



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



The Nexus between entrenched poverty and educational performance of students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 23(01), 935–941

Publication history: Received on 21 May 2024; revised on 07 July 2024; accepted on 10 July 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.1.1969>

Abstract

Entrenched poverty and educational performance are deeply intertwined creating a cycle that could be difficult to break. This work focusses on the nexus between entrenched poverty and educational performance of students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. Specifically, the work sought to examine how parents' levels of income and education influences students' academic performance in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. Primary data was sourced through the use of questionnaire and a sample size of 840 respondents was arrived at. Simple percentages and Chi squared was used to analyse the data and the results show that both parents' levels of income and education influenced educational performances of the students in the Local Government. It was recommended among others that government should increase funding for Education by allocating more budget to the education sector to improve infrastructure, provide learning materials, and ensure schools are well-equipped. Also prioritize funding for schools in impoverished areas to reduce disparities in educational resources.

Keywords: Entrenched Poverty; Education; Performance; Students

1. Introduction

Poverty and educational performance are often interconnected because individuals from impoverished backgrounds may face obstacles like limited access to quality education, inadequate resources and socio economic barriers which can hinder their educational achievements. Poverty can be seen as a condition of having insufficient resources or income. Fundamentally, it is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity which implies lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society (UNESCO 2021). The results being not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having good access to health facilities, not having a good job to earn a living and most importantly not having access to education which is the crux of this research. Entrenched poverty on the other hand implies a deeper more persistent form of poverty where individuals or communities have been trapped in poverty for generations, often due to systemic issues like lack of access to education, employment opportunities or basic services (World Bank 2020). The linkages between education and entrenched poverty can be broadly seen in two ways: Firstly, investment in education increases the skills and productivity of poor households. It enhances the income level as well as the overall standard of living (human development). Secondly, poverty is also a big impediment in educational attainment. Poverty affects the educational achievement in three dimensions. The very first one is from resource-side (learning and financial resources), second one is the generation of such social pressures which mutilates the mind-sets of poor students and lastly when poverty grabs any institution it deteriorates the teaching standards. At macro level, we can generally examine that poor countries have low levels of education and at micro level children of poor families do not attend schools. Conversely, higher levels of education can often help individuals escape poverty by providing them with better job opportunities and increased earning potential (Brookings Institution 2020)

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Entrenched poverty can have a multifaceted and pervasive impact on students' educational performance, creating numerous barriers that must be addressed through targeted interventions and systemic changes to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students. Therefore, the objective of this work is to examine the nexus between entrenched poverty and educational performance of students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State in Nigeria. Specifically, the study was to:

- Access the impact of parents' level of income on students' performance
- Examine the effect of parents' level of education on students' performance.

The following research questions would guide the study

- What is the impact of parents' level of income on students' performance?
- What is the effect of parents' level of education on students' performance?

1.1. Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between parents' level of income and the students' performance
- Ho2: There is no significant relationship between parents' level of education and academic performance of students

2. Literature review

2.1. Entrenched poverty

Entrenched poverty in Nigeria refers to the persistent and systemic poverty that affects a significant portion of the population over an extended period. This form of poverty is characterized by its deep roots in various socio-economic, political, and environmental factors that create a vicious cycle, making it challenging to eradicate (Global Partnership for Education 2019). There are some key elements and causes that elaborate on this concept; which according to Human Rights Watch (2019) include the following:

- **Economic Factors:** this comprise of unemployment and underemployment where a high unemployment rate, coupled with underemployment, means that many Nigerians do not have stable and sufficient incomes to meet basic needs. This lack of economic opportunity is a significant driver of entrenched poverty. There is also the issue of informal economy where a large portion of Nigeria's workforce is employed in the informal sector, which is characterized by low wages, lack of social security, and job insecurity. This sector's dominance hinders economic stability and growth.
- **Inequality:** There is a substantial gap between the wealthy and the poor in Nigeria. This disparity means that economic growth benefits a small elite while a large portion of the population remains impoverished. Regional disparities also exist where certain regions, particularly the northern parts of Nigeria, experience higher levels of poverty compared to other regions. This regional inequality is often exacerbated by historical neglect, lack of infrastructure, and lower levels of educational attainment.
- **Education and Skills:** In terms of access to quality education, many Nigerians especially in rural areas, do not have access to quality education. This lack of education limits opportunities for higher-paying jobs and perpetuates the cycle of poverty. For educational attainment, the education system often fails to equip students with the necessary skills for the modern job market, contributing to underemployment and unemployment.
- **Governance and Corruption:** there is political instability where frequent political changes and instability disrupt economic policies and development programs, making sustained poverty alleviation efforts difficult. Widespread corruption diverts resources meant for public services and development projects, leading to inadequate infrastructure, healthcare, and educational facilities.
- **Healthcare:** Poor healthcare services results to limited access to quality healthcare services meaning that many Nigerians suffer from preventable and treatable diseases, which can incapacitate breadwinners and increase household poverty. Health-related expenditures like high out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare can drive families into poverty, especially in the absence of comprehensive health insurance schemes.
- **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Lack of basic and inadequate infrastructure including roads, electricity, and water supply, hinders economic activities and quality of life, particularly in rural areas. Similarly, urban vs. rural divide means infrastructure development is often concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural areas underdeveloped and contributing to rural poverty.

Social and Cultural Factors Demographic Pressures like high population growth rates strain resources and services, making it difficult to improve living standards and reduce poverty. In the same vein certain cultural practices, such as early marriage and large family sizes, can limit economic opportunities and educational attainment, particularly for women and girls.

In view of the above, entrenched poverty in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue requiring comprehensive and sustained efforts across various sectors. Addressing it necessitates policy interventions that promote economic diversification, improve education and healthcare, tackle corruption, and ensure inclusive growth that benefits all regions and segments of society. By understanding and addressing these underlying factors, Nigeria can make significant strides towards reducing entrenched poverty and improving the educational performance of students and the quality of life for its citizens (World Economic Forum 2020).

2.2. Entrenched poverty and educational performance of students in Nigeria

Entrenched poverty significantly affects the educational performance of students in Nigeria in several ways some of which according to UNICEF (2019) are outlined below:

- **Limited Access to Quality Education:** Many children from impoverished backgrounds lack access to quality schools, which are often concentrated in urban or wealthier areas. Rural and impoverished regions frequently suffer from underfunded schools, insufficient infrastructure, and inadequate learning materials.
- **Poor Nutrition and Health:** Poverty often leads to malnutrition and poor health, which can affect cognitive development and concentration. Students who are hungry or unwell are less likely to perform well academically.
- **Inadequate Learning Environment:** Students in poverty-stricken areas often attend overcrowded schools with high student-to-teacher ratios. These environments make individualized attention difficult, which can hinder learning and academic achievement.
- **Limited Parental Support:** Parents in impoverished families might lack the education themselves to assist with homework or to engage in their children's academic life. Additionally, they may work long hours, leaving less time for involvement in their children's education.
- **High Dropout Rates:** Financial pressures often force students to drop out of school to work and support their families. This interrupts their education and limits their future opportunities.
- **Psychosocial Stress:** The stress of living in poverty can affect students' mental health and emotional well-being, leading to issues like anxiety and depression, which can impede academic performance.
- **Insufficient Educational Resources:** Many students from low-income families cannot afford textbooks, uniforms, and other educational supplies. This lack of resources can hinder their ability to complete assignments and participate fully in school activities.
- **Exposure to Violence and Instability:** Poverty-stricken areas may have higher rates of crime and violence, creating an unsafe environment that can disrupt schooling and affect students' ability to focus on their studies.

Addressing these challenges in the view of WHO (2018) requires a multifaceted approach, including investment in education infrastructure, nutrition programs, community support initiatives, and policies aimed at reducing poverty.

2.2.1. Educational performance

Educational performance refers to the measurable outputs of a student's learning process and the effectiveness of educational systems, including schools, teachers, curricula, and policies. It encompasses various dimensions, including academic achievement, skills development, and personal growth (Hattie 2009). Understanding educational performance involves examining multiple factors that influence student outcomes, the methods used to assess these outcomes, and the broader impacts on individuals and society. Sirin (2005) outlined some key dimensions of educational performance as follows:

- **Academic Achievement:** this is measured by grades and test scores, subject proficiency and graduation rates
- **Skills Development:** This involves cognitive skills made up of critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. There are also technical skills which encourages competence in using technology and performing specific tasks related to various professions. Then there is also soft skills Communication, teamwork, adaptability, and other interpersonal skills.
- **Personal Growth:** this is measured by self-efficacy which is a student's belief in their own ability to succeed. Motivation and engagement, that is the level of interest and participation in educational activities and Social and emotional development which has to do with skills in managing emotions, building relationships, and understanding social dynamics.

2.3. Empirical literature

Brown and Park (2012) specifically examined the effect of poverty on the educational enrolment and outcomes of children aged 5-16, using a 1997 survey of households and schools from poor countries in six provinces. Their measure of household wealth was expenditure per capita (excluding expenditure on education), and they defined a household to be 'poor and credit' constrained if it is in the bottom third of both expenditures per capita and access to credit. Using a proportional hazard model, they found that children are more likely to drop out of school if the household is poor and credit-constrained (Their most important result), if they have fewer siblings, if the father enrolment decision, and if school fees (possibly proxying school quality) are lower. The sibling result was interpreted as indicating that siblings are complementary rather than competitors of resources, and the fees improve the quality of education and hence the rate of return. The authors found the test score (for enrolled pupils) to be higher if expenditure per capita is higher (implying that it improves quality) if there are older siblings, and for girl (suggesting that the less able girls drop out of school). However, their variables representing school quality (the pupil-teacher ratio, the proportion of rain-proof classrooms, and proportion of teachers with post-secondary education) had no significant effects on test scores.

3. Research methodology

Descriptive survey design was employed to unravel the effects of poverty on the educational performance of students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. The population of the study was made up of all the students in the twelve government secondary schools in which a sample size of 840 students was drawn through a random sampling technique, 70 from each school. The instrument used for the collection of data was the questionnaire made up of 6 items designed in a three point Likert scale responses of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was made up of two sections. Section 'A' elicited the respondents' bio-data and section 'B' elicited information on the research questions. The researchers personally administered the instrument and also retrieved all of them accordingly. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages tool for the research questions and chi-square statistic for the hypotheses.

3.1. Study area

Abi local government is in the central senatorial district of Cross River State, the headquarters is Itigidi and there are ten wards in the Local Government which include: Adadama, Afafanyi/Igonigoni, Ekureku I, Ekureku II, Imabana I, Imabana II, Usumutong/Abuego, Itigidi, Ebom, Ediba/Anong. It is situated along the Cross River and is bounded to the north and west by Ebonyi State, to the south by Biase Local Government and to the east by Yakurr Local Government Area.

Government secondary schools in Abi

- Community secondary school Itigidi
- Agbo comprehensive secondary school Egboronyi
- Bahumono secondary grammar school Ebom
- Igbo Imabana secondary school
- Government Technical college Afafanyi
- Edanafa secondary community school
- Community secondary school Adadama
- Government secondary school Bazoure
- Community secondary school Ebijakara
- Government secondary school AnongEkureku
- Government secondary school Ikpalegwa.
- Community secondary school

4. Results

4.1. Research Question 1: Do parents' level of income affect students' performance in Abi Local Government Area?

Table 1 Responses on parents' level of income

S/No	Items	SA	% SA	A	% A	D	% D	SD	% SD
Do you agree that Parents' level of income influence the academic performance of students in Abi LGA?									
1	Due to parents' poverty some students could not register for senior school certificate exams.	225	26.8	370	44.0	150	17.9	95	11.3
2	Most SS3 students may not obtain UTME forms because their parents cannot afford it.	260	30.9	282	33.6	124	14.8	174	20.7
3	Many students drop out of school due to inability to pay school fees	235	28.0	298	35.5	102	12.1	205	24.4

Source: researchers' computation

From table 1 above, 71.2 per cent of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that parents' poverty could hinder registration of students for school certificate examinations while 28.8 per cent of the respondents both disagreed and strongly disagreed. Similarly, 64.5 per cent of the respondents both agreed and strongly agreed that most SS 3 students may not obtain UMTE forms because of parents' poverty while 35.5 per cent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. In the same vein 63.5 percent of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that many students drop out of school due to parents' inability to pay fees while 36.5 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed.

4.2. Research Question 2: Do parents' level of education affect students' performance in Abi Local Government Area?

Table 2 Responses on parents' Level of Education

S/No	Items	SA	% SA	A	% A	D	% D	SD	% SD
Do you agree that Parents' level of education influence the academic performance of students in Abi LGA?									
1	My school lack laboratories	272	32.4	420	50	85	10.1	63	7.5
2	Each class is usually over crowded	326	38.8	358	42.6	84	10.0	72	8.6
3	We lack both library and ICT facilities	218	26	322	38.3	162	19.3	138	16.4

Source: researchers' computation

From table 2 above, 82.4 per cent of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that their school lack laboratories while 17.6 per cent of the respondents both disagreed and strongly disagreed. Similarly, 81.4 per cent of the respondents both agreed and strongly agreed that each class is usually over crowded while 18.6 per cent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. In the same vein 64.3 percent of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they lack both library and ICT facilities while 35.7 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed.

4.3. Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between parents' income and the students' performance

Table 3 Chi-square statistic Test of relationship between poverty of parents' level of income and their children academic performance

Variables	N	Df	Sig/level	X ² -cal	X ² -tab	Decision
Parents Level of income	840	9	0.05	162.48	15.92	Rejected

At 0.05 level of significance and 9 degree of freedom, χ^2 -cal is 162.48 and χ^2 -table is 15.92. Since χ^2 calculated is greater than χ^2 -table, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that academic performances of students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State are influenced by parents' level of income.

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between parents' level of education and academic performance of students

Table 4 Chi-square statistic Test of relationship between poverty of parents' level of education and their children academic performance

Variables	N	Df	Sig/level	X ² -cal	X ² -tab	Decision
Parents Level of Education	840	9	0.05	215.95	15.92	Rejected

At 0.05 level of significance and 9 degree of freedom, χ^2 -cal is 215.92 and χ^2 -table is 15.92. Since χ^2 calculated is greater than χ^2 -table, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that academic performances of students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State are influenced by parents' level of education.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

In this study, we specified entrenched poverty related variables that affect students' educational achievement in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. Parents' level of income and parents' level of education were duly put under consideration to check their level of impact on students' educational performance. Entrenched poverty implies a deeper more persistent form of poverty where individuals or communities have been trapped in poverty for generations, often due to systemic issues like lack of access to education, employment opportunities or basic services. As a result, it significantly affects the educational performance of students in Nigeria in several ways like limited access to education, poor nutrition and health, etc.

To mitigate the impact of entrenched poverty on the educational performance of students, the Nigerian government can implement a multi-faceted approach that addresses both immediate needs and long-term systemic needs. The study therefore recommends the following:

- **Increase Funding for Education:** By allocating more budget to the education sector to improve infrastructure, provide learning materials, and ensure schools are well-equipped. Also prioritize funding for schools in impoverished areas to reduce disparities in educational resources.
- **School Feeding Programs:** By expanding school feeding programs to ensure that students receive at least one nutritious meal a day, which can improve concentration and overall health. Also partner with local farmers to supply food, promoting local agriculture and ensuring fresh produce.
- **Scholarships and Financial Aid:** By providing scholarships, grants, and bursaries to students from low-income families to cover tuition fees, uniforms, books, and other school-related expenses. Establish also targeted financial aid programs for girls and other marginalized groups.
- **Teacher Training and Incentives:** Invest in continuous professional development for teachers to enhance their teaching skills and methodologies. Provide also incentives such as housing, transportation allowances, and bonuses to attract and retain qualified teachers in rural and underserved areas.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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