



Poverty as an Impediment to Economic Growth and Development: Perspective on Education in Nongoma Area of Zululand District of Kwazulu-Natal

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Poverty is more complex than just than it is because it is a determinant factor for the growth and development of the economy in the country and precisely in Nongoma. The study argues that the impact of poverty has limit economic growth and development due to a poor education system that disadvantage learners from poor households from receiving quality education while many even drop out of school, some learners engaged in different criminal activities, because of the financial constraints. Amongst others, the study recommends joint efforts among all the stakeholders to alleviate poverty, political unrest, even distribution of income and resources in the Nongoma municipality. The study was anchored by the ecological theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner while the mixed method was adopted for the study.

Key words: *Poverty, economic growth and development, education*

INTRODUCTION

The definition of poverty has been instrumental in expanding the observed gaps between nations and communities regarding living standards and per capita income. The researcher found that the constitutional commitment, universal human rights, and dignity of the poor person were violated immediately.

This study aimed to explore household poverty's influence on academic achievement among low-income students. In poor children, the academic disadvantage is greater than in children born in middle/high-class families. (Isaacs & Magnuson, 2011; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012).



Poverty can prevent a learner from learning and can lead to social, emotional, and behavioral problems (Cauthen & Fass, 2009). Parenting poverty, large families, low levels of jobs, and the poor community in which learners grow up are amongst the most common factors of learner poverty (Guerrero et al., 2013; Kenney, 2012; Whaley, Jiang, Gomez, & Jenks, 2011). More specifically, the majority of learners live in poverty in Nongoma rural areas than learners from affluence homes or in the city (Lopez & Velasco, 2011; Mather, 2016).

The poverty trap can be regarded as any strengthening mechanism that continues to cause poverty (Azariadis & Stachurski, 2005). Although the post-apartheid economic growth has been registered, the gaps between the rich and the poor have increased. The researcher argued. The dynamics of poverty and its forms and their complexity were unpacked by this study. The investigator studied the impact of the poverty trap on the academic performance of learners and how it affects economic growth and development. The different policies implemented by the Government of South Africa in addressing poverty were then analyzed. The effectiveness of these methods is tested, while the literature review explores the potential for greater impact

In less-privileged and socially-excluded families, children are more likely to be stuck in poverty, given that the education system available to most of the poor is weak [the South African Human Rights Committee and the United Nations Children's Fund (2004)] and that they have no opportunity to obtain a quality education.

In this regard, the researchers found that considering that the deprived schools attended, they have every excuse to struggle in academia or even to end up with a failure that can inevitably lead to poverty in the long term.

Zhang's (2003) research on 'Education Absenteeism and Poverty' shows that children living in poor homes with unemployed parents or guardians and receiving government welfare grants would more often skip schools than peers whose parents have a particular occupation. Due to the financial issue faced by some families, it could be hard for the children in this group to always be in school because of the burden that they have to work a long distance to keep them from school. Despite the South African government's focus on education since 1994 in terms of equity, affordability, and access, the 2007 survey of the Southern and Eastern African Consortium on Education Quality Monitoring (SACMEQ) found that performance gaps between the poor and the wealthy children in South Africa were far greater than the differences in reading and scanning (Van der Berg, 2009).

The results of the SACMEQ survey show the ironic case of two education systems in South Africa: a well-resourced, high-performing system that serves predominantly children with a special context and a low-level system, which is not able to convert resources into initial output, and that serves children from poor backgrounds, (SACMEQ, 2011). Furthermore, in the past, apartheid has not fully reversed the impact of the system on the disadvantaged community, so the Government must close the gap between the rich and the poor.



Similarly, UNICEF finds poverty trapping as a core concern for blacks and colored people in South Africa (UNICEF, 2014c). Schools are missing certain basic needs among the most vulnerable groups and children from such families are therefore likely to receive low-quality education (UNICEF 2011).

Also, the majority of poor children in South Africa are black or colored and stuck in the deprived elementary school sector, placing them in a situation where the cycle of poverty that was spawning the (SAHRC & UNICEF,2011) were born is disadvantaged. This increasing poverty impact could lead to profound damage and limited opportunities because the effects of poverty on school children are a matter of concern (McKiernan & Ratcliffe, 2010).

Therefore, this research explores the impact of household poverty on the performance of school students in rural areas. Moore et al. (2009) say that household poverty research is significant because the majority of studies connect poverty to poor child welfare standards. In comparison to children from affluent backgrounds, marginalized children appear to leave schools on numerous grounds, have low academic results, and have behavioral health or emotional problems. This research, therefore, explores the diversity of learning difficulties unique to school children from families with abject poverty, deprived children early in childhood, and the deficit and poverty cycle.

Poverty is still one of the world's greatest human disasters, especially in Africa. South Africa fights high levels of poverty like its poorer neighboring countries despite its position as the largest economy in Africa. In many developing countries decentralization is normal. Achieving effective social policies aimed at reducing poverty, is important to gain an understanding of poverty, its persistence, and in particular its chances of getting out of poverty (Glauben, Herzfeld, Rozelle, et al & Wang ,2012).

The low performance of poverty reduction initiatives in the Franklin & College (2011) continent needs a reflection of the policies and attempts to reduce poverty, amid domestic and global efforts to counter poverty. The National Planning Commission recognizes that while several measures were taken to alleviate poverty, these steps were not appropriate. Millions of working households are unemployed, and many live close to the poverty line (NPC ,2011).

Research on the understanding of the academia lag between students raising in poverty and their wealthier peers (Barbarin & Aikens; 2015; García & Weiss, 2017; Jensen, 2009) shows that increased research on the links between parenting, schools, and community expectations of learners is complex and challenging. This study aims to study the influence of households, schools, and communities on the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged home students and its impact on economic growth and development in the Nongoma area.



The current 2,5percent economic growth must triple in the number of years before the country can generate 11 million jobs by 2030, President Jacob G. Zuma said in his nation-state address in (2013). To fight injustice, economic development remains key. The research work supports a multi-stakeholder emphasis on the effects of poverty and a rethink of the systemic problems of poverty perpetuating a low academic performance of Nongoma high schools in the Zululand district.

The Poverty

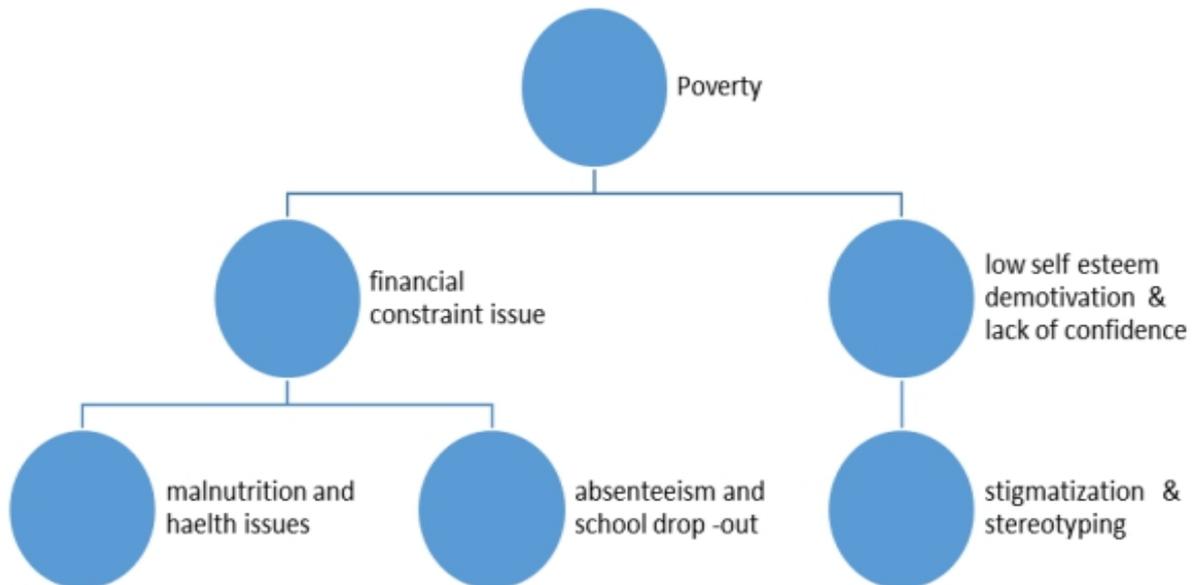
Poverty is a term that is disputed; it is contested with good reason. The argument about how poverty should be conceptualized, described and calculated goes beyond semantics and academic hair-splitting. The conceptualization, description, and measurement of poverty in society are like a mirror image of the society's ideals: we still say a great deal about how we would like things to be theoretically robust in the conceptualization, definition, and measurement of what is appropriate in society.

For public educators and administrators, learners raised by economically deprived parents present a challenge. For whatever cause, learners who darken schoolhouse doorways are not prepared to learn to face obstacles during their lifetime (Rouse, Brooks-Gunn,&McLanahan, 2003). Poverty has harmed school readiness, academic achievements, and overall progress in schools.

Besides, economically disadvantaged learners frequently experienced a lower degree of school achievement due to reduced school preparation and poor results. Unfortunately, lack of success, poor academic performance starts when learners met educators who were socially programmed to consider poor people as morally inferior, i.e. a class that remained in poverty by choice and altitude. The belief that learners who grew up in poverty were beyond repair was wrongly expressed by some teachers. Educator acted as if these learners were so harmed by their early experiences, they could be too difficult to educate (Wilkins,2006) such a misinformed view was unfortunate because some educator failed to provide a good school experience for these needy learners that could ultimately lead them to break the cycle of poverty.

School failure or low academic results is more likely to be the product of economically deprived learners given the challenges addressed (Amatea & West-Olatunji 2007). Poverty had adverse impacts on its youngest victims because they were more likely to be held and many subsequently struggled to finish high school speaks less about going to higher institutions for further studies.

IMPACT OF HOUSEHOLD POVERTY TRAP IN LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



(Source : Adapted from Iwaloye 2018)

Pragmatic diagram of the impact of poverty

In South Africa and elsewhere on the continent, poverty as a universal phenomenon is distinctive because it tends to impact the majority of the population of the same region, while a very small minority enjoys opulence. And at worst the standard of education that one gets and how much one can be good in education seem to be decided. Singh well illustrates the impact of poverty on a learner when he says: the learner's excellent ability is lost prematurely, allowing the adverse socio-economic circumstances to grow only partially. Social disadvantage is deprivation and handicap, a stuck, doomed to stagnation, wastage, and failure is the socially disadvantaged learner. Physically and mentally, social disadvantage mutilates the learner, stunts his progress, kills his abilities, and deprives him of self-fulfillment (Singh,1980).

Education has long been recognized as the most important, if not the only, factor in social progress and as such, is at the heart of improving the lives of millions of poor South Africans. Three of the four points of the South Africans' national development vision for 2014 are halving unemployment, halving hunger, and improving equality in jobs.

Financial Material Resources Constraints

Lack of financial resources serves as an impediment for a learner to perform to the optimum level academically and this is one of the major effects of poverty non-academic performance

of learners. The findings of the study by UNICEF (2011) indicate that when a learner is financially disadvantaged, he or she will attend a poor school in a rural environment. Such a school is likely to lack some basic resources that can enhance teaching and learning activities. The finding further suggests that some schools lack adequate resources and materials that promote good academic performance and this will limit effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

According to Bronfenbrenner in his study, there is need to understand the multiple and interactive social-economic, cultural and community level factor which alone influences the process of development and academic attainment of learners. *Okioga (2013)* states that learners from poor households face both practical and materials constraints and this tends to limit their academic success because such learners will be unable to concentrate in class activities due to lack of basic needs compared to the counterparts from wealthy backgrounds. Mwamwenda (2010) emphasizes that if learners are given access to all necessary teaching and learning resources needed in the classroom, they tend to be more confident and experience more self-assured to perform better in school examinations.

Additionally, Chireshe (2010), Yi, Zhang, Luo, Shi, Mo, Chen, and Rozelle (2012) support that those financial constraints limit the academic performance of the learner. Their findings further suggest that when learners are deprived of basic needs or grow up in stricken poor environments, their brains do not grow to their fullest potential, thus, their cognitive and mental alertness needed to excel in the classroom are limited. Suffice to state that learners living in poverty experience many challenges to keep up with their peers.

Truancy and Dropout from School

Poverty reduces the likelihood of educational attainment and at the same time, one of the key pathways for escaping poverty is educational attainment. Poverty has an astonishing impact on the academic accomplishments of learners. Poverty is well known to be one of the main causes of school truancy and dropouts (Cuthrell, et al., 2010). Since the introduction of No Learner Left Behind (2001), all learners have been kept accountable for the scholastic achievement of colleges, teachers, and administrators. The call for an education system to equip learners with the required knowledge and skills for successful education has placed pressure on educators to understand their learners especially learners who face academic challenges. Studies show that educators' efforts can make a big difference in creating a positive atmosphere in an impoverished learner's educational journey (Pascopella, 2006).

Stereotyping and reckoning

Stereotypes may also play a major role in the difference between black and white ethnicity in achievement. The threat of stereotypes is a factor that prevents a person or community from performing at its maximum potential (Appel & Kronbege, 2012). Due to the set-up of the



environment, parental history, lack of adequacy in the school setting, or general physical outlook of the learners, rural schools are viewed as less intelligent. The learner can underperform when these false ideas and biased attitudes are present within the learning environment, whether intentionally or not. Appel and Kronberger discovered that there was a party performing at their best while stereotyping signals (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

Stereotyping and Stigmatization

Stereotypes may also play a significant role in the achievement gap that exists among black, colored, and white ethnicity. Stereotype threat is a factor that inhibits an individual or group from performing at their highest ability (Appel & Kronberger, 2012). The rural schools are perceived as less intelligent due to the set-up of the environment, parental background, lack of adequate infrastructures in the school environment, or general physical outlook of the learners. When these false ideas and biased attitudes are present within the learning environment, whether purposely or not, students may underperform. Appel and Kronberger found that stereotyping cues prevent learners from performing at their best ability (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

Increase in the actions of multiple offenders

It is important to remember the contributory dangers of poverty, having established poverty and its prevalence in the United States. Poverty is also linked with other stressors, such as drug and alcohol misuse, along with multiple illegal activities. Subsisting below the level of poverty produces unprecedented levels of frustration, resentment, and stress. These negative feelings can lead to physical abuse and violence. Levine, (2009) has been confirmed to have an exceptionally high risk of mistreatment such as physical, sexual, and emotional violence in these circumstances. All of these contributing factors increase the risk of mental health disorders being formed by impoverished learners. Given the well-recognized impact of these stressors on learners, there are colossal disparities between learners who need treatment for mental and physical health services and those who receive them.

More than 50 percent of learners living in poverty have anticipated mental health needs based on data from Burns, Phillips, Wagner, Barth, Kolko, Campbell, & Landsverk (2004), but only 16 percent ever receive the assistance they have been referred to. The difference between the aid needed and its actual reception is important in terms of growth. The stressors of crime, abuse, and neglect caused by poverty, left alone can lead to mental and emotional harm (Burns, et al 2004). Studying the impact that parental factors can have on a learner living in poverty is significant. Impoverished homes are more likely to be single-parent households, 72 percent of which are driven by a female parent (Bureau of the Census, 2008). More learners are increasingly likely to have little to no prenatal care, low birth rates, inadequate nutrition, and non-existent after-born care within the boundaries of generational poverty (Wadsworth, Aviv, Rhinehardt, Wolf, Santiago, & Einhorn, 2008).



These poor parenting abilities are often born from inadequate income to meet the needs of learner care; detached interests may contribute to physical and emotional negligence, such as wasting money on alcohol or drugs.

The psychological burden of unemployment or lack of adequate parental income may also contribute to austere and abrasive parenting. Parents suffering from poverty often exhibit less parenting, decreased sincere concern for healthy growth, and little academic modeling (Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2009). The lack of work or attempts to pursue employment also raises the probability of family upheaval, causing difficult changes. These stressors also lead to neglect of the mental, emotional, and educational requirements of poor learners (Wadsworth et al, 2008).

Teenage delinquency, insufficient and incomplete schooling and poor health behaviors may be exacerbated by the consequences of negligent and ineffective parenting due to poverty. The cycle of deprivation and violence breeds itself without proper direction and education, forming a spiral of generational poverty and resulting in low academic performance.

Growing difference in learner academic success in rural and urban areas

There is a rising difference in the output of learners from various walks of life (Neuman, 2013). Studies show that learners from disadvantaged economic backgrounds appear to attain lower levels of standardized testing skills (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2002) and learners living in poverty (Duncan et al, 2013). Strategies have been proposed by a myriad of research-based practices to help close the achievement gap, including parental participation (Larocque & Darling, 2011), improved school funding, better nutrition, and reading in the summer (Allington et al, 2010; Basch, 2011; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010).

Studies show several factors that lead to and help close this gap in accomplishment. This research explores these disparities in depth through the academic performance of rural learners relative to urban learners (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2002) and learners living in poverty (Duncan et al, 2013). Studies display a series of evidence that relate to and help close this achievement gap. These are discussed in depth in this research work.

Black and colored educational achievement in South Africa, in particular, depends on income, but learners belonging to low-income groups are less likely to graduate from high school and are much less likely to pursue post-secondary education relative to their high-income white peers (NCES, 2015).

However, household economic status is a determinant of academic achievements for learners, low socio-economic status learners may not be able to complete secondary school due to the financial status of their background, whereas their counterpart with a good financial

background would be academically successful because they will have access to all the required resources to help them achieve their financial background. More than 50 percent of the population of South Africa lives in poverty, according to (Statistics South Africa ,2008). Statistics South Africa stressed that, as one of the key goals of the South African National Development Programme, it is unlikely that the country will achieve its target of eliminating poverty by 2030.

Malnutrition

Poverty entails an immense amount of risks and challenges that put vulnerable learners at risk. For young minds and bodies to grow, positive nutritional habits are important. Malnutrition can be a significant drawback to cognition, memory growth, and language capacity that can hinder adequate learning success in the classroom. Under-nutrition is an epidemic among the poor in the United States; studies suggest that approximately 12 million American learners eat diets far below the recommended nutritional allowances (Brown, & Pollit, 1996). Since the evidence indicates that the absence of significant nutritional dietary requirements can have deleterious effects on the developing brain and can also contribute to learning deficiencies and behavioral problems, this issue exposes poor youth to a storm of possible limitations.

Although South Africa spends billions on public assistance and free public education, much of this money is wasted when a learner presents the academically weakened classroom with inadequate nutrition (Brown, & Pollit, 1996). While government aid is widely available via programs such as free food, free education, and other initiatives, these funds are often misused or abused. The fund is also used to buy items that are not relevant to learning, such as alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, and clothing, instead of using government funds intended to help provide for learners. Even well-meaning parents believe that nutritious balanced food is simply inexpensive and opt for cheap, filling food instead; this has led to a rise in the incidence of diabetes and obesity in learners living in homes below poverty levels (Fennal & Brown,2006). The emotional impact of nutritional food deficiency can lead to damaging distortions of body image, dysmorphia, and eating disorders; lack of awareness and apathy about proper nutrition contributes to poor eating and health habits over a lifetime that will not enable learners to be more productive in school and also hinder proper focus during learning. Both of these are co-contributors to the increasingly high level of morbidity among learners and poor families. (Fennal, & Brown,2006) .

Lack of aspiration and lack of motivation

Research results Berzin, (2010) indicate that disadvantaged young people lack expectations and motivation for education. Furthermore, their reality is based more on the survival and preservation of the lifestyles they have become used to rather than higher education (Berzin, 2010). This period of repetition displays all the features of generational poverty. One aspect of generational poverty that is important to remember is the repudiation of the mindset of poor



families towards change that pervades their learners. The cycle of repetition can also be facilitated, if not promoted, by refusing to acknowledge the performance of the learner over the parent.

It has been noted Baker (1987) that the deep-seated resentment of any family member who dares to question a lower socio-economic lifestyle and to break free from the cycle of repetition is rooted in generational poverty. The dissatisfaction that is harbored is rooted in generational expectations; to expect better for oneself is considered an insult to the lifestyle offered (Baker, 1987). Unfortunately, as Baker (1987) points out the cycle of repetition has a strong effect on disadvantaged young people, particularly given the strong emotional impacts of an equivalent socio-economic environment that reaffirms their circumstances as usual.

Conceptualizing Rural Communities in South Africa

Rural communities are different from other places (Flora & Flora, 2014). They also take the view that rural communities in the developed countries differ from those in developing or underdeveloped countries. The factors are different. For example, Flora & Flora (2014) states that in developed countries rural communities are characterized as being unavailable to airports and rail transport, among others. But Dani & Shah (2016) and Uleanya & Gamede (2018b) agree that rural communities in underdeveloped and developing economies, including South Africa, are characterized by untarred roads, poor road systems, electricity poor or not accessible, high rates of unemployment, and dispersion.

Problem statement

Different factors appear to compete with students' academic performance. Factors such as teacher-learner relations, such as the availability of learnings, supporting learning materials Mlambo (2011), academic literature and literacy Glew, Dixon & Salamonson, (2016), the health of the learning community Holly & Sharp,(2014) have been seen among other factors as impairing learners' relations. Further factors include Teacher-learning relationships, (Abrantes, Sabra & Lages,2007, Kuzhumannil & Fehring, 2009). However, the household poverty trap and its impact on the academic performance of learners were given little or no consideration. This study explored the impact of household poverty trap on learners' academic performance and its influence on economic growth and development in this community, using selected schools in an individual rural community of Nongoma in Zululand District in South Africa. The reason for this study is, therefore: The study aims to respond to the following question from the investigation:

METHODOLOGY

The study employs quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. To collect Quantitative Data, a questionnaire was used, while qualitative data was used during a focus group

discussion. Kumar (2014) is supporting the use of questionnaires and focus group discussions for data collection. Quantitative data through the use of questionnaires help to generalize results while findings from focus group discussions help to gather detailed information on the phenomenon under discussion. This study was performed at selected rural schools at KwaZulu-Natal district of Zululand, Nongoma circuit.

The target population for this study is 5 conveniently selected educators who form the focal group and 250 randomly selected students from 5 high schools deliberately selected in Nongoma in the district of Zululand. Convenient sampling has been taken in the selection of educators based on time, availability, and interest. Kumar (2014) states that convenient sampling is useful, taking into account participants' availability and interest in studying. Random sampling was used to select students who answered questionnaires to avoid prejudice and offer all students the same possibility of participating in the study.

Kumar (2014) considers random sampling to be an opportunity for researchers to avoid discrimination and bias. The secondary schools were purposefully chosen based on similar characteristics such as location, funding source, population/size, structure, etc. The research included five (5) public high schools at the Nongoma Circuit in Zululand District, five (5) educators, one (1) from each school selected, and (50) learners from the schools selected. This is to ensure that schools are represented within Nongoma Circuit in Zululand District and that participants in the selected schools are consistent. The study, therefore, includes 255 participants: 250 learners and 5 educators.

This study includes two hundred and fifty-five participants. Randomly selected learners received questionnaires while the teachers formed a focus group that collected qualitative information. Besides, data obtained through the questionnaires have been quantitatively analyzed using descriptive frequency counting statistics, simple percentages, tables, and statistical representations, which explain the results of the study. The software Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform the statistical analysis. The demographic data were analyzed using frequency and simple percentage numbers.

On the other hand, qualitative data collected were inductively analyzed to identify subjects and models. To better understand the focus group data and to indicate clear conceptual relations between the data collected, the researcher coded them. This helps to count keywords as well. The researchers have used the collected qualitative data in a systemic, efficient codification and complex analysis. Each topic was used to conclude from the results

Findings and Discussion

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

Research Question 1: What is the impact of the household poverty trap on learner's academic performance within secondary schools that impede economic growth and development in the Nongoma area in the Zululand District?

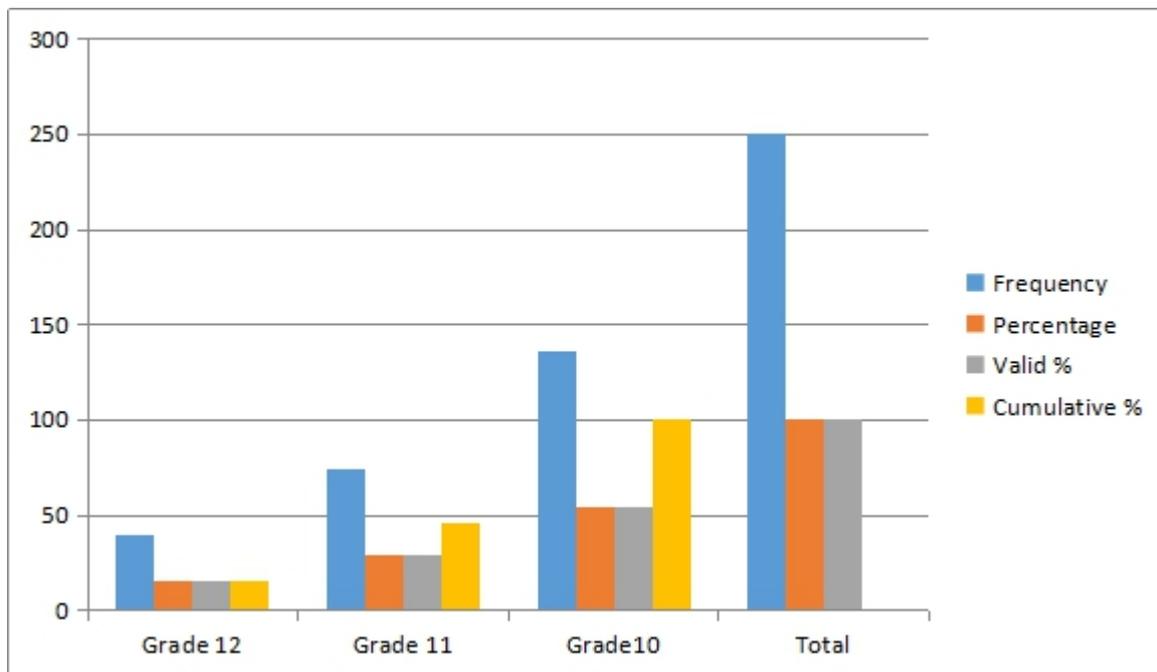
Results from Quantitative Study

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

Frequency Table

Grade of the learner

Respondent characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Grade 12	40	16.0	16.0	16.0
Grade 11	74	29.6	29.6	45.6
Grade 10	136	54.4	54.4	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	



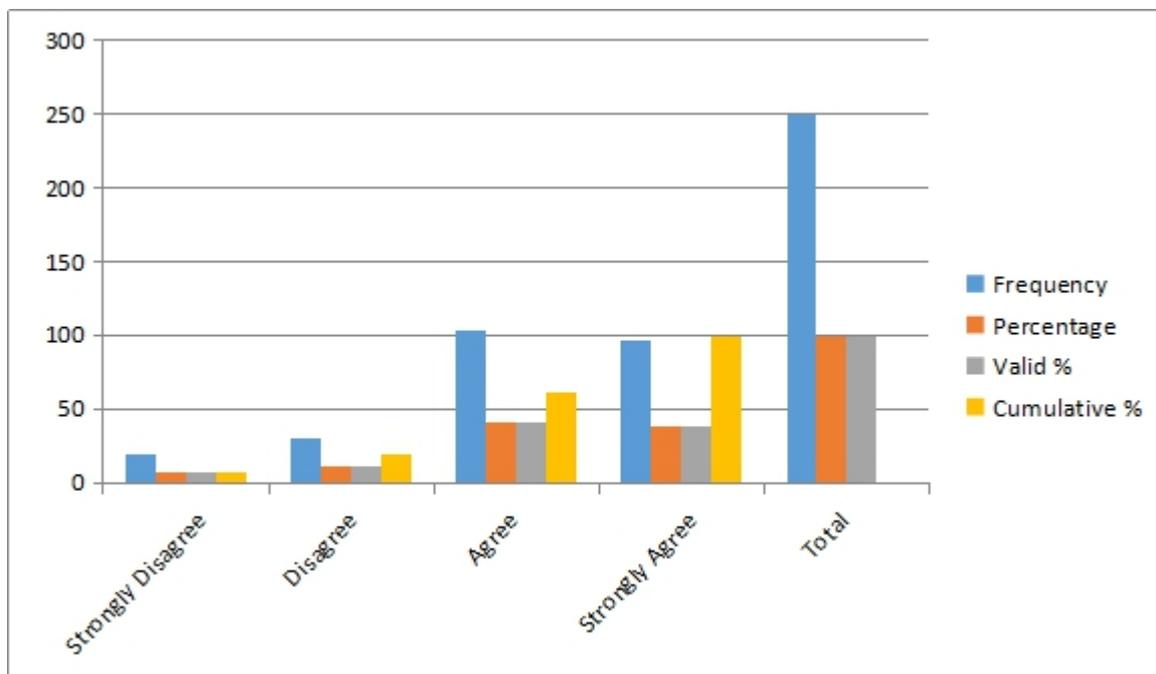
THE FINDING FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES RESPONDENT

Relationship between the academic performance of rural secondary school learners and poverty

The poverty trap is one of the main causes of learners' poor performance in the rural secondary schools in the Nongoma circuit of Zululand District

FREQUENCY TABLE 3

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	20	8.0	8.0	8.0
Disagree	30	12.0	12.0	20.0
Agree	104	41.6	41.6	61.6
Strongly Agree	96	38.4	38.4	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	



The table shows that 80% (41,6 + 38,4) of learners are united in the reality of poverty being the key source of poor results for rural secondary schools in the Nongoma of the district of Zululand. It should usually be noticed that most of the learners answering questionnaires think



that poverty impedes high school academic achievement. A total of 200 students out of 250 totaled 80% said poverty impaired academic results, while 50 learners disagreed.

It can be maintained, therefore that rural/community learners are challenged by poverty, which exposed them to the lack of a quality education system that coincides with Akoojee & Nkomo (2008), Fook & Sidhu (2013) work, who believe that rural learners are struggling to learn because poverty has exposed them to poor education. Due to the lack of quality in the education system to which they are exposed, poor academic performance is probable (Cavanagh & Haycock 2007). The reasons behind persistent poverty are overwhelmingly present in four main elements, according to (Sharanya Ravichardran 2011). Inadequate government facilities, education deficit, and civil inadequacy. The lack of education has also led to extreme poverty in rural areas.

There are various kinds of poverty, including lack of income and adequate resources to ensure healthy livelihoods, famine and malnutrition, ill-health, restricted access to education and other basic facilities, increased mobility and death from illness, homelessness and inadequate accommodation, unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion, classified by lack of co-existence (United Nation-UNCHR, 2012). Researchers such as Suitts (2015) have held the view that only thoughtful, structural variations in and educational policy as well as in educational practices can avoid a rising number of public school learners living in poverty.

Fair confirmation funding public schools in our nation irrespective of zip code or geographical location, and increasing national demonstrations against poverty normalization, seems like a good place to start (A report on the spring, 2015, ASCD whole child symposium) Also, Olufu & Uju (2017). The studies revealed that the relationship between study habits and academic performance of learners is significant. Educators and school guide consultants were advised to cooperate, guide learners in the development of good learning practices to improve their academic performance. Based on the respondent opinion and the support of the literature, it can conclusively agree that poverty causes poor academic performance of learners from impoverishing home in most of the rural school in Nongoma and its environment.

Findings from Qualitative Study

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

Demographic table of the respondent of focus group interview

code	qualification	subject taught	grade
fgea	Honour degree in Mathematics	mathematics	10 -12
fgeb	Bed ,honours,pgce	physical sciences	10-12
fgec	B-tech acc(hons)	accounting economics business studies	10-12
fged	B.a dual major	English language (hl)	10-12
fgee	Bsc, pgce	life sciences	10-12

Question 1: There is a high level of dropout of learners in the high school, what do you think is the main cause of this?

The responses of participants to this question are presented below:

FGEA Some learners drop out of school because they do not have the money to buy some basic things for themselves.

FGEB Many households are child-headed due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic hence such children end up prioritizing fending for siblings than attending schools thus lack role models is the main cause.

FGEC Poor households often force their children to drop out of school, so they can support the family by generating income. This increases the gap between the skills needs of the economy and the supply of those skills.

FGED It is stress/depression caused by the poverty trap. Being in poverty can cause low self-esteem in the learners. The learners may even feel discomforts in the classroom, learners might be forced to drop out to hustle for the family.

FGEF The main reason for this is depression, which is caused by the poverty trap, living in poverty can cause learners to have a low mood and overreaction to activity and they may feel some sort of discomfort in the school environment



The finding from the respondents affirmed that due to the poor financial background of learners in the rural community, the outcome of their educational performance is always poor compared to their peers in the urban school. This was informed by the response of FGEC who states that: Poor households often force their children to drop out of school, so they can support the family by generating income. This increases the gap between the skills needs of the economy and the supply of those skills hence impede economic growth and development. Stress/depression caused by poverty trap. Being in poverty can cause low self-esteem in the learners. The learners may feel discomforts in the classroom, learners might be forced to drop out to hustle for their family. Poverty limits the chance of educational attainment; it has an astonishing impact on the learners' academic achievement. Cuthrell et al. (2010) opine that poverty is responsible for school dropout, and truancy.

The study established that the financial cost of schooling is often, making it difficult for poor learners to have access to quality education and this leads to a popular saying that —If education is costly, try ignorance —.

Learners from impoverished homes always lack the basic learning tools due to financial problems, starting with uniforms, writing materials, and others. Some parents even force their learners to drop schooling to support the family. A study by UNICEF (2011) establishes that many schools in rural areas lack learning resources such as textbooks, libraries, laboratories, and computers that can enhance their academic performance. This is by the finding of *Okioga (2013)* who opines that poor learners face both practical and material constraints and that affects their effective participation in their educational pursuits. The majority of the educator that was interviewed in the focus group, FGEF, FGEC, FGED, and FGEA confirmed this in their responses.

QUESTION 2: Based on your experience as an educator, in which group of learners does absenteeism persist most?

The responses of participants to this question are presented below:

FGEA Learners in the senior and FET Phase but precisely learners with poor background

FGEB Grade 8 to 10 because they are not sure of their academic progression.

FGEC Absenteeism persists most in the less disadvantaged home; learners are forced to do piece jobs so they can meet the basic needs of their family.

FGED The poor learners, miss out on school more often, giving a reason that they didn't have enough money for transport, or they don't have transport at all, they work long distance to school.

FGEF The poor learners from economically disadvantage home, they seem to miss out on school a lot, giving reasons that they didn't have enough money for transport or that they were too depressed or hungry to come to school.

The response from FGEC, FGED, and FGEF correspond with the study on school absenteeism and poverty conducted by (Zhang 2003). Poverty is more prevalent among learners from poor economic backgrounds due to circumstances beyond their capability. Cuthrel, et al. (2010) also assert that truancy and school dropout is common among the learners from poor households, therefore, the responses elicited from the interviewees are more positive and relevant to this study, therefore, it is deduced that poverty impacted negatively on the academic performance of learners in the rural secondary schools due to their absenteeism.

QUESTION 3: Do you agree with the assumption that there is a disparity between learners in urban areas and learners in the rural community when it comes to learners' performances? The responses of participants to this question are presented below:

FGEA Yes, I agree, learners in the cities are very much exposed to good libraries and internet café than their counterparts in the rural areas.

FGEB Yes, learners in the urban areas have libraries to research with computers, they have lights for study at night compared to learners in the rural community

FGEC Yes, learners in the urban area often feel comfortable in the learning environment than learners in the rural area, they see learners in the rural as inferior to them.

FGED There is disparity because learners in the urban seem to have everything they need, and they seem to be happier and more knowledgeable in their school work.

FGEF There is a wide gap because in most cases learners in urban areas seem happier and more knowledgeable when it comes to schoolwork.

From the responses of the educators in the focus group to the above question, it was established that there is an ever-growing gap in the achievement gap of learners from varying walks of life. The finding further suggests that learners from rural and disadvantaged homes tend to achieve very low in their academic achievement because they are likely to receive a low-quality education. The findings also suggest that there are two scenarios of two educational systems operating in South Africa. One educational system that is well resourced and high performing, serving mainly the learners from affluence home, and the other a low-performing system, serving learners from the poor economic background.



QUESTION 4: How can you explain the influence of household poverty on the learner's performance?

The responses of participants to this question are presented below:

FGEA Once a household is poor, the negative effect on the learner's performance is obvious. The learner has a high risk of performing poorly.

FGEB Nutrition affects learner's concentration since food is scarce in poor family's homes, poverty also entails a lack of resources for learners for example calculator.

FGEC reduces the performance of learners in school, learners are often faced with many challenges at home and the pressure from school often makes them fail.

FGED Household poverty causes the children from impoverished homes to be discouraged and give up on their school work which leads to poor performance and end up in criminality behavior.

FGEF I agree with the last speaker.

Sequel to the responses of the educators interviewed, it can be deduced that poor nutrition causes different forms of learning instability due to the negative effects that accompany it. This finding agrees with the work of Mwangi (2010) who states that health problems and poor nutrition deficits are ways in which poverty affects learners. Donald et al. (2010) regarding the subject matter state that learners raised in poverty tend to miss school more often due to various forms of illnesses and other kinds of related poverty syndromes which limit their academic success. The above is in conjunction with the response of FGEB when he said —nutrition affects learner's concentration since there is always food scarcity in a poverty household, therefore a hungry learner will not be able to concentrate in class. Such will therefore lead to poor academic performance and sometimes failure to write examinations due to absenteeism. It destroys the excellent potentiality of learners, sometimes leads to deprivation and waste of future. Poverty maims and mutilates learners physically, mentally, likewise their potentials. Poverty limits the availability of skills and decent work due to a lack of education (Mbeki, 2004). Poverty also affects the physical wellbeing, brain development, educational performance, self-esteem, cognitive and psychological development of learners. Evans & Schamberg (2009) affirmed that the negative effect of poverty has damages on developing children (learners). The impact includes: causing low self-esteem and diminished self-efficacy for them. This finding also agrees with the work of Levine (2009) who reports that learners raised in poverty are at high risk of delinquency behaviors such as drug addiction, early pregnancy, exposure to various diseases like HIV/AIDS, and criminal behaviors which will hinder them from achieving good performance academically and possess quality skills to

participate in the mainstream of the economy. Based on the responses of the respondents in the interview above, the researcher was able to affirm that poverty influence contributes immensely to the poor economic growth and development of Nongoma and its environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATION

The study explored the effect of the household poverty trap on the learning abilities and academic performances of learners in selected rural secondary schools in South Africa, using Nongoma District. The findings of the study show that the poverty trap is prevalent in rural settlements in the nation. The study shows that the household poverty trap is contributing negatively to the self-esteem/confidence of learners, hampers their learning abilities as well as academic performances, and eventually causes some of the affected learners to drop out of school. The findings of the study suggest that the effect of the household poverty trap on the learning abilities and academic performances of learners is monumental and can cause learners to constitute a nuisance in the society as an increase in drop-out rate is envisaged to affect the society negatively. Hence, the following recommendations are made:

- ❖ The consequences of poverty encountered by learners are important to resolve. Working with all stakeholders is important in South Africa and particularly in rural areas to review the key root causes of poverty, such as socioeconomic stability, political turmoil, unequal income, and unequal resource distribution in the region.
- ❖ The government should provide as many people as possible with more work opportunities. Rising income subsidies such as subsidies for poor household learners to provide basic needs.
- ❖ The Government shall establish a strategy which, independently of its socio-economic status, will make basic education compulsory for all children.
- ❖ Polices and laws and a framework for the monitoring of learner's work and sexual abuses of the students should be developed.
- ❖ Government and education can be awareness-raised and educated to benefit disadvantaged context learners.
- ❖ Poverty is a social issue that needs to be resolved by a school, family, and community microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. .Poverty is a social problem (political, ideology)
- ❖ Government to intensify more efforts in the provision of teaching and learning material resources
- ❖ The parent - learners partnership should be more encourage to improve educational performance



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