

An investigation into the effects of poverty on Grade 5 students' academic performance at Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School in rural Trelawny, Jamaica

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Corresponding Author Basilius Redan Werang Northern Caribbean University Article History Received: 12/ 07/2025 Accepted: 29/ 07/ 2025 Published: 02 / 08 /2025	Abstract: This research explored the impact of poverty on academic performance, focusing on Grade 5 students at the Trailblazers Primary School in rural Trelawny, Jamaica. It investigated how socioeconomic challenges influence students' educational performance and identifies key factors contributing to achievement disparities. Additionally, investigation was done on how poverty poses as a barrier to academic achievement by examining how inadequate resources, limited parental involvement, poor nutrition, and emotional distress influence students' academic performance. By shedding light on these issues, I hope to inform educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the urgent need for targeted interventions to support students from impoverished backgrounds Keywords: Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines quantitative data from standard test scores with qualitative insights gathered through questionnaires, class observations, and case studies with students and teachers.
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How to Cite in APA format: Green, L., Lewis, K. B., (2025). An investigation into the effects of poverty on Grade 5 students' academic performance at Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School in rural Trelawny, Jamaica. *IRASS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(8)1-19.

Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of personal and societal development, yet socioeconomic disparities often create barriers to academic success. Research has consistently shown that poverty negatively affects students' educational outcomes by limiting access to essential resources, increasing absenteeism, and contributing to physical and emotional stress (UNESCO, 2021). This investigation examines the effects of poverty on Grade 5 students' academic performance at Trelawny Trailblazer Primary School, situated in rural Trelawny, Jamaica. By analyzing the interplay between poverty and education in this context, the study seeks to highlight challenges and propose actionable solutions to improve reading outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Jamaica, like many developing countries, continues to have socioeconomic inequalities that deeply affect its education system. According to the Planning Institutes of Jamaica (POJ, 2022), approximately 19.9% of the population lives below the poverty line, with rural areas experiencing higher rates of deprivation in regions such as Trelawny. Limited access to basic services, employment opportunities, and educational resources worsens these challenges. Schools in these areas often lack adequate funding, resulting in insufficient teaching and learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, and unrestrained staff (World Bank, 2020).

Grade 5 students represent a critical stage in Jamaica's primary education system, as they prepare for the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) examinations. These exams serve as a gateway to Secondary education, determining students' placement and future academic pathways. Nevertheless, poverty-related factors, such as nutritional needs, lack of school supplies, and limited parental support, place significant burdens on students, compromising their ability to perform well academically (Evans & Acosta, 2020). This study focuses on Trelawny Trailblazers Primary School, which

reflects the broader challenges faced by rural Jamaican schools, to explore the specific ways in which poverty impacts students' achievement.

While national initiatives such as the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) aim to alleviate poverty's impact on education, there remain gaps in addressing the systemic challenges faced by students in rural schools. Educators at the Trailblazer Primary School have observed that students from low-income households consistently underperform compared to their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite these observations, limited empirical research exists to provide a detailed understanding of how poverty affects academic performance at the local level.

The absence of localized research, however, creates challenges for implementing effective interventions tailored to the specific needs of this population. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the socioeconomic factors that influence academic performance among Grade 5 students, thereby contributing to a more subtle understanding of poverty's impact on education in rural Jamaica.

The primary purpose of this research is to identify the challenges faced by students from low-income families, examine the correlation between poverty and academic outcomes, such as attendance and performance on standardized tests, assess the role of parental involvement, school resources, and community support in mitigating poverty's effects, and provide suitable recommendations for improving educational outcomes for students affected by poverty. Through these purposes, the study aims to offer actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders working to create equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform targeted interventions that address the unique challenges of rural schools in Jamaica. Previous studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of poverty on education globally, but localized research is essential for understanding the specific socioeconomic and cultural factors at play in communities (Gershoff et al., 2001). By examining the lived experiences of students and teachers, this study contributes to the broader discourses on educational equity and poverty abatement.

For policymakers, the findings of this study offer insights into allocating resources and designing programs that address the educational needs of impoverished communities. For educators, the study provides practical strategies for supporting students' academic development despite financial constraints. Additionally, the research underscores the importance of fostering stronger partnerships between schools, families, and communities to create a more equitable and supportive learning environment.

In conclusion, poverty remains a critical barrier to academic success, particularly in rural communities where socioeconomic disparities are most prominent. By investigating the experiences of Grade 5 students at the Trelawny Trailblazer Primary School, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of how poverty affects educational outcomes and identify practical solutions for addressing these challenges. The insights gained will not only enhance academic discourse on poverty and education but also empower stakeholders to foster equitable learning environments that support all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Statement of the Problem

Poverty is a significant challenge affecting the academic performance of students globally, and its impact is particularly pronounced in rural areas. In Jamaica, approximately 12.6% of the population lives below the poverty line (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2023). The effects of financial hardship on education are directly evident. Students in rural communities, such as those attending Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School, often face numerous barriers to academic achievement. These challenges include limited access to educational resources, inadequate nutrition, and unstable home environments, all of which hinder their ability to perform optimally in schools (UNICEF, 2022).

Despite various initiatives implemented by the government, the academic gap still exists between students from low-income families and their more well-off counterparts, which may hinder these students' possibilities for upward mobility and lifetime success.

This research investigates how poverty impacts the academic performance of Grade 5 students at Wait-A-Bit Primary School. By identifying the primary factors associated with poverty that influence learning outcomes, this study aims to provide insights that could inform specific targeted initiatives to improve educational outcomes and the well-being of students in similar school settings, and to educate teachers on existing strategies in closing the education gap for students.

Research Questions

1. How does poverty affect Grade 5 students' academic achievement at the Trelawny Trailblazers Standard Primary School in Rural Trelawny, Jamaica?

2. What are the main poverty-related factors that influence academic achievement among Grade 5 students at Trelawny Trailblazers Standard Primary School?
3. What coping strategies do Grade 5 students from low-income families use to deal with challenges related to poverty?
4. Are there any existing school-based interventions aimed at mitigating the effects of poverty on students' academic performance?

Definitions of Terms

- **Academic performance** - This refers to the measurable outcomes of a student's education, often assessed through grades, standardized tests, or other evaluations that reflect their mastery of skills and knowledge in each subject area. Brookhart (2013) defines academic performance as a multidimensional concept that includes not only cognitive achievements but also behavioural and emotional engagement in learning. It encompasses a student's ability to meet learning objectives, complete tasks, and demonstrate progress within an educational framework.
- **Educational equity**- This means that each child receives what they need to develop their full academic and social potential, ensuring fair treatment, access, and opportunities for success in education, regardless of their circumstances (National School Boards Association, 2016)
- **Parental Involvement** - This refers to the attitudes and actions taken by parents to enhance their children's academic success. This includes monitoring their children's studies, maintaining communication with teachers, and participating in school activities. (Ali, M. Llyas, M., Langah, S., Bhutto, M.K. & Mughal, S., 2024).
- **Primary Exit Profile (PEP)** - PEP is an assessment developed by the Ministry of Education and is used to evaluate the academic performance of students at the end of their primary school education (Grade 6), which helps to determine their readiness for secondary education. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, 2020)
- **Poverty**- Poverty is commonly defined as the state of lacking sufficient financial resources to meet basic needs, including food, shelter, and clothing, as well as access to essential services such as healthcare and education. According to the World Bank, poverty encompasses not just low income but also the deprivation of well-being due to a lack of access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power (World Bank, 2022)

Assumptions/Limitations

The researcher may encounter limitations that may affect the effective completion of the study. Some of these limitations may include the following:

- ❖ Gaining access to sensitive data about students' socioeconomic status and academic records could be difficult.

- ❖ The study might include a limited sample of pupils from the area, which could restrict how broadly the results can be applied to other schools in Jamaica.
- ❖ Students' academic performance can result from inaccurate assessments of students' abilities, which may result from prejudices that affect teachers' judgment of student performance, such as having lower expectations for children from less fortunate homes.
- ❖ There may be inaccurate or incomplete records, where there may be missing or inconsistent data that could affect the reliability of the analysis. For example, if students' attendance records are not consistently maintained or if grades are not updated, this can lead to gaps in the data.
- ❖ Time constraints may be another limitation. There may be limited time for collecting the needed data, which could limit how much data can be data, which may also result in a smaller sample size or less comprehensive data collection.
- ❖ There may be other socioeconomic and environmental factors that may affect academic performance, for example: health issues, parental involvement, or the quality of teaching.
- ❖ The researcher may have preconceived notions about the impact of poverty on academic performance, which could influence the way the data is interpreted.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive introduction to the study, outlining the critical issue of how poverty affects the academic performance of Grade 5 students at Trelawny Trailblazers Primary School in Jamaica. The chapter began by contextualizing the research within the broader educational landscape, highlighting the persistent challenges faced by students from low-income backgrounds and the subsequent impact of academic outcomes. The problem statement was articulated, highlighting the need to understand and address the specific ways poverty influences education in a rural Jamaican setting.

The next chapter will delve into the existing body of literature, reviewing relevant studies and theories to provide a framework for analyzing the relationship between poverty and academic performance.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the curve of individuals and communities, but its outcomes are often significantly influenced by socioeconomic factors. The relationship between poverty and academic performance has been a central focus of educational research for decades, as socioeconomic disparities continue to influence students' learning outcomes.

According to Creswell (2012), a literature review is a comprehensive summary of books, journal articles, and other documents that synthesize previous research on a particular topic. It involves identifying, evaluating, and integrating existing studies to provide a clear understanding of the current state of knowledge in the field. A literature review serves to highlight gaps in the

research, establish the theoretical framework, and provide a basis for the significance of a new study.

This literature review seeks to explore the interconnections between poverty and academic performance, focusing on how economic hardship affects learning outcomes, access to resources, and overall educational attainment.

Literature Review

Effects of Poverty on Educational Success

Bradley and Corwyn (2023) conducted a research study that explored the intricate relationships between socioeconomic status, parenting practices, and child development outcomes. The research highlighted that children from low-income families are more likely to face developmental challenges that can unfavourably affect their academic performance. The research suggested that poverty is associated with poorer cognitive outcomes due to factors such as inadequate nutrition, limited stimulation, and sometimes chronic stress. These conditions hamper cognitive growth, affecting attention, memory, and problem-solving, which are crucial for academic success in schools. They further stated that children from impoverished backgrounds often experience cumulative effects resulting from poverty. These factors create a significant disadvantage for these children, hence contributing to the achievement gap between children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Their research emphasizes the importance of addressing these barriers to improve educational outcomes for children living in poverty.

Access to resources

One of the most notable factors influencing academic performance among students from low-income families is the lack of access to essential resources. Duncan and Murnane (2011) suggested in their study that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack access to educational resources such as books, computers, tutoring (extra lessons), and educational extracurricular activities. These resources are necessary to complement learning in the classroom and build a foundation for academic success. According to Duncan and Murnane, inadequate access to learning materials leaves students at a disadvantage compared to their peers from more affluent families. They further stated that in rural areas in Jamaica, where students in rural areas, where resources are already scarce, these disparities can be more prominent, therefore leading to lower academic achievement among students.

Likewise, the UNESCO (2022) Global Education Mentoring Report provides a comprehensive examination of how poverty adversely affects academic achievement globally. The report underscores the complex interplay between socioeconomic conditions and educational outcomes, highlighting key challenges faced by children from impoverished backgrounds. The report establishes that poverty is a significant determinant of academic performance, as children from low-income families face systemic challenges to quality education. This challenge manifests itself in various forms, such as limited access to learning resources, under-resourced schools, and inadequate teacher support. The findings align with previous research, confirm that poverty contributes to a widening achievement gap between socioeconomically disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers (UNESCO, 2022).

The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Achievement

Sirin (2005) in the study “Socioeconomic Status and Achievement: A Meta-Analytic Review,” explored the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Sirin’s meta-analysis revealed the significant role that poverty and socioeconomic status play in shaping academic achievement. The research highlighted the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities in education to close the education gap between students from different backgrounds. The meta-analysis was conducted in seventy-four independent studies. The findings provided key insights into poverty and socioeconomic status on students’ academic performance. From the research, it was concluded that higher socioeconomic status is generally associated with better student academic performance. Therefore, addressing the challenges faced by students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is crucial for promoting educational equity.

Another challenge of being in a state of poverty for school-aged children is that it is closely linked to absenteeism and students being disengaged from school, which directly affect academic performance. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) in their study found that students from low-income families are more likely to miss school due to financial constraints and health issues. According to Balfanz and Byrnes, chronic absenteeism can lead to gaps in learning, making it difficult for students to keep up with their peers. Furthermore, students from impoverished backgrounds may struggle with motivation, and self-confidence, and feel disconnected from the school environment, which contributes to a decrease in academic achievement. They defined chronic absenteeism as missing 10% or more of the school year. They argue that students from low-income families are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism. Balfanz and Byrnes further postulated that chronic absenteeism not only affects short-term academic performance but also has long-term consequences. Students who are constantly absent are more likely to drop out of school, further limiting their future opportunities. This, therefore, creates a cycle where poverty leads to absenteeism, which in turn reduces academic performance and continues poverty in the next generation.

Moreover, Students from low-income families often employ emotional and psychological coping strategies to deal with stress and challenges related to poverty. According to Compass, Jaser, Dunn, and Rodriguez (2012), children in financially difficult situations tend to use emotion-focused coping skills, such as distractions, avoidance, and suppression, to manage their emotional relief, they often do not address the root causes of stress and may lead to disengagement in school activities and sometimes maladaptive behaviours, such as truancy or social isolation. Compass, Jaser, Dunn, and Rodriguez (2012) further accentuated the physiological impact of chronic illnesses the mechanisms children use to manage stress, and the emotional challenges that arise from their conditions. The authors highlighted that effective coping is crucial in psychological adjustments for children with chronic illness. They also debated exercising adaptive coping skills, namely social support or engaging in problem-solving. These strategies are associated with better emotional and behavioural outcomes. In addition, the authors also discussed the role of family, healthcare providers, and peers in supporting coping efforts. Their review concluded with recommendations for interventions aimed at promoting adaptive coping strategies in children facing chronic health issues due to poverty.

Strategies to help students overcome Poverty

Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) in their article investigated the role of grit as a predictor of success in achieving long-term goals, especially in the context of achieving long-term goals. Their research emphasized two components of grit, namely perseverance and passion. By fostering both perseverance and passion in students, particularly those from low-income families, educators and parents can play a significant role in enhancing academic achievement and supporting students in overcoming the challenges posed by poverty. They further stated that grit is a pathway that can allow students from impoverished backgrounds to improve their academic outcomes. Additionally, they proposed that the importance of environmental factors lies in developing grit. This can be achieved through supportive relationships with parents, teachers, and mentors (including guidance counselors) can enhance students’ perseverance and passion, which is especially crucial for those facing challenges, especially poverty. They put forward that schools should focus on fostering grit in students through structured interventions that emphasize goal setting, resilience training, and encouragement to pursue long-term aspirations. This will improve academic achievement, helping students overcome obstacles related to their socioeconomic status.

Effects of social support and resilience

Consequently, support from peers, family members, and teachers serves as an important component of coping mechanisms for students from low-income backgrounds. Malecki and Demaray (2006) suggested in their article that strong peer networks provide emotional support that can mitigate the negative psychological impacts of poverty. In the article, they argued that the role of social support is needed to alleviate the negative effects of low socioeconomic status on students’ academic performance. Melecki and Demaray (2006) explored how various forms of social support can serve as protective factors for students facing the challenges associated with low socioeconomic status. They also discussed that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds often face additional stressors that hinder their academic performance as they negatively affect students’ motivation and engagement in school. Also, the findings from the study indicated that social support could act as a buffer against the detrimental effects of low socioeconomic status. The authors suggested that schools should implement programs that promote social support networks among students. Other initiatives could include mentorship programs, family engagement strategies, and creating a supportive school climate that encourages positive relationships among students and staff.

On the contrary, another way to alleviate poverty is by having proper nutrition. Nutrition plays an important role in students’ learning, yet many students from low-income families experience food insecurity. Murphy (2007) articulated that school breakfast programs have also been associated with better concentration and memory, which leads to higher academic achievement. In the article, Murphy explored the relationship between breakfast consumption and its impact on learning and academic performance in children and adolescents. This comprehensive review synthesizes findings from various studies to highlight the importance of breakfast as a crucial meal for cognitive development and functioning. Murphy discussed in the article the impact of school breakfast programs, noting that these initiatives can effectively increase breakfast consumption among

students, particularly those in low-income areas. He believed that participation in school breakfast programs has been linked to improved attendance, academic performance, and overall health. He concluded by advising that further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of breakfast on learning and the specific mechanisms through which breakfast influences cognitive functions. He also suggested that more studies should be done focusing on the types of breakfast that yield the most significant benefits for different populations.

Also, students from low-income families often develop problem-solving skills as a coping strategy. These skills include seeking out help when needed, balancing schoolwork with household responsibilities, and finding creative solutions to financial challenges. Masten and Coatworth (1998) emphasized that effective problem-solving is connected to academic resilience and success, as it enables students to navigate both personal and academic obstacles. In the article, they explained how children develop competencies in various environmental contexts, specifically focusing on both supportive and challenging circumstances (poverty). They also highlighted the factors that contribute to success and resilience among children, drawing lessons from research on successful individuals. Matsen and Coatworth (1998) argued the importance of favorable environments, which can foster the development of competence. Supportive schools, nurturing families and home environments, and positive relationships can enable children to enhance their ability to thrive and succeed academically. Moreover, they suggested that interventions should be implemented to aim at promoting competence, focusing on strengthening protective factors, such as providing support for families, enhancing teacher training to foster positive relationships, and creating community programs that can offer resources and opportunities for skill development. To conclude, they reiterate the importance of monitoring children's development across different stages of development, which can provide insights into the processes that contribute to long-term success.

Conclusion

The reviewed literature collectively emphasizes the many aspects of the impact of poverty and socioeconomic status on students' academic performance, development, and overall well-being. Across the literature review, a recurring theme is the pervading influence of poverty, not only in limiting access to resources and educational opportunities but also in creating chronic stress and adverse developmental conditions that hinder academic achievement.

Key findings highlight the role of parental involvement (Ali et al., 2024 and Hill and Tyson, 2024), access to resources (Duncan and Murnane, 2021 and UNESCO, 2022), and the adverse effects of chronic absenteeism (Balfanz & Brynes, 2012). Additionally, the literature review emphasizes the alleviating effect of social support and resilience (Malecki & Coatsworth, 1998), demonstrating that targeted interventions can mitigate some negative effects of poverty.

This body of research provides a compelling case for the need to mitigate poverty's impact on education through comprehensive and complex approaches. By leveraging these insights, educators, policymakers, and community members can collaborate to create equitable educational environments that empower students from all socioeconomic backgrounds to attain their full potential.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, sample selection and description, instrumentation, and procedures used to collect, analyze, and interpret data. It is structured to ensure the study's reliability and validity while aligning with the research objectives. This chapter begins by describing the research design and is followed by an explanation of the study sample selection and description, sampling techniques, and data collection instruments.

Research Design

The type of Research Design to be used is Mixed Methods Research.

Mixed Methods Research is a research approach that uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Using this type of research design, the researcher can draw on the strengths of both data types to gain a deeper, comprehensive understanding of a research problem.

Creswell (2012) postulates that the Mixed Methods Research design can be used to provide richer, detailed, and meaningful insights than alone. It is useful when a research problem is complex and requires multiple strata of exploration. He further suggests that this type of research design can be used to strengthen and validate research findings. This is done by comparing the results from the quantitative and qualitative data to see if the data can lead to the same conclusions.

Mixed Methods Research was chosen as the desired research method because of its complexity. The Mixed Methods will allow me, the researcher, to incorporate numerical data from the research and narratives combined to enable me to capture the bigger picture and the finer, intricate details.

Moreover, the Mixed Methods Research design will allow me to explore my research topic(s) from a multitude of perspectives. Quantitative data will provide numerical insights, while qualitative data will offer profound context and meaning.

Additionally, the research design will enhance my interpretation of my results from the research. The quantitative data will reveal the "what", while the qualitative "why" and "how" of my research topic(s). Hence, with the combination of the two. I will have a more substantial interpretation, giving deeper insight into the context and reasons behind the data collected.

Selection and Description of Sample

The selected type of research sampling method is simple random sampling. In this sampling, every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. It is often done using random number generators or drawing lots. Creswell (2012) emphasizes that the simple random sampling technique is particularly useful because it minimizes bias and ensures that the sample is representative of the larger population, which enhances the generalizability of the research findings. By using simple random sampling, researchers can avoid the influence of subjective judgment in choosing participants, then ensure fairness and objectivity in the sample selection process.

The researcher will randomly choose twenty (20) students: ten (10) males and ten (10) females, and ten teachers (the school

only has two male teachers; therefore, if willing, the two males and eight random females will be selected).

Instrumentation

The researcher will use three major data collection tools; these include: mixed-method questionnaires, case studies, and classroom observations.

Two additional tools to be utilized are standardized tests and class attendance registers.

For the research topic, “The effects of poverty on student achievement in Jamaican rural primary schools”, I will use all five stated collection sources, namely: questionnaires, tests, case studies, students’ attendance, and classroom observations.

- ❖ An online questionnaire will be utilized to collect data from participants. A questionnaire will gather qualitative and quantitative data from students, teachers, parents, and school administrators to understand how poverty affects academic outcomes. The questionnaire will focus on student performance and educational resources. Socio-economic conditions, students’ well-being, and community involvement.
- ❖ Case studies are qualitative and quantitative research methods that can be used to gather information. By using case studies, I will be able to get a detailed, in-depth exploration of how poverty impacts students, their families, and the school through experiences in context. Students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and poverty levels will be chosen, which will help to demonstrate varying effects of poverty on academic performance. Also, the case study will offer a detailed narrative of how poverty impacts different aspects of student life, from home to school engagement.
- ❖ Classroom observations are a qualitative method used to collect a systematic record of students by watching them and analyzing their behaviour and interactions within the classroom. In using classroom observations, I will be able to provide a detailed understanding of how poverty manifests in the classroom setting and affects students’ engagement, participation, and performance.

The additional tools to use for further insights:

School attendance is a quantitative measure that can be used to collect relevant data. In using the attendance of students, I will be able to reflect on the underlying socio-economic issues that may affect students’ ability to consistently be engaged and participate in school. By analyzing the attendance register, patterns of absenteeism that are linked to poverty and its broader effects on student achievement. It also highlights barriers related to poverty that may prevent students from accessing consistent and wholesome quality education.

Tests are a tool that can be used to collect quantitative data on a research topic. By using students’ standardized tests, I will be able to gather data on students’ academic performance, which will be investigated and analyzed concerning how their socioeconomic status manifests in the classroom setting and affects students’ engagement, participation, and performance.

Data Collection

Data collection is used for gathering, measuring, and analyzing information from various sources to answer research questions, test hypotheses, or evaluating outcomes. It involves using specific methods or tools to obtain accurate, relevant, and reliable data. Taherdoost (2021) highlights that data collection is a crucial component in the research process as it forms the foundation for analysis and decision-making. It involves the systematic process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest.

The purpose of data collection is to obtain the information necessary for making informed decisions, drawing conclusions, and testing research hypotheses.

The data collection will be done over six weeks. The research design procedure to be used for this study is a mixed-methods design. This will be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative information from participants. The sample will be thirty participants, consisting of both male and female students and teachers. Abiding by the research ethical protocols, the researcher created a questionnaire in Google Docs comprising both qualitative and quantitative question items. Each participant will be given a link to complete the questionnaire.

Consent forms and permission will be obtained. The researcher will conduct class observations and case studies. Once all the information is gathered, the researcher will interpret and analyze the data. In the end, the data analysis will be presented in this study. The data will be presented using thematic analysis as well as by using tables and graphs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis can be defined as the process of systematically applying statistical or logical techniques to describe, summarize, and evaluate data. It is a critical phase in research where raw data is processed to extract meaningful insights, detect patterns, and conclude (Sahu, P.K. & Sahu, S, 2022). They further postulate that the purpose of data analysis is to make sense of complex datasets and translate raw data into meaningful insights, to inform decisions by providing evidence-based conclusions, which can guide future actions or policy development, and to detect patterns, relationships, and themes within the data that may inform further research or understanding of the subject.

Furthermore, the researcher will analyze mixed-method data (quantitative and qualitative data) using StatistiQualitative data will be interpreted and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify frequent themes, patterns, and relationships. The researcher will use tables, charts, and graphs to visually represent findings. A summary of each finding will be given. Evidence-based recommendations to address the effects of poverty on academic performance will be provided.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodology employed to investigate how poverty affects Grade 5 students at the Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School has been thoroughly outlined. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

CHAPTER FOUR: Presentation of Data

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the data collected to investigate the effects of poverty on the academic performance of Grade 5 students at the Trelawny Trailblazer Primary School. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through teacher and student questionnaires, classroom observation, and a case study. The findings were organized around the major research questions and presented using tables, charts, and thematic analysis.

Student Questionnaire

The questionnaire was initially to be completed by twenty students: ten boys and ten girls. Nevertheless, it was completed with twenty-one students: thirteen boys and eight girls. This occurred since only eight of the ten females' parents allowed them to complete the online questionnaire, as a result, more males were asked to complete the questionnaire. The results are as follows:

Figure 1: Students' Self-Assessment of Students' Academic Performance

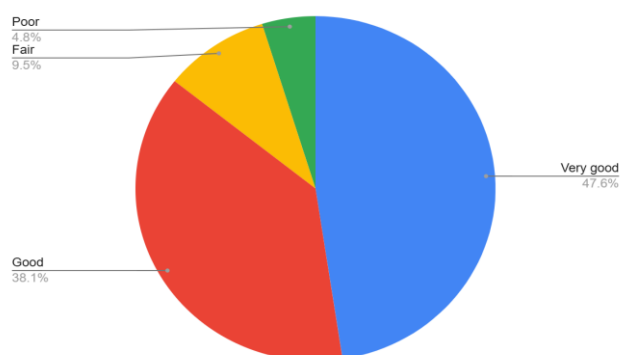


Figure 1: Students' Performance in School

Question 1 of the student questionnaire asked students to do a self-assessment of their academic performance. The data reveals that a vast majority of the students perceive themselves as performing well, with 47.6% rating their performance as "Very good" and 38.1% as "Good". However, it is important to note that 9.5% of students rated their performance as "Fair", and "4.8%" as "Poor". While these subsets are relatively low, they highlight a subset of students who may be facing academic challenges.

Sirin's (2025) meta-analysis found that socioeconomic status strongly predicts achievement, with higher status corresponding positively with better outcomes. Furthermore, Yoshikawa, Aber, and Beardslee (2012) argue that poverty affects academic achievement.

Figure 2: Students' School Attendance

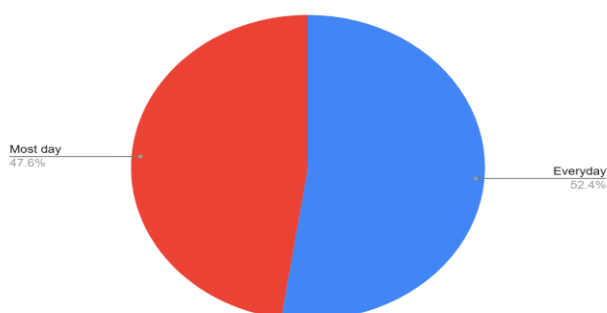
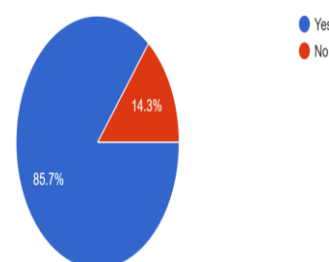


Figure 2: Students' School Attendance

The data reveals that most of the students maintain regular attendance. The results reveals that just over half of the students (52.4%) report attending school every day, a significant portion (47.6%) attend only on most days. This suggests that although absenteeism is not extreme, it is still present and has implications for student learning and academic progress.

The findings of this study are supported by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012), who found a strong connection between poverty and chronic absenteeism. Their research revealed that students from low-income families are more likely to miss school due to factors such as financial hardships, health issues, and lack of transportation. Although the current study's findings show relatively high attendance overall, the fact that 47.6% of students attend school only on most days may reflect underlying challenges linked to poverty.

Figure 3: Presentation and Responsibility for Academic Success



Pie Chart 3: Presentation and Responsibility for Academic Success

Question 3 asked students to share if they have the necessary school supplies. The data reveals that most students, 87.5%, reported having the necessary school supplies. This suggests that most students feel adequately equipped to participate in their academic activities. However, 14.3% of the respondents indicated that they do not have the required supplies. While this is a minority, it is still a notable portion that could be at disadvantage in completing assignments and engaging fully in classroom learning.

This collaborates with Duncan and Murnane (2011) who emphasized that students from low-income backgrounds often lack access to essential resources, such as books, computers, tutoring, and extracurricular activities. This directly connects poverty to a lack of preparedness for learning, as these resources are needed for school success.

Figure 4: The Impact of breakfast habits on students' school readiness and performance

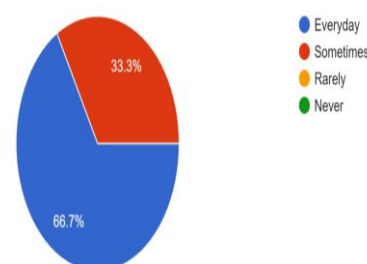


Figure 4: The Impact of breakfast habits on students' school readiness and performance

Question 4 asked students how often they have meals (breakfast) before coming to school. The results show that 67.7% of students reported that they had meals every day before coming to school, while 33.3% indicated they only ate breakfast sometimes before school. This is a noteworthy concern, as regular breakfast consumption is widely recognized as essential for effective learning.

According to Murray (2007), children who consistently eat breakfast demonstrate better concentration, improved memory, and higher academic achievement compared to those who skip meals. The fact that one-third of the students do not consistently eat breakfast may contribute to reduced classroom engagement, fatigue, and diminished academic outcomes.

Figure 5: Students' Academic Workload and Time Management

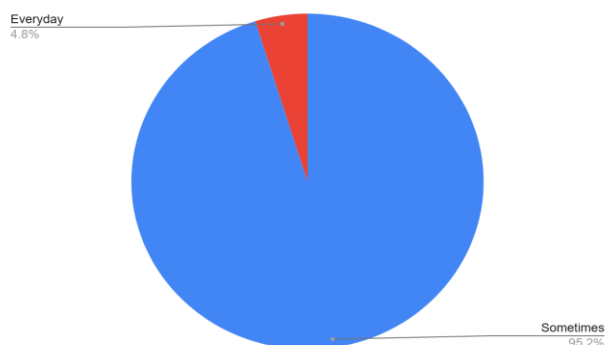


Figure 5: Students' Academic Workload and Time Management

In question 5, the students were asked how often they received homework. The data reveals that all students surveyed receive homework regularly, with 52.4% indicating that they receive it every day and 47.6% report that they receive it on most days. This high frequency of homework assignments suggests that teachers at the school are independent practice as part of their instructional strategy. However, while frequent homework can be beneficial, it may also present challenges for some students; especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may lack a quiet space, parental support, or necessary resources at home.

Bradley and Corwyn (2023) accentuate that limited stimulation at home and chronic stress among students in poverty negatively affect cognitive development and academic habits. This can influence how well students manage regular homework tasks.

Figure 6: Digital Access and Internet Connectivity

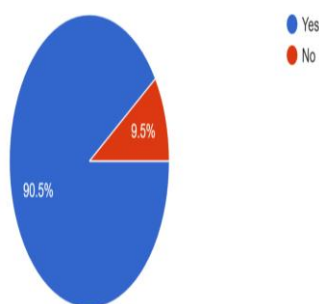


Figure 6: Digital Access and Internet Connectivity

Question 6 asked students if they have internet access or a device at home. The research reveals that a significant majority of participants (90.5%) reported having internet access or a digital device at home. This indicates a generally high level of digital connectivity among the sample population. However, 9.5% of respondents indicated that they do not have access to the internet or a device at home.

This correlates with Duncan and Murane (2011), who highlighted that students from low-income families often lack essential educational resources, such as books, computers, and tutoring, which are critical for supporting classroom instruction and achieving academic success.

Figure 7: Student-Teacher Support Relationship

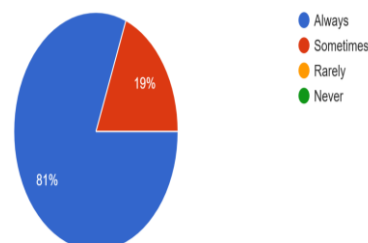


Figure 7: Student-Teacher Support Relationship

For question 7, the data reveals a strong perception of teacher support among students. A significant 81% of respondents indicated they always feel supported by their teacher when they need help with schoolwork. Meanwhile, 19% reported they sometimes feel supported. Remarkably, no responses indicated a lack of support (e.g., "rarely" or "never"). Suggesting a generally positive student-teacher relationship and accessibility for academic assistance.

Positive teacher-student relationships have been shown to significantly influence the academic and social outcomes of students from low-income backgrounds. Unfortunately, none of the literature reviews speak about this topic. Nonetheless, (2005) found that low-income students with strong, supportive relationships with their teachers exhibited higher academic achievement and better social-emotional adjustment compared to their peers without such relationships. Furthermore, a study done by McKinnon et al. (2028) highlighted that frequent school mobility, common among low-income students. Negatively impacts the quality of teacher-student relationships, which in turn affects performance.

Figure 8: Resilience in the Face of Adversity? Coping with Life's Challenges

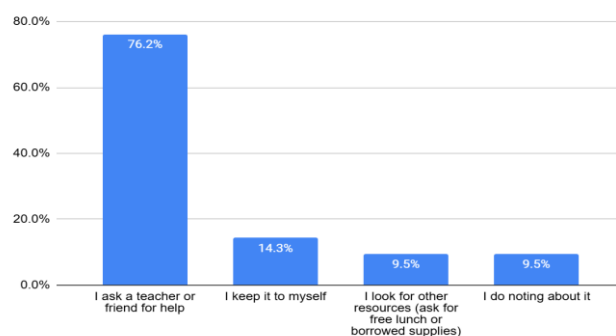


Figure 8: Resilience in the Face of Adversity? Coping with Life's Challenges

Question 8 asked students to share how they usually cope when they are faced with a difficult situation (like feeling hungry or having no money or school supplies).

The data reveals that many of the students (76.2%) indicated that they cope by asking a teacher or friend for help. This response suggests a relatively high level of trust in their immediate support system at school. A smaller percentage (14.3%) reported that they “keep it to themselves”. This is very concerning as it suggests that some of the students may be internalizing their struggles, possibly due to embarrassment, fear of judgment, or lack of trust. “Look for other resources or borrow resources as well as “Doing nothing about it,” have the same number of respondents. For students who responded by saying they look for or borrow resources, they may either ask for free lunch or snacks or borrow supplies. This is an indication that students aren’t aware of possible barriers to accessing them. For “doing nothing about it”, there is a highlight of a group of students who may feel helpless in difficult situations. This requires a need for better guidance and support mechanisms to be in place.

Compass, Jaser, Dunn, and Rodriquez (2012) discuss coping strategies used by children in difficult situations, especially those involving poverty. Malecki and Demaray (2006) emphasize the role of peer and teacher support as protective factors for students from low-income backgrounds. Mastern and Coatsworth (1998) focus on problem-solving and resilience, which includes seeking out help or resources. Murray (2007), however, reiterates that schools should centre on nutrition and school breakfast programs.

Figure 9: School-Based Programs and Support Systems in Schools

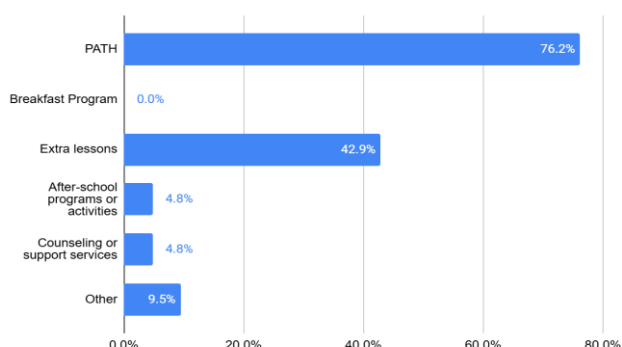


Figure 9: School-Based Programs and Support Systems in Schools

Question eight asked the question, “Which types of school-based programs or support services are provided by the school?”. The data indicate that the PATH (Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education) is the most widely provided school-based support service, with 76.2% of respondents identifying it. Extra lessons are also commonly provided, reported by 42.9% of the participants. In sharp contrast, the Breakfast Program registered a 0% response rate, implying that no such program is in place. Both after-school programs or activities and counseling or support services were reported by only 4.8% of respondents. Lastly, 9.5% of the respondents indicated “other” services, though these services were not mentioned.

These findings are supported by the following:

- Brandley and Corwyn (2023) and Yoshikawa et al. (2012) illuminate how poverty negatively affects children’s cognitive development and academic

performance, highlighting the need for programs like PATH. PATH serves as a cushion by providing financial and nutritional support, helping students overcome some barriers related to low socioeconomic status.

- Duncan and Murnane (2011) directly support the finding on extra lessons. They discuss how students from low-income families often lack access to resources like tutoring and extra classes, which are crucial for success.
- As it relates to counselling or support services, Compass et al. (2012) and Lalecki and Demaray (2006) emphasize the importance of emotional support and coping strategies for children in poverty.
- UNESCO (2017) reports that schools in low-income areas often lack extracurricular activities, which are vital for a supportive learning environment.

Figure 20: Enhancing Student Success Through School-Based Support and Resources

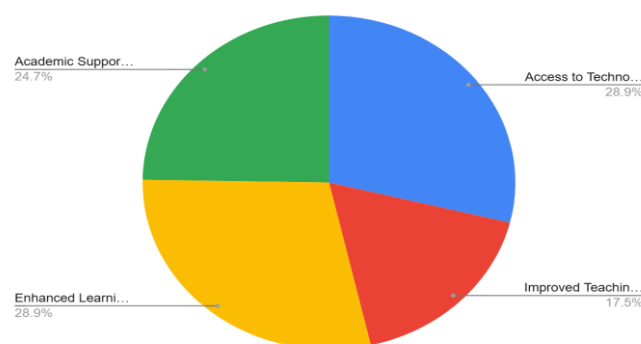


Figure 20: Enhancing Student Success Through School-Based Support and Resources

As it relates to question 10, which asked students what other school-based support or resources they would want the school to provide to help them do better in school. Four themes were concluded.

Theme 1 has to do with access to technology and digital learning tools. 28% of students responded to this theme. One participant stated, “Yes, We will be able to use the school computers, let us have educational devices to use for school work, and have better internet connection.” This finding correlates with Duncan and Murnane (2011), who mention that students from impoverished families often lack access to essential educational resources, including computers and digital tools, which places them at a disadvantage.

Theme 2 relates to enhanced learning resources and methods. 28% of the students also responded to this theme, stating that updated textbooks, interactive materials, and innovative instructional strategies (like differentiated instruction) are seen as crucial for improving educational outcomes. One participant posited, “By providing learning songs in our daily studies that could help us to learn better and faster.” Another respondent stated, “Text book”. Duncan and Murnane (2011) mention that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack access to essential educational resources, including computers and digital tools, which places them at a disadvantage.

Theme 3 is Academic support services, and 24% of the respondents agreed with this theme. From the responses, it can be concluded that the respondents emphasized the value of academic

interventions like tutoring, remedial classes, and mentorship. These services help bridge learning gaps and provide individualized attention to students who may struggle, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds. Two other respondents stated, “Tutoring”. Six respondents had negative or neutral responses. One of the six respondents stated, “Nothing else.” Four respondents said no, and one respondent said “Na”. Malecki and Demaray (2006) explicitly advocate for mentorship, peer support, and counselling as protective factors in mitigating the academic effects of poverty.

Theme 4 relates to improved teaching and teacher-student relationships. This is the least selected response, having 17% of responses. Strong teacher-student relationships foster trust, motivation, and a supportive classroom. One respondent (the only one) expressed, “The teachers to be nicer.” Two other respondents stated, “Tutoring”. Malecki and Demaray (2006) affirm the role of teacher support in buffering against the effects of poverty, indicating that strong relationships, and boost student motivation and emotional well-being.

Teacher Questionnaire

Figure 21: The Impact of Socioeconomic Challenges on Student Achievement

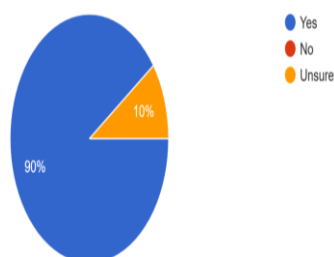


Figure 21: The Impact of Socioeconomic Challenges on Student Achievement

Question 1 of the teacher questionnaire asked: “Do you observe poverty challenges affecting your students’ academic performance?” The data reveals that a significant majority of participants (90%) affirmed that they observed poverty-related challenges negatively impacting their students’ academic performance. Notably, none of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while a small minority (10%) remained unsure. These findings suggest a widespread recognition among teachers.

This finding is supported by Sirin’s (2005) meta-analysis of 74 studies, which confirmed the strong relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Students from higher-income backgrounds consistently outperformed those from lower-income families. The finding reinforces the need to address poverty-related barriers to promote educational equity.

Figure 22: The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Educational Outcomes

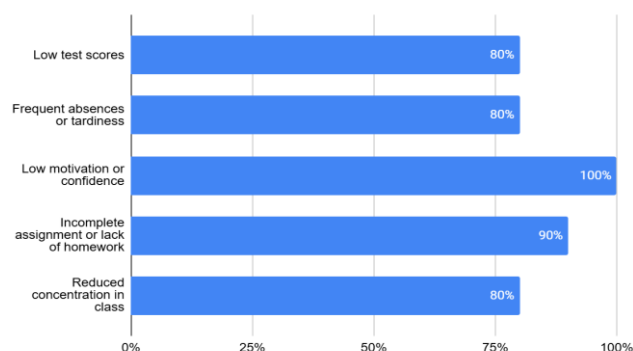


Figure 22: The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Educational Outcomes

For question 2 of the questionnaire, which asked educators to perceive poverty as having a multifaceted and profound impact on students’ academic performance. A unanimous 100% of respondents identified low motivation and confidence as significant challenges faced by students living in poverty. Additionally, 90% of educators observed that poverty contributes to incomplete assignments or a lack of homework completion. Furthermore, 80% of the educators reported that poverty leads to low test scores, frequent absences or tardiness, and reduced concentration in class.

Yoshikawa, Aber & Beardslee (2012) strongly support that poverty undermines children’s mental, emotional, and behavioural health, which in turn affects their cognitive development, concentration, and school readiness. Moreover, UNESCO (2017) reports that economic disadvantage leads to lower academic outcomes through unequal access to learning resources, qualified teachers, and basic services.

Figure 23: Impact of Socioeconomic Barriers on Student Achievement

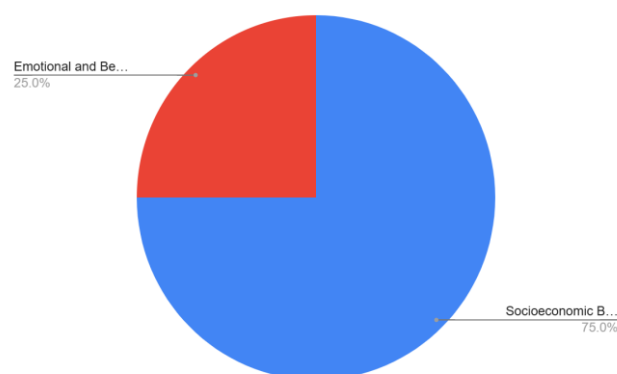


Figure 23: Impact of Socioeconomic Barriers on Student Achievement

Question 3 of the questionnaire asked educators to share their opinion on poverty-related factors they have observed as the most significant barriers to students’ academic success. The themes were gathered.

One of the themes had to do with socio-economic barriers to learning, with 75% of the participants highlighting how financial hardship affects students’ ability to regularly attend school, access learning materials, and perform academically. emotional and

behavioral effects of poverty. One participant stated, “Lack of parental support, financial constraints.”

The other theme is the emotional and behavioural effects of poverty. 25% of the students agreed with this theme. Beyond the material challenges, poverty also deeply impacts students’ emotional well-being and behaviour. Respondents noted that students often suffer from low self-esteem, especially when they are scorned or ridiculed by peers for their appearance or lack of possessions. One respondent stated, “An improvement in general deportment as sometimes their peers’ scorn or ridicule them and so this causes students to have low self-esteem.”

Figure 24: Impact of poverty-related changes that negatively affect students' achievement

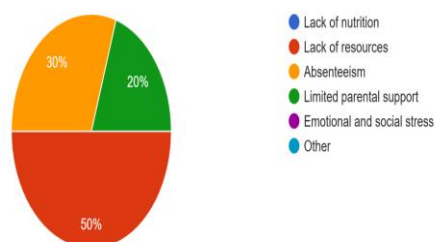


Figure 24: Impact of poverty-related changes that negatively affect students' achievement

Question 4 of the Questionnaire asked, “Which poverty-related challenges do you feel have the greatest negative impact on student achievement?”. The data disclosed that half of the respondents (50%) identified the lack of resources as the most significant barrier to student success. Students from low-income families often lack essential educational materials, such as textbooks, technology, and school supplies. 30% of the respondents reported absenteeism as a poverty-related change. This issue is particularly prevalent in high-poverty areas, where factors like unstable housing, health problems, and lack of transportation contribute to frequent absences. However, 20% of the participants noted limited parental support. Limited parental support often stems from the challenges faced by low-income families. No participant chose lack of nutrition, lack of resources, or emotional and social stress. Although these factors were not selected, these factors associated with poverty can adversely affect students’ academic performance.

These findings are supported by UNESCO (2017) which reports that lack of educational resources, such as textbooks, technology, qualified teachers, and safe infrastructure directly affect learning outcomes, particularly in low-income communities and Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee (2012) shows that children living in poverty often miss school due to unstable housing, inadequate healthcare, or having to support their families at home.

Figure 25: Coping Strategies from Low-Income Backgrounds

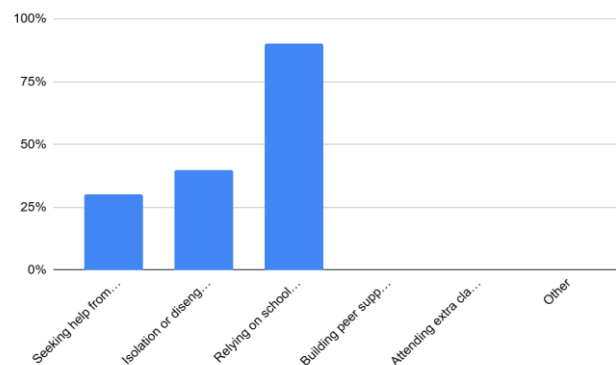


Figure 24: Coping Strategies from Low-Income Backgrounds

Question 5 of the questions asked participants to share what coping strategies are frequently observed in students from low-income backgrounds. The data indicates that students from low-income backgrounds predominantly rely on institutional support programs, with 90% of the participants agreeing that PATH and wellness initiatives are ideal strategies that help students to cope with poverty. However, 40% of the respondents exhibit coping strategies characterized by isolation or disengagement from academic tasks or class discussions. Furthermore, 30% of the respondents reported that students seek help from teachers and classmates. Unfortunately, none of the respondents reported building peer support networks or participating in extracurricular activities such as coping mechanisms.

These findings are supported by Yoshikawa, Aber and Beardslee (2012). This study explores the mental, emotional, and behavioural effects of poverty on children. Also, Malecki & Demaray (2006) highlights the buffering effect of social support on the relationship between low socioeconomic status and academic achievement.

1.26: Additional Support to help students from low-income families to cope with academic challenges

Question 6 of the questionnaire asked, “What additional support do you believe would be helpful to students from low-income families to cope more effectively with academic challenges?” The responses gathered highlighted two main themes.

Theme 1 has to do with strengthening parental support and theme 2 deals with community and economic support. For theme 1, 63% of the respondents emphasized the collaboration of schools and schools, this theme advocates for workshops, seminars and regular communication to foster a supportive educational environment. One participant revealed, “Having more parenting seminars highlighting the significance of parental involvement.” Another respondent said, “Parents partnering with schools for support.” Hill & Tyson (2009) study strongly affirms that parental involvement, through communication, monitoring, and participation, has a positive effect on academic achievement, especially when schools actively engage parents. Additionally, they support the idea of parenting seminars, workshops, and school-parent partnership as effective strategies.

Theme 2, on the other hand, had the respondents of 38%. This has to do with community and economic support. Community involvement can provide essential support to low-income families. One participant had this to say, “Community members who are

able to support low-income parents or provide job opportunities for them so they can uplift themselves.”

Duncan & Murnane (2011) supports this theme, their work explores the broader societal and economic inequalities that impact children’s academic success, emphasizing that schools alone cannot close the achievement gap without complementary community and economic support systems.

Figure 27: School Programs or Interventions Aimed at Assisting Students Affected by Poverty

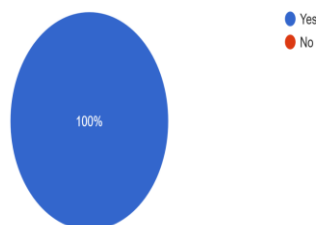


Figure 27: School Programs or Interventions Aimed at Assisting Students Affected by Poverty

Question 6 of the questionnaire asked: “Are there any school programs or interventions in place aimed at assisting students affected by poverty?” The data reveals that all respondents (100%) acknowledged the existence of school programs or interventions designed to support students impacted by poverty. This unanimous response indicates a strong awareness of the issue and suggests that schools are taking proactive steps to address the educational and socio-economic challenges faced by disadvantaged students.

These findings reflect a widespread awareness and implementation of strategies that are validated by research, particularly the findings presented by Sirin (2005), emphasizing the role of educational institutions in addressing socio economic disparities.

Figure 28: Interventions that Support Low-Income Students’ Academic Achievement

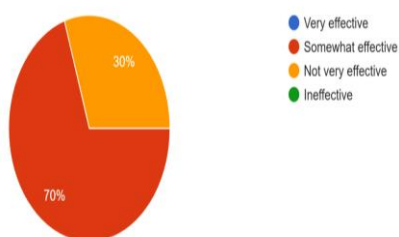


Figure 28: Interventions that Support Low-Income Students’ Academic Achievement

Question 8 in the questionnaire asked educators to share interventions that support low-income students’ academic achievement. Based on the survey responses, 70% of the participants indicated that the school-based interventions are “somewhat effective” and 30% “not very effective”. There appears to be cautious optimism regarding the intervention on low-income students’ academic achievement.

This sentiment aligns with research findings that, while certain interventions yield positive outcomes, their effectiveness

can vary based on implementation and context. This finding is supported by Yoshikawa, Aber and Beardslee (2012), highlighting that while interventions can help, their effectiveness is influenced by timing, implementation quality, and the socio-emotional context.

Figure 29: Aspects of Existing Programs that are Most Helpful to Students and Where Do They Need the Most Improvement?

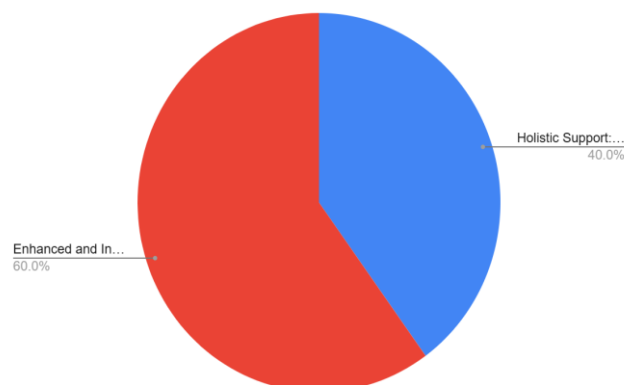


Figure 29: Impact of aspects of existing programs that are most helpful to students

Question 9 of the teacher questionnaire asked, “In your observation, what aspects of the existing programs are most helpful to students, and where do they need the most improvement?” Based on the responses collected, the findings reveal two main areas of impact and need; these include enhanced and inclusive support programs and holistic support: academic, emotional, and home involvement.

For the theme “enhanced and inclusive support programs “, most respondents (60%) identified material-based support programs. One participant reported, “The feeding of students at school is the most helpful but I believe the quality can be better”.

This finding is supported by Bradley and Corwyn (2002). Their study explores how, and socio-economic support influences various aspects of child development, including health, cognitive, and socioemotional outcomes. The authors advocate for interventions that address these multifaceted needs to promote equitable development.

The other theme is “holistic support: academic, emotional, and home involvement”. 40% of responses emphasize the need for support beyond material aid. These included areas such as academic intervention, emotional wellness, and stronger collaboration between home and school. Respondents noted that while in-school programs help with immediate needs, long-term student success also depends on consistent academic support and mental health interventions. One respondent shared, “The wellness program helps students who are without lunch. More intervention is needed to reach the students' mental faculty.”

This finding was supported by Yoshikawa, Aber & Beardslee (2012) they discussed in their article how poverty affects mental, emotional, and behavioral health. They discussed that children from low-income families are at increased risk for mental health issues due to factors like chronic stress, exposure to violence, and limited access to supportive resources. They advocate for preventive interventions that address these challenges by providing comprehensive.

Classroom Observation Checklist**Summary of Table of Observations (21 Students)**

Summary Statements	Yes	No	Sometimes
Does the student arrive at school on time?	19	-	2
Does the student frequently come to school?	11	2	8
Is the student properly attired?	13	-	8
Does the child lack necessary school supplies?	3	10	8
Does the student appear engaged and focused during lessons?	3	6	12
Does the student frequently participate in class discussions or activities?	3	-	18
Does the student complete class assessments?	3	-	18
Does the student show signs of low self-esteem and confidence?	4	5	12
Does the student collaborate with peers to complete schoolwork?	4	-	17
Does the student participate in any after-school programs or support groups?	14	4	5

The class observation was done with twenty-one students: thirteen boys and eight girls. From the classroom observation administered, three major themes were detected; these are: limited student engagement and participation, strength in structural support and resources, and social and emotional needs.

For theme 1, the observation data highlights a concerning trend of low student engagement and participation in classroom activities. Only about 14.3% of the students were reported as being focused during lessons, while the same percentage participated in class discussions and completed assessment assessments. Moreover, just 19% were noted to collaborate with their peers during schoolwork. These findings suggest that many students are either disengaged or lack the motivation and confidence to participate actively. Consequently, this may impact their academic performance and overall classroom experience, including a strong need for interactive teaching methods and personalized academic support.

This theme is supported by Sirin (2005), through a meta-analysis, the research demonstrates significant correlations between socio-economic status and academic achievement. It suggests the lower socio-economic is linked to lower academic performance, which can be indicative of limited student engagement and participation.

Theme 2 has to do with strength in structural support and resources. The findings reveal that students are generally well-supported in terms of structure and resources. 90.5% of the students were noted as not lacking necessary school supplies. Additionally, 47.5% of the students were noted as not lacking necessary school supplies. Significantly, 60.9% also participate in after-school programs or support groups. These statistics reflect a

relatively stable foundation for learning, with students benefiting from either parental involvement or school-based initiatives. Therefore, it can be concluded that material needs are largely met, setting solid foundations upon which to build improved engagement and learning outcomes.

Theme 2 is supported by Bradley & Corwyn (2002). Their review highlights how socioeconomic status affects various aspects of child development, including health, cognition, and socioemotional well-being. It emphasizes the importance of structural support, such as quality housing, nutrition, and educational resources, in combating the adverse effects of poverty.

Theme 3 relates to social and emotional needs. The results from the findings show that 76.2% of the students were reported to show signs of low self-esteem and confidence, either consistently or occasionally. This is further compounded by the low rate of peer collaboration, which suggests potential issues with social integration or interpersonal skills. As a result, it becomes clear that emotional support systems, such as counselling, mentorship, and peer building activities, are crucial for fostering a healthy and supportive learning environment. It is crucial that these emotional needs be addressed so that they can aid in personal development and for academic success.

This theme aligns with Yoshikawa, Aber and Beardslee (2012). Their article examines how poverty affects children's mental, emotional, and behavioural health. It discusses mechanisms through which poverty influences these aspects and offers a theoretical framework for understanding these effects. The authors highlight the importance of preventive interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of poverty on children's development.

Class Attendance

From September 2-April 4, 2025- 136 Days

Boys (13)

Students	Days Present	Days Absent
Student 1	126	10
Student 2	38	98
Student 3	134	2
Student 4	126	10
Student 5	119	17
Student 6	112	24
Student 7	119	17

Student 8	124	12
Student 9	112	24
Student 10	129	7
Student 11	125	11
Student 12	124	12
Student 13	99	37

Girls (8)

Students	Days Present	Days Absent
Student 14	97	39
Student 15	94	42
Student 16	114	22
Student 17	93	43
Student 18	131	5
Student 19	95	41
Student 20	125	11
Student 21	116	20

Table 2: Class Attendance

Summary:

In addition to the questionnaire and class observation, class attendance data provided further insight into how poverty impacts Grade 5 students at the Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School. From September 2, 2024-April 4, 2025, attendance records revealed noticeable disparities, with several students experiencing chronic absenteeism.

Among the thirteen (13) boys observed, attendance ranged from a high of 134 days to a low of 38 days, with an estimated

average attendance of 114 days. Similarly, the eight (8) recorded attendance between 131 and 93 days, averaging around 109 days. Remarkably, three boys and four girls were absent more than 35 days, placing them well within the threshold for chronic absenteeism.

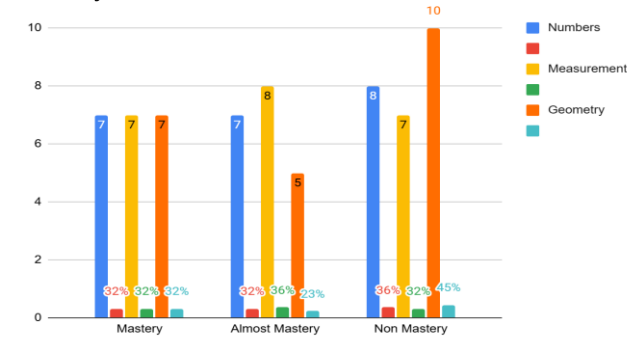
This inconsistency in attendance suggests that students may be experiencing poverty-related challenges, including lack of transportation, health issues, or household responsibilities that hinder regular school attendance. Consequently, these factors are likely to contribute to academic underperformance by limiting

instructional time, disrupting learning routines, and weakening school engagement. Therefore, the attendance data supports the broader finding that poverty significantly impacts not only the material conditions of students but also their academic opportunities and outcomes. In addition, it highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions that address both in-school support and external socio-economic barriers to learning.

This finding is supported by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012), who highlight that chronic absenteeism adversely affects academic performance, particularly for low-income students. Regular school attendance is crucial for these students, as it provides a pathway out of poverty by enhancing academic achievement.

Summary of Mid-Term Two Test

Numeracy Data

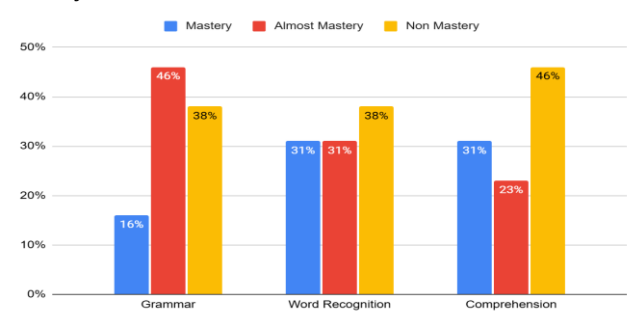


Bar Graph 4: Mid-Term Two Numeracy Test Data

The data above reveals consistent challenges across the mathematics strands: Numbers, Measurement, and Geometry. In each subject, only 32% of the students achieved mastery, indicating that a significant majority are not meeting the expected proficiency levels. Moreover, 36% of the students did not master the Number strand, 32% fell short in Measurement, and a notable 45% did not achieve mastery in Geometry. The geometry strand, with the highest non-mastery rate, suggests difficulties in spatial reasoning and conceptual understanding.

These findings align with national trends in Jamaica, where students often struggle with mathematics. This statistic underscores the widespread nature of mathematical challenges among primary school students. The low mastery at Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School may be influenced by various factors, including limited access to educational resources, inadequate instructional strategies, and socio-economic challenges prevalent in rural communities.

Literacy Data



Bar Graph 5: Mid Term 2 Literacy Data

Literacy assessment reveals significant challenges across grammar, word recognition, and comprehension. Specifically, only

23% of the students achieved mastery in grammar, while a notable 41% fell into the non-mastery category. Similarly, in word recognition, 28% reached mastery, with 36% not meeting the expected standards. Comprehension showed slightly better results, with 37% of students attaining mastery; however, 45% still did not achieve the desired proficiency.

Hence, these figures suggest that a substantial proportion of students are struggling with fundamental literacy skills. Consequently, there is a pressing need for targeted interventions to address these deficiencies. Implementing evidence-based strategies, such as explicit grammar instruction, phonics-based approaches for word recognition, and guided reading sessions to enhance comprehension, could be beneficial.

These findings are supported by Duncan & Murnane (2011) in their book where they explore how economic inequality impacts children’s educational attainment. The book strongly supports the link between poverty and lower academic achievement, including exam failure, due to limited access to quality education, support, and resources.

Conclusion:

The comprehensive analysis of data collected through teacher and student questionnaires, class attendance records, and case studies at Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School underscores the profound impact of poverty on Grade 5 students’ academic performance.

Firstly, insights from questionnaires reveal both educators and students identify poverty-related challenges, such as limited access to educational resources, inadequate parental support, and insufficient technological resources, as significant barriers to academic success. These factors contribute to difficulties in mastering fundamental subjects, including literacy and numeracy.

Secondly, attendance records indicate a troubling pattern of chronic absenteeism among students from low-income families. A strong positive relationship between regular class attendance and improved academic performance. Regular attendance is crucial for consistent learning and academic achievement.

Lastly, case studies provide a nuanced understanding of individual student experiences, highlighting how socio-economic hardships, like food insecurity, lack of transportation, and unstable home environments, directly hinder students’ ability to attend school regularly and engage fully in their education.

To conclude, the triangulation of data from questionnaires, attendance records, and case studies paints a compelling picture, poverty significantly hinders academic performance through both direct and indirect pathways. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including providing targeted interventions to support low-income families, enhancing parental involvement, and implementing school-based interventions geared towards improving attendance and engagement.

CHAPTER FIVE: Discussions of Findings

Introduction

This section presents an analysis and interpretation of the data collected during the research study. The aim is to examine the findings in relation to the research questions, and to explore these findings with the extending literature. By interpreting the patterns,

trends, and participant responses, the discussions seek to provide deeper insights into the educational issue under investigation. The findings are discussed in context of relevant theoretical frameworks and previous research, highlighting both expected outcomes and any surprising results that emerged from the study.

Discussion and Interpretations of Findings

Research question 1 states, “How does poverty affect Grade 5 students’ academic achievement at the Trelawny Trailblazers Standard Primary School in Rural Trelawny, Jamaica?” The findings reveal that poverty tremendously affects academic performance among Grade 5 students at the Trelawny Trailblazers Standard Primary School. Specifically, participants noted challenges such as inadequate access to school resources, poor nutrition, and lack of parental involvement. This is consistent with the conclusions drawn by Bradly and Corwyn (2002), who emphasized that children from low-income families often face developmental delays that negatively impact their academic progress.

Moreover, Sirin (2005) affirms that through a meta-analysis review that socioeconomic statuses are one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement. Likewise, Evans and Kim (2023) argue that chronic stress associated with poverty impairs working memory and cognitive development, both of which are crucial for academic success. Evidently, these factors manifest in local context where teachers observe that poverty-stricken students struggle with concentration, frequent absenteeism, and limited engagement in classroom activities.

Additionally, when comparing student performance across socioeconomic lines, those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to score higher on standardized assessments such as Primary Exit Profile (Ministry of Education, 2020). Therefore, poverty presents multiple obstacles that cumulatively hinder students’ academic achievement.

The third research question is, “What coping strategies do Grade 5 students from low-income families use to deal with challenges related to poverty?”. Despite these challenges, many Grade 5 students have developed coping strategies that help them persevere through difficult situations. For instance, several students rely on supportive peer relationships, while others draw encouragement from caring teachers. This aligns with the resilience theory advanced by Masten and Coatsworth (1998), which suggests that children can succeed in unfavourable situations when protective factors present themselves.

Moreover, some students demonstrate what Duckworth et al. (2007) term “grit”, a combination of perseverance and passion for long-term goals, which enables them to stay motivated despite their circumstances. Nevertheless, as Compass et al. (2012) caution, prolonged exposure to adversity without adequate psychological support may lead to emotional or behavioural issues. Consequently, schools must play an active role in reinforcing positive coping mechanisms while addressing the underlying stressors.

Question 4 has to do with existing school-based interventions aimed at mitigating the effects of poverty on students’ academic performance. Encouragingly, the data reveals that the Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School has implemented several interventions designed to support students from low-income families. These include school-feeding programs, guidance counselling services, and school mentorship initiatives.

As stated by UNESCO (2017), accountability in education requires targeting the most vulnerable.

Additionally, the American Psychological Association (2017) emphasizes the need for educational systems to adopt holistic approaches that address both academic and emotional needs of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The presence of such programs at the Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School demonstrates a commendable effort to bridge the opportunity gap and promote equity, as outlined by the National School Boards Associations (2016).

Ultimately, these findings suggest that while poverty continues to pose a significant challenge to academic success, well-structured school-based initiatives can buffer its impact and foster resilience among affected students.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Parental Involvement Initiatives:** Given the strong correlation between parental engagement and student per (Ali et al., 2024; Hill & Tyson, 2009), the school should organize regular workshops to educate parents on how they can support their children academically, even with limited resources. Flexible meetings times and community-based outreach may also encourage greater participation from parents with demanding work schedules.
2. **Expand the School Feeding Programmes:** Considering the adverse effects of food insecurity on learning (Murphy, 2007), it is recommended that the current school feeding programme be expanded to include breakfast. Partnerships with local businesses, community groups, and NGOs could provide sustainable support for this initiative.
3. **Improving School-Based Mentorship and Counseling Program:** Programs should build students’ resilience through structured mentorship and psychological support is essential (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Compass et al., 2012). Trained guidance counselors and teacher mentors should be assigned to work closely with students facing extreme hardship, helping them to develop emotional coping strategies and academic confidence.
4. **Provide Academic Support and Enrichment Opportunities:** These can be put in place to combat the learning deficits often associated with poverty (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002, Sirin, 2005), the school should offer after school tutoring, homework clubs, literacy and numeracy camps. These programmes should be free of cost and staffed by trained teachers or community volunteers.
5. **Seek Additional Government and Community Funding:** The school administration should advocate for more financial and material support from the Ministry of Education, Youth Skills and Information and community stakeholders. Grants or sponsorships could be used to acquire textbooks, school supplies, uniforms, and digital tools for students from low-income households.

Limitations

When conducting this research, some potential limitations that may arise are as follows:

1. Questionnaires may lead to biased responses due to social desirability bias, where participants provide answers, they think are expected rather than the truth.
2. Thematic analysis may be subjective in such a way that the analysis may be influenced by the researcher's interpretation, which may introduce bias.
3. Focusing on Grade 5 students at a single primary school may limit the generalizability of findings to other schools or grades in Jamaica.
4. If the students are randomly selected, the sample may not adequately represent the population, leading to deviating results.
5. Some participants may drop out or fail to complete the questionnaire, reducing the sample size and potentially biasing the results.
6. Instruments used may not capture the multifaceted nature of poverty or academic performance.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the scope and limitations of this study, the following suggestions are offered to guide research efforts"

- ❖ Future research should consider expanding the sample size to include multiple schools across different parishes in Jamaica. This would allow for more generalizable findings and broader understanding of how poverty impacts academic performance in various rural and urban settings.
- ❖ Further studies could examine how educators perceive and respond to poverty-related challenges in the classroom. Understanding their attitudes, biases, and instructional strategies could inform professional development programmes aimed at improving equity and outcomes for disadvantaged students.
- ❖ Future research could assess the effectiveness of individual school-based interventions, such as feeding programmes, mentorship programs, or homework clubs, on students' performance. Comparative studies would help identify which interventions offer the greatest return or investment
- ❖ Given the increasing importance of digital learning, especially post-Covid19, future research should explore how lack of access to technology and the internet affects learning outcomes for students from low-income families.

Conclusion

This study has explored the multifaceted ways in which poverty influences academic achievement among Grade 5 students at the Trelawny Trailblazer Standard Primary School. The findings reveal that poverty influences students' educational outcomes through various channels, including limited access to educational resources, inadequate nutrition, chronic absenteeism, and reduced parental involvement.

Similarly, the research underscores that students from low-income families often have significant challenges that hinder their academic performance. These challenges are not only material but also psychological, as the stress associated with poverty can impact on cognitive functions essential for learning. Moreover, the lack of parental support, often due to economic constraints, further exacerbates these issues, leaving students with the necessary guidance and encouragement at home.

Despite these obstacles, the study also highlights the resilience and coping strategies employed by some students, such as seeking support from peers and teachers. These findings suggest that while poverty poses substantial barriers to academic achievement, targeted interventions can mitigate its effects. School-based initiatives, such as feeding schemes, mentorship initiatives, and parental engagement workshops, have shown promise in supporting students facing economic hardships.

In conclusion, addressing the educational disparities caused by poverty requires a multifaceted approach that involves not only the school but also the broader community and policymakers. By implementing comprehensive support systems and fostering an inclusive educational environment, it is possible to enhance the academic outcomes of students affected by poverty. Future research should continue to explore effective strategies and interventions that can bridge the gap in educational achievement for students from low-income families.

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