Abstract
This study examined the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive research design survey. The population consists of 1578 secondary school teachers in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 250 secondary school teachers from both public and private schools. The respondents comprise of 80 male and 170 female teachers with teaching experience ranging from 1-20 years. A researcher structural questionnaire tagged: the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students. (TEPOMOAPSS) which adapted likert scale pattern was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using frequency count, and mean. Findings revealed among others that poverty of the mind makes students to have lowered expectations about future outcomes, drop out of school, and have low self esteem as well as chronic stress. The study also showed among others that inadequate emotional nurturing by parents, poor classroom engagements by teachers, obnoxious traditional beliefs and poor nutrition are other factors encouraging poverty of the mind in secondary school students of the study area. Based on these findings, the study recommended among others that teachers in the area should be given adequate training on how to identify and engage students suffering from poverty of the mind.

Keywords: Effects, Poverty of the Mind, Academic Performance, Students.

Introduction
An impressive academic performance in scholars like any other worth-while achievement requires a prolific and positive mindset. The mind is normally seen as the centre of creative ideas. If the mind is not properly trained, it affects personal development and academic performance. Poverty of the mind is regarded as poor self-concept or image, a feeling of inadequacy and lack of will to achieve the object of one’s desires. Students who are poor at the mind tend to lack resolute determination and the will to succeed. They are not motivated, they lack unwavering faith in achieving anything worth-while, they are contented in their misery – “little world” and are wishful thinkers.
Material poverty is generally seen as lack of basic human needs such as clean water, nutrition, health-care, education, shelter, transportation and others. This type of poverty is said to exist when people or individuals lack the means of satisfying basic needs. Such non-satisfaction reflects and tells on various facets of the individual including their academic performance.

Academic performance is viewed as how students carry out their academic work. It also refers to as the score or grades obtained by students in examination in their various schools. It could be high academic performance which means good pass or low academic performance which means failure.

One might ask: is there a nexus between socio-economic status and poverty of the mind? According to Butterworth, Olesen, & Leach, (2012), low socioeconomic and the accompanying financial hardships are correlated to depressive symptoms. One reason many students seem unmotivated when it comes to academic work is lack of hope and optimism. For students to be at their peak of academic performance, their body needs proper nourishments. It is now beyond dispute that there is a mind-body connection for optimal academic performance. When the body is free from tension, as a result of high or middle socioeconomic status devoid of material poverty, the mind is clear, calm and focused as well.

Also, strong, secure relationships devoid of poverty and lack, help to stabilize children emotionally and provide the core guidance needed to build life long skills. Children who grew up with such relationships learn healthy, appropriate emotional responses to everyday situations which ultimately transcends into their psychological dispositions in academic performance later in life. On the contrary, children raised in homes where there is abject poverty often fail to learn these responses to the detriment of their academic performance later in life. Secondary school students who are poor in the mind always see themselves as “never-do well” they lack the necessary self-confidence to the mastery of their academic work. According to Harris (2006), complex web of social relationships which student experience with peers and adult in the school and among family members exerts a much greater impact on their academic performance and cognitive capacity.

In terms of academic, mindset is a crucial attitude for both students and teachers. A student’s attitude about learning is a moderately robust predictive factor of academic achievement (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck 2007). Taken together, students’ mind-set and teacher-support can form either a significant asset or a serious liability. When both teachers and students believe that students have a fixed amount of “smarts” that cannot be increased, students are far more likely to disengage. Conversely, when students have positive attitudes about their own learning capacity, and when teachers focus on growth and change rather than on having students reach arbitrary milestones – a strategy that leaves students more vulnerable to negative feedback and thus more likely to disengage from challenging learning opportunities hence increasing students’ engagement (Mangels, Butterfield, lamb, Good, & Dweck, 2006). Also Jensen, (2013), opined that if students think that failure or low performance is likely to be, they will probably not bother to try similarly, if they think they are not smart and cannot succeed they will probably not put up any effort.

Many low socio-economic students face emotional and social instability which is integral to their psychological dispositions – mindset. Typically, the weak or anxiously attachments formed by infants in poverty become the basis for full-blown insecurity during the early childhood years. However, the overall goal of this study is to investigate the influence of
poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students of Abakaliki Local government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem**
National Bureau of Statistics (2015) ranked Ebonyi State as the tenth poorest state in Nigeria with poverty rate of 73.6%. Abakaliki local government area (the study area) is one of the 13 local government areas in the state. The study area is made up of inhabitants who are mostly peasant farmers. They depend wholly on merger agricultural produce from their farms as means of livelihood. This indicates abundance of low income families in the area. This socioeconomic background of most families in the area has a tremendous psychological implications for secondary students from such homes vis-à-vis their academic performances. According to Jensen, (2013), many low socio-economic students face emotional and social instability. Students require healthy learning and exploration for optimal brain development. Unfortunately, impoverished families tend to have a higher prevalence of such adverse factors as teen motherhood, depression and inadequate health care all of which lead to decreased sensitivity toward the students. Furthermore, economic hardship makes it more difficult for caregivers to create the trusting environments that build students’ secure attachments. Social dysfunction may inhibit student’s ability to work well in cooperative groups, quite possibly leading to the exclusion by group members who believe they are not “doing their part” or “pulling their share of load”. This exclusion and the attendant reduction in collaboration and exchange of information exacerbates at risk students leading to shaky academic performance. In view of the above therefore, the problem of this study is summed up with the question: What effect does poverty of the mind have on the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki local government area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

**Purpose of the Study**
The general purpose of this study is to examine the cause of poverty of the mind in the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

(i) Examine the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance on secondary school students in Abakaliki local government area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
(ii) Determine the factors encouraging poverty of the mind among secondary school students
(iii) Find out remedies to the effect of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki local government area of Ebonyi State.

**Research Questions**
1. What are the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki local government area, Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
2. What are the factors encouraging poverty of the mind among students?
3. What are the possible remedies to the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of students in Abakaliki Local Government Area, Ebonyi State?
Significance of the Study
In his higher nature, man is limitless. In the realm of mind, of character and of spirit there are no limitations except those which he imposes upon himself and, no man reflects deeply without realizing that the possibilities of growth in his true and higher being are empirically infinite. The result of this study will arouse in students with poverty of the mind a profound sense of intrinsic worth and greatness, as well as a deep reverence for themselves thus awakening in them a deep sense of limitless possibilities. It will also educate the general public on the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of students. Furthermore, this research will be of immense contribution to the body of literature in the area of the effects of personality traits on students’ academic performance, thereby opening up a new vista of research on the subject especially on the study area. Finally, the study will enlighten secondary school teachers in the study area as well as in Nigeria generally on the need to adopt appropriate teaching intervention/engagement in handling students with poverty of the mind.

Methodology
This study employed descriptive research design survey. The population consists of 1578 secondary school teachers in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria simple random sampling technique was used to select 250 secondary school teachers from both public and private schools drawn from 30 schools. The participants comprise of 80 male and 170 female teachers with teaching experience ranging from 1 – 20 years. The disparity between male and female teachers is based on the fact that there are more female than male teachers in the area. A 15 item constructed questionnaire titled the effect of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students questionnaire (TEPOMOAPSS) which adapted likert scale type was used. The instrument was constructively criticized and validated by two (2) test experts in measurement and evaluation and their constructive criticism and amendments were effected on the final copy. A test re-test method was used on the instrument and a reliability coefficient of 0.84 was realized. This was considered high enough to ensure the reliability of the instrument. Data obtained following the administration of questionnaire was analysed using frequency count and mean. The cut off point for the analysis was 2.5 (i.e., mean = 2.5). Therefore, any item with a mean of 2.5 and above was regarded as agreed while mean below 2.5 was regarded as disagreed.

Results
The results of the findings are presented as follows:

Research question 1: What are the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State?
Table 1: Mean values of effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of secondary school students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA (4)</th>
<th>A (3)</th>
<th>D (2)</th>
<th>SD (1)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>RX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Secondary school students with poverty of mind performs very low on tests of intelligence.</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Secondary school students with poverty of the mind have lowered expectations about future outcomes.</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Secondary school students with poverty of the mind usually experience a demotivating disconnect between school world and home lives thereby dropping out from school</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Secondary school students with poverty of the mind are subject to acute stress which influences their academic performance</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Secondary school students with poverty of the mind find it difficult to put in lots of efforts into their academic work.</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents in research question 1: table 1, admitted that secondary school students that suffer from poverty of the mind perform very low on tests of intelligence, have lower expectations about future outcomes, have a demotivating disconnect between school world and home life leading to dropout, find it very difficult to put a lot of effort in their academic work and are subject to acute stress with mean scores of (3.6), (3.0), (2.8), (2.6) and (3.4) respectively.

Research question 2: What are the factors encouraging poverty of the mind among secondary school students?

Table 2: Mean scores of factors encouraging poverty of the mind among secondary school students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA (4)</th>
<th>A (3)</th>
<th>D (2)</th>
<th>SD (1)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>RX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Poor classroom engagements by the teachers encourages poverty of the mind among students.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Inadequate emotional nurturing by parents results to poverty of the mind which affects the academic performance of secondary school students.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Low cognitive capacity encourages poverty of the mind in secondary school students</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Poor nutrition encourages poverty of the mind in secondary school students</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Obnoxious traditional beliefs encourages poverty of the mind in secondary school students</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents in research question 2: table 2, all concurred that poor engagements by teachers, inadequate emotional nurturing, low cognitive capacity, poor nutrition and obnoxious cultural/traditional beliefs encourages poverty of the mind-set among secondary school students with mean scores of (3.3), (3.3), (3.7), (3.5), (3.3)

**Research question 3:** What are possible solutions to the effects of poverty of the mind on the academic performance of students in Abakaliki L.G.A. of Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

**Table 3:** Mean values of possible solutions to the effects of poverty of the mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA (4)</th>
<th>A (3)</th>
<th>D (2)</th>
<th>SD (1)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>RX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Self-determination skills should be integrated into secondary school curriculum.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Teachers should use special engagement techniques peculiar to students with poverty of the mind.</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>More guidance counselors should be employed to help in the identification of students with poverty of the mind/diagnosis.</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Organizing self-development symposia in secondary schools regularly</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Advocacy of parental guidance and orientation can assuage poverty of the mind among secondary school students.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Dx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents in research question 3, table 3 agree that inclusion of self-determination skills into academic curriculum of secondary schools, special engagement techniques by teachers, employment of more guidance, counselors in secondary schools, organizing self developing/grooming symposia in schools are some of the possible solutions to the problem of poverty of the mind among secondary school students with mean values of (2.5), (3.7), (2.8) and (3.2) respectively. They however, disagree that advocacy of parental guidance is not a panacea to the problem of poverty of the mind among secondary school students with a mean score of (2.3).

**Discussion of Findings**

The respondents in research question 1: table 1, all agreed that secondary school students with poverty of the mind perform very low on tests of intelligence. This means that secondary school students in the study area who are poor at the mind are more likely to fail courses or drop out of school. Poverty of the mind is strongly associated with a number of measures of cognitive ability including IQ, grade retention level and literacy. This entails that the academic performance of secondary school students in the area who are poor at the mind are adversely affected. Also, the respondents agree that secondary school students in Abakaliki local government area, Ebonyi State who are affected by poverty of the mind have lowered expectations about future outcomes. The implication is that such students have negative view of the future due to lack of intrinsic motivation. The future is normally bleak for them. They do not have high hopes, and expectations about life generally, this is in tandem with Robb, Simon & Wardle (2009) who opined that lower socio-economic status often correlates with negative view of the future and Odeen, Theorell, Leineweber, Erickson & Ursin (2012) also
submitted that positive response outcome expectancy (“coping”) is associated with low subjective socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the findings are in line with Jensen (2013) who stated that if students think failure or low performance is likely they will probably not bother to try. Similarly, if they think they are not smart enough and cannot succeed, they will probably not put out any effort. The respondents also agreed that secondary school students in the study area experience a demotivating disconnect between school world and their home lives thereby dropping out of school. This obviously means that students with poverty of the mind are practical about what motivates them. They want to know who their teacher really is, and they want the teaching to connect to their world. When teachers do not connect personally, students with poverty of the mind are less likely to trust them. The implication here is that secondary school teachers in the study area must make connections to low socioeconomic students’ culture in ways that will help the students see a variable reason to play the academic “game”. When teachers remain ignorant of their student’s culture, students usually experience a demotivating disconnect between the school world and their home life (Lindsey, Karns & Myatt, 2010).

The respondents also agree that secondary school students in the study area with poverty of the mind experience acute/chronic stress which influences their academic performance negatively. This entails that such students who come from stressful home environment tend to channel their stress into disruptive behavior at school. They tend to be less able to develop a healthy social and academic life. this is in line with the findings of Degramo, Forgatch & Martinez, (1999) who upholds that socioeconomic status correlates positively with good parenting which research has found improves academic performance. The respondents also agreed that secondary school students with poverty of the mind find it difficult to put in lots of efforts in their academic world. This is predicated on their background which affects their intrinsic motivation and attitude in the school.

The respondents in research question 2, table 2, agreed that poor classroom engagements by secondary school teachers exacerbates poverty of the mind in students. This means that when teachers are not focused to look closely to the psychological and emotional needs of students especially those suffering from poverty of the mind; it worsens their condition which invariably has integral/colossal effects on their academic performance. This also could be attributed to the level of qualification and experience of teachers in the area. According to Achilike & Achilike (2016), some teachers in Ebonyi State rural schools lack basic qualifications and skills in education while others go into teaching just to eke out a living without having the interest of their students at heart. Often, teachers do not show enough concern about the emotion of students they teach thereby giving or labeling them to have negative behavior and imploring misguided or unprofessional interventional strategies in handling such student in the classroom. This finding supports Jordan (2011) that upholds that teachers often underestimate the prevalence of negative emotions in their student’s lives and misinterpret these emotions. For example, they may view anger as a sign of student’s insubordination or lack of self-control, when it is more likely to be a symptom of depression. Teachers may unknowingly reinforce false assumption that certain students do not have the “mental strength” or “staying power” to succeed, and that belief can hurt student’s performance (Miller, 2012). Such ugly circumstance substantially affects student’s ability to recruit their cognitive resources to sustain learning over time. Psychologically, teacher-support is essential to academic success of students suffering from poverty of the mind, many of whom do not believe in their capacity to learn and grow.
The respondents also agreed that inadequate emotional nurturing by parents affects academic performance of secondary school students. This implies that if students are not properly nurtured emotionally, it has an impending extraordinary influence on their academic achievement. Early in life, unreliable emotional interactions can lead to diminished social skills. According to Jensen (2013), strong relationships help to stabilize a child’s behavior and provide the guidance needed to build lifelong social skills. Unfortunately, parents living in poverty do not always devote time to have consistent emotional interactions with their children. Without those interactions, children can have difficult time regulating their emotions and forming healthy relationship with teachers or peers. Still on research question 2, the respondents agreed that low cognitive capacity encourages poverty of the mind among secondary school students. These findings agrees with that of Coon (2000), who stated that students from low socioeconomic families, suffering from poverty of the mind do not believe in their capacity to learn. He asserts that when families must cope with poverty, the risk that children must cope with deprivation is magnified. By age five, children who grow up in poor homes have lower IQs. They are more fearful, unhappy and prone to hostile behavior.

The respondents also agreed that poor nutrition encourages poverty of the mind among secondary school students. According to Saposky (2005), physical, mental and emotional health, support engagement and learning. For a student to be physically, mentally and emotionally fit, he or she must be feed very well, hence the nexus between poor nutrition and poverty of the mind. When students do not eat well, or when they do not eat at all, their behaviours suffer and have tougher time learning. Furthermore, the study conducted by Taki (2010), shows that poor nutrition at breakfast affects gray-matters mass in students’ brain. His findings also shows that deficiency in minerals are linked to weaker memory and low levels of certain nutrients such as omega – 3 and fatty acids are linked with depressions. Research question 3, table 3 concentrated on the remedies to the effect of poverty of the mind. The respondents all agreed that inclusion of self-determination skills in secondary schools will help abate incidences of poverty of the mind among secondary school students in the study area. This will enable students with poverty of the mind to set goals and take initiative to attain these goals. It will strengthen the belief of the students with poverty of the mind that they can control their destiny.

The respondents also agreed that teachers using special teaching techniques peculiar to students with poverty of the mind will help ameliorate their condition. This means that secondary school teachers in the area must make connections to low socioeconomic students suffering from poverty of the mind in a way that will help improve them. The respondents also agreed that guidance counselors are needed to mediate in the academic activities of secondary school students suffering from poverty of the mind. Since such affected secondary school students mind battles with low self concept, therefore, the need for guidance counselors cannot be overemphasized. Guidance counselors can help them overcome their struggles with cognitive deficits which could hinder bring impressive academic performance. Respondents also agreed that organizing self-development symposia in secondary schools regularly is a suitable panacea to the problems of poverty of the mind among secondary school students in the study area. This means that motivational talks from such programs can help stimulate and change the mindset of students suffering from poverty of the mind. Motivational talks are inestimable “meals” for learners that energize their inner being. The respondents on research question 3 however disagreed that advocacy of parental guidance cannot have a significant impact in assuaging the mind problem of secondary school students.
suffering from poverty of the mind. Since their parents are mostly poor, they will be concerned more on how to make ends meet instead of devoting adequate time to look after their children.

**Conclusion**

Poverty of the mind is a wrong mental attitude which can be corrected. Poverty of the mind has a nexus with academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. Students from impoverished families are more likely to have problems in school than students who come from middle or upper class families. This study has x-rayed the link between poverty of the mind and academic performance of secondary school students. Poverty of the mind makes students to have lower expectations about the future, experience a demotivating disconnect between school world and home life thereby dropping out of school, have low self-concept and also experience acute stress which affects their academic performance.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations were made:

(i) Teachers in secondary schools in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State should be given professional training/grooming in identification and engagements of students with poverty of the mind. Research shows that effective engagement of students with poverty of the mind reveals expansion of student’s cognitive capacity and increased motivation.

(ii) Since poverty is said to be a state of the mind, regular symposia should be organized by secondary school managers in the study area geared towards motivating and encouraging low socio-economic status student with poverty of the mind.

(iii) Government should intensify youth empowerment programs that are geared towards poverty alleviation. This will reduce material poverty among youths which is either directly or indirectly related to poverty of the mind.

**References**


