leads to emotional imbalance and this affects students

academic performance. On question 7, forty respondents representing 80% of the respondent agreed while ten respondents representing 20% disagreed, indicating that students from poor background feels inferior in the class with the students from affluent homes and this affect their academic performance. On question 8, forty-four respondents representing 88% of the total respondent agreed while six respondents representing 12% of the total respondent disagreed, this shows that hawking before coming to school affects students learning ability in the classroom. On question 9, forty-six respondents representing 92% of the total respondent agreed while four respondents representing 8% of the total respondent disagreed with the question, this indicates that some students become a truant due to inadequate supply of their school needs. On question 10, forty-seven respondents agreed representing 94% of the total respondent while three respondents disagreed representing 6% of the total respondent, this shows that students tend to become irrational to their studies due to inability to meet with the financial demands.

**Research Question 3:** Does parents' income influence the level of education ultimately attained by the child?

**Table 3: Parents Income as a Determinant of Students Level of Education**

S/N	Items	Frequency		Total	Percentage	
		Yes	NO		YES	NO
11.	Some students do not have JSS3 certificate because of lack of money for registration	47	3	50	94	6
12.	Due to parents' poverty some students could not register for senior school certificate exams	47	3	50	94	6
13.	Most SS3 students may not obtain UTME forms because their parents cannot afford it.	46	4	50	92	8
14.	Many students drop out of school due to inability to pay school fees	48	2	50	96	4

**Source: field work 2022**

The table above contains the questions that were raised from the research question three. From the table question 11, forty-seven out of the respondent

agreed with the question making a total of 94%, of the total respondent while three respondents representing 6% of the total respondent disagreed, this indicate that lack of money for examination registration hinders students academic progress. On question 12, forty-seven respondents representing 94% of the total respondents agreed while three respondents representing 6% of the total respondents disagreed, from this it could be said that due to parents' poverty some students could not register for senior school certificate exams. On question 13, forty-six respondents representing 92% of the total respondents agreed with the question while four respondents representing 8% of the total respondents disagreed, from this it is clear that most SS3 students may not obtain UTME forms because their parents cannot afford it. On question 14, forty-eight respondents representing 96% of the total respondent agreed with the question while two respondents representing 4% of the total respondent disagreed, this indicate that many students drop out of school due to inability to pay school fees.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The results of this study revealed in the first instance that all the items on table 1 reflects the opinion of the respondents that the economic status of parents affects students' academic performance. This finding is in line with Brito & Noble (2009) who opines that students who are raised in low socio-economic status tend to become truant as a result of inability of their parent to pay school fees. Most often some of the affected students who come from a low socioeconomic status tend to go hawking for their parents before coming to school, which has negative effect on such students due to emotional stress associated with the street hawking. The findings show that there are several effects of poverty on students' performance. Such effects can be a long term such as chronic stressors and changes in brain structure that affect emotion and memory, other effects are situational causing emotional and social struggles. This is line with Jensen (2009) who opines that students who experienced emotional and social challenges may misbehave in the class, the students may be impatience and have poor control, their behavioral responses may be limited due to having a parent that is not sensitive to their needs. Likewise, they lack the ability to

empathize with others, thus making it difficult for these students to work well in co-operative groups with their classmates. This inability to work well with classmates often results in students becoming unwanted participants in groups, adding to their feelings of inadequacy and resulting in the students giving up on tasks before they successfully complete it. According to Jensen (2009) chronic stressors will cause students to under-perform in school and either give up or become disinterested in their school work also developmental delays are more common for children raised in poverty as against their counterpart raised in affluence, poor performance on tests and examinations are mostly indices common to students raised in abject poverty and some behavioral problems in the classroom, mental health issues, and emotional problems are more frequently in those children who have been raised in a lower socio-economic home.

The study also reveals that parents' income influence the quality of schools their ward attend. The finding of the study is that most of the schools attended by the children of the poor lack laboratories, libraries, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities etc. Some of the teachers

are non-professionals, and the classrooms are usually overcrowded. It is understandable that most of the poor dwell in rural areas with their children. The findings of this study is therefore given credence by Okeke (2002) who posits thus: Poor academic performance of children in the rural areas could also be attributed to insufficient qualified teachers in these areas. Lack of basic infrastructure in schools such as study-tables, libraries, laboratories of different types, residential accommodation for workers and other essential social amenities including pipe-borne water, water-system toilet, electricity and good roads will discourage many qualified staff to settle there comfortably.

Also the UNESCO recommendation or standard of 30 students per teacher is not practiced in most of the schools and more of the students in such schools are children from low socio-economic background. Furthermore, the finding of the study is that parents' poverty influence the level of education ultimately attained by their wards. Some students from poor background could not obtain Junior Secondary School Certificate because there was no money to register for the examination. Some students

suffer the same fate in the Senior Schools Certificate Examination registration. It therefore follows that some students from poor background end up their education career in JSS 3, some at SS3, some cannot obtain form for Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) while some drop out of school at either JSS1, JSS2, SS1 or SS2. The above findings is supported by Musbau (2017:18) as he posits that “indeed poverty not only lies at the heart of the factors that hinder access to education but continues to be the main obstacle to achieving the goal of universal education in the country”.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

This study was carried out to determine the Influence of Poverty on the academic performance in Secondary School Students using Ovia Northeast Local Government Area of Edo State.

In order to achieve the purpose of the Study, four research questions were raised and they are:

- To what extent does economic status of parents affect students' performance in Secondary School?
- What are the effects of poverty on students' performance in Secondary Schools?
- Does parents' income influence the level of education ultimately attained by the child?

To be able to explore and get answers to these research questions raised, the survey research design was used. The Instrument used for the

research was questionnaire, of which fifty copies were distributed to a sample population of five randomly selected secondary schools in Ovia Northeast Local Government area of Edo state, the same number of fifty questionnaires were retrieved and used for this study. Frequency count and simple percentage were used for analyzing and interpreting the variables from the teachers.

Summarily the results gotten from this study showed that poverty influences the performance of students in secondary schools.

## **Conclusion**

Poverty is a reality today and is still a prevalent factor in our societies between those who have and those who do not have. Students raised in abject poverty are likely to experience emotional instability, social challenges and mental health issues and chronic stressors and cognitive problems. It is imperative that the level of schooling is highly related to level of economic development and as such both students raised in poverty and affluence should be given equal access to every educational programs. Poverty is the most prevalent indicator of academic performance in our

various schools today, many students are raised in poverty, it is very important that principals, teachers and all stakeholders in education should be aware of effects of poverty on students' behavior and learning capacity in the classroom. All stakeholders in education should introduce strategies to close the gap between students raised in poverty and affluent students.

Poverty affects people both psychologically and socially. It translates in the fact that more of the children from low socio-economic background perform comparatively low in academics, attend low quality schools and often dropout of school without attaining appreciable level of education.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need to give help to those children raised in low socio-economic status in the classroom in order for them to become educationally equal with their counterpart from affluent home. In this regard teachers need to develop

strong relationship with their students, shows respect in their interactions with students, display some social skills in the lessons.

2. Also teachers and all stakeholders in education should recognize that there are students raised in poverty and as such be empathetic, build caring and supportive relationships with such students in order to arouse their interest towards their studies.

3. The stakeholders in education should provide a conducive environment where students feel included, valued and accepted as members of the classroom which will help them to improve their overall mental health. This is to show that school administrators and teachers should make sure that all the students in the classroom are presented with equal opportunities in respect of their socio-economic status.

4. Government should establish social welfare scheme for the poor and needy.

5. The various tiers of government should prioritize education in their annual budget and ensure quality education is provided for all her citizens

6. Since unemployment is closely linked to poverty, government at all levels should create employment opportunities to reduce the rate of poverty.

7. A good policy should be made to reverse the trend of the growing population of out of school children.

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## APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY,  
EDO STATE

### STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondents,

I am a student of the above named institution; I am currently carrying out a research on the Topic: *Influence of Poverty on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students. A case study of Ovia North-East Local Government*

I humbly crave your indulgence to fill the questionnaire sincerely as all information gathered shall be used purely for research purpose and shall be treated with utmost confidentiality.

**CHIBUIKE UGONNA PRECIOUS**

**RESEARCHER**

#### SECTION A (Demographic data)

**Gender:** Male ( ) Female ( )

**Age:** 20 – 24 ( ) 25 – 29 ( ) 30 and above ( )

**Educational Level:** No /Formal Education ( ) Primary Education ( )

Secondary Education ( ) Tertiary Education ( )

**Occupation:** Trader ( ) Civil servants ( ) entrepreneur ( )

**Name of School** .....

### SECTION B

Instruction: Please answer all questions: indicate the answer(s) most appropriate to you by ticking (✓) in the box provided. Thank you

S/N	ITEMS	YES	NO
	<b>To what extent does economic status of parents affect students' performance in Secondary School?</b>		
1.	Most parents cannot afford to pay their children school fees and it affect the students' performance.		
2.	Economic status of some parents contribute to students low performance		
3.	Some students run away from the class because their parents could not afford to buy their writing materials		
4.	Some students hawk for their parents before coming to school in order to raise money for payment of schools		

5.	Family from low income background prefer a mush room schools for their children		
	<b>What are the effects of poverty on students' performance in Secondary Schools?</b>		
6	Some students experience chronic stressors like being emotionally in balance in the class and thus affect their performance		
7.	Students from poor background feels inferior in the class with the students from affluent homes and this affect their academic performance		
8.	When in the class, some of the students who hawk around before coming to school sleep in the class		
9.	Some students become a truant due to inadequate supply of their school needs		
10.	Students tend to become irrational to their studies due to inability to meet with the financial demands		
	<b>Does parents' income influence the level of education ultimately attained by the child?</b>		

<b>11.</b>	Some students do not have JSS3 certificate because of lack of money for registration		
<b>12.</b>	Due to parents' poverty some students could not register for senior school certificate exams		
<b>13.</b>	Most SS3 students may not obtain UTME forms because their parents cannot afford it.		
<b>14.</b>	Many students drop out of school due to inability to pay school fees		