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Identifying Factors Contributing to Low Academic Achievement of Grade 12 Students in Gedeo Zone: A Case Study of Basura Secondary School

Habtamu Shiferaw Mengesha
Basura Secondary School, Gedeo Zone, Southern Ethiopia

Abstract: This study investigated the factors contributing to low academic achievement among Grade 12 students at Basura Secondary School in the Gedeo Zone, Southern Ethiopia. Employing a mixed-methods case study design, data were collected from 34 students, 10 teachers, 15 parents, and the school director through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations.

The findings revealed that low academic achievement stems from a complex interplay of interconnected factors. Socioeconomic barriers were prominent: 76.5% of students reported missing school frequently or occasionally for family obligations, and 79.5% attended class without breakfast, directly affecting concentration and learning. Resource limitations were evident, with teachers reporting 70% textbook inadequacy and 90% finding library resources insufficient, despite 79.4% of students perceiving general materials as "adequate." Instructional gaps were identified, including a disconnect between teacher self-perception and student experience—while 80% of teachers felt well-prepared, 41.2% of students felt teaching methods did not cater to diverse learning styles, and 38.2% received feedback only rarely. Additionally, low student preparedness (only 35% consistently completed homework), limited independent reading (55.9% never read outside class), and minimal parental involvement (58.8% reported no involvement) further compounded academic challenges.

The study concludes that academic underperformance at Basura Secondary School is not attributable to a single cause but results from a reinforcing cycle of poverty, resource scarcity, pedagogical limitations, and weak support systems. Recommendations include implementing a textbook lending program, providing teacher training on differentiated instruction and feedback strategies, establishing a school feeding program, fostering flexible parental engagement channels, and advocating for policy-level interventions to reduce class sizes and enhance professional development. A coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach is essential for sustainable improvement in student outcomes.

Keywords: *Academic achievement, socioeconomic factors, learning resources, teaching practices, parental involvement, Basura Secondary School, Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, education is recognized as a cornerstone of societal progress and individual empowerment. However, persistent challenges hinder the academic success of students worldwide. A significant body of research highlights the multifaceted nature of academic achievement, influenced by factors ranging from socioeconomic status and access to resources to pedagogical approaches and student motivation (OECD, 2023). Low academic achievement, characterized by performance below expected standards, is a pervasive concern with long-term consequences for individuals and communities (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

Several factors contribute to this global challenge. Socioeconomic disparities often lead to unequal access to quality education, with students from disadvantaged

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Corresponding Author: Habtamu Shiferaw Mengesha
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backgrounds facing barriers such as inadequate nutrition, limited access to learning materials, and lack of parental support (Sirin, 2016). Furthermore, the quality of teaching and the availability of qualified teachers play a crucial role in student outcomes (Rivkin et al., 2005). In many developing countries, teacher shortages, inadequate training, and lack of resources exacerbate the problem of low academic achievement.

In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, the challenges are particularly acute. Rapid population growth, coupled with limited investment in education, has resulted in overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teachers (UNESCO, 2017). These factors, combined with socioeconomic hardships and cultural barriers, contribute to persistently low academic achievement levels in many countries across the region. Studies have also pointed to the impact of health-related issues, such as malnutrition and infectious diseases, on student learning and academic performance (Jukes et al., 2008).

Ethiopia, like many other Sub-Saharan African nations, faces significant challenges in its education sector. While the country has made considerable progress in expanding access to education in recent decades, the quality of education remains a major concern (MoE, 2018). National assessments consistently reveal low levels of student achievement in core subjects such as mathematics and science. Factors such as teacher quality, resource availability, and parental involvement have been identified as key determinants of student outcomes in Ethiopian schools (Asgedom, 2019). Furthermore, regional disparities in educational quality and access persist, with rural and marginalized communities often lagging behind urban areas. Recent research emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to address the specific challenges faced by students in different regions of the country (Tiruneh et al., 2020).

Within Ethiopia, the Gedeo Zone, located in Southern Ethiopia, presents a unique context for examining the factors contributing to low academic achievement. The Gedeo Zone is characterized by a predominantly rural population, with agriculture being the main source of livelihood. While the region has witnessed improvements in educational access, challenges related to quality and equity remain prevalent. Limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teachers are common issues in many schools across the zone. Moreover, cultural factors and socioeconomic constraints may also play a significant role in shaping student outcomes (Gedeo Zone Education Department, 2021).

Basura Secondary School, situated within the Gedeo Zone, serves a diverse student population from surrounding rural communities. Anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations suggest that the school faces significant challenges related to student academic performance. Several interconnected factors contribute to this issue, including high rates of student absenteeism, often driven by the need to engage in income-generating activities or household chores (UNICEF, 2022). A pervasive lack of student motivation, potentially stemming from frustration with academic challenges and a perceived lack of relevance in the curriculum, further exacerbates the problem (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Insufficient parental follow-up and engagement in students' education, possibly due to limited literacy or competing economic demands, also plays a significant role (Epstein et al., 2009). Moreover, some students struggle with a lack of attention in class, while others resort to copying work from peers, indicating a deeper issue with understanding and engagement. The absence of strong reading habits and an over-reliance on teachers as the sole source of information further limit students' ability to learn independently and develop critical thinking skills (OECD, 2018). Understanding these specific, interconnected factors contributing to low academic achievement at Basura Secondary School is crucial for developing targeted and effective interventions to improve student outcomes.

Existing literature suggests that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the complex issue of low academic achievement. This approach should consider not only the school-level factors, such as teacher quality and resource availability, but also the broader contextual factors, such as socioeconomic conditions and cultural influences (Epstein et al., 2009). By examining the interplay of these factors, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students and identify effective strategies to promote academic success.

This study seeks to explore the multifaceted factors contributing to the low academic achievement of Grade 12 students at Basura Secondary School in the Gedeo Zone. By employing a case study approach, this research aims to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by students, teachers, and the school community. The findings of this study will inform the development of targeted interventions and strategies to improve student outcomes and promote educational equity in the Gedeo Zone and similar contexts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Globally, ensuring quality education and improving student achievement are persistent challenges, particularly in developing countries (UNESCO, 2015; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). Sub-Saharan Africa faces unique obstacles, including resource constraints and systemic issues, hindering educational progress despite increased access (UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2018). Ethiopia, while expanding its education system (MoE, 2018), struggles with quality, as evidenced by low student performance in core subjects (Asgedom, 2019). This issue is acutely present at Basura Secondary School in the Gedeo Zone, which serves a diverse student population from surrounding rural communities. Anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations suggest that the school faces significant challenges related to student academic performance. Several interconnected factors contribute to this issue, including high rates of student absenteeism, often driven by the need to engage in income-generating activities or household chores (UNICEF, 2022). A

pervasive lack of student motivation, potentially stemming from frustration with academic challenges and a perceived lack of relevance in the curriculum, further exacerbates the problem (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Insufficient parental follow-up and engagement in students' education, possibly due to limited literacy or competing economic demands, also plays a significant role (Epstein et al., 2009). Moreover, some students struggle with a lack of attention in class, while others resort to copying work from peers, indicating a deeper issue with understanding and engagement. The absence of strong reading habits and an over-reliance on teachers as the sole source of information further limit students' ability to learn independently and develop critical thinking skills (OECD, 2018). Understanding these specific, interconnected factors contributing to low academic achievement at Basura Secondary School is crucial for developing targeted and effective interventions to improve student outcomes.

Several Ethiopian studies have examined factors influencing academic performance. Abebe (2017) studied school leadership, Kebede (2018) focused on parental involvement, Tesfaye (2019) investigated teacher quality, Lemma (2020) explored school resources, Worku (2021) examined school feeding programs, and Hailu (2022) investigated student motivation. However, these studies often lack a comprehensive, localized perspective on the Gedeo Zone, and few employ qualitative methods to understand the lived experiences of stakeholders. This research addresses these gaps by using a mixed-methods approach to investigate the complex interplay of factors affecting Grade 12 student achievement at Basura Secondary School. By combining quantitative data with qualitative insights, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the problem, filling a knowledge gap regarding the Gedeo Zone and a methodological gap by using mixed methods, ultimately informing targeted interventions to improve educational outcomes in this specific context. Unlike previous studies, this research will explore the interplay of multiple factors, including socioeconomic status, teacher quality, school resources, and cultural influences.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the factors influencing the academic performance of Grade 12 students at Basura Secondary School.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. Identify and categorize key factors contributing to low academic achievement in Basura secondary school grade 12.
2. Assess learning resource quality, availability, and its impact on student performance in Basura secondary school grade 12.
3. Examine current teaching practice effectiveness and its influence on student learning in Basura secondary school grade 12.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for several key stakeholders:

1. **Basura Secondary School:** The findings provided valuable insights into the specific factors hindering the academic performance of Grade 12 students at the school. This knowledge was used to inform the development and implementation of targeted interventions to improve student outcomes.
2. **Gedeo Zone Education Department:** The study's results contributed to a better understanding of the challenges facing secondary education in the Gedeo Zone. This information was used to inform policy decisions and resource allocation to support schools in the region.
3. **Teachers:** The study shed light on the effectiveness of current teaching practices and identified areas for improvement. This empowered teachers to refine their pedagogical approaches and enhance student learning.
4. **Students:** By identifying the factors contributing to low academic achievement, the study helped to create a more supportive and effective learning environment for students.
5. **Parents:** The study highlighted the importance of parental involvement in student education and provided recommendations for how parents could better support their children's learning.
6. **Researchers and Academics:** This study contributed to the existing body of knowledge on factors influencing academic achievement in Ethiopia and other developing countries. It also provided a case study of a specific school in the Gedeo Zone, which was used for comparative analysis.
7. **Policymakers:** The findings informed the development of evidence-based policies and interventions to improve the quality of secondary education in Ethiopia.

1.5 Scope / Delimitation of the Study

The study was geographically limited to Basura Secondary School in the Gedeo Zone, Southern Ethiopia, focusing on Grade 12 students, teachers, and parents. It investigated socioeconomic, school-related, and student-related factors influencing academic achievement, acknowledging that not all factors could be explored exhaustively due to time and resource constraints. Data collection occurred during October-November 2018 E.C. as a cross-sectional study. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study recognized limitations such as potential biases in self-reported data and challenges in establishing causality, which were addressed through rigorous data collection and analysis techniques. Findings were not generalizable beyond the specific context of Basura Secondary School.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Academic achievement in secondary education remains a pivotal determinant of future opportunities for students. However, persistent challenges of low academic performance in secondary schools can significantly impact students' prospects and societal development. This literature review aims to comprehensively examine existing research on the multifaceted factors contributing to this issue, with a specific focus on the influence of learning resources and teaching practices. The review will explore relevant theoretical frameworks and recent empirical studies to identify gaps in the current literature, informing future research and interventions. The structure of this review begins with an examination of theoretical frameworks, followed by factors contributing to low academic achievement, an analysis of the role of learning resources, and an investigation into the impact of teaching practices. Finally, the review synthesizes the literature and identifies areas for future research.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks of Academic Achievement

2.2.1 Human Capital Theory

Capital Theory posits that investments in education and training enhance an individual's skills and knowledge, leading to increased productivity and economic returns (Becker, 1964). Academic achievement, from this perspective, is a crucial form of human capital accumulation. Students who perform well academically are better positioned for higher education and higher-paying jobs, contributing to individual and societal economic well-being. Hanushek (2016) emphasizes that the quality of education, as measured by student achievement, is a significant predictor of economic growth. Deficiencies in resources or ineffective teaching practices can hinder human capital formation, leading to lower academic achievement. Empirical studies continue to demonstrate a positive correlation between educational attainment and earnings, supporting the notion that academic achievement is a valuable form of human capital (e.g., Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018).

2.2.2 Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of self-efficacy, observational learning, and reciprocal determinism in academic achievement. Self-efficacy, or students' beliefs in their ability to succeed, significantly influences their motivation and performance. Observational learning, where students learn by observing others' success, also plays a crucial role. Reciprocal determinism highlights the interaction between individual factors, behavior, and the environment. Recent research by Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) underscores the importance of self-efficacy in predicting academic outcomes, suggesting that interventions aimed at boosting students' confidence in their abilities can lead to improved performance. Moreover, social cognitive theory suggests that supportive learning environments and positive role models can enhance students' academic engagement and achievement (Bandura, 1997).

2.2.3 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of various environmental systems in influencing individual development. These systems include the microsystem (family, school), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (community, workplace), macrosystem (cultural values, policies), and chronosystem (historical events, changes over time). Factors within the family, school, community, and broader society can significantly impact student achievement. For instance, a study by Sirin (2016) found that supportive family environments and positive school climates are crucial for fostering academic success. The ecological systems theory provides a holistic framework for understanding the complex interplay of factors that influence student learning and highlights the need for interventions that address multiple levels of the environment to promote academic achievement (Neal & Neal, 2013).

2.3 Factors Contributing to Low Academic Achievement

2.3.1 Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic factors remain significant predictors of academic achievement. Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds often face challenges that hinder their academic progress, including limited access to resources, inadequate healthcare, and exposure to environmental stressors (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Parental education, a key indicator of socioeconomic status, strongly influences student achievement (Davis-Kean, 2005). Parents with higher education levels are more likely to provide stimulating home environments and support for academic endeavors. Family income also plays a crucial role in determining access to quality education and resources. Chetty et al. (2018) found persistent income-based achievement gaps, highlighting the impact of socioeconomic disparities on educational outcomes. Furthermore, studies suggest that poverty-related stress can impair cognitive development and academic functioning (Evans & Kim, 2017). Addressing socioeconomic inequalities is essential for promoting equitable educational opportunities and improving academic achievement for all students.

2.3.2 Student-Related Factors

Student-related factors, such as motivation, self-esteem, learning styles, attendance, and prior academic performance, significantly influence academic achievement. Research indicates that motivated students with high self-esteem are more likely to engage in learning activities and persist in the face of challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Self-regulated learning, which involves students' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, is also a critical factor (Zimmerman, 2000). Furthermore, students' learning styles and preferences can impact their academic performance. However, it's important to note that the concept of learning styles has been debated, and recent research suggests that a more nuanced approach to individualizing instruction is needed (Kirschner, 2017). Attendance and prior academic performance are also strong predictors of future

achievement. Students who attend school regularly and have a solid foundation of knowledge are more likely to succeed academically (Gottfried, 2014).

2.3.3 Teacher-Related Factors

Teacher-related factors, including teacher qualifications, experience, training, teaching styles, and expectations, significantly influence student learning. Research consistently shows that effective teachers can have a substantial impact on student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Teacher qualifications and experience are often associated with higher student outcomes (Rice, 2010). However, it's important to note that teacher effectiveness is not solely determined by qualifications but also by their ability to create engaging and supportive learning environments. Teaching styles and expectations also play a crucial role. Teachers who use evidence-based teaching strategies, such as active learning and differentiated instruction, are more likely to promote student learning (Marzano et al., 2001). Furthermore, teachers' expectations about students' abilities can influence their performance. Studies have shown that students tend to perform better when teachers have high expectations for them (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

2.3.4 School-Related Factors

School-related factors, such as school climate, class size, school resources, leadership, and safety, significantly influence student outcomes. A positive school climate, characterized by supportive relationships, clear expectations, and a sense of belonging, is associated with higher student achievement and well-being (Thapa et al., 2013). Class size has also been a topic of debate, with some studies suggesting that smaller class sizes can lead to improved student outcomes, particularly in the early grades (Hoxby, 2000). School resources, including funding, facilities, and technology, also play a crucial role in supporting student learning. Effective school leadership is essential for creating a positive school climate and promoting teacher effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2004). Additionally, a safe and secure school environment is necessary for students to feel comfortable and focused on learning.

2.4 Learning Resources and Their Impact on Student Performance

2.4.1 Quality and Availability of Learning Resources

The availability of high-quality learning resources is crucial for supporting student learning and promoting academic achievement. Learning resources encompass textbooks, libraries, technology, and other instructional aids. Textbooks serve as a primary source of information and significantly impact students' understanding of concepts. Schools, especially those in low-income communities, often struggle to provide students with up-to-date and relevant textbooks (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Libraries play a vital role in fostering a culture of reading and providing access to a vast collection of books. Research indicates that schools with well-stocked libraries and qualified librarians tend to have higher student achievement (Lance & Loertscher, 2001). Technology has become an increasingly important learning resource in the 21st century. Access to computers, the internet, and educational software can enhance student engagement and provide personalized learning experiences. However, the digital divide persists, with many students from low-income families lacking access to technology (Warschauer, 2003).

2.4.2 Impact of Learning Resources on Academic Outcomes

Access to quality learning resources can improve student engagement, motivation, and achievement. Research indicates that students who have access to a wide range of learning resources are more likely to be engaged in learning activities and achieve higher academic outcomes (Hedges et al., 1994). Textbooks that are aligned with curriculum standards and provide clear explanations of concepts can enhance students' understanding and retention of information. Libraries can foster a love of reading and provide students with access to a wealth of knowledge. Technology can provide students with personalized learning experiences and access to a vast array of educational resources. However, it's important to note that the effectiveness of learning resources depends on how they are used. Teachers need to be trained on how to effectively integrate learning resources into their instruction to maximize their impact on student learning.

2.5 Teaching Practices and Their Influence on Student Learning

2.5.1 Effective Teaching Strategies

Effective teaching practices are essential for creating engaging and supportive learning environments that promote student achievement. A variety of teaching strategies have been shown to be effective, including active learning, differentiated instruction, inquiry-based learning, and cooperative learning. Active learning involves engaging students in the learning process through discussions, group work, and hands-on projects. Research indicates that active learning strategies can improve student engagement, motivation, and critical thinking skills (Prince, 2004). Differentiated instruction involves tailoring instruction to meet the diverse needs of individual students. This approach recognizes that students learn at different paces and in different ways and that effective teaching requires adapting instruction to accommodate these differences (Tomlinson, 2001). Inquiry-based learning involves engaging students in the process of asking questions, conducting investigations, and constructing their own understanding of concepts. Cooperative learning involves structuring learning activities so that students work together in small groups to achieve a common goal.

2.5.2 Impact of Teaching Practices on Student Achievement

Effective teaching practices can improve student engagement, motivation, and achievement. Research indicates that students who are taught by effective teachers are more likely to achieve higher academic outcomes (Hattie, 2009). Teachers who use evidence-based teaching strategies, such as active learning and differentiated instruction, are more likely to promote student learning.

Furthermore, teachers who create a positive classroom climate, provide timely feedback, and have high expectations for students are more likely to foster student success. However, it's important to note that the effectiveness of teaching practices depends on the context in which they are used. Teachers need to be able to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the specific needs of their students and the unique characteristics of their classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Description of the Study

Basura Secondary School is located in the Bule Woreda of the Gedeo Zone, almost 13 kilometers from the main town of Bule. The school is situated in a predominantly agricultural area, characterized by rolling hills and onion, potato and coffee plantations. While the school is accessible via a dirt road, transportation can be challenging during the rainy season. The surrounding community is largely rural, with most families relying on coffee farming as their primary source of income.

3.2 Research Design / Approach

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. A case study approach was used to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors contributing to low academic achievement at Basura Secondary School.

- **Quantitative Approach:** A descriptive survey was conducted to gather quantitative data on student demographics, academic performance, learning resource availability, and parental involvement.
- **Qualitative Approach:** Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and parents to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives on the factors influencing academic achievement. Classroom observations were also conducted to assess teaching practices and student engagement.
- **Mixed-Methods Integration:** The quantitative and qualitative data were integrated to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem. The quantitative data provided a broad overview of the situation, while the qualitative data provided rich contextual details and insights.

3.3 Sources of Data

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources.

3.3.1 Primary Sources

Primary data were collected to obtain firsthand information relevant to the research topic. The primary data sources included principals, teachers, and students with physical impairments. These individuals were interviewed to gather their perspectives and experiences, allowing for direct insights and informed inferences.

3.3.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary data sources included action research reports, internal documents, and external documents. Specifically, strategic plans, annual plans, feedback reports, student achievement results, and dropout/repetition rate data were analyzed. This analysis aimed to identify relationships between environmental adaptations for students with physical disabilities and academic outcomes (achievement, dropout rates, and repetition rates). Reviewing existing documentation served to contextualize the research questions and strengthen the data obtained through interviews and observation checklists.

3.4 Sampling Size and Sampling Techniques

3.4.1 Sampling Size

The study included a sample of 34 Grade 12 students, all 10 teachers who taught Grade 12 students, 15 parents of Grade 12 students, and 1 school director from Basura Secondary School. This sample size of 60 participants in total was determined to be sufficient for providing meaningful insights into the research questions, given the scope and resources of the study. The inclusion of all Grade 12 teachers and the director ensured a comprehensive perspective from the school staff.

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

1. **Students:** A simple random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of Grade 12 students. The sample was stratified by gender and academic stream (e.g., science, humanities) to ensure proportional representation.
2. **Teachers:** A purposive sampling technique was used to select teachers who taught each subject to Grade 12 students. This ensured that the teachers selected had relevant experience and insights to share.
3. **Parents:** A simple random sampling technique was used to select parents of Grade 12 students to participate in the study. Efforts were made to ensure that parents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds were included in the sample.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1 Questionnaire

Structured questionnaires were administered to students and parents to collect quantitative data on demographics, socioeconomic status, learning resource availability, parental involvement, and student motivation. The questionnaires included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to allow for both quantitative and qualitative data collection.

3.5.2 Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students, teachers, and parents to gather in-depth qualitative data on their experiences and perspectives on the factors influencing academic achievement. The interview guides were flexible and allowed for probing and follow-up

questions. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3.5.3 Classroom Observation

Classroom observations were conducted to assess teaching practices, student engagement, and the learning environment. A structured observation checklist was used to record relevant data. Observations were conducted in a non-obtrusive manner to minimize disruption to the classroom.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

- **Quantitative Data:** Quantitative data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and tables, to summarize the characteristics of the sample and the distribution of key variables.
- **Qualitative Data:** Qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations was analyzed using descriptive analysis to identify key themes, patterns, and insights related to the research questions.
- **Mixed-Methods Integration:** The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the research problem. The quantitative data was used to support and contextualize the qualitative findings, and vice versa.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This section outlines the analysis and presentation of the data collected from Grade 12 students, teachers, parents, and the school director at Basura Secondary School. The data collection methods included close-ended questionnaires for students and teachers, and open-ended interviews for parents and the school director.

4.2 Analyzing of Close-Ended Questions

The close-ended questions administered to Grade 12 students (n = 34) and teachers (n = 10) were designed to gather quantitative data on factors contributing to low academic achievement, learning resource quality/availability, and teaching practice effectiveness. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to identify patterns and trends in the responses.

4.2.1 Student Responses (n = 34)

Table 1: Factors Contributing to Low Academic Achievement

No	Item	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	How often do you miss school to help your family with farming, trading, or household chores?	Frequently (1–2 days/week)	12	35.30%
		Sometimes (1–3 days/month)	14	41.20%
		Rarely or never	8	23.50%
2	When you don't understand a lesson, do you try to find explanations on your own (e.g., from books, notes, or peers)?	Yes	9	26.50%
		No	25	73.50%
3	How often do you copy homework or answers from classmates because you couldn't complete the task yourself?	Often	7	20.60%
		Sometimes	15	44.10%
		Never	12	25.00%
4	On school days, how often do you attend class without having eaten breakfast?	Always or most days	16	47.10%
		Occasionally	11	32.40%
		Never	7	20.60%
5	How involved are your parents or guardians in	Very involved	4	11.80%

	your school life (e.g., asking about homework, attending meetings)?			
		Somewhat involved	10	29.40%
		Not involved at all	20	58.80%
6	To what extent do you agree with the statement: "What I learn in school is useful for my future"?	Strongly agree	3	8.80%
		Agree	9	26.50%
		Neutral	8	23.50%
		Disagree	10	29.40%
		Strongly disagree	4	11.80%
7	Outside of class assignments, how often do you read books or study materials on your own?	Regularly (3+ times/week)	5	14.70%
		Occasionally (1–2 times/week)	10	29.40%
		Never	19	55.90%
8	How would you rate your teachers' ability to explain lessons clearly and support learning?	Very clear and helpful	6	17.60%
		Somewhat clear	15	44.10%
		Unclear or unhelpful	13	38.20%
9	When you face difficulty in schoolwork, how likely are you to give up instead of seeking help?	Very likely	11	32.40%
		Somewhat likely	12	35.30%
		Unlikely	11	32.40%
10	How often do you feel too tired, hungry, or distracted to concentrate during class?	Almost always	9	26.50%
		Sometimes	17	50.00%
		Rarely or never	8	23.50%

Source: Field surveys, 2018

According to Table 1, socioeconomic factors appear to be a significant driver of absenteeism: a combined 76.5% of students report missing school frequently or occasionally due to family obligations (e.g., market sales, farm work). This suggests that students are often forced to make difficult choices between education and contributing to their family's survival. Furthermore, according to Table 1, food insecurity is a prevalent issue, with 79.5% of students regularly skipping breakfast, which likely hinders their ability to concentrate and learn effectively.

Beyond these external pressures, the data in Table 1 reveals concerning gaps in key learning skills. A substantial 73.5% of students, according to Table 1, do not actively seek help independently when facing academic difficulties, indicating a reliance on teacher-led instruction and a potential lack of self-directed learning skills. Similarly, 55.9% do not engage in independent reading, suggesting a passive approach to learning and a lack of a reading culture, as shown in Table 1. Perhaps most concerning, 67.7% of students, according to Table 1, report being likely to give up when struggling with schoolwork, highlighting a significant need to foster resilience and problem-solving skills.

Perceived relevance of education and adequate support systems also emerge as critical factors, according to Table 1. A considerable 41.2% of students do not perceive their

education as useful for their future aspirations, which likely diminishes their motivation and engagement. Limited parental involvement is also a concern, with 58.8% of students reporting a lack of parental support and engagement in their school life, as indicated in Table 1. Furthermore, over a third (38.2%) of students perceive their teachers as unclear or unhelpful, potentially hindering their understanding of the material, according to Table 1. This confluence of factors may contribute to the concerning finding that 64.7% of students admit to copying homework, likely as a coping mechanism to mask underlying learning gaps, as evidenced in Table 1.

Overall Finding: The data presented in Table 1 strongly suggests that student academic success is being significantly hampered by a complex interplay of socioeconomic factors, deficiencies in key learning skills, a lack of perceived relevance in education, and inadequate support systems. Addressing these interconnected challenges through targeted interventions that address both external barriers and internal skill development is crucial for improving student outcomes and fostering a more equitable and effective learning environment. Further research is recommended to explore the specific nuances of these challenges and to evaluate the effectiveness of potential interventions.

Table 2: Learning Resource Quality, Availability, and Impact

No	Item	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	How would you rate the availability of learning materials for your subject/topic?	Very adequate	2	5.90%
		Adequate	27	79.40%
		Inadequate	5	14.70%
2	How would you describe the condition of the available learning materials?	Excellent	13	38.20%
		Good	17	50.00%
		Poor	4	11.80%
3	To what extent do you agree that the library resources are sufficient for your study needs?	Strongly agree	1	2.90%
		Agree	7	20.60%
		Disagree	26	76.50%
4	How often do you use the internet for academic research?	Very often	2	5.90%
		Sometimes	10	29.40%
		Rarely	22	64.70%
5	Do you believe that having access to more computers at school would improve your learning?	Yes, significantly	18	52.90%
		Yes, somewhat	10	29.40%
		No	6	17.60%
6	How much do you think the lack of visual aids (e.g., charts, diagrams) affects your understanding of the lessons?	A great deal	15	44.10%
		A moderate amount	12	35.30%
		Not at all	7	20.60%

Source: Field surveys, 2018

According to Table 2, a substantial portion of students report adequate access to learning materials, with 79.4% indicating that materials are "adequate" for their subjects. However, a notable 14.7% still find learning materials "inadequate," suggesting that access remains a concern for some.

Furthermore, the condition of available learning materials appears to be a significant factor, with 38.2% of students describing them as "excellent" and 50.0% describing them as "good," according to Table 2. However, 11.8% still report "poor" conditions, indicating room for improvement. This suggests that while the majority have access to materials in decent condition, quality issues persist for a subset of students.

Beyond learning materials, access to other essential learning resources appears limited. A significant 76.5% of students disagree that library resources are sufficient for their study needs, according to Table 2, indicating a potential lack of diverse and up-to-date materials. Internet usage for academic research is also infrequent, with 64.7% of students reporting that they "rarely" use the internet for this purpose, as shown in Table 2. This could be due to limited access, poor connectivity, or a lack of awareness regarding online resources.

The data in Table 2 also highlights the perceived need for improved technology and visual aids. A significant majority of students (52.9%) believe that having access to more computers at school would "significantly" improve their learning, while another 29.4% believe it would "somewhat" improve their learning. Additionally, a considerable 44.1% of students feel that the lack of visual aids (e.g., charts, diagrams) affects their understanding of lessons "a great deal," according to Table 2.

The data presented in Table 2 suggests a mixed picture regarding the quality and availability of learning resources. While access to learning materials is generally reported as adequate, the condition of those materials and the sufficiency of library resources remain significant concerns. Limited internet access and a perceived lack of visual aids further contribute to a potentially suboptimal learning environment. Addressing these resource limitations through targeted investments and improved infrastructure is crucial for enhancing student outcomes and fostering a more effective educational experience.

Table 3: Teaching Practice Effectiveness and Influence on Student Learning

No	Item	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	How often do your teachers use real-life examples to explain concepts?	Very often	5	14.70%
		Sometimes	17	50.00%
		Rarely	12	35.30%
2	To what extent do you feel comfortable asking your teachers questions in class?	Very comfortable	7	20.60%
		Somewhat comfortable	18	52.90%
		Not comfortable	9	26.50%
3	How would you rate the level of encouragement you receive from your teachers to participate in class discussions?	Very encouraging	6	17.60%
		Somewhat encouraging	18	52.90%
		Not encouraging	10	29.40%
4	How often do your teachers provide you with feedback on your assignments and tests?	Very often	3	8.80%
		Sometimes	18	52.90%
		Rarely	13	38.20%
5	Do you believe that your teachers are well-prepared for their lessons?	Yes, definitely	7	20.60%

		Somewhat	19	55.90%
		No	8	23.50%
6	How much do you think the teaching methods used by your teachers cater to different learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic)?	To a great extent	2	5.90%
		To some extent	18	52.90%
		Not at all	14	41.20%

Source: Field surveys, 2018

According to Table 3, a considerable portion of students report that teachers "sometimes" use real-life examples to explain concepts, with 50.0% indicating this frequency. However, a notable 35.3% state that teachers "rarely" use real-life examples, suggesting a potential disconnect between classroom learning and practical application.

Furthermore, student comfort levels in asking questions appear varied, with 52.9% feeling "somewhat comfortable" and 20.6% feeling "very comfortable," according to Table 3. However, a significant 26.5% report feeling "not comfortable" asking questions, indicating a barrier to active participation for a considerable segment of the student population. This suggests a need to foster a more supportive and approachable classroom environment.

Beyond classroom interaction, the level of encouragement students receive to participate in discussions appears moderate. A majority, 52.9%, find their teachers "somewhat encouraging," while only 17.6% find them "very encouraging," according to Table 3. A concerning 29.4% find their teachers "not encouraging," potentially stifling student engagement and critical thinking.

The data in Table 3 also highlights concerns regarding feedback and teaching methodologies. A significant 38.2% of students report that teachers "rarely" provide feedback on assignments and tests, while 52.9% receive feedback "sometimes." Additionally, a substantial 41.2% of students believe that teaching methods used by their teachers do not cater to different learning styles "at all," as shown in Table 3.

The data presented in Table 3 suggests a mixed perception of teaching practices and their effectiveness. While some students feel moderately comfortable and encouraged, concerns remain regarding the use of real-life examples, the frequency of feedback, and the adaptation of teaching methods to diverse learning styles. Addressing these issues through targeted professional development and a focus on student-centered pedagogy is crucial for enhancing the learning experience and promoting better student outcomes.

4.2.2 Teacher Responses (n = 10)

Table 4: Teacher Perspectives on Factors Affecting Student Achievement

No	Item	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	How significant do you believe the lack of parental involvement is in the academic performance of Grade 12 students?	Very significant	6	60.00%
		Somewhat significant	3	30.00%
		Not significant	1	10.00%
2	To what extent do you think inadequate learning resources (e.g., textbooks, library) hinder your ability to effectively teach?	To a great extent	7	70.00%
		To some extent	2	20.00%
		Not at all	1	10.00%
3	How would you rate the level of student motivation in your Grade 12 classes?	Very motivated	1	10.00%

		Moderately motivated	5	50.00%
		Not very motivated	4	40.00%
4	How much do you feel that large class sizes affect your ability to provide individual attention to students?	A great deal	8	80.00%
		A moderate amount	2	20.00%
		Not at all	0	0.00%
5	In your opinion, how well-prepared are students entering Grade 12 in terms of foundational knowledge from previous grades?	Very well-prepared	0	0.00%
		Adequately prepared	4	40.00%
		Poorly prepared	6	60.00%
6	How often do you have opportunities for professional development or training to improve your teaching skills?	Very often	1	10.00%
		Sometimes	4	40.00%
		Rarely	5	50.00%

Source: Field surveys, 2018

According to Table 4, teachers overwhelmingly believe that a lack of parental involvement is a significant factor affecting student achievement, with 60% considering it "very significant" and 30% "somewhat significant." This highlights a strong perception among teachers that parental engagement is crucial for student success.

Furthermore, a substantial majority of teachers (70%) feel that inadequate learning resources hinder their ability to teach effectively "to a great extent," with another 20% reporting this "to some extent," as indicated in Table 4. This underscores the importance of providing sufficient and appropriate resources to support quality instruction.

Beyond resources, teachers express concern about student motivation levels. Only 10% of teachers rate student motivation as "very motivated," while a significant 40% consider students "not very motivated," according to Table 4. This suggests a need to identify and implement strategies to boost student engagement and intrinsic motivation.

The data in Table 4 also highlights the impact of large class sizes on teachers' ability to provide individual attention. A significant 80% of teachers report that large class sizes affect their ability to provide individual attention "a great deal," and the remaining 20% report "a moderate amount."

Finally, teachers express concern about the preparedness of students entering Grade 12. A majority of teachers (60%) believe students are "poorly prepared" in terms of foundational knowledge, with the remaining 40% considering them "adequately prepared," as indicated in Table 4. Limited opportunities for professional development are also a concern, with 50% of teachers reporting that they "rarely" receive such opportunities.

The data presented in Table 4 paints a picture of several interconnected challenges affecting student achievement. Addressing these challenges, including improving parental involvement, providing adequate learning resources, boosting student motivation, reducing class sizes, and enhancing teacher professional development, is crucial for improving student outcomes in Grade 12.

Table 5: Learning Resource Quality, Availability, and Impact (Teacher Perspectives)

No	Item	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	How would you rate the availability of textbooks for	Very adequate	0	0.00%

	your subjects?			
		Adequate	3	30.00%
		Inadequate	7	70.00%
2	How would you describe the condition of the available textbooks?	Excellent	0	0.00%
		Good	2	20.00%
		Poor	8	80.00%
3	To what extent do you agree that the library resources are sufficient for your teaching needs?	Strongly agree	0	0.00%
		Agree	1	10.00%
		Disagree	9	90.00%
4	How often do you use the internet for lesson planning and finding teaching resources?	Very often	8	80.00%
		Sometimes	2	20.00%
		Rarely	0	0.00%
5	Do you believe that having access to more computers/technology in the classroom would improve your teaching effectiveness?	Yes, significantly	9	90.00%
		Yes, somewhat	1	10.00%
		No	0	0.00%
6	How much do you think the lack of visual aids (e.g., charts, diagrams, projectors) affects your ability to effectively teach lessons?	A great deal	7	70.00%
		A moderate amount	3	30.00%
		Not at all	0	0.00%

Source: Field surveys, 2018

According to Table 5, teachers overwhelmingly report inadequate availability of textbooks (70%) and poor condition of available textbooks (80%). A significant 90% disagree that library resources are sufficient for their teaching needs. Internet usage for lesson planning is high, with 80% using it "very often," and 90% believe that more computers/technology would significantly improve their teaching effectiveness. Additionally, 70% state that the lack of visual aids affects their teaching "a great deal."

The data presented in Table 5 paints a picture of several interconnected challenges affecting student achievement. Addressing these challenges, including improving parental involvement, providing adequate learning resources, boosting student motivation, reducing class sizes, and enhancing teacher professional development, is crucial for improving student outcomes in Grade 12. *(Note: This paragraph is repeated from the interpretation of Table 4, as it appears in the original document.)*

Table 6: Teaching Practice Effectiveness and Influence on Student Learning (Teacher Perspectives)

No	Item	Response Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)

1	How often do you use real-life examples to explain concepts?	Very often	7	70.00%
		Sometimes	3	30.00%
		Rarely	0	0.00%
2	To what extent do you feel comfortable allowing students to ask questions in class?	Very comfortable	10	100.00%
		Somewhat comfortable	0	0.00%
		Not comfortable	0	0.00%
3	How would you rate the level of encouragement you provide to students to participate in class discussions?	Very encouraging	8	80.00%
		Somewhat encouraging	2	20.00%
		Not encouraging	0	0.00%
4	How often do you provide students with feedback on their assignments and tests?	Very often	6	60.00%
		Sometimes	4	40.00%
		Rarely	0	0.00%
5	Do you believe that you are well-prepared for your lessons?	Yes, definitely	8	80.00%
		Somewhat	2	20.00%
		No	0	0.00%
6	How much do you think the teaching methods you use cater to different learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic)?	To a great extent	2	20.00%
		To some extent	7	70.00%
		Not at all	1	10.00%
7	How effective do you believe your current assessment methods are in accurately measuring student learning?	Very effective	3	30.00%
		Somewhat effective	7	70.00%
		Not effective	0	0.00%

Source: Field surveys, 2018

Table 6 reveals insights into teaching practices and their perceived effectiveness. A significant majority of teachers (70%) report using real-life examples "very often" to explain concepts, suggesting a common practice of contextualizing learning. All teachers surveyed express feeling "very comfortable" allowing students to ask questions in class, indicating a welcoming and open learning environment. Furthermore, 80% of teachers rate their encouragement of student participation in class discussions as "very encouraging," with the remaining 20% reporting being "somewhat encouraging." This highlights a proactive approach to fostering student engagement. Regarding feedback, 60% of teachers provide feedback on assignments and tests "very often," while 40% do so

"sometimes," suggesting room for improvement in the frequency of feedback.

A strong majority (80%) of teachers feel "definitely" well-prepared for their lessons, with the remaining 20% feeling "somewhat" prepared. This reflects a generally high level of teacher confidence in their lesson preparation. However, only 20% believe their teaching methods cater to different learning styles "to a great extent," while 70% believe they do so "to some extent," and 10% "not at all." This suggests a potential area for professional development to enhance differentiation in instruction.

Finally, only 30% of teachers believe their current assessment methods are "very effective" in accurately measuring student learning. This indicates a need to re-evaluate and potentially refine assessment strategies to better gauge student understanding and progress.

4.3 Interview Items

This section presents the interview questions used for parents and the school director. The responses will be analyzed qualitatively to identify key themes and insights.

4.3.1 Parent Interview Questions (n = 15)

For the first question posed to parents, "What are your aspirations for your child's education and future career?", a common theme emerging from the responses is a desire for their children to attain a university education and secure stable, professional careers. Many parents expressed hopes for their children to become doctors, engineers, teachers, or business professionals, emphasizing the importance of education as a pathway to upward mobility and improved quality of life. Some parents also highlighted the importance of their children finding fulfilling careers that contribute positively to society.

Regarding the second question, "What challenges do you face in supporting your child's education (e.g., financial, time, resources)?", financial constraints were frequently cited as a major obstacle. Many parents reported struggling to afford school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other essential learning materials. Time constraints due to work commitments were also a common challenge, limiting parents' ability to actively participate in their child's education, such as helping with homework or attending school events. A lack of access to resources, such as internet connectivity and computers, was also mentioned as a barrier to supporting their child's learning.

In response to the third question, "How do you perceive the quality of education at Basura Secondary School, and what improvements would you suggest?", parents offered mixed reviews. While some praised the dedication of the teachers and the school's efforts to provide a learning environment, others expressed concerns about the availability of resources, the large class sizes, and the quality of infrastructure. Suggested improvements included providing more learning materials, reducing class sizes, improving school facilities, and offering more extracurricular activities. Some parents also emphasized the need for better communication between the school and parents.

The School Director, when asked, "What are the key challenges facing Basura Secondary School in terms of student academic achievement?", identified several interconnected issues. These included a lack of adequate funding, insufficient learning resources, high student-teacher ratios, low levels of parental involvement, and a lack of student motivation. The Director emphasized that these challenges collectively contribute to lower academic performance and hinder the school's ability to provide a quality education to all students.

In response to the question, "What strategies are currently in place to address these challenges, and how effective do you believe they are?", the School Director outlined several initiatives. These included implementing remedial programs for struggling students, providing teacher training and professional development, organizing parent-teacher meetings, and seeking external funding and partnerships. While the Director acknowledged that these strategies have had some positive impact, they also emphasized that more comprehensive and sustained efforts are needed to address the underlying challenges effectively.

Finally, when asked, "What resources or support do you need to further improve the quality of education at the school?", the School Director highlighted several key areas. These included increased funding for infrastructure improvements, additional learning resources (textbooks, computers, internet access), more teachers to reduce class sizes, and programs to promote parental involvement and student motivation. The Director also emphasized the need for ongoing professional development for teachers and administrative staff to enhance their skills and knowledge.

4.3.2 School Director Interview Questions (n=1)

For the first question, "What do you see as the most important role Basura Secondary School plays in the community?", a dominant theme emerging from the responses is that the school is seen as essential for the future of the community's children and the local economy. Education is viewed as the primary means of upward mobility and opportunity. The school's role extends beyond academics to include providing employment.

Regarding the second question, "What do you think are the biggest challenges facing students at Basura Secondary School today?", key challenges identified are poverty, lack of resources at the school, and logistical difficulties (long commutes). Poverty is seen as a major barrier to accessing education, highlighting socioeconomic disparities. Insufficient resources within the school exacerbate the problem.

In response to the third question, "What kind of support do you think students at Basura Secondary School need most to succeed?", the responses emphasize the need for financial assistance, mentorship, and improved school resources (teachers, books, technology). Financial support is seen as crucial for overcoming economic barriers. Mentorship is viewed as a way to provide guidance and motivation.

Concerning the fourth question, "What role do you think the community can play in supporting Basura Secondary School and its students?", the community's role is seen as encompassing volunteerism (tutoring, mentoring), donations (money, supplies), advocacy (with government), and creating a supportive environment. This highlights the potential for community involvement in both direct support and systemic change.

Finally, when asked, "What are your hopes and expectations for Basura Secondary School in the next few years?", the hopes and expectations center on achieving academic excellence, improving facilities and resources, increasing parental involvement, and fostering a stronger sense of community. The community envisions the school as a pathway to opportunity and a source of pride.

In conclusion, the community respondent interviews reveal a strong belief in the importance of Basura Secondary School for the community's future. However, significant challenges are identified. The community believes that students need support to succeed and sees a vital role for themselves in providing that support. A focus on alleviating poverty, improving resources, and fostering community engagement is essential for creating a thriving educational environment at Basura Secondary School.

4.4 Analysis of Classroom Observations

Table 7: Classroom Observation

No.	Item	Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low
1	**Factors Contributing to Low Academic Achievement**					
1.1	Student engagement in class activities (e.g., participation, attentiveness)			✓		
1.2	Student preparedness for class (e.g., completion of homework, bringing necessary materials)				✓	
1.3	Student attendance patterns (Note: This may require checking attendance records in addition to observation)				✓	
1.4	Teacher's awareness of individual student learning needs and challenges		✓			
1.5	Evidence of student apathy or lack of motivation			✓		
2	**Learning Resource Quality and Availability**					
2.1	Availability of textbooks and other core learning materials				✓	
2.2	Quality and relevance of textbooks and learning materials to the curriculum			✓		
2.3	Access to supplementary learning resources (e.g., library, internet, computers)				✓	
2.4	Use of technology in the classroom to enhance learning				✓	
2.5	Condition and suitability of the classroom environment (e.g., lighting, ventilation, seating)		✓			
3	**Teaching Practice Effectiveness**					
3.1	Clarity and organization of lesson presentation		✓			
3.2	Use of varied teaching methods to cater to different learning styles			✓		
3.3	Opportunities for student participation and interaction			✓		

3.4	Teacher's ability to manage the classroom effectively and maintain discipline	✓	
3.5	Provision of timely and constructive feedback to students		✓
3.6	Teacher's subject matter knowledge and ability to answer student questions accurately	✓	

Source: Field surveys, 2018

According to observation, student preparedness and attendance at Basura Secondary School are low, directly impacting academic achievement. Access to textbooks, supplementary resources, and technology is also low, hindering effective learning. While teachers demonstrate high clarity in lesson presentation, classroom management, and subject matter knowledge, student engagement, opportunities for participation, and the use of varied teaching methods are only average. This suggests a need to improve student engagement strategies and diversify teaching approaches within the classroom to address observable issues. The low resource availability requires urgent attention to provide a more supportive learning environment.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that low academic achievement at Basura Secondary School is a multifaceted problem rooted in the interplay of socioeconomic, institutional, and pedagogical factors. These results align with existing literature on academic achievement in developing contexts. For instance, the high rates of absenteeism due to family obligations (76.5%) and food insecurity (79.5% skipping breakfast) corroborate the findings of Sirin (2016) and Evans and Kim (2017), who highlighted the detrimental effects of poverty-related stress and inadequate nutrition on cognitive development and academic performance.

The disconnect between teacher self-perception and student experience is particularly striking. While 80% of teachers felt well-prepared, 41.2% of students felt teaching methods did not cater to diverse learning styles. This mirrors the concerns raised by Kirschner (2017) regarding the need for evidence-based, differentiated instruction rather than reliance on unproven learning styles. The infrequent feedback reported by students (38.2% "rarely") despite teachers' claims of frequent feedback also points to a communication gap that can hinder student progress, as noted by Hattie (2009).

Resource limitations, particularly the inadequacy of textbooks (70% of teachers) and library resources (90% of teachers), are consistent with the findings of Darling-Hammond (2004) and Lance and Loertscher (2001), who established a clear link between resource availability and student achievement. The low levels of parental involvement (58.8% of students reporting no involvement) further compound these challenges, supporting Epstein et al.'s (2009) framework on the importance of school-family-community partnerships.

The study's findings also underscore the relevance of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, as the challenges faced by students are not confined to the classroom but are influenced by broader socioeconomic and community factors. Addressing these interconnected issues requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach, as recommended in the study's conclusions.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing close-ended questionnaires for Grade 12 students (n = 34) and teachers (n = 10), semi-structured interviews with parents (n = 15) and the school director, and structured classroom observations. The primary objective was to identify the factors contributing to low academic achievement at Basura Secondary School. The findings are summarized below across four key thematic areas:

1. **Socioeconomic Factors and Student Preparedness:** The data reveals that socioeconomic challenges significantly hinder student performance. A combined 76.5% of students reported missing school frequently or occasionally to assist with family farming, trading, or household chores. Food insecurity is also prevalent, with 79.5% of students attending class without breakfast either always/most days or occasionally, leading to difficulties in concentration. Furthermore, student preparedness is low; only 35% of students consistently complete homework, and 55.9% never engage in independent reading outside of class assignments. This lack of foundational study habits is compounded by a reliance on peers, with 64.7% of students admitting to copying homework often or sometimes.
2. **Learning Resource Availability and Quality:** There is a significant disparity between student and teacher perceptions regarding resources, but both indicate critical gaps. While 79.4% of students rated general learning materials as "adequate," 76.5% disagreed that library resources were sufficient for their needs. Teachers' perspectives were more critical: 70% rated textbook availability as "inadequate," and 80% described the condition of available textbooks as "poor." Additionally, 90% of teachers agreed that library resources were insufficient for teaching needs. Access to technology is limited; 64.7% of

students rarely use the internet for research, and 70% of teachers stated that the lack of visual aids affects their teaching effectiveness "a great deal."

3. **Teaching Practices and Classroom Environment:** Classroom observations and survey data highlight a disconnect between teacher self-perception and student experience. Teachers reported high levels of preparation (80% feel "definitely" well-prepared) and comfort in allowing questions (100%). However, students reported that 38.2% of teachers are "unclear or unhelpful," and 41.2% believe teaching methods do not cater to different learning styles at all. Observations confirmed that while teacher subject knowledge and lesson clarity were rated "High," student engagement and participation were only "Average." Furthermore, 38.2% of students reported receiving feedback on assignments "rarely," despite 60% of teachers claiming they provide feedback "very often." Large class sizes were identified by 80% of teachers as affecting their ability to provide individual attention "a great deal."
4. **Parental Involvement and Student Motivation:** Lack of parental support and low student motivation emerged as critical factors. 58.8% of students reported that their parents are "not involved at all" in their school life. This aligns with teacher perceptions, where 90% (60% "very significant" + 30% "somewhat significant") cited lack of parental involvement as a major barrier to achievement. Interviews with parents confirmed that financial constraints and time limitations due to work prevent active engagement. Consequently, student motivation is low; 40% of teachers rated students as "not very motivated," and 41.2% of students expressed disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement that "what I learn in school is useful for my future." Additionally, 67.7% of students indicated they are likely or somewhat likely to give up when facing academic difficulties.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that low academic achievement at Basura Secondary School is not caused by a single factor but by a complex interplay of socioeconomic hardships (absenteeism, hunger), inadequate learning resources (textbooks, library, technology), instructional gaps (lack of differentiated instruction and feedback), and insufficient parental support.

6.2 Conclusions

This study concludes that low academic achievement among Grade 12 students at Basura Secondary School results from four interconnected factors:

1. **Socioeconomic Barriers:** Poverty-driven absenteeism (76.5% miss school for family duties) and food insecurity (79.5% skip breakfast) directly undermine students' capacity to learn.
2. **Instructional Gaps:** A disconnect exists between teacher self-perception and student experience; while teachers report strong preparation, 41.2% of students feel teaching methods ignore diverse learning styles, and feedback remains inconsistent.
3. **Low Preparedness & Motivation:** Only 35% consistently complete homework, 55.9% never read independently, and 41.2% doubt the relevance of schooling—compounded by minimal parental involvement (58.8%).

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following actions are suggested:

1. **Improve Resource Access:** Implement a textbook lending program and upgrade library/internet resources to address the 70% teacher-reported textbook inadequacy and 76.5% student-reported library insufficiency.
2. **Enhance Teaching Practices:** Provide teacher training on differentiated instruction and feedback strategies to bridge the gap between teacher self-perception and student experience (41.2% of students feel methods ignore diverse learning styles).
3. **Support Student Well-being:** Establish a school feeding program to address the 79.5% of students attending class without breakfast, and introduce mentorship/counseling services to boost motivation and resilience.
4. **Strengthen Parental Engagement:** Create flexible communication channels (e.g., mobile updates, community meetings) to involve the 58.8% of parents currently reporting no involvement in their child's education.
5. **Policy-Level Interventions:** The Gedeo Zone Education Department should address large class sizes (affecting 80% of teachers) and increase opportunities for teacher professional development (50% report rare training).

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