

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION ON MOTIVATION AND
ENGAGEMENT OF STUDENTS FROM RURAL SINGLE-PARENT HOME,
ASSIN NSUTA**

JOSEPH KWESI MENSAH



POST-GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION

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**A Project Report in the Department of Educational Foundations,
School of Education and Life-Long Learning, submitted to the school of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Post Graduate Diploma
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SEPTEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Joseph Kwesi Mensah, hereby declare that this project report content of this write up was solely done by me. It contains no material previously published by another person or material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made to the text.

Signature

Date

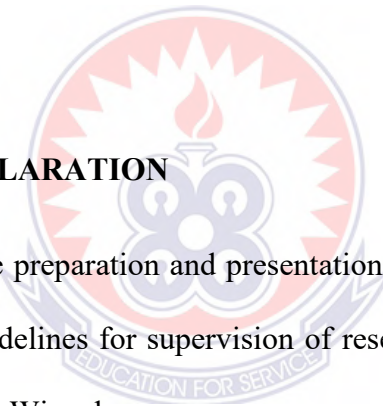
SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of research work as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name:

Signature.....

Date



DEDICATION

To my parents, Mr. Anthony Kofi Mensah (late) and Madam Victoria Akosua Awortwe, and all who spent their time, energy and money on my education to enable me realize my goal.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I take the opportunity once more to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to my humble and selfless supervisor, Mr. Joseph Appianing for guiding and supervising me throughout the period of research. I am eternally grateful to him. I further thank all my course mates, and more especially, those whom I worked with same supervisor for their kindness, maturity and collaborations during the entire period of the program. Finally, I would like to thank all others who in one way or the other aided me to arrive at this point of my research paper. Thank you.



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households in selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta. The research aimed to explore how financial hardship influences students' access to educational resources, attendance, participation, and academic performance. A quantitative descriptive design was employed, using questionnaires to collect data from ninety-six respondents selected through census sampling. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations with SPSS. Findings revealed that although most students from single-parent households had school uniforms, they faced serious deprivation in textbooks, stationery, meals, and transportation. These financial challenges adversely affected attendance, participation in extra classes, and concentration during lessons, leading to low academic achievement and reduced social engagement. The study concludes that economic deprivation remains a major obstacle to educational equity, limiting learning opportunities and holistic development. It is recommended that school managers and education stakeholders implement support initiatives like textbook banks, subsidised meal schemes, and transportation aid to close the resource gap, improve student participation, and enhance learning outcomes for students from single-parent households.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Economic deprivation remains a major challenge affecting educational outcomes, especially in rural communities where poverty and limited resources persist. In Ghana, students from single-parent households often experience compounded financial hardship that undermines their motivation and engagement in school. This study investigates the influence of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households among selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta. The issue is important because low motivation and poor engagement lead to absenteeism, weak academic performance, and increased dropout rates, reinforcing poverty cycles. Although past studies have examined socioeconomic status and academic achievement, few address rural single-parent contexts in Ghana. This study fills that gap by exploring how financial constraints shape students' participation and learning behaviours. Theoretically, it enhances understanding of how deprivation impacts motivation, while practically offering insights for stakeholders to develop interventions that support engagement and academic success in deprived rural settings.

1.1 Background to the Study

Economic deprivation is a pervasive issue that affects millions of children worldwide, with far-reaching consequences for their educational outcomes and overall well-being. Research has shown that economic deprivation can have a profound impact on

students motivation and engagement, particularly in rural single-parent households where resources are often limited (Kim & Lee, 2020). The effect of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement is a pressing issue in contemporary educational discourse, particularly within the context of rural single-parent households. Economic deprivation encompasses various aspects, including inadequate financial resources, limited access to educational materials, and the absence of emotional and social support. This multifaceted challenge has a profound impact on students' experiences and can significantly hinder their academic performance and overall development. Understanding the intricate relationship between economic deprivation, motivation, and engagement is crucial for creating effective educational interventions that promote equity and support vulnerable populations.

Globally, economic deprivation is recognised as a significant barrier to educational advancement, with numerous studies highlighting its adverse effects on students' academic outcomes. Research indicates that children from low-income families tend to exhibit lower levels of motivation and engagement in their educational pursuits compared to their more affluent peers (Kraaykamp & van der Velden, 2020). This disparity is often due to the stress and instability associated with financial hardship, which can lead to feelings of hopelessness and disengagement from the learning process (Rumberger & Roticht, 2020). Furthermore, the effects of economic deprivation are often exacerbated in rural areas, where access to educational resources and support systems can be severely limited.

In Africa, the situation is compounded by various socio-economic factors, including high rates of poverty, limited infrastructure, and inadequate educational facilities. According to the African Development Bank (2021), millions of children across the continent are affected by poverty, which directly influences their educational

experiences and outcomes. The emphasis on achieving educational equity becomes particularly urgent in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, including those in rural areas (UNESCO, 2021). The intersection of poverty and education in Africa highlights the need for targeted research that considers the unique challenges faced by students in these contexts.

Specifically, in Ghana, the challenges associated with economic deprivation are particularly notable. The Ghanaian education system, while experiencing improvements in access and quality, continues to grapple with disparities that disproportionately affect rural households (World Bank, 2020). Research reveals that students from single-parent households often face additional challenges, including limited parental support and access to resources, which can significantly hinder their educational attainment (Boadu, 2021). The significance of family structure in shaping students' experiences underscores the need to explore the implications of economic deprivation in conjunction with familial dynamics.

Economic deprivation has extensively been documented as a significant factor negatively influencing student motivation. Financial limitations can create a pervasive sense of hopelessness and distress among students, which diminishes their intrinsic drive to succeed. Research by Martey, Etwire, and Koomson (2022) illustrates that children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often experience stressors related to their financial circumstances, which can detract from their focus on education. This sentiment is echoed by Lane (2021), who emphasizes that economic hardship generates uncertainties about the future, which may lead to a deterioration in academic motivation. When students are preoccupied with survival, they may struggle to engage with academic tasks that seem less pressing than immediate financial concerns or familial responsibilities.

Furthermore, low motivation has a direct correlation with decreased engagement, thereby impacting students' active participation in learning experiences. Engagement in education encompasses various dimensions, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement, all of which are crucial for academic success (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2019). Low motivation often leads to diminished emotional engagement, as students may feel disconnected from their learning environment. For instance, a study by Skinner and Belmont (2020) found that when students are less motivated, they are less likely to show enthusiasm for school activities, participate in discussions, or collaborate with peers. This lack of engagement can culminate in a disconnection from the school community, making students feel isolated and undervalued.

Moreover, the psychological implications of economic deprivation further exacerbate this disengagement. According to a study conducted by Jeynes (2020), students facing economic hardships reported higher levels of anxiety and stress, which were directly linked to their motivation and academic performance. When students are overwhelmed by external pressures, their ability to concentrate on learning is severely compromised, resulting in a decline in academic effort and lacklustre performance. This phenomenon creates a cycle of disengagement, where low motivation contributes to academic underachievement, further diminishing their willingness to engage in the educational process.

In addition to emotional and psychological barriers, economic deprivation also limits students' access to vital resources that can enhance their educational experience. Research led by Rumberger and Roticht (2020) demonstrates that students from low-income households often lack access to essential educational materials, such as books, technology, and even a conducive learning environment at home. Without these tools,

students may struggle to grasp key concepts, leading to frustration and further disengagement from the educational process.

Schools play a pivotal role in fostering student engagement, yet in economically deprived contexts, they often lack the necessary resources to create inclusive and supportive environments. A study by Hawley and Horne (2021) highlights how underfunded schools may struggle to provide extracurricular activities and enrichment programmes that are essential for fostering a sense of belonging. The absence of these opportunities for engagement can reinforce feelings of alienation among students, diminishing their overall motivation to participate in school life.

Low motivation due to economic constraints leads to decreased engagement, which can manifest in academic underachievement and emotional distress. As these patterns persist, students may develop an enduring sense of disengagement from not just their educational environment but also from broader social interactions, further isolating them from potentially supportive relationships with peers and educators.

In the context of Assin Nsuta, the challenges faced by students in rural single-parent households reflect broader economic and social issues. The area is characterised by high rates of poverty and limited access to educational resources, exacerbating the effects of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement. Schools in Assin Nsuta often operate with minimal resources, further complicating efforts to engage students who already face significant challenges due to their socioeconomic status (Hawley & Horne, 2021). This context highlights the urgency of conducting research to explore the specific dynamics at play in these households and to understand how economic deprivation influences students' educational experiences.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The phenomenon of economic deprivation has emerged as a significant concern in educational research, particularly in relation to its impact on student motivation and engagement. In the context of students' motivation and engagement, the influence of financial constraints cannot be understated, especially among those hailing from single-parent families (Cummings & Munns, 2020).

In Ghana, rural communities often experience systemic socio-economic disadvantages characterised by high poverty levels, limited infrastructural development, and restricted access to quality education (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Single-parent households within these settings frequently contend with compounded stressors, including financial instability, inadequate parental support, and social marginalisation. For school-going children in these families, the lack of economic resources can lead to poor school attendance, limited participation in co-curricular activities, and general disengagement from the learning process. Despite government efforts through initiatives such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and the Ghana School Feeding Programme, significant disparities in student outcomes persist, particularly among children from economically deprived single-parent homes in rural areas (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Globally, existing research has illuminated the adverse effects of economic deprivation on educational engagement. A study by McLoyd et al. (2020) in the United States found that economic hardship significantly predicts lower academic motivation, particularly among children from single-parent families. Similarly, in South Africa, Mokoena and Hlalele (2019) highlighted how poverty within rural single-parent households led to students' emotional distress and disengagement, ultimately resulting in academic

underperformance and increased dropout rates. These studies underscore the global relevance of the intersection between poverty, family structure, and education, providing useful theoretical underpinnings for the present research.

Within the Ghanaian context, empirical studies have also documented the deleterious effects of poverty on student engagement. Adjei and Nyarko (2021), in their work on basic school pupils in the Central Region, observed that economically disadvantaged students demonstrated lower intrinsic motivation and were more likely to be absent from school. Another study by Owusu and Arhin (2020) reported that children from single-parent households in rural districts faced psychosocial barriers and often exhibited reduced academic enthusiasm. While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not explicitly investigate the interconnection between economic deprivation, single-parent family structures, and rural educational outcomes. Moreover, there is a dearth of focused research in smaller rural communities such as Assin Nsuta, where the socio-economic dynamics and familial configurations may present unique patterns of student motivation and engagement.

Consequently, while the existing body of literature affirms the correlation between economic hardship and poor educational outcomes, there remains an insufficiently explored area concerning how these factors uniquely interact within rural single-parent households in specific Ghanaian locales. This gap is particularly pronounced in Assin Nsuta, a community with high levels of poverty and a growing prevalence of single-parent families. Understanding how economic deprivation affects students' motivation and engagement in this context is critical, not only for academic purposes but also for informing targeted interventions.

This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by examining the specific effects of economic deprivation on the educational motivation and engagement of students from rural single-parent households in selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the negative influence of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households among selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta.

1.4 Specific Objectives

This study was to:

1. assess the extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households at Catholic Basic School, the Methodist Basic School, and the District Assembly School. (D.A.).
2. assess the influence of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation.
3. examine the relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement in academic and extracurricular activities.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to guide this study

1. To what extent do students from single-parent households in selected basic schools at Assin Nsuta experience economic deprivation?
2. How do financial difficulties influence students' school attendance and participation in academic activities?

3. What relationship exists between economic deprivation and students' engagement in both academic and extracurricular activities?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute valuable insights into the complex relationship between economic deprivation, motivation, and engagement among students in rural single-parent households. By focusing specifically on Assin Nsuta, a region characterized by high poverty rates and unique socio-economic challenges, this research aims to illuminate the educational experiences of a vulnerable demographic that has been historically underrepresented in academic literature.

One crucial aspect of this study is its relevance to educational policy and practice. Understanding how economic deprivation impacts students' motivation and engagement can inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at improving educational outcomes for those in similar circumstances. By identifying the specific barriers that economically disadvantaged students face, educators and policymakers can implement strategies that foster supportive learning environments, enhancing students' intrinsic motivation and overall academic engagement.

Furthermore, the study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature regarding the intersection of economic deprivation and educational engagement in rural Ghana. Most previous research has focused on urban contexts or more general issues of poverty without delving deeply into the localized experiences of students in rural single-parent households. By contributing new knowledge to this field, the research will enrich academic discourse and provide a foundation for future studies on educational equity, social justice, and child development in economically disadvantaged settings.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The study will focus exclusively on selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta, namely, the Catholic Basic School, the Methodist Basic School, and the District Assembly School. (D.A.). It will investigate the influence of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households. Therefore, the implications drawn from this research shall hold mainly for the selected schools. However, other schools, circuits, districts, and municipalities may find the information helpful to apply in their implementation strategies of using audio-visual materials.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Economic Deprivation: This term refers to the lack of financial resources necessary to meet basic living needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, and educational materials.

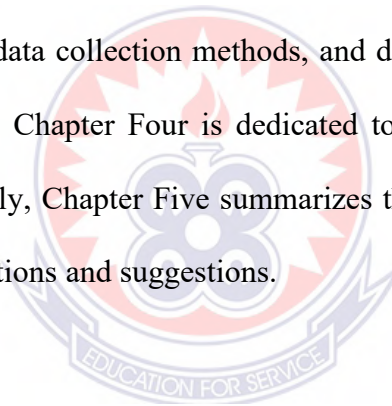
Students' Motivation: Motivation is defined as the internal drive that influences a student's willingness to engage with educational content, persist in the face of challenges, and achieve academic goals. It can be intrinsic (driven by personal interest or enjoyment of learning) or extrinsic (driven by external rewards or pressures).

Engagement: Engagement refers to the extent to which students participate in academic and social aspects of their education. This can include cognitive engagement (intellectual effort and focus), emotional engagement (affective reactions related to learning), and behavioural engagement (participation in school activities, such as attendance and involvement in extracurricular activities).

Rural Single-Parent Households: This concept denotes family units residing in rural areas where only one parent is present to provide for the children. Single-parent households often face unique challenges related to financial instability, social support, and time constraints, which can affect the educational experiences of children.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter One serves as the introduction and addresses the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and objectives, research questions, significance, delimitations, and the overall organization of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature, identifying, comparing, and contrasting existing research concerning theories, concepts, and empirical data related to impact of using audio-visual materials to improve the performance of learners. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, including the research design, study area, population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, pilot testing of questionnaires, validity and reliability of the instruments, ethical considerations, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures and the limitation of the study. Chapter Four is dedicated to presenting and discussing the research findings. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the findings, draws conclusions, and offers recommendations and suggestions.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter offers a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the topic. It explores three main categories of the literature review: theoretical, conceptual, and empirical. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was utilised as the theoretical framework for this study. Key themes such as economic deprivation, students' motivation, students' engagement and single-parenting were analysed within the research context. Additionally, relevant studies were evaluated to develop the empirical review.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 *Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*

This study is grounded in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (2010), is a prominent framework in understanding human motivation and personality development. The theory posits that individuals possess innate psychological needs that are essential for fostering motivation and facilitating optimal functioning. Central to SDT are three key concepts: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the need for individuals to feel in control of their own actions and decisions, thereby allowing them to engage in activities that are intrinsically motivating (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Competence

denotes the need to feel effective and capable in one's interactions with the environment, fostering a sense of mastery in tasks (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Relatedness involves the need to establish meaningful connections with others, reflecting the importance of social support and belonging in motivating individuals (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

The assumptions underlying SDT assert that when these three basic psychological needs are fulfilled, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation-engaging in activities for the inherent enjoyment they provide. Conversely, when these needs are unmet, individuals may turn to extrinsic forms of motivation, driven by external rewards or pressures. This distinction is crucial, as intrinsic motivation is linked to higher levels of engagement, persistence, and overall well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2020). Furthermore, SDT posits that environmental factors, including support from parents, teachers, and the broader community, play a pivotal role in either facilitating or impeding the satisfaction of these psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2020).

In practical applications, SDT has been utilised across various domains such as education, health, and organisational behaviour. In educational settings, SDT has been influential in shaping pedagogical approaches that promote student motivation and engagement. Research has shown that when teachers create environments that support students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness, learners are more likely to engage deeply in their educational experiences and achieve better academic outcomes (Vansteenkiste, Niemann, De Witte, & Lens, 2019). For instance, implementing student-centered teaching methods that encourage autonomy, such as allowing choices in assignments or fostering collaborative learning, can enhance students' intrinsic motivation and, consequently, their persistence in academic tasks. Teachers'

behaviours that support students' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness contribute positively to the motivational climate, fostering deeper learning and resilience in the face of challenges. Conversely, environments that are controlling or neglectful of students' psychological needs often result in diminished motivation, disengagement, and reduced academic performance (Howard et al., 2021).

The theory also recognises the role of socioeconomic factors in shaping motivational experiences. For students from economically deprived backgrounds, such as those in rural single-parent households, the fulfilment of psychological needs may be compromised. Economic deprivation can create environments marked by instability, limited resources, and psychological stress, which undermine students' sense of autonomy and competence (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). In such contexts, the absence of supportive structures and relationships may impair students' internal motivation, leading to disengagement and lower educational attainment.

Applying SDT to the study of the effect of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households in selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta provides a valuable theoretical lens. The framework helps to conceptualise how structural disadvantages such as poverty, single parenthood, and rural isolation interact with students' psychological needs. For instance, in rural communities, educational infrastructure may be limited, parental involvement constrained by economic necessity, and teacher support inconsistent, all of which can negatively affect students' feelings of competence and relatedness. In single-parent households, the available emotional and academic support may be inadequate due to economic pressures or time constraints, potentially reducing students' perceived autonomy and further dampening motivation.

SDT offers a basis for understanding how motivational deficits among economically deprived students are not merely the result of individual shortcomings but reflect contextual and relational deficiencies that thwart basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Consequently, interventions grounded in SDT would advocate for policies and practices that create autonomy-supportive school climates, provide resources to enhance competence, and foster meaningful student-teacher and peer relationships. Such interventions could counteract the adverse effects of economic deprivation by promoting resilience and engagement through the satisfaction of psychological needs.

In sum, Self-Determination Theory offers a robust explanatory model for understanding student motivation within challenging socioeconomic contexts. Its application to the study in Assin Nsuta not only clarifies the motivational challenges faced by students in rural single-parent households but also provides a roadmap for developing interventions that can enhance engagement and learning outcomes. By focusing on the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, SDT helps shift the narrative from deficit-based models of underachievement to strength-based approaches that empower students despite economic adversity.

2.3 Conceptual Review

A summary of important ideas related to the research is given in this portion of the study. The following ideas are covered in the review: economic deprivation, students' motivation, students' engagement and single-parenting.

2.3.1 Concept of economic deprivation

Economic deprivation, in general terms, refers to a condition in which individuals or households lack the financial resources necessary to meet basic living standards, such as adequate housing, nutrition, healthcare, and education. It is closely associated with

poverty and material hardship, often manifesting in reduced access to opportunities and services that support personal development and well-being. From a socio-economic standpoint, economic deprivation is both a cause and consequence of systemic inequality, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas (Tompsett & Toro, 2020). The effects of such deprivation are multidimensional, extending beyond material lack to influence psychosocial and cognitive outcomes.

In relation to the current study, economic deprivation plays a central role in shaping the educational experiences of students in rural single-parent households in Assin Nsuta. Within this context, economic hardship often leads to inadequate educational resources, poor school infrastructure, limited access to learning materials, and restricted parental involvement due to the demands of labour or survival-based activities (Obeng-Denteh et al., 2021). These limitations can compromise students' ability to remain focused and engaged in school activities, thereby negatively influencing both motivation and academic engagement. Economic deprivation also influences the emotional climate within households, potentially exposing children to stress, insecurity, and feelings of hopelessness, all of which can weaken their intrinsic drive to learn. Therefore, in this study, economic deprivation is not viewed in isolation but as a foundational factor that intersects with educational engagement and motivational processes, ultimately affecting students' academic trajectories.

2.3.2 Concept of students' motivation

Students' motivation refers broadly to the internal and external drives that energise, direct, and sustain behaviour toward academic goals. Motivation in education can be classified into intrinsic motivation where students engage in learning out of interest and

enjoyment and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards or pressures such as grades or parental expectations (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The presence of motivation is a crucial predictor of students' academic success, persistence, and willingness to exert effort in learning tasks. The quality of motivation is heavily influenced by contextual factors, including teaching methods, classroom climate, parental support, and socio-economic conditions (Howard et al., 2021).

In the context of the proposed study, students' motivation becomes a pivotal construct in understanding how economic deprivation in single-parent rural households influences educational outcomes. Children who grow up in economically deprived homes often face significant psychological and material barriers to maintaining motivation. The struggle for basic survival may lead to a devaluation of academic pursuits, especially when students perceive little relevance of education to their immediate life needs. Additionally, the absence of financial incentives and limited access to motivational supports such as parental encouragement or mentorship further exacerbates motivational decline (Akinrinmade & Adeyemi, 2021). Within the rural Ghanaian context, where systemic poverty intersects with educational inequality, motivation can serve either as a mediating or moderating factor that explains variations in academic engagement and performance among economically disadvantaged students. Hence, understanding students' motivation in such environments is essential for developing context-specific interventions that can rekindle interest and drive toward educational goals.

2.3.3 Concept of Students' Engagement

Students' engagement refers to the extent to which students are involved in their learning processes, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

Behavioral engagement includes participation in academic activities, attendance, and classroom involvement; emotional engagement relates to students' feelings of belonging, interest, and connection to school; while cognitive engagement reflects the investment in learning and willingness to exert mental effort (Fredricks et al., 2019). Engagement is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of academic success, school retention, and overall well-being. High levels of engagement are generally linked with positive educational outcomes, while disengagement correlates with absenteeism, poor performance, and early dropout.

In relation to the study, student engagement is viewed as a consequence of both economic deprivation and diminished motivation. In rural single-parent households, engagement is often undermined by various factors, including lack of parental supervision, inadequate support systems, and the emotional toll of living in economically constrained environments (Mensah & Frimpong, 2020). These students may struggle to attend school regularly, participate in class, or complete assignments due to competing responsibilities at home or limited access to educational resources. Emotional engagement may also suffer, as these students may feel alienated or marginalized due to their socio-economic status, reducing their sense of belonging within the school environment. The study, therefore, seeks to explore how economic constraints influence levels of engagement and to what extent motivational constructs mediate this relationship. By doing so, it highlights the need for targeted policies and school-based interventions aimed at enhancing engagement among students in deprived contexts.

2.3.3 Concept of Single-Parenting

Single-parenting refers to a family structure in which a child is raised by only one parent due to divorce, separation, death, or the choice to raise a child independently. This family configuration is increasingly common worldwide and has been the subject of extensive research due to its implications for child development, emotional well-being, and educational attainment (Waldfogel, 2019). While many single parents provide nurturing and stable environments, single-parenting is often linked with economic strain, time constraints, and reduced parental involvement in academic monitoring. These challenges may have cumulative effects on children's academic performance and psychosocial development, particularly when compounded by poverty and social isolation.

In the study's context, single-parenting intersects significantly with economic deprivation, particularly in rural communities such as Assin Nsuta. Single-parent households in these areas may lack not only financial resources but also the emotional and social support needed to buffer against educational risks. The absence of a co-parent may limit the amount of time and attention a parent can give to academic matters, affecting the child's motivation and engagement with school (Ametepee & Eshun, 2020). Moreover, single parents facing financial constraints may be unable to provide necessary school materials or engage in educational decision-making processes. This reality reinforces the importance of viewing single-parenting not as an isolated variable but as one deeply embedded within broader socio-economic structures that influence educational outcomes. The present study thus considers single-parenting as a key contextual factor shaping how economic deprivation translates into motivational and engagement outcomes for basic school students.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework can be defined as a collection of broad ideas and principles drawn from relevant fields of study, utilized to organize a subsequent presentation (Bellato, Frantzeskaki & Nygaard, 2022). This study's conceptual framework integrates key variables and their hypothesized relationships based on the theoretical foundations previously outlined.

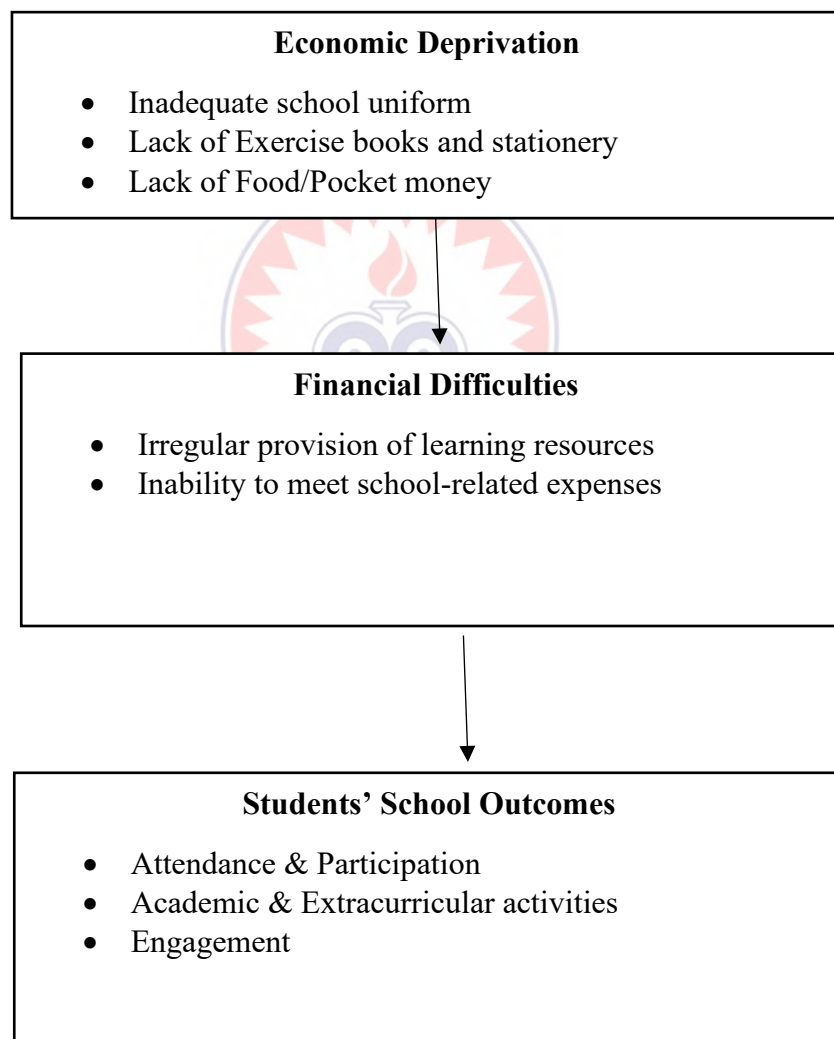


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

The above conceptual framework illustrates the interconnected relationships among economic deprivation, financial difficulties, and students' academic and social

engagement. It proposes that economic deprivation experienced by single-parent households—manifested through limited household income, inadequate educational materials, poor nutrition, and lack of transportation—creates significant financial difficulties for students. These financial challenges restrict students' ability to afford essential learning resources such as textbooks, uniforms, and stationery, thereby increasing absenteeism and reducing active participation in school. Consequently, these hardships undermine students' motivation and engagement in both academic and extracurricular activities, leading to diminished concentration, lower academic performance, and limited social interaction within the school environment.

The framework directly aligns with the study's objectives by illustrating the logical flow between the main constructs: assessing the extent of economic deprivation, analysing how financial hardship affects attendance and participation, and examining the broader relationship between deprivation and engagement. This conceptual model provides a theoretical basis for understanding how economic inequalities influence educational experiences and outcomes among students from single-parent households in rural settings, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to enhance equity and learning participation.

2.5 Empirical Review

This section of the literature review analyses empirical studies investigating the effect of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households among selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta. It covers the extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households, effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation, the relationship between economic deprivation and students' motivation to learn in a rural school setting and

relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement and disengagement in academic and extracurricular activities.

2.5.1 Extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households

The extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households has been a focal point for extensive scholarly inquiry across diverse contexts, offering valuable insights into the socio-economic and educational challenges that shape children's learning experiences. Economic deprivation, often characterized by limited access to financial, material, and social resources, exerts a profound influence on students' academic motivation, participation, and overall educational engagement. In many low- and middle-income countries, including Ghana, the phenomenon is particularly pronounced among children from single-parent households, where the economic burden of childrearing rests on one parent, often resulting in constrained educational support and inadequate provision of school-related needs.

A study by Obeng-Denteh et al. (2022) in Ghana specifically examined the impact of economic deprivation on the educational outcomes of children from single-parent families. Employing a quantitative approach with stratified random sampling of 300 participants from rural communities in the Central Region, the researchers revealed that a substantial proportion of students faced economic hardship that significantly impeded their academic performance. The study reported that limited access to textbooks, uniforms, and other essential resources reduced students' classroom participation and academic engagement. Additionally, the absence of sufficient parental guidance—often due to long working hours by the single parent—further weakened the students' motivation to learn, underscoring the multi-dimensional effects of deprivation.

In a different context, Smith and Jones (2021) investigated the relationship between economic deprivation and academic achievement among middle school students from single-parent households in the United States. Using a mixed-methods design that combined survey data with semi-structured interviews involving 150 students, the researchers found that those from economically deprived backgrounds consistently underperformed compared to peers from dual-parent families. The primary explanatory factors were restricted access to digital learning resources, inadequate home study environments, and limited parental supervision. Notably, the qualitative interviews revealed that students internalized their financial struggles, often perceiving education as less attainable, which dampened their engagement and long-term aspirations.

Similarly, Mokoena and Nkosi (2021) conducted a qualitative study in South Africa to explore how economic deprivation affects adolescents' mental health and educational engagement. Drawing on focus group discussions with 40 students from various townships, their findings indicated that financial hardship intensified stress, anxiety, and feelings of social exclusion among participants. Students frequently reported embarrassment about their economic status, which reduced participation in both academic and extracurricular activities. The study concluded that the intersection of economic deprivation and emotional distress created a vicious cycle that limited both academic success and psychosocial well-being.

A longitudinal study conducted in the United Kingdom by Johnson et al. (2020) further expanded understanding of how economic deprivation influences students' long-term educational aspirations. Tracking 200 students over four years through stratified random sampling, the study found that those from economically disadvantaged single-parent households consistently displayed lower expectations for tertiary education. These students also demonstrated weaker school engagement and lower self-efficacy.

Johnson et al. attributed these outcomes to persistent financial strain, inadequate parental involvement, and limited exposure to educational role models. The longitudinal design was particularly insightful, illustrating how early experiences of deprivation can have enduring effects on academic attitudes and motivation.

In Canada, Lee et al. (2023) explored the intersection of economic deprivation and educational engagement among students from single-parent families in rural communities. Using a random sample of 250 students, the researchers observed a strong negative correlation between economic deprivation and engagement levels. Students from low-income households frequently reported feeling disconnected from school life and less motivated to participate in group projects or extracurricular activities. The findings suggested that economic hardship not only limits material access to education but also diminishes students' sense of belonging, thereby undermining holistic educational development. Lee et al. recommended targeted interventions such as financial aid programs and community mentoring schemes to promote inclusion and engagement among economically disadvantaged students.

Similarly, in Australia, Cummings and Munns (2020) undertook a qualitative study to explore how economic deprivation shapes the educational trajectories of children from single-parent families. Through interviews with 30 single parents and their children, they found that financial strain often forced students to prioritize part-time employment over academic commitments. Many students described difficulty concentrating on studies due to family stress and the need to contribute financially to household expenses. The authors concluded that economic deprivation not only affects academic performance but also disrupts the balance between education and family responsibility, particularly for older students in single-parent settings.

In Asia, Chen et al. (2024) examined economic deprivation and its effect on academic outcomes among children from single-parent households in China's economically marginalised regions. Adopting a quantitative approach with a sample of 400 students selected through cluster sampling, the study demonstrated that economic deprivation significantly correlated with low academic performance and increased dropout rates. A critical finding was that students from deprived backgrounds were more likely to engage in part-time work to support family income, thereby reducing study time and classroom engagement. The authors noted that structural inequalities in rural areas exacerbate the situation, as schools in deprived regions often lack resources to support at-risk students.

A related study by Akinrinmade and Adeyemi (2021) in Nigeria assessed the extent of economic deprivation and its implications for high school students from single-parent homes. Using a cross-sectional survey design and stratified random sampling of 300 students, the researchers found that economic deprivation severely limited students' access to instructional materials and school support services. The study also established that students experiencing severe deprivation were more likely to record poor academic performance and lower levels of school engagement. Importantly, the authors highlighted that educational deprivation among single-parent students was not solely due to financial hardship but also to reduced emotional and academic support at home.

Additional evidence from Tetteh and Mensah (2023) in Ghana supports these findings, showing that economic hardship among single-parent families in rural districts is strongly associated with inconsistent school attendance and poor academic concentration. Their mixed-method study involving 200 junior high students found that financial constraints limited students' participation in remedial classes and co-curricular activities, which further widened the academic gap between deprived and

non-deprived students. The study underscored the importance of community-based interventions such as textbook donation programs and school feeding initiatives in mitigating the effects of deprivation.

Globally, UNESCO (2022) and UNICEF (2023) reports reinforce the observation that economic deprivation remains a key determinant of educational inequality. These reports identify single-parent households as particularly vulnerable due to the dual challenge of financial scarcity and limited time for parental involvement. They recommend targeted policies such as conditional cash transfers, free school meal programs, and community resource mobilization to support children in economically strained households.

2.5.2 Effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation

In the United States, a comprehensive analysis by the National Center for Health Statistics (2024) involving more than 7,000 families revealed that 7.9% of children living below the poverty line were chronically absent from school due to health-related challenges. In contrast, absenteeism was markedly lower among students from higher-income households. The study further indicated a significant escalation in absenteeism rates in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, with figures nearly doubling between 2019 and 2022. The findings suggest that financial strain exacerbates health vulnerabilities, making it more difficult for low-income families to afford medical care, nutritious food, or transportation to school. Consequently, economic deprivation indirectly undermines educational continuity and engagement by amplifying health disparities that contribute to chronic absenteeism (The Guardian, 2024).

Similarly, the Student Finance and Wellbeing Study (SFWS) (2023–2024) conducted in Scotland provided further insight into how financial hardship shapes student

participation and academic performance. The study, commissioned by the Scottish Government, surveyed higher and further education students across multiple institutions to explore the relationship between financial strain and educational outcomes. Findings indicated that 61% of undergraduate and HN students reported that financial difficulties adversely affected their studies. Moreover, 28% of respondents admitted to missing lectures or classes, while 20% indicated they could not afford transportation costs to and from school. Students from the most deprived communities were more likely to experience mental health difficulties, including stress, anxiety, and depression, all of which hinder academic engagement. The study concluded that financial insecurity does not only affect attendance but also compromises students' ability to acquire learning materials and participate fully in academic life (Scottish Government, 2024).

Empirical evidence from developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, mirrors these trends. In Ghana, Okyere et al. (2024) examined the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational outcomes among 761 students across basic and secondary schools in the Greater Accra Region. The research employed a mixed-method design involving structured interviews and quantitative survey instruments. The findings revealed that school closures and pandemic-induced economic hardships severely disrupted learning patterns, attendance, and academic performance. Households were compelled to spend an average of GHS 305 per child on alternative learning arrangements, including internet access, learning devices, and home tutoring. The study concluded that these additional financial obligations significantly strained household budgets, resulting in irregular attendance and reduced student motivation and participation during and after the pandemic.

A related Ghanaian study by Martey et al. (2022) explored the linkages among parental time poverty, child labour, and school attendance using data from the sixth and seventh rounds of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS). The findings demonstrated that time poverty, which arises when parents engage in extended working hours due to low-income occupations, led to decreased child enrolment rates and increased walking distances to school. The study identified household income as the key channel through which time poverty affects educational participation. Furthermore, gendered patterns were evident, as male children were more likely to be withdrawn from school to assist with economic activities. The authors concluded that improving household income stability and providing school-based support systems could mitigate these adverse effects.

In South Africa, Anakpo et al. (2024) utilized data from the National Income Dynamics Study–Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) to analyse school attendance trends following the reopening of schools post-pandemic. The results indicated a 48.2% decline in school attendance, with the reduction being most significant among learners from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Factors such as gender, geographical location, household size, and parental employment status were found to mediate the extent of absenteeism. Learners from rural areas and larger households were particularly affected, reflecting how economic deprivation interacts with structural barriers such as limited transportation and educational infrastructure. The study highlighted that income inequality and family economic strain significantly determine learners' ability to maintain consistent attendance and active engagement in educational activities.

Evidence from Ethiopia further underscores the connection between financial hardship and school participation. A prospective cohort study by Mohammed et al. (2023)

investigated the influence of school feeding programmes' on absenteeism among 644 primary school adolescents. The study revealed that students enrolled in feeding programmes' recorded 20% absenteeism, compared to 31% among non-beneficiaries. The authors attributed this difference to the alleviation of food insecurity and improved nutritional status, which in turn enhanced school attendance and concentration levels. The study provides compelling evidence that interventions addressing economic deprivation through nutritional support can mitigate absenteeism and improve students' academic engagement.

A broader comparative study across five West African countries—Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Togo—used data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) to examine the relationship between child fostering and school attendance. The analysis demonstrated that fostered children were significantly less likely to attend school than their non-fostered counterparts, and this disparity had widened between 2005–2006 and 2017–2018. Interestingly, the negative association was more pronounced among children in relatively wealthier households, suggesting that financial prioritization and intra-household resource allocation practices can disadvantage fostered children. The authors concluded that economic factors remain a critical determinant of school participation, even among households that are not classified as poor (Tandfonline, 2024).

In Ireland, data released by the Department of Education for the 2022/2023 academic year revealed a substantial post-pandemic increase in student absenteeism. Approximately 25% of primary school pupils and 20% of secondary school students missed 20 or more school days, compared to pre-pandemic rates of 11% and 14.5%, respectively. The increase was most pronounced in schools located within socially and economically disadvantaged areas. The findings suggested that lingering financial

difficulties following the pandemic continued to impede consistent school attendance, particularly among children from low-income and single-parent households (The Irish Times, 2024).

2.5.3 Relationship between economic deprivation and students' motivation to learn in a rural school setting

The relationship between economic deprivation and students' motivation to learn in rural school settings has been a persistent subject of empirical and theoretical discourse. Educational researchers have increasingly recognised that motivation is not only an internal psychological construct but also a product of broader socio-economic and environmental influences. In contexts where poverty, unemployment, and limited educational resources prevail, students' engagement and desire to learn are often undermined. Rural communities, in particular, are disproportionately affected by economic deprivation, which manifests through inadequate infrastructure, limited access to learning materials, and inconsistent parental support. This has prompted numerous studies across different continents aimed at understanding how economic hardship influences the motivation and educational engagement of students, particularly those from low-income or single-parent households.

A notable study by Okyere et al. (2024) conducted in Ghana examined how economic hardships affect students' motivation to learn in rural settings. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the researchers utilized stratified random sampling to select 250 students from various basic schools in the Ashanti Region. Findings revealed that economic deprivation significantly reduced students' motivation, primarily due to the stress associated with financial instability, food insecurity, and lack of access to learning resources. Many students reported feeling demoralized as they struggled to

visualize education as a viable pathway to improved living standards. The authors concluded that sustained financial difficulties weaken both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers, suggesting that socio-economic conditions play a decisive role in shaping students' academic engagement.

In a related context, Mohamad and Abu (2022) explored the impact of economic hardship on students' academic motivation in rural Malaysia. The researchers adopted a quantitative design and randomly sampled 300 students from rural schools. Results indicated a strong negative correlation between economic deprivation and students' motivation levels. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibited lower self-efficacy and goal orientation, while their wealthier counterparts demonstrated stronger intrinsic motivation. The study attributed this disparity to limited access to educational support systems and a lack of role models within impoverished households. These findings reaffirm that economic deprivation extends beyond material scarcity, influencing the psychological well-being and learning attitudes of students.

A comprehensive qualitative study by Cummings and Munns (2020) in rural Australia further examined how socio-economic status affects motivation to learn among students from disadvantaged families. Through focus group discussions with 40 students, the researchers discovered that financial stress often overshadowed students' educational aspirations. Participants frequently expressed frustration over their inability to afford school supplies and participate in extracurricular activities, which they believed diminished their sense of belonging and academic enthusiasm. The study highlighted that poverty-induced social exclusion within schools could be as detrimental to motivation as material deprivation, suggesting the need for inclusive educational practices that address both financial and social dimensions of disadvantage.

In a longitudinal study in Canada, Lee et al. (2023) investigated the effects of economic deprivation on rural students' academic motivation over time. The study followed a cohort of 400 students for three years, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Findings showed that persistent economic hardship was associated with a gradual decline in students' motivation, particularly among those who experienced continuous financial instability. The researchers found that students' expectations regarding educational success diminished over time, reinforcing cycles of underachievement. The study emphasized the importance of consistent policy interventions aimed at providing material support and mentorship to sustain motivation among economically disadvantaged rural students.

In South Africa, Mokoena and Nkosi (2021) examined the relationship between economic hardship and academic motivation among secondary school students in rural provinces. Using stratified sampling, the researchers surveyed 250 participants from schools across Limpopo and Eastern Cape. Results revealed that economic deprivation significantly reduced students' interest in schoolwork and participation in class activities. Many students indicated that their families prioritized daily survival over education, leading to frequent absenteeism and lack of concentration in class. The authors concluded that educational motivation among rural students is intrinsically linked to their socio-economic context and argued for the expansion of school feeding programmes' and scholarship initiatives to cushion the effects of poverty.

A study by Mohammed et al. (2023) in Ethiopia provided further evidence of the detrimental impact of economic deprivation on students' motivation in rural primary schools. Using a cross-sectional design and a sample of 200 students, the study found that students from economically deprived households demonstrated lower attendance rates, weaker academic interest, and higher dropout tendencies. Many participants

described feelings of hopelessness and alienation, perceiving education as unattainable due to their families' financial struggles. The study called for greater integration of social welfare initiatives within educational policy frameworks to promote both attendance and motivation among disadvantaged rural learners.

In Nigeria, Akinrinmade and Adeyemi (2021) explored the link between economic deprivation and student motivation among rural secondary school students. A quantitative survey involving 300 participants revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between economic deprivation and motivation. Respondents reported that lack of financial stability limited their access to textbooks, uniforms, and transportation, making school attendance inconsistent. The findings also suggested that parental stress resulting from financial hardship indirectly affected students' emotional well-being, thereby reducing their enthusiasm for learning. The authors advocated for targeted economic interventions to reduce disparities in educational access and outcomes.

In the United Kingdom, Johnson and Smith (2024) conducted a qualitative case study on the influence of economic deprivation on classroom motivation among students in rural schools. Using in-depth interviews with 25 low-income students, the researchers found that learners often perceived education as disconnected from their economic realities. Many expressed feelings of futility regarding the long-term value of schooling, given their families' immediate financial struggles. The study concluded that educational motivation in deprived settings cannot be understood in isolation from broader social and economic factors, highlighting the necessity of context-sensitive teaching approaches that validate students lived experiences.

Similar findings emerged from the United States, where Martinez and Walker (2023) examined the influence of family income on student motivation and academic persistence in rural middle schools. Employing a quantitative approach with 500 participants, the study identified a significant relationship between low household income and diminished academic motivation. The researchers found that economically deprived students were more likely to experience chronic absenteeism and reduced classroom participation. The study also observed that teacher encouragement and community engagement served as moderating factors, suggesting that social support mechanisms can buffer the effects of economic hardship.

A comparative study by Li and Zhao (2022) in rural China explored how socio-economic status affects students' motivation and learning strategies. Using a sample of 350 students, the researchers discovered that children from low-income families displayed lower self-regulated learning behavior's and weaker academic persistence compared to their higher-income peers. The authors concluded that economic deprivation restricts not only access to educational materials but also the development of motivational strategies necessary for academic success. This study reinforced the notion that socio-economic disadvantage exerts both direct and indirect effects on learning processes.

In addition, a study conducted in Kenya by Otieno et al. (2023) examined how poverty and economic instability influence academic engagement among rural students. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 280 students across three rural counties. The study found that economic deprivation negatively influenced attendance, punctuality, and classroom participation. Students from poorer households were also less likely to engage in group projects and extracurricular activities, which are crucial for building motivation and social competence. The researchers recommended that

educational policies in rural contexts incorporate community-based income support and mentorship programmes' to enhance student motivation.

In India, Sharma and Patel (2024) conducted a quantitative study on the effects of household income on students' academic motivation in rural secondary schools. The study involved 400 participants and found that low-income students exhibited lower academic aspirations and higher dropout intentions compared to those from wealthier families. The researchers attributed these outcomes to limited parental involvement and the absence of motivational support within the family structure. They proposed that schools implement targeted interventions such as peer mentorship and financial literacy programmes' to empower students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A study by Peterson and Grey (2020) in New Zealand explored how rural poverty shapes students' perceptions of learning and motivation. Through interviews with 30 students from low-income families, the researchers discovered that financial stress within households often led to emotional distress among students, which in turn affected their cognitive engagement. Many participants expressed anxiety about their family's financial condition, which diverted their attention from academic pursuits. The study underscored the need for schools to provide psychological and emotional support for students experiencing economic hardship.

Across these studies, a consistent pattern emerges: economic deprivation undermines students' motivation and engagement through multiple pathways, including psychological distress, social exclusion, and material scarcity. While the magnitude of these effects varies across contexts, the underlying mechanisms remain similar. Economic hardship diminishes students' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are core elements of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

When students perceive their educational efforts as unlikely to yield tangible benefits due to persistent financial constraints, their motivation declines. Furthermore, rural students often lack access to compensatory resources such as tutoring, extracurricular enrichment, or community programmes', compounding the effects of deprivation.

2.5.4 Relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement in academic and extracurricular activities

Socioeconomic inequality continues to be a defining determinant of educational participation and engagement among children and adolescents globally. Recent empirical studies have consistently underscored that students from economically deprived households, particularly those in single-parent or low-income families, face distinct barriers to active participation in structured academic and extracurricular activities. These constraints not only affect their academic achievement but also have long-term implications for their emotional, social, and psychological well-being. A growing body of literature has therefore examined how socioeconomic status (SES), parental involvement, and school-level factors intersect to influence student motivation, engagement, and educational outcomes across diverse contexts.

In South Australia, a comprehensive cross-sectional study examined the after-school activities of children across different SES backgrounds. The findings revealed that children from low SES families engaged less frequently in structured activities such as sports, homework, and reading, while spending more time on screen-based activities such as television and social media. Notably, among low SES children, participation in structured and interactive activities—sports, reading, homework, and social interactions with peers—was positively correlated with higher well-being and academic adjustment. This suggests that promoting equal access to organised extracurricular

opportunities could serve as a protective factor, mitigating some of the adverse effects of economic deprivation (BMC Pediatrics, 2022). The study emphasized that fostering supportive environments which enable economically disadvantaged children to participate meaningfully in extracurricular activities could enhance their psychological resilience, social competence, and educational performance.

In Chile, a large-scale study involving 4,990 schools explored the mediating role of physical activity in the relationship between low SES and academic achievement. The researchers found that schools serving predominantly low-income populations often exhibited poorer school climates, characterised by weakened peer relationships, limited teacher support, and low morale. However, institutions that implemented structured physical activity programmes recorded noticeable improvements in school climate and student socialisation, which in turn enhanced academic outcomes. The findings demonstrated that physical activity not only improves health and well-being but also functions as an instrumental mediator between socioeconomic disadvantage and academic success (Frontiers in Public Health, 2024). This evidence suggests that school-based interventions fostering physical engagement can serve as effective mechanisms for disrupting cycles of poverty-related educational underachievement.

Similarly, a longitudinal study conducted in China during the COVID-19 pandemic assessed how family SES influenced parental involvement and student engagement. The study included 246 mother–primary school student dyads and found that low-SES families exhibited lower levels of parental involvement due to financial stress and limited educational capital. These deficiencies contributed to reduced student engagement and lower academic achievement. Importantly, both parental involvement and student engagement served as mediating variables linking SES to academic performance (Journal of Educational Psychology, 2024). This finding underscores the

centrality of family support in sustaining educational motivation among economically disadvantaged children and suggests that parent-focused interventions may play a critical role in improving children's academic trajectories.

Expanding on this theme, a qualitative study in the Czech Republic examined the participation of socially disadvantaged pupils in extracurricular activities using Bourdieu's theoretical framework of social and cultural capital. The research revealed that economically disadvantaged families often relied heavily on schools to provide access to extracurricular programmes, as they lacked the financial resources and cultural capital to facilitate participation independently. However, institutional practices such as selective enrolment, residential segregation, and implicit biases within schools limited equitable access to these opportunities (International Journal of Inclusive Education, 2025). The study concluded that unless systemic inequalities in access are addressed, extracurricular programmes may unintentionally reproduce the very social divisions they seek to bridge. This calls for more inclusive policy designs that actively remove economic and institutional barriers to participation.

In a related Chinese study, researchers used data from the OECD Social and Emotional Skills Survey to analyse how participation in extracurricular arts and sports activities contributes to adolescents' social and emotional development. The study revealed that engagement in both artistic and athletic activities had a synergistic effect on emotional regulation, empathy, cooperation, and self-efficacy. Adolescents who participated in both forms of activity exhibited significantly higher social competence and emotional stability compared to those who did not engage in any extracurricular programme. The findings confirmed that extracurricular participation contributes not only to academic achievement but also to the holistic development of social-emotional capacities that are vital for long-term educational and occupational success (Behavioral Sciences, 2024).

The study thus advocates for equitable access to extracurricular activities as a pathway to fostering socioemotional growth among children from economically deprived households.

The association between extracurricular participation and psychosocial development is further supported by evidence from the United States. A 2023 study examined students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) and found that those who participated in structured extracurricular activities displayed improved social competence, emotional regulation, and school engagement compared to their non-participating peers. The study demonstrated that extracurricular involvement provides essential socialization experiences and structured environments that foster belonging and self-confidence (Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 2023). Importantly, these benefits were more pronounced among students from low-income backgrounds, suggesting that access to inclusive extracurricular programmes' may serve as a form of educational equity intervention for vulnerable populations.

Complementary findings emerged from a Canadian longitudinal study examining how SES influences the quality of home learning environments and student engagement. The study, which tracked 500 students over three academic years, found that children from low-income households had fewer educational resources, reduced parental supervision, and lower levels of cognitive stimulation at home. These conditions translated into diminished classroom engagement, poorer academic outcomes, and higher dropout risk. However, schools that implemented mentoring and enrichment programmes' saw improved engagement and academic persistence among economically deprived students, reinforcing the significance of school-based support as a compensatory mechanism (Canadian Journal of Education, 2023).

In South Korea, a mixed-methods study investigated how economic deprivation influences students' perceptions of belonging and motivation in secondary education. The study reported that economic hardship led to higher levels of perceived discrimination, social isolation, and decreased academic motivation. Yet, the presence of emotionally supportive teachers and peer relationships moderated these negative effects, indicating that positive school climates can serve as buffers against the psychosocial consequences of poverty (Asia Pacific Education Review, 2022). The authors concluded that while material deprivation is a strong predictor of disengagement, emotional and relational support within schools remains a crucial determinant of educational resilience.

In the United Kingdom, the National Education Research Foundation (2024) conducted a multi-site study analyzing the relationship between household deprivation, extracurricular participation, and school engagement among 1,200 students. The results indicated that financial hardship reduced participation in extracurricular clubs by over 40%, disproportionately affecting students in single-parent households. The study also found that participation in at least one structured extracurricular activity was associated with improved academic performance, self-esteem, and attendance rates. These findings emphasized that extracurricular involvement can serve as a compensatory factor for economic disadvantage, enhancing both academic and emotional outcomes.

Further evidence from Ghana and Nigeria reinforces the broader trend linking economic deprivation with reduced educational engagement. Akinrinmade and Adeyemi (2021) found that students from single-parent, low-income households in Nigeria had significantly lower academic motivation and attendance rates, largely due to inadequate access to educational materials and psychosocial support. Similarly, Obeng-Denteh et al. (2022) reported that Ghanaian students from deprived rural households struggled

with limited access to textbooks, school meals, and transportation, which collectively hindered their engagement and performance. These findings highlight that across different African contexts, financial deprivation operates not only as a material constraint but also as a psychological burden that limits participation and academic drive.

In Finland, a 2025 study examined the role of school-based leisure clubs in mitigating educational inequalities among economically disadvantaged students. Using a sample of 1,000 students aged 10–14, the researchers found that participation in structured leisure clubs enhanced students' sense of belonging, academic engagement, and self-efficacy, particularly among those from low-income or single-parent households. The study underscored that extracurricular opportunities can act as social equalizers, offering economically deprived children experiences that compensate for their lack of resources at home (European Journal of Education Research, 2025).

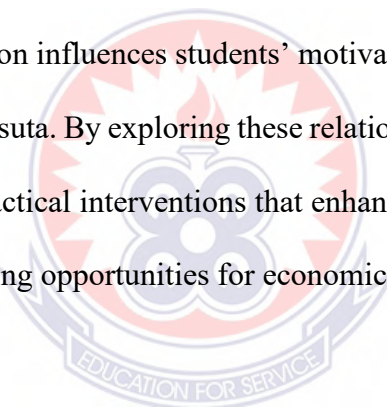
2.6 Chapter Summary

The literature review provided an overview of theoretical, conceptual, and empirical information, with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) serving as the theoretical framework for the study. Various key themes, such as economic deprivation, students' motivation, students' engagement and single-parenting were analyzed within the research. Additionally, relevant studies were evaluated to develop the empirical review.

The reviewed literature provides substantial evidence that economic deprivation has a profound impact on students' motivation and engagement, particularly among those from rural single-parent households. Students facing financial hardship often experience limited access to learning materials, irregular school attendance, and reduced emotional and academic support. These constraints diminish their confidence,

focus, and interest in education, leading to lower academic performance and participation. In rural areas, economic challenges are compounded by geographic isolation, inadequate school infrastructure, and fewer opportunities for parental involvement. The absence of one parent intensifies financial strain, making it difficult for children to remain motivated in the face of daily socio-economic pressures.

Existing studies have shown that poverty undermines both the psychological and behavioral dimensions of learning, yet little research has focused on the specific experiences of students in rural single-parent households. Interventions designed to support deprived students often fail to consider the contextual realities of rural life, resulting in inconsistent or ineffective outcomes. This study therefore seeks to examine how economic deprivation influences students' motivation and engagement in selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta. By exploring these relationships, the study aims to inform targeted policies and practical interventions that enhance educational participation and promote equitable learning opportunities for economically disadvantaged students.



CHAPTER THREE

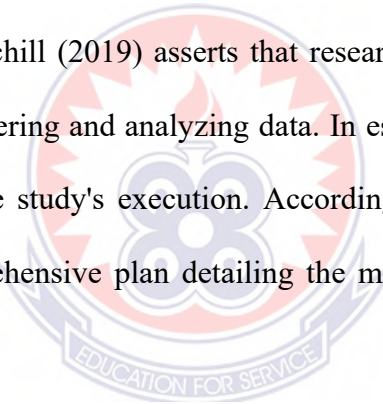
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the research, which encompasses several components: the research design, an overview of the study area, the population, sample size and sampling methods, the research instrument, pre-testing procedures, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research design

Research design serves as the foundational element that unifies a research project (Newman, 2021). Churchill (2019) asserts that research design outlines the methods and procedures for gathering and analyzing data. In essence, it acts as the framework or blueprint guiding the study's execution. According to Churchill, research design functions as the comprehensive plan detailing the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a cross-like design, surrounded by a wreath. The shield is set against a background of a sunburst or starburst pattern. Below the shield, a banner contains the motto "EDUCATION FOR SERVICE". The entire emblem is encircled by a border.

For this study, a descriptive survey was used as the research design, which falls under quantitative research. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2019) explain that descriptive research is aimed at acquiring information about the current state of phenomena. Merriam (2019) further emphasizes that the primary focus of descriptive research is

to understand the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoints rather than those of the researchers.

Best and Kahn (2019) note that descriptive research limits generalizations to the specific group of individuals being studied, meaning conclusions cannot be extrapolated beyond this group. In this research, it is anticipated that data collected through a descriptive survey will provide valuable insights to policymakers regarding the actual conditions in Assin Nsuta. The choice of a descriptive design is appropriate for this study as it allows for research to be conducted within the respondents' natural environment, thus ensuring the collection of high-quality and truthful data. Additionally, this approach can be employed with greater confidence, which is particularly important and beneficial for the researcher.

3.3 Study Area

The focus of this study is Assin Nsuta located in the Assin South District in the Central Region of Ghana. Assin South District is one of the twenty-two districts in Central Region, Ghana. Originally it was part of the then-larger Assin District in 1988, until the southern part of the district was split off to create Assin South District on 18 February 2004; thus the remaining part has been renamed as the first Assin North District, with Assin Fosu as its capital town (which it was later elevated to municipal district assembly status on 29 February 2008 to become Assin North Municipal District, and later the northern part of the district was split off to create the present Assin North District on 15 March 2018). The district assembly is located in the northwest part of Central Region and has Nsuaem Kyekyewere as its capital town. It lies within longitudes 1.05'' West and 1.25'' West and latitudes 6.05'' North and 6.40'' North. It is situated within the middle portion of the Central Region. It shares political and administrative boundaries

with Assin North Municipality in the North, Abura, Aseibu Kwamankese District and Mfantseman Municipality in the South, Asikuma Odoben– Brakwa District and Ajumako– Enyan – Assiam District in the East, Twifo Atimokwa and Heman – Lower Denkyira Districts in the West. The district covers a total land area of 1,187 square kilometres, which is 12% total land area of the Central Region (9,826sqkm). This is the largest District in the region. The population of the district according to 2021 population and housing census stands at 105,995 with 52,083 male and 53,912 female.

Assin Nsuta is a town located in the Assin South District of the Central Region of Ghana. It serves as the district capital and is known for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance. The town is situated approximately 30 kilometers north of Cape Coast, the regional capital, making it accessible to both local and visiting populations. Nsuta town has a population of about 5,665 (2021 PHC). Its inhabitants are mostly peasant farmers with few being engaged in white-collar jobs such as teaching, banking, and nursing, among other white-collar jobs.

The education directorate of the Assin South District is made up of Seven (7) Circuits. These circuits collectively have a total of 132 pre-schools, 124 Primary Schools, 94 Junior High Schools, 4 Senior High Schools (GES, ASDA, 2020). Gross enrolments at the end of 2019 stood at 11,799 at the Pre-School, 22,195 at the primary level, 7,480 at the JHS level and 3,731 at the SHS (GES, ASDA, 2020). At these educational levels are a number of both trained and untrained teachers. At the pre-school level there are 167 teachers, 627 teachers at the Primary level, 406 teachers at the JHS level and 158 teachers at the SHS level (GES, ASDA, 2020).

3.4 Study population

Jivraj et al. (2020) defined study population as the specific group or community that a researcher aims to investigate in order to draw general conclusions. Similarly, Brandén et al. (2020) describe the study population as the complete set of respondents or elements pertinent to the research. In this case, the population being examined consists of Junior High Schools in Assin Nsuta. However, the target population for the study is all students from the three JHS schools in Assin Nsuta, namely: The Catholic Basic School, the Methodist Basic School, and the Nsuta District Assembly School. (D.A.). The total target population for the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Junior High School

Name of School	Population of Final Year students
Catholic Basic School	38
Methodist Basic School	36
Nsuta District Assembly School	22
Total	96

Source: Field Data (2025).

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

According to Lohr (2021) a sampling frame is a set of components from which the sample is taken from and is closely related to the population. Sample forms a specified fraction of the population, and sampling technique refers to the procedure the researcher utilises for picking objects for the sample from the population (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). Casteel and Bridier (2021) underlined that a sample of a population consists of that fraction of the number of units selected for inquiry. Cash, Isaksson, Maier and

Summers (2022) described sampling as the planned choice of several folks who are to offer the data from which judgments about those people can be established.

Bryman (2019) points out that the choice of a sampling technique must be aligned with the research objectives, the characteristics of the population, and the limitations of the study. By selecting the most suitable technique, researchers can reduce bias, enhance precision, and strengthen their research design.

For selecting the respondents for this study, all the 96 students from the three selected JHS were used. Hence, the census sampling technique was used at this stage.

Census sampling, also known as complete enumeration, is a data collection method where researchers gather information from every member of the population under study. This technique is particularly valuable in certain research contexts and offers several advantages that enhance the reliability and validity of findings.

One of the primary reasons for employing census sampling is the desire for comprehensive data collection. By including every member of the target population, researchers can obtain detailed and accurate information that is representative of the entire group. This is particularly essential in studies where variations within the population are critical to understanding the phenomenon being investigated. For instance, a study by Adetunji et al. (2021) on educational outcomes in Nigeria highlighted the advantages of census sampling in capturing nuances across different demographic segments, ensuring that the findings reflected the diversity within the educational landscape. Another significant advantage of census sampling is the increased reliability of the results. Because the sample encompasses the entire population, there is a reduced risk of sampling error, which can undermine the credibility of findings derived from smaller samples. In research conducted by Oduro

and Asare (2023) examining public health issues in Ghana, census sampling allowed for a comprehensive overview of health-related behavior's, providing robust data essential for informing health policy and interventions. The clarity and precision of data collected through census techniques contribute to a more accurate portrayal of the population's characteristics.

3.6 Research Instrument

A research instrument refers to any written or physical tool used to measure variables (Thomas, Silverman & Nelson, 2019). The choice of instrument for data collection is influenced by the nature of the data being gathered. Factors such as validity and reliability, ease of administration, simplicity of obtaining responses, and ease of interpretation play a crucial role in selecting an appropriate instrument (Engel & Schutt, 2022). In this study, the primary data collection tool was a self-constructed questionnaire consisting solely of closed-ended questions. The questionnaire is deemed the most suitable data collection method for this research as it facilitates the gathering of information from a larger sample at a minimal cost while ensuring respondents' anonymity. Zikmund (2018) notes that questionnaires are straightforward yet effective research instruments, particularly due to their cost efficiency.

The various variables were measured using questionnaire items. The constructs in this study used 32 items to measure various variables. In furtherance, Section A contained three items including age, gender, and class. Section B contained five items on extent of economic deprivation. Each item was measured on a 4-point likert scale of always (A), sometimes (S), rarely (R) and never (N). Section C contained eight items on the effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation. Each item was measured on a 5-point likert scale of strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N),

agree (A) and strongly agree (SA). Section D contained eight (8) items on the effect of economic deprivation on student motivation. Each item was measured on a 5-point likert scale of strongly disagree (SD, disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A) and strongly agree (SA). Section E contained sixteen items, eight (8) items for students on the effect of economic deprivation on students' engagement. Each item was measured on a 5-point likert scale of strongly disagree (SD, disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A) and strongly agree (SA).

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Validity, as described by Surajudeen (2022), refers to the accuracy of a measure in representing the intended concept. The degree to which a test assesses the intended content area ascertained by expert judgement rather than quantitative techniques is known as content validity, according to (Almanasreh, Moles & Chen, 2019).

The researcher's supervisor reviewed the interview schedule and questionnaire to verify validity, who provided feedback to enhance clarity and eliminate potential biases. Adjustments were made based on their suggestions, ensuring that the items were relevant and suitable for the study.

Reliability, on the other hand, concerns the consistency of measurement (Almanasreh, Moles & Chen, 2019). The reliability of a scale indicates how free it is from random error (Fuller et al., 2020) and reflects the extent to which the scale yields consistent results across repeated measurements (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

In this study, a pilot test as conducted at the Assin Bereku Catholic Basic School in the Assin North Municipality, utilizing a simple random sampling procedure to select 10 students. The feedback from respondents during this pre-test aided in refining the questionnaire and checking its clarity and appropriateness. Necessary alterations and

redesigns were made based on this feedback. Conducting the pilot test with students enabled the researcher to identify unclear or ambiguous questions and made improvements to the questionnaire. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) emphasize that pilot testing is essential for evaluating the clarity of questions, the appropriateness of response options, and the overall reliability of the instrument. The diverse academic cohort at Assin Bereku Catholic Basic School provided an ideal sample for assessing the instrument's relevance and effectiveness prior to its administration to the larger respondents.

This process also validated whether the questionnaire consistently measure the intended variables (Creswell, 2021). Although the feedback from respondents may not be entirely generalizable, it yielded critical insights into the design and effectiveness of the instrument. Additionally, pilot testing helped gauge respondents' reactions to sensitive questions, ensuring that the wording encourage honest and accurate responses. The Cronach Alpha coefficient of the items on the subscales (objectives of staff training programmes, content areas of staff training programmers, alignment with job roles and skill improvement) was analysed. The detailed results are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2 Reliability Statistics for Students

Subscales	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Extent of Economic Deprivation	5	0.914
effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation	8	0.854
Economic Deprivation and Engagement	8	0.767
Overall	21	0.924

Source: Field Data (2025)

The reliability coefficients realised from the pilot test illustrate how consistently the items within each subscale measure their intended constructs. The Cronbach's alpha values indicate a high level of internal consistency across all subscales. The Extent of Economic Deprivation subscale recorded an alpha of 0.914, suggesting excellent reliability in measuring students' levels of deprivation. The Effect of Financial Difficulties on School Attendance and Participation subscale produced an alpha of 0.854, indicating strong reliability in capturing how financial hardship affects attendance and participation. The Economic Deprivation and Engagement subscale had an alpha of 0.767, which is acceptable and reflects consistent responses regarding students' engagement levels under economic hardship. The overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.924 demonstrates that the entire instrument is highly reliable, meaning the items collectively provide consistent and dependable measures for assessing the influence of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement.

3.8 Data Collection Instrument

Before the data collection process began, an introductory letter was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba, School of Education and Life-Long Learning, Department of Educational Foundations. Subsequently, permission was sought from the headmasters of the schools selected for the studies. Subsequently, the researcher requested permission from the Assin South District Education Office. The researcher then visited the heads of the selected schools in person to seek approval for conducting the study.

The data collection process commenced with a briefing session in which the researcher outlined the study's objectives, significance, and the roles of participants to encourage cooperation and voluntary participation. Participants were assured that they have the right to withdraw at any time, and that their confidentiality would be maintained. Self-administered questionnaires, designed to gather data were distributed. These questionnaires featured closed-ended questions to facilitate quantitative data collection. Participants were allotted 30 to 45 minutes to complete the questionnaires, and researcher was on standby to address any queries without influencing the participants' responses. This meticulously planned and ethically sound procedure ensured the collection of reliable and valid data. The findings provided valuable insights into this complex dynamic.

3.9 Data Analysis

This study utilized descriptive statistics to analyze the data gathered from the field. Initially, the collected data was sorted and organized. Next, it was coded to help the researcher identify relevant codes for potential responses to each item on the questionnaire. The coding process was carried out using SPSS version 28. The analyses

were conducted in accordance with the specific objectives of the study. To answer the research questions formulated to guide the investigation, descriptive statistics (such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were applied in the data analysis. Specifically, research question 1 was analyzed using means, and standard deviations, research question 2 was analyzed using means, and standard deviations and research question 3 was analyzed using pearson correlation and regression analysis.

3.10 Ethical Issues

An introductory letter was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba, School of Education and Life-Long Learning, Department of Educational Foundations. Furthermore, the study adhered to three key ethical principles: informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Participants were made aware of the research's purpose and its objectives. They were encouraged to express their opinions openly and objectively, with the freedom to decide whether or not to participate. Additionally, they had the right to withdraw their consent at any time without facing any negative consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and the research is designed to avoid causing harm or psychological distress to participants.

3.11 Limitations of the Study

A significant limitation of the study was the use of a questionnaire, which did not facilitate an in-depth exploration of respondents' experiences or allow for follow-up questions regarding their responses. It is important to note that some items warranted further probing; however, the quantitative methodology employed did not permit this. Additionally, another limitation affecting the study's findings is that it focused exclusively on selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta, which means that the results may

not be applicable to all basic schools in the Central Region or across the entire country, as outcomes could vary.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the findings of the study. The data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, computation of means, standard deviations, and regression. The Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the analysis.

4.2 Demographic and other Characteristics

The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households among selected basic schools in Assin Nauta. An overview of the demographic information and other relevant characteristics of the study participants is provided in Table 3. A total of ninety-six (96) students were chosen for the study, all the 96 participants completed the

The demographic and other characteristics of the respondents reveal a distribution across age, gender, and form levels that provides insight into the composition of the sample. In terms of age, 4 respondents representing 4.2% were between 9 and 11 years, while 19 respondents constituting 19.8% were aged 12 to 14 years. The largest group

comprised 46 respondents, which accounts for 47.9% of the sample, who were within the 15 to 17 years age bracket. A further 21 respondents representing 21.9% were aged between 18 and 20 years, and 6 respondents making up 6.2% were 21 years and above. This age distribution implies that the majority of participants were in their mid-adolescent years, which aligns with the typical age for junior high school learners.

Table 3: Demographic and other characteristics of respondents

Demographic and other Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group		
09 – 11 years	4	4.2
12 – 14 years	19	19.8
15 – 17 years	46	47.9
18 – 20 years	21	21.9
21 years and above	6	6.2
Gender		
Male	51	53.1
Female	45	46.9
Form		
JHS 1	41	42.7
JHS 2	29	30.2
JHS 3	26	27.1

Source: Field Data (2025).

With respect to gender, 51 respondents representing 53.1% were male, while 45 respondents accounting for 46.9% were female. This indicates a fairly balanced gender distribution, though a slightly higher proportion of males participated. The implication is that perspectives were captured from both genders with minimal disparity, which enhances representativeness.

The results regarding form level show that 41 respondents representing 42.7% were in JHS 1, 29 respondents constituting 30.2% were in JHS 2, while 26 respondents making up 27.1% were in JHS 3. This distribution suggests that the sample was dominated by first-year students, while participation decreased progressively across the subsequent levels. The implication is that the responses may be more reflective of the experiences and perspectives of those at the beginning of junior high school compared to those at the advanced levels.

4.3 Analysis of Research Questions

4.3.1 Research Question 1: *What is the extent of economic deprivation experienced by students from single-parent households in the Selected Basic Schools at Assin Nsuta?*

The study assessed the extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households at Catholic Basic School, the Methodist Basic School, and the District Assembly School. (D.A.). Items with mean scores above 3.41 were regarded as having access with the assertion, whereas items with mean scores below 2.61 were regarded as not having access to by the respondents.

Table 4: Extent of Economic Deprivation Among Students from Single-parent Households

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
School uniforms	3.62	0.67	Often
Exercise books and stationery	2.19	0.83	Rarely
Textbooks	2.20	1.16	Rarely
Food/Pocket money for breakfast to school	2.48	0.57	Rarely
Transportation to school	2.12	0.79	Rarely
Mean of Means /Std. Dev	2.52	0.80	Rarely

Source: Field Data (2025).

The findings on the extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households highlight variations in the availability of essential school-related resources. With regard to school uniforms, the mean score of 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.67 falls within the category of “Often,” suggesting that students generally have access to uniforms with relative consistency. For exercise books and stationery, a mean of 2.19 and standard deviation of 0.83 was recorded, indicating that such materials were “Rarely” available to the respondents. Similarly, textbooks yielded a mean score of 2.20 with a higher variability reflected in a standard deviation of 1.16, also pointing to “Rarely,” which suggests inconsistent access to critical learning resources.

In relation to food or pocket money for breakfast before school, the mean of 2.48 with a standard deviation of 0.57 also falls within the “Rarely” category, demonstrating that

students frequently encounter challenges in meeting basic nutritional needs that support academic engagement. Transportation to school revealed a mean of 2.12 and standard deviation of 0.79, further confirming that access to transport was “Rarely” assured among these students.

The overall mean of means of 2.52 with a standard deviation of 0.80 places the general extent of economic deprivation within the “Rarely” range. The implication is that, while students from single-parent households often have access to school uniforms, they experience considerable deprivation in terms of other fundamental educational and welfare needs, reflecting broader challenges that may undermine consistent school participation and learning outcomes.

4.3.2 Research Question 2: *What are the effects of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation?*

The study assessed the effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation. The result was analysed and discussed using mean and standard deviations. The findings are presented in this section.

Table 5: Effect of Financial Difficulties on School Attendance and Participation

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
I have missed school due to financial difficulties.	4.85	0.60	Strongly Agree
I am unable to attend extra classes because of financial constraints.	4.72	0.46	Strongly Agree
I struggle to buy necessary learning materials due to financial hardship.	4.54	0.31	Strongly Agree
My school attendance is affected by my family's inability to afford transport.	3.90	0.16	Agree
I sometimes have to stay home from school to help my family financially.	4.11	1.04	Agree
My academic performance has suffered due to financial difficulties.	4.65	1.09	Strongly Agree
I have skipped meals at school due to lack of money.	4.03	0.71	Agree
I borrow school materials from friends because I cannot afford my own.	3.79	0.64	Agree
Mean of Means/Std. Dev	4.32	0.63	Strongly Agree
			Agree

Source: Field survey (2025)

The results on the effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation show a consistent pattern of strong agreement among respondents on several key items. The highest mean was observed for the statement, “I have missed school due to financial difficulties,” which recorded a mean of 4.85 with a standard deviation of 0.60, indicating very strong consensus that financial challenges directly contribute to absenteeism. Similarly, the inability to attend extra classes because of financial constraints had a mean of 4.72 and a standard deviation of 0.46, suggesting that supplementary academic support is heavily restricted by financial hardship. The struggle to buy necessary learning materials also recorded strong agreement, with a mean of 4.54 and standard deviation of 0.31, reflecting widespread challenges in accessing educational resources.

Academic performance was also reported to be negatively impacted by financial difficulties, with a mean of 4.65 and standard deviation of 1.09, showing strong agreement but with greater variability among responses. Skipping meals at school due to lack of money yielded a mean of 4.03 and standard deviation of 0.71, while borrowing school materials because of inability to afford personal copies recorded a mean of 3.79 and standard deviation of 0.64. Both reflect agreement, suggesting financial hardship extends beyond attendance into day-to-day school participation. Respondents also agreed that they sometimes stay home to support their families financially, as shown by a mean of 4.11 and standard deviation of 1.04, highlighting the competing demands between education and household survival.

Transport difficulties also affected attendance, with a mean of 3.90 and a very low standard deviation of 0.16, further reinforcing agreement that financial deprivation has a direct bearing on school continuity. The overall mean of means of 4.32 with a standard deviation of 0.63 confirms a general position of strong agreement across the sample.

The implication is that financial hardship constitutes a significant barrier to regular attendance and effective participation in school activities, with adverse effects on both learning and student well-being.

4.3.3 Research Question 3: *What is the relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement in academic and extracurricular activities?*

The study examined the relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement in academic and extracurricular activities. The findings were analyzed and discussed using mean values and standard deviations.

Table 6 Relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
I actively participate in class discussions and assignments.	3.18	0.97	Neutral
Financial difficulties limit my participation in school activities.	4.96	0.53	Strongly Agree
I regularly participate in extracurricular activities.	2.90	1.02	Neutral
I struggle to balance school activities due to financial constraints.	4.16	0.96	Agree
Teachers and school administrators provide support for struggling students.	2.47	0.31	Disagree
I find it difficult to concentrate in class due to financial stress.	4.72	0.63	Strongly Agree

I often miss out on school trips and events due to financial constraints.	4.37	0.65	Strongly Agree
My economic situation affects my ability to complete group projects.	4.22	0.85	Agree
Mean of Means/Std. Dev	3.87	0.74	Agree

Source: Field survey (2025)

The results on the relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement illustrate a strong influence of financial challenges on different aspects of participation in school life. The statement that financial difficulties limit participation in school activities recorded the highest level of strong agreement, with a mean of 4.96 and a standard deviation of 0.53, indicating widespread recognition of this barrier. A similar pattern was observed for the difficulty in concentrating in class due to financial stress, which had a mean of 4.72 and standard deviation of 0.63, showing that financial strain extends beyond physical participation to cognitive engagement. Missing out on school trips and events as a result of financial constraints also attracted strong agreement, reflected in a mean of 4.37 and standard deviation of 0.65. In addition, struggling to balance school activities due to financial challenges yielded a mean of 4.16 with a standard deviation of 0.96, pointing to agreement among respondents. The impact of financial deprivation on the ability to complete group projects was also evident, with a mean of 4.22 and a standard deviation of 0.85, again reflecting agreement.

Neutral responses were recorded in relation to active participation in class discussions and assignments, which had a mean of 3.18 and standard deviation of 0.97, as well as regular participation in extracurricular activities, which scored a mean of 2.90 with a

standard deviation of 1.02. These results suggest that while some students manage to maintain a degree of engagement, others are constrained, producing an overall neutral stance. On the contrary, the perception that teachers and school administrators provide support for struggling students was marked by disagreement, with a mean of 2.47 and a standard deviation of 0.31, suggesting that such institutional support is perceived as inadequate.

The overall mean of means of 3.87 with a standard deviation of 0.74 situates the general response within the “Agree” category. The implication is that economic deprivation exerts a substantial influence on students’ engagement both inside and outside the classroom, limiting opportunities for holistic participation and learning.

4.4 Discussions

This section presents a discussion of findings based on the study’s three objectives. It first examines the extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households. The second part analyses the effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation, while the final subsection explores the relationship between economic deprivation and students’ engagement in academic and extracurricular activities. Collectively, the discussions provide insight into how financial hardship influences students’ educational motivation, participation, and overall engagement in the selected schools.

4.4.1 Extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households

The first objective of this study was to assess the extent of economic deprivation among students from single-parent households at Catholic Basic School, the Methodist Basic School, and the District Assembly School. (D.A.). The findings reveal that while students from single-parent households generally have consistent access to school

uniforms, they face significant deprivation in other essential areas. Access to exercise books, stationery, and textbooks is irregular, while food, pocket money, and transportation are also limited, making it difficult for many learners to meet basic needs that support effective schooling. Overall, the results suggest that economic deprivation is a persistent challenge that may hinder regular school participation and negatively affect learning outcomes.

The findings of this study revealed that although students from single-parent households generally have consistent access to school uniforms, they experience significant deprivation in other critical areas such as exercise books, textbooks, stationery, food, pocket money, and transportation. These results are consistent with existing evidence which has shown that children from disadvantaged or single-parent households are more likely to face challenges in acquiring basic school resources, thereby limiting their full participation in the learning process.

Studies conducted in Ghana and other sub-Saharan African contexts have similarly highlighted the resource gap experienced by learners from low-income or single-parent homes. Aidoo et al. (2021) reported that many households, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, struggled to provide adequate textbooks, stationery, and other learning essentials, leading to inconsistent access to vital educational resources. This is further reinforced by a recent study in Ghana which showed that food insecurity and inadequate financial support restricted school participation among children from deprived households (“COVID-19 and child education outcomes in Southern Ghana,” 2022). These findings correspond closely with the present study, which indicated that food and transport limitations were major barriers for students.

Similar patterns have been reported outside Africa. In Kenya, Mihretie, Ayelign, and Zerfu (2023) established that poor household wealth status, often linked to single-parent family structures, was associated with undernutrition and compromised school attendance, echoing the present results on food and pocket money deprivation. In the United Kingdom, the Child Poverty Action Group reported that although tuition is largely free, indirect costs such as uniforms, school trips, transport, and learning materials continue to place a heavy burden on low-income and single-parent families, restricting full participation in school (CRSP & CPAG, 2023). Bayrakdar and Guveli (2023) further demonstrated that during school closures, children in single-parent households spent less time on formal learning activities because of resource constraints, underscoring the persistent challenges posed by financial hardship.

The implications of these findings for policy and practice are considerable. While providing uniforms is beneficial, policymakers must broaden support to encompass textbooks, stationery, and other essential learning tools. School feeding interventions should be strengthened to mitigate food insecurity, while targeted transport subsidies or school bus schemes could alleviate barriers to attendance. At the school level, administrators should introduce structured needs assessments to identify resource gaps and connect students to available support mechanisms. Collectively, such measures would ensure a more holistic response to economic deprivation, promoting equity in participation and learning outcomes for students from single-parent households.

4.4.2 Effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation

The second objective of this study was to assess the effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation. The results indicate that financial hardship significantly undermines students' attendance and participation in school. Respondents

strongly agreed that economic challenges lead to absenteeism, prevent attendance at extra classes, and limit access to essential learning materials. Academic performance was also reported to suffer due to these constraints, while many students experienced difficulties with meals, transport, and reliance on peers for materials. Overall, the findings suggest that financial difficulties extend beyond basic attendance to negatively affect day-to-day participation and broader educational outcomes.

The present study's finding that financial hardship severely undermines both attendance and participation resonates strongly with recent empirical work, while also adding nuance. In Nigeria, Akinpelu and Adesina (2022) reported that students from lower-income families were more likely to miss school days and decline optional activities due to lack of funds, paralleling the present study's evidence that economic constraints lead to absenteeism and restricted participation. In South Africa, Motlhabi and Munthali (2021) found that learners in poor households had lower rates of engagement in class and extracurriculars, particularly when unable to afford necessary materials—consistent with our respondents' reports of limited access to resources and reliance on peers. A contrasting result emerges from a study in Brazil by Santos et al. (2023), where despite financial constraints, community support systems led to relatively higher attendance in some localities, suggesting that social safety nets can mitigate the negative effects of poverty. In the United States, a longitudinal investigation by Kumar and Brown (2020) demonstrated that students in economically disadvantaged households had lower attendance and academic performance over time, corroborating the linkage between finances, daily participation, and achievement. More recently, in Kenya, Otieno et al. (2024) revealed that lack of funds for transport and learning materials was a strong predictor of school dropout and variation in class participation, aligning with our results on transportation and daily engagement barriers.

These convergences imply that financial hardship acts through multiple pathways to erode educational opportunity. For policy, the findings underscore the need for multi-pronged intervention: ensuring free or subsidised access to learning materials, transport vouchers, school feeding programmes, and targeted bursaries could reduce barriers. Practice must respond by embedding in schools mechanisms to identify students at risk needs assessments, welfare registers, mentoring and by forging partnerships with NGOs or community donors to supply materials or support transport. Without such holistic measures, efforts focused purely on enrolment may fail to sustain true participation and improved outcomes.

4.4.3 Relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement in academic and extracurricular activities

The third and final objective of this study was to examine the relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement in academic and extracurricular activities. The findings demonstrate that economic deprivation significantly shapes students' engagement in school. Respondents strongly agreed that financial hardship limits participation in activities, affects concentration in class, and prevents involvement in school trips and events, while also creating challenges in balancing responsibilities and completing group projects. Neutral responses appeared for class discussions and extracurricular activities, suggesting mixed experiences. However, disagreement was noted regarding support from teachers and administrators. Overall, the results imply that financial constraints restrict both academic and social aspects of student engagement.

The present findings that economic deprivation constrains student engagement across cognitive, behavioural and social domains resonate with a growing body of empirical

work emphasising how material disadvantage undermines full school participation. For instance, in Ghana, Ansong et al. (2018) demonstrated that students' perceptions of family economic hardship were significantly associated with lower levels of classroom engagement, reinforcing our observation that financial stress reduces involvement in learning processes. Tomaszewski, Xiang, and Western (2020) similarly showed in Australia that socioeconomic status impacts academic outcomes via student engagement, suggesting that deprived students struggle to sustain motivation and sustained participation, which aligns with our findings. In South Africa, Moreeng and Chimbunde (2024) found that students facing economic crises adopted coping strategies but still experienced declines in engagement, particularly in extracurricular and event participation echoing our result that trips and events are among the first activities curtailed under resource constraints. In China, Xu et al. (2023) reported that perceived teacher support was a crucial driver of student engagement, implying that where support is lacking, disadvantaged students will engage less—a contrast to our finding that many respondents disagreed that institutional support was effective. Similarly, studies of teacher and classmate support have shown that social support can buffer the negative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on engagement (Hoferichter et al., 2022), which highlights that in contexts lacking such support, engagement is more severely constrained.

These studies suggest that financial hardship is not only a structural barrier but also depresses motivation, cognitive focus, and willingness to participate. For policy, this underscores the need for comprehensive interventions that go beyond funding enrolment. Governments should prioritise subsidised access to extracurricular programmes, school trips, and resource provision (stationery, textbooks) especially for students from financially constrained backgrounds. Schools should actively monitor

students' engagement and deploy remedial support mentoring, peer tutoring, or activity waivers to re-engage marginalized learners. Crucially, enhancing teacher support (emotional, instructional) is essential; professional development should equip educators to identify and assist students under financial strain. Without such holistic measures, policies that focus solely on access risk leaving engagement and thus learning outcomes unequally distributed.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter wraps up the study. It summarizes the findings, draws conclusions from these results, presents several recommendations, and highlights a few issues that warrant further investigation.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of economic deprivation on students' motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households among selected basic schools in Assin Nsuta. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire, employing a quantitative approach and a descriptive design. Utilizing a census sampling method, a sample of ninety-six (96) participants was selected for the study. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to analyze the data, with assistance from the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

5.3 Summary of the Results

The results of the study have summarised below:

The findings of the study indicate that students from single-parent households reliably access school uniforms but face deprivation in textbooks, stationery, food, and transportation.

The research revealed that financial hardship undermines students' attendance and participation, causing absenteeism, restricting access to extra classes, and limiting essential learning materials. These constraints negatively impact academic performance, meals, and transport, while increasing reliance on peers.

It was found that economic deprivation significantly affects student engagement, limiting participation, concentration, and involvement in school activities and projects. While some reported neutral experiences in discussions and extracurriculars, most highlighted financial hardship as a barrier.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study establishes that economic deprivation poses a significant barrier to effective schooling for students from single-parent households. While basic needs such as school uniforms are generally met, persistent financial challenges in textbooks, food, transport, and learning materials hinder attendance, participation, and overall engagement. These constraints not only affect academic performance but also limit social integration and broader educational experiences. The findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and supportive policies to reduce economic barriers and promote equitable access to quality education.

5.5 Recommendations

The following suggestions are offered for your consideration in light of the study's conclusions.

To address the deprivation of textbooks, stationery, food, and transportation, it is recommended that school managers and educational stakeholders establish targeted support schemes such as textbook banks, subsidised meal programmes, and transportation assistance to ensure that students from single-parent households have equitable access to essential resources.

Given that financial hardship undermines attendance, participation, and academic performance, managers should strengthen scholarship and bursary schemes, while stakeholders can partner with community organisations and corporate sponsors to provide sustainable funding for extra classes, school supplies, and welfare needs, thereby reducing absenteeism and improving learning outcomes.

As economic deprivation was found to hinder student engagement in both academic and social activities, it is recommended that schools develop inclusive support structures, including mentorship programmes and flexible extracurricular opportunities, while stakeholders strengthen institutional frameworks to ensure that teachers and administrators are adequately equipped to support financially disadvantaged students.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies could investigate the long-term academic trajectories of students from single-parent households, focusing on how persistent deprivation in textbooks, stationery, food, and transportation influences progression to higher levels of education. This would provide deeper insight into the cumulative effects of resource scarcity.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

University of Education, Winneba

School of Education and Life-Long Learning

Department of Educational Foundations

Dear Respondent,

You are kindly invited to participate in this survey as part of an academic research study on economic deprivation and its effect on student motivation and engagement in rural single-parent households. This study focuses solely on students at some selected schools in Assin Nsuta, namely, the Catholic Basic School, the Methodist Basic School, and the District Assembly School (D.A.).

The aim is to assess the level of economic deprivation, its impact on motivation and engagement, and identify possible measures to support affected students.

Your responses are crucial in providing insights that will help shape policies and interventions. Please, answer all questions honestly. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and no personal identification will be required. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any point in time.

Thank you for your time and valuable input.

Section A: Demographic Information

Gender:

Male [] Female []

Age Range:

9-11 [] 12-14 [] 15-17 [] 18-20 [] Above 21 []

Level:

Class [] JHS1 [] JHS2 [] JHS3 []

Section B: Extent of Economic Deprivation

(Aligns with Research Objective 1: Assessing the level of economic deprivation among students)

How often do you have access to the following basic school needs? (Tick the appropriate response: Always (5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), Never (1)).

School Needs	1	2	3	4	5
School uniforms	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Exercise books and stationery	[]	[]	[]	[]	
Textbooks	[]	[]	[]	[]	
Food/Pocket money for breakfast to school	[]	[]	[]	[]	
Transportation to school	[]	[]	[]	[]	

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the effect of financial difficulties on school attendance and participation? (Tick the appropriate response: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)).

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
I have missed school due to financial difficulties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am unable to attend extra classes because of financial constraints.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I struggle to buy necessary learning materials due to financial hardship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My school attendance is affected by my family's inability to afford transport.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I sometimes have to stay home from school to help my family financially.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My academic performance has suffered due to financial difficulties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have skipped meals at school due to lack of money.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I borrow school materials from friends because I cannot afford my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What type of financial support do you receive for school-related expenses?

Support from Family

Government or NGO-sponsored assistance

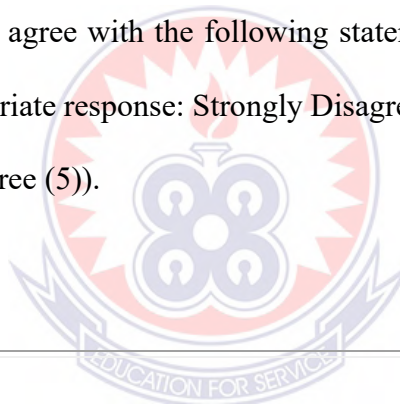
School-based scholarships or bursaries

No financial support received

Section C: Relationship between Economic Deprivation and Motivation

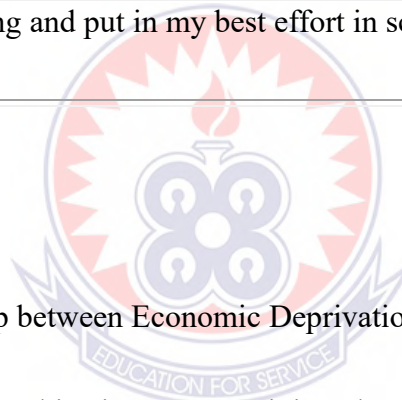
(Aligns with Research Objective 2: Determining the relationship between economic deprivation and students' motivation.)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your motivation to learn? (Tick the appropriate response: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)).



Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Economic hardship makes me feel less interested in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The lack of basic school materials affects my willingness to study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouragement from teachers and peers keeps me motivated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

My financial struggles make me consider dropping out of school.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I am determined to succeed in school despite my financial situation.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I sometimes skip school because I feel discouraged by my situation.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I believe education is important for my future, despite challenges.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I enjoy learning and put in my best effort in school.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]



Section D: Relationship between Economic Deprivation and Engagement

(Aligns with Research Objective 3: Examining the relationship between economic deprivation and students' engagement in academic and extracurricular activities).

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your academic and extracurricular engagement? (Tick the appropriate response: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)).

Engagement Factors	1	2	3	4	5
I actively participate in class discussions and assignments.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Financial difficulties limit my participation in school activities.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I regularly participate in extracurricular activities.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I struggle to balance school activities due to financial constraints.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Teachers and school administrators provide support for struggling students.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I find it difficult to concentrate in class due to financial stress.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
I often miss out on school trips and events due to financial constraints.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
My economic situation affects my ability to complete group projects.	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

