The Impact of the Household Poverty Trap on Learners’ Academic Achievement in Rural Secondary Schools in the Zululand District: A Case Study of Nongoma Secondary Rural Schools

Iwaloye Bunmi Omoniyi
Bongani Thulani Gamede
Chinaza Uleanya

Social Sciences Education, University Of Zululand,
Corner Guldengracht &, 2 Cent Cir, Road,
Richards Bay, 3900, South Africa

DOI: https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2022-0085

Abstract

This study looks into the elements that contribute to the poverty trap and how it affects learner academic progress in selected Nongoma secondary schools in South Africa’s Zululand district. A mixed qualitative and quantitative data gathering strategy was utilized to collect the information. Purposeful sampling was employed to pick five secondary high schools in this area, as well as teachers and students who were conveniently selected for the study. Financial resources, a lack of aspiration and motivation, and school dropouts are all results of poverty traps, according to the research, and these factors impede learners’ academic achievement in the schools studied. According to the study, reducing or eliminating poverty requires collective efforts, and all educational actors should contribute their respective quotas to provide basic infrastructure to both schools and rural communities, redistribute income and wealth, and plan improvements to encourage students to see the world from various perspectives.

Keywords: Poverty trap, Academic performance, cognitive, Ecological, Psychosocial

1. Introduction

Poverty is a phrase that is hotly debated, and for good reason. The debate over how poverty should be defined, described, and calculated extends beyond academic wrangling. The conceptualization, description, and measurement of poverty in society are a mirror reflection of society’s ideals: we still talk about how we want things to be theoretically sound in the conceptualization, definition, and assessment of what is proper in society. Learners raised by economically disadvantaged parents create a challenge for public educators and administrators. For whatever reason, students who enter school by the back door are unprepared to learn how to overcome challenges throughout their lives (Rouse, Brooks-Gunn & McLanahan, 2003).

School readiness, academic achievement, and overall school progress have all been harmed by poverty. Furthermore, due to a lack of school preparation and poor performance, economically
disadvantaged students usually had lower levels of school achievement. Unfortunately, failure and low academic performance begin when students encounter educators who have been socially conditioned to view impoverished people as morally inferior, i.e. a class that has chosen to remain poor. Some teachers incorrectly conveyed the view that students who grew up in poverty were irreparable.

Educators acted as if these students had been so harmed by their early experiences that they might be too difficult to educate (Wilkins, 2006). This was unfortunate because some educators failed to provide a positive school experience for these needy students, which could eventually lead them to break the cycle of poverty. Given the problems faced, school failure or poor academic performance is more likely to be the outcome of economically disadvantaged students (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Poverty had a negative influence on its youngest victims because they were more likely to be detained, and many of them struggled to finish high school and were less interested in continuing their education at higher institutions.

According to the World Bank, poverty is defined as hunger. Inadequate shelter is a symptom of poverty. Being sick and unable to see a doctor is a sign of poverty. Poverty means not being able to read and not being able to attend lessons. Poverty isn’t working; it’s a fear of the future, a day at a time survival. Poverty has various faces and has been shown in a variety of ways, changing over time and from location to place. The majority of the time, poverty is a condition that individuals wish to avoid. Poverty is a call to action for both the rich and the poor to improve the world so that more people have enough to eat, adequate housing, access to education and health care, safety from violence, and a voice in determining the notion of progress in their environment and cultures.

Situational poverty is characterized by a rapid decrease in resources, which is often caused by job loss, the death of a family member, or divorce. Despite the fact that it has a psychological influence, it is usually thought to be only transient. If a family’s socioeconomic level has remained below poverty for more than three generations, this is known as generational poverty or the poverty trap (Carter, & Brett, 2006). Although vulnerability and social isolation are frequently used interchangeably with poverty, they are not the same thing (Atkinson, 2008). According to Walker (2006), prolonged poverty provides people with too few opportunities to recuperate. This can demotivate students, which explains why social isolation is so strongly linked to poverty.

Poverty is defined by the (World Bank, 2007) as a situation in which a person lacks access to fundamental human requirements such as food, safe drinking water, sanitation, health, shelter, education, and knowledge. It is dependent not just on sales, but also on access to services. It is also defined as a lack of participation in decision-making as well as civil, social, and cultural life. As a result of insufficient cash and resources, learners may be excluded and marginalized from participating in activities that are considered the norm for other people in society, leading to a negative mindset and low self-concept, negatively impacting their academic performance.

2. Household Poverty Trap’s Impact on Learners’ Academic Performance

2.1 Stereotypes and repercussions

Stereotypes may also play a part in the attainment gap between black and white ethnic groups. Stereotypes are a factor that stops a person or a community from reaching their full potential (Appel & Kronbeger, 2012). Rural schools are considered as less intellectual due to the environment, parental history, inadequacy in the school setting, or the general physical outlook of the students. When these incorrect notions and prejudiced attitudes are present in the learning environment, whether purposefully or not, a learner can underperform. Appel and Kronberger discovered a group of people who were giving it their all while stereotyping signals. Appel & Kronberger is a law firm founded by Appel and Kronberger (2012).
2.2 Malnutrition

Poverty comes with a slew of hazards and problems, putting vulnerable students at risk. Positive nutritional habits are critical for the development of young brains and bodies. Malnutrition can have a substantial impact on cognition, memory, and linguistic capacity, which can make it difficult to study effectively in the classroom. In the United States, undernutrition is an epidemic among the poor; studies estimate that some 12 million American students consume meals that fall significantly short of the required nutritional recommendations. Brown and Pollit (1996). Because the lack of major basic dietary requirements has been shown to have negative impacts on the developing brain, as well as contributing to learning inadequacies and behavioural difficulties, this issue exposes poor kids to a slew of potential constraints.

Despite the fact that South Africa spends billions on social assistance and free public education, most of this money is lost when a student arrives in class with inadequate nutrition (Brown, & Pollit, 1996). While government assistance is widely available through programs like free food, free education, and other initiatives, these monies are sometimes misappropriated or abused. Instead of using government funding designed to support learners, the fund is also used to purchase products that are unrelated to learning, such as alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, and apparel. Even well-intentioned parents mistakenly feel that nutritious balanced meals are simply too expensive, and instead opt for cheap, full food; this has resulted in an increase in the incidence of diabetes and obesity among students living in low-income households (Fennal & Brown, 2006).

Lack of awareness and apathy about good nutrition adds to poor eating and health habits over a lifetime, which will not allow learners to be more productive in school and will also hamper correct focus while studying. Both of these factors play a role in the rising rate of morbidity among students and disadvantaged households. (Fennal and Brown, 2006)

2.3 Learning disabilities

Learning difficulties are another key issue that has a negative impact on educational attainment. In 2013, nearly 30 million individuals, the majority of whom are children, lived in poverty. (Child/Trends Databank, 2014) All learners living below the poverty line have been reported as having disabilities. Minority students are overrepresented in special education services, according to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (2014) (Child / Trends Databank, 2014). Poverty among learners from low-income families has been identified as a driving force for learning difficulties, according to the Centre for Learning Disabilities (2014). (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). Some experts, on the other hand, say that minority students do not have learning difficulties; rather, teachers are indifferent to their needs and cultural norms.

In South African schools, ineffective teachers appear to employ the most traditional methodology. According to Hughes (2003), the prevailing cultural mode of schooling is universal, or should be universal, and best appropriate for everybody. Hughes explained that in order to give engagement and motivation, teachers must be sympathetic to their students’ interests, motives, social, and cultural preferences. A teacher must modify the lesson to fit the needs of all students in these categories. Volunteering at school, attending parent/teacher conferences, connecting with educators, assisting learners with homework, and supporting other learning activities are just a few examples.

In South Africa, the less-social economic group of black and colored parents, particularly in rural places like Nongoma, who are not active in these activities, can appear to have low parental involvement from the school side (Gaetano, 2007). Less fortunate families are less likely to react to and support the school’s stance in these activities, despite the fact that not all of these activities are visible to schools and instructors. This can be interpreted as ignorance on the part of the school (Barbarin, McCandies, Coleman, Hill, 2005). The affluent household, on the other hand, would frequently communicate with schools over their children’s academic or social concerns.
2.4 School dropouts and truancy

Poverty diminishes the likelihood of educational accomplishment while also making educational attainment one of the primary avenues out of poverty. Poverty has a remarkable impact on students' academic achievements. One of the most well-known causes of school absenteeism and dropouts is poverty (Cuthrell, et al., 2010). Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (2001), all students have been held responsible for the academic success of colleges, teachers, and administrators. The demand for an education system that provides learners with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed has put pressure on educators to understand their students, particularly those who are struggling academically.

According to studies, instructors may make a significant impact in providing a healthy learning environment for underprivileged students (Pascopella, 2006). Any peer-to-peer interaction is another telltale sign of at-risk students. Because disadvantaged students may not be fully exposed to or lack the motivation for personal hygiene, their peers become hyperaware of the differences. Bullying and teasing can occur as a result of peer to peer contact in this situation. Teachers, counselors, and administrators should be well-trained to examine the concerns and deficiencies of a student whose sanitary conditions may be hazardous to themselves and others in a non-threatening manner. Because these students may be unaware of positive sanitary issues, educators should be able to teach them about basic sanitation in a courteous and inviting manner.

Teachers must use the resources in their classroom that provide crucial information about the learners in order to be fully prepared for the issues they will confront in their classroom culture. Counselors, administrators, and professional teachers are all considered to be experts in their fields. Counselors, managers, and experienced instructors are all good sources of information about future or vulnerable students (Gay, 2002). Teachers must be aware of the finest pedagogical approaches in order to comply with NCLB, in addition to promoting the academic performance of economically disadvantaged students in their classes (2001). Maintaining high educational and behavioral expectations for all students, for example, and understanding that indifference can disguise the insecurity of underprivileged students.

2.5 Multiple offenders’ activities are becoming more common.

After establishing poverty and its presence in the United States, it is critical to recall the contributory dangers of poverty. Poverty is linked to a variety of other pressures, including drug and alcohol abuse, as well as a variety of illicit behaviors. Frustration, resentment, and tension are at an all-time high for people who live in poverty. These unpleasant emotions might escalate to physical aggression and abuse. In these situations, Levine, (2009) has been confirmed to have an extremely high risk of mistreatment, including physical, sexual, and emotional aggression. All of these variables enhance the likelihood of underprivileged students developing mental health disorders. Given the well-known impact of these stressors on students, there are significant gaps between those who require mental and physical health services and those who receive them.

According to Burns, Phillips, Wagner, Barth, Kolko, Campbell, & Landsverk (2004), more than half of low-income students anticipate mental health issues, but only 16% actually obtain the help they’ve been referred to. In terms of growth, the gap between what is needed and what is actually received is critical. Poverty-related stressors like as crime, abuse, and neglect, if left unaddressed, can cause mental and emotional trauma (Burns, et al 2004). It’s important to look into the impact that parental issues can have on a student who is poor. Single-parent households are more common in impoverished areas, accounting for 72 percent of all households (Bureau of the Census, 2008).

Poor parenting skills are frequently the result of insufficient resources to satisfy the needs of learner care; disconnected hobbies may contribute to physical and emotional neglect, such as squandering money on alcohol or drugs. Furthermore, the psychological toll of unemployment or a lack of sufficient parental income may contribute to harsh and abrasive parenting. Poverty-stricken parents are more likely to have poor parenting skills, a lack of genuine concern for their children's
well-being, and minimal intellectual role modeling (Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2009). Lack of job or attempts to find work increases the likelihood of family turbulence, resulting in tough changes.

2.6 Constraints on Financial and Material Resources

One of the biggest effects of poverty on learners' non-academic performance is a lack of financial resources, which makes it difficult for them to achieve at their best academically. According to the findings of a UNICEF (2011) study, when a student is financially disadvantaged, he or she will attend a poor school in a rural setting. A school like this is likely to be short on fundamental resources that can help teachers and students learn more effectively. The findings also imply that certain schools lack adequate resources and materials to support strong academic achievement, which will hinder effective classroom teaching and learning.

According to Okioga (2013), students from low-income families experience both practical and material restraints, which limits their academic progress because they are unable to concentrate in class activities owing to a lack of fundamental needs, as opposed to students from higher-income families. Mwamwenda (2010) asserts that if students have access to the necessary teaching and learning resources in the classroom, they will be more confident and self-assured, allowing them to do better in school examinations.

Furthermore, according to Chireshe (2010), Yi, Zhang, Luo, Shi, Mo, Chen, and Rozelle (2012), financial restrictions limit a learner's academic success. Their findings also imply that when students are denied basic requirements or grow up in deplorable conditions, their brains do not develop to their full capacity, limiting their cognitive and mental alertness in the classroom. To emphasize the obvious, students in poverty face numerous hurdles in keeping up with their peers.

2.7 Conceptualizing the rural poverty trap

The terms "concept of poverty" and "definitions of poverty" are occasionally used interchangeably in the scholarly literature on poverty, however this can lead to misunderstanding. In this publication, the researcher distinguishes between definitions, meaning, and poverty calculations. We're talking about the conceptual framework that the phrase is built on. These structures are themselves informed by the contending ideas. Definitions can be used to distinguish the poor from the non-poor, and measures can be used to operationalize the description. The distinction is critical, especially for developing poverty-fighting measures.

According to Lister (2004), conventional conceptualizations are reflected in poverty-fighting programs. Definitions are mediated in practice by definition and measurement, and it is vital to distinguish between the three, which are often muddled. As a result, words like "description" and "definition" are interchangeable. A clearer differentiation between the three ideas helps to avoid misunderstanding and unnecessary confusion between the broad and restricted definitions of poverty. In absolute definitions, the concept of poverty is contentious. Its various contexts make it impossible to have a single, all-encompassing, uniform idea of poverty, but only in relative terms.

Poverty has a variety of interpretations according to different scholars. The absolute poverty line is determined as the food spending required to adhere to dietary standards, offset by a tiny non-food allowance (Ravallion, 1992). There are two types of poverty: absolute and relative poverty.

3. Statement of the Problem

Furthermore, a study is needed to establish the links between family poverty and bad student performance in schools, because studies link students with poor academic performance to those who live in impoverished homes (Pagani, Boulerice, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 1999; Yi, Zhang, Luo, Shi, Mo, Chen & Rozelle, 2012; Singh&Sarkar, 2014). Despite the fact that the South African government has launched a number of strategies and aid initiatives aimed at assisting low-income families and communities gain
access to quality education through its Department of Basic Education, the performance of urban and rural-settler school learners at national examinations appears to be very marginal.

In Nongoma, where poverty tends to predominate due to developing rural areas, this study assisted to achieve a socio-economic view of home poverty and high school learners. The researchers’ investigation into the relationship between the two definitions resulted in the identification of overlaps between classroom demands and household needs and goals. The study looks at how the family’s social and economic condition affects the learner’s learning needs and academic success. The study’s goal is to respond to the following investigation’s question:

To investigate the influence of the home poverty trap on learners’ academic performance in rural secondary schools in Zululand’s Nongoma circuit.

4. Methodology

The study collects data using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A questionnaire was utilized to collect quantitative data, while a focus group discussion was employed to acquire qualitative data. For data collecting, Kumar (2014) supports the use of questionnaires and focus group discussions. Quantitative data collected through surveys aids in the generalization of findings, whilst findings from focus group discussions aid in the gathering of particular information on the topic under consideration. This research was conducted in selected rural schools in KwaZulu-Nongoma Natal’s circuit in Zululand.

The study’s target population consists of five conveniently selected educators who serve as the focal group, as well as 250 randomly selected pupils from five high schools in Nongoma, Zululand. The selection of educators was done using a convenient sampling method based on time, availability, and interest. According to Kumar (2014), convenient sampling is beneficial since it takes into account participants’ availability and interest in learning. To eliminate prejudice and give all students the same chance to participate in the study, random sampling was employed to pick students who answered questionnaires.

Kumar (2014) views random sampling as a way for researchers to avoid prejudice and discrimination. The secondary schools were picked with comparable qualities in mind, such as location, financing source, population/size, structure, and so on. The study included five (5) public high schools in the Zululand District’s Nongoma Circuit, five (5) educators, one (1) from each school chosen, and fifty (50) students. This is to ensure that all schools in the Nongoma Circuit of the Zululand District are represented, as well as that participants in the selected schools are consistent. As a result, there are 255 participants in the study: 250 students and 5 educators. Two hundred and fifty-five people took part in this study. Teachers organized a focus group to collect qualitative data while randomly selected students were given questionnaires. Furthermore, the information gathered through the questionnaires was quantitatively analyzed using descriptive frequency counting statistics, simple percentages, tables, and statistical representations to explain the study’s findings. The statistical analysis was carried out using the program Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency and simple percentage statistics were used to assess the demographic data.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, was analyzed inductively to identify subjects and models. The researcher coded the focus group data in order to better understand it and to show clear conceptual relationships between the data collected. This also aids in the counting of keywords. The qualitative data was utilised in a systemic, efficient codification and complicated analysis by the researchers. Each issue was used to draw conclusions from the data.

5. Finding and Discussion

The results of the quantitative and qualitative study are presented respectively based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of the household poverty trap on learner’s academic performance within selected secondary schools in Nongoma area in the Zululand District?
5.1 Results from Quantitative Study

The demographic data of respondents are presented in the graph and frequency table below.

**Table 1: Frequency Table: Grade of the learner**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 1:]

**Table 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 2:]
Table 3: The poverty trap is one of the main causes of learners poor performance in the rural secondary schools in Nongoma circuit of Zululand District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3:

According to the table, 80 percent (41.6 + 38.4) of learners agree that poverty is the primary cause of poor performance in rural secondary schools in the Nongoma district of Zululand. It should be noted that the majority of students who respond to questionnaires believe that poverty hinders high school academic achievement. A total of 200 students out of 250 indicated poverty had a negative impact on their academic performance, whereas 50 students disagreed. It can thus be maintained that rural/community learners are challenged by poverty, which has exposed them to a lack of a quality education system, which is consistent with the work of Akoojee & Nkomo (2008), Fook & Sidhu (2013), who believe that rural learners are struggling to learn as a result of poverty's exposure to poor education. Poor academic achievement is likely due to a lack of quality in the education system to which they are exposed (Cavanagh & Haycock, 2007).

According to Sharanya Ravichardran (2011), the reasons for continuous poverty are mainly prevalent in four primary elements: inadequate government facilities, education deficiency, and civil inadequacies. In rural areas, a lack of education has also resulted in extreme poverty. Poverty is defined as a lack of income and adequate resources to ensure healthy livelihoods, as well as famine and malnutrition, ill-health, restricted access to education and other basic facilities, increased mobility and death from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion, and lack of co-existence (United Nation-UNCHR, 2012). According to researchers such as Suits (2015), only serious, structural changes in educational policy and educational practices can prevent an increase in the number of public school students living in poverty.

Fair funding for public schools across the country, regardless of zip code or geographic region, and increased national demonstrations against poverty normalization appear to be a good place to start (A report on the spring, 2015, ASCD whole child symposium). Furthermore, investigations by
Olufu Paul A. and Ebele Uju F. (2017) found that there is a substantial link between study habits and academic achievement of learners. Educators and school guidance advisors were encouraged to collaborate and assist students in developing healthy learning habits in order to improve their academic performance. Based on the opinions of the respondents and the evidence from the literature, it can be concluded that poverty causes low academic performance in learners from impoverished homes in the majority of rural schools in Nongoma and its environs.

5.2 Findings from Qualitative Study

The findings from the qualitative part of this study are presented in this section. The demographic data of participants are presented in the table below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>SUBJECT TAUGHT</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGEA</td>
<td>Honour Degree Chemical Engineering Mathematics (Fet)</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGBE</td>
<td>Bed, Honours, PGCE</td>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGEC</td>
<td>B-Tech Acc (Hons)</td>
<td>Accounting, Economics, Business Studies</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGED</td>
<td>B.A Dual Major</td>
<td>English Language (Hl)</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGEE</td>
<td>Bsc, PGCE</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 1:** How can you explain the impact of the household poverty trap on the learner's performance? The following are the participants' responses:

FGEA: “Poverty has a significant influence because fewer students are able to overcome poverty and rise above it. Household poverty causes children from disadvantaged homes to become discouraged and abandon their schoolwork, resulting in low performance and criminal behavior.”

FGED: “Household poverty has a detrimental impact on learners because they like to compare themselves to others, and when they discover that they fall short of necessity, they become demotivated and disheartened. Household poverty, on the other hand, can either drive the student to perform better in order to help his family, but this is dependent on the learner’s personality.”

FGEC: “They won’t have time to do homework or study because they’ll be too preoccupied with the peace-meal. It has a negative impact on students’ academic performance.”

Due to the detrimental impacts of poor nutrition, it may be extrapolated from the comments of the questioned educators that it causes numerous sorts of learning instability. This finding is consistent with Mwangi’s (2010) work and Uleanya, Iwaloye, and Gamede’s (2019) study of the effect of poverty trap on academic performance of rural school learners, which found that health issues and poor nutritional deficiencies are two forms of poverty that have an impact on students. According to Donald (2010), poverty-relieving students appear to drop out of school more frequently as a result of numerous illnesses and other poverty syndromes that impede their academic achievement. The
above is in relation to FGEB’s reaction, which stated:

“Nutrition influences a student’s levels of performance since food is often scarce in a poor household, and a hungry learner cannot concentrate in a classroom, resulting in poor academic achievement.”

It suffocates the potential of the students and leads to the stagnation and destruction of the future. Poverty affects and mutilates students on a physical, emotional, and destructive level. Because of a lack of education, poverty reduces skills and job opportunities (Mbeki, 2004). Poverty has ramifications for physical health and mental development. Evans and Schamberg (2009) verified that poverty has a negative impact on growth, including poor development, low respect, and low self-efficiency. The findings back up Levine’s (2010) claim that disadvantaged students are more likely to engage in criminal behavior, such as drug misuse, early pregnancy, HIV/AIDS victims, and criminal behavior that interferes with good academic achievement.

Question number two: Which category of students, in your experience as a teacher, has the highest rate of absenteeism?

FGEB: “Most learners from a low socioeconomic background, females learners from poverty homes who cannot afford to buy sanitary pads, cough cough cough, and em em em learners who cannot afford jersey and winter clothes during the winter may always chose to stay at home, cough cough cough.”

FGEC: “Absenteeism has a particularly negative impact on orphaned students and students from broken families.”

FGEA: “Poor students leave school more frequently, claiming that they don’t have enough money for transportation or don’t have any at all, and they work vast distances to get to school.”

FGED: “The poor learners from economically disadvantaged homes appear to leave school frequently, citing reasons such as a lack of funds for transportation or being too depressed or hungry to attend.”

FGEE: “Absenteeism is particularly prevalent in the less advantaged home, where students are required to work part-time jobs in order to fulfill their family’s fundamental needs.”

Zhang’s (2003) research on school absence and poverty is consistent with the FGEA, FGED, and FGEE responses. Learners from low-income families are more likely to experience conditions that are beyond their capacity. Because the results of the study are more positive, the researcher may conclude that poverty has a negative impact on the performance of rural secondary students due to absenteeism. According to Cuthrel et al (2010), truancy and dropouts are common among students from low-income families. One of the main effects of poverty on learners’ academic performance is a lack of funding, which is an impediment to their academic progress.

When a learner is financially disadvantaged, according to the conclusions of the UNICEF (2011) report, they are unable to attend school every day. In comparison to their peers from a wealthy background, Okioga (2013) notes that the functional and material constraints on learners from a poor home appear to limit their academic performance because they are unable to focus on class activities due to a lack of basic needs, including transportation to school.

Mwamwenda (2010) states that if a student has access to all of the required classroom resources, he will feel more safe and confident in performing well on the school exams. Also, Chen (2009) and Chiresh (2010) support the restriction of financial resources to limit learners’ academic performance. It has been reported that when learners do not meet basic needs or grow up in a poverty household, the brain does not fully develop, preventing the mental and cognitive alertness required for academic excellence.

Question number three: There is a high rate of dropout among high school students; what do you think the main cause is?

FGEC: “A high rate of dropout occurs as a result of early pregnancy and substance abuse.”
FGEE: “Socioeconomic variables such as extreme poverty, when they are not recognized, stimulation, and medical issues such as sight and hearing impairment due to a low living standard from birth.”

FGEA: “Because of early pregnancy and poverty, most teenagers marry older married men in order to survive. They are used and promised a better life, but when girls become pregnant, they are abandoned to fend for themselves and their babies, and boys leave school to find a calm work to assist their parents.”

FGEB: “Long walking distance to school, some learners completed education to the level they desired despite poverty, some regard education as useless because they can see many illiterate who are able to succeed in life without it, illness disability due to poverty, poverty resulting in no money to meet some basic needs in schools, poor academic performance, too many family responsibilities, and etc.”

FGED: “Pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, child labor, and being the breadwinner in a family with children.”

According to the conclusions of interviewees, rural students’ educational attainment is still low in comparison to their classmates in urban schools, owing to their poor financial history. FGEA’s response was based on the fact that boys frequently drop out of school to seek peace work in order to help their parents. This widens the gap between the economy’s skill needs and the availability of skills, stifling economic growth and development, resulting in low productivity and a higher dependency rate, which leads to increased poverty. Stress and depression are caused by the poverty pipe. Learners may also feel insecure in their classroom, according to FGEE’s statement, where they may feel compelled to push the family. Before these criteria can be addressed at the top level, there are several basic requirements that must be met, such as food, shelter, and water. According to Kenrick (2010), the body seeks homeostasis, which is defined as a balance of variables such as water, salt, sugar, protein, calcium, and oxygen, as well as constant hydrogen levels and blood temperatures. Food, water, shelter, fresh air, and a constant temperature help to do this. If all of these demands are not met, physiological needs take precedence. Given the foregoing, physiological needs such as food, drink, and sleep take precedence and are critical in motivating disadvantaged students.

If this isn’t done, everything will be lost (Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg & Schallers, 2010). Human abilities such as intellect, memory, and dreams work together to seek psychotic as well as physiological comfort, which means that learners from low-income backgrounds face challenges in self-actualization as a result of their hunger (see Ganga & Chinyoka, 2012; Ecker & Nene, 2012; Nabarro, et al 2012; Fanzo, 2012).

6. Recommendation

![Recommendation Diagram]

Figure 4:
It is critical to address the implications of poverty for students. In South Africa, and particularly in rural regions, it is critical to work with all stakeholders to examine the fundamental root causes of poverty, such as socioeconomic stability, political volatility, unequal income, and unequal resource distribution. More job possibilities should be made available by the government to as many individuals as feasible. Increasing income subsidies, such as those for low-income students, are helping to meet basic necessities. The government must develop a strategy that would make basic education obligatory for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Policies and rules, as well as a framework for monitoring student work and sexual abuse, should be developed.

Government and educators can work together to promote awareness and educate disadvantaged students. Poverty is a social problem that must be addressed by a microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem that includes the school, family, and community. Poverty is a social issue that needs to be addressed (political, ideology). The government should step up its efforts to provide additional teaching and learning resources.

To increase educational success, the parent-learner partnership should be encouraged more.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the influence of family poverty trap on secondary school learners in Nongoma Circuit, Zululand District, and recommends that sound education policies, programs, and solitude can help impoverished household learners improve their academic performance. Poverty has an impact on and has dictated outcomes for learners' cognitive development in a variety of situations, including family, neighborhood, and schooling, according to the study. Due to poverty-related factors such as socioeconomic financial restrictions, poor mental and physical health, violence, substance and alcohol addiction, stigmatization and marginalization, behavioural and socio-emotional difficulties, and growth delays, many students have been denied access to schools.

Despite the negative effects of poverty on academic performance, the researchers concluded that poverty cannot be used as a rationale for educational practitioners to demand less from impoverished students. It is true, however, that kids arrive at school with a slew of issues and challenges that have a negative impact on their academic achievement. Educators, leaders, and other stakeholders must focus on learners in order to identify strategies to assist them in overcoming these barriers and getting the most out of their education. Denying a specific group of students access to school. Many learners’ right to education is denied, undermining efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals, which are consciously recognized. Your education is likely to be your only means of breaking the poverty cycle and leaving it. As a result, it is one of the most compelling reasons for all students to succeed.

References

Bay, Y., & Bay, D. N. Analysis of Children’s Primary School Readiness According to Some Variables.


Policy Department