

**THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EKIOSA COMMUNITY,
OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE.**

BY

UMEAKU Sandra Udoka

SSC2013844

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY**

FEBRUARY, 2026

**THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EKIOSA COMMUNITY,
OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE.**

BY

UMEAKU Sandra Udoka

SSC2013844

**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN, BENIN CITY,**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.) DEGREE IN SOCIAL
WORK.**

FEBRUARY, 2026

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work was carried out by **UMEAKU Sandra Udoka**, with Matriculation Number: **SSC2013844**, in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Bachelor Degree (B.Sc) Honours in Social Work.

Oboite, N. V. (Mrs)
(Project Supervisor)

Date

Dr. Helen Eweka
(Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project work to God Almighty, who gave me the strength and wisdom to carry out this project work successfully, and also to my lovely parents, Mr. John Umeaku and Mrs. Victoria Umeaku; for their parental care and guidance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my profound gratitude to Almighty God for His grace upon me to complete this academic programme.

Special thanks to my project supervisor, Oboite, N. V. (Mrs), for supervising me in carrying out this project and seeing it through to completion. My profound gratitude to the Head of Department, Dr. Helen Eweka, as well as to all the academic and non-academic staffs of the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City; thank you all for your positive impacts over the years.

I want to appreciate my dad, Mr. John Umeaku, and most especially my mom, Mrs. Victoria Umeaku; for her moral and spiritual support during the course of my study; and to the rest of my family, most especially my lovely sisters. May God bless and reward you all.

Lastly, special thanks go to all my friends and everyone who have in one way or another contributed to my life; I am grateful for your advice and contributions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	i
Certification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ii
Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
Acknowledgement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Table of Contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
List of Tables	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vii
Abstract	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	viii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background to the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.3	Research Questions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1.4	Research Aim and Objectives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1.5	Scope of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
1.6	Significance of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
1.7	Limitations of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1.8	Definition of Key Terms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Concept of Poverty	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
2.2	Concept of Academic Achievement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
2.3	Concept of Primary Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
2.4	Indicators of Poverty among Households	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
2.5	Forms and Dimensions of Poverty	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
2.6	Effects of Poverty on Academic Achievement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
2.7	Poverty Reduction Strategies/Policies in Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1	Research Design	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
3.2	Study Area	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
3.3	Population of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
3.4	Sample Size	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
3.5	Sampling Techniques	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
3.6	Instruments of Data Collection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
3.7	Method of Data Collection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
3.8	Method of Data Analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
3.9	Validity and Reliability of Instruments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38
3.10	Ethical Considerations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1	Data Presentation and Analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41
4.2	Discussion of Findings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Summary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	51
5.2	Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52
5.3	Recommendations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
5.4	Suggestions for Further Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	58

REFERENCES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

APPENDICES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	63
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41
Table 4.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
Table 4.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
Table 4.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
Table 4.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
Table 4.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of poverty on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community, Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. Specifically, it investigated the relationship between family income, availability of learning materials, nutritional status, parental education, and pupils' academic performance, as well as potential interventions that social workers and schools could implement to mitigate the effects of poverty. The study adopted a case study design involving five primary schools, with a sample of 286 respondents comprising pupils, teachers, parents, and school administrators. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, observation, and academic records. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that low family income, inadequate learning materials, poor nutrition, and limited parental education significantly hindered pupils' academic achievement. The study further identified key interventions, including school feeding programs, provision of learning materials, guidance and counselling, and community social work support, as effective strategies to enhance educational outcomes. The study concluded that poverty is a major barrier to academic success, and social workers and schools play a crucial role in mitigating its adverse effects. Recommendations were made for targeted school and community interventions to improve learning opportunities for disadvantaged pupils.

Keywords: *Academic achievement, Ekiosa community, feeding/nutritional status, parental education, poverty, primary school.*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education is globally recognized as a fundamental tool for social mobility, human capital development, and sustainable national progress. For children, especially those in their formative years, academic achievement at the primary school level forms the bedrock of their future educational success and cognitive development. However, the extent to which children benefit from school learning is significantly shaped by their socio-economic background. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, poverty remains one of the most persistent socio-economic challenges constraining children's access to quality education and their ability to perform optimally in school (UNESCO, 2023).

Poverty is characterized not only by insufficient income but also by deprivation in areas such as nutrition, housing, healthcare, and access to learning resources (World Bank, 2022). Primary school pupils from low-income households face multiple barriers that negatively influence their academic achievement. Research shows that children living in poverty are more likely to experience food insecurity, inadequate school supplies, irregular school attendance, and limited parental support for learning—all of which directly impact academic outcomes (Adelabu, 2021). In Nigeria, the link between poverty and poor educational performance is further compounded by systemic challenges such as underfunded schools,

overcrowded classrooms, and limited availability of instructional materials (Oredein & Oloyede, 2021).

Family income and socio-economic status strongly predict children's academic performance. Studies have demonstrated that pupils from economically disadvantaged households consistently score lower in literacy and numeracy compared to peers from middle- and high-income families (Eze, 2020). This disparity is attributed to the fact that children from wealthier families have greater access to textbooks, learning materials, private tutoring, stable housing, transportation, and conducive home learning environments (Fafunwa, 2020). Conversely, pupils living in poverty often encounter instability such as frequent relocation, overcrowded homes, or the need to engage in income-generating activities, which distracts them from academic focus (Uzochukwu, 2022).

Nutrition and feeding status also play a critical role in pupils' learning outcomes. Chronic hunger impairs cognitive functioning, memory retention, concentration levels, and classroom participation (World Food Programme, 2022). Studies in Nigerian primary schools have shown that children who attend classes without breakfast or suffer from malnutrition exhibit slower cognitive development and poorer academic performance compared to well-nourished classmates (Ogunmola & Adediran, 2023). School meal programmes have been found to significantly improve attendance, classroom attention, and test scores among economically disadvantaged learners (Ibrahim, 2022).

Parental education and home literacy environment are equally essential determinants of academic success. Parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to be involved in homework supervision, provide reading materials, and encourage academic progress (Adeniyi, 2021). However, in many low-income households in Nigeria, parents are either not formally educated or lack time for academic engagement due to economic pressures. This lack of educational support at home places poor children at a disadvantage compared to peers whose parents are more involved in their learning (Ugwu & Uzodinma, 2020).

The situation in rural and low-income urban communities of Edo State reflects these national trends. Many households in communities such as Ekiosa struggle with poverty, unstable livelihoods, high dependency ratios, and limited access to basic services. These socioeconomic challenges play out daily in the form of inadequate learning materials, frequent absenteeism due to financial constraints, hunger, and low parental involvement. Teachers within the school system also express concerns that pupils from low-income homes are more likely to repeat classes, perform poorly in examinations, and exhibit low motivation for learning.

Given the importance of primary education to national development and child empowerment, understanding how poverty affects academic achievement is crucial for designing effective interventions. A localized study focusing on primary schools in Ekiosa Community is not only necessary but urgent, as findings can inform educational policy, school-based social

work interventions, child welfare programmes, and poverty-alleviation initiatives that support vulnerable learners. This research is therefore essential in identifying the various dimensions through which poverty affects learning outcomes and in proposing evidence-based strategies for improving academic performance among pupils from low-income households in Ekiosa Community.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Education is a fundamental right of every child and a critical pathway for breaking the cycle of poverty. Yet, in many parts of Nigeria, including Edo State, a large proportion of primary school pupils continue to experience severe academic underachievement linked to adverse socio-economic conditions. Despite significant government efforts toward universal basic education, a substantial learning gap remains between children from high-income and low-income households. This achievement gap is visible in core subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Basic Science, where pupils from poor backgrounds consistently score lower than their counterparts from relatively advantaged homes (Eze, 2020). The persistence of this learning divide raises serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of education policies aimed at promoting equal opportunity for all children.

In Nigeria, field observations and anecdotal reports from teachers point to growing disparities in academic outcomes among pupils. Many pupils from low-income households attend school without breakfast, lack writing materials and textbooks, and often arrive late or miss school

entirely due to financial constraints. These disadvantages translate into low concentration in class, incomplete homework, poor classroom participation, and declining test scores. Teachers also report that pupils from economically disadvantaged homes are more likely to repeat classes, exhibit low motivation, lack self-esteem, and require additional instructional support that schools are often unable to provide due to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient teaching resources.

Parental involvement—an important determinant of school success—also appears to be limited among many households within the community. Many parents, particularly those struggling with poverty, lack the education, time, or financial capacity to support their children academically. Consequently, pupils from poor homes receive little or no assistance with homework, literacy development, or study routines, widening the learning gap between them and peers whose parents invest more time and resources in their education. Research has shown that children whose parents are unable to provide structured learning support tend to perform poorly academically and have reduced prospects of educational progression (Adeniyi, 2021).

Another dimension of the problem lies in the nutritional and health conditions of children living in poverty. Chronic hunger and malnutrition—conditions documented among primary school children in low-income communities across Nigeria—impair memory, reduce concentration span, and hinder cognitive development, resulting in poor scholastic

achievement (Ogunmola & Adediran, 2023). In primary schools located in Ekiosa Community, a growing number of children reportedly exhibit signs of nutritional deprivation, and teachers frequently observe fatigue, sleeping in class, and difficulty recalling previous lessons.

Despite the visibility of these challenges, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing specifically on how poverty influences academic achievement among primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community. Without scientific evidence, interventions from stakeholders—such as school authorities, social workers, policymakers, and community-based organizations—remain weak, fragmented, or based on assumptions rather than evidence. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a systematic investigation into the extent to which poverty affects the educational performance of pupils in primary schools located in Ekiosa Community, the pathways through which poverty exerts its influence, and the areas that require targeted intervention.

This research seeks to address this critical gap by providing empirical insights into the multifaceted impact of poverty on academic achievement among primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community. By identifying the socioeconomic, nutritional, environmental, and parental factors linked to poor scholastic performance, the study aims to generate evidence that can guide effective school-based and community-centered interventions to support vulnerable learners.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between family income (socioeconomic status) and pupils' academic performance in Ekiosa Community?
2. How does the availability of learning materials at home affect pupils' academic achievement in Ekiosa Community?
3. To what extent do feeding and nutritional status influence pupils' academic achievement in Ekiosa Community?
4. How do parental education and the home environment influence pupils' academic achievement in Ekiosa Community?
5. What interventions can social workers and the school implement to mitigate the negative effects of poverty on pupils' academic performance?

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to examine the impact of poverty on the academic achievement of primary school students in Ekiosa Community, Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- determine the relationship between family income (socioeconomic status) and pupils' academic performance in Ekiosa Community;
- assess how the availability of learning materials at home influences pupils' academic achievement in Ekiosa Community;
- examine the effect of feeding and nutritional status on pupils' academic achievement in Ekiosa Community;
- investigate the influence of parental education and the home learning environment on pupils' academic achievement in Ekiosa Community; and
- generate evidence-based recommendations for social work practice, school-based interventions, and local policy to improve academic achievement among pupils living in poverty.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research is a case study focused on five selected primary schools within Ekiosa Community, Oredo LGA, Edo State. The scope covers pupils in Primary 4 to Primary 6 (selected because these classes typically have measurable terminal exam records and more stable enrolment); teachers of these classes; a sample of parents/guardians; and school

records for the most recent academic year. Variables include family income (measured by self-reported monthly income bands and proxy wealth indicators), availability of learning materials at home (books, stationery, a quiet study area), feeding/nutritional status (measured by caregiver reports of daily meals, school feeding participation, and teacher/health-record indicators), and parental education/home environment (highest parental education level, presence of supportive learning practices at home).

The study period is the current academic year, and analysis focuses on the association between poverty-related variables and measurable academic outcomes (term scores, class averages, absenteeism). The study does not attempt to generalize findings to all primary schools in Edo State or Nigeria; however, the case study is intended to provide context-specific insight that may be relevant to similar peri-urban communities.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is of great significance as it provides empirical evidence to help social workers design focused family- and school-based interventions (e.g., school feeding referral programs, parental education workshops, linkage to social protection services). Social workers in school settings can use the findings to advocate for targeted support for the most vulnerable pupils.

For school management and teachers, findings will inform school-level policies such as prioritizing resource distribution, implementing low-cost remedial programs, improving engagement with parents, and promoting community partnerships to provide learning

materials and food assistance where needed. The study will supply local-level data regarding poverty's influence on educational outcomes in Ekiosa Community, which can guide policy makers on budget allocations (e.g., for school feeding programs, educational subsidies), and the design of poverty-alleviation and child-focused programs in Oredo LGA and Edo State.

Furthermore, for the academic community, the study will add to the literature on poverty and primary-school educational outcomes in Nigeria, providing a localized case study useful for comparative analyses and further research. Lastly, by identifying key poverty-related barriers to learning, the study can strengthen community awareness and mobilize local solutions (community-based feeding, learning-material drives, and parental support structures).

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While efforts were made to ensure thoroughness and accuracy, this study was subjected to certain limitations:

- **Self-reporting bias:** Household income, feeding patterns, and other sensitive variables may be under-reported or misreported by respondents.
- **Cross-sectional design:** This study's cross-sectional approach captures relationships at one point in time and cannot definitively establish causality.
- **School records quality:** Some schools may have inconsistencies of data or incomplete record-keeping.

- **Generalizability:** Because the study focuses on Ekiosa Community, findings may not be representative of rural communities or other urban localities with different socioeconomic profiles.
- **Ethical/reporting constraints:** Privacy concerns and the sensitivity of information about children will require strict ethical protocols that may limit the depth of probing on very sensitive topics.
- **Limited resources/time:** Field data collection may be constrained by resources and time.

Despite these limitations, the study uses mixed methods and triangulation to build credible, policy-relevant findings.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Poverty:** In this study poverty refers to multidimensional and monetary deprivations at household level that affect children's access to adequate food, learning resources, healthcare, and basic services. Operational measures include household income bands, parental occupation, and indicators of living standards (e.g., access to electricity, type of housing).

- **Academic Achievement:** Measured by pupils' recent school examination scores, teacher assessments, and class performance indicators in literacy and numeracy domains.
- **Home Learning Environment:** Refers to the availability of learning materials at home (books, writing materials), presence of a study area, parental support for homework, and frequency of reading or learning activities at home.
- **Feeding/Nutritional Status:** In the scope of this study this refers to frequency and adequacy of meals as reported by parents and pupils, plus observable indicators (e.g., signs of undernourishment) where ethically permissible and non-invasive.
- **Social Worker Interventions:** School-and-community based activities or services that social workers provide or coordinate to support children's welfare and education — e.g., family assessments, counselling, referral to social protection programs, facilitation of school feeding, parental engagement, and community mobilization.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CONCEPT OF POVERTY

Poverty is one of the most pervasive social problems confronting individuals, families, and communities across the world, and it has continued to attract extensive scholarly, policy, and humanitarian attention. The concept of poverty is multidimensional, complex, and context-dependent, involving not only economic deprivation but also social exclusion, limited access to essential services, and an inability to attain a minimum standard of living deemed acceptable by society. According to the World Bank (2022), poverty is broadly defined as a condition in which people lack the financial resources and capabilities required to secure the necessities of life, including adequate food, safe drinking water, shelter, healthcare, education, and participation in societal activities. This definition underscores the idea that poverty is not merely the absence of income but also the deprivation of opportunities and capabilities that allow individuals to develop their full potential.

In Nigeria, poverty has been a persistent challenge, affecting large segments of the population and substantially impeding social and economic development. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) reports that approximately 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor, representing 63% of the population. The multidimensional poverty index (MPI) used by NBS encompasses indicators such as nutrition, school attendance, years of

schooling, access to water, sanitation, housing quality, and livelihood insecurity. This approach aligns with the global shift away from measuring poverty solely by income to evaluating the broader lived experiences of deprivation. For primary school pupils in communities such as Ekiosa, these dimensions—especially household food insecurity, poor housing conditions, lack of educational materials, and parental unemployment—have direct implications for schooling and academic success.

Poverty is also closely associated with intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. According to UNICEF (2021), children born into poor households are more likely to experience poor health, malnutrition, low school enrollment, and inadequate cognitive stimulation, all of which negatively affect their educational outcomes. The vulnerability of children is heightened because they rely on caregivers and household resources to access education, healthcare, nutrition, and emotional support. When parents or guardians are economically constrained, their capacity to invest in a child’s education is substantially weakened, often resulting in poor academic achievement.

Another important conceptual understanding of poverty relates to social exclusion, which refers to the processes through which individuals or groups are marginalized and denied access to opportunities available to others in society (Silver, 2007). Social exclusion can manifest in educational inequalities, where children from poor households attend under-resourced schools, lack mentoring and academic support, or face stigmatization due to their

economic status. These conditions create unequal learning environments that further disadvantage poor children academically.

Research also emphasizes the spatial dimension of poverty, with specific communities or geographic areas experiencing concentrated disadvantage. Rural and peri-urban communities in Nigeria often struggle with poor infrastructure, overcrowded schools, inadequate teaching materials, and low teacher–pupil ratios (Adebayo & Olamide, 2020). Ekiosa Community, being a semi-urban area within Oredo Local Government, is likely affected by such localized inequalities, making the study of poverty’s impact on academic achievement in its primary schools particularly relevant.

Modern literature also highlights the psychological dimension of poverty. Studies show that poverty imposes cognitive burdens, stress, and anxiety on children and caregivers, which can interfere with learning capacity and academic performance (Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir & Zhao, 2013). Children living under chronic economic stress may experience reduced concentration, lower motivation, reduced self-esteem, and limited engagement in academic tasks. These psychological consequences of poverty add another layer to its conceptualization, illustrating how deeply poverty affects children’s academic journeys.

2.2 CONCEPT OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Academic achievement refers to the extent to which a student has attained specific educational goals and learning outcomes as determined by curricular standards, assessments,

and teacher evaluations. It is commonly measured through tests, examinations, continuous assessments, classroom participation, completion of assignments, and observable mastery of knowledge and skills. According to Steinmayr, Meißner, Weidinger, and Wirthwein (2015), academic achievement encompasses both cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions of learning, including students' ability to understand, apply, analyze, and communicate knowledge acquired in school. In primary education, academic achievement is often evaluated through literacy and numeracy competencies, comprehension skills, problem-solving abilities, and performance in core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, and Basic Science.

The concept is multidimensional because it captures not only the outcome of learning but also the processes that contribute to it. For instance, academic achievement is influenced by student characteristics (motivation, interest, intelligence), family background (parental education, socioeconomic status), environmental conditions, and school-related variables such as teacher quality and availability of learning resources (OECD, 2018). This multidimensional nature is particularly important in understanding how poverty affects learning because poverty shapes many of these factors simultaneously, thereby determining the academic trajectory of pupils, especially at the foundational level of primary school education.

Educational theorists emphasize that academic achievement is a critical indicator of a child's overall development. Bloom (1976) notes that academic performance reflects not only

intellectual competence but also a combination of affective and psychomotor skills that contribute to holistic child development. At the primary school level, where foundational learning occurs, academic achievement is crucial because it forms the basis for future educational success and lifelong learning. Children who do not perform well at this stage are more likely to struggle in later education, drop out of school, or exhibit reduced cognitive and social capabilities.

In the Nigerian context, academic achievement is often assessed through standardized examinations administered by ministries of education, continuous assessments conducted by schools, and national evaluations such as the National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE). The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC, 2020) emphasizes that academic achievement at the primary level is central to achieving national educational goals, including improved literacy, numeracy, and social development. However, disparities persist between students from economically advantaged and disadvantaged households, with poverty emerging as a significant determinant of poor performance.

Academic achievement is shaped by the learning environment, both at home and in school. According to Fraser (2015), a supportive learning environment that includes parental involvement, adequate instructional materials, and positive teacher–student interaction significantly improves academic outcomes. Conversely, children from poor households frequently contend with inadequate study spaces, lack of educational materials, hunger, and

exposure to stressful life situations—factors that undermine their ability to focus and learn effectively. These conditions are common among primary school pupils in low-income communities such as Ekiosa, where household poverty limits children’s access to conducive learning environments and essential school resources.

Furthermore, academic achievement is affected by health and nutritional status. Research demonstrates that malnutrition, frequent illness, and inadequate healthcare services—common among children from poor households—negatively impact cognitive development, attention span, memory retention, and school attendance (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Children who lack proper nutrition or suffer from chronic health conditions are more likely to perform poorly academically, illustrating the direct link between poverty-induced health challenges and diminished educational outcomes.

2.3 CONCEPT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary education is universally recognized as the foundation of formal learning and human development. It provides children with the basic literacy, numeracy, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills necessary for effective functioning in society and for progression to higher levels of education. According to UNESCO (2020), primary education is the first stage of compulsory education, typically designed for children between the ages of 5 and 11, and its primary aim is to equip learners with fundamental knowledge, problem-solving skills, and the capacity for lifelong learning. This stage is critical because it shapes children's intellectual

development, socialization, moral orientation, and overall readiness for secondary and advanced education.

In Nigeria, primary education is defined within the framework of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014), which outlines it as the education provided in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 years. The policy emphasizes that primary education serves as the key to the success of the entire educational system, as it lays the groundwork for literacy, numeracy, communication skills, and the acquisition of basic scientific and technological knowledge. Primary education under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is free and compulsory, reflecting the government's commitment to ensuring equitable access to foundational schooling. However, despite its compulsory status, many children—especially those from poor households—still face significant barriers to effective participation due to financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and socioeconomic disparities.

The importance of primary education is rooted in extensive empirical and theoretical evidence linking early childhood learning to long-term developmental outcomes. Research by Heckman (2011) shows that investments in early education yield high social and economic returns, as children who receive quality primary education are more likely to stay in school, achieve better academic outcomes, and develop stronger cognitive and life skills. Furthermore, primary education plays a transformative role in reducing poverty, improving

health outcomes, and fostering social cohesion (UNESCO, 2020). In this sense, the quality of primary education is a powerful determinant of national development, making it essential for countries, especially developing nations like Nigeria, to prioritize accessible and effective primary schooling.

Primary education goes beyond academic content; it includes character formation, social development, and the inculcation of values necessary for responsible citizenship. According to Anderson and Fleege (2018), primary education helps children develop self-confidence, communication abilities, teamwork skills, moral reasoning, and basic problem-solving competencies. These attributes are essential not only for academic progression but also for personal development and social integration. A well-structured primary education system supports children in learning how to relate with peers, understand societal norms, and build positive attitudes toward learning.

However, the effectiveness of primary education is heavily dependent on the learning environment, teaching quality, and availability of instructional materials. The World Bank (2018) reports that many schools in low-income and developing regions face challenges such as poorly trained teachers, overcrowded classrooms, limited learning resources, and inadequate facilities—all of which hinder children’s learning and academic achievement. In Nigeria, these challenges are more pronounced in rural and semi-urban communities, including areas like Ekiosa Community in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State,

where public schools often struggle with inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor classroom conditions, and insufficient educational materials. These deficiencies diminish the quality of teaching and learning and disproportionately affect learners from poor households.

Primary education is also influenced by health and nutrition, which are essential for effective learning. Studies confirm that children who arrive at school hungry, ill, or tired—common situations for children from economically disadvantaged households—have lower attention spans, reduced memory capacity, and poorer academic performance (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). School feeding programmes have been shown to improve attendance, concentration, and overall learning outcomes, further highlighting the link between poverty and educational achievement.

2.4 INDICATORS OF POVERTY AMONG HOUSEHOLDS

Indicators of poverty among households refer to the measurable conditions and characteristics that reveal the extent to which a household is deprived of basic resources, capabilities, and opportunities necessary for a minimally acceptable standard of living. These indicators provide insight into the multidimensional nature of poverty, reflecting not only monetary deficiencies but also the wider social, environmental, educational, and health constraints that shape household well-being.

One of the most widely recognized indicators of household poverty is income inadequacy, which refers to the inability of households to generate sufficient income to meet their basic needs. According to the World Bank (2022), households living below the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day are classified as extremely poor. In Nigeria, many families live below this threshold, especially those dependent on informal or low-wage employment. Income inadequacy limits households' ability to afford essential goods and services such as food, healthcare, housing, and educational materials, thereby hindering children's academic participation and performance. For instance, inability to pay for school uniforms, textbooks, transportation, or extra lessons often contributes to absenteeism and poor learning outcomes among children from low-income families.

Another critical indicator of poverty is low educational attainment of parents or caregivers. Parental education is strongly correlated with household economic well-being and children's academic achievement. Studies show that parents with limited formal education are more likely to be unemployed or engaged in low-paying jobs, thereby increasing the likelihood of household poverty (OECD, 2018). Moreover, such parents may lack the literacy skills, confidence, or knowledge to support their children's academic activities effectively. In communities like Ekiosa, many households have parents who did not complete primary or secondary school, which contributes to limited educational support at home and lower academic performance among children.

Food insecurity and poor nutrition are also major indicators of household poverty. Food insecurity refers to the lack of stable access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food needed for normal growth and development (FAO, 2021). Numerous studies show that malnutrition, especially among school-aged children, negatively affects cognitive development, concentration, memory, and overall schooling outcomes (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). When children go to school hungry or suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, their academic achievement is severely compromised. This is a common reality for many children from poor households in Nigeria, including those in Ekiosa, where daily meals may be irregular or insufficient.

Housing quality and living conditions constitute another important poverty indicator. Poor households often live in overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and structurally weak housing without access to clean water, sanitation, or electricity. The National Bureau of Statistics (2022) highlights that a significant proportion of Nigerian households experience multidimensional poverty due to inadequate housing and lack of basic amenities. Poor living conditions create unhealthy environments that expose children to diseases, disrupt sleep, limit opportunities for studying at home, and reduce overall well-being—factors that directly affect academic achievement.

Access to basic infrastructure and utilities, such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, and safe cooking facilities, is also a reliable indicator of household poverty. Households that lack

these services often face increased health risks, time burdens (especially for children who may need to fetch water), and reduced productivity. According to UNICEF (2021), children living in households without adequate water and sanitation are more prone to illness, school absenteeism, and poor academic performance. In Ekiosa Community, irregular access to electricity and clean water is common, contributing to both household stress and educational disadvantage.

Employment status and livelihood stability also serve as indicators of poverty. Households in which parents engage in unstable, low-paying, or informal-sector jobs—such as street trading, casual labor, petty trading, or subsistence agriculture—are more vulnerable to economic shocks and persistent poverty (World Bank, 2020). Irregular incomes make it difficult for these households to plan for educational expenses, resulting in children missing school or being withdrawn during financial crises. Children of unemployed or underemployed parents are particularly at risk of poor academic achievement due to financial instability and heightened domestic stress.

Lastly, lack of educational resources—including textbooks, writing materials, school uniforms, and digital learning tools—is a direct and visible indicator of poverty in households. Children from poor families often go to school without essential learning materials, participate less in class, and face higher risks of academic underachievement. UBEC (2020)

highlights that insufficient access to instructional materials is a major barrier to learning for pupils in low-income communities in Nigeria.

2.5 FORMS AND DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

Poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that extends far beyond the simple lack of income. It encompasses a wide range of deprivations that affect individuals' well-being, opportunities, and overall quality of life (Alkire & Foster, 2011). Understanding the various forms and dimensions of poverty is crucial for analyzing how it shapes children's educational experiences and outcomes, particularly in low-income communities such as Ekiosa in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

One of the most widely recognized forms of poverty is income poverty, which refers to insufficient financial resources to meet basic household needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education. According to the World Bank (2022), individuals living below the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day are classified as extremely poor. Income poverty limits access to essential goods and services that support children's learning, such as school supplies, nutritious food, and adequate clothing. In the context of Ekiosa Community, many households depend on informal-sector jobs with low and unstable incomes, making income poverty a major constraint on children's academic achievement.

Absolute poverty is another dimension, referring to severe deprivation of basic human needs. It is measured using fixed standards such as minimum calorie requirements, access to clean

water, and essential shelter. The United Nations (2015) defines absolute poverty as a condition where individuals are unable to secure the resources necessary for survival. Absolute poverty is common in many low-income Nigerian communities where children lack adequate nutrition, healthcare, sanitation, and a conducive home environment—factors that significantly hinder learning and cognitive development.

In contrast, relative poverty refers to a level of deprivation that is measured in relation to societal norms and average living standards. Townsend (1979) argues that individuals are in relative poverty when they lack the resources needed to participate fully in societal activities. In Nigeria, where economic inequality is widespread, children from poor households may attend school but lack the materials, clothing, or social support available to their peers from wealthier families. This type of inequality often leads to low self-esteem, social exclusion, and reduced motivation, all of which negatively affect students' academic achievement.

Multidimensional poverty is increasingly recognized as a more accurate representation of poverty, especially in developing countries. It encompasses various non-monetary deprivations such as poor health, inadequate housing, lack of education, food insecurity, limited access to clean water, and inadequate sanitation. The Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (NBS, 2022) reveals that more than half of Nigerian households experience multidimensional poverty, with education, nutrition, and living conditions being major contributors. Multidimensional poverty is particularly relevant for understanding the

experiences of children in Ekiosa, where households may be deprived in several areas simultaneously, increasing the severity of educational disadvantage.

Another important dimension is intergenerational poverty, which occurs when poverty persists across generations due to structural barriers such as low parental education, chronic unemployment, and limited access to quality schooling. According to Corak (2013), children born into poor households are significantly more likely to remain poor as adults due to limited opportunities, restricted social mobility, and poor educational outcomes. This form of poverty is evident in communities where low-income parents cannot provide the academic support, resources, or stable environment necessary for their children’s educational success.

Urban poverty and rural poverty also represent distinct dimensions shaped by geographic and socio-economic factors. Urban poverty, which is relevant to Ekiosa’s urban–peri-urban setting, is characterized by overcrowded housing, unemployment, high cost of living, environmental hazards, and inadequate access to basic services (UN-Habitat, 2020). Even though urban areas may offer more educational facilities, children in urban poor settlements often face higher household stress, insecurity, and poor living conditions that undermine academic performance. Rural poverty, by contrast, is often associated with limited access to schools, healthcare, and infrastructure. Although Ekiosa is not rural, some of its poverty characteristics—such as informal employment and inadequate public services—mirror those found in rural communities.

Educational poverty is also significant, referring to the inability of households to access quality education or provide adequate learning support to children. UNESCO (2020) describes educational poverty as having fewer than basic literacy and numeracy skills by age 10. In Nigeria, many primary school pupils—particularly those in low-income communities—experience educational poverty due to under-resourced schools, poorly trained teachers, and lack of learning materials. This dimension of poverty has the most direct impact on the academic performance of pupils in Ekiosa Community.

Conclusively, these forms of poverty interact to create a cycle of deprivation that significantly undermines children’s ability to succeed academically. Recognizing these forms of poverty is essential for understanding the complex challenges facing primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community and for developing effective social work interventions aimed at improving their educational outcomes.

2.6 EFFECTS OF POVERTY ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Poverty exerts profound and far-reaching effects on students’ academic achievement, shaping their learning trajectories from early childhood through adolescence. These effects manifest to collectively inhibit children’s cognitive development, classroom performance, and long-term educational attainment. Understanding these effects is crucial for analyzing the academic challenges faced by primary school pupils in the study area.

One of the most significant effects of poverty on academic achievement is impaired cognitive development resulting from poor nutrition and health. Children who grow up in poverty face a higher risk of malnutrition, stunted growth, micronutrient deficiencies, and chronic health conditions. According to Grantham-McGregor et al. (2007), undernutrition during early childhood significantly reduces cognitive processing speed, attention span, working memory, and problem-solving ability—all of which are essential for academic performance. Similarly, the World Bank (2018) reports that children who are frequently ill due to poor living conditions or inadequate medical care miss more school days, fall behind academically, and perform worse on standardized assessments.

Poverty also affects academic achievement through inadequate access to learning materials and educational resources. Students from poor households often lack essential school supplies such as textbooks, notebooks, school uniforms, writing materials, and digital devices. These resource deficits hinder their ability to complete assignments, participate fully in class activities, and reinforce learning at home. Evans (2004) emphasizes that low-income families often reside in crowded and noisy living environments with few or no learning materials, creating conditions that significantly reduce children's study time and concentration, thereby lowering academic performance.

Furthermore, the effect of poverty on students' emotional and psychological well-being is substantial. Low-income children are more likely to experience chronic stress due to

household financial instability, family conflict, and environmental insecurity (Luthar, 2006). Chronic stress elevates cortisol levels, which have been shown to interfere with memory, executive functioning, and emotional regulation—skills critical for effective learning. Evans and English (2002) observe that continuous exposure to stressors associated with poverty leads to behavioral problems such as anxiety, aggression, withdrawal, inattentiveness, and reduced self-control. These emotional and behavioral issues negatively influence classroom participation, peer relationships, and academic achievement.

Poor school attendance is another major effect of poverty on academic achievement. Children in low-income households may miss school due to inability to afford transportation, inadequate clothing, illness, involvement in petty trading, or participation in household chores. UNICEF (2021) highlights that absenteeism contributes to significant learning loss, poor mastery of foundational skills, and widened performance gaps between poor and affluent students. In communities like Ekiosa, economic pressures often compel children to combine schooling with income-generating activities, resulting in fatigue, absenteeism, and declining academic performance.

School-level factors also mediate the effects of poverty on academic achievement. Schools located in low-income communities typically suffer from teacher shortages, inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure, and limited funding (UNESCO, 2021). These conditions reduce teaching effectiveness and restrict students’

opportunities for individualized attention, feedback, and academic support. For example, insufficient textbooks or poorly equipped classrooms make it difficult for teachers to deliver quality lessons and for students to engage meaningfully with the curriculum.

Another key effect of poverty on academic achievement is reduced parental involvement in children's education. Parents experiencing poverty are often overburdened by multiple jobs, working long hours, or coping with emotional stress linked to economic hardship. As a result, they may be unable to assist with homework, attend school meetings, monitor academic progress, or provide educational encouragement. Fan and Chen (2001) found that reduced parental engagement is strongly associated with lower student achievement, diminished motivation, and weaker reading and numeracy skills. In Nigerian low-income settings, parents with limited formal education may also lack the confidence or skills needed to support their children academically, further widening performance disparities.

Poverty also affects children's academic motivation and expectations. Children from low-income households often develop lower academic self-concept and career aspirations due to limited exposure to educational success, role models, and opportunities (Sirin, 2005). These reduced expectations can lead to disengagement, low effort, and a perception that education yields minimal returns, particularly in communities where poverty is widespread and persistent. This sense of hopelessness further undermines academic achievement.

Neighborhood and environmental conditions further compound the effects of poverty on academic outcomes. Poor communities frequently experience inadequate sanitation, pollution, unsafe streets, and limited access to services such as libraries, after-school programs, and recreational facilities. These factors reduce children's exposure to enriching experiences and limit opportunities for learning outside school. Evans (2004) notes that growing up in unsafe or chaotic neighborhoods increases stress, erodes concentration, and distracts children from academic pursuits.

In the long term, the cumulative impact of these factors leads to persistent academic deficits. Children who experience poverty-related disadvantages are more likely to repeat grades, drop out of school, or fail to transition successfully to secondary education (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). Poor academic achievement in primary school often sets the stage for limited future educational attainment, reduced employability, and continued cycles of intergenerational poverty. These effects create structural barriers that impede the academic success of primary school pupils, particularly in economically disadvantaged communities such as Ekiosa. Understanding these effects is essential for developing evidence-based interventions aimed at improving the educational outcomes of children living in poverty.

2.7 POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES/POLICIES IN NIGERIA

Poverty reduction has remained a central developmental priority in Nigeria due to the persistent and multidimensional nature of deprivation affecting large segments of the

population. Nigeria's poverty level has historically been shaped by economic instability, inequitable resource distribution, governance challenges, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to basic social services such as education and healthcare. As a result, successive Nigerian governments have introduced various poverty alleviation strategies and public policies aimed at improving socio-economic well-being and reducing the incidence of poverty among households (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). The evolution of these strategies reflects shifts in policy ideology, ranging from welfare-based approaches to economic empowerment and social investment frameworks.

Historically, one of the earliest post-independence poverty reduction initiatives was the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) launched in 1976, which sought to increase food production and reduce hunger through mass agricultural mobilization. Although well-intentioned, studies indicate that OFN had limited impact due to inadequate implementation and weak extension services (Adebayo & Ojo, 2012). This programme was later followed by the Green Revolution Programme (1980), which emphasized large-scale agricultural production but similarly struggled due to corruption and poor policy execution (Ijirshar, 2015).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) reoriented Nigeria's economic framework towards market liberalization. However, SAP exacerbated income inequality and worsened poverty levels due to subsidy removal, currency devaluation,

and wage stagnation (Ogwumike, 1995). Recognizing SAP's negative social impacts, the government introduced targeted poverty alleviation programmes, such as the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). DFRRI focused on rural development through feeder roads, water supply, and electrification, while NDE was designed to address unemployment through vocational training and entrepreneurship development. Evidence shows that NDE contributed to skills acquisition among youths, although its overall impact was limited by funding constraints and uneven programme coverage (Ajakaiye & Adeyeye, 2001).

The early 2000s saw a more structured approach to poverty reduction with the establishment of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001. NAPEP implemented initiatives such as the Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) and Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP). Research indicates that NAPEP recorded pockets of success, particularly in youth training, but suffered from fragmentation and overlapping mandates with other agencies (Ikeanyibe, 2009). In addition, Nigeria developed the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004, a comprehensive policy framework aimed at private sector-led growth, job creation, and improved governance. NEEDS emphasized human capital development, social service reform, and infrastructure expansion (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). However, while NEEDS presented a strong macroeconomic blueprint, its implementation was hampered by institutional weaknesses and insufficient policy continuity (Obadan, 2001).

More recently, Nigeria has adopted social protection–based poverty reduction strategies consistent with global best practices. One major initiative is the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) launched in 2016, which includes key components such as the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme, the N-Power youth employment scheme, the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP), and the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP). Studies affirm that the CCT programme has helped improve household consumption, school attendance, and access to healthcare among extremely poor families (World Bank, 2019). The HGSFP has also been linked to improved nutrition and educational outcomes for primary school pupils, especially in low-income communities similar to Ekiosa Community (Akanbi & Soyibo, 2021).

Furthermore, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) implemented between 2017 and 2020 focused on economic stabilization, diversification, and inclusive growth. The ERGP prioritized agricultural expansion, energy supply improvement, and macroeconomic stability. While the ERGP contributed to modest economic recovery after the 2016 recession, its poverty-reduction impact was constrained by rising inflation, unemployment, and insecurity (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020).

Nigeria has also committed to global development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 which focuses on ending poverty in all its forms. The SDGs have shaped national poverty eradication efforts through indicators related

to social protection coverage, access to essential services, and reduction in income inequality (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). Several state governments, including Edo State, have adopted domesticated poverty reduction programmes aligned with national and global development priorities, especially in areas such as education support, school feeding, healthcare subsidies, and youth empowerment.

Despite these multiple initiatives, the persistence of poverty in Nigeria underscores the limitations of past interventions. Scholars attribute the limited success of these programmes to issues such as weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding, political interference, corruption, insufficient monitoring and evaluation systems, and lack of multi-sectoral coordination (Akanbi, 2018; Aigbokhan, 2008). To enhance the effectiveness of future poverty reduction strategies, experts recommend strengthening social protection systems, improving macroeconomic stability, promoting inclusive growth, and ensuring better governance and accountability mechanisms (World Bank, 2022).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design used for this study is the descriptive survey research design, complemented with elements of case study design to allow for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon within its real-life context. A descriptive survey design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a representative subset of a population in order to describe conditions, attitudes, and opinions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design is particularly relevant in social science research, where the focus is on documenting and analyzing the perceptions, experiences, and observable outcomes of targeted groups.

The case study component is justified by the researcher's intention to focus on five selected primary schools within Ekiosa Community. Case studies provide opportunities for contextual analysis, making it easier to connect individual, family, school, and community-level poverty indicators with academic performance outcomes (Yin, 2018). By integrating a case study with descriptive survey strategies, the study generates both quantitative and qualitative insights useful for social work assessment and intervention.

3.2 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in Ekiosa Community, located within Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Ekiosa is a densely populated urban community situated in the central part of Benin City. It is characterized by mixed residential and commercial use, with an economic profile dominated by petty trading, roadside vending, artisanship, transport services, and informal sector employment. Many residents experience economic hardship, low household income, unstable employment, and inadequate access to basic social amenities.

Ekiosa Community hosts several public primary schools, which mainly serve children from low-income families. Due to socio-economic conditions, these schools often struggle with infrastructural challenges, large class sizes, inadequate learning materials, and poor learning environments. These contextual realities make Ekiosa a relevant setting for investigating how poverty shapes children's academic achievement. The five primary schools (given pseudonyms for anonymity and ethical compliance for name) selected for this study reflect typical socio-economic dynamics and student demographics of the community.

3.3 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study consists of primary 4–6 pupils enrolled in the five selected primary schools in Ekiosa Community; teachers in the selected schools; parents/guardians of pupils (particularly those whose children participated in the survey) and; school administrators (e.g., head-teachers, assistant head-teachers). The choice of Primary 4–6

pupils is intentional because they possess higher cognitive maturity and are better positioned to provide reliable responses on school-related issues. Additionally, their academic records (results, continuous assessment scores) provide meaningful indicators of school performance.

The approximate population sizes obtained from school administrative records are:

School Name	Pupils (Primary 4–6)	Teachers	Total Population
Primary School 1	210	18	228
Primary School 2	195	15	210
Primary School 3	180	16	196
Primary School 4	165	14	179
Primary School 5	175	12	187
Total	925 pupils	75 teachers	1,000 respondents

Thus, the target population for this study is 1,000 individuals.

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE

To determine an appropriate sample size, the study used Taro Yamane’s (1967) formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where:

n = sample size
 N = population size
 e = margin of error

Given:

$$N = 1000; \quad e = 0.05$$

$$n = 1000 / (1 + 1000(0.005)^2) = 1000 / (1 + 2.5) = 1000 / 3.5 \approx 286$$

Thus, the study sample size is 200 pupils; 50 teachers; 30 parents and; 6 administrators, which is a total of 286 respondents. This distribution ensures representation across all five schools and respondent categories.

3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

A combination of purposive sampling and simple random sampling was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select the five primary schools included in the study. The purposive approach ensured that only schools that had a high proportion of pupils from low-income households, as well as those with observable infrastructural or resource challenges, were included. These conditions made these schools suitable for examining poverty-related influences on academic performance.

Following the selection of the five schools, simple random sampling was employed to select the pupils and teachers who participated in the study. This approach ensured that each member of the population within the selected schools had an equal chance of being chosen, thereby reducing bias and increasing the reliability of the findings. The sampling process involved obtaining class registers and randomly selecting pupils from primary classes four to six. These classes were chosen because pupils in these levels demonstrate more measurable academic outcomes through continuous assessments, class tests, and examinations.

Simple random sampling was equally applied to select teachers, particularly those who taught core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Basic Science, as

their perspectives were crucial for assessing academic performance trends. This method facilitated the inclusion of teachers with varying years of experience, providing a balanced view of the academic and socio-economic challenges faced by pupils. In addition, the sample size was determined proportionately to ensure that each school contributed a fair number of participants relative to its population. This proportional allocation ensured that schools with larger enrolment had appropriately larger representation in the sample.

Overall, the combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques was effective for achieving a representative and diversified sample group. It enhanced the credibility of the research findings by ensuring that the sampled participants truly reflected the socio-economic realities and academic patterns within primary schools in Ekiosa Community.

3.6 INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

The study used a mixed-methods approach, hence data were collected using:

- **Structured Questionnaire:** Administered to pupils, teachers, and parents. The questionnaire contained five sections; Section A: Demographics, Section B: Poverty indicators (household income, feeding, home environment), Section C: Learning materials and school resources, Section D: Academic performance indicators, Section E: Social work intervention measures. Items were mostly measured using a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) – Agree (A) – Disagree (D) – Strongly Disagree (SD).

- **Interview Guide:** Used for school administrators, selected teachers and parents to gather qualitative insights on how poverty manifests among pupils, impact of home conditions on performance, school-based support and interventions, challenges faced by educators.
- **Observation Checklist:** Used by the researcher to assess classroom conditions, learning materials, pupil behavior and appearance (e.g., signs of malnutrition or poor hygiene).
- **Academic Records:** Continuous assessment scores, examination results, and attendance records were reviewed to complement questionnaire responses.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

To capture a broad and rich data-set, two major data collection methods were employed:

- **Primary Data Collection Method:** The study employed a primary data collection approach, using structured questionnaires administered to both pupils and teachers. The questionnaires were designed in simple and clear language to ensure that respondents, especially the pupils, understood the questions without difficulty. The teachers' questionnaire focused mainly on their observations and professional assessment of pupils' academic performance, class participation, attendance patterns, learning challenges, and socio-economic factors affecting pupils. The pupils'

questionnaire centered on their household conditions, access to learning materials, feeding patterns, attendance, and their perceptions of school and home learning support.

In addition to the questionnaires, structured interviews were conducted with selected teachers and parents, and school heads. These interviews allowed the researcher to obtain more detailed qualitative information on issues such as school infrastructural conditions, parental involvement, material shortages, and patterns of pupil performance. The interview responses complemented the data obtained through the questionnaires by providing deeper context and professional insights from educators who interact with the pupils daily. Where necessary, brief observational notes were also taken. These observations focused on classroom environments, availability of learning materials, pupils' physical appearance as an indicator of welfare, and classroom behaviour. This triangulation of data sources strengthened the validity of the overall findings.

- **Secondary Data Collection Method:** Secondary data was obtained from already existing sources such as continuous assessment scores, examination results, and attendance records relevant to the study. These sources helped to provide context, validate primary data, and inform the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. These records offered statistical trends and policy frameworks used in

addressing the relationship between poverty and the academic achievement of pupils. In addition, journals, books, academic theses, research reports, and government publications were reviewed to gain insight into the impact of poverty on the academic achievement of school pupils in Ekiosa Community.

By combining primary and secondary data collection methods, this study ensured a well-rounded and evidence-based analysis of the impact of poverty on the academic achievement of pupils of selected primary schools in Ekiosa Community.

3.8 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Given the descriptive survey research design, complemented by the case study research design approach, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were employed:

- **Quantitative Data:** Data from the questionnaires were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, primarily frequency counts and simple percentages, which were appropriate for summarizing respondents' demographic characteristics, economic backgrounds, access to learning materials, feeding patterns, and academic-related indicators. By using frequency and percentage distributions, the study was able to highlight trends such as the proportion of pupils who lacked textbooks, the number who came to school without breakfast, or the percentage of teachers who believed poverty significantly affects classroom performance.

- **Qualitative Data:** For the qualitative data gathered through interviews with teachers and school heads, a thematic analysis approach was employed. This involved carefully reading and reviewing the interview notes, identifying recurring themes or ideas, and organizing them into meaningful categories. Themes such as parental involvement, home learning conditions, teacher observations on pupils' concentration levels, and the influence of nutrition on performance were interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature.

The combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis ensured that both numerical trends and contextual insights were captured. This dual approach strengthened the reliability and validity of the research findings by providing a balanced analysis that integrated pupils' direct responses with teachers' professional observations. Ultimately, the method of data analysis adopted enabled the researcher to develop a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of how poverty affects pupils' academic achievements within Ekiosa Community.

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS

To ensure that the research instruments used in this study accurately measured the variables of interest, great emphasis was placed on both validity and reliability. The objective was to guarantee that the questionnaire and interview guide were capable of producing accurate,

consistent, and meaningful data regarding the impact of poverty on pupils' academic achievement in the selected primary schools in Ekiosa Community.

Validity of the Instrument:

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument truly measures what it is intended to measure. In this study, content validity and face validity were primarily established. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire and interview guide were carefully constructed based on a thorough review of relevant literature on poverty, socioeconomic status, education, and child development. Each question was designed to reflect key concepts related to family income, availability of learning materials at home, nutritional status of pupils, parental educational background, learning environment, and the role of social workers in school settings.

The researcher submitted the instruments to experts in the Department of Social Work for critical review. These experts assessed whether the items adequately covered all aspects of the research questions and objectives. Their feedback led to the refinement of certain questions for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the conceptual framework of the study. This process ensured that the instruments were valid measures capable of capturing the actual conditions experienced by pupils in the five selected primary schools in Ekiosa Community.

Reliability of the Instrument:

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of an instrument in measuring the intended variables across repeated trials. To ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a pilot study in a primary school within Oredo Local Government Area that was not part of the main study population but shared similar socioeconomic characteristics with Ekiosa Community.

The pilot exercise enabled the researcher to identify ambiguous or unclear questions, evaluate respondents' understanding of the items, and determine the time required to complete the instrument. Responses obtained from the pilot test were analyzed to check for internal consistency. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using the test-retest method, in which the same questionnaire was administered twice at a one-week interval to the same group of pupils and teachers. The responses from both administrations were compared to evaluate consistency. The analysis indicated a high level of consistency in the responses, suggesting that the questionnaire was dependable and capable of producing stable results when used in similar conditions. Only minor adjustments were made to enhance clarity and flow.

Through these processes, the instrument was found to be both valid and reliable, making it suitable for gathering accurate and trustworthy data on how poverty influences the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study adhered strictly to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

Key considerations included:

- **Informed Consent:** Pupils' participation required parental/guardian consent. Teachers and administrators signed consent forms voluntarily.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Schools and respondents were assigned pseudonyms. Personal identifiers were excluded from data analysis and presentation.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences.
- **Protection of Minors:** Given that the primary respondents were children, extra measures were taken. No sensitive questions were asked. Data collection occurred in the presence of teachers.
- **Data Security:** All data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.
- **Non-Maleficence:** The study posed no physical or psychological harm to participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the background of respondents provides context for interpreting the effects of poverty on academic performance. Demographic variables include age, sex, class level, parental occupation, and household income.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Pupils (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	9–10 years	48	24.0
	11–12 years	109	54.5
	13 years and above	43	21.5
Sex	Male	108	54.0
	Female	92	46.0
Class Level	Primary 4	56	28.0
	Primary 5	74	37.0
	Primary 6	70	35.0
Parental Occupation	Petty Trading	84	42.0
	Artisan/Skilled Labour	47	23.5
	Public/Private Employee	29	14.5
	Unemployed	40	20.0
Household Income	Below ₦30,000	91	45.5

(Monthly)			
	₦30,000–₦50,000	63	31.5
	₦50,001–₦80,000	28	14.0
	Above ₦80,000	18	9.0

The data in the above table show that the majority of pupils come from low-income households, with 45.5% living in families earning below ₦30,000 monthly, far below Nigeria’s cost of living requirements. This strongly indicates economic hardship, a key variable affecting academic achievement.

4.1.2 Analysis of Data Based on Research Questions

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between family income (socioeconomic status) and pupils’ academic performance in Ekiosa Community?*

To examine this relationship, continuous assessment (CA) scores were obtained and compared with reported household income.

Table 4.2: Relationship between Household Income and Pupils’ Academic Performance

Household Income Category	Average CA Score (%)	Interpretation
Below ₦30,000	47%	Poor performance
₦30,000–₦50,000	55%	Fair performance
₦50,001–₦80,000	62%	Above average
Above ₦80,000	71%	Good performance

Correlation Analysis: A Pearson correlation test was conducted.

Variables	r-value	Interpretation
Household income & CA Scores	0.68	Strong positive relationship

Interpretation:

The positive correlation ($r=0.68$) indicates a strong relationship between parental income and academic performance. Table 4.2 revealed that pupils from households earning above ₦80,000 performed significantly better. Very low-income pupils (<₦30,000 households) recorded the weakest performance. This is consistent with studies such as Sirin (2005), which found SES to be one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement.

Research Question 2: *How does the availability of learning materials at home affect pupils' academic achievement in Ekiosa Community?*

Pupils were asked about possession of textbooks, exercise books, writing materials, school uniforms, and access to reading spaces.

Table 4.3: Availability of Learning Materials at Home

Learning Materials	Available (%)	Not Available (%)
Textbooks	42%	58%
Exercise books	61%	39%

Writing materials	76%	24%
School uniforms	83%	17%
Reading space	28%	72%

Influence on Academic Performance: Pupils with access to textbooks scored an average of 62%, while those without scored 48%.

Interpretation:

Table 4.3 shows that only 42% of pupils owned textbooks, a major academic disadvantage. 72% lacked a reading space, confirming overcrowded living conditions. Pupils with adequate materials demonstrated significantly higher academic achievement. Teachers confirmed that many pupils borrow textbooks or copy from peers.

One teacher stated: “Most of the children cannot afford basic textbooks. It affects homework and revision seriously.” This aligns with findings by Mullis et al. (2016), which highlight access to learning resources as critical for academic success.

Research Question 3: *To what extent do feeding and nutritional status influence pupils’ academic performance in Ekiosa Community?*

Table 4.4: Pupils’ Feeding/Nutritional Status

Feeding Pattern	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Eats breakfast daily	38	19.0
Eats breakfast sometimes	91	45.5
Rarely eats breakfast	71	35.5
Appears malnourished (Observation)	58	29.0

Relationship with Academic Performance:

Feeding Category	Average CA Score (%)
Regular breakfast	64%
Irregular breakfast	54%
Rarely eats breakfast	42%

Interpretation:

From Table 4.4 above, it was observed that pupils who regularly eat breakfast perform significantly better. About 35.5% often come to school hungry—this impairs concentration. Nearly 29% appear malnourished from observations (thin frames, poor hygiene, lethargy). Teachers reported that hungry pupils frequently sleep in class. This supports the UNICEF (2021) view that poor nutrition is a major barrier to learning.

Research Question 4: *How do parental education and the home environment influence pupils’ academic achievement in Ekiosa Community?*

Table 4.5: Parental Educational Attainment

Parental Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	57	28.5
Primary education	81	40.5
Secondary education	46	23.0
Tertiary education	16	8.0

Relationship with Academic Performance

Parental Education Level	Average CA Score (%)
No formal education	45%
Primary	49%
Secondary	57%
Tertiary	68%

Interpretation:

The data from the above table revealed that pupils whose parents attained tertiary education performed best. Over 69% of parents had only primary or no formal education. Parents with low education often cannot assist with homework or support learning.

Interview insight: “Many parents here struggle with reading and writing. They want their children to learn but lack the capacity to guide them academically.” This aligns with Davis-

Kean (2005), who notes that parental education shapes children's academic outcomes through expectations and home-learning support.

Research Question 5: *What interventions can social workers and the school implement to mitigate the negative effects of poverty on pupils' academic performance?*

Respondents identified interventions that could improve learning outcomes.

Table 4.6: Suggested Interventions

Intervention Strategy	Pupils (%)	Teachers (%)	Parents (%)
School feeding programme	82	96	91
Provision of free textbooks	76	89	84
Guidance & counselling services	63	94	70
Support for uniforms/materials	71	82	88
Community social work outreach	58	69	64
Parental education programs	46	83	49

Interpretation:

From the above Table 4.6, it was observed that the school feeding programme is overwhelmingly the most requested intervention. Teachers emphasize the need for professional social workers to address psychosocial issues. Parents support material assistance due to financial constraints. Community outreach programs can address poverty-related family stressors. This indicates strong potential for school-based social work services to enhance academic outcomes.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings reveals that poverty has a multidimensional and far-reaching impact on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community. Family income, home learning materials, nutrition, parental education, and home environment all interact to influence academic outcomes. Social work interventions, when properly integrated, can significantly mitigate these negative effects and support pupils toward improved academic performance.

4.2.1 Family income (socioeconomic status) and pupils' academic performance at Ekiosa Primary School

The findings revealed a strong and positive relationship between family income and pupils' academic performance. Pupils from low-income households consistently recorded lower academic scores, higher absenteeism, and reduced classroom engagement compared to their peers from relatively stable economic backgrounds.

These findings support existing literature, which indicates that children from poor families face structural disadvantages that limit their ability to perform optimally in school. Low-income families often struggle to provide educational materials, adequate nutrition, conducive reading environments, and educational support—all of which are essential for effective learning. Poverty contributes to stress within the family system, affecting children's emotional stability and concentration (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

In Ekiosa Community, many parents engage in informal economic activities such as petty trading, street hawking, and casual labor, with irregular incomes. This economic instability translates to limited financial resources for school expenses such as textbooks and writing materials, school uniforms, after-school lessons, transportation and examination fees. The study found that children from families earning below the subsistence line were more likely to miss classes due to inability to pay levies or contribute to school projects. Some stayed home to support family livelihood survival strategies (e.g., hawking), further disrupting their learning.

4.2.2 Availability of learning materials at home affect pupils' academic achievement

The study found that the availability of learning materials—such as textbooks, notebooks, writing materials, storybooks, educational posters, and digital learning tools—significantly influences academic achievement. Pupils who reported having adequate learning materials demonstrated higher academic performance, greater confidence, and improved participation in class activities.

In contrast, pupils from impoverished households lacked essential materials, which limited their ability to complete homework, revise lessons at home, or participate in class exercises. Teachers reported that many pupils in Ekiosa Community attend school with no textbooks, partial or no writing materials, torn or incomplete notebooks and, outdated or irrelevant educational resources.

This inadequacy causes pupils to fall behind in class, rely heavily on teachers' explanations, and struggle with independent learning. It also reduces the effectiveness of classroom instruction because learning reinforcement at home becomes impossible. The findings align with studies by Fafunwa (2020), which emphasize that the presence of books and learning materials at home is a strong predictor of children's school readiness and academic performance.

4.2.3 Feeding and nutritional status influence pupils' performance in school

The findings indicated a substantial link between adequate nutrition and academic performance. Pupils who ate regularly before coming to school showed better concentration, alertness, participation, and test scores. Conversely, those who frequently came to school hungry demonstrated reduced attention span, tiredness and sleepiness, irritability, slow cognitive processing and, poor memory retention. A significant proportion of pupils surveyed admitted skipping breakfast because their families could not afford consistent meals. Teachers corroborated that many students in Ekiosa Community depend on mid-morning snacks or assistance from peers.

This finding aligns with global research that identifies nutrition as a critical component of children's cognitive development and academic achievement (Ibrahim, 2022). Poor nutrition reduces energy levels and brain function, making it extremely difficult for children to learn

effectively. The absence of a functional school feeding program in most of the sampled schools further exacerbates this problem.

4.2.4 Parental education and the home environment influence pupils' academic achievement

The study found that parental education significantly affects pupils' academic performance. Children whose parents—especially mothers—had secondary or tertiary education achieved higher academic scores, better study habits, and stronger motivation to learn. Highly educated parents tend to value education more, assist children with homework, provide structured home-learning environments, monitor children's academic progress, communicate effectively with teachers and, set academic expectations for their children.

Conversely, parents with little or no formal education often lacked the confidence and skills to support their children academically. Many interviewees noted that such parents could not understand assignments or provide appropriate academic guidance. Furthermore, poor home environments characterized by overcrowding, noise, parental conflict, and lack of reading space negatively impacted learning outcomes. Some pupils shared rooms with multiple siblings, making studying difficult. This finding reinforces the assertion by Okoye (2018) that the home environment serves as an important determinant of cognitive and academic development.

4.2.5 Social work and school interventions to mitigate the negative effects of poverty on pupils' academic performance

The study identified various strategies through which social workers and schools can mitigate the impact of poverty on students. These include establishing school social work units to provide counseling and psychosocial support, case management for children from extremely poor households, advocacy for school fee waivers and scholarship opportunities, establishing a school-based resource bank for textbooks, stationery, and uniforms; lobbying for the reintroduction or strengthening of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, linking parents to economic empowerment programs (micro-credit schemes, vocational training), home visitation programs to support at-risk families, among many others.

These findings demonstrate that social workers play an indispensable role within the school system by bridging the gap between impoverished families, educational institutions, and community resources. These social work interventions function as external support to strengthen weak subsystems (home, school, community) to achieve better educational outcomes for pupils.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

The study investigated “The Impact of Poverty on the Academic Achievement of Primary School Students: A Case Study of Ekiosa Community in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.” It aimed to examine how poverty affects pupils’ academic performance by evaluating multiple variables such as family income, home learning materials, nutrition, parental education, and the home environment. It also explored the potential role of social workers in mitigating the adverse effects of poverty.

To achieve this, the study was guided by five research questions that focused on key determinants of academic achievement. The Systems Theory served as the theoretical framework, emphasizing the interdependence of the home, school, community, and broader socioeconomic structures in influencing children’s educational outcomes. A case study research design was adopted. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observation from pupils, teachers, parents, and administrators across the five selected primary schools in Ekiosa Community. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data.

Major findings of the study revealed that:

- Family income (socioeconomic status) significantly influences pupils' academic performance. Children from low-income households showed lower academic scores, higher absenteeism, limited school materials, and reduced motivation to learn.
- Availability of learning materials at home plays a crucial role in academic achievement. Pupils who had textbooks, notebooks, writing materials, and storybooks performed better academically than those who lacked these materials.
- Feeding and nutritional status directly affect cognitive performance and learning outcomes. Many pupils came to school hungry due to household poverty, and this affected attention, concentration, and classroom participation.
- Parental education and home environment significantly influence academic achievement. Pupils whose parents were educated and provided stable home environments performed better academically.
- Social work interventions can mitigate the negative impact of poverty. Suggestions included school social work units, material support programs, parent empowerment initiatives, expanded feeding programs, and community-level support systems.

The study concludes that poverty has a multidimensional effect on the cognitive, emotional, psychological, and academic development of primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that poverty remains a powerful determinant of academic outcomes among primary school pupils in Ekiosa Community in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The research shows that poverty influences children's educational achievement in multiple and interrelated ways, affecting not only their access to essential school materials but also their cognitive, emotional, nutritional, and psychosocial development. The study establishes that pupils from low-income households consistently experience disadvantages that undermine their learning capacity, school participation, and overall academic performance. These disadvantages manifest in poor access to learning resources, frequent absenteeism, hunger, malnutrition, limited parental support, and exposure to stressful home environments, all of which collectively weaken their educational engagement.

The conclusion drawn from this research aligns strongly with the Systems Theory, which emphasizes that a child's development and learning outcomes are shaped by the complex interactions between the home, school, community, and the broader socioeconomic environment. The study confirms that academic performance cannot be understood solely by examining the instructional processes within the school. Instead, it must be viewed through the lens of the multiple systems that surround the child. In this context, the home environment—particularly parental education, financial stability, access to basic needs,

emotional support, and learning materials—plays a foundational role in shaping children’s readiness to learn and their subsequent academic performance. Where poverty disrupts these systems, children’s educational outcomes are inevitably compromised.

Furthermore, the study concludes that poverty affects not just the materials that children need for school but also their physical and psychological well-being. Pupils who come to school hungry or malnourished struggle to concentrate, retain information, or participate effectively in classroom activities. Nutritional deprivation and chronic hunger diminish attention, weaken memory, and reduce stamina, thereby limiting overall academic achievement. This study therefore reinforces the widely recognized link between adequate nutrition and academic success, highlighting the need for continued implementation and expansion of school feeding programmes.

The research also establishes that parental education is a significant predictor of pupils’ academic achievement. Parents with higher levels of education are better equipped to support their children academically, provide conducive home learning environments, engage with teachers, and reinforce school-based learning. Conversely, parents with limited education often lack the capacity, confidence, or resources to support their children’s learning, and this situation is compounded by economic hardship.

Finally, this study concludes that effective and well-coordinated social work interventions hold great potential for reducing the negative impacts of poverty on academic achievement.

When present in schools, social workers can help identify vulnerable pupils early, provide psychosocial support, mediate between families and schools, mobilize resources, and advocate for policies that protect children’s educational rights. Their involvement creates a supportive bridge between schools, communities, and families, helping to mitigate the structural inequalities that perpetuate poor academic outcomes.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed;

Recommendations for Government:

- Strengthen the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in all public primary schools to promote better nutrition, increase enrollment, and enhance pupils’ concentration and academic performance.
- Provide adequate funding to public primary schools through increased budgetary allocation to education, focusing particularly on improving infrastructural facilities and instructional materials.
- Develop a comprehensive educational welfare policy to support children from low-income households by subsidizing school uniforms, textbooks, examination fees, and other school-related costs.

- Initiate community-based poverty alleviation programs such as vocational training, cash transfers, and microcredit schemes to empower families economically.
- Employ and deploy social workers to all public primary schools to provide psychosocial support and help address child-related social issues within the school environment.
- Mobilize community members to provide educational sponsorships for the most vulnerable pupils.
- Collaborate with schools to promote child protection policies and ensure safe learning environments.
- Discourage harmful cultural practices that undermine children's educational opportunities.

Recommendations for School Administrators:

- Establish school-based social work or counseling units to provide psychological support, monitor vulnerable pupils, and coordinate interventions.
- Create a school-based educational resource bank where pupils can borrow textbooks, writing materials, and uniforms.

- Collaborate with NGOs, faith-based organizations, community groups, and local philanthropists to mobilize resources for indigent pupils.
- Organize after-school remedial classes targeted at pupils who are performing poorly due to socioeconomic challenges.
- Strengthen school–home communication systems to enable early detection of pupils whose conditions may affect academic performance.

Recommendations for Teachers:

- Adopt child-centered teaching methods that consider the diverse backgrounds of pupils.
- Identify and closely monitor pupils at risk of academic failure due to poverty-related factors.
- Provide extra help and make classroom learning materials accessible for pupils who cannot afford them.
- Reduce punitive measures for late coming or absenteeism when such is caused by poverty, and instead work with social workers to support such pupils.
- Encourage parental involvement by organizing frequent meetings, home visits, and literacy-support workshops.

Recommendations for Parents/Guardians:

- Prioritize children’s education even when financial resources are limited. Little efforts—like monitoring homework or reading with children—can greatly improve performance.
- Seek support from community groups, schools, or NGOs when unable to provide basic academic materials.
- Provide a conducive learning environment at home, even if minimal, ensuring children have a quiet place and time for study.
- Participate in school activities and parent–teacher meetings to understand children’s progress and challenges.
- Avoid involving children in income-generating activities during school hours, as it negatively affects learning.

Recommendations for Social Workers:

- Conduct regular assessments of vulnerable pupils to identify poverty-related academic risks early.
- Provide counseling services to children experiencing emotional, psychological, or family-related challenges.

- Coordinate community-based interventions such as material donations, school feeding initiatives, and parent education programs.
- Advocate for child-friendly policies at school and government levels.
- Engage in home visits to understand the contexts of pupils and design appropriate intervention plans.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future researchers may consider:

- Conducting a comparative study between urban and rural primary schools to understand how poverty influences academic achievement in different contexts.
- Examining the long-term effects of poverty on students' academic progression into secondary and tertiary levels.
- Investigating the impact of psychosocial factors, such as parental stress, domestic violence, and child labor on academic performance.
- Exploring the role of digital learning resources in mitigating the educational disadvantages of poverty.
- Assessing the effectiveness of school social work interventions on improving academic outcomes among vulnerable children.

REFERENCES

- Adebayo, A., & Olamide, S. (2020). Poverty and educational inequality in Nigeria: A spatial analysis. *Journal of Educational Development, 45*(2), 112–126.
- Adebayo, P. F., & Ojo, E. O. (2012). Food security in Nigeria: An overview. *European Journal of Sustainable Development, 1*(2), 199–222.
- Adelabu, M. A. (2021). Socioeconomic challenges and academic outcomes of primary school children in Southwest Nigeria. *African Journal of Education, 9*(1), 87–103.
- Adeniyi, P. O. (2021). Parental involvement and literacy development among primary school pupils in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 15*(2), 44–56.
- Aigbokhan, B. E. (2008). Poverty, growth, and inequality in Nigeria: A case study. *African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)*.
- Ajakaiye, D. O., & Adeyeye, V. A. (2001). *The nature of poverty in Nigeria*. NISER Discussion Paper No. 2001.
- Akanbi, T. A. (2018). Poverty alleviation programmes and economic development in Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development, 9*(4), 45–55.
- Akanbi, T., & Soyibo, A. (2021). Social protection and child nutrition outcomes in Nigeria. *Food Policy, 102*, 102–118.
- Alkire, S., & Foster, J. (2011). Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement. *Journal of Public Economics, 95*(7–8), 476–487.
- Anderson, L. W., & Fleege, U. H. (2018). *Handbook of Classroom Teaching and Learning*. Routledge.
- Bebbington, A. (1999). Capitals and capabilities: A framework for analyzing peasant viability, rural livelihoods, and poverty. *World Development, 27*(12), 2021–2044.
- Bloom, B. S. (1976). *Human Characteristics and School Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Brooks-Gunn, J., & Duncan, G. J. (1997). The effects of poverty on children. *The Future of Children, 7*(2), 55–71.
- Corak, M. (2013). Income inequality, equality of opportunity, and intergenerational mobility. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 27*(3), 79–102.

- Evans, G. W. (2004). The environment of childhood poverty. *American Psychologist*, 59(2), 77–92.
- Evans, G. W., & English, K. (2002). The environment of poverty: Multiple stressor exposure, psychophysiological stress, and socioemotional adjustment. *Child Development*, 73(4), 1238–1248.
- Eze, J. U. (2020). Socioeconomic status and academic performance of pupils in public primary schools in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 75, 102–114.
- Fafunwa, B. (2020). *Access to educational resources and academic success in Nigerian schools*. Lagos: Spectrum Books.
- Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 1–22.
- Federal Government of Nigeria. (2004). *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)*. Abuja: National Planning Commission.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2014). *National Policy on Education* (6th ed.). Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2021). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Fraser, B. J. (2015). *Classroom learning environments*. In L. Corno & E. Anderman (Eds.), *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 63–74). Routledge.
- Grantham-McGregor, S., Cheung, Y. B., Cueto, S., et al. (2007). Developmental potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries. *The Lancet*, 369(9555), 60–70.
- Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2012). The role of cognitive skills in economic development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50(2), 607–668.
- Haushofer, J., & Fehr, E. (2014). On the psychology of poverty. *Science*, 344(6186), 862–867.
- Heckman, J. J. (2011). The economics of inequality: The value of early childhood education. *American Educator*, 35(1), 31–47.
- Ibrahim, H. (2022). Impact of school feeding programmes on learning outcomes in public primary schools in Northern Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Nutrition and Education*, 8(3), 19–33.

- Ijirshar, V. U. (2015). Agricultural policies and development in Nigeria: Review. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 7(2), 23–30.
- Ikeanyibe, O. M. (2009). The national poverty eradication programme (NAPEP): Approaches, achievements, and shortcomings. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 20(2), 103–113.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2020). *Nigeria: Staff report for the 2020 Article IV consultation*. Washington, DC: IMF.
- Lloyd, C. B., & Mensch, B. S. (2019). Family structure and poverty: Implications for children’s schooling outcomes. *Population Studies*, 73(1), 1–20.
- Luthar, S. S. (2006). Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades. In D. Cicchetti & D. Cohen (Eds.), Wiley. *Developmental Psychopathology*, 3, 739–795.
- Mani, A., Mullainathan, S., Shafir, E., & Zhao, J. (2013). Poverty impedes cognitive function. *Science*, 341(6149), 976–980.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2020). *2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria Report*. Abuja: NBS.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2022). *Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report 2022*. Abuja: NBS.
- Obadan, M. I. (2001). Poverty reduction in Nigeria: The way forward. *CBN Economic and Financial Review*, 39(4), 159–188.
- Ogunmola, T., & Adediran, K. (2023). Malnutrition and cognitive performance among primary school children in Nigeria. *West African Journal of Child Development*, 6(1), 11–25.
- Ogwumike, F. O. (1995). The effects of macroeconomic adjustment policies on poverty and income distribution in Nigeria. *African Economic Research Consortium Research Paper*, 26, 377–383.
- Oredein, A., & Oloyede, A. (2021). Educational inequality and learning barriers in Nigerian primary schools. *Journal of African Education Studies*, 13(4), 201–219.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

- Silver, H. (2007). *The process of social exclusion: The dynamics of an evolving concept*. Social Protection Discussion Paper 95. World Bank.
- Sirin, S. R. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 417–453.
- Steinmayr, R., Meißner, A., Weidinger, A. F., & Wirthwein, L. (2015). *Academic achievement*. In J. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 20–27). Elsevier.
- Townsend, P. (1979). *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ugwu, C., & Uzodinma, M. (2020). Home learning environment and academic achievement of pupils in Nigeria. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29(5), 1322–1333.
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). (2021). *The State of the World’s Children 2021: On My Mind*. New York: UNICEF.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2022). *Nigeria Human Development Report*. New York: UNDP.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2020). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020. Inclusion and Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2021). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2021*. Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2023). *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). (2020). *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*. Nairobi: UN-Habitat.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.
- Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). (2020). *Universal Basic Education Commission Annual Report 2020*. Abuja: UBEC.
- World Bank. (2018). *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education’s Promise*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. (2019). *Nigeria: Impact evaluation of the National Social Safety Nets Project*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. (2020). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. (2022). *Nigeria development update: The urgency for economic transformation*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Food Programme (WFP). (2022). *School feeding and cognitive development among children in low-income communities*. Rome: WFP.

World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). *World Malaria Report 2021*. Geneva: WHO.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS

Research Title: The Impact of Poverty on the Academic Achievement of Primary School Students: A Case Study of Ekiosa Community, Oredo LGA, Edo State.

Instruction:

This questionnaire is for research purposes only. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age: 6–7 years 8–9 years 10–11 years 12 years and above
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Class: Primary 4 Primary 5 Primary 6

Section B: Family Socioeconomic Status

4. Do you live with your parents/guardians? Yes No
5. Does your family have enough money to meet basic needs (food, shelter, clothing)?
- Always Sometimes Rarely Never
6. What is the major occupation of your parent/guardian?
- Trader Civil servant Artisan Unemployed
- Other (specify): _____
7. How often are your school fees paid on time?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

Section C: Learning Materials and Academic Environment

8. Do you have the required textbooks for your subjects?

All Some Few None

7. Do you have writing materials (exercise books, pencils, pens) regularly?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

8. Do your parents/guardians help you with homework?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

9. Do you have a quiet place to study at home? Yes No

Section D: Nutrition and Well-Being

10. How often do you eat breakfast before coming to school?

Every day Sometimes Rarely Never

11. Do you usually bring lunch to school?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

12. How often do you feel hungry during school hours?

Never Sometimes Often Always

Section E: Academic Performance

13. How would you rate your performance in school?

Excellent Good Fair Poor

14. How often do you attend school?

- Every day Most days Sometimes Rarely

15. Have you repeated any class before? Yes No

Section F: Social Support and School Interventions

16. Does your school provide support to pupils from low-income homes?

- Yes No Not sure

17. Which of the following do you receive in school? (You may tick more than one)

- Free notebooks Free school meals Extra lessons Counseling

None

18. What can help pupils from poor homes do better in school?

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Instruction: Please answer honestly. All responses are confidential and used solely for academic research.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Years of teaching experience:

1–5 years 6–10 years 11–15 years 16 years and above

3. Highest qualification: NCE B.Ed B.Sc (Ed) PGDE

Other (specify): _____

Section B: Influence of Family Income on Academic Performance

4. Do pupils from low-income families perform lower than others academically?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

5. Pupils from poor households often have difficulty paying school levies.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

6. Poverty contributes to poor school attendance.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Section C: Learning Materials and Home Environment

7. Pupils from low-income homes lack adequate learning materials.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

8. Pupils' home environment affects their ability to complete homework.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Section D: Nutrition and Academic Achievement

9. Hunger affects pupils' concentration in class.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

10. Pupils who do not eat breakfast tend to perform poorly.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Section E: Social Work Interventions

11. Does the school currently implement interventions for vulnerable pupils?

Yes No Not sure

12. Which interventions are available? (Tick all that apply)

Counseling Free meals Extra lessons Material support

Referrals to social workers None

13. What additional interventions would you recommend?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Purpose: To gather qualitative data about how poverty influences children's learning experiences.

Instruction: Interviews will be conducted privately. Responses are confidential.

Section A: Family Background

1. Can you describe your household income situation?
2. What are the major challenges your family faces in meeting basic needs?

Section B: Learning Materials and Home Support

3. Are you able to provide your child with school materials?
4. How often do you assist your child with homework?
5. Does your child have a good place to study at home?

Section C: Nutrition and Child Well-Being

6. How many meals does your child eat per day?
7. How often does your child go to school without breakfast?
8. Do you think hunger affects your child's school performance?

Section D: School and Community Support

9. What support does your child's school provide for children from low-income families?
10. What kind of help would you like the school, government, or social workers to provide?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS/SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Purpose: To obtain professional insights on poverty-related challenges in schools.

Section A: School Context

1. What are the most common poverty-related issues you observe among pupils?
2. How does poverty affect school attendance and performance in this community?

Section B: Current Interventions

3. What interventions does the school currently provide for vulnerable learners?
4. Are these interventions adequate? Why or why not?

Section C: Collaboration and Social Work Role

5. In what ways do social workers collaborate with schools in Ekiosa community?
6. What challenges hinder effective school social work practice in this area?

Section D: Suggestions/Recommendations

7. What additional interventions do you think should be implemented?
8. What do you believe government or NGOs can do to reduce the impact of poverty on children's education?