Effect of Poverty on the Academic Performance of Students at the University Level in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Poverty prevails when individuals lack the resources to meet their fundamental needs. This study aims to explore the impact of poverty on students' academic performance, focusing on two universities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The research targeted students at the BS level in these institutions, employing a causal-comparative design. Six hundred students across all selected semesters were included, chosen through a simple random sampling technique. The study used a standard instrument utilizing a five-point Likert scale. Questionnaires were distributed to 50 students from WUB and Poonch University Rawalakot for pilot testing. The instrument's reliability, assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielded a satisfactory value of 0.91. The Pearson correlation was used to explore the relationship between variables, while simple linear regression was used to assess the impact of poverty on academic performance. The results indicate a robust and statistically significant negative correlation between poverty and academic performance. The linear regression outcomes also reveal that poverty adversely affects students' academic performance. In summary, the findings suggest a conclusive relationship wherein an increase in poverty levels corresponds to a decrease in students' academic performance, and conversely, a reduction in poverty levels is associated with an improvement in academic performance.
Keywords: Poverty, Academic Performance, Individual Deficiencies.

Introduction

Access to education is one of the most fundamental and significant human rights in any society. Every society in the world acknowledged these facts. Every individual has the right to access education, but poverty renders it unattainable for most students to avail themselves of this fundamental freedom. Poverty has spread like a cankerworm and is a widespread societal problem in the majority of families (Biggeri & Cuesta, 2021). Poverty is a circumstance that diminishes an individual's or a family's ability to meet basic needs or exercise their fundamental right to education. However, attaining educational success is also recognized as one of the most effective means to prevent poverty (Cooper & Miralay, 2022). One of Pakistan's biggest concerns is poverty. The definition of *poverty* is a state of ongoing deprivation or lack of necessities in life (Khan et al., 2020). 37.2 percent ($3.65 per day 2017) of the population live below the poverty line 2023

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(World Bank, 2023). Although this rate is slightly lower than the last recorded figure in 2018, which was 39.8 per cent, the consideration of population growth reveals an increase of almost 3 million more individuals living in poverty compared to 2018.

Academic performance refers to the level that a student, or any other person, as well as an institution, achieves quickly. It also refers to any accomplishment an individual provides over an extended period (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2014). The achievements assessed in this context align with the specified learning objectives. Academic accomplishments encompass achievements such as a cumulative GPA and the attainment of educational credentials, including degrees, among other factors (Wang & Degol, 2013).

Only some people are successful in achieving high academic standards. Numerous elements, both internal and external, are responsible for academic performance. Internal factors involve the intellectual ability that every person has in their possession (Aizer & Currie, 2014). The inherited characteristics of an individual play a role in the variance in a child's capacity to internalize concepts and retain the knowledge they are given in a classroom. The aspects that often impact a person's capacity to do well in the academic area, on the other hand, are external ones. Many studies reveal that external elements directly or indirectly impact a child's aptitude (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2014). Some of the variables include the student's exposure to the environment, his interactions with others, and the socioeconomic position of their families. For example, a student from a prosperous home will do better than another (Wang & Degol, 2013).

In the same way, children who connect with intelligent people have a higher probability of outperforming those who engage with school dropouts, which is also a result of poverty (Spaull, 2013). Recently, the impact of poverty on academic performance has received much attention in academic research. Many studies documented the negative effect of poverty on the academic performance of students (Engin, 2009; Farooq et al., 2011; Mulford et al., 2008)

It has been proven throughout the past century that a student's poverty level and academic performance are related (Harwell et al., 2017). The concept of poverty has several facets. Malnutrition, a lack of shelter, sickness, a lack of access to health care and education, unemployment, and, to some extent, a lack of freedom can all be contributing factors (Iqbal et al., 2016). The effects of poverty on education are substantial, and it is upsetting to witness youngster's battles and the difficulties of studying without assistance from the government or their parents. According to (Gweshengwe et al., 2020), "one of the most critical issues of the twenty-first century is poverty. Any emerging nation where most people are impoverished has one of the most challenging tasks in the world (Ogwumike, 2001). Consequently, the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals advocates eradicating all poverty worldwide (Koehler, 2017). The desire is for all sovereign nations to provide underprivileged students with their full attention and to address the general populace's low socioeconomic situation constructively.

The current inflationary wave in Pakistan forces a significant portion of the population below the poverty line, resulting in rising poverty and social vulnerabilities (World Bank, 2023). It is, therefore, crucial to examine the impact of poverty on the academic performance of students at the university level. In light of the miserable circumstances of the rural poor in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the uncertain nature of the effects of inequality and poverty, a consequent study was conducted to examine the impact of poverty on the academic performance of students at the university level in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir context.

Hypothesis

H01**:** There is no significant relationship between poverty and students' academic performance in universities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

H02: Poverty has no significant effect on students' academic performance in universities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Material and Methods

This study is quantitative, and a causal-comparative design was employed. A causal-comparative research design finds the effect of independent variables on dependent variables after an event has already occurred.

Population and Sampling

The researcher selected two universities (Women University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Bagh) and Poonch University Rawalakot of AJ&K for this study. BS-level students were the population of this study. Four departments (Botany, Zoology, Mathematics and Chemistry) were taken from Poonch University Rawalakot, and three departments (Education, Economics, and English) were taken from Women University Bagh Azad Jammu and Kashmir. There were 147 students at Bs level in semester 2nd in four departments of Pooch University AJK, and 414 students were found in semester 3rd, 5th, and 7th in three departments of WUB AJ&K. The total population of this study was 600 students, and the researcher took 300 students as a sample for this study. The respondents were selected through a simple random sampling technique.

Instrument

The poverty questionnaire was developed by Chindu (2021) for the present study. It was developed on a four-point Likert scale. The researcher distributed a questionnaire among 50 students of both universities' Women University Bagh and Poonch University Rawalakot AJ&K, for pilot testing. The purpose of the pilot testing was to check the instrument's reliability. Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.91, which was significant for further study.

Table 1: Cronbach alpha for Poverty Questionnaire

Scale	Cronbach Alpha value
Poverty Questionnaire	.91

Data Analysis

The data collected directly from the participants was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS-26). The primary aim of this study was to determine the impact of poverty on the academic performance of students. As correlation is only a straight linear relationship between two variables and does not always imply causation, regression analysis has also been utilized in addition to correlation. Hence Regression and Pearson's correlation coefficient statistical techniques were applied for data analyze purposes.

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of the study variable

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Poverty	300	32.27	102	78.04	13.63
CGPA	300	2.41	4.00	3.360	0.310

Descriptive statistics was summarized in table 2 index of poverty and CGPA by providing the maximum, minimum and standard deviation and mean for the constructs under study. Main variable in this study was poverty, which was measured by different indicators. The index for the poverty that we reveled in this study takes the value ranging from a minimum of 32.27 to a maximum of 102 with a standard deviation of 13.63. The lower standard deviation of poverty shows that the data do not suffer from the problem of high dispersion.

H01: There is no significant relationship between poverty and academic performance of students in universities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Bagh.

Table 3: Pearson correlation coefficient between poverty and academic performance

Variables	M	SD	R	P
Poverty	78.03	13.63		
Academic performance	3.360	0.310	-0.946	0.000

The correlation coefficient (r) between poverty and academic performance of students is -.946 which shows a strong negative association between both variables. The p value is ≤ 0.05, which means the relationship is statistically significant, so it can be said that the increase in the level of poverty decreases the academic performance of students. So H01 is rejected. In other words, it can be said that when poverty increases, students' academic performance decreases, and when poverty decreases, students' academic performance improve. These results are consistent with existing literature (Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Olszewski & Corwith, 2018; Ryan et al., 2018)

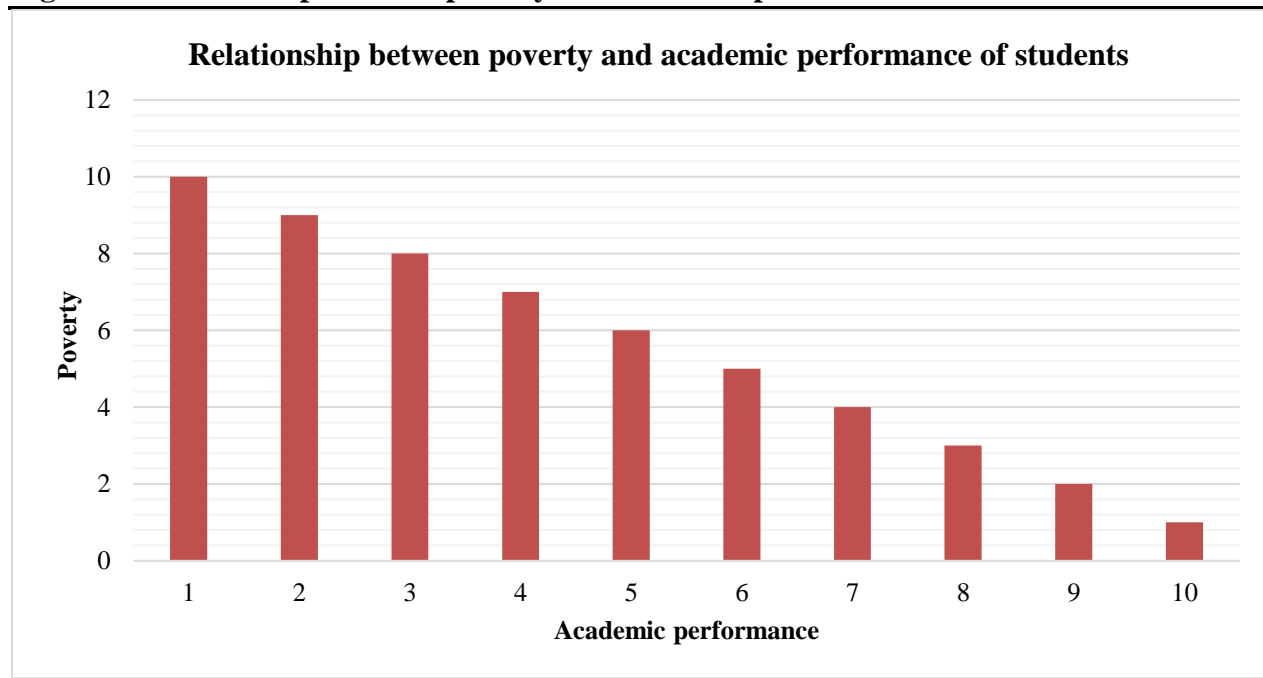**Figure 1: Relationship between poverty and academic performance**

Figure 1 showed that there was a negative relationship between two variables, i.e., poverty and the academic performance of students. When one variable increases, other decrease, and when one decreases, others increase.

H$_{o2}$: There is no significant effect of poverty on academic performance of students in universities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Table 4: Regression coefficients for the effect of poverty on academic performance

Variables	Coefficientsβ	βStandardized	T	P
(Constant)	78.435		168.15	0.000
Poverty	0.0019	-.946	-50.33	0.000

Table 4 depicts that poverty is statistically significant (t = -50.33 and p = 0.00) as the p value is less than 0.05 and the t value is greater than 2 with an expected negative sign, which implies that poverty is negatively related to the academic performance of students. Hence, the null hypothesis "There is no significant effect of poverty on the academic performance of students in universities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir" is rejected. Furthermore, the beta value is negative, which indicates a negative effect of poverty on the academic performance of students.

Table 5: Effect of poverty on academic performance of university-level students

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	P
0.946	0.895	0.894	5.92856	0.000

As indicated in Table 5, it can be seen that the R-square value is 0.895%, which means that the independent variable, i.e., poverty, causes 89.5% of the variation in the dependent variable, i.e., the academic performance of students. The critical value in this table is. 0.895%. R square means the total variation in the dependent variable because the independent variables mean how much the contribution of independent variables is in the change of the dependent variable. Many studies document similar results for different countries. For instance, Ade et al. (2023) found similar results for poor urban contexts in Ghana.

Similarly, Lee et al. (2023) found similar results for students with low socioeconomic status in the South Korean context. Students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds experience challenges in both reading and academic achievement. Furthermore, children identified as economically disadvantaged demonstrate a significant influence on academic achievement scores (Lacou & Tissington, 2011; Kranjac & Kranjac, 2021)

Conclusion

The current study aimed to explore the impact of poverty on the academic performance of university-level students in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The results revealed that students whose parents' income was high were more regular and attentive during class, and their C.G.P.A. was also higher than those whose parents' income was low. Low-income students found themselves inattentive during class. Their attendance needed to be more satisfactory. Hence, based on the findings, it was concluded that students' academic performance was negatively affected by poverty. Furthermore, there was a strong relationship between poverty and the academic performance of university-level students.

Recommendation
Based on this conclusion, it is recommended:

1. Universities should practically address this issue.
2. Universities should offer students accessible or affordable services, including food banks, financial counselling, housing support, and healthcare services with bulk-billing options.
3. Internet services in universities should be available for all students.
4. Since it has been shown that poverty substantially influences students' academic performance, the state government should ensure that its plan for reducing poverty targets the appropriate people and should be expanded to include scholarships for higher education, increasing parents' income will enable pupils to focus constantly on their schoolwork.

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