

Economic Hardship as Correlates of Moral Decadence in Nigerian Society

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Abstract: *The study looked on economic hardship as correlate of moral decadence in Nigerian society. The research design for this study was descriptive research survey design. The population for this study comprises of pupils in public primary schools in South West of Nigeria. The sample of this study comprises of 940 pupils in four selected state in south west of Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used for the study. One instrument was used title 'Economic Hardship on Pupil's Moral Decadence Questionnaires' (EHoPMDQ). Cronbach Alpah techniques was used which obtain reliability co-efficient of $r=0.87$ on EHoPMDQ. Inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlations PPMC was employed to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. The findings reveal that there is a significant positive significant relationship between economic hardship effects on pupils' moral decadence in public primary schools. The study also affirms that there is a significant positive significant relationship between economic hardship effects on pupils' moral decadence in public primary schools. The study recommended that, there should be good orientation and re-orientation programs for students on the dangers of immorality, parents should establish strong, dependable, constant, unconditional direction and support, and Schools should look inward to generate more funds to prosecute school programmes since the government grant; subvention and allocations seemed to be going on the low side on yearly basis due to economic meltdown.*

Keywords: Emotional, Moral, Decadence, Poverty, Social difficulties

Introduction

The past decades, the unfortunate reality is that the income gap has widened between Nigerian families. Educational outcomes are one of the key areas influenced by family income. Compared to their counterparts from more affluent families, children from low-income families frequently fall behind in school right from the start. Along with neighborhood features and social networks, poverty's occurrence, depth, duration, and timing all have an impact on a child's scholastic and behavioral success. International and Nigerian groups alike, though, have demonstrated that adopting long-lasting initiatives, poverty's consequences can be lessened.

In the meantime, poverty persists tenaciously, even in wealthy nations. According to Harris (2006), students' intricate network of social ties with their peers, teachers, and family members have a significantly stronger impact on how they behave. This process begins with a student's fundamental relationship with their parents or other primary caregivers, which shapes their personality and determines whether it is secure and attached or insecure and detached. Children with strong attachments behave better in class (Bali, Granger, Kivlighan, Mills-Koonce, Willongby & Greeberg, 2008). Once adolescents are in school, socialization and social standing work together to influence behavior in a big way. While the goal of achieving high social status motivates kids to want to stand out in some ways, for instance, socioeconomic status plays a significant role in this equation, the school socialization process often pushes pupils to be like their peers or face social rejection. Children who grow up in poverty hardly ever make a conscious decision to act differently, but they suffer everyday struggles that wealthy kids never experience, and their brains have changed to cope with poor situations in ways that impede academic success. Emotional trauma is one of the societal issues that poor pupils must deal with. The emotional atmosphere can frequently be quite demanding and depleting. Feelings of estrangement, inadequateness, inadequacy, melancholy, and anxiety can result from a lack of emotional nourishment. As a result, their behavior and academic performance may be negatively impacted by impulsive or aggressive behavior as well as social withdrawal. This study's main objective is to provide light on the impact of poverty on academic performance and student behavior.

Stakeholders in the education industry have consistently expressed their grave worry with students' subpar academic performance at all levels of the educational system, particularly in more recent years. The government and every citizen of Nigeria believe that education is able to achieve national integration and quick progress, as well as to bring about desired change in all areas of human endeavor. This may help to explain why the various levels of government work so hard to provide a high-quality education to the population of school-aged children that is constantly growing, realizing the importance of education in boosting economic

performance in internal and external exams that serve as the barometer for determining the success or failure of the education sector. The National Examination Council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC) are the two examination bodies mandated to conduct external examinations to assess secondary school students nationwide and the results obtained by the students will determine their progress or otherwise. Education has been in crisis for many years largely due to the fact that the sector is poorly funded. This results in shortage of material and human resources experienced in the system. Inadequate qualified teachers, high turnover rate of teachers, shortage of classroom, and poor remuneration of teachers and a host of other problems abound in the education sector. These problems are more pronounced at the primary and secondary school levels. The education system has undergone rapid changes and growth within the contest of unstable economy. The economic crisis experienced in Nigeria and impacted on the education system had played a major role in the decline of the quality of Education offered (Olabanjo and Abayomi 2010). Spillover effect in the education sector, the education sector then witnessed rapid growth and development. However, by the 1980s, in contrast to what was experienced in the 1970s, it was a period of economic recession. By 1995, the value of the Naira had fallen to #85 to \$1 i.e.85 naira to one US dollar instead of #1:\$1 experienced before. Presently, the exchange rate is #150 to \$1. the rate of inflation remain high and this has a negative impact on the education sector leading to the transfer of funding responsibilities from one level of government to another as well as to families to help subsidize education through fee payments at secondary and higher levels of education. According to Teboho (2000), alternative sources of funding education have been explored. In 1995, the government established the education tax fund in which companies with more than 100 employees contribute 2% of their Re-tax to the fund. Secondary education received 10% of the contribution addition to budgetary allocation. The infrastructure and facilities in most secondary schools remain inadequate to cope with the rapid growth pace. School environment is therefore in general terms not conducive for learning due to the physical condition and inadequate teaching and learning resources. The annual growth rate estimated at 3.3 percent contributed to children who have to be accommodated in school. He further hammered on the financial crisis in the education sector when he declared that existing facilities in most schools are inadequately maintained and has retarded progress in building new facilities. This shows that the rising pupil's population is not matched with adequate facilities. Shittu (2004) revealed that the quality of parents and home background of a student goes a long way to predict the quality and regularity of the satisfaction and provision of a child's functional, survival and academic needs. In a similar way, a child's social and economic needs are grossly neglected by their parents as a result of their poverty. typically result in the child's low academic achievement.

Martins and Emmanuel (2009) declared that the immediate effect of economic meltdown on organizations and the inability to maintain the current productive capacity leading to inadequate fund. It raises the possible implication of government's control measures such as cutting down expenditure which may likely affect educational expenditure. Ogun state public secondary school teachers experienced hardship during the period of economic meltdown as they experienced delay in the payment of salaries and allowances, payment of net salary only, roof blowing taxation, depletion of the personal co-operative savings and stagnation on a grade level and step. This according to them affected the teachers' morale which prevented them from giving out the best to the students.

Meaning of Poverty

These conditions are determined by a number of factors, including resources, current standards, and a public conception of what is minimally acceptable. Poverty has a long history and has been defined in many different ways.

The phrase "The needy will always be around" has been used numerous times throughout poverty's lengthy history (Matthew 26: verse 11, NKV). The recurring idea is that those who live in poverty have an "unacceptable" standard of living since their situation is unfair. Poverty is still a social issue today.

Standards of living and acceptability are still contentious ideas. This meant that, despite society's responsibility to ensure the general welfare of all individuals, individuals from all socioeconomic categories had diverse ideas about what is "acceptable." According to Sen (2013), poverty is a criterion below which a person cannot participate adequately in communal activities and avoid facing public shame for not conforming to social norms. One who lacks a standard or socially acceptable level of money or material goods is said to be in a condition of poverty. When individuals lack the resources to meet their basic necessities, poverty is said to exist (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013).

Although poverty is a problem that has existed since the beginning of time, its relevance has evolved. Under tradition (i.e, non industrialized) widespread poverty, many economic production methods, and been acceptable as inevitable. With the economic productivity that resulted from industrialization, the total output of goods and services would still not have been enough to provide the entire population with a comfortable standard of living by current standards. However, this is no longer the case, especially in the world's most industrialized countries, where national outputs were enough to raise the entire population to a comfortable level if the necessary distribution (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013).

Types of Poverty

The following are types of poverty:

- a. Situational poverty
- b. Generational poverty
- c. Absolute poverty
- d. Relative poverty
- e. Urban poverty
- f. Rural poverty

Situational Poverty

Is generally caused by a sudden crisis or loss and often temporary. Events causing situational poverty include environmental disasters, divorce or severe health problem (Whitener, Gibbs & Kusmin, 2003).

Generational Poverty

This takes place in households where at least two generations have experienced poverty. Families living in this type of poverty people lacking the resources to leave their current situation situations (Whitener, Gibbs & Kusmin, 2003).

Absolute Poverty

This level of poverty is determined by the bare necessities needed to pay for bare minimum levels of housing, food, medical care, and clothing (Babylon Free Dictionary, 2012). The line must be the same throughout all nations, cultures, and technology advancements for the measurements to be considered absolute. Such an absolute metric ought to focus solely on a person's capacity for consumption and ought to be unaffected by shifts in the distribution of income.

Relative Poverty

Refers to a family's financial situation when its income is insufficient to match the average standard of life in the community (Whitener, Gibbs, and Kusmin, 2003)

Urban Poverty

This happens in urban regions with a minimum population of 50,000. The urban poor must contend with a complicated combination of acute and chronic stressors, such as restricted access to employment opportunities and income, inadequate and secure housing and services, violent and unhealthy environments, few or none social protection mechanics and learning possibilities (Whitener, Gibbs & Kusmin, 2003, Worldbank, 2011).

Rural Poverty

This refers to the need for aid that exists rural regions, such as the social, economic, and political aspects that contribute to that poverty (Janvry, Sadoulet & Murgai, 2002). The bulk of the world's poor are concentrated in rural areas, and poverty continues to be a rural concern (Stefan, 2009). (Janvry, Sadoulet & Murgai, 2002). According to estimates, 76 percent among the world's poorest people reside much higher than the 58 percent national average in rural areas (Ravallian, Chen & Sangraula, 2007). Lack of access to social services in rural areas worsens the negative effects of rural poverty (Idriss, Mouhiuddin & Panuccio, 2021).

How conduct and academic success are impacted by poverty

There are four risk factors for poverty that have an impact on pupils' conduct and academic achievement.

1. Emotional and social obstacles
2. Short-term and long-term stressors
3. Delays in thinking.
4. Security and health concerns.

Emotional and social obstacles

Many pupils from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds experience social unrest and emotional instability. Infants raised in poverty frequently develop weak or uneasy bonds, which later on set the stage for full-blown insecurity in the formative years of childhood. Healthy learning and exploration are essential for young children's brain development. Unfortunately, poor families tend to have higher rates of harmful factors like teen pregnancy, depression, and inadequate health care, all of which make parents less sensitive to their infants and later cause the child to perform poorly in school and behave badly (Van Ijzendoorn, Vereijken, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Riksen-Walraven, 2004). social unrest and emotional instability. Infants raised in poverty frequently

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Low-socio-economic When youngsters are frequently left at home alone with their younger siblings while their parents work long hours, they spend less time playing outside and more time watching, and they are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities than their more affluent counterparts (U.S census Bureau, 2000). Unfortunately, viewing cartoons won't provide youngsters with the essential emotional development or social skills; instead, They require hot, one-on-one encounters. The failure to establish healthy peer relationships has long-term socio-emotional repercussions (Szewcyk-Sokolowski, Bost & Wain-Wright, 2005). Caretakers find it more challenging to establish the trustworthy surroundings that foster safe relationships in their charges. According to a behavioral study, children from impoverished homes experience psychiatric illnesses and abnormal social functioning more commonly than children from wealthy homes (McCoy, Firck, Loney & Ellia, 2010).

The impact of emotional and social difficulties on pupils' behavior and academic performance

Children's behavior is stabilized and the fundamental direction required to develop lifetime social skills is provided through strong, secure partnerships. Children who were raised in such relationships learn how to respond to everyday occurrences on an emotional level in a healthy, suitable manner. To the cost of their academic achievement, however, children raised in impoverished homes frequently fail to learn these reactions. For instance, pupils who have trouble controlling their emotions could become so quickly frustrated that they quit up on a task just as they were about to succeed. Students with social dysfunction may find it difficult to cooperate effectively in groups, which could lead to them being excluded by other group members who feel they aren't "doing their part" or "lifting their share of the load." The lack of teamwork and information sharing that result from this exclusion worsens at-risk adolescents' already erratic behavior and academic performance (Harris, 2006).

Acute and Chronic Stressors

Stress is characterized as the body's physiological reactions to a sense of helplessness brought on by a bad situation. All of us benefit from stress because it helps us become more resilient and supports our immune systems. Yet, poverty-raised children suffer from severe and persistent stress, which has a detrimental effect on their quality of life. While chronic stress is high stress that is sustained over time, acute stress is severe stress that results from exposure to trauma like abuse or violence. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more susceptible to both of these types of stress than their more affluent classmates. Children who live in poverty endure chronic stress that is much higher than that of their more affluent peers (Almeida, Neupert, Banks & Sevido 2005). This kind of stress has a disastrous, covert effect on a child's capacity to develop intellectually, thrive in school, and interact with others. It also has a negative influence on the child's physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive functioning. Students who experience such stress may lack crucial coping strategies and develop major behavioral and academic problems at school.

Effects of Short-Term and Long-Term Stressors on pupils' Academic Performance and Behavior

A child from a stressed-out household is less likely to be able to have a healthy social and academic life and is more likely to use that stress as an excuse for acting out at school (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Excellent parenting boosts academic achievement and has a positive correlation with socioeconomic status, according to study (DeGramo, Forgatch & Martinez, 1999). Regrettably, persistent poverty-related stress degrades parenting abilities, and poor parenting degrades kids' academic ability. Parents who are suffering merely to make ends meet frequently work longer hours, hold down numerous jobs, and have less time, energy, and money to invest in their kids. Poor academic performance on children's standardized tests and higher degrees of externalizing behaviors have both been linked to these impairments (Hsuch & Yoshikawa, 2007).

Stress, whether acute or chronic, is incapacitating. Higher levels of anxiety, a sense of powerlessness, and a sense of detachment are among the most frequent adaptive behaviors. Low-income students who face distressing or traumatic events or who don't feel connected to their family, neighborhood, or religion eventually grow more powerless (Bolland, Lian & Farmichella, 2005). More vulnerable to stressors are children who have been subjected to more abuse, neglect, danger, loss, or other events associated to poverty. Each stressor amplifies the impacts of the others and reinforces them, progressively changing the pupil. For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, life is frequently miserable due to the accumulation of stressors.

Delay in thinking

It takes a lot of cognitive effort to think clearly. It is subject to a variety of evaluations and influences from a variety of factors, not the least of which is socioeconomic status. There is a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and a number of measures of children's cognitive ability, including the IQ, achievement tests, grade retention rates, and reading (Smith, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 2007). There is a difference between the performance of poor and wealthy students on almost every test of cognitive development, including standardized achievement tests and the Bayley Infant Behavior scales. There are constant and rather substantial links between socio economic class and cognitive ability and performance from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood (Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathurst, Guerin & Parramore, 2003).

One of the most important things is to read aspects influencing how a child's brain develops, along with learning a language. The ability to read does not come naturally to humans; therefore, it is necessary to actively teach each reading skill, including fluency, vocabulary, phonics, phonological awareness, and comprehension. The main caretaker must pay attention, concentrate, and be motivated during this lesson. Again, it is tragic that poor families do not have the time or resources to accomplish this. There is evidence that poverty impacts the course of the brain's development negatively (Noble, Wolmetz, Ochs, Farah & Candliss, 2006).

Effects of delay in thinking on Pupil behaviour and Academic Achievement

Many less fortunate kids start school later than their more fortunate peers. Early childhood cognitive stimulation is essential since poor children tend to experience less of it than their more affluent classmates. These deficiencies have been demonstrated to have increasingly significant effects on vocabulary development, IQ, and social skills in later childhood and have been associated to underdeveloped cognitive, social, and emotional competence (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo & Coll, 2001). Low-SES children frequently score below average in reading, arithmetic, and science and exhibit poor writing skills, according to standardized intelligence tests, which also show an association between poverty and worse cognitive success. Although poverty's impacts are not inevitable or irreversible, they can begin a vicious and persistent cycle of low expectations. Reduced expectations caused by poor academic performance frequently propagate throughout society and lower children's general self image. It doesn't help that there is a stark socioeconomic disparity in education. High poverty and minority schools receive significantly less state and municipal support than more affluent ones, and students there are more likely to be taught by inexperienced or non-specialist teachers (Jerald, 2001).

Meaning of Moral Decadence

According to Odeh (2013), moral decay is when society fails to preserve moral principles. According to Muraino and Ugwumba (2014), moral decadence is the act of acting in a way that demonstrates low moral standards. It denotes a severe decline in a society's moral standards. Hence, moral decay seems to represent a decline in society's moral standards. Maintaining our society values, beliefs, conventions, and ethical standards appears to be declining or collapsing. In order to make sense of the world around us, Bratton (2010) defined perception as the process of choosing, organizing, and interpreting information. According to Agim and Ejiogu (2011), perception is a belief that a person or a group of people have based on how they perceive the world. Therefore it would seem that perception is a concept or belief that one has as a result of how they perceive or comprehend something.

Afuye (2015) added that there are other manifestations of moral degradation, such as cultism, rape, exam cheating, teenage pregnancies, student prostitution, and sexual harassment, the sale of "Grade" student demonstrations, drug use, obscene dressing, and so forth. Idensi (2010) said that moral decadence is documented in all communities and cultures, from industrialized to non-industrialized worlds, and that morally reprehensible behaviors among young people and children around the world include rape, sexual abuse, drug misuse, school violence, and deaths.

Research Questions

1. What is the composite effect of economic hardship on pupils' moral decadence in public primary school?
2. What is the independent relative effect of economic hardship and standard of living on pupil's academic performance in public primary schools?
3. What are the forms of moral decadence among pupils primary school?

Research Hypotheses

- H⁰₁:** There is no significant relationship between economic hardship effects on pupils' moral decadence in public primary schools.
- H⁰₂:** There is no significant relationship between parental income and provision of school basic needs on the academic performance of pupils in primary schools.

Methodology

The research design for this study was descriptive research survey design. The population for this study comprises of pupils in public primary schools in South West of Nigeria. The sample of this study comprises of 940 pupils in four selected state in south west of Nigeria. The states include Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, and Osun state respectively. Multistage sampling technique was used for the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select four states in south west of Nigeria. Stratified sampling technique was used to select five local governments from each of the state while simple random technique was use to select 47 public primary schools in each of the local government. One instrument was used title ‘Economic Hardship on Pupil’s Moral Decadence Questionnaires’ (EHoPMDQ). The instrument was structure questionnaire which is divided section A and B; A to elicit information on the demographic of the respondents and section B were 15 items related to Economic Hardship on Pupil’s Moral Decadence Questionnaires on four Likert scale of; SA, A, D, SD. Cronbach Alpah techniques was used which obtain reliability co-efficient of $r=0.87$ on EHoPMDQ. Inferential statistics of Pearson Product moment correlations PPMC was employed to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between economic hardship effects on pupils’ moral decadence in public primary schools.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between economic hardship effects on pupils’ moral decadence in public primary schools

| Variable | Mean | Std.D | N | r | Sig. | Remark |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|-----|--------|-------|-------------|
| Economic Hardship Effect | 64.235 | 33.234 | 940 | .946** | 0.000 | Significant |
| Moral Decadence | 53.256 | 29.452 | | | | |

Table 1 above shows that there is a significant positive significant relationship between economic hardship effects on pupils’ moral decadence in public primary schools. ($r=-0.946$; $p<0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between parental income and provision of school basic needs on moral decadence of pupils in primary schools.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between parental income and provision of school basic needs on moral decadence of pupils in primary schools.

| Variable | Mean | Std.D | N | r | Sig. | Remark |
|---|--------|--------|-----|--------|-------|-------------|
| Parental income and provision of school basic needs | 58.412 | 31.123 | 940 | .821** | 0.000 | Significant |
| Moral Decadence | 53.256 | 29.452 | | | | |

Table 2 above shows that there is a significant positive significant relationship between economic hardship effects on pupils’ moral decadence in public primary schools. ($r=-0.821$; $p<0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion

It was observed that economic hardship have great influence on pupils’ moral decadence. Poverty remains a stubborn fact of life. Unfortunately, poverty is very much related to academic achievement in Nigeria. Pupil’s who come from impoverished families are more likely to have problems in school than pupils who come from middle or upper class families. This is a tragedy for our nation because Nigeria has very high rates of poverty, and it is very difficult for the impoverished families to escape poverty once they are in it. Poverty involves a complex array of risk factors that adversely affect the pupils in a multitude of ways. The combination of risk variables makes daily life difficult; they are complex and intertwined, building upon and counteracting one another in a devastatingly synergistic way. In other words, one issue brought on by poverty feeds another, which fuels yet another, and so on, creating what seems like an infinite chain of negative outcomes.

Recommendations

1. The school can embark on small scale venture like business center, catering services and consultancy to rake in more income and reduce the level of poverty plaguing people as parents would be employed to run the ventures.
2. For their children, parents should establish strong, dependable, constant, unconditional direction and support.
3. There should be good orientation and re-orientation programs for students on the dangers of immorality.
3. Schools should look inward to generate more funds to prosecute school programmes since the government grant; subvention and allocations seemed to be going on the low side on yearly basis due to economic meltdown. They can do this by approaching old students association, Parents-Teachers-Forum, corporate bodies and religious bodies for assistance.
4. Government should increase allocation of funds to provide for more amenities to facilitate learning in the schools and economic empowerment programmes should be embarked on to enhance parent’s income.

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