

Perceived Effects of Poverty on Secondary School Student's Learning Outcomes in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government area of Rivers State.

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the perceived effects of poverty on secondary school students' learning outcomes in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study adopted the survey research design. The participants were 100 students randomly selected from five schools (20 per school). Instrument used was Perceived Effect of Poverty Questionnaire ($r=0.85$) and Achievement Test in Social Studies ($r=0.77$). Data were analyzed using t-test analysis and all hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of students based on religion and the parental educational background was not correlated with students' learning outcomes. It was recommended that teachers and school administrators should give attention to both students from educated and uneducated homes in the classroom activities and encourage them to actively participate in classroom activities and encourage them to actively participate in classroom instruction and that government bridge the existing gap between the rich and the poor.

Keywords: Perception, Poverty, Secondary students, Learning outcomes

Introduction

Several factors that influence classroom activities and invariably impinge on learning outcomes have been researched. Generally classified as cognitive and non – cognitive factors, these factors interact to influence the patterns of behavior exhibited by the learner in the classroom setting. The cognitive traits are acquired through exposure to some learning tasks, while the non – cognitive traits are not clearly linked with the process of acquisition of knowledge, understanding and thinking. This explains why the non – cognitive traits are not easily and directly measurable like the cognitive behaviors, which are most often evaluated using paper and pencil tests.

Education is fundamental to acquisition and advancement of knowledge. Titiloye (2018) stressed that education occurs through any experiences that have a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels or acts. In its narrow technical sense, education is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another e.g. instructions in schools. A right to education has been created and recognized by some jurisdictions (Peters, 2016). Education involves gathering of knowledge in whatever aspects. It helps a person to draw the best out of their minds and spirit. Education plays a vital role in the personal growth and the social development among all of us. It impacts us with all the power and necessities in making a noticeable mark in any of the field. In all, it's one's education which decides what one can make out of life (Tompson, 2017).

School readiness on the part of a child's reflects such child's ability to succeed both academically and socially in a school environment. It requires physical well – being and appropriate motor development, emotional health and a positive approach to new experiences, age – appropriate social knowledge and competence, age – appropriate language skills and age – appropriate general knowledge and cognitive skills. Peters, Rollins and Damole (2017) stressed that poverty decreases a child's readiness for school through aspects of health, home life, schoolings and neighborhood. A child's home has a particular strong impact on school readiness.

Poverty can be described as the situation where by people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. These chronic insufficient needs are poor nutrition, poor housing and inadequate medical care (Ayomide, 2015). In his own opinion, Henry (2017) affirmed in his study that poverty population density, family size, poor health and insufficient general knowledge were features of low social class, which prevent children from taking full advantage of educational opportunities which invariably promote background trend in schools. In similar vein, Ayomikun (2019) found that these variables lead to poor education progress will be thwarted. Living in extreme and persistent poverty has particularly negative effects although the consequences of not being defined below the poverty line but still suffering from material hardship should not be underestimated (Titus, 2013).

From the findings of Boluwaduro (2015) he observed that living in extreme and persistent poverty has particular negative effects although the consequences of not being defined below the poverty

line but still suffering from material hardship should not be underestimated. Abdullahi (2013) stressed that the negative effects of poverty on all level of school success have been widely demonstrated and accepted. There is a direct link between early childhood intervention and increased social and cognitive ability.

Hence, it is the parent child relationship that has been proven to have the greatest influence on reversing the impact of poverty. Both parenting style and parental involvement, inside and outside of the school environment have impact on a child's early development.

The researcher, Odunayo (2015) observed that the children from financially challenged backgrounds find it hard to learn with the same vigor with that of children from well to do background. She stressed further that pupils living in poverty do come to school hungry, tired and in worn – out clothes. So, they find it hard to concentrate because of their social irritability. Things preoccupy them and prevent their mind from concentrating on any innovative stuff. It is an established fact that due to lack of adequate financial capability many individuals who might have contributed to the growth of this nation in different fields, eventually found themselves engaging in unpromising careers, such individual are forced out of schools only to find themselves engaging in hard labour such as farming with the aims of getting ends meet and saving money for school expenses. Most of the times, their aims are defeated as they could not afford the needed instructional materials. This awkward situation invariably hinders their academic success, and this killing their dreams in this regard.

In his own view, Akinfenwa (2016) stressed that deficiency in brain, if persists for long may lead to permanent damage to such brain. Total brain development takes place between the moment of conception and age two. During this period protein intake is necessary for proper brain development. Inadequate medical facilities as a result of poverty may lead to irregular school attendance and lack of concentration even while in school. The result to this ugly situation will automatically be poor academic performance. Moreover, Collins (2012) was of the opinion that poverty can breed a feeling of inferiority complex. A child without school uniform and school sandals will definitely feel inferior and bad. He may be unwilling or unable to interact with peers in school in an effective manner. There is general agreement that interventions should be data driven, and that

assessment and interventions should be closely linked. A primary evaluation of a child and family support system is, therefore pivotal in the creation of individualized interventions to ensure success in placing children on a normative trajectory. Therefore, a child's home has a particular strong impact on school readiness.

Poverty indicates the extent to which an individual does without resources. The literature on poverty suggests that it has an effect on education. For instance, it has been reported that poverty has a negative association academic achievement due to the limited resources available to low income students (Titus and Queen, 2014). Likewise, it has been reported that children from poorer households are more likely to drop out before completing their education (Akinkunmi, 2017). Furthermore, Education systems aim to provide a quality education to all students, however, studies carried over many years show that socio – economic status hinders academic achievement, and low socio – economic level and low achievement are correlated (Fola, Abdulahi and Ogunbiyi, 2018).

In another study, Reign (2019) found that parent's educational attainment at the time of his or her child's birth had the strongest influence on whether or not their child would experience persistent childhood poverty. This supports earlier research conducted by Jessica, Ebilism and Jumahi (2018) where they found that the parent's educational attainment had a significant effect on academic achievement while other studies have shown that a mother's education level has more significant impact on children learning outcomes than income. Again, the problems of poverty are compounded by a widening national achievement gap, especially between low-income students and high income students (Brown, 2017).

Children living in poverty sees many chronic stressors, including unsafe neighborhoods where there are high levels of crime, parents who are making minimum wage which causes a financial strain on the family, parents who are separated or divorced, siblings live in different households, and household that are overcrowded (Johnson, Riis, and Noble, 2016). All of these stressors create void in the lives of children raised in poverty, and result in academic and behavioral issues in schools. Children raised in poverty who have significant changes in brain structure are faced with many academic problems. They may experience emotional and social challenges, chronic stressors, and cognitive lags due to significant changes in brain structure in areas of memory and emotional trauma,

which result in lower academic achievement in the classroom.

Researchers have proven that how a child is socialized at home is not a part of measuring a child's competence. Instead, a child's test scores are used to only measure competence. Boluwaduro (2015) affirm that most researchers argue that performance and competence are synonymous, but they are not. Performance in any given situation is determined by a number of factors, including socialization variables that children learn in the home. Other studies also contribute to the literature about how parental involvement influences a child's academic success. Evidence from researches has supported how higher levels of student achievement are associated with greater parental encouragements (Reign, 2019). It is crucial to understand several components of the family structure when determining the likelihood of academic success of students. Social factors that involve ethnicity, family income, race, parental education and English proficiency are significant when it comes to educational opportunity and access to it.

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creation of individualized interventions to ensure success in placing children on a normative trajectory. Therefore, a child's home has a particular strong impact on school readiness.

Statement of the Problem

It is almost becoming a common and accepted knowledge the poor performance of students in our schools is due to the inadequacies of teachers or student non-challant attitude to study. This is purely a wrong assumption that needs an investigation as we cannot afford to lose sight of the drastic effect that one's parental background has on the academic performance of the child. In recent times, one of the cardinal challenges of the contemporary society is the pursuit of modernization through technical advancement. The ultimate goal of this is the provision of life for the better quality populace. It is well documented that poverty decreases a child's readiness for school through aspects of health, home life, schooling and neighborhood. Living in poverty has particular negative effects of poverty on all levels of school success have been widely demonstrated and accepted. There is a direct link between early childhood intervention and increased social and cognitive ability. The characteristics of parents have positive effects on several aspects of child's learning outcomes. Therefore, poor learning and comprehensive skills are very common among financially challenged backgrounds and they themselves as individuals who cannot meet up academically with their mates. The nexus between poverty and students' preparedness to learn constitutes the hub for this research.

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were raised for the study;

1. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from Christian families and those from Muslim families.
2. There is no significant difference between the academic performances of students from rich and poor families.
3. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from educated families and those from illiterate families.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey research design. It focused on perceived effects of poverty on secondary school students' learning outcomes in One LGA, Rivers State. The study adopted the survey design that deals with the opinion of people through the use of questionnaire in gathering data. The population for the

study comprises of all secondary school students in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. Out of this population, a sample of 100 respondents was selected through random sampling technique from five schools (20 per school). Instruments used were Perceived Effect of Poverty Questionnaire (0.85) and achievement Test in Social studies ($r=0.77$). Three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using t-test.

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from Christian families and those from Muslim families.

In testing this hypothesis, t-test analysis was used to determine the difference between the academic performance of students from Christian families and those from Muslim families. With the use of t-test statistical method employed, the results were presented in the table below, using performance of students in English and mathematics as yardstick.

Table 1: T-test analysis of academic performance of students from Christian and those from Muslim families

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-value	Remark
Christian Family	29	91.79	24.660	82	1.116	1.96	NS
Muslim Family	61	94.76	24.714				

P= 0.05

As indicated above, table 1 shows t-calculated 1.116 is less than table value of 1.96. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from Christian families and those from Muslim families.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from rich and poor families.

The use of t-test statistical method was made use in the academic performance of students in English Language and Mathematics was considered.

Table 2: t-test analysis of academic performance of students from rich and poor families

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-value	t-critical	df	Remark
Rich Families	50	70.04	3.21	37.09	1.96	98	Sig
Poor Families	50	46.23					

P= 0.05

As shown in the table above, since the calculated $t(37.09)$ is greater than the tabulated t score (1.96). Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference between the academic performance of students from rich families and those from poor families

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from educated families and those from illiterate families

Table 3: t-test analysis of academic performance of students educated families and those from illiterate families

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-value	Remark
Educated Families	51	91.51	24.923	98	0.853	1.96	NS
Illiterate Families	49	95.71	24.349				

P= 0.05

As indicated above, table 3 shows that t-calculated 0.853 is less than t-value of 1.96. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the academic performance of students from educated families and those illiterate families.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study shown in table 1 shows that there is significant difference between the academic performance of students from rich families and those from poor background. The result of this study gives further empirical support to the previous findings of researchers on religion and academic performance of students. Kaplan and Taylor (2016) revealed that there is no significant correlation between religiosity and academic performance among science students. However, a close examination of the results revealed that science students possessed high levels of religiosity as well as high levels of academic performances. Oladotun (2018) stressed that if a positive relationship is found between student's religiosity and academic performance, it is expected that steps should be taken to improve student religiosity by encouraging more involvement in religions activities. In another study, Olaonipekun (2014) determined the religiosity of social science students enrolled in a college of education and university in Kaduna State using 20-item questionnaire which contained emotions, beliefs and religious rituals. He used cumulative Grade Point Averages (CPGA) to measure their academic performance.

The findings revealed no significant correlation was found between religion and students' academic performance. Gurrey (2013) stressed that public religious practice had a moderate impact on academic performance using certain variable related to church meeting attendance. Religious belief variables were found to be completely negligible in their impact on the same.

The findings from table 2 shows that there is significant difference between the academic performance of students from rich families and those from poor families. The findings of this study confirmed what Ojelabi (2015) found out that the success rate of students from high-income and low-income in Biology and Mathematics is at the same rate in terms of their performances. He stressed further that educational inequality is not visible in terms of the influence of social background on students' test scores, as well as in learning, as expressed by the performance distribution in test scores. Socioeconomic status has been commonly used as a latent construct for measuring family background (Wright, 2014). However, among empirical studies, there is no consensus on how to best operationalize the concept.

In another study, Heward and Johnson (2017) conducted a study on effect of socioeconomic

segregation on academic performance of secondary school students. Their analyses were conducted on senior secondary school student II. They found that socioeconomic status of parents had no significant effect on the students' academic performance. Further analysis revealed that the effect of parent socioeconomic status on academic outcomes was no longer significant after controlling for school policies and practices. Based on these results, they concluded that socioeconomic integration may not be necessary, provided school policies and practices can be reformed. It may be the case that improving low-economic status schools in this fashion would be more effective and realistic, in comparison to mandated socioeconomic integration.

The findings from table 3 which stated that no significant difference in the academic performance of students from educated families and those from illiterate families. The hypothesis was accepted. The findings of this study therefore corroborate with the findings of Jude, Smith and Peter (2018) which stated that in this era of globalization and technological revolution, education is considered as the first step in every human endeavor. It plays a fundamental role in the development of human capital and is linked with an individual wellbeing and opportunities for better living. Michael (2014) in his research conducted on 150 students of senior secondary school in Lagos, found out that there is no relationship between parental education and students' academic performance. To him, those students from educated parents did not have better G.P.A. than those from uneducated parents. Again Babafemi (2018) came up with the result that there is no significant difference between students from educated parents and uneducated parents.

Another study by Williams (2016) on the impact of parental educational background on students leaving outcomes in Mathematics, indicated that students with high educational qualification did not perform better in academic activities than students from uneducated families.

Unfortunately, these factors are so weighty that, it renders the important efforts made by the teachers towards the realization of students' academic useless. It is widely accepted that child's academics achievement does not only restrict to the school he attends but also the education and educational preparation that particular child has received outside the school

Conclusion

From this study, the major finding is that there was a statistically significant difference between children of

rich and poor parents on academic performance. It could be concluded that poverty could negatively affect children's academic performance in schools.

Recommendation

Based on the above, the following recommendation are hereby proffered:

1. Teachers and school administrators should give attention to both students from educated and uneducated homes in class room activities and encourage them to actively participate in classroom institution.
2. Government should increase allocation of funds to provide for more amenities to facilitate leaning in schools.
3. Parents should be sensitized on the need to make education of their children easy to pursue by giving up priority to provide school materials for their children.
4. Attempt should be made by the government to bridge the existing gap between the children of rich and poor families, by adopting policies that would reduce inflation to the bearest minimum.

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