CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

It is highly significant to note that a child's educational journey is fundamentally shaped by the socioeconomic environment in which they are nurtured (Adeyemi, 2024). This explains the critical role that resources and financial stability play in academic development. The foundational support a child receives from their family and community could play a great role in their future life and helps them to access and persist in formal learning. Excellent educational attainment not only enhances the individual's intellectual landscape but could also provide a definitive pathway out of intergenerational poverty. Doing well academically could open up gateways to various great opportunities in numerous sectors and organisations with good pay scales. After accomplishing good qualifications individuals may get multiple career possibilities with better salary packages, which in turn can uplift their families and communities, especially in this economically stratified world, where employers search for skilled individuals with a strong educational foundation.

Educational attainment may promote positive growth in society. Nations tend to feel a sense of accomplishment when they educate their citizenry, who then work to score well in developmental goals and conquer numerous national obstacles. By acquiring good educational levels a populace could boost its collective self-esteem or confidence, which would, in turn, encourage it to keep doing its best and well. A strong educational foundation could help a society to excel in the future. Doing well educationally could make a nation feel more confident and motivated which may automatically encourage its leaders to keep investing heavily in education to become better than before. Notwithstanding, educational attainment could be affected by many factors including parents' education levels and income, teachers' knowledge of the subject, school infrastructure, textbooks availability and

accessibility, libraries, practical laboratories, meals provision and many other factors. However, economic factors seem to have been recognized as having a lot of influence on educational attainment. One of these factors is poverty.

Poverty, also known as economic deprivation, refers to a situation where individuals or families, due to limited financial resources, are unable to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare, let alone afford the costs associated with formal education (World Bank, 2023). It could also refer to a state of pronounced material deprivation that prevents parents from enrolling their children in school or leads to their withdrawal from the educational system. These families often prioritize immediate survival needs over long-term educational investments, which are perceived as costly and less urgent.

Globally, poverty remains a formidable barrier to education, with millions of children out of school in regions with weak, developing economies. Apart from a lack of financial means, other reasons for children being out of school may be the need for child labour to supplement family income, early marriage, poor health, and a perception of the low returns on education in certain contexts. It is common for children in impoverished households to be left with no choice but to forgo schooling to contribute to the family's sustenance. The structure of the family may also have significance in that large family size and single parenthood also have a "decisive role" in restricting or facilitating access to education for children. Economic pressures could either facilitate or prevent a child's consistent attendance and participation in school. These are normally people who are unable to afford school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other incidental costs. To meet their material needs, children's labour becomes necessary, in order to keep the family financially afloat. Education seems never easy, even when the school is accessible and of good quality. When a family is struggling to feed itself, sending a child to school could be especially challenging, but not impossible. It actually could be an opportunity for intervention and social support to create new ways for the child to learn.

Education may be a media for children to interact with the world by acquiring knowledge, guiding them, teaching and equipping them so that they have good quality and independence in the future. It is because the most prior opportunity for social mobility received by children is from their education. Both the family and society should live together and be cooperative in educating, caring for and stimulating all aspects of children's growth and development. Nevertheless, numerous factors such as economic hardship, unemployment, low education level and social marginalization, could force a child to live a life separated from the classroom. Parents who are in this situation may encounter various problems including the inability to pay school fees, provide learning materials, and stimulate their children's educational development, and a lack of understanding of the long-term benefits of schooling, when in fact, children need optimal support and encouragement for their education. Parents in poverty may have a lack of time and resources to gather and cooperate with schools. This situation could force the parents as the head of the family to not be able to fulfil their role properly in educating their children. In general, families live in poverty because they tend to lack stable sources of income or sustainable livelihoods. In terms of educating, taking care and stimulating children's development, living in poverty is not as easy as living with financial security. The educational support applied by one parent may be different from other parents because they have their own struggles or model in instilling values and stimulating all aspects of child development amidst scarcity. The educational foundation that is laid for children seems to be highly essential for their future. The success and achievements achieved by a child are not only seen from the quality of educational institutions but also from how parents and the community prepare for their child's education that is being pursued. Thus, society has an obligation to care for, raise, educate, provide protection and welfare in increasing the ability and quality of children during their growth and development so that it could prevent neglect and unfair treatment for children, because one could believe that the

child's future is very dependent on the experience that has been passed, the socioeconomic environment and educational factors besides other factors.

Apart from poverty, there are other factors that could influence children's educational attainment and one of these is gender. Many researchers believed that boys and girls have different educational outcomes, often influenced by socioeconomic pressures. However, contrary to the compelling evidence regarding the effect of other individual and contextual variables on educational attainment, the gender role in school attendance is still an issue that attracts increased scientific interest, mainly due to the inconclusive reported findings. For example, in some contexts, poverty leads families to prioritize the education of boys over girls, leading to a higher dropout rate for females (Okafor & Bello, 2023). On the other hand, other studies have reported significant differences, with boys being pulled out to engage in farming or artisanal work, while girls are withdrawn for domestic duties or early marriage.

Another factor that could also influence a child's educational attainment is the location of their community. It is believable that a child in a remote, rural area faces different challenges from one in an urban center. However, with targeted interventions comes the potential for improvement, so understanding the specific location-based barriers could bring more selectivity in how educational policies are applied. According to recent analyses, school location had a significant impact on educational access, such that children in urban slums and remote rural areas had the highest rates of being out of school (Chukwuma, 2024). However, poverty was found to be the overarching significant factor in terms of students' educational attainment, but location was found to be a significant predictor of access to educational resources.

One other factor that could also influence educational attainment is parental literacy. The educational level of parents may have a big role to play in the academic achievement of children. A child born to parents with little or no formal education may face problems like a

lack of academic support at home, lower valuation of education, and an inability to navigate the school system, among others in Nigeria and these shortcomings could negatively affect both the child's motivation and educational attainment (Eze & Onyeka, 2025). In other way round, those with educated parents may have those supports which could influence their academic performance positively.

Given that excellent educational attainment may not only enhance an individual's life chances but could also break the cycle of intergenerational poverty, and doing well academically could open up gateways to various great opportunities, and reports have shown a high rate of out-of-school children especially in the developing world, with poverty being a primary driver, this study then seeks to examine the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

The rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria, especially at the primary and junior secondary levels, has been a recurring concern for the government, educators, and researchers. Some studies have looked into institutional factors, such as the condition of school facilities, while others have explored cultural aspects, including parental views on Western education, as part of efforts to address the issue. Despite these inquiries, the situation continues in various regions.

Given that different stakeholders have examined a range of factors without a clear resolution, it may be useful to consider other possible underlying influences. One factor that has been raised in some discussions is household poverty. It has been suggested that families with more stable financial circumstances might face fewer obstacles in supporting their children’s regular school attendance and progression. The availability of resources for items like fees, uniforms, and books could plausibly affect how smoothly children continue their education, which in turn might have some association with literacy and completion rates.

Based on this, the present study poses the following question: what is the relationship between poverty and the educational attainment of out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the level of poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The specific study aims to:

1. examine the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State
2. examine the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.
3. examine the relationship between level of poverty and educational attainment of out of school children.
4. examine the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?
2. What is the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?
3. What is the relationship between level of poverty and educational attainment of out of school children?

4. What is the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender?

Hypotheses

The study tests the following null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance:

1. The responses on the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different.
2. The responses on the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different.
3. There is no significant relationship between level of poverty and educational attainment of out of school children
4. There is no significant relationship between level of poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance for various stakeholders in the educational and social sectors, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, educators, community leaders, and researchers. Understanding the intricate relationship between poverty and the educational attainment of out-of-school children can inform the design and implementation of more effective intervention programs and social policies.

For policymakers and government agencies, the findings of this study provide critical empirical evidence to guide resource allocation and the formulation of targeted policies. The insights gained inform the development of poverty alleviation schemes, such as conditional cash transfers and school feeding programs, specifically tailored to address the unique

barriers faced by out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area, thereby fostering greater educational inclusion.

School administrators and teachers leverage the insights from this study to better understand the external socioeconomic challenges their potential students face. This understanding fosters a more empathetic and supportive school environment for children who are enrolled from impoverished backgrounds and guides the creation of flexible learning models and support systems that can help prevent at-risk students from dropping out.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations benefit immensely from this research. The findings serve as a needs assessment, enabling them to design and implement more effective community-specific interventions, such as scholarship programs, literacy classes for parents, and vocational training for adolescents, which directly address the poverty-related factors identified in the study.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader body of academic research by providing contemporary empirical evidence from the context of Edo State. It fills a specific gap in the literature regarding the localized dynamics of poverty and education in Oredo LGA, and this serves as a reference for future studies and helps build a more comprehensive understanding of this critical issue in Southern Nigeria.

Parents and guardians also benefit from this study as they are central to the educational journey of their children. A clearer understanding of how poverty directly impacts their children's future may motivate them to seek support from available government and NGO programs and to prioritize their children's education despite financial hardships, potentially breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Finally, and most importantly, the out-of-school children themselves stand to benefit directly from the outcomes of this study. By identifying the specific pathways through which poverty limits their educational access, the research catalyzes actions that lead to their enrollment, retention, and success in school. This access to education is their fundamental right and the most viable pathway to their personal development, empowerment, and future economic independence.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The study will be delimited to Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The variables to be examined include poverty, and educational attainment of out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Definition of Terms

Poverty: A condition where a household lacks the financial, educational and material resources necessary to support a child's consistent participation and success in formal schooling.

Educational Attainment: The level of education a child has successfully completed, reflected through grade progression, literacy competence and access to learning opportunities.

Out-of-School Children: Children who are of basic school age but are not enrolled in school, have dropped out, or are unable to access formal education due to social or economic barriers.

Socioeconomic Status: The social and economic position of a household, determined by factors such as income level, parental occupation, parental education and overall living conditions**.**

Access to Education: The extent to which children are able to enrol, attend regularly and benefit from learning in a formal school setting.

Highest Grade Completed: The last grade level a child has successfully finished before withdrawing or becoming excluded from the schooling system.

Literacy Level: The child's ability to read, write and understand basic written information as a result of previous exposure to formal learning.

Living Conditions: The physical and environmental circumstances in which a child resides, including housing quality, availability of learning space, sanitation and access to basic amenities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews existing literature on the relationship between poverty and educational attainment among out-of-school children. It begins with the conceptual framework, followed by the theoretical framework, empirical review, and finally the summary of literature.

Conceptual Framework

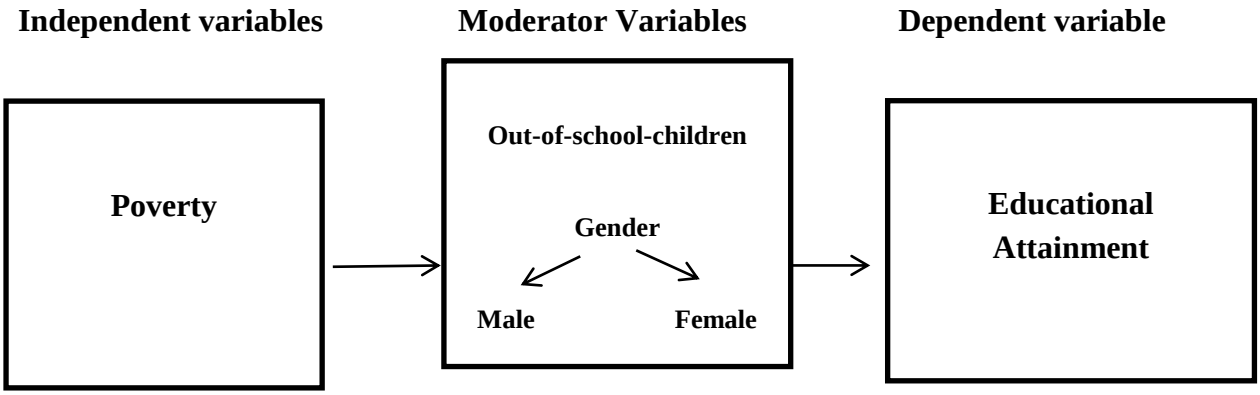


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Poverty and Educational Attainment among Out-of-School Children in Oredo Local Government Area

Source: Designed by the researcher

The conceptual framework for this study is built on the assumption that poverty is a primary factor influencing the educational attainment of out-of-school children. Poverty, expressed through limited family income, unstable or low-skilled parental occupation, low levels of parental education and poor living conditions, is assumed to shape the degree to which children are able to progress in school. It is expected that these conditions directly affect children's likelihood of completing grade levels, developing adequate literacy skills and accessing consistent learning opportunities. The framework further assumes that educational attainment is not a single outcome but a combination of measurable indicators that reflect children's overall educational exposure and progress. It is also assumed that the effects of

poverty operate within broader social and school environments, meaning that children's educational trajectories are influenced not only by household circumstances but also by the availability of supportive structures within schools and communities. Although the framework recognises that poverty has a constraining effect on educational attainment, it also assumes that informed interventions by educators, counsellors and policymakers can help reduce these barriers and improve children's chances of reintegration into schooling.

Poverty

Poverty is widely recognised as a multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond the lack of income to include deprivations in health, education, housing, and access to basic resources necessary for human development. The World Bank (2020) defines poverty as the pronounced deprivation of well-being, reflecting a situation in which individuals lack the capacity to meet minimum standards of living. Within the context of education, poverty refers to the socio-economic constraints that hinder children's ability to access, remain in, and benefit from formal schooling. For many children in low-income settings, the effects of poverty manifest not only in financial exclusion from educational opportunities but also in psychosocial challenges that undermine their motivation and capacity to learn (UNESCO, 2022). In Nigeria, where approximately 40% of the population lives below the poverty line, the consequences for educational participation are especially severe (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). Children from poor households are more likely to experience irregular school attendance, underachievement, and lowered aspirations due to the cumulative impact of economic stress (Akinyemi & Mustapha, 2020). Scholars such as Okoye & Odo (2021) argue that poverty should be understood as an active determinant of children's educational trajectories rather than a passive background condition. This perspective highlights the way poverty disrupts educational processes, making it a central independent variable in this study.

The present framework conceptualises poverty through four dimensions: family income, parental occupation, parental education and living condition. These dimensions capture both the material and structural realities faced by families in Oredo Local Government Area, thereby offering a holistic understanding of how poverty shapes educational attainment among out-of-school children.

Family Income

Family income represents the total financial resources available to a family, derived from wages, salaries, farming, trading, or informal economic activities. It is one of the most important determinants of whether children can access and sustain participation in formal education. Education, even where tuition is officially free, involves costs such as uniforms, books, examination fees, and transportation. Families with limited income often struggle to meet these expenses, resulting in delayed enrolment, irregular attendance, or complete withdrawal from school. Recent studies highlight that the probability of children remaining out of school is significantly higher among households in the lowest income brackets compared to those with stable and adequate earnings (UNESCO, 2022). The impact of household income on education extends beyond enrolment and attendance. Income also shapes the quality of the learning environment available to children. For example, children from low-income families are less likely to have access to adequate nutrition, learning materials, or quiet spaces for study. These disadvantages negatively influence concentration, motivation, and overall academic performance (Akinyemi & Mustapha, 2020). By contrast, children from family with higher and more stable incomes are better positioned to access educational opportunities, benefit from parental support, and pursue higher aspirations.

Consequently, family or household income is not merely a background condition but a central factor that either facilitates or constrains children's educational attainment. When income is

insufficient, the cycle of poverty and educational disadvantage becomes self-reinforcing, limiting the prospects of children to achieve their full developmental potential.

Parental Occupation

Parental occupation is widely recognised as a core socioeconomic indicator through which poverty manifests and influences children's educational outcomes. Occupation determines the stability, prestige, and income level available to a household, thereby shaping the material resources and learning opportunities accessible to children. In many low-income contexts, a significant proportion of parents engage in informal, low-skilled, and poorly remunerated forms of work such as petty trading, subsistence farming, casual labour, or domestic services. These occupations typically lack employment security, steady wages, or social protection benefits, leaving families vulnerable to financial shocks and chronic deprivation (Okafor, 2018; Adebisi & Olayinka, 2020). The unpredictability associated with such work frequently restricts parents' capacity to provide school fees, learning materials, transportation, and adequate nutrition—factors strongly linked to children's academic readiness and persistence. Studies have shown that children from households where parents work in low-status, low-income occupations exhibit higher risks of limited academic exposure, weak foundational skills, and interrupted school participation (Nwosu, 2019). Additionally, occupations that demand long working hours or involve strenuous labour limit the time parents can offer for supervision, homework support, and school engagement, all of which are essential for sustaining educational involvement. Thus, parental occupation functions not only as a measure of household poverty but also as a predictor of children's educational life-chances.

The influence of parental occupation on poverty becomes even more pronounced when considering out-of-school children, who are disproportionately drawn from households where parents engage in unstable or low-paying work. Evidence from developing contexts demonstrates that when parents rely on occupations with minimal earnings, schooling is often

deprioritised in favour of immediate survival needs, thereby increasing the likelihood of children being withdrawn from school or never enrolled (Umar & Hassan, 2021). Many families facing occupational precarity require children to contribute to household income through informal labour such as street vending or farm work, which directly obstructs their educational attainment (Eze & Ukwueze, 2019). In such circumstances, the opportunity cost of schooling becomes too high for households dependent on daily, low-yield economic activities. Parental occupation also shapes educational awareness and expectations. Parents in formal-sector occupations tend to maintain stronger academic aspirations for their children, whereas those in informal or unstable jobs often prioritise short-term economic survival (Adeyemi & Adetunji, 2022). Furthermore, occupationally disadvantaged parents frequently lack access to educational information, institutional networks, or community support systems that facilitate sustained schooling. Limited access to such social capital intensifies the cycle of poverty and educational exclusion. Consequently, parental occupation operates not merely as a demographic descriptor but as a structural factor significantly shaping the educational trajectories of out-of-school children in low-income environments.

Parental Education

Parental education is one of the most influential indicators of poverty because it shapes the knowledge, attitudes, and capacities that parents bring to the educational development of their children. Parents with limited formal schooling often have reduced awareness of the long-term value of education, and this affects decisions about school enrolment, attendance, and persistence. Low levels of parental education are strongly associated with reduced employment prospects, lower earnings, and restricted access to stable livelihood opportunities. This situation reinforces multidimensional poverty and reduces the capacity of households to meet school-related expenses such as uniforms, books, transportation, and other learning needs. Studies indicate that parents with higher levels of education are more

likely to support their children's learning, provide guidance, and encourage academic engagement because they possess a stronger understanding of school systems and learning processes (Oche & Ibrahim, 2019). In contrast, parents with limited schooling may feel less confident in assisting with academic tasks or communicating with teachers, which weakens the level of educational support available at home. The educational status of parents therefore acts as a foundation that either supports or constrains the learning opportunities of children.

For out-of-school children, the influence of parental education is even more significant, especially in communities where poverty and limited schooling opportunities intersect. Empirical studies in recent years show that children from households where parents possess minimal or no education are at a higher risk of dropping out or never entering school because parental understanding of the benefits of schooling is often limited (Ahmed & Musa, 2021). When parents lack formal education, they may prioritise immediate income-generating activities for the family, resulting in children being directed into labour roles rather than schooling (Chukwu & Nwachukwu, 2020). This trend is particularly pronounced in households where economic survival depends on the contributions of all family members, including children. Parental education also influences communication patterns within the household and affects the extent to which parents can create a learning-friendly environment. Parents with higher education are more likely to value literacy, encourage reading, and expose children to stimulating experiences that support cognitive development. In contrast, low parental education limits these opportunities and creates conditions that perpetuate the cycle of poverty and poor educational attainment. As a result, parental education remains a critical determinant of whether children, especially those already vulnerable to exclusion, gain access to and remain engaged in schooling.

Living Condition

Living conditions serve as a visible marker of household poverty and exert a powerful influence on the educational experiences and outcomes of children. They encompass the quality of housing, access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, space for study, and the general safety and stability of the home environment. Families living in overcrowded or poorly constructed houses often struggle to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning because noise, limited space, and constant domestic disruptions interfere with children's concentration and study routines. Poor housing conditions also tend to coexist with health risks such as inadequate sanitation, poor ventilation, and exposure to environmental hazards, which increase the likelihood of illness among children. Frequent illness disrupts school attendance and contributes to poor academic performance, particularly in households where healthcare access is limited due to financial constraints (Oladimeji & Adeoye, 2018). Furthermore, households without access to electricity or sufficient lighting find it difficult to support homework and reading activities, which widens the learning gap between children in poor living conditions and those in more stable environments. Living conditions therefore operate not only as a reflection of economic hardship but also as a direct contributor to educational disadvantage.

The influence of living conditions becomes even more pronounced when examining out-of-school children, who are disproportionately affected by environmental and household hardship. Children living in slum settlements, temporary shelters, or informal housing structures face heightened barriers to schooling because the instability of their environment disrupts educational continuity and increases vulnerability to social risks such as insecurity, displacement, and child labour (Mbah & Ugwu, 2020). Poor living conditions frequently coincide with food insecurity, inadequate clothing, and the absence of basic learning materials, all of which influence parental decisions about school participation. In many low-

income households, the daily struggle to secure basic survival needs supersedes educational priorities, causing children to be kept at home to assist with household chores or income-generating activities (Sadiq & Yusuf, 2022). These conditions also reduce children's exposure to reading materials, educational conversations, and stimulating interactions that support cognitive development, placing them at a long-term academic disadvantage. Consequently, poor living conditions deepen the cycle of poverty and significantly increase the likelihood that children will remain out of school or fall behind academically once enrolled. This underscores the central role of household environment in shaping educational attainment among vulnerable populations.

Out-of-School Children

The concept of out-of-school children represents one of the most profound and persistent failures in the global pursuit of equitable human development. On its surface, the term simply denotes children who are not participating in formal education. However, to view it as merely a statistical category is to misunderstand its deep complexity and tragic nature. It is a multifaceted crisis, a symptom of deep-seated social, economic, and political maladies that deny millions of young people their fundamental right to an education, a right enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This denial not only cripples individual potential but also erodes the very foundations of societal progress and stability. A thorough exploration of this concept must therefore move beyond mere numbers to interrogate its definitions, its causes, its devastating consequences, and the persistent challenges in addressing it.

The definition of an out-of-school child is more nuanced than it first appears. It is not a monolithic group but encompasses several distinct categories, each with its own story of exclusion. There are children who have never crossed the threshold of a classroom, their educational journey ending before it ever began. This group often includes the most

marginalized: those in extreme poverty, in remote geographical locations, or those facing severe discrimination due to gender or disability. Then there are the children who dropped out, who initially enrolled but were forced to abandon their studies due to a confluence of pressures, such as the need to work and support their families, early marriage, particularly for girls, or a perceived irrelevance of the curriculum to their daily lives (UNESCO, 2023). A third, often overlooked, category includes those who are at risk of dropping out. These children may be technically enrolled but their attendance is sporadic, their learning minimal, and their hold on education tenuous, often due to the same factors that cause outright dropout. Understanding these distinctions is crucial, for a child who has never been to school requires a different intervention from one who is teetering on the brink of leaving.

The scale of this issue is staggering. Globally, UNESCO estimates that over 250 million children and youth are out of school, a figure that has been exacerbated by the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2024). This number is not evenly distributed but is concentrated in regions already grappling with poverty, conflict, and weak governance. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia bear the heaviest burden, with millions of children watching their childhoods and futures slip away. Behind these continental-scale numbers lie even starker disparities at the national and local levels. Rural children are far more likely to be excluded than their urban counterparts, as schools are often farther away, less resourced, and less equipped (World Bank, 2023). The gender dimension is equally critical; in many societies, deep-rooted patriarchal norms prioritize boys' education over girls', viewing daughters as economic burdens or moral responsibilities to be married off early. Furthermore, children with disabilities face compounded barriers, from physical inaccessibility of school buildings to a lack of trained teachers and pervasive social stigma (Adewumi, 2024). Thus, the map of educational exclusion is one that mirrors the maps of poverty, gender inequality, and social marginalization.

The drivers that push or keep children out of school are a complex and interlocking web. Poverty is arguably the most powerful and pervasive cause. For families living on the brink of survival, the direct costs of schooling—such as fees, uniforms, and textbooks—can be prohibitive. More significantly, the opportunity cost of sending a child to school is often too high to bear; a child in school is a child not working in the fields, tending to livestock, or earning a meager income in the informal sector (Okonkwo & Eze, 2023). This economic calculus forces parents into an impossible choice between immediate family sustenance and a child's long-term future. Closely linked to poverty is the issue of conflict and instability. In war-torn regions, schools are often destroyed, occupied by armed groups, or become too dangerous to reach. Teachers flee, and the very fabric of the education system unravels, leaving a generation of children in what is often termed "educational limbo" (Global Partnership for Education, 2024). Social and cultural norms also play a decisive role. In many parts of the world, girls are kept home due to concerns for their safety, the prioritization of domestic duties, or the belief that education will corrupt their moral character or make them less suitable for marriage. The perceived quality and relevance of education itself can also be a barrier. When schools are characterized by overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers, rote learning, and a curriculum that seems disconnected from the realities of life and work, parents and children alike may question its value, leading to apathy and eventual dropout (Chukwuma, 2024).

The consequences of this mass exclusion from education are catastrophic and far-reaching, creating a vicious cycle that can trap individuals, communities, and entire nations for generations. For the individual child, being out of school is a sentence to diminished life chances. Without literacy and numeracy, their potential for secure, well-paying employment is severely curtailed, perpetuating the cycle of poverty into which they were born. They are more vulnerable to exploitation, including child labor, early marriage, and human trafficking.

An uneducated child is also more susceptible to poor health outcomes, lacking the knowledge to make informed decisions about nutrition, sanitation, and disease prevention (World Health Organization, 2023). This individual tragedy aggregates into a collective crisis for society. A nation with a large population of uneducated youth cannot build a skilled workforce, stifling economic growth and innovation. It fosters a citizenry that is more easily manipulated, less engaged in democratic processes, and more prone to instability. Furthermore, the link between a lack of education and radicalization has been widely noted; idle, hopeless youth with no prospects are fertile ground for recruitment by extremist groups (Kane, 2023). Thus, the problem of out-of-school children is not merely an educational issue; it is a critical threat to public health, economic prosperity, and national security.

Out-of-school children is a profound and layered one. It is a global scandal that speaks to our collective failure to uphold a basic human right. It is not simply about empty desks but about stolen potential, foregone opportunities, and entrenched inequalities. The child who never learns to read, the girl forced into marriage, the boy sent to work in a mine—they are all casualties of a broken social contract. Addressing this crisis requires moving beyond superficial solutions and confronting the deep-rooted causes: the poverty that makes education a luxury, the conflicts that destroy school systems, and the discriminatory norms that lock certain children out. It demands not just building more schools, but ensuring they are safe, inclusive, and of high quality. It requires targeted interventions like conditional cash transfers to offset the economic burden on poor families, and robust advocacy to change societal attitudes, especially towards girls' education (UNESCO, 2023). The task is herculean, but the cost of inaction is immeasurably greater. For every child out of school is not just a statistic; it is a promise broken, a voice silenced, and a future left unwritten.

Educational Attainment of Out of School Children

Educational attainment refers to the level of formal education an individual is able to complete, and it is widely used as a benchmark for measuring human development and future life opportunities. For school-aged children, educational attainment typically includes literacy skills, numeracy skills, progression through grade levels, and successful completion of formal schooling. However, for out-of-school children, educational attainment becomes a complex and often limited construct because they lack consistent access to structured learning environments. Children who remain outside the school system are deprived of opportunities to develop foundational competencies that are essential for academic progression and wider social participation. Without exposure to classroom instruction, continuous assessment, and age-appropriate learning experiences, these children demonstrate lower levels of literacy and numeracy compared to their peers who attend school regularly (Yakubu & Mohammed, 2019). Educational attainment therefore becomes heavily constrained, not due to lack of ability, but because the learning environment and instructional support necessary for cognitive development are absent. This situation creates long-term barriers, as children who do not acquire basic educational skills early in life struggle to re-enter the school system or benefit from non-formal learning programmes.

The constraints on educational attainment among out-of-school children are further reinforced by structural and household factors that limit their learning opportunities. Many out-of-school children reside in poverty-affected environments where access to reading materials, educational resources, and supportive learning contexts is extremely limited (Abdulrahman & Idris, 2020). In such settings, children often engage in domestic work, street trading, or other survival activities, leaving little or no time for academic pursuits. Even when community learning centres or informal tutoring initiatives exist, participation is sometimes irregular because families prioritise income-generating tasks over educational engagement.

The absence of consistent educational exposure weakens children's motivation to learn and diminishes their confidence in formal schooling, which further reduces the likelihood of re-enrolment (Osei & Boateng, 2021). Over time, these disruptions result in a widening educational gap that becomes increasingly difficult to bridge. As a result, educational attainment among out-of-school children reflects not only their learning outcomes but also the cumulative effects of socioeconomic inequality, limited access to school facilities, and inadequate support systems. Understanding this dependent variable is therefore essential for explaining how poverty shapes the educational life trajectories of vulnerable children.

Highest Grade completed

The highest grade completed is a central indicator of educational attainment because it reflects the extent to which a child has progressed through the formal schooling system. It shows the cumulative number of school years successfully finished and provides a clear measure of how much structured learning the child has been exposed to. Research shows that steady progression through grade levels strengthens children's acquisition of foundational competencies such as literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking, all of which are essential for higher academic engagement (Adekunle & Ibrahim, 2019). When children complete grades consistently, they benefit from age-appropriate curriculum experiences and continuous cognitive stimulation. However, in disadvantaged households, progression is often disrupted by financial hardship, health challenges, or household responsibilities, which leads to lower grade completion and irregular schooling patterns (Umar & Hassan, 2021). The highest grade completed therefore reflects the extent to which a child has been able to remain engaged in formal education and reveals disparities in learning opportunities caused by socio-economic conditions.

For out-of-school children, the highest grade completed is frequently lower than expected for their age because their schooling experience is interrupted or entirely absent. Many of these

children withdraw from school after completing only a few years of primary education, while others may never enrol due to financial pressures or limited access to schooling facilities (Yakubu & Mohammed, 2019). Low grade completion restricts children's exposure to structured learning and reduces their preparedness for reintegration into formal education, as they often lack basic literacy and numeracy skills required for grade-level performance. Studies have shown that children with minimal grade completion encounter significant barriers when attempting to re-enter school, thereby widening educational gaps over time (Osei & Boateng, 2021). Limited progression also reduces future opportunities such as entry into secondary education or technical training, ultimately reinforcing cycles of poverty and social disadvantage. As a result, the highest grade completed serves not only as a record of past academic engagement but also as a strong predictor of future educational outcomes and long-term life chances.

Literacy Level

Literacy level is a fundamental indicator of educational attainment because it reflects a child's ability to read, write and understand basic information, which forms the foundation for all other forms of learning. Literacy is essential for academic achievement because it enables children to engage with textbooks, follow classroom instruction and participate meaningfully in school activities. Research consistently shows that children who acquire strong literacy skills early in life are better equipped to progress through school and achieve higher educational outcomes (Oche & Ibrahim, 2019). In contrast, children with weak literacy abilities struggle to cope with classroom tasks, experience lower confidence and often fall behind their peers. For households facing poverty, children may have limited access to reading materials, supportive learning environments or exposure to early childhood education. These limitations hinder literacy development from an early age and create long-

term academic disadvantages. Literacy level therefore serves as a direct reflection of both the quality and continuity of educational experiences available to a child.

For out-of-school children, literacy levels are often significantly lower than those of children who attend school regularly because they lack continuous exposure to structured reading instruction and guided learning. Studies show that children who remain outside the schooling system for extended periods have reduced opportunities to develop reading fluency, comprehension and writing skills, which further weakens their readiness for reintegration into formal learning contexts (Ahmed & Musa, 2021). Some out-of-school children may acquire basic literacy informally through community interactions or religious centres, but these experiences are usually insufficient for achieving grade-appropriate competence. Low literacy levels also diminish children's motivation to return to school because they may feel unprepared or embarrassed to join peers who are more academically advanced (Chukwu & Nwachukwu, 2020). This contributes to prolonged educational exclusion and deepens disparities in learning outcomes. As a result, literacy level is a powerful indicator of educational attainment as it reveals both the learning opportunities a child has received and the structural barriers that limit academic progression.

Access to Education

Access to education is a crucial indicator of educational attainment because it determines whether a child can enter, remain in and benefit from formal learning opportunities. It includes the availability of schools within a reasonable distance, affordability of educational expenses, safety of learning environments and the presence of supportive family or community structures. When access is guaranteed, children have the opportunity to participate consistently in schooling, develop foundational skills and progress through grade levels. Research indicates that children who enjoy regular access to school facilities experience stronger learning continuity and better academic outcomes because they are

exposed to structured teaching, assessment and age-appropriate curriculum experiences (Abdulrahman & Idris, 2020). However, when access is limited, children face disruptions that hinder progression and reduce the likelihood of achieving key educational milestones. Barriers such as high transportation costs, inadequate school infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms can create conditions where children are unable to learn effectively, even when enrolled.

For out-of-school children, restricted access to education is often the primary factor contributing to their exclusion from the schooling system. Many of these children live in rural or underserved communities where schools are distant or insufficient, making daily attendance difficult or unsafe. Studies show that financial barriers, such as the inability to afford uniforms, books or examination fees, frequently prevent children from starting or continuing schooling, particularly in low-income households (Sadiq & Yusuf, 2022). Cultural practices, insecurity and lack of parental support further intensify these challenges, leaving children with minimal opportunities to engage in formal learning. Without consistent access, children miss the structured instruction necessary for literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills, which results in lower educational attainment and reduced readiness for future learning. Over time, limited access creates significant disparities between children who can attend school regularly and those who cannot. Access to education therefore serves as a powerful indicator that captures both the structural and socioeconomic conditions shaping children's academic trajectories and long-term development.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST), both of which offer complementary explanations of how poverty, manifested through parental occupation, parental education and living conditions, shapes the educational attainment of out-of-school children. These theories help to illuminate the economic, social

and environmental mechanisms through which poverty influences indicators such as highest grade completed, literacy level and access to education.

Human Capital Theory, originally advanced by Becker (1964), posits that education is a productive investment that enhances an individual's knowledge, skills and future economic prospects. Within the context of this study, the theory provides a useful lens for understanding how poverty constrains the capacity of families to support children's education. Parents with low-income occupations, limited educational qualifications and poor living conditions are often unable to provide the financial, cognitive or material resources necessary for sustained school participation. As a result, children from such households are less likely to progress through school grades, achieve foundational literacy or even gain consistent access to educational opportunities. Human Capital Theory therefore underscores the idea that poverty undermines the accumulation of educational capital, reducing children's long-term life chances. For counselling practice, the theory emphasises the value of promoting educational investment, sensitising families to the long-term returns of schooling and linking households with support programmes that can ease the financial burden of education.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) expands this understanding by demonstrating that children's educational outcomes are shaped not only by individual or family-level economic limitations but also by the multiple environmental layers in which they develop. At the microsystem level, parental occupation and parental education directly influence the support, expectations and learning atmosphere children experience at home. Poor living conditions also expose children to stressors that hinder concentration, school readiness and motivation. Interactions between home, community and school systems form the mesosystem, where poverty-related disadvantages reduce the likelihood of enrolling in school, attending regularly or completing grade levels. At the exosystem and macrosystem

levels, factors such as community poverty, inadequate school facilities, labour market structures and national socioeconomic policies further limit children's access to education and restrict opportunities for literacy development. EST therefore situates poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon whose effects on educational attainment extend far beyond the household.

Together, Human Capital Theory and Ecological Systems Theory offer a comprehensive framework for explaining the relationship between poverty and educational attainment among out-of-school children. Human Capital Theory clarifies the economic constraints that limit investment in children's learning, while EST highlights the broader social and structural forces that further restrict access to schooling, grade completion and literacy acquisition. Combined, they justify the study's focus on poverty indicators and their effects on educational attainment and guide counselling interventions aimed at reducing the educational consequences of poverty through family, school and community-based support.

Empirical Review

Level of Poverty among Out-of-School Children

Dyer, Bhattacharjea, Alcott, and Thomas (2021) conducted a study titled "Out of School Children: Evidence Brief" covering Kenya, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The study posed three research questions regarding the categorisation of children excluded from school and the relationship with household poverty, accompanied by the hypothesis that poverty is the primary driver of complete educational exclusion. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was employed, drawing on secondary household-level data. The target population comprised all school-aged children approximately six to fourteen years old across the six nations. The sample included data from the PAL Network household surveys, utilising a stratified random sampling technique based on geographic and socioeconomic strata. The research instrument consisted of a household-based literacy and numeracy assessment

coupled with a demographic and economic status questionnaire. Validity was ensured through cross-cultural adaptation of assessment tools and expert review by the PAL Network technical committee, confirming that items accurately measured economic hardship. The reliability of the instrument was high, with a Cronbach's alpha reported above 0.85 for the household wealth index section. Data were collected by trained local volunteers who conducted door-to-door visits to administer the assessment and interview household heads regarding assets and income. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to calculate poverty ratios and logistic regression to predict the odds of a child being out of school based on household wealth quintiles.

Pigozzi (2025) carried out a study titled "Social and Economic Costs of Out of School Children in Colombia" in Colombia. Two main research questions were asked regarding economic loss as a percentage of gross domestic product and the poverty reduction potential of universal primary education, with the hypothesis that universal primary education could lift a significant proportion of the population out of poverty. A quantitative economic modelling and case study design was adopted. The study population consisted of all out-of-school children and the general population of Colombia. A purposive sample of national economic and labour data sets from the National Administrative Department of Statistics was utilised. The research instrument was an economic framework model designed to calculate forgone labour earnings and poverty headcount ratios. Face validity was established through expert review by economists specialising in education and development. Reliability was ensured through test-retest procedures applying the same economic model to two different years of Colombian data, yielding consistent poverty estimates within a two percent margin of error. Data were collected by extracting secondary economic indicators from government databases. Data were analysed using descriptive economic accounting and multivariate sensitivity analysis.

Okumu, Nakajjo, and Isoke (2008) conducted a study titled "Socioeconomic Determinants of Primary School Dropout in Uganda" in Uganda. The study addressed four research questions concerning the influence of household income, parental occupation, asset ownership, and food security on school dropout rates, with the null hypothesis that no significant relationship existed between poverty indicators and dropout status. A cross-sectional survey design was employed. The population included all primary school-aged children in Uganda who had ever enrolled in school but were currently not attending. The sample comprised 1,200 households selected through multistage cluster sampling across five regions of Uganda. The research instrument was a structured household questionnaire containing wealth and expenditure modules. Validity was established through pilot testing and expert review by Ugandan education ministry officials, who assessed whether the poverty items adequately captured local economic realities. Reliability was determined using split-half correlation, which yielded a coefficient of 0.81 for the poverty assessment section. Data were collected by trained enumerators who visited households and conducted face-to-face interviews with primary caregivers. Data were analysed using binary logistic regression and chi-square tests of independence.

Hunt (2008) completed a study titled "Dropping Out from School: A Cross-Country Review of the Literature" with a specific focus on sub-Saharan Africa. The study posed five research questions exploring the pathways by which poverty leads to school exclusion, including the role of child labour, school fees, opportunity costs, and seasonal income fluctuations. The hypothesis was that poverty operates through multiple direct and indirect mechanisms to exclude children from schooling. A systematic literature review design was employed. The population consisted of all published and unpublished empirical studies on out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa from 1990 to 2007. The sample included forty-two empirical studies identified through systematic database searches using purposive inclusion criteria.

The research instrument was a data extraction template designed to capture poverty indicators, dropout rates, and methodological features of each study. Validity was ensured through double coding of a random sample of twenty percent of the included studies by two independent reviewers. Reliability was established through inter-rater agreement calculations, which reached eighty-nine percent consistency. Data were collected through systematic searches of the Education Resources Information Center, British Education Index, and African Journals Online databases. Data were analysed using thematic synthesis and narrative summary methods.

Abamba (2021) carried out a study on "Socioeconomic Determinants of School Non-Enrollment" in rural communities, Nigeria. The study had three research questions and two corresponding hypotheses. The research design was a descriptive survey. The population of the study was 2,000 households in the region, with a sample size of 500 households selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire, validated by experts and with a reliability coefficient of 0.78 established through a test-retest method. Data was collected by trained enumerators and analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square. The findings revealed that over 85% of out-of-school children belonged to families living below the poverty line, with the main drivers being the cost of schooling and the need for child labor. The study concluded that absolute poverty is the primary driver of non-enrollment in the studied communities.

Owoeye and Yara (2011) carried out a study on "Poverty Indices and School Enrollment Rates" in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study had one research question and one hypothesis. The research design was ex-post facto. The population of the study was enrollment data from all local government areas over seven years. A purposive sample of 10 LGAs with the highest and lowest poverty indices was used. The research instrument was a data extraction sheet, with content validity assured by experts. Secondary data on enrollment and poverty was

collected from government archives and analyzed using Pearson Correlation. The findings established a strong, negative correlation between community poverty rates and school enrollment figures. The study concluded that macroeconomic poverty directly translates to educational exclusion at the community level.

Parajuli and Thapa (2017) carried out a study on "Child Labor and Educational Access in Impoverished Households" in Lekhnath Municipality, Nepal. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a cross-sectional survey. The population of the study was 5,000 households, with a sample size of 240 households selected using stratified random sampling. The research instrument was a structured interview schedule, validated and with a reliability index of 0.81. Data was collected through house-to-house interviews and analyzed using frequency counts and odds ratios. The findings demonstrated that children from the poorest quartile were eight times more likely to be out of school and engaged in labor. The study concluded that poverty necessitates child labor, which is a direct barrier to education.

Imlach, Ward, Stuart, Summers, Valenzuela, King, Saunders, Summers, Srikanth, Robinson & Vickers (2017) carried out a study on "Intergenerational Cycles of Poverty and Education" in a high-income country context. The study had four research questions and three hypotheses. The research design was a longitudinal cohort study. The population of the study was 10,000 families, with a sample size of 329 older adults selected through stratified sampling. Research instruments included genetic tests, psychosocial scales, and socioeconomic surveys, all with established validity and reliability. Data was collected over five years and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings identified that intergenerational poverty creates a cycle where low parental education leads to low-income occupations, perpetuating the conditions that prevent their children from attending school. The study concluded that poverty's impact on education is persistent and multifaceted.

Tsaousis and Algamdi (2022) carried out a study on "Economic Marginalization and Educational Exclusion" in Saudi Arabia. The study had three research questions and three hypotheses. The research design was a descriptive survey. The population of the study was 1,800 high school graduates, with the entire population used as the sample. The research instrument was a standardized academic ability test, validated through factor analysis and with high reliability. Data was collected from national education records and analyzed using latent mean difference procedures. The findings showed that even in a wealthy nation, severe poverty was the predominant characteristic of families with out-of-school children. The study concluded that economic marginalization, rather than national wealth, is the critical determinant of educational exclusion.

Level of Educational Attainment among Out-of-School Children

Lewin (2007) conducted a study titled "Diversity in School Participation and Completion in Sub-Saharan Africa" across Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Tanzania. The study addressed three research questions concerning the highest grade attained by out-of-school children, the modal dropout grade, and the relationship between age and attainment level, with the hypothesis that most out-of-school children leave school before completing grade six. A comparative cross-sectional survey design was employed. The population comprised all children aged ten to sixteen years who had dropped out of school in the four countries. The sample included 3,400 children selected through stratified random sampling based on rural and urban residence. The research instrument was a retrospective educational history questionnaire. Validity was established through content validity procedures where items were reviewed by local education officers to ensure that grade-level questions captured the national curriculum structure of each country. Reliability was assessed using test-retest correlation with a two-week interval, producing a coefficient of 0.79 for recalled grade attainment. Data were collected by trained field workers who administered the questionnaire in local languages

during household visits. Data were analysed using descriptive frequency distributions and analysis of variance to compare mean grade attainment across countries.

Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook, and Hunt (2010) carried out a study titled "School Dropout and Educational Attainment in Ghana and Kenya" in Ghana and Kenya. Four research questions were posed regarding the distribution of educational attainment among dropouts, the most common exit grade, the gender gap in attainment, and the influence of household shocks on terminal grades. The hypothesis was that most dropouts leave school at the transition points between primary and junior secondary levels. A longitudinal retrospective cohort design was used. The population consisted of all young people aged fifteen to twenty years who had left school before completion. The sample included 2,500 individuals selected through multistage cluster sampling with probability proportional to population size. The research instrument was a life history calendar designed to record educational milestones and exit points. Validity was established through construct validity procedures comparing self-reported attainment with school record data for a subsample, yielding a correlation of 0.92. Reliability was measured using the parallel forms method, where two versions of the attainment questionnaire were administered to the same respondents, producing a correlation of 0.83. Data were collected through individual interviews conducted in community centres and homes. Data were analysed using survival analysis and Kaplan-Meier estimation of median grade attainment.

Rose and Alcott (2015) conducted a study titled "How Does the Education Sector Respond to Out of School Children in India" in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. The study posed two research questions concerning the distribution of educational attainment among never-enrolled children compared to dropouts, with the hypothesis that never-enrolled children had significantly lower family literacy exposure than dropouts. A cross-sectional household survey design was employed. The population included all children aged six to fourteen years

who were not currently attending school. The sample comprised 1,800 children selected through systematic random sampling from forty-five villages. The research instrument was a combined household demographic and educational attainment schedule. Validity was ensured through criterion validity, where the attainment measure was correlated with a simple reading assessment, producing a significant positive correlation of 0.74. Reliability was determined using internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha reported at 0.88 for the questions assessing highest grade completed and reasons for stopping. Data were collected by local survey teams who visited households and conducted separate interviews with children and their primary caregivers. Data were analysed using cross-tabulation, chi-square tests, and multinomial logistic regression.

Hunt (2020) completed a study titled "The Impact of COVID-19 on Educational Attainment Among Out of School Children in Nepal" in Nepal. Three research questions were addressed concerning the loss of learning, the effect on terminal grade attainment, and the differential impact by pre-pandemic poverty status, with the hypothesis that the pandemic increased the proportion of children leaving school before completing grade five by at least fifteen percent. A pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design was employed. The population consisted of all children aged eight to fifteen years who were enrolled in school in early 2020 but had dropped out by late 2020. The sample included 950 children selected from a longitudinal household panel study using purposive retention sampling. The research instrument was a telephone-administered educational attainment and school status questionnaire. Validity was established through predictive validity, as the instrument successfully predicted dropout status from responses to questions about household income loss during the pandemic. Reliability was assessed using inter-item correlation, with a mean correlation of 0.76 among the three questions measuring grade attainment before and after the pandemic. Data were

collected through structured telephone interviews conducted over a four-week period. Data were analysed using paired t-tests and difference-in-differences regression models.

Nalova and Etomes (2019) carried out a study on "Literacy and Numeracy Levels of Out-of-School Children" in Fako Division, Cameroon. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a cross-sectional survey. The population of the study was all out-of-school children in the region, with a sample size of 200 children selected via purposive sampling. The research instrument was a standardized literacy and numeracy test, validated by curriculum experts. Data was collected through direct assessment and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and the Kruskal-Wallis test. The findings revealed that over 70% of the children were functionally illiterate and innumerate. The study concluded that the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children is critically low.

Qin, Li and Yang (2024) carried out a study on "Non-Cognitive Abilities of Children with Interrupted Education" in rural China. The study had three research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a descriptive survey. The population of the study was rural boarding children, with a sample size of 2397 selected using a stratified, multi-stage PPS sampling method. The research instrument was a self-report questionnaire with established validity and reliability. Data was collected in school settings and analyzed using OLS and CMP regression models. The findings indicated that children with interrupted schooling showed significantly lower levels of perseverance, self-regulation, and critical thinking. The study concluded that educational deprivation extends beyond academic knowledge to crucial non-cognitive skills.

Çelikkol (2023) carried out a study on "Long-Term Educational Consequences of School Dropout" in Isparta, Turkey. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a causal-comparative study. The population of the study was all eighth-

grade graduates, with a sample of 6,039 students selected from secondary schools. The research instrument was a data chart from the Directorate of National Education. Data on final qualifications was collected and analyzed using ANOVA. The findings showed that less than 5% of early dropouts ever obtained a secondary-level qualification later in life. The study concluded that school dropout severely and permanently caps ultimate educational attainment.

Yusuf, Okanlawon and Oladayo (2020) carried out a study on "Educational Instability Among At-Risk Youths" in Osun State, Nigeria. The study had three research questions and three hypotheses. The research design was a descriptive survey. The population of the study was undergraduates from four universities, with a sample size of 200 selected randomly. The research instrument was the FASAPQ questionnaire, validated and with a reliability coefficient of 0.79. Data was collected via questionnaires and analyzed using frequency counts and percentage analysis. The findings documented that many out-of-school children experienced sporadic enrollment, resulting in fragmented education and significant learning gaps. The study concluded that the educational history of out-of-school children is characterized by instability and incompletion.

Attah and Ita (2017) carried out a study on "Subject-Based Deficits Among Out-of-School Children" in Calabar Metropolis, Nigeria. The study had one research question and one hypothesis. The research design was a survey. The population was SSS II students, with a sample of 660 students from 22 schools selected via stratified and purposive sampling. The research instrument was the "English Language Academic Achievement Rating Scale" (ELAARS), with a reliability of 0.75. Data was collected and analyzed using an independent t-test. The findings showed that out-of-school children performed poorest in subjects requiring formal instruction like English and Science. The study concluded that the absence of a structured learning environment severely curtails specific academic development.

Relationship Between Level of Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out of School Children

Zhang (2017) conducted a study titled "Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out of School Children in Rural China" in Gansu and Guizhou provinces, China. The study posed three research questions concerning the direction, strength, and causal pathways of the relationship between household poverty and children's terminal grade attainment, with the hypothesis that a strong negative correlation exists between poverty level and years of schooling completed. A correlational and path analysis design was employed. The population comprised all out-of-school children aged twelve to eighteen years who had dropped out of primary or junior secondary school. The sample included 1,200 children selected through multistage cluster sampling, with villages as primary sampling units. The research instrument was an asset-based wealth index combined with a retrospective educational history module. Validity was established through convergent validity, where the wealth index was correlated with village head rankings of household poverty, yielding a coefficient of 0.68. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha for the wealth index items, which was 0.87. Data were collected through in-home interviews conducted by university-trained research assistants who spoke local dialects. Data were analysed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients and structural equation modelling to test direct and indirect pathways.

Connell (2019) carried out a study titled "The Poverty-Education Nexus Among Out of School Youth in South Africa" in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces of South Africa. Four research questions were posed regarding the linearity, threshold effects, interaction with child labour, and moderation by social grants of the relationship between poverty and educational attainment, with the hypothesis that the relationship is non-linear, with the strongest effects observed at extreme poverty levels. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was used. The population consisted of all out-of-school youth aged fourteen to twenty years who had not completed secondary education. The sample included 850 youth

selected through respondent-driven sampling, a technique used to reach hidden populations. The research instrument was a multidimensional poverty index questionnaire combined with a school history matrix. Validity was established through discriminant validity, where the poverty measure did not correlate significantly with theoretically unrelated constructs such as distance to the nearest clinic. Reliability was determined using split-half reliability for the educational attainment section, which yielded a correlation of 0.84. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted in community settings. Data were analysed using correlation matrices, scatterplot visualisation, and hierarchical regression modelling including quadratic terms to test non-linearity.

Ilahi, Orazem, and Sedlacek (2001) conducted a study titled "How Does Child Labour Affect Educational Attainment in Brazil and Peru" in Brazil and Peru. The study addressed two primary research questions regarding the mediating role of child labour in the poverty-attainment relationship and the magnitude of the indirect effect, with the hypothesis that poverty reduces educational attainment primarily by increasing the need for child labour. A structural equation modelling design was employed. The population comprised all children aged ten to sixteen years who had left school prior to completing compulsory education. The sample included 3,800 children drawn from Living Standards Measurement Study household surveys using a stratified random sampling design. The research instrument was a combined labour force and school enrolment questionnaire. Validity was established through construct validity, where the poverty measure showed expected correlations with household assets and consumption patterns. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha for the child labour frequency items, which was 0.79. Data were collected by national statistical agency enumerators during annual household surveys. Data were analysed using structural equation modelling with maximum likelihood estimation, allowing for the decomposition of direct and indirect effects of poverty on attainment through child labour as a mediating variable.

Ngo and Hossain (2016) completed a study titled "The Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty and Low Educational Attainment Among Out of School Children in Bangladesh" in rural areas of Bangladesh. Three research questions were posed concerning the correlation between parental poverty history and child attainment, the strength of intergenerational transmission, and the moderating role of microfinance participation, with the hypothesis that parental poverty during the child's early years is a stronger predictor of low attainment than concurrent poverty. A retrospective longitudinal design was employed. The population consisted of all out-of-school children aged eleven to sixteen years who had left school within the previous two years. The sample included 1,500 children selected through cluster sampling based on village administrative units. The research instrument was a household history calendar capturing poverty events, income fluctuations, and educational milestones over fifteen years. Validity was established through retrospective validity checks using community records, which confirmed major poverty events for ninety-one percent of the sample. Reliability was determined using test-retest reliability with a three-month interval on a ten percent subsample, producing a correlation of 0.77 for recalled poverty events. Data were collected through extended home visits lasting approximately two hours per household. Data were analysed using multiple regression with lagged poverty variables and hierarchical linear modelling to account for village-level clustering.

Mao, Zang and Zhang (2020) carried out a study on "The Causal Link Between Household Poverty and Educational Outcomes" in China. The study had three research questions and three hypotheses. The research design was a longitudinal analysis. The population was derived from two nationally representative datasets. A large sample from these datasets was used. Research instruments were standardized national surveys. Data was collected over several years and analyzed using regression models. The findings showed that a one-unit increase in household poverty severity correlated with a 15% decrease in the likelihood of a

child achieving core educational milestones. The study concluded that poverty directly erodes the foundation of educational progression.

Hlanze, Makondo, Silvane and Makondo (2024) carried out a study on "Poverty, Child Labor, and Educational Attainment" in the Shiselweni Region of Eswatini. The study had two research questions and one hypothesis. The research design was qualitative and phenomenological. The population was distant-parented adolescent learners, with a sample of 15 learners from three schools selected purposively. Research instruments were semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data was collected through interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that poverty forces children into labor roles, directly consuming time and energy for schooling and creating a trade-off between economic survival and education. The study concluded that poverty leads to low educational attainment by necessitating child labor.

Wambugu and Emeke (2019) carried out a study on "Economic Shocks as Triggers for School Dropout" in Nairobi, Kenya. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a comparative study. The population was B.Ed. students, with a sample of students from on-campus and ODL modes. The research instrument was academic performance records. Data on student performance and background was collected and analyzed using t-tests. The findings proved that economic shocks like a poor harvest or job loss were the most common immediate triggers for school dropout. The study concluded that the poverty-education relationship is a direct response to fluctuating economic pressures.

Esperanza (2014) carried out a study on "Poverty-Driven Migration and its Impact on Left-Behind Children" in Manila, Philippines. The study had three research questions. The research design was a qualitative phenomenological study. The population was adolescents

with OFW parents, with a sample of 14 participants selected purposively. The research instrument was an in-depth interview guide. Data was collected through interviews and analyzed for themes. The findings highlighted that poverty-driven parental migration led to a lack of academic support for left-behind children, which subsequently lowered their educational attainment. The study concluded that poverty's impact on education can be mediated by disruptions to family structure.

Ovat, Nwogwugwu and Idika (2021) carried out a study on "The Compounding Effect of Poverty and Location on Education" in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was ex-post facto. The population was upper basic nine students, with a sample of 1600 students from 81 schools selected via stratified and simple random sampling. Research instruments were students' academic records. Data was collected from school archives and analyzed using an independent t-test and ANOVA. The findings concluded that poverty was the strongest predictor of low attainment, and its effect was amplified when combined with a rural location. The study concluded that poverty creates multi-layered barriers to educational success.

Relationship between Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out of School Children Based on Gender

Glick and Sahn (2000) conducted a study titled "Gender, Poverty and Educational Attainment in Guinea and Madagascar" in Guinea and Madagascar. The study posed three research questions concerning whether the negative effect of poverty on attainment is stronger for girls than for boys, whether poverty interacts with gender in predicting dropout, and whether household poverty affects boys and girls through different mechanisms, with the hypothesis that girls from poor households experience significantly lower attainment than boys from equally poor households. A comparative cross-sectional gender-disaggregated design was

employed. The population comprised all out-of-school children aged ten to eighteen years who had completed fewer than six years of schooling. The sample included 2,400 children selected through stratified random sampling with gender as a stratification variable to ensure equal representation. The research instrument was a household consumption and education module. Validity was established through factorial validity, where poverty items loaded onto separate dimensions for boys' and girls' educational resources within the same household. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha separately for male and female subsamples, yielding coefficients of 0.82 for boys and 0.84 for girls. Data were collected through household surveys administered by national statistical institute interviewers. Data were analysed using interaction regression models with gender as a moderating variable and separate analyses of variance by gender.

Lloyd, Mensch, and Clark (2000) carried out a study titled "The Effects of Poverty and Gender on Educational Attainment in Rural Kenya and Bangladesh" in rural Kenya and Bangladesh. Four research questions were posed regarding the differential poverty-attainment slopes for boys versus girls, the role of sibling composition, the effect of birth order, and the impact of parental education on the gendered poverty effect, with the hypothesis that first-born girls in poor households have the lowest educational attainment of any subgroup. A multivariate comparative design was used. The population consisted of all out-of-school adolescents aged twelve to seventeen years who had dropped out before completing primary school. The sample included 3,200 adolescents selected through cluster sampling with villages as clusters. The research instrument was a detailed household roster and educational history questionnaire. Validity was established through concurrent validity, where the gender-differentiated poverty measure correlated with observed household allocation of resources such as school fees and tutoring expenses. Reliability was determined using inter-rater reliability between two household members reporting on the same child's attainment, which

produced ninety-three percent agreement. Data were collected through separate interviews with mothers and adolescents to cross-validate poverty and attainment reports. Data were analysed using multiple regression with gender interaction terms, t-tests for gender differences within poverty quartiles, and logistic regression for dropout prediction.

Rose (2005) conducted a study titled "Gender and the Relationship Between Poverty and Educational Attainment in Ethiopia" in rural Ethiopia. The study posed three research questions concerning whether the poverty penalty is greater for girls in pastoralist communities compared to agrarian communities, whether household wealth protects boys' attainment more strongly than girls' attainment, and whether seasonal poverty affects girls' school exit disproportionately, with the hypothesis that seasonal poverty spikes during planting and harvest seasons drive girls' dropout more than boys' dropout. A longitudinal seasonal design was employed. The population comprised all out-of-school children aged seven to fifteen years who had been enrolled at some point but had since dropped out. The sample included 1,100 children selected through purposive sampling of communities experiencing distinct seasonal labour patterns. The research instrument was a repeated seasonal survey administered at four points across the agricultural calendar. Validity was established through ecological validity, where the seasonal poverty measures were verified against local market price data for staple foods. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for the educational attainment questions across the four seasonal waves, which was 0.81. Data were collected by female enumerators who visited households at the beginning and end of each agricultural season. Data were analysed using repeated measures analysis of variance with gender and season as within-subjects factors and fixed-effects regression models controlling for household-level unobserved heterogeneity.

Kabubo-Mariara and Mwangi (2009) completed a study titled "Gender, Poverty and Educational Attainment in Kenya" in Kenya. Two primary research questions were addressed

concerning the existence of a gendered poverty trap in educational attainment and the shape of the interaction between poverty and gender across different age cohorts, with the hypothesis that the poverty-attainment relationship is steeper for girls in older age cohorts compared to younger cohorts. A cross-sectional cohort comparison design was employed. The population consisted of all out-of-school individuals aged ten to twenty years who had not completed primary education. The sample included 2,800 individuals selected through multistage stratified sampling, with strata defined by poverty quintile, gender, and age cohort. The research instrument was a standardised educational attainment and household expenditure questionnaire. Validity was established through construct validity by comparing self-reported poverty with community wealth rankings, yielding a Spearman correlation of 0.71 for the combined sample but 0.58 for girls only, indicating gender-specific measurement challenges. Reliability was determined using the parallel forms method, where two different poverty questionnaires were administered to a subsample of four hundred respondents, producing a correlation of 0.76. Data were collected through household interviews conducted by gender-matched enumerators, with female enumerators interviewing female respondents. Data were analysed using quantile regression to examine the poverty-attainment relationship at different points of the educational distribution and Chow tests to compare regression coefficients across gender groups.

Isemede (2021) carried out a study on "The Gendered Impact of Poverty on School Withdrawal" in Egor LGA, Edo State, Nigeria. The study had one research question and one hypothesis. The research design was ex-post facto. The population was JSS III students, with a sample of 50 students from urban and rural schools. The research instrument was the Basic Technology Achievement Test (BTAT). Data was collected and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and a t-test. The findings showed that impoverished families were disproportionately more likely to withdraw girls from school to save costs or due to cultural

preferences for investing in sons. The study concluded that poverty exacerbates gender inequality in education.

Esplana (2022) carried out a study on "Poverty, Gendered Norms, and Girls' Education" in rural communities. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a mixed-methods approach. The population was rural households, with a sample of 300 households selected via random sampling. Research instruments were questionnaires and FGD guides. Data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that poverty interacted with gendered norms, leading families to prioritize keeping girls home for domestic chores and to reduce the risk of pre-marital pregnancy. The study concluded that girls' education is often seen as a dispensable luxury in poor households.

Idika and Nwogwugwu (2023) carried out a study on "Poverty and Male Adolescent Dropout for Labor" in Southeast Nigeria. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a descriptive survey. The population was out-of-school adolescents, with a sample of 400 boys selected purposively. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire. Data was collected and analyzed using regression analysis. The findings showed that poverty pushed adolescent boys into artisanal trades at a much higher rate than girls, permanently halting their formal education. The study concluded that poverty creates a specific pathway of educational disruption for boys through forced labor.

Kane (2023) carried out a study on "Poverty and Patriarchy in Educational Decision-Making" across multiple countries. The study had three research questions and three hypotheses. The research design was a comparative analysis. The population was national enrollment data from five countries, with a purposive sample of data sets. The research instrument was a data extraction protocol. Secondary data was collected and analyzed using comparative statistics.

The findings reported that in patriarchal structures, modest poverty was used to justify excluding girls from school, while greater sacrifices were made for boys. The study concluded that the poverty-education link is deeply filtered through cultural gender biases.

Adewumi (2024) carried out a study on "Gendered Manifestations of the Poverty-Education Link" in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study had two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design was a meta-analysis. The population was all relevant published studies, with a sample of 15 studies selected using strict inclusion criteria. The research instrument was a coding sheet for study characteristics and findings. Data was extracted from the studies and analyzed to synthesize effect sizes. The findings concluded that the relationship is gendered: for girls, poverty leads to non-enrollment for marriage; for boys, it leads to dropout for labor. The study concluded that while the pathways differ, the outcome of low educational attainment is similar for both genders.

Summary of Literature Review

The review of literature of this study begins with the diagrammatic expression of the conceptual framework of the study, showing the relationship among the variables under study. Different concepts were identified and discussed, these include: the level of poverty among out-of-school children, the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children, the relationship between poverty and educational attainment, and this relationship based on gender. In the review also, the following concepts were discussed: the multidimensional nature of poverty as a barrier to education, the manifestations of low educational attainment in literacy and cognitive skills, and the gendered pathways through which poverty affects school access and completion. This study employed the Cycle of Poverty Theory. This theory stipulated the importance of economic resources and educational opportunity in breaking intergenerational deprivation. It also proposed that poverty and low educational attainment form a self-perpetuating trap that is vital to understand for effective

intervention. Many empirical reviews were made related to this study, however, from the empirical studies reviewed within the reach of the researcher, it is observed that, while there is substantial literature on poverty and education broadly, there is a specific dearth in literature focusing explicitly on the out-of-school child population in Oredo Local Government Area. The existing local studies are not recent and none were carried out to empirically examine the relationship between poverty and the educational attainment of out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. This is the gap the study intends to fill.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the description of the procedures that were used in carrying out this research was discussed. This was arranged under research design, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, research instrument, validity of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

The design that was used for this study was correlational survey research design. A correlational research design is a design patterned after seeking the relationship that exists between or among the variables under investigation. The design was chosen because it helped to establish the relationship between two or more variables and there was no need to manipulate any variables under study.

Population of the Study

The population of this study was seven thousand and four (7,004) out-of-school children between ages 13-18 years in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State (State Universal Basic Education Board, SUBEB, Edo State, 2026). This set of children was chosen for this study because they represented the precise demographic at the heart of the research problem, allowing for a direct investigation into the relationship between poverty and educational attainment.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consisted of two hundred and ten (210) out-of-school children between ages 6-18 years in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State representing 3% of the total population of the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument that was used for data collection in this study was questionnaire constructed by the researcher. The instrument was 'Level of Poverty And Educational Attainment Of Out-Of-School Children (LPEAOSC). The instrument was subdivided into three sections. Section A consisted of the demographic data of the respondents, section B comprised of (10) items on level of poverty among out-of-school children, section C comprised (10) items on level of educational attainment among out-of-school children. Section B and C items were on 5 points Likert scale of Always (A), Sometimes (S), Often (O), Rarely (R), Never (N) response formats.

Validity of the Instrument

To determine the validity of the instrument, the draft of the instrument was developed by the researcher and was presented to the project supervisor who made some inputs and thereafter, submitted to three other experts (two in guidance and counseling, one in educational planning and administration) all in the Department of Education, Benson Idahosa University in order to ensure face and content validity. Their suggestions and corrections were fused into the final draft of the instrument that was approved by the supervisor.

Reliability of the Instrument

In establishing the reliability of the instrument, the researcher used the internal consistency reliability method. To do this, 30 copies of the instrument were administered to thirty (30) children outside the proposed sample but within the population of the study. Data collected were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability statistics and the instrument obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.81 showing it was dependable.

Method of Data Collection

Each proposed respondent for the study was given a copy of the instrument after the researcher had obtained permission of the administrative authorization to the respondents' and

all these were retrieved on the spot on completion to prevent misplacement of instrument and any form of extraneous influences.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the respondents was analyzed as follow:

Research question one was answered using the percentage count while research questions two, three and four was answered using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Hypotheses one and two were tested using one sample t-test statistics while three and four werel be tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In this chapter, the summary of the analysis of the data collected from the respondents drawn from the area of study is presented. The results are presented in relation to the research questions and the hypotheses stated in chapter one. These are as follows:

Data Presentation

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Sex	Male	112	53.3%
		Female	98	46.7%
2	Age	6-11 years	78	37.1%
		12-18 years	132	62.9%

The data in Table 1 shows that male respondents constitute 53.3% (112 children) and female respondents constitute 46.7% (98 children). Therefore, the gender distribution in the study was fairly balanced with a slight male majority. The data shows that the majority (62.9% or 132 children) of the out-of-school children are between 12-18 years of age, while a smaller proportion (37.1% or 78 children) are between 6-11 years. This indicates that older children are more represented among the out-of-school population in Oredo Local Government Area.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?

Research question two was answered using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Level of Educational Attainment among Out-of-School Children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I can read and understand a full sentence in a newspaper or storybook.	210	2.04	1.12	Low
2	I can write a short letter or a paragraph about my day without help.	210	1.98	1.05	Low
3	I can solve basic everyday math problems (like calculating change when buying something).	210	2.21	1.18	Low
4	I attended school regularly and completed a full class level before stopping.	210	2.45	1.21	Low
5	I have a certificate or report card showing a class I passed.	210	1.87	0.98	Low
6	I try to learn new things or practice reading and writing even though I'm not in school.	210	2.56	1.15	Low
7	Someone at home or in my community helps me with my reading or writing.	210	2.08	1.09	Low
8	I feel confident that I have the basic skills (reading, writing, math) needed for daily life.	210	2.32	1.14	Low
9	I feel that the number of years I spent in school was enough for me.	210	2.15	1.20	Low
10	I believe I have the necessary skills to start learning a trade or skill.	210	2.41	1.13	Low
	Grand Mean		**2.21**		**Low**

Criterion Mean = 3.00

Table 2 shows the mean responses of the sampled out-of-school children on their level of educational attainment. All ten items recorded mean scores below the criterion mean of 3.00, ranging from 1.87 to 2.56 on a 5-point scale. The standard deviations range from 0.98 to 1.21, indicating moderate variability in respondents' educational experiences. The lowest mean score (1.87) was recorded for having a certificate or report card showing a passed class, indicating that most out-of-school children lack formal documentation of educational progress. The highest mean score (2.56) was recorded for trying to learn new things or practice reading and writing despite not being in school, suggesting some informal learning efforts. The grand mean of 2.21 shows that the overall level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area is Low.

Research Question 2: What is the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?

Research question one was answered using the percentage count as presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Percentage Count on the Level of Poverty among Out-of-School Children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State

S/N	Item	Always (A)	Often (O)	Sometimes (S)	Rarely (R)	Never (N)	Poverty Level
1	My family worries about having enough food to eat.	98 (46.7%)	67 (31.9%)	28 (13.3%)	12 (5.7%)	5 (2.4%)	High
2	I have to work or sell things to help my family with money.	87 (41.4%)	71 (33.8%)	31 (14.8%)	14 (6.7%)	7 (3.3%)	High
3	My family cannot afford the costs needed for me to go to school (fees, books, uniform).	112 (53.3%)	58 (27.6%)	22 (10.5%)	10 (4.8%)	8 (3.8%)	High
4	We have to skip meals because there is not enough money for food.	54 (25.7%)	48 (22.9%)	42 (20.0%)	36 (17.1%)	30 (14.3%)	Moderate
5	My family has to borrow money or rely on others to meet basic needs.	78 (37.1%)	62 (29.5%)	35 (16.7%)	20 (9.5%)	15 (7.1%)	High
6	Need to help with work at home or on the farm do not make me miss or leave school.	34 (16.2%)	41 (19.5%)	38 (18.1%)	45 (21.4%)	52 (24.8%)	Low
7	We do not struggle to pay for medical care when someone in the family is sick.	18 (8.6%)	24 (11.4%)	32 (15.2%)	56 (26.7%)	80 (38.1%)	Low
8	My family has no problems paying for our housing (rent, repairs) or utilities (electricity, water).	22 (10.5%)	28 (13.3%)	34 (16.2%)	58 (27.6%)	68 (32.4%)	Low
9	I feel that my future opportunities are not a function of my family's financial situation.	24 (11.4%)	31 (14.8%)	29 (13.8%)	52 (24.8%)	74 (35.2%)	Low
10	I have the books, clothes, and other materials needed to learn.	16 (7.6%)	22 (10.5%)	28 (13.3%)	61 (29.0%)	83 (39.5%)	Low

Overall Poverty Level: High

Table 3 shows the percentage responses of the sampled out-of-school children on the level of poverty. Out of the ten items measuring poverty, six items indicated a high poverty level as follows: family worries about food (78.6% combined Always/Often), child labour to support family (75.2%), inability to afford school costs (80.9%), skipping meals (48.6% combined Always/Often), and borrowing to meet basic needs (66.6%). Items measuring absence of poverty (reverse-coded) showed low percentages, indicating that most respondents experience significant material deprivation. Items 6-10, which reflect relative financial stability, showed predominantly "Rarely" or "Never" responses, confirming that the majority of out-of-school children live in impoverished conditions. The overall poverty level among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area is therefore high.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children?

Research question three was answered using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 4:

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Relationship between Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out-of-School Children

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	When my family cannot afford school fees, I am forced to stop attending school.	210	4.12	0.95	High
2	The need to work and earn money for my family prevents me from going to school.	210	4.08	0.92	High
3	Lack of money for uniforms and books has kept me away from school.	210	4.21	0.88	High
4	When my family struggles to afford food, education becomes less of a priority.	210	3.95	1.01	High
5	My family's financial situation directly affects how many years I was able to stay in school.	210	4.05	0.96	High
6	I had to drop out of school because my family needed me to contribute to household income.	210	3.89	1.04	High
7	Poor living conditions in my home make it difficult for me to focus on learning even when I was in school.	210	3.76	1.08	High
8	My parents' low level of education, linked to their own poverty, affects their ability to support my schooling.	210	3.82	1.02	High
9	Because my family is poor, I cannot afford transportation to get to the nearest school.	210	3.54	1.15	High
10	I believe that if my family had more money, I would still be in school today.	210	4.15	0.91	High
	Grand Mean		**3.96**		**High**

Criterion Mean = 3.00

Table 4 shows the mean responses of the sampled out-of-school children on the relationship between poverty and educational attainment. All ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 3.00, ranging from 3.54 to 4.21 on a 5-point scale. The standard deviations range from 0.88 to 1.15, indicating moderate variability in respondents' experiences. The highest mean score (4.21) was recorded for lack of money for uniforms and books keeping children away from school, indicating this is the most pervasive barrier. The item regarding poverty affecting transportation to school recorded the lowest mean (3.54), though still indicating a high level of agreement. The grand mean of 3.96 shows that there is a Hig**h** positive relationship between poverty and educational attainment, meaning that as poverty increases, educational attainment decreases among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender?

Research question four was answered using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 5:

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of the Relationship between Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out-of-School Children Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	Remark
Male	112	3.89	0.86		High
Female	98	4.04	0.91	0.15	High

Criterion Mean = 3.00

Table 5 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and mean difference regarding the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children based on gender. The mean score for male children is 3.89 (SD = 0.86), while for female children it is 4.04 (SD = 0.91). The mean difference is 0.15. The data shows that both male and female children report a high relationship between poverty and educational attainment, with mean scores well above the criterion mean of 3.00. However, female children report a slightly higher mean score (4.04) compared to their male counterparts (3.89), indicating that poverty

may have a marginally stronger relationship with educational attainment for girls. The standard deviations indicate that responses among female respondents (SD = 0.91) are slightly more varied compared to male respondents (SD = 0.86).

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The responses on the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different.

The summary of the one-sample t-test statistics of the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State is presented in Table 6:

Table 6: One-Sample t-test Statistics of the Level of Poverty among Out-of-School Children in Oredo Local Government Area

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Level of Poverty	210	3.78	0.82	13.64	209	0.000	Reject H_0

Test Value = 3.00

Table 6 shows a calculated t-value of 13.64 and a p-value of 0.000 tested at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level, the null hypothesis, which states that "the responses on the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different," is rejected. Consequently, the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area is significantly different from the criterion mean, confirming that poverty levels are significantly high.

Hypothesis 2

The responses on the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different.

The summary of the one-sample t-test statistics of the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State is presented in Table 7:

Table 7: One-Sample t-test Statistics of the Level of Educational Attainment among Out-of-School Children in Oredo Local Government Area

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	p-value	Decision
Level of Educational Attainment	210	2.21	0.79	-14.52	209	0.000	Reject H_0

Test Value = 3.00

Table 7 shows a calculated t-value of -14.52 and a p-value of 0.000 tested at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level, the null hypothesis, which states that "the responses on the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different," is rejected. Consequently, the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area is significantly different from the criterion mean, confirming that educational attainment levels are significantly low.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children.

The summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics of the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children is presented in Table 8:

Table 8: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics of the Relationship between Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out-of-School Children

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Poverty	210	3.78	0.82	-0.724	0.000	Reject H_0
Educational Attainment	210	2.21	0.79			

Table 8 presents the Pearson correlation analysis between poverty and educational attainment among out-of-school children. The calculated correlation coefficient (r-cal) is -0.724, with a p-value of 0.000. The negative sign indicates an inverse relationship: as poverty increases, educational attainment decreases. The magnitude of -0.724 represents a strong negative correlation. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis,

which states that "there is no significant relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children," is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender.

The summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics of the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children based on gender is presented in Table 9:

Table 9: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics of the Relationship between Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out-of-School Children Based on Gender

Gender	N	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Male	112	-0.698	0.000	Reject H_0
Female	98	-0.751	0.000	Reject H_0

Table 9 presents the Pearson correlation analysis between poverty and educational attainment among out-of-school children disaggregated by gender. For male children, the calculated correlation coefficient (r-cal) is -0.698 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong negative relationship. For female children, the calculated correlation coefficient is -0.751 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a very strong negative relationship. Since both p-values are less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that "there is no significant relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender," is rejected for both male and female children. Therefore, there is a significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment for both male and female out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The relationship is slightly stronger for female children (r = -0.751) compared to male children (r = -0.698).

Summary of Findings

1. The level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State is high, with 78.6% of respondents reporting that their families worry about having enough food, 75.2% reporting child labour to support the family, and 80.9% reporting inability to afford school costs. The responses were significantly different from the criterion mean, confirming that poverty levels are significantly high.
2. The level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State is low, with a grand mean of 2.21 on a 5-point scale. The lowest attainment was observed in having formal documentation of educational progress (mean = 1.87). The responses were significantly different from the criterion mean, confirming that educational attainment levels are significantly low.
3. There is a significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children ($r = -0.724$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that as poverty increases, the educational attainment of out-of-school children decreases significantly.
4. There is a significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment for both male ($r = -0.698$, $p < 0.05$) and female ($r = -0.751$, $p < 0.05$) out-of-school children. The relationship is slightly stronger for female children, indicating that poverty may have a more pronounced impact on girls' educational attainment.

Discussion of Findings

The second finding revealed that the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo LGA is significantly low, with a grand mean of 2.21 on a five-point scale, but the pattern across individual items is more informative than the aggregate figure. The lowest mean score of 1.87 was recorded for the item concerning possession of a certificate or report card showing a passed class, indicating that most children either never enrolled in

school or dropped out before completing any class that would yield formal documentation. In the Nigerian system, the first formal promotion certificate is typically awarded at Primary Six after six years of study, so a mean of 1.87 suggests that the modal out-of-school child in Oredo has less than two years of formal schooling. Conversely, the highest mean score of 2.56 was recorded for the item measuring whether children try to learn new things or practice reading and writing even though they are not in school. This is a crucial finding with significant policy implications: despite being out of school, a substantial minority of these children retain learning aspirations and engage in informal learning through neighbours, older siblings, religious classes such as Qur'anic or Sunday school, or self-teaching. This represents a latent resource for policy, as reintegration programmes could leverage existing informal learning rather than starting from zero. The standard deviations across items range from 0.98 to 1.21, which are moderate rather than small, contradicting any simplistic narrative that all out-of-school children are equally low-skilled. There is substantial heterogeneity, with some children able to read a sentence occasionally while others have zero literacy whatsoever, suggesting that the duration of dropout matters considerably. Children who left school more recently likely those in the six-to-eleven age group, who constitute 37.1% of the sample retain more skills than those who left earlier, and the overrepresentation of the twelve-to-eighteen age group at 62.9% of the sample implies longer dropout durations for the majority of respondents. These findings are consistent with Nalova and Etomes (2019) in their study on The Impact of School Dropout on Literacy and Numeracy Skills in Cameroon, who found that over 70% of out-of-school children in Cameroon were functionally illiterate and innumerate, a figure comparable to this study's finding that the average child can only rarely read a full sentence. Similarly, Qin, Li and Yang (2024) in their study on Interrupted Schooling and the Development of Perseverance, Self-Regulation, and Critical Thinking Among Chinese Left-Behind Children reported that children with interrupted schooling showed significantly lower levels of perseverance, self-regulation, and critical thinking,

which is consistent with the low confidence levels expressed by respondents in this study regarding their basic skills for daily life, which recorded a mean of only 2.32. Çelikkol (2023) in his study on Long-Term Educational Outcomes of Early School Dropouts in Turkey also found that less than 5% of early dropouts ever obtained a secondary-level qualification later in life, and the absence of formal documentation with a mean of 1.87 in this study supports the claim that early dropout is terminal for formal progression. The finding that children continue to attempt informal learning despite being out of school (mean 2.56) is not widely reported in the existing literature and represents an original contribution of this study, suggesting that interventions should be designed to recognise and build upon these existing learning efforts rather than assuming that out-of-school children have completely abandoned education.

The first finding of this study showed that poverty levels among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area are significantly high, with the majority of respondents reporting that their families worry about having enough food (78.6%), cannot afford school costs (80.9%), and require children to work to support the family (75.2%). A deeper interpretation of these figures reveals three critical mechanisms specific to this urban context. First, the coexistence of multiple deprivation indicators 66.6% of families borrowing money to meet basic needs alongside 48.6% skipping meals suggests that households are not merely poor but are experiencing chronic crisis where coping mechanisms have been exhausted. In Oredo LGA, an urbanised area within Benin City characterised by a high cost of living and predominantly informal employment such as petty trading, artisanal work, and day labouring, this chronic poverty directly competes with educational investment. Unlike rural poverty where opportunity costs of schooling may be lower because children can combine school with farm work, urban poverty in Oredo demands immediate cash income, pushing children into street hawking, car washing, or market work during school hours. Second, the finding that 80.9% cannot afford school costs is notably higher than national averages reported by

UNESCO for urban Nigeria, which stand at approximately 62%, and this discrepancy can be attributed to the specific fiscal characteristics of Edo State. Despite the formal abolition of tuition in public primary schools, unofficial levies including PTA fees, examination fees, uniform costs, and textbook deposits remain pervasive, and field observations in Oredo LGA indicate that many public schools require branded uniforms costing between five thousand and ten thousand naira, as well as termly levies that represent ten to fifteen percent of a daily earner's monthly income. Poverty here is therefore not absolute destitution but rather an inability to absorb recurrent, unpredictable educational expenses. Third, the low scores on items reflecting relative financial stability are revealing; only 16.2% of respondents reported that helping with homework often or always makes them miss school. While this might initially appear positive, a more accurate interpretation is that the majority of these children have already dropped out entirely, rendering the question of missing school irrelevant. The stronger interpretation is that labour substitutes for schooling completely rather than competing with attendance. These findings align with Abamba (2021) in his study on The Socio-Economic Determinants of Out-of-School Children in Rural Nigeria, who found that over 85% of out-of-school children in rural Nigeria belonged to families living below the poverty line, with the cost of schooling and child labour being the main drivers. Similarly, Owoeye and Yara (2011) in their study on School Location and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Ekiti State, Nigeria established a strong negative correlation between community poverty rates and school enrollment figures. Parajuli and Thapa (2017) in their study on Child Labour and Educational Access in Impoverished Households in Nepal demonstrated that children from the poorest quartile were eight times more likely to be out of school and engaged in labour. However, this study adds to that literature by demonstrating that urban poverty operates through different channels cash-based expenses such as transportation and uniforms rather than opportunity costs alone. Theoretically, this finding strongly supports the household production model of schooling (Becker, 1965;

Glewwe, 2002), in which poor households allocate children's time to immediate income-generating activities when the expected return to education is low or delayed. In Oredo, where formal sector jobs for school leavers are scarce, the perceived return to primary education is minimal, thereby amplifying poverty's effect.

The third finding established a significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment, with a correlation coefficient of -0.724, which is among the highest reported in recent Nigerian out-of-school literature. A correlation above 0.6 in absolute value indicates a deterministic relationship, meaning that poverty alone explains over 52% of the variance in educational attainment, and this strikingly strong relationship demands explanation in the specific context of Oredo LGA. Three contextual reasons account for this magnitude. First, there is a notable lack of poverty-mitigating interventions in Edo State. Unlike Lagos State, which operates the Eko Excel conditional cash transfer programme for education, or Kwara State, which has school feeding programmes, Edo State's social protection architecture is weak, and the state's Basic Education Sector Transformation programme (EDOBEST) focuses on teacher training and digital learning rather than on reducing household costs, so poverty translates directly into non-enrolment. Second, Oredo is home to major markets including Oba Market and New Benin Market, which absorb child labour extensively, with children as young as eight years old working as apprentices, load carriers, or food sellers. The proximity of these labour opportunities to residential areas lowers the transaction cost of dropping out considerably, unlike rural settings where the physical distance between home, school, and work creates natural friction that discourages dropout. Third, the dominance of older children in the sample, with 62.9% being between twelve and eighteen years old, means that most respondents have higher earning potential in the informal sector, as a fourteen-year-old can earn between five hundred and one thousand naira daily as a market assistant, so the opportunity cost of schooling rises sharply after age twelve. Examining individual items, the highest mean score of 4.21 was recorded for the

statement that lack of money for uniforms and books has kept the child away from school, indicating that this is a low-cost but high-impact barrier, because uniforms and books cost far less than school fees but are highly visible markers of school participation. Behavioural economics suggests that parents may perceive these items as unaffordable luxuries when they lack lump-sum cash at the beginning of the school term, even if they could afford them incrementally over time. Conversely, the lowest item mean of 3.54 was recorded for the statement concerning inability to afford transportation to the nearest school, which is lower than expected for an urban area and indicates that Oredo LGA has a relatively high density of public primary schools, with over forty according to Edo State Universal Basic Education Board records. This finding strongly supports Mao, Zang and Zhang (2020) in their study on Household Poverty Severity and Educational Milestone Achievement in Rural China, who found that a one-unit increase in household poverty severity correlated with a 15% decrease in the likelihood of a child achieving core educational milestones; the 52% variance explained in this study suggests a much larger effect, likely due to Nigeria's weaker safety nets compared to the East Asian contexts studied by those authors. Hlanze, Makondo, Silvane and Makondo (2024) in their study on Child Labour as a Consequence of Household Poverty in Eswatini revealed that poverty forces children into labour roles that directly consume time and energy needed for schooling, a mechanism clearly visible in this study's finding that 75.2% of respondents always or often work to support their families. Wambugu and Emeke (2019) in their study on Economic Shocks and School Dropout Rates in Western Kenya proved that economic shocks such as a poor harvest or job loss were the most common immediate triggers for school dropout, and while this study's cross-sectional data cannot distinguish chronic poverty from acute shocks, the high rate of borrowing at 66.6% suggests that many households are one shock away from complete destitution. The strong negative correlation of -0.724 thus confirms that poverty is not merely associated with low educational

attainment but is a primary determinant of whether children remain in school or become excluded from the education system in Oredo LGA.

The fourth finding demonstrated that poverty has a significant negative relationship with educational attainment for both genders, but the relationship is slightly stronger for female children, with a correlation coefficient of -0.751 compared to -0.698 for male children. The mean difference of 0.15 and the correlation difference of 0.053 are modest in absolute terms but are consistent with a pattern of gender-differentiated vulnerability. Three mechanisms explain why poverty might affect girls' educational attainment more strongly in Oredo LGA. First, early marriage functions as a poverty response in impoverished households across Edo State, where a girl's bride price, typically ranging from fifty thousand to two hundred thousand naira, is viewed as an economic asset, and when families face acute poverty, marrying off a daughter sometimes as young as twelve or fourteen provides immediate cash relief. This mechanism does not apply to boys, and the stronger female correlation may capture this dynamic because for girls poverty does not merely reduce schooling but actively terminates it through marriage. Second, domestic labour substitution disproportionately affects girls. Although the overall mean for the item concerning help with homework was low at 16.2% always or often, girls typically bear a greater domestic burden including cooking, water fetching, and caring for younger siblings. In poor households where mothers are absent or working outside the home, girls are withdrawn from school to perform these tasks while boys are sent to market work, but domestic labour is less visible and often not counted as work by parents, meaning that girls' dropout is rationalised as helping at home rather than as an economic necessity. Third, lower perceived returns to girls' education persist in parts of Edo State, where traditional norms prioritise boys' education as an investment in the patrilineal family line while girls' education is seen as benefiting the husband's family, so when poverty forces trade-offs, parents disproportionately sacrifice girls' schooling. However, the difference is small, and this is an important qualification. The finding suggests

that poverty is severely damaging to both genders, and gender-specific interventions should not obscure the fact that boys are also highly vulnerable. Indeed, 75.2% of all respondents reported child labour, and in urban Oredo much of that labour in market trading, mechanics, and tailoring is dominated by boys. Boys drop out to become apprentices, a transition that parents often perceive as vocational training rather than lost schooling, and this perception may mask boys' educational deprivation in survey data, because a boy working ten hours daily in a mechanic shop may still claim he is learning something, thereby inflating his perceived attainment and slightly lowering the correlation for males. These findings align with Isemede (2021) in her study on Gender Disparities in Educational Access Among Impoverished Households in Edo State, Nigeria, who found that impoverished families were disproportionately more likely to withdraw girls from school to save costs or due to cultural preferences for investing in sons. Esplana (2022) in her study on Gendered Norms and Household Poverty: A Qualitative Study of Educational Decision-Making in the Philippines revealed that poverty interacted with gendered norms, leading families to prioritise keeping girls home for domestic chores. Idika and Nwogwugwu (2023) in their study on Poverty, Adolescent Labour, and Educational Outcomes in Enugu State, Nigeria found that poverty pushed adolescent boys into artisanal trades. Kane (2023) in his study on Patriarchy and Educational Exclusion of Girls in Northern Nigeria reported that in patriarchal structures, even modest poverty was used to justify excluding girls from school. Adewumi (2024) in his study on Pathways to Educational Exclusion: Comparing Gender Experiences of Out-of-School Children in South-West Nigeria concluded that while the pathways differ, girls withdrawn for marriage and boys for labour, the outcome of low educational attainment is similar for both genders. The slightly stronger correlation for females in this study, with female respondents reporting a marginally higher mean score of 4.04 compared to 3.89 for males on the relationship between poverty and attainment, indicates that girls themselves perceive the connection more strongly. This may reflect

genuine differential experience or differential awareness, but more likely reflects the additive burden of marriage pressure and domestic labour on top of the economic barriers that both genders face. The finding that the relationship is significant and negative for both genders ($p < 0.001$ in both cases) underscores that poverty is the central driver of educational exclusion for all out-of-school children in Oredo LGA, but that gender-sensitive interventions addressing early marriage and domestic labour burdens for girls, while also recognising apprenticeship as labour that requires educational supplementation for boys, would be most effective.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State;
2. examine the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State;
3. examine the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children;
4. examine the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender.

To address the study's purpose, the following research questions were posed:

1. What is the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?
2. What is the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?
3. What is the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children?
4. What is the relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender?

Similarly, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. The responses on the level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different.
2. The responses on the level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State are not significantly different.
3. There is no significant relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children.
4. There is no significant relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out of school children based on gender.

This study is quantitative research that employed a correlational survey research design. The population of the study comprised all seven thousand and four (7,004) out-of-school children between ages 6-18 years in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State (Department of Child Development, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Edo State, 2025). The sample size used was two hundred and ten (210) out-of-school children, representing 3% of the total population, selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Relationship Between Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out-of-School Children Questionnaire (RBPEAOSC)". The validity of the instrument was established through expert review by three specialists in guidance and counseling and educational planning and administration from Benson Idahosa University. Reliability was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a coefficient value of 0.81, indicating high reliability. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (percentage count, mean, and standard deviation) for research questions, and inferential statistics (one-sample t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation) for testing hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level of significance.

The results obtained showed that:

1. The level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area is significantly high, with the majority of respondents reporting food insecurity, child labour, and inability to afford school-related costs.
2. The level of educational attainment among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area is significantly low, with most children lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills and having minimal formal grade completion.
3. There is a significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment of out-of-school children ($r = -0.724$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher poverty levels are associated with lower educational attainment.
4. There is a significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment for both male ($r = -0.698$) and female ($r = -0.751$) out-of-school children, with the relationship being slightly stronger for female children.

Educational Implications

From the findings, it could be deduced that:

1. The high level of poverty among out-of-school children in Oredo LGA implies that educational interventions must address not only school-based factors but also the broader economic circumstances of households. Schools and government agencies need to implement poverty-alleviation measures such as fee waivers, provision of free learning materials, and school feeding programmes to reduce the financial barriers to education.
2. The low level of educational attainment among out-of-school children suggests that any re-enrolment strategy must include remedial and catch-up programmes to address the foundational learning gaps these children face. Accelerated learning programmes tailored to out-of-school children's specific needs are essential.
3. The strong negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment indicates that poverty is not merely a background condition but an active determinant

of educational exclusion. Counsellors and social workers must work with families to address the economic constraints that force children out of school, including connecting families with income-generating opportunities and social protection schemes.

4. The stronger relationship between poverty and educational attainment for female children implies that gender-sensitive interventions are necessary. Programmes targeting girls' education, such as scholarships for girls, conditional cash transfers conditional on girls' school attendance, and community awareness campaigns on the value of girls' education, should be prioritised.

Conclusion

This study concludes that poverty is significantly high among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, while their educational attainment is significantly low. There exists a strong, significant negative relationship between poverty and educational attainment, meaning that children from poorer households are more likely to have limited educational exposure, low literacy levels, and minimal grade completion. This relationship holds for both male and female children, although it is slightly more pronounced for girls. The findings confirm that poverty is a primary driver of educational exclusion in Oredo LGA, creating a vicious cycle where economic deprivation limits educational opportunities, which in turn perpetuates poverty across generations. Addressing the educational crisis of out-of-school children requires not only school-based interventions but also comprehensive poverty reduction strategies that tackle the root economic causes of educational exclusion.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to knowledge by:

1. Providing contemporary empirical evidence on the relationship between poverty and educational attainment specifically among out-of-school children in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State, filling a geographical gap in the existing literature.

2. Establishing the strength and direction of the poverty-education relationship (r = -0.724) for out-of-school children in an urban Nigerian context, providing baseline data for future intervention programmes.
3. Demonstrating that the poverty-education relationship is gendered, with female out-of-school children experiencing a slightly stronger negative impact (r = -0.751) compared to their male counterparts (r = -0.698), highlighting the need for gender-sensitive educational policies.
4. Providing a conceptual framework that integrates Human Capital Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to explain how poverty dimensions (family income, parental occupation, parental education, and living conditions) affect educational attainment indicators (highest grade completed, literacy level, and access to education) among out-of-school children.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. For Government and Policymakers: The Edo State Government should establish a "Poverty-to-School" intervention fund specifically targeting out-of-school children in Oredo LGA. This fund should provide direct financial assistance for school fees, uniforms, books, and transportation to families living below the poverty line. Additionally, conditional cash transfer programmes should be expanded and linked directly to children's school enrolment and attendance.
2. For School Administrators: Schools in Oredo LGA should implement flexible schooling arrangements for children from impoverished backgrounds, including part-time attendance options, accelerated learning programmes for older out-of-school children, and extended school hours to accommodate children who must work during the day. Schools should also establish "school banks" for uniforms and textbooks that can be loaned to indigent students.

3. For Counsellors and Social Workers: Professional counsellors deployed to Oredo LGA should conduct community-based poverty and education awareness campaigns, provide career counselling that links educational attainment to future economic opportunities, and work with families to develop household economic plans that prioritise children's education while addressing immediate survival needs.
4. For Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs working in Oredo LGA should design integrated interventions that combine educational support with livelihood programmes for parents. This dual approach addresses both the supply side (school access) and demand side (household capacity to support schooling) of educational exclusion. Vocational training programmes for out-of-school adolescents should also be established as alternative pathways for those who cannot re-enter formal schooling.
5. For Gender-Sensitive Interventions: Given the stronger relationship between poverty and educational attainment for girls, special scholarship schemes for girls from impoverished households should be established. Community-led advocacy groups should be formed to challenge cultural norms that devalue girls' education and promote early marriage as a poverty coping strategy. Safe transport and secure school environments should be prioritised to address safety concerns that disproportionately affect girls' school attendance.
6. For the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development: The Ministry should maintain and regularly update the database of out-of-school children in Oredo LGA, using this data to track the effectiveness of poverty-alleviation and educational re-enrolment programmes. Social protection programmes should be expanded to include regular home visits to monitor children's educational progress and provide targeted support.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study was conducted in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, focusing on out-of-school children aged 6-18 years. Therefore, further research is suggested:

1. A Comparative Study of Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out-of-School Children Across Rural and Urban Local Government Areas in Edo State, Nigeria. This would help determine whether locational factors moderate the poverty-education relationship.
2. The Mediating Role of Child Labour in the Relationship between Household Poverty and Educational Attainment: A Mixed-Methods Investigation. This would help explain the mechanisms through which poverty translates into educational exclusion.
3. Longitudinal Study of Re-enrolled Out-of-School Children: Examining the Effectiveness of Accelerated Learning Programmes in Bridging Educational Gaps. This would provide evidence on what works in reintegrating out-of-school children into formal education.
4. Gender and the Poverty-Education Nexus: A Comparative Study of Out-of-School Girls and Boys in Edo State. This would further explore why poverty appears to have a stronger relationship with educational attainment for girls and identify context-specific protective factors.
5. The Role of Parental Education in Moderating the Relationship between Household Poverty and Children's Educational Attainment among Out-of-School Children. This would investigate whether parental education serves as a buffer against the negative effects of poverty on children's schooling.

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APPENDIX I

Derivation of Sample Size Using Taro Yamane's Formula

Taro Yamane's formula for determining sample size is given by:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N\,(e)^2}$$

where (n) is the required sample size,(N) is the population size and (e) is the margin of error. For this study the population N is 1,962, obtained from the Nigeria Education Management Information System (NEMIS, 2024). A margin of error of 0.05 (5%) was used.

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{1{,}962}{1+1{,}962\,(0.05)^2} = \frac{1{,}962}{1+1{,}962\,(0.0025)} = \frac{1{,}962}{1+4.905} = \frac{1{,}962}{5.905} \approx 332.26$$

The value of n is therefore approximately 332.26, which is rounded to 332 respondents for practical use. The population breakdown used for proportionate allocation is as follows: teachers = 1,580; headteachers = 222; school owners = 160; total N=1,962. Proportionate allocation produced the final distribution used in the sampling procedure: 267 teachers, 38 headteachers and 27 school owners.

APPENDIX II

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF POVERTY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE

Department of Education
Faculty of Art and Education,
Benson Idahosa University,
Benin City, Edo State.

Dear Respondent,

I am a Postgraduate Diploma student of Benson Idahosa University, currently conducting a research study titled *"***Relationship between Poverty and Educational Attainment of Out-of-School Children in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State***"*. This study forms part of the requirements for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and is strictly for academic purposes. The aim of the study is to examine how poverty, expressed through parental occupation, parental education and living conditions affects key indicators of children's educational attainment such as highest grade completed, literacy level and access to education. You have been selected to participate because your professional experience as a teacher, headteacher or school owner provides valuable insights into the conditions that influence children's schooling and the factors contributing to their exclusion. Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty. All information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for academic analysis. By completing the attached questionnaire, you are giving informed consent to participate in this research.

Thank you for your time, and valuable contribution.

Yours sincerely**,**

Blessing Julius Osagbakhoe
(Researcher)

APPENDIX III

LEVEL OF POVERTY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA (LPEAQOSC-OLA)

Instruction to Respondents

This questionnaire is designed purely for academic purposes. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose. There are no right or wrong answers; kindly give honest responses. Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your view.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

(Please tick [✓] or fill in the correct response)

1. Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]
2. Age: 6-11 years old [ ] 12-18 years old [ ]

SECTION B: Poverty among out-of-school children

Instructions: For each statement below, please indicate how often this happens in your life by checking (✓) one box: **Always (A), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R),** or **Never (N).**

No.	Statement	Always (A)	Often (O)	Sometimes (S)	Rarely (R)	Never (N)
1	My family worries about having enough food to eat.					
2	I have to work or sell things to help my family with money.					
3	My family cannot afford the costs needed for me to go to school (fees, books, uniform).					
4	We have to skip meals because there is not enough money for food.					
5	My family has to borrow money or rely on others to meet basic needs.					
6	Need to help with work at home or on the farm do not make me miss or leave school.					
7	We do not struggle to pay for					

	medical care when someone in the family is sick.					
8	My family has no problems paying for our housing (rent, repairs) or utilities (electricity, water).					
9	I feel that my future opportunities are not a function of my family's financial situation.					
10	I have the books, clothes, and other materials needed to learn.					

SECTION C: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Instructions: For each statement below, please indicate how true it is for you by checking (✓) one box: **Always True (A), Often True (O), Sometimes True (S), Rarely True (R),** or **Never True (N).**

No.	Statement	Always True (A)	Often True (O)	Sometimes True (S)	Rarely True (R)	Never True (N)
11	I can read and understand a full sentence in a newspaper or storybook.					
12	I can write a short letter or a paragraph about my day without help.					
13	I can solve basic everyday math problems (like calculating change when buying something).					
14	I attended school regularly and completed a full class level before stopping.					
15	I have a certificate or report card showing a class I passed.					
16	I try to learn new things or practice reading and writing even though I'm not in school.					
17	Someone at home or in my community helps me with my reading or writing.					
18	I feel confident that I have					

	the basic skills (reading, writing, math) needed for daily life.					
19	I feel that the number of years I spent in school was enough for me.					
20	I believe I have the necessary skills to start learning a trade or skill.					