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## How Teachers Perceive Students' Socioeconomic Background and Academic Performance in Charter Schools

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Concordia University–Portland  
College of Education  
Doctorate of Education Program

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How Teachers Perceive Students' Socioeconomic Background and Academic Performance in  
Charter Schools

Brittany Strickland  
Concordia University–Portland  
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in  
Higher Education

Jillian Skelton, Ed.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Concordia University–Portland

2019

## **Abstract**

Teachers represent the frontline of education and many of them find themselves working daily with impoverished students. Teachers' qualitative perceptions are useful for developing solutions to the problem of educating diverse students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in charter schools. The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low socioeconomic status (SES) students and their academic performance. A qualitative design and a case study methodology were used with two charter schools, including 45 participating teachers. Results from questionnaires and interviews ensured a sufficient understanding of the phenomenon. The collected information was coded and analyzed to identify the major themes. The three major themes included parents' occupation and level of education, family income, and education policies. The results indicated that socioeconomic background and academic policies influence on academic performance. The findings might have a significant influence on theory, practice, and future studies on the relationships between education quality or academic performance and SES.

*Keywords:* low socioeconomic, academic performances, charter schools, teachers' perception, demographics

## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to several people who are exceptional and were very helpful during this journey. First, my husband, Demond Strickland, supported me throughout this process. On days I wanted to give up, he kept encouraging me to make it to the finish line. He knew the exact words to say at the right time, especially when I felt that I had nothing else to give.

Special acknowledgements also include my son, Jace. At times he somehow sensed the stressfulness of my attempts to juggle his swimming, soccer, and school schedules as I met the demands of my work and study sessions. Jace would often say, "It's okay, Mom! You got this!" My son encouraged me in so many ways without being cognitive of his support. My son has been one of the foremost motivational sources in my quest to achieve the highest educational degree possible. Achieving this degree and setting an example for Jace will hopefully be a catalyst toward him seeking to fulfill his own educational desires and accomplishments.

I also dedicate this study to my grandmother, Beatrice Graham, who passed away seven years ago. Her desire was that her grandchildren would accomplish the highest of educational goals, even though most were not a realistic possibility during her lifetime. She always prayed for my success and related her encouraging words to biblical scriptures from time to time. I am saddened that she did not witness this journey, but I know she is heavenly happy at my accomplishments.

Last, but not least, I dedicate this study to my father, David Stuart Sr. who has been a consistent source of encouragement through this journey. I am grateful for the discussions and the lengthy conferences.

## **Acknowledgments**

The time has finally come! From the beginning of the coursework, I never imagined how much dedication and commitment would be needed to complete the work. However, I am forever grateful I didn't have to take this journey alone, for I had great people who helped me along the way. I am thankful for Dr. Jillian Skelton, my dissertation chair at Concordia University—Portland. You have been phenomenal at making sure I met my deadlines on time. You always kept me ahead so I would never fall behind. Every time I sought your advice and wisdom, you were available with suggestions to prepare me for the end of my dissertation. I am also grateful for my committee members, Dr. Dana Shelton, my Content Specialist, and Dr. Derrick Tennial, my Content Reader. I offer a special thanks to my sister, Bridgette Hicks, your support meant a lot during this journey. To all my family, friends and colleagues who decreed and declared, “Dr. Strickland” in advance, I wholeheartedly appreciate each of you.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

Socioeconomic status (SES) is determined by evaluating an individual's or family's economic and social standing in a community relative to education, income, and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2019). Wells (2000) argued that socioeconomic background is the most significant construct in determining achievements. Additionally, there has been an emphasis on the significance of higher-level SES students having access to tutors and reference material in improving their academic performance. According to OECD (2012), poverty-level SES status represents an indisputable predictor of academic struggle. Children of low SES and disadvantaged parents eventually have academic challenges (OECD, 2012). Darrow (2016) noted that low-SES students lack preparedness to attend school, academic achievement, and involved parents.

A more effective way to improve student performance and learning involves applying interventions based on strong education policies (UNESCO, 2014). In developing countries with weak or no education policies, low-quality education paralyzes economic growth (Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). The quality of education should be strengthened by both the government and school (OECD, 2012). Recently, the debate on education aid policy shifted from promoting school access to improving the quality of student learning to support economic development (UNESCO, 2014). Globally, 250-million children have literacy deficits, despite 50% of the world's children attending school for at least four years (UNESCO, 2014).

An investment in human capital through education policy has been a significant priority for developing countries since World War II ended in 1945 (UNESCO, 2014). With many African nations gaining independence from colonial powers in the 1970s and 1980s, education

aid was one of the key agendas to be focused on, putting pressure on the improvement of education access through implementing laws concerning constructions of schools and providing learning resources (Hale, 2001; UNESCO, 2014). The United Nations produced new education policies to enhance the quality of education worldwide and expected the new policies to ensure the enhancement of productivity, economic development and growth, improvement of teaching abilities through teacher training programs, and effective use of learning materials (Duflo, 2015; Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). Consistent efforts have been made internationally to ensure the enhancement of quality and equality in education among all children (UNESCO, 2014).

Academic achievement by public school students has been a major priority of the United States government according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012). When the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was signed into law in 2002, all public schools were tasked with ensuring their students could earn scores on state assessments that indicated they had attained academic proficiencies as required in mathematics and reading (Duflo, 2015). NCLB was signed into law to force a sense of urgency among administrators as well as teachers in public schools throughout the country. The legislation caused discussions about the demographic and socioeconomic variables that affect student achievement. Because SES influences academic performance, state assessments needed to be equitable measurements of academic ability among all public students across the nation (Essex, 2002; Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). Thus, educational improvement is a priority for every state. Additionally, increasing educational attainment levels improves individuals and society in terms of increased economic growth, socioeconomic status, and social integrations such as criminal justice and healthcare costs (OECD, 2012; Wiliam & Thompson, 2017; Wößmann & Schütz, 2006).

Within the parameters of the nation's emphasis on student achievement, teachers work to create productive learning environments and to engage and support students equally with the aim of achieving the best performance for their respective schools (William & Thompson, 2017). The analysis of education performance can be used to explore more than grades or assessment test results. Researchers can explore the quality of a learning environment as well as how teachers influence the lives of their students (Darrow, 2016). Though many educators understand that low SES influences low-level academic performance, they may not fully understand that their students do not have their basic needs met, which results in students lacking appropriate development physically or mentally (Darrow, 2016). Even though public schools have no authority over the economic statuses of their students, public schools are held accountable when their students of low SES underperform according to prerequired academic standards and benchmarks. The SES found in a school's location represents a significant determinant of the school learning environment and the likelihood of meeting performance mandates (Schaefer, 2008; Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Therefore, teachers are also affected by the learning challenges their low-SES students bring into their classrooms.

### **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

Past researchers conducted studies addressing equality in resource distribution and academic performance. In studies by Darrow (2016) and Malin, Bragg, and Hackmann (2017), the SES of an individual significantly influenced their personal and societal development. The quality of one's living—which is dictated by both the nature of their environment and financial ability—determined the extent to which they make significant achievements in life. Academic achievement is also believed to be influenced by these factors. Because most research about the role of teachers in the achievement of students from low SES has been quantitative, there was a



gap in the body of knowledge about their qualitative perceptions that might be useful to developing solutions to the problem of educating poor, diverse students in charter schools. When investigating teachers' perceptions of student performance in marginalized or neighborhoods of low-SES families who are likely to be African American and Hispanic, consideration of the teachers working in schools serving higher SES neighborhoods would improve the depth provided in the findings of such research.

From the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, all the writers offered similar thoughts on the academic effects of students living in low-income households. However, most of the low-SES learners represent Hispanic and African American households (Diament, 2015; Dulgerian, 2016). Additionally, these students' schools operate in areas that have higher crime rates that contribute to higher turnover rates for talented teachers who do not believe they are safe at work, in the classroom, and on the campus (Adams et al., 2013; Tucker, 1999). These school's facilities are also likely to be poorly maintained, which can be demotivating to educators and learners. Low-SES neighborhoods also contribute negatively to students' concentration and ability to understand concepts (Darrow, 2016; Newton, 2012).

These aspects of neighborhood needs, such as access to food, safety, and security, suggest that Maslow's hierarchy of needs represents an avenue for understanding the psychological transformations in human beings that take place through the cycle of life. The needs of people evolve as they move from one stage of life to another (Maslow, 2014). Maslow's theory provides a basis for understanding the idea of motivation as a product of human development (Stoyanov, 2017). Human need begins as physiological to support biological life, graduates toward achieving safety, moves upward into feeling love and belongingness, evolves into self-esteem, and ultimately culminates in self-actualization (Rodulfo, 2018). The ideas of

Maslow help in explaining why people seek different things at different points in life and why children need to have the mandatory three basic needs of physiology, safety, and belongingness met in school in order to be academically successful.

Lack of equality leads to a regional imbalance in development which results in disparities in socioeconomic backgrounds (UNESCO, 2014). In low-SES neighborhoods, students do not have access to the basic facilities required for learning and lack the resources to perform well. Consequently, performance differences are found between learners attending schools located in high- and low-SES areas. The availability of better school facilities and adequate supplies creates a conducive learning environment contributing to student achievement in areas representing low-SES (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005; Roeser, Urdan, & Stephens, 2009).

Riley and Coleman (2011) opposed using the better facilities argument. They argued that simply building better facilities was insufficient to warrant improved school performance among disadvantaged learners. The differential allocations of resources could generate chaos for students living with insufficient basic services and commodities such as healthcare and security (Riley & Coleman, 2011). The disruptions to students' lives caused by the chaos could lead to pressure on governmental and elected leaders by the citizenry due to concerns about inequalities in resource allocation and regional development imbalances in the presence of variable SES. Consequently, SES divides society into classes and affects the development of its individual members and determines parents' availability to mentor and coach their children as well as their ability to cater to their children's developmental needs. Parents contribute to their children's achievements in life who support their children's academic wellness. Their ability to secure good schools for their children as well as provide for their children's basic needs represent significant determinants of their children's academic performance.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The relationship between SES and academic performance has been debated over a long time and mostly among educators (UNESCO, 2014). Education remains an essential requirement for a nation's growth in the present and future generations, both in the United States and worldwide (Duflo, 2015). However, the education offered has not been an economically fulfilling one because the nation's educational results have not benefitted all SES classes equally. According to Darrow (2016), schools have produced negative results because the quality of the learning being offered is too low to sustain the growth and development of the country. Heyman (2008) argued that children with low socioeconomic backgrounds generate inadequate academic performance in school. Though it has been stated that social status is the main factor in academic performance, it is not necessarily correct because of many other factors (Heyman, 2008). Other factors determining academic success include students' age, gender, cultural background, race, parental background, and genetics.

SES also has an association with personal differences in intelligence test scores where students from lower SES show lower average performance than students from families with higher SES (Von Stumm & Plomin, 2015). According to Von Stumm and Plomin's (2015) findings, SES was mostly associated with a family high SES in infancy that offered a more significant advantage on gains of intelligence during childhood. Children from families with low SES scored an average of six fewer IQ score points at two years old than children the same age from higher SES families (Von Stumm & Plomin, 2015). Alternatively, some children portray substantial gains in intelligence, regardless of SES, while other children appear to lose IQ test points between infancy and adolescence (Tucker-Drob & Briley, 2014). Teachers represent the frontline of education and work daily with impoverished students suggesting an association

between teachers' and students' academic achievement in school, family background, and school environment (Jerrim, 2015). Because most research about the role of teachers in the achievement of students from low SES has been quantitative, there was a gap in the body of knowledge about their qualitative perceptions that might be useful to developing solutions to the problem of educating poor, diverse students in charter schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance. I explored teachers' beliefs about what factors contribute to performance patterns, such as student SES. Further, I collected teachers' views on whether students' SES directly affected academic performance in charter schools. In this regard, I explored the teachers' perceptions of the different ways through which their students' SES and family backgrounds influenced students' academic performance as well as the development of education policies in charter schools. I collected data from teachers working in two charter schools in Texas—one from a school located in an environment serving high-SES families and one from a school serving low-SES families.

### **Justification of the Study**

The process of education aims at enhancing the academic performance of the students. According to Darrow (2016), only a holistic approach can yield the anticipated learning outcomes of students. Academic performance is dependent on many constructs like intelligence, SES, personal characteristics, attitude, values, and environment (Darrow, 2016). Society is divided into many economic classes and on the basis of parent's affiliation with a certain class, they send their children to schools accordingly. Hence, parental SES is an important factor that contributes to academic achievement (Darrow, 2016).

## **Objectives of the Study**

**Main objective.** The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance.

**Specific objectives.** First, I explored teachers' beliefs about the factors that contribute to performance patterns, such as student SES. Second, I collected teachers' views about the academic effects of low-SES backgrounds on students' academic performance in charter schools. Third, I explored the teachers' perceptions about the different ways the socioeconomic factors of their students' backgrounds influence academic performance as well as education policies.

## **Research Questions**

There were two research questions that guided this study to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance:

RQ1: How do teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?

The study generated options for solving the problem of educating children from low SES in alignment with the above-listed objectives and research questions. Successful achievement of these targets might generate research significance as discussed in the following section.

## **Significance of the Study**

This research was designed to understand teachers' experience with the real effects of SES-oriented achievement gaps, which occur due to the factors of parental level of education,

occupational status, and income (West, 2007). The results of this study could assist educators who make important decisions daily about what education reforms might be beneficial to students from all SES classes who need to meet academic achievement targets. Educators, including teachers as well as tutors, could start by assessing the integral parts of the learning process, improving pedagogies to focus on how students learn, and using appropriately integrated learning activities.

Additionally, the findings offered reform opportunities for school administrators and heads of academic departments based on the charter schoolteachers' experiences. Child development specialists, human resources personnel, and education policymakers wishing to improve student performance among low-SES students might also benefit from the findings (Roeser et al., 2009). This study's findings could benefit policymakers on school boards, legislatures, and state education agencies who need guidance to solve the problem of academic performance gaps from children of low-SES and to implement reforms that benefit all students. Finally, future researchers may wish to complete additional research to support or refute the findings of this study.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Academic performance.** This term refers to the outcome after assessing students on high-stakes accountability or subject area examinations (Darrow, 2016).

**Achievement gap.** The achievement gap, as applied in this study, represents a difference in the academic success between students from affluent backgrounds and students from low-SES backgrounds (Winans-Solis, 2014).

**Education.** Education is the process of imparting knowledge and skills especially in a school, university, or college (Ornstein, Levine, Gutek, & Vocke, 2017).

**Income.** This term refers to the monetary payments received from offering goods and services or derived from other sources, for example from rents and investments (Darrow, 2016).

**Occupation.** Employment in a job serves as a source of living and represents the work content of a person in a formal or informal occupation that requires particular levels of education and skill and generates an income (Darrow, 2016).

**Parental involvement in education.** It refers to the amount of participation a parent has in terms of school and their child's life (Darrow, 2016).

**Socioeconomic status.** SES represents a combination of the social and economic factors affecting household opportunity and income (American Psychological Association, 2019).

**Student performance.** This term represents the percentage of students within any given school who earns scores on educational assessments and examinations (Darrow, 2016).

### **Limitations of the Study**

The findings were limited due to the lack of information teachers had for understanding student SES. The objective responses could not be separated from the subjective responses; the study collects respondents' perception on selected topics and thus, is subject for influence by personal attributes and experiences, objective, while others are not, the subjective. These factors might have caused bias to affect the findings and the transferability of the findings. The teachers' biases might have affected the data as well as the interpretation of the data. Thus, the findings might not transfer to charter schools in other areas or to other types of schools across the nation. The lack of availability of information from secondary sources on the influence of SES on academic performance could have affected the transferability of the research findings.

## **Delimitations of the Study**

The study was based on interactions with teachers who served students from two charter schools. The two selected schools provided a better representation of institutions located in both high and low SES neighborhoods. The delimitations required the teachers participating to have taught at the current charter schools for at least one year and to have held substantial knowledge of student performance, the influence of educational policies and structures on student performance, and adequate information on the influence of SES on student performance in the charter school.

## **Assumptions of the Study**

I assumed the participants would fully participate by giving the requested information truthfully and honestly, especially because I assured them that the information they provided was used for academic purposes, they might benefit from the findings, and their identities would be concealed by the use of pseudonyms. I assumed the research design and methodology used in the study would produce sufficient data to develop conclusions. Finally, I assumed that the sample of teachers would represent the entire teacher populations of the two charter schools.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided information about the problem of low SES status affecting children's academic performance. The main concern and constant debate involved how the SES of students' families affects learning and how to overcome its influences on student achievement. The main aim of this research was to understand charter schoolteachers' perceptions of academic performance and SES. The study was necessary to help educators to understand constructs affecting academic performance, such as SES affecting family environments and local



communities. The study's significance could lead to educators determining efficient education reforms for benefiting all students regardless of their economic status.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 included a brief introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, delimitations and summary. Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature related to poverty and school success along with sections about the historical perspective of SES, reasons for childhood poverty, and the effects of poverty on child development, and SES and school achievement and summary. Chapter 3 contained the research methods used in the study, including population, design, data collection, data analysis, research questions, and hypotheses. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study. Chapter 5 finalized the study with a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction to the Literature Review**

Chapter 1 provided a detailed introduction to the current study's problem with an illustrative theoretical background review. Additionally, the chapter highlighted the various objectives set to be achieved through the conduction of the research as well as its rationale and significance. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance.

Chapter 2 contains critical analysis and review of the various literature and assertions relevant to the study. The analysis is specifically focused on the literature relevant to the research objectives as outlined in the previous chapter. Additionally, the literature review demonstrates the research gap with previous literature that led to the current study and the effort to bridge the knowledge gap. Thus, the literature review contains a conceptual framework on the interrelationship between the various research constructs, a review of the research and methodological literature, a review of the methodological issues in the available studies, a synthesis of research findings, as well as a critique of past literature.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Most disadvantaged learners are from low-SES backgrounds that have a direct negative effect on their education (Diament, 2015; Dulgerian, 2016). Most Title I schools operate in areas with high crime rates and concerns about individual safety as concerns that contribute to high turnover rates of talented teachers (Adams et al., 2013). These Title I school facilities are also likely to have a multitude of maintenance and safety issues that represent demotivating factors

for both teachers and students. The neighborhoods in which learners of low-SES live affect their concentration and understanding of concepts during school hours (Darrow, 2016; Newton, 2012).

UNESCO (2014) encouraged governments to enact policies that could reduce the effects of poverty in education since it contributes to cycles of insecurity within neighborhoods. If learners of economic disadvantage had appropriately safe neighborhoods and school facilities, they could concentrate on their studies rather than having to keep on worrying about such things they cannot control as security and infrastructures (Roeser et al., 2009). Worry reduces students' concentration on academics.

However, most state and national government budgets do not include adequate funding for Title I schools, even though funds specific to the Title I low-SES serving schools have been allocated annually (Malin et al., 2017; Roeser et al., 2009). Therefore, there might be minimal, if any, provision to expand or improve existing schools, housing, and transport facilities in neighborhoods of low SES (Roeser et al., 2009). Contributing high levels of funding to neighborhoods of low SES could mean that the funds would have to be redirected from schools and areas serving middle- and high-SES society members (Cox, 2002; Malin et al., 2017). Allocation shifts could generate chaos as a result of middle- and high-SES society members believing they would receive insufficient basic services and commodities that they have come to expect, such as healthcare, security, and education (Riley & Coleman, 2011). The disruption caused by this type of chaos could put pressure on the government to return allocations to previous levels due to requests from the middle- and high-income class members who perceive their tax base to ensure their receipt of services (Cox, 2002). Thus middle- and high-SES individuals are considered to have a more opportunity to influence governmental budgets and

school allocations based on their voting, taxation, and ability to influence critical matters in the government and society (Warlop, 2016).

These aspects of neighborhood needs, such as access to food, safety, and security, suggest that Maslow's hierarchy of needs represents an avenue for understanding the psychological transformations in human beings that take place through the cycle of life. The needs of people evolve as they move from one stage of life to another (Maslow, 2014). Maslow's theory provides a basis for understanding the idea of motivation as a product of human development (Stoyanov, 2017). Human need begins as physiological to support biological life, graduates toward achieving safety, moves upward into feeling love and belongingness, evolves into self-esteem, and ultimately culminates in self-actualization (Rodulfo, 2018). The ideas of Maslow help in explaining why people seek different things at different points in life and why children need to have the mandatory three basic needs of physiology, safety, and belongingness met in school in order to be academically successful.

Significantly, Maslow (2014) provided context for understanding the role that education plays with regard to affecting students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Teachers are often capable of understanding the impact that socioeconomic background can play in the performance of their students (McGuire, 2012). In private schools, the availability of money motivates teachers to exert themselves in teaching learners, while public schoolteachers might feel overwhelmed instead of motivated due to lack of financial and other resources. Maslow's ideals provide a basis for understanding education as an element of the capitalist framework (Pichere & Cadiat, 2015).

The application of Maslow's (2014) was used to evaluate what teachers understood about the motivations behind learners' academic performance. Further, in Chapter 5, the study makes

conclusive remarks on the issues that have been discussed throughout the work. Ultimately, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provided an underlying theoretical lens for the analysis of the data.

### **Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

Academic performance is influenced by various internal and external environment factors. While SES influences internal and external determinants of academic performance, it also influences performance directly. In a narrower concern, the understanding of how key academic wellness actors, such as teachers, view the influence of SES to student's academic performance gives more significant findings. This section offers an exploration of the various ways students' socioeconomic backgrounds influence their academic performance. Additionally, the literature depicts how education policies influence academic performance, particularly for children of low SES. Critical review and analysis of past literature relevant to the present study were conducted to steer toward the achievement of the research objectives and the provision of solutions to research questions. The research is divided into the following major factors affecting academic performance: (a) socioeconomic factors, (b) parent-oriented, (c) socioeconomic background, and (d) education policies.

**Socioeconomic factors affecting academic performance.** Numerous factors contribute to the development of an individual (Darrow, 2016). Similarly, the development of a student is affected by variables both internal and external. More specifically, the nature of the environments in which children are brought up affect their later-in-life characteristics and behaviors (Van Bergen, Van Zuijen, Bishop, & De Jong, 2016), and children's academic performance depends on the nature of their economic environments (UNESCO, 2014). In this regard, this section contains studies of the effects that students' socioeconomic backgrounds

have on their academic performance, with key consideration of students' ethnicities, such as African American and Hispanic.

There are varying findings regarding an economic environment's influence on the academic performance of learners (Adams et al., 2013). Findings emerge based on the nature of the study and methods researchers use in data collection, analysis strategies, and the population used for data collection (Winans-Solis, 2014). Students of low SES perform poorly in their academics and produce little evidence of academic skill acquisition (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017). In addition to financial status, inquiries have demonstrated the significance of the kind of school a child goes to in influencing student performance results. While inquiries about the U.S. have discovered that SES factors influence academic achievement, the school setting has a role in influencing the quality of the connection found between SES and academic achievement (Portes & MacLeod, 1996). Hipolito-Delgado and Zion (2017) found that students hailing from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds performed poorly in their academics as compared with their counterparts; the researchers related socioeconomic marginalization to the ethnic marginalization that corresponds with the financial class structure seen in the United States. According to Winans-Solis (2014), most marginalized communities in America suffer economic constraints, which implies community marginalization indicates the presence of low SES.

There have been international investigations associating children's socioeconomic statuses with their academic performance. Studies in Britain demonstrated that school resources independently affect high school graduation rates (Lupton, 2004; Sparkes, 1999). While there is less information accessible on this issue in Australia, a few examinations were performed with data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth. Australian researchers discovered that going to private non-Catholic schools led to remaining in school compared to students attending

public Australian schools (Long & Lillis, 1999; Marks, Mumford, Zaccaro, & Connelly, 2000). In India, Malabika (1989) investigated the relationship between students' SES and scholastic achievement and sought to identify differences in scholastic achievement between high, middle, and low socioeconomic groups of students living in rural and urban areas. Malabika found the mean achievement scores of the high-SES group of urban students were significantly higher than the mean achievement scores of students representing other SES groups. The mean achievement scores of rural-area students between higher SES and lower SES also differed significantly.

Autonomous or private tuition-based school students have been shown to accomplish higher achievement levels (Buckingham, 2003). While school-related factors are critical, there is again an aberrant connection to SES, as tuition-based schools are more prone to have more prominent numbers of students from high SES families, with higher scholastic capacities, and representing affluent financial assets (Buckingham, 2003). The school influence factor is affected by the variety, quality, and dispositions of instructors (Sparkes, 1999). Educators in schools serving students of low SES are more likely to have lower expectations for their students academically, which reduces student performance outcomes (Cairney & Ruge, 1998).

Students' individual qualities form a critical variable affecting scholarly achievement, and students change their behavior based on teachers' instructional techniques and expectations (Tsinidou, Gerogiannis, & Fitsilis, 2010). Importantly, teacher instruction changes as a result of students' fundamental abilities, which is important when the nature and structure of instruction changes from culture to culture (Cairney & Ruge, 1998). Social support for students by school faculty and staff and students' families represents a pivotal element in student achievement (Goddard, 2003). Parental involvement in their children's schools increases students' scholarly accomplishments (Eitle, 2005; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995). Interestingly, student sexual

orientation as well as ethnicity and parental occupation are noteworthy variables affecting student performance (Bécares & Priest, 2015; Peng & Hall, 1995; Poteat, Scheer, & Mereish, 2014). Young women have demonstrated more effective academic execution over young men in specific cases (Chambers & Schreiber, 2004).

When teachers recognize how their students are comprehending information and making positive connections between content and topics, they gain opportunities to enhance the achievement of students representing low SES (Archambault, Janosz, & Chouinard, 2012; West, 2007). Giving more instructional time in mathematics has a positive effect on the academic achievement of students from low SES backgrounds (Chatterji, 2005). Educator quality in high poverty school settings remains a critical strategy of focus (Hogrebe & Tate, 2010). Instructors drive classroom administration, and student conduct decidedly connects positively with academic accomplishment (Marsden, 2006). Instructors have been found to directly influence higher student performance in mathematics in schools serving high percentages of students of color and the financially neediest students (Casper, 2013; Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011; Little-Harrison, 2012; Liu & Wang, 2008). Teachers with high self-efficacy and social competency relate to their students more effectively and make learning conditions amicable for students; this relationship has been identified as being affected by teacher ethnicity; dialect; and childhood SES, neediness, or hardships (Freitas, 2013). Title I schools with such educators have higher likelihoods of meeting student performance requirements and targets.

Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) conducted a study to determine the relationship between SES background and academic performance as moderated by teacher quality. Rivkin et al. argued that parents and students referred often to differences in teacher quality affecting performance. Also, academic achievement is at any point a cumulative function of present and



previous family, school histories, and community. Finally, teachers have an influence on school performance based on the number of students in each classroom (Rivkin et al., 2005). Van Bergen et al. (2016) did not consider the effect of the school environment on the performance of students but determined human development was the most significant feature affecting personal growth and development.

Educators' comprehension of students' ability to discern information and make content connections, as well as of classroom flow, enhance the academic performance of students of lower SES (Archambault et al., 2012; West, 2007). Educator quality in high neediness school settings remains an essential strategy focus for change (Hogrebe & Tate, 2010). Effective educator-driven classroom administration associates positively with improvements in student performance (Marsden, 2006). Instructor effects are more articulated for mathematics fulfillment in schools serving mostly students of color (Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011). Schools giving more instructional time to mathematics showed improved achievement scores among students of low SES (Chatterji, 2005).

Bolstering instructors' abilities for arbitrating the learning of students from low SES might indeed reverse the negative academic performance gains found amongst the neediness students who might then attain scholarly accomplishment (Casper, 2013; Little-Harrison, 2012; Liu & Wang, 2008). A devoted educator with a high state of self-efficacy, social competency, and a strong ability to relate to students, either because of comparable ethnicity, dialect, childhood, or SES, can make learning conditions friendly to students (Freitas, 2013). Teachers can overcome the challenges of educating students from low SES by understanding how parents communicate and support children's academic performance at home and by training parents to be partners in learning (Duflo, 2015; Winans-Solis, 2014).

Borsato and Stroebel (2013) focused on surveys completed by 1,907 Caucasian and Latino middle school students who completed a survey and had complete school records. The school district was reported to be located in Northern California. The survey asked about whether teachers put an emphasis on good grades and on academic challenge as well as about motivation to learn, and the students' scores on the California Achievement Test were used as the dependent variable. Teacher data about classroom practices and motivations were included. Borsato and Stroebel found that teachers who provide caring classrooms and support academic challenge over grades produce higher achievement among students, regardless of race/ethnicity and while controlling for SES to keep it from being a factor affecting achievement.

Though academic performance is a multifactor product, learner background, the equitability of resources, and the structures and mandates of education policies are significant factors in educational quality improvement efforts (Muijs, 2007). These background factors can be used to improve the education equity dilemma because students of low SES and from marginalized communities experience disadvantaged access to quality educational opportunities (Muijs, 2007). The students most affected by these factors include African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, and low SES. Additional information about the influence of social background on academic performance needs further consideration.

**Parent-oriented factors affecting academic performance.** Parental enthusiasm for their children's academics might affect scholastic accomplishment even during hardship (Murphy, 2009). A clarification offered for this parental enthusiasm factor is that it may camouflage the scope of academic hazard which includes the added factors of low SES and adversity in meeting mental and physiological needs in their environments. Von Stumm and Plomin (2015) debated the effect of SES on children's intelligence. Children from families with low SES are argued to

score an average of six fewer IQ points at two years of age compared to children from families of higher SES (Von Stumm & Plomin, 2015).

Families may give elevated amounts of cognition-oriented guidance to their children in situations when the advancement of abilities is vital for showing academic learning at school (Darrow, 2016; Duflo, 2015). Specifically, parental enthusiasm for their children's academics amid the most recent year of instruction was found to improve children's cognition. Parental inclusion in children's academics likewise builds children's life-course options and academic accomplishments. Conversely, children whose mothers lack secondary school training do not produce necessary cognition for academic success, as early as the preschool years. Also, young mothers and mothers who are ignorant or jobless probably raise their children to become scholastically underachieving when contrasted with mothers who have completed high school (Darrow, 2016).

Definitively, childrearing behaviors by parents have represented a significant indicator of children's self-efficacy and flexibility in correspondence with scholarly accomplishment (Murphy, 2009). For example, guardians shield children against hardship by alleviating the effects of the hazard factors and give their children opportunities to perform as expected at school (Speight, 2010). This positive direct effect on student performance due to parental participation was found by Speight (2010) who used a nonclinical sample of 213 African American students' parents.

Gaps in teaching and students' academic accomplishments are, for the most part, associated (Graber, Nichols, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). An examination of a national survey of U.S. 10th graders and their educators indicated that both the students' impressions of their educators and their educators' states of mind affect student performance (UNESCO, 2014). This

finding supported the assertion that students of the lowest SES level frequently miss class due to dread of scholastic failure, which the students might not have had if their educators presented to them with positive states of mind (Baccellieri, 2010; West, 2007; Whitehead, 2007) . For example, Strambler and Weinstein (2010) used a sample of 111 students from California to demonstrate students' perceptions of negative instructor criticism predict downgraded student academic performance. Positive educator desires, support, and inspiration have dynamic, positive effects on student performance, especially for students of low SES (Gregory & Huang, 2013; Sorhagen, 2013; Thomas, Bierman, Thompson, Powers, & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2008).

Similar to teachers' frames of mind toward their students of low SES, school configuration, size, and atmosphere affect student achievement (Alimohamed, 2009). Students from families of low SES have significantly reduced dropout rates when attending small-sized schools rather than larger schools with 2,000 or more students. Alimohamed (2009) studied 11th grade students in West Virginia and indicated the school population and the rural geographical location of the school affect students' test scores. Children from urban and suburban schools performed with higher scores, while children of rural schools showed lower levels of academic performance.

The influence of parental SES on their children's academic results might be affected positively or negatively by the scope of additional relevant family and personal attributes (UNESCO, 2014). Financial status may additionally be connected to family structure (Darrow, 2016). Sole parent families with reduced incomes, lower educational attainment, and reduced drive to work produce children who are probably going to demonstrate reduced levels of academic achievement (Rich, 2000). However, guardians who hold low-wage earning and low-

SES occupations yet transmit high academic expectations to their children tend to have children who produce high academic achievement scores.

Resources possessed by relatives can frequently be used to intercede in showing the family's value of education by helping the children when the parent has to work. The social and the monetary aspects of financial status may have unmistakable, direct influences on students' academic results (Darrow, 2016). Social variables that include a guardian's communications about education's value have been observed to be more noteworthy than a family's ability to purchase specific products and tutors predictors of academic success (Duflo, 2015). It is contended that families with guardians who are advantaged socially, educationally, and financially cultivate increases in academic accomplishment among their children (Duflo, 2015).

According to Eurydice's (2010) European Union study findings, the differences between boys and girls in attaining academic achievement appeared during children's early grades, and boys are more likely to repeat school grades than girls. Boys tended also to be early school leavers while higher ratios of girls completed secondary school with higher grades and passing rates for achievement examinations (Eurydice, 2010; Frisancho, Krishna, Lychagin, & Yavas, 2016). Teenagers, particularly those of color, encounter circumstances in their regular daily existences that they decipher as unjustifiable (Borsato & Stroebel, 2013).

The ramifications of such deciphering by teenagers can be harmful to their academic achievement. Regardless of their young age, children of color have reported experiencing circumstances of racial/ethnic segregation and discrimination (Soto, 2007). Moreover, children observed segregation by adults as most elevated among Latinos and separation by peers as high among Asian Americans (Soto, 2007). Overall, apparent segregation was a hazard factor for children's psychosocial development and scholarly achievement (Soto, 2007). Soto's findings

bolster concerns about segregation and separation by race and ethnicity with respect to the academic achievement gap that exists between Caucasians and Latinos (Soto, 2007).

Nonetheless, Title I eligible schools with such instructors can be high accomplishing academically. Parental contributions to their children's studies, especially as far as scholarly socialization, increase students' scholarly accomplishment and affects students' general wellbeing and the aggregate academic prosperity of lower SES learners (Westerlund, Gustafsson, Theorell, Janlert, & Hammarström, 2013). Instructing guardians about academics and giving them systems to advance scholarly accomplishment with their children does expand the academic accomplishments of children of low SES. This parental education about children's academics has the capability of changing the generational neediness cycle (Winans-Solis, 2014).

Training and educating parents to help their children represent a means for buffering between the adverse effects of SES and the mandate for children to show scholastic accomplishment (Little-Harrison, 2012; Liu & Wang, 2008; Westerlund et al., 2013). According to Boggess (2010), teaching guardians and giving them systems to advance scholastic accomplishment expands the accomplishment of children of low SES and can be tools for changing the generational cycle of poverty (Boggess, 2010). Educating parents, particularly those of low SES, positively affects students' choices of proceeding with interest in science and mathematics (Winans-Solis, 2014). For instance, female students, and particularly female students of color, have been decidedly affected by help from family to pursue science and mathematics (Parker, 2013). Students' parents and guardians, as well as extended families, are essential to promoting positive academic achievement among students of low SES (Crowther-Dowey, 2013).

**Socioeconomic background factors affecting academic performance.** Wells (2000) argued that poverty leads to little academic growth and development in many families. Socioeconomic background is the most significant variable in determining student achievement and affecting the opportunities to achieve academic success (Heyman, 2008). As SES increase, families gain access to resources such as specialized help at home, tutors, and reference materials (Wells, 2000). Interestingly, Wang and Holcombe (2010) provided research findings that indicated as students' SES decreases, their academic performance decreases, irrespective of their races, ethnicities, or other marginalization status. Winans-Solis (2014) confirmed the connection between marginalization, economic status, and academic performance. Howard (2013) reiterated that learners in affluent schools enjoy privilege, security, and power, all of which positively promote their higher academic performance levels. Essentially, marginalization, both socially and economically, has a significant influence on the academic performance of learners.

Soto (2007) categorized African Americans as a disadvantaged or marginalized group in education that existed alongside low-SES regions or communities. Soto indicated that one of the ways to ameliorate the problem was to adjust systems for curriculum development and to include these students' teachers in the process. Schultz (2003) and Ornstein et al. (2017) shared this recommendation to revise education policies as a means to reduce gaps in academic achievement and educational quality. Dulgerian (2016), Adams et al. (2013), and Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2009) called for an improvement of education through the consideration of bolstering low-SES regions' schools with additional financial, curricular, and structural allocations.

The contributions of both the economic and social factors to the performance of learners in school were confirmed in empirical studies. These factors were single parent households, family structures, financial status, and neighborhood and school characteristics (OECD, 2012),

and they affected both the physical and psychological development of learners (Duflo, 2015). Furthermore, education performance is dependent on the quality of the learning environment as well as how it influences the lives of learners (Darrow, 2016). Though many educators base low SES as the cause of low academic performance, it is not always. When the basic needs of students are not met, the net result causes students not to be physically or mentally capable of generating expected academic performance (Murphy, 2009). People do not choose to be born in a family of low SES, and school leaders have no control over the economic statuses of their students. However, educators are held accountable when their students fail to achieve mandated academic performance targets (Frye-Lucas, 2003; Tippett & Wolke, 2014). In their discussion on equity in education, Riley and Coleman (2011) argued that the only way to provide a comprehensive education for all students is by ensuring equality in the distribution of resources, including finances, books, supplies, facilities, and high-quality educators.

Economic and social barriers to social success experienced by many African American children are a reality, so community-based education partnerships can be designed to self-empower African American children for academic and social success (Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Partnerships are essential when schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students are at a greater risk of facing more challenges that could result in inadequate academic performance that affects the education system's lack of internal capacity to improve learning conditions (Han, Capraro, & Capraro, 2016; Riley & Coleman, 2011). According to Riley and Coleman (2011), low performing disadvantaged schools are at risk and contain environments not conducive for successfully implementing learning policies, such as those emphasizing the teacher-student relationship. Poor relationships between teachers and students have been associated as a factor that increases the likelihood of inadequate academic performance (Riley & Coleman, 2011).



Parents of children in low performing schools are perceived as less engaged by school leaders (Darrow, 2016). According to Esler, Godber, and Christenson (2008), proactive educators systematically identify those families who have not been involved in their children's schooling and extend personalized invitations to become involved in every child's performance (Dumont, Istance, & Benavides, 2010). Efficient communication between parents and schools provides for better coordination between learning activities both at home and school (Duflo, 2016; Winans-Solis, 2014). Thus, there are ways to use education policies to improve the academic achievement of students representing lower SES levels.

**Education policies affecting academic performance, particularly in Title I schools and schools serving students of low SES.** The structure of the policies governing education influences the procedures utilized in the allocation of resources and enhancement of learner motivation. Education policy has been evolving since World War II ended. Investing in human capital through education policy has been a priority for developing countries after the post-World War II period. The expectations of the post-World War II policies were the enhancement of productivity, development and economic growth, teaching abilities through training teachers, and upgrading learning materials in an effective way to enhance the quality of education (Duflo, 2015; Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016).

For example, as many African nations gained independence from colonialism in the 1970s and 80s, education aid was applied internationally as one of the top agendas to improve education access by enacting laws concerning school facilities and access to resources and equipment (Duflo, 2015). As for European Union countries, immigrant children are at higher risk for dropping out of schools over their native-to-country counterparts (Eurydice, 2010). In some countries, immigrant students experience weaker family support systems and limited access to

higher education learning opportunities following compulsory schooling (European Commission, 2012).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) pointed out that a more effective way to improve student performance and learning involves interventions based on equity-oriented education policies. Poor-quality education should be recognized as paralyzing the economic growth of most developing countries. In the 21st century, the debate on education aid policy shifted from accessing school to improving the quality of learning because it has a great significance for economic development. Globally, 250-million children are reported as illiterate despite having 50% of them studying in formal schools for no less than four years (UNESCO, 2014).

Equity in education can be described by two magnitudes, inclusion and fairness (Field, Kuczera, & Pont, 2007). Equity as inclusion means an assurance that all students get at least the minimum basic level of skills, aim to provide equitable education systems, and fair and inclusive while supporting students to reach their learning potential without formal or informal pre-setting barriers or low expectations (Field et al., 2007). Equity as fairness denotes that socioeconomic or personal circumstances like gender, family background, and ethnic origin are not barriers to success in education. An equitable educational system allows individuals to take full advantage of learning opportunities and quality instruction irrespective of their backgrounds (Faubert, 2012; Field et al., 2007; Hanushek, Peterson, Talpey, & Woessmann, 2019).

Equity gaps need to be addressed according to OECD (2012), which reported that 1 out of 5 students could not attain the basic minimum literacy and mathematics skills to enable them function in society as adults. OECD further explained that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are mostly likely to exhibit academic performance that is 50% of the performance

shown by students of higher SES levels. Moreover, OECD argued that the absence of inclusion and fairness in school policy implementation results in school failure and higher dropout rates that include evidence of 20% of young adults reporting high school dropout. OECD further argued that policies supporting school leaders' efforts to ensure equity represents a start to the transformation in low performing schools.

School administrators hold the right positions to offer keen reviews of their schools' environments, such as recommending what types of facilities should be available for their use (OECD, 2012). The nature of academic structures requires frequent assessment for adherence to market demands as well as education policies' requirements. As stated by Newton (2012), academic environment assessment is imperative to the process of developing substantial equity structures and systems. When the results from such practices are well utilized, they provide practitioners sufficient opportunities to provide quality education and equity in the provision of resources and opportunities. Newton also argued that the findings from needs assessments should always be compared with previous findings to identify whether or not improvements occurred following previously installed structures and policies.

Darrow (2016) argued that the introduction of policies that promote the educational environment for the disadvantaged students would help in leveling the situation to a comparable state with the affluent. While equality in education might require implementing diverse improvements, an economic approach turns out as the most significant aspect in improving the education status for marginalized students of low SES (Abrajano, 2010). Studies on the American education systems' equity levels between schools indicated the presence of a loop in both resource distribution as well as policy development regarding children from the

marginalized races of Hispanic and African American as well as from neighborhoods represented by families of low SES (Darrow, 2016).

With the introduction of NCLB in 2002, there were hopes that learners from marginalized neighborhoods would gain educational achievement opportunities (Malin et al., 2017; OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2014). When NCLB was signed into law in 2002, all public schools were tasked with ensuring their students could earn scores on state assessments that indicated they had attained academic proficiencies as required in mathematics and reading (Duflo, 2015). NCLB was signed into law to force a sense of urgency among administrators as well as teachers in public schools throughout the country but provided no additional funding for its mandates.

In 2015, President Obama authorized the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to replace the highly criticized NCLB from 2002. The ESSA retracted much of the federal policy requirements that were part of NCLB. There was a general consensus that returning significant educational policy power to the states would benefit students who had been marginalized by NCLB, such as students with disabilities (Darrow, 2016). These laws highlight that federal education policy expected states to provide all children, teachers, and stakeholders with a sense of equality and to ensure a high-quality education was provided throughout the nation.

The level of academic performance observed in marginalized communities that house families of low SES in the United States should reflect a change with the introduction of a new policy in educational equity. However, federal education policy has not met its goals (Galat, 2012; Malin et al., 2017; Taylor, 1997). No realistic sense of equity has emerged. ESSA, for example, required but did not fund its mandate for the career preparation of all students or provide equal opportunities in job and higher education placement and allocation (Malin et al., 2017).

Taylor (1997) indicated that African American students of low-SES backgrounds were disadvantaged in the acquisition of education, reducing the likelihood of acceptable academic performance. Galat (2012) argued against the equitability of American education with African American gifted learners and indicated the presence of inequality in the allocation of academic resources between schools serving children who were members of the dominant culture and affluent and schools serving children who were African American. Thus, inequity continues in American education following ESSA. Galat proposed that the most significant way of improving learning was through the improvement of the conditions found in different community levels, such as by providing free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students. When community improvement is achieved, marginalized students gain an opportunity to have equitable learning experiences in comparison to their counterparts of higher SES and dominant culture status.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

The effect of the economic background of middle school children on their academic achievement can be observed with various methods. The methodology used by a researcher has a significant influence on the nature of the study as well as the applicability of providing a solution to the identified study problem. The limitations of the findings obtained by the literature used in the current study were products of the methodologies used by the researchers. The present section contains an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the studies reviewed in this chapter. In this section, the review includes insight into the methodologies of the studies and sheds light on the development of the methodological approach for the present study of teachers in charter schools. Additionally, the review contains recommendations for data analysis and instrument choice.

Richards and Shahidul (2018) developed an argument on the effect poverty has on learning. However, in their evaluation and data collection, they aligned the data to support their claim about the effects of poverty on learning. They used descriptive information only and concentrated on students from low SES backgrounds, particularly Hispanic and African-American students. However, the alignment of the data to support their assertions was an element of bias generation that might have contributed to the reduction of the quality of the results. In addition to this, Richards and Shahidul could have included data representing students of affluent backgrounds to compare data between students of divergent SES backgrounds and the effects of poverty on academic performance. Data alignment issues appeared in the study by West (2007) who collected data as if to align them to fit with the developed hypothesis. However, West did not concentrate fully on describing low-SES neighborhoods but rather determined the impact that living in these neighborhoods had on learning.

OECD (2012) collected data from low-SES Hispanic and African American neighborhoods in the United States. The OECD added inferential statistical analysis with a correlation test assessing the association with the effect of parental income and the academic performance of the children. In addition to this, the data collected in the study was well aligned and did not demonstrate bias toward obtaining the expected findings or propositions.

A diverse methodology study was conducted by Durik, Schwartz, Schmidt, and Shumow (2018), which determined the impact positive influence or motivation has on the performance of children from impoverished backgrounds. Diverse methodology takes the approach of understanding that each of the sampled respondent is unique in their own way and thus the possibility of differences in their perceptions on selected subjects. Durik et al. understood from previous studies that children from impoverished backgrounds perform poorly while those from

financially stable environments show higher academic performance. Similarly, Riley and Coleman (2011) identified whether a lack of equal distribution of resources from both low and high socioeconomic backgrounds could be the reason for the disparity in academic performance. Resource distribution was considered a significant factor to explore in the present study as an external influence on academic performance. The methodology and findings of Durik et al. and Riley and Coleman affected the design elements as well as data collection materials of the present study.

Studies of the effect of motivation, inspiration, and other methods to improve the academic performance and quality of education in for students of low-SES backgrounds mostly applied descriptive data. Apart from the ones mentioned in the review above, other such studies included Roeser et al. (2009), Murphy (2009), and Denbo and Beaulieu (2002). These researchers utilized learner or teacher motivation as aspects of solutions for inadequate academic performance among students of low-SES backgrounds. The attribute is significant for consideration in the development of the study model for the present research because the provision of solutions to the identified research problem was paramount to the purpose of the study. It was, therefore, relevant to the research design to include the provision of solutions to the study problem through both literature analysis and data collection, analysis through a hybrid study methodology.

In addition, some research methodologies included education policies as significant contributors to the disparity in academic performance between high- and low-SES backgrounds. The studies claimed that academic policies, as well as academic practitioners, play significant roles in ensuring equity in the distribution of education resources to the motivation of both students and teachers. The claim increases the significance of academic policies as affecting

academic performance based on resource distribution and motivation of learners. Such studies were conducted by Rice, Roellke, and Sparks (2006); Rivkin et al. (2005); Diament (2015); and Ornstein et al. (2017). These researchers assessed equity in education, curriculum development, quality of education, technology incorporation, and academic administration structures.

The above methodological approaches used by different authors in assessing the impact of socioeconomic background on academic performance and behavior development for middle school children were significant to the development of the present study's methodology. The most common weaknesses with the methodologies were the exclusion of data representing affluent backgrounds for comparison in data analysis as well as justifications for their particular claims and conclusions. For effective and inclusive data analysis, data for the present study were collected from chart schools serving children of both high and low SES. This design reduced the likelihood of bias in the research and increased the probability of quality findings.

The development of the methodology and the research design for the present study required the determination of the most effective methodologies used by previous studies. The present review of methodological issues from the literature initiated a foundation for the present study. Through the review, I identified the design features to include, as well as those factors and designs to avoid, for the achievement of a robust methodology. The key reason for the development of this methodology review was the achievement of the set objectives as well as the application of a feasible and appropriate research design. From the preceding review, the above-outlined conclusions supported the achievement of the study's objectives.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

The review of the factors that relate to the academic performance of learners from low-SES backgrounds included varying perspectives and approaches. More precisely, such studies in



the United States mostly involved neighborhoods with high poverty and low SES (Darrow, 2016). These conditions were essential elements contributing to the performance of school children. The general conclusion was that children from low SES backgrounds in the United States and of the African American, Hispanic, and Latin ethnicities often performed poorly in their academics (UNESCO, 2014). However, the underlying factors that contributed to conclusions received little consideration in practice. Nevertheless, the substantial analysis and research conclusions involved performance disparities and gaps between students representing high-poverty backgrounds and students of higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

West (2007) determined the reasons behind inadequate academic performance among learners from low-income families with a regression model successfully predicting a lack of education achievement in poverty. West, akin to what OECD (2012) observed, reported on a significant relationship between the neighborhoods of the learners and their performance at school. These findings were supported subsequently in findings showing the particular neighborhood in which students live has a significant influence on student performance in school (Dulgerian, 2016; Winans-Solis, 2014). Richards and Shahidul (2018) assessed the impact of parental income on the performance of students by focusing on economic disadvantage. In their study, outcomes from African American and Hispanic students of economic disadvantage were applied in a regression model showing parental income negatively affected student performance (Richards & Shahidul, 2018). The researchers confirmed there is a disparity in academic performance between students of affluent neighborhoods and students of other neighborhoods, such as those with low SES or ethnic diversity.

Winans-Solis (2014) approached the situation from a different perception and explored the influence of marginalization on academic performance. Winans-Solis claimed that

marginalization lowers the ability of learners to acquire self-identity and reduces their power to participate fully in learning. Winans-Solis argued that a probable solution to the situation is helping children from such backgrounds reclaim their identity and power. On the other hand, the inequality in performance between children of low-SES backgrounds and children of other regions could be due to poorly developed educational policy (Darrow, 2016; Dulgerian, 2016). Both Darrow (2016) and Dulgerian (2016) noted the ESSA was designed to ensure that the gap in performance between students of higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds could be minimized. Thus, the principal concern in such studies was a lack of equity in the systems used to direct the distribution of resources to schools in different regions of the nation.

Additionally, Malin et al. (2017) proposed that bridging the gap in the distribution of academic resources could influence the performance of learners from all backgrounds. Their study was conducted as a response to the ESSA and findings from earlier studies by Pashler et al. (2007) and Murphy (2009). The model related academic performance to economic background and found income earned in students' households affected school performance.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

The research model and design applied by a particular study is an important feature in the results achieved. Consequently, different studies may achieve contradicting findings on the same subject depending on the nature of the methodology applied. The approach to research design is a significant determinant of the nature of a set of findings. Perhaps the saying *the means justify the end* fits well in the case of research findings. It was, therefore, essential to consider an analysis of the methodologies, models, approaches, and structures used by previous researchers to determine the nature of the findings they obtained. The present section depicts the task of

conducting a critique of the literature addressing the relationship between socioeconomic background and academic performance.

In the review of ESSA, Malin et al. (2017) unveiled the relationship between the career readiness of students and their overall enrollment in colleges based on the equity in available academic resources. Malin et al. might not have achieved a significant rationale for the justification of inequity in the distribution of academic resources because they did not consider additional factors that affect the lack of equity in the distribution of resources. The nature of the recommendations was limited; however, the approach and structure used in the study did offer a platform providing significant findings about the factors, such as socioeconomics, undermining the provision of quality education for all children (Malin et al., 2017).

The ability of a student to perform well in school is a multifactor product. That is, different variables contribute to the determination of how well the student performs in school. While these factors contributed to a model for predicting the academic performance of a learner, most studies dealt solely with the single SES factor. The determination of the effect of one variable could not provide evidence toward the influence of other factors in the analysis. For instance, Riley and Coleman (2011) considered economic inequality as the only factor leading to inadequate academic performance in education. While this variable was a significant contributor to poor performance by students living in marginalized areas, the other factors could contribute to the disparity in academic performance.

Roeser et al. (2009) evaluated the role of education practitioners in promoting motivation in schools. According to their study findings, the provision of motivation in schools is a necessary tool in promoting performance especially for learners from marginalized areas. While their propositions seemed appropriate, their approach to its justification led to research bias and

limitations concerns. They utilized descriptive data to evaluate the importance of motivation in enhancing performance in the schools. They collected data from education practitioners at two sample institutions with one holding motivation sessions and the other one not holding motivation sessions, which might have contributed to the achievement of externally valid findings. Moreover, the collection of such information from different types of education stakeholders formed a substantial basis for evaluating the beliefs of teachers in charter schools.

Newton (2012) addressed education management and administration structures in academic assessment results and recommended using them for studying academic performance. However, such efforts could not demonstrate understanding about teachers' experiences with students of different SES levels. The development of a research design with teachers representing cases of charter schools serving in low- and high-SES communities could provide understanding about the differences in education assessment results known to exist in the literature.

Different research studies were conducted after the introduction of ESSA. Some of these studies (e.g., Malin et al., 2017) tended to criticize the effectiveness of the provision of equal education opportunities and resources between schools serving different SES geographies. Malin et al. (2017) research explored the ability of the education offered to provide equal opportunities for career readiness and placement in institutions of higher education. However, they focused on the lack of equity in the quality of education offered and did not tackle the potential for effective policy solutions (Malin et al., 2017).

Malin et al. (2017) could have perhaps conducted a comparative analysis between pre- and post-ESSA periods to help in evaluating the contribution of the new ESSA policy to the education system. The application of a time series comparative study might have been the best

approach to evaluating educational equity, academic achievement, and career readiness by students. While the model may seem complicated, Malin et al. would have collected information on the prevailing statuses of equality, career readiness, and equality in higher education placement to compare the findings with secondary information collected before the enactment of the policy. When investigating teachers' perceptions of student performance in marginalized or neighborhoods of low-SES families who are likely to be African American and Hispanic, consideration of the teachers working in schools serving higher SES neighborhoods would improve the depth provided in the findings of such research.

The nature of determinants to the academic performance ranges from social, economic, to political. Studies used in the present paper have proved that various variables significantly contribute to the determination of the quality of education offered in schools. Policies that affect the academic sector were presented as an imperative contributor to the quality of education offered in schools irrespective of where they are located. For instance, teacher motivation was presented as a determinant of the nature of the services they offer to students. Consequently, it determines the quality of education received by students as well as the performance level. In addition to this, academic policies are significant factors to the level performance in schools. The structures that govern human resource management in schools especially in matters of appraisal, promotion, and accreditation that can affect the quality of children's education.

On the other hand, policies on resource distribution were reported to be a significant contributor to the widening of the gap between the haves and the have not in society. When there is inequity in resource provision, learners do not have equal chances to academic performance. According to Roeser et al. (2009), marginalized neighborhoods are affected by the inequality of government policies and systems on resource allocation. Mostly, they receive the smallest levels

of allocations that reduced the ability of children to perform as well as their counterparts in the developed neighborhoods. Marginalization through inequitable resource provision was reported to influence educators and students to develop a psychology mindset of inferiority (Diament, 2015). The inferiority feeling was reported to extend to academic performance across all levels. The observations made in schools admitting students from both high and low SES provided impetus for the present study (Dulgerian, 2016).

From a different perspective, marginalization and inequality in resource distribution were presented from a political view. Roeser et al. (2009) produced substantial analysis of the influence of political ideologies on inadequate academic performance by students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds as facilitated by a lack of sufficient resources. The low socioeconomic backgrounds constituted the smallest portion of the population to have any role in politics. Low SES is, therefore, disregarded in resource allocation and means those areas receive the lowest share of resources while the high-voting middle-class neighborhoods and less-populated upper-class neighborhoods receive the most substantial portions of available resources. Such political frameworks contribute significantly to poor performance by learners of low socioeconomic backgrounds and marginalized communities populated by African Americans and Hispanics.

The whole structure of academic performance and marginalization have invited divergent features as responsible agents for students' reduced academic performance. Low-SES neighborhoods are characterized by inadequate security, sanitation, and infrastructural development among other societal injustices. The lack of needed service features causes students of low SES to worry about things beyond their control, such as safety at home and the availability of food to eat. The condition of housing developments in low-SES areas increases

children's marginalization and reduces their ability to performance at higher academic levels. In the case of African Americans and Hispanics, the marginalization of the regions in which they reside limits them from sharing in an equal opportunity for academic learning with their academic counterparts in areas of improved SES levels. When high- and low-SES areas are offered the same facilities, disparities in academic performance could be compared because the school-level variables could be controlled. Researchers could consider different variables, such as teacher attitudes, rather than equality of resources allocation disparities.

### **Summary**

In the present paper, the concept of academic performance in marginalized states on a broader view, has been developed and presented. Right from the illustration of the current study's problem for consideration, the information on academic performance among students from high-poverty backgrounds in the United States was presented with crucial emphasis and concentration on African Americans and Hispanics. Many variables contribute to the academic performance of learners in a particular region. Nevertheless, children's socioeconomic backgrounds and school equity issues emerged as the main contributors to academic performance. Teachers represent an element of school resource equity. The literature's findings justify the need for understanding teachers' perceptions of students based on students' socioeconomic backgrounds.

Studies reviewed in the present chapter have contributed to the design of the present study. Throughout the analysis of previous studies, various models were obtained relating to academic performance and marginalization or social and economic segregation. It was determined that teachers could provide ample data about how familial SES, parental involvement and roles, and neighborhood economics affect student performance. Thus, the literature provided

a gap that could be addressed in this study of teachers' beliefs about what factors contribute to performance patterns among their students of both high- and low-SES based on the neighborhoods served by each of two charter schools. The following chapter outlines the methodological design and strategies applied in this research.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the present study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance. I explored teachers' beliefs about what factors contribute to performance patterns, such as student SES. Additionally, the procedures applied to obtain information on academic performance and contributing factors vary between different research considerations. Numerous environmental aspects, such as SES, contribute to students' academic performance. According to the review developed in Chapter 2, government policies and education management strategies were identified as part of the most crucial aspects of academic performance by students of high-poverty backgrounds. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance.

The previous chapters provided original information on student academic performance as dependent on SES. Additionally, the analysis of the various designs used by the researchers and the influence it had on their study findings provide relevant information for the development of the present chapter. This chapter is comprised of subtopics such as research questions, research phenomenon, purpose and design of the study, research population and sampling method, instrumentation, data collection, and identification of attributes. In addition, the study contains information about other subtopics like data analysis procedures, limitations for the study, expected findings, ethical issues and a summary of Chapter 4.

In the present study, I explored what teachers believed to contribute to unsatisfactory or inadequate academic performance among African American and Hispanic students from

impoverished backgrounds. Having understood the frameworks outlined above and as identified from literature analyses in the previous section, I applied the appropriate methodology to the present study. The present chapter outlines such methods and procedures I utilized for studying the identified problem. More precisely, the present chapter contains the research methodology, design, instruments measured, target population, and data collection and analysis procedures the research seeks to apply. In each of the areas identified, I provide a rationale(s) for the choices made.

The decision on whether to conduct a study using quantitative or qualitative data lies in the nature of constructs measured by the specific study and in the research problem and questions statement. In addition to this, I also considered designs used by previous studies. In the present case, I considered both the areas of the study as well as the strategies used by previous studies. As outlined earlier, the socioeconomic background is a multidimensional factor affecting education that cannot be conclusively understood with quantitative methodology. It, therefore, required consideration via qualitative measures to understand how teachers incorporate most of the constructs that relate SES in obtaining adequate academic performance from their students (Darrow, 2016). A study conducted by Richards and Shahidul (2018) evaluated the effect of SES on numeracy prowess of learners and utilized qualitative measures to conduct the research. Such success stories and the nature of the present study facilitated the choice of qualitative design application in the present study. The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance.

## **Research Questions**

The achievement of research objectives and bridging of the identified research gaps requires the application of the most significant procedures that assure maximum effectiveness. As stated by Newman (2016), research questions assist in ensuring that research fully achieves the set objectives through the provision of their solutions. Additionally, they help in the development of the background for the choice of methodological processes and designs to apply in a study. Moreover, the development of the research question ensures the process of research preparation does not include irrelevant information. Research questions are used to guide the process of data collection and analysis methods for the maximal achievement of the set objectives. To achieve the objectives of the current study and based on the literature analysis and findings from the previous chapter, I developed the following questions:

RQ1: How do teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance. The achievement of solutions to the above-listed research questions required using an efficient research methodology and design. While such achievement goes hand in hand with the research objectives, understanding of the research phenomenon is paramount as illustrated in the following section.

## **Research Methodology**

The present research relies on the collection of individual's perceptions on the research topic for achievement of the set objectives. The research will, therefore, apply qualitative research methodology since human perceptions cannot be measured quantitatively. The collection of these information will solely depended on respondent's experiences as elementary schools teachers with limitations to outlier data. Qualitative methodology will, therefore, be used to provide an understanding to the phenomenon addressed by the research questions. As stated by Shariful (2015), phenomenology is a methodology that describes the living experiences of a person. On the other hand, research phenomenon is the object of investigation used by a study. In the case of this study, the phenomenon for this study is teachers' perceptions of SES influence on charter school student performance (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

## **Purpose and Design of the Study**

Following the increased variations in the performance patterns between different social and economic neighborhoods, an analysis of the underlying factors remains significant. The current study was focused on the various socioeconomic aspects contributing to this educational disparity. This research was needed to provide imperative insights on the implementation of the ESSA. The present study, therefore, provided detailed information on teachers' perceptions about how the various SES aspects influence the academic performance of charter schools' student performance. The findings were significant in the realization of an equitable learning environment for all that incorporated the ESSA.

According to Creswell and Clark (2017), a research design offers the research an opportunity to develop a strategy for the improvement of the results to be obtained by their study. Depending on the nature of the objectives to be achieved, different research designs are

used. It integrates all the research components to ensure that the end products bridge findings with the identified research gap. Several studies have been conducted about academic wellness and socioeconomic features, as analyzed in the previous chapter (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Darrow, 2016). The nature of the objectives they aimed at achieving dictated the research designs they applied.

The analysis of education performance can involve analyzing more than grades, such as the quality of the learning environment as well as how it influences the lives of learners (Darrow, 2016). Therefore, such research can be used to incorporate qualitative over quantitative data for attaining in-depth understanding. The qualitative study afforded additional consideration of the socioeconomic background of the students that could not be expressed quantitatively, which was an in-depth descriptive analysis of teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of socioeconomic background on students' academic performance. However, Rowley (2002) argued that exploring how particular aspects of a phenomenon are related, or even why they are associated, indicates the case study was most likely to be an effective method for the purpose of the study.

The present study's purpose was achieved qualitatively, rather than quantitatively. As stated by Patton (2002), qualitative researchers have the option of conducting data analysis and methodology as either narrative or case study. For the narrative option, researchers collect information as presented by respondents and proceed to analyze the data in chronological order for analysis and inferential development. On the other hand, a case study approach involves using particular examples when presenting the findings of the research (Yin, 2003). The case study approach receives credit for its effectiveness and efficiency in conducting studies on less researched problems. From the statement of the research questions, it is clear that only academic

performance may have a bit of quantitative data among the evaluated elements. In this regard, a case study approach deems fit and appropriate for this research. The present study applied an exploratory case study design to answer the questions of how education performance is affected by students' SES and education policies (Yin, 2018). The research design was selected due to its ability to effectively explore the descriptive features of the factors to be measured in the current study. Case study design affords the ability to explore finer details on the subject of the study as illustrated by Rowley (2002).

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

In the present study, I utilized both primary and secondary data for the maximum achievement of the set objectives. The significance of each data source was reliant on the specific objective of the study as well as the research question to answer. Primary data sources were used to provide raw data on features such as student performance and SES background. On the other hand, some information on features such as government influence and education policies came from documents, representing secondary sources and artifacts, in the present study. In a research study that comprises both primary and secondary data requirements, researchers should consider utilizing all essential data collection methods and data types (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017).

In the present study, I collected data from elementary schoolteachers in Texas. The teachers worked at two charter schools. The two selected schools provided a better representation of institutions located in high and low SES neighborhoods, hence their choice. The research was conducted with 45 teacher participants. The selection criteria for the teachers involved being a teacher at the current school for at least one year. In addition, the teachers were required to have substantial knowledge of student performance and the influence of education structures on

student performance. Finally, the teachers who participated held adequate information on the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school. The selected sample of teachers was sufficient to obtain saturation and allowed for study feasibility by saving on time as well as costs when interviewing teachers of two specific campuses (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018).

Purposeful sampling was the method to select and sample participants. Purposeful sampling is a nonprobability method that heavily depends on researcher judgment (Palinkas et al., 2015). The method is flexible in the range of qualitative research designs and allows researchers to develop justifications for inferences made in the study as well as its inclusion of multiple research phases (Creswell & Clark, 2017). However, the purposeful sampling method is highly prone to bias and subjectivity due to dependability in researcher judgment and nonprobability respectively. Nevertheless, the nature of the present study and the objectives to be met justifies purposeful sampling as the best method. Similar to the illustrations by Palinkas et al. (2015), the current study required information from participants who met the selection criteria. Thus, when developing rapport with the identified population, purposeful sampling emerges as the most effective method to minimize lack of fit between the participants and the purpose of the study.

### **Instrumentation**

There is a need to identify the best instruments to use to obtain sufficient information on student performance, SES background, and education policies. To understand the elements, I conducted interviews, questionnaires, and made inferences from documented materials. According to Hipolito-Delgado and Zion (2017), the effective utilization of instruments can lead to the achievement of substantial findings in a qualitative research study.

**Interviews.** Conduction of 20 to 45-minute interviews with 15 teachers helped to obtain detailed information from the teachers. To ensure that the study was conducted using with the required authorization. A gatekeeper letter was obtained from the institution to warrant both the use of school premises for data collection as well as the involvement of the school's teachers in the current study.

The interviews of the teachers took an average of 20 to 45 minutes to allow for obtaining sufficient information on the topic under study. The interviews were based on a case study of elementary schools in Texas (Hung, Badejo, & Bennett, 2014). Interviews are best in the collection of detailed and confidential information and immediate feedback on issues that require clarification. Additionally, interviews allow for containing the experience within a personal space and observing participants' nonverbal behaviors, such as changes in facial expressions (Palinkas et al., 2015). Though the instrument's implementation is time consuming, the interviews were conducted via a semi structured guide with the participating teachers.

**Questionnaires.** Open-ended items on an online questionnaire collected information from 30 teachers. The questionnaires were economically used to collect information and increase the size of the sample. The instrument saved time and allowed more teachers to share their perceptions privately.

**Documents.** Existing documents, or artifacts, were used to gain information from the schools directly. Information relating to education management policies and resource distribution models and policies could only be best obtained directly from the schools' administrators. The three data sources illustrated the useful collection of required information for identifying the common themes to achieve the current study's objectives.



## **Data Collection**

Before the collection of data from human subjects, I requested an approval form from the management of the Institution Review Board of the Concordia University–Portland (CU-P IRB). The recruitment and consent materials appear in Appendices A through D. Proceedings from interviews and questionnaires were recorded and analyzed as later outlined in this chapter to help in the achievement of the study’s objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). The following sections illustrate the procedures used in each of the data collection methods.

**Interviews.** Interviews were conducted with the teachers who met the inclusion requirements of the current study. The interview lengths ranged from 20 to 45 minutes. These interviews were conducted in the identified schools. I requested a room from each school’s administration to help in the data collection processes. The interview session occurred one on one between the interviewer and the participant (Lewis, 2015). This promoted a sense of confidentiality on the information provided by the participant. The one-on-one interview format was in line with the requirements of CU-P IRB to treat information collected with the utmost confidentiality and not involve third parties as much as possible. The confidentiality of the participants was ensured by assuring the participants that the information that they may give is for academic purposes only and could not be used for any other reason. In addition, the confidentiality of the participants was maintained by not allowing them to indicate their names on the responses that they gave (Tidwell & Anaya, 2017). The recruitment and consent materials for the interviews appear in Appendices A, B, and D. Interviews provided a method to explore the teachers’ perspectives about student SES and academic performance.

**Questionnaires.** Questionnaires were issued via SurveyMonkey to the teachers who were identified for participation in the present study. The questionnaires were administered to the

teachers who filled them out at their convenience and submitted them electronically. Before the teachers received the questionnaires, I briefed the teachers on the importance of their provision of accurate information and of the study (Cella et al., 2015). In addition, I assured the teachers that the information they provided would be treated with privacy to protect their confidentiality as required by CU-P IRB. The recruitment and consent materials for the questionnaire appear in Appendices A, B, and C.

**Documents.** Documents and publications on the effects of SES and education policies on student performance were used as secondary sources in the present study. Some of the information required by the present study could not be collected from the two groups of participants. Therefore, I found it imperative to consider obtaining such information from documented materials. Materials used in this study were selected depending on how useful their information was to the accomplishment of the study goals (Cella et al., 2015). Such documents included schools' academic performance records from the schools and certified from department of education databases. The main information collected from the documents involved education and socioeconomic policies related to student performance in Title I schools.

### **Identification of Attributes**

As stated by Layne, Hospedales, Gong, and Mary (2012), the identification of key variables to be evaluated in a research study is a significant step toward achieving the set goals. The present study was defined by various attributes, all of which were evaluated qualitatively. These attributes were academic performance, socioeconomic background, teacher motivation or education management policies, government policies on education, and resource distribution. The academic performance of students was gauged as excellent, very good, good, pass, or fail.

SES background was evaluated as high, middle, or low. Other attributes were evaluated from their influence on the academic performance of children in either of the SES backgrounds.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The present study was conducted using a qualitative design. This implies that data collection, coding, and analysis procedures were all be qualitative. Moreover, the attributes to be defined and evaluated in the study were done on a qualitative nominal level of measurement. The measurement scale was selected since the present study utilized qualitative data and no other level of measurement handles qualitative data. Moreover, it is easy to analyze data using categories when using the measurement scale. Data were prepared for analysis and presentation of the findings through the techniques of transcribing interviews, coding survey and interview data, and member checking. First, the collected data was analyzed through descriptive coding using the instruments identified in the previous section (Saldaña, 2013). Then, qualitative data was analyzed using comparative analysis on the findings obtained under each socioeconomic level.

Several steps were followed before determining the various means that were adopted for the presentation of the data collected. After transcribing the data, I determined the most critical aspects of how teachers perceived the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in the two charter schools and how teachers perceived the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning in students from all socioeconomic levels. This effort was followed by the specification of alternative courses of actions and evaluations of each course of action.

The various steps involved in the data analysis process of the topic under study focused on answering the research questions. The results were then used to determine what teachers

perceived as the influence of SES on their students' academic performance. The data analysis process involved coding data into narrative form to allow for interpretation and understanding of the findings. The data were analyzed through the use of content analysis to understand all the aspects of the phenomenon covered under the study (Darrow, 2016). The following sections illustrate how the data were prepared for analysis as well as analyzed.

**Descriptive analysis.** The primary data were coded for providing descriptions of the questionnaire and interview data. This process is called descriptive analysis. The demographic data received descriptive analysis; however, the descriptive analysis involved reviewing data coded for similar findings grouping. The essence of the demographics analysis was to group coded data by identified demographic categories for cross examination. The descriptive analysis was sought for each participant's experience, faculty status, and school location to help with understanding variations in their perceptions about how various SES factors influence the academic performance of learners.

**Comparative analysis.** This analysis method was used to compare and contrast for understanding the similarities and contradictions in the in-depth data collected in the questionnaires and interviews (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Saldaña, 2013). The comparative analysis also helped in establishing teachers' perception differences by their professional experience, age, school locations, or classroom SES. Additionally, the analysis was used to check for agreement between primary data and secondary sourced information in the quest to answer the research questions.

**Questionnaires.** Data collected through the administration of the questionnaires were coded for easy analysis through identification of major themes from individual teachers' responses. The coding of the data was done for identifying the major themes presented in the

collected data based on what the instruments asked for the purpose of the present study. The coded information was grouped according to patterns and perceived associations or not (Saldaña, 2013).

**Interviews.** While data collected through questionnaires were in hard copies form, data collected using interviews were in audio form. Prior to the conduction of the data analysis, the audio recordings were transcribed. After transcription, the coding process let to the relevant groupings as per the analysis of the questionnaire data. The same analysis procedures were used for the interviews that were used for data collected through the administration of questionnaires.

**Secondary data.** Data collected from secondary sources were coded in the same way as the data from interviews and questionnaires. The major themes were those identified from the highlighted research objectives. Since the sources were validated based on how well they contributed to the maximal achievement of research objectives as well as to the overall provision of answers to the research questions, I used the coding process to understand in-depth the participants' corresponding perceptions about the phenomenon. The findings were assured through the comparative analysis between the secondary and two forms of primary data, as explained above.

**Triangulation.** Turner, Cardinal, and Burton (2017) defined triangulation as a research strategy for data verification and validation. The process involves evaluating all aspects of the data retrieved from the different data collection methods. All data are counterchecked to find associations and contradictions. In the present research, I compared the data I collected in the different collection methods; interviews, questionnaire, and secondary data. I collected both primary and secondary data from teachers and publications, respectively.

Additionally, the teachers were recruited to participate from two charter schools, one located in a higher SES background and the other in low SES background. The triangulation process involved comparing and contrasting all data collected, regardless of the collection method, to thoroughly analyze all aspects of the data. The findings generated by using triangulation helped with identifying the themes and any discrepant data points. I used all the data and did not specifically identify any outliers or discrepancies in the results, thereby improving the validity of the obtained findings.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

**Participants.** There was a need to distinguish and audit a portion of the constructs that confined the conveyance and achievement of the goals in the present study. The present research was about a delicate and basic aspect of learning, teachers' perceptions. The study was delimited to collecting information from teachers not related to their social and personal space; subsequently, the findings were limited to only the teachers' perceptions about their students. This delimitation ensured the teachers did not experience any risks associated with participation that could have influenced them to give false information and prevented the data collection from diverging away from the expectations of CU-P IRB regulations. There is a critical impediment to the precision of the data examination involving the capacity to gather from the said populace. Also, there was no certification that the data introduced in the school reports were an exact introduction of the status of every family that was considered by the present investigation.

**Time factor.** Lack of sufficient time for data collection in this study will limit the ability to achieve quality findings that perfectly accomplish research objectives. The teachers and learners need to make sure they meet their daily goals, which limited their availability for participation in data collection for the present study. Spending 45 to 60 minutes with each

participant served as a way of fully engaging the teachers and collecting sufficient information for analysis.

**Sample size.** The present study used 25 teachers from the school located in low SES background and 20 teachers from the school located in high SES. The number of teachers used in the study was identified following the total number of teaching staff in the school and consideration of the selection criteria for the present study. However, I considered the number as a limiting factor to the collection of sufficient data for the present study even though they do not have control over the situation.

**Delimitation.** The present contextual analysis likewise allowed for exploring the academic performance of learners with consideration for SES based on teachers' perspectives. Consequently, I applied several parameters in determining the inclusion of participants and the schools to be used for data collection. In the case of teachers, I limited the selection to those with substantial knowledge regarding student performance. Teachers with teaching experience in schools located in communities of different SES were also highly preferred. The choice of learning institutions was influenced by its composition of students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

### **Validation**

The provision of possible remedies to the research methodology and design limitations as outlined in the above illustrations required establishing strategies to enhance the validity and credibility of the data collected. Data validation processes ensured that the data were scientifically useful for forming conclusions. The following section contains these validation methods.

**Credibility and dependability.** Credibility involves the evaluation of both the data collection methods and data obtained to be an accurate presentation of the examined situation. I applied validity checking strategies such as consistency to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the data collected. I utilized both internal and external consistency check methods to evaluate both the credibility and dependability of the data collected. The dependability of data was determined by the use of either stepwise replication or inquiry audits. Stepwise replication usually involves dividing data into groups as a way of comparing the data obtained apart from the findings. Inquiry audits required scrutinizing all data as well as having an external reviewer also inspect the codes and patterns in the data. Additionally, credibility was determined by data triangulation. Using these strategies, instances of outliers and false information could be identified.

**Member checking.** Participants had the opportunity to check the transcriptions of the recording for their responses to the research questions. After the interview recordings were transcribed, they were shared to participants through secure sharing in a Google drive and not as email attachments, as per the requirements of CU–Portland IRB requirements on handling personal identifying information (CU–Portland, 2019). Participant validation was conducted to ensure the credibility of the information used in analysis and for the development of results. According to Harper and Cole (2012), member checking in a qualitative study is significant in enhancing the internal credibility of a study. The participants confirmed whether the transcript data records contained an exact recording of the information they provided. This strategy was meant to ensure only correct codes were used for identifying patterns and findings. In addition, the participants provided any additional information that they recalled as significant to the requirements of the study which they might not initially have provided.



## **Expected Findings**

This study was conducted to understand the teachers' perceptions of their students in two different charter school environments, one with students of lower SES levels and one with students of higher SES levels, and how students' socioeconomic backgrounds influenced academic performance. I expected to obtain information on teachers' perceptions about the nature of SES as an influential factor in the academic performance of charter school students. I expected teachers would have different viewpoints about students of higher SES versus students of lower SES. I also expected teachers would have differential beliefs about parental involvement based on whether they worked at the charter school serving students from higher versus the charter school serving students from lower SES.

## **Ethical Issues**

**Conflict of interest assessment and the researcher's position.** I had no connections to the schools in which the study was conducted. I did not work directly with the teachers who were interviewed. I had no irreconcilable situation affecting any interactions with the human participants. I did not receive any funding from external sources and conducted the study with my own funds and resources. I bracketed my biases away from the data when performing data analysis.

**Ethical issues in the study.** Creswell and Clark (2017) contended that each investigation involving humans as participants requires holding fast to moral systems to maintain a strategic distance from any association with unscrupulous issues that could affect the study's legitimacy. Thus, I gained approval from the CU-P IRB and the administrations of the two charter schools to conduct the study. I shared with the participants that no anticipated risks were present in their participation in the study, neither rationally nor mentally. Likewise, I guaranteed the participants

that I would maintain their privacy as a part of taking care of the data they gave and ensuring their confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms. I utilized participant protection measures by obtaining their informed consent to participate and reporting the findings with pseudonyms such as Participant 1, Participant 2, . . . Participant *k*. I also maintained personal control over all access to and storage of the data. I locked the paper versions of data in secure cabinets. I kept the electronic data in password protected folders and data files on a personal computer to which only I had access according to the recommendations of CU–Portland (2019). The data would be destroyed after two years from the final day of collection in accordance with the specifications of CU-P IRB regarding protection of personal identifying information.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

The present chapter contained a detailed illustration of the research methodology and design as well as the procedures for collecting and analyzing data. Additionally, the chapter included the methods used to check the validity of the collected data to enhance the efficiency of the research. Since the present study’s information was collected from human participants, an account of the procedures was offered to ensure adherence to ethical regulations. Aside from the methodology, constant comparative and content analysis techniques were used in answering the research questions. The purpose was to ascertain how teachers perceived the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in charter schools and how teachers perceived the role of the government in enhancing equity and quality of learning among students of all socioeconomic levels.

Chapter 4 contains the findings obtained from the study to answer the research questions for the study. The results chapter’s subtopics involved presenting the charter schoolteachers’ perceptions about student learning regardless of socioeconomic background. This information is

followed by a discussion of the results that integrates the findings obtained from interviews and questions and secondary data materials on the topic.

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance. Chapter 3 illustrated the procedures and approaches for collecting and analyzing data. Application of the research design enhanced the maximal achievement of the research objectives and indicated possible solutions, theoretically, practically, and to the identified problem of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results obtained from the data collected with the charter schoolteachers and other sources. The present study was conducted to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: How do teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?

Additionally, the information provided in this chapter was limited to the achievement of the primary objective to determine the parents' socioeconomic status influences on the student's academic performance in school as well as to the following three specific objectives:

- Charter schoolteachers' beliefs about the factors that contribute to performance patterns, such as student SES.
- Charter schoolteachers' views about the academic effects of low-SES backgrounds on students' academic performance in charter schools.

- Charter schoolteachers' perceptions about the different ways the socioeconomic factors of their students' backgrounds influence academic performance as well as education policies.

This study was based on a case study design, and the data were coded in order to provide meaningful information and thematic findings. The present chapter contains both the major research themes and a discussion. The chapter includes a detailed summary of the codes or themes identified during analysis in light of both the research questions presented. The results emerged from the information collected through the interviews, questionnaires, and documents collected.

### **Sample**

The present study utilized both primary and secondary sources. The sample of charter schoolteachers who provided data totaled 45. Teachers were identified for participation in the data collection process through a purposeful sampling method. Twenty (44.4%) participating schoolteachers worked in a charter school situated in a community serving families of low-SES, while the other 25 (55.6%) participating schoolteachers taught in a charter school serving families living in one high-SES neighborhood. The two charter schools were of unequal sizes. The charter school located in low-SES neighborhood had a smaller teacher population than the charter school located in the high-SES neighborhood. Fifteen (33%) of the participants participated in interviews, while the other 30 (67%) participated by completing questionnaires. Each of the two charter school samples represented approximately 50% of the total sample.

The identified participants had different characteristics. Nineteen of the participants taught science subjects representing 42.2% of the sample, while the remaining 26 (57.8%) teachers taught art-based subject areas. Eight of the respondents (17.8%) were aged below 30

years, 25 (55.5%) were aged between 30 and 40 years, and 12 teachers (26.7%) were aged over 40 years.

There were variations in experience for teaching in schools located in a low- versus high-SES neighborhoods. Nine charter schoolteachers (20%) had fewer than 5 years of experience in schools located in low SES neighborhoods while 12 charter schoolteachers (26.7%) had between five and 10 years, and four teachers (8.9%) had more than 10 years of experience in low-SES schools. For high-SES serving schools, eight charter schoolteachers (16.7%) had fewer than five years of experience while nine charter schoolteachers (20%) had between five and 10 years of experience and only three teachers (6.7%) had more than 10 years of experience. Table 1 represents a summary of the participants' demographics.

Table 1

*Participants' Demographics by Years of Experience in the Classroom*

Experience Type	Years of Experience Teaching		
	0–5	5–10	> 10
Teaching (All)	10	19	6
High SES school <i>n</i>	8	9	3
Low SES school <i>n</i>	9	12	4
Teacher Age	< 30	30–40	> 40
Years <i>n</i>	8	25	12

The participants had variability in their teaching experience lengths and their experiences in teaching high- or low-SES serving schools. Ten charter schoolteachers (22.2%) reported having fewer than five years of teaching experience. Nineteen participating charter schoolteachers (42.2%) had taught for between five and 10 years. Six charter schoolteachers (13.3%) had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

### **Data Collection**

Charter school administrators provided the contact information for the teachers in each school. The participants were contacted and scheduled for an interview. Prior to beginning the interviews, the charter schoolteachers received the informed consent forms and information about the study and the voluntary nature of their participation. The researcher ensured they only gave consent after they knew everything about the study. The researcher informed the schoolteachers of the purpose of the study and all the methods of handling their information for ensuring their confidentiality. In addition, the participants were made aware of the format the interview and its estimated duration. Each participant received the researcher's contact details in case they would wish to communicate over something in future or inform of their withdrawal from participating in the study.

Charter schoolteachers who participated in interviews provided data analyzed as a higher priority in the data analysis process than the teachers who responded to the questionnaires. However, during the first day of data collection, I identified the need to collect the same data in the written questionnaire and in the interviews to help with interpreting the interviewed teachers' perspectives about the effects of socioeconomic background on student performance. The questionnaire and interview instrument changes mostly rotated around respondent demography. The need to update the interview to match the questionnaire was noted after the first day and

adjusted for the second day of data collection, and the first three interview participants were emailed the additional questions, to which they provided answers. The questionnaire was updated accordingly for use with the preceding batches as well as for administration to the other 30 participants. The questions that were asked of all 45 participants appear in Appendix E.

The interviews were divided into three teachers per day and occurred over a 5-day period. Questionnaires were administered and collected online and anonymously using SurveyMonkey. Data collected through interviews and questionnaires represented both the primary and main data sources for the research. Additional data were collected from documents and publications as needed and significant to the research's purpose.

### **Data and Analysis**

As part of the analysis, I manually inspected, read, and reviewed all data multiple times for the data coding process and for understanding the data collected from both the interviews and the administration of the online questionnaires. Both data collection techniques used the same questionnaire document with the only difference being how the data were collected. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The online administration of questionnaires yielded an electronic document filled with raw data from SurveyMonkey.com, an online platform for administering and collecting data through questionnaires. The data received by email for the additional questions asked of the first three interview respondents were added to their response scripts for uniformity of processing and data coding during data analysis.

The transcribed interview information was merged with the interview-matched field notes produced with each individual interview. The data coding of the interviews and questionnaires occurred by recognition of the highly common attributes found in the data. The questionnaires were systematically arranged. I was aware of the possible responses the respondents might give.



I found identifying the codes to occur easily. In the case of the questionnaire data, coding was efficient because most of the respondents kept their responses brief and precise.

For each of the research questions, as presented in the questionnaire document, respondents' answers were analyzed case by case then as a group. For instance, in the question requiring a participant to give the impact of education policies on academic performance, the provision of effects of education policies resulted in the generation of codes that led to patterns. The patterns allowed for identifying major themes. I coded the data theoretically by referring back to the key concepts of the theoretical framework and the specific terminology used in the research questions (Saldaña, 2013). I developed a list of observable themes involving teachers' beliefs about what had a significant influence on students' academic performance. Once the major themes were identified, I proceeded to describe what teachers believed to influence their students' academic performance through a comparative analysis of all the forms of data. Consequently, some codes were recorded as having a higher frequency than others; some codes' frequencies depended on the number of participants who reported them, or the number of times individual participants reported them. Nevertheless, the significance of any code was identified through how often and with what clarity the respondent or multiple respondents discussed the code as having an imperative contribution or an influence on academic performance.

Codes were organized depending on how they were interrelated as well as how well they were affiliated with the research objectives. During their selection and categorization, similar or related codes were placed together or connected together in bubble diagrams for the enhanced theoretical coding process. The results from the data provided by all 45 participants were then organized by major themes and grouped from the coding categories that related to each other.

Each subheading was built from the interrelated codes forming the categorized theme. The categories led to the research findings.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The findings obtained from the collected data portrayed varying themes and relationships among the developed codes. Data collected through the conduction of interviews and administration of questionnaires were grouped and arranged on the basis of how each participant perceived individual concepts being measured by the various questions asked. The analysis results and subsequent narrative formed the theoretical coding's findings. The present section contains a summary of the overall results obtained from the data analysis of all primary and secondary data. Additionally, the present section provides a comparative analysis summary of the primary data based on the participant's demographics. Findings were obtained from the primary data and as emphasized by the summary of results. As per the results, the different departments and academic stakeholders relate within and without thereby significantly influencing the delivery of learning and other academic activities. Additionally, the nature of the policies instilled by authorities determine how conducive la earning environment can be, which can contribute to student performance. The findings obtained from the present study can indicate that the teachers perceive or think that SES affects academic performance. Therefore, socioeconomic background has a significant influence on the academic dynamics and thus the student's performance.

### **Presentation of the Data and Results**

Data collected from the administered questionnaires and conducted interviews were analyzed qualitatively as illustrated above. The results obtained from the analyses were presented depending on how well they related. The present section outlines the findings under each

interview question. Under each theme, the different themes obtained from participant's responses are presented with illustrations from sampled responses where necessary. The themes formed pertained to the connection between SES and the quality of learning. Seven themes emerged. Each is presented.

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance.** Different participants, based on their teaching experiences in various socioeconomic backgrounds, expressed their understanding about the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance. Some participants lacked substantial explanations on how they understand the influence of socioeconomic background on the performance of students in charter one school as illustrated by their responses below.

- It makes a difference with making sure each student has equally sources to just as successful as a non-Title I school. (Participant 1)
- I think the economic background of a student can substantially affect a student's performance. (Participant 9)

The teachers' responses indicated they had some knowledge of the impact that socioeconomic background might have on the academic performance of students in Title I schools. Most of the participants were able to give ways through which socioeconomic background influenced the performance of students in charter schools. Five participants recognized the importance of a student's background to academic performance as follows:

- Students who receive good social support are likely to have peace of mind and significant concentration at school and thus have higher chances of performing well. (Participant 17)

- Students who come from high socioeconomic backgrounds often receive substantial parental support, and therefore, record good performance in school compared to those from low socioeconomic backgrounds with strained parent-child relationships. (Participant 33)
- The social structure of a student's background is an imperative contributing factor to their academic achievement based on how well it positively influences their social growth. Lack of sufficient elements in a society's structure that contributes to one's social growth highly affects their growth in all other aspects of life academic included. (Participant 27)
- The overall growth and development of a person depends on how well they are developed in each of life's dimensions. Among the five dimensions, the social aspect is the most significant contributor to student's advancement in academics where students from high socioeconomic backgrounds are more advanced than otherwise and consequently perform better in school. (Participant 36)
- The ability of a society to develop its people all round depends on its effectiveness to enhance their inner development. High socioeconomic backgrounds have higher abilities to enhance this compared to low socioeconomic background and consequently, learners from such backgrounds often perform better in school than their fellow learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds. (Participant 39)

Two respondents recognized the impact single parenthood have on the academic achievement of a student.

- Students with both parents often perform well in school compared to those from single parent families. This can be related to their psychological and social wellness both at home and school. (Participant 23)
- Learners from single-parenthood backgrounds have their sociological and psychological growths affected negatively which consequently impacts their performance in school. (Participant 40)

The economic status of a student's background was reported by participants as significantly influencing a student's academic performance as follows:

- Students who hail from economically well up backgrounds usually perform well compared to those from poverty-stricken backgrounds. (Participant 35)
- The economic background of a student has a significant impact on their academic wellness. Students develop qualities based on the economic status of their backgrounds which are significant in their academic performance. In this regard, those from good economic backgrounds are usually associated with quality skills development and thus good academic performance unlike those from poor backgrounds. (Participant 20)
- The economic status of a learner's neighborhood determines the nature of activities, lifestyle, language, and friends they interact with. These features have a significant contribution to how the student performs in school. Students from a background with high economic status have access to the features and attributes that significantly improve their academic performance. On the other hand, lack of access to quality life skills development amenities as well as the limitation on the nature of activities that

enhance learner's comprehension of school content significantly affects the academic performance of learners from poor backgrounds. (Participant 45)

Students' performance was reported to be influenced by both socioeconomic background and the SES found in the school's service area. This observation was expressed by the charter schoolteachers as their perceptions of the influence of socioeconomic background on student's academic performance.

- A school's social structure is affected by class size which determines the bond between teachers and students. Schools located in low socioeconomic locations generally have large class sizes and teacher to student ratio which negatively influences student performance. (Participant 43)
- The school environment, determined by the socioeconomic background status, highly influences academic performance depending on how conducive it is for learning activities. (Participant 38)

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of parental occupation on student academic performance.** The second question in section two prompted the participant to express their knowledge from experience on how they perceive the influence of parents' occupation on student performance in a charter school. Different explanations and views were received from the responses obtained. The following is an illustration of the main ideas as summarized from the overall obtained data.

- Parents' occupation matters with putting in timing in their child's performance and making sure their child has all the sources they need. (Participant 2)
- Depending on the level of performance, TEIR 1 you have hands on parents, TEIR 3 doesn't have as much support. (Participant 8)

- I believe that a parent's occupation can affect a student's performance. If parents are unavailable, students may have extra stress out on them. (Participant 1)
- The ability of a parent to offer the full support required by their children depends on how well their profession allows them. Since this parental support is a significant contributor to a child's academic performance, their occupation or profession consequently influences their academic performance. (Participant 30)

Several illustrations were forwarded by participants to demonstrate their perceptions and understanding of how directly parental occupation influences the academic performance of their children.

- Parents acquire life skills which are imperative for the academic improvement of their children from their day to day activities. Their occupations, therefore, are key influencers on their children's academic performance. (Participant 25)
- Students get first inspiration from home. The nature of professions affiliated with their parent's occupation poses a great challenge to them in their endeavors in school. Students with professional parents often perform better than otherwise with the inspiration they want to be better professionals than their parents. (Participant 28)
- Certain occupations, such as teaching and counseling, equip parents with skills and knowledge of supporting their children up the teenage ladder as well as in their academics. Such differences with other types of occupations makes a parent's occupations a significant influencer towards the academic performance of their children. (Participant 16)

- Parent occupation mostly determines their availability in the parenting of children which is a significant determinant to their overall development and thus the academic achievements. (Participant 38)

Nevertheless, some teachers perceived that a parent's occupation had no significant influence on the academic performance of their children. While some teachers suggested having a lack of sufficient evidence with their experience in the teaching profession, others indicated that a parent's occupation and ability to nurture their children's academic performance had no association. Illustrated below are select such responses from participants.

- For learners from two-parent families, the individual parent's occupation has minimal effects on the academic performance of the learner. Learners are less affected in the case of families with parents' occupational cash. (Participant 12)
- The occupation of a parent has no influence on the academic performance of a student. It is the skills and virtues that the parent(s) instill in their children that influence their academic achievement which is independent of their occupation or profession. (Participant 14)

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of a parent's level of education on a student's academic performance.** The participating teachers had varying perceptions of how the level of education of parents influenced the academic performance of their children. Some said that it had positive effects, others negative, while some stated that it has little effect on the academic performance of their children. The following illustrations represent an overview of selected teacher's perceptions sampled to represent the general obtained results.

- I think the level of education of the parents is a significant factor because they value education. (Participant 3)



- I think this is a factor perhaps genetically and environmentally and parents may not have the skills necessary to support their children's learning. (Participant 7)
- You will find students as Title I; it comes across as parents not being educated. (Participant 11)

While the above responses were not clear enough to understand the individual participants' perceptions about the influence of parental level of education on the academic achievement of their children, most of the teachers were able to express their perception clearly as illustrated below.

- Highly educated parents usually sensitize the importance of education to their children which finds most of them making greater achievements in their academics compared to learners whose parent have low education levels. (Participant 1)
- Students require additional support with their homework assignments at home. Additionally, they also need someone to help them out when they get stuck with their studies as this builds their academic foundation appropriately. In this regard, educated parents are in a better position to help their children than uneducated ones which makes parents' level of education a significant influencing factor to student's academic performance. (Participant 13)
- Parents with a good academic background are able to assist their children in their course of learning which enhances their ability to improve academically. Parent education level, therefore, significantly contributes to learner's performance in school. (Participant 22)
- Neglect and carefree attitude towards children's education are rampant with lowly educated parents and in families located in low socioeconomic background. The

result is poor academic improvement by the affected students compared to those with highly educated parents and living in high socioeconomic backgrounds. (Participant 15)

- Student motivation towards learning depends on the nature of influence they receive from their environment. With parents being the most immediate environment, their positive influence, which is dependent on their level and love for education promotes their academic achievement. (Participant 32)
- Home is where basic values and norms are taught to children. It is usually their first school. The ability of a parent to provide such support depends on their education levels and significantly influences their children's academic performance. (Participant 39)
- Well educated parents will have the right attitude towards education and will provide full support to their children's education. (Participant 18)
- Parents are the second teachers to their children. Their understanding of academics will have a positive impact on their children's academic performance. (Participant 22)

Nevertheless, some participants argued that there was no significant influence on academic performance by parent's level of education as illustrated by the following sampled responses.

- There is more to parent's influence on their children's academic performance than just their level of education. Parental support is not related to their level of education and has a significant influence on children's academic improvement that the latter. (Participant 27)

- I don't think parents' level of education has a significant influence on their children's academic performance. The ability of a parent to motivate and instill the right attitude towards education does. (Participant 24)

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of a student's family income on academic performance.** Like any other endeavor, education requires resources for the maximal achievement of set goals. The fourth question explored the teachers' perceptions about the influence of family income on academic performance. Different perceptions were expressed some indicating a positive influence, others negative, lack of influence, while some were not certain about the specific influence that family income has on student academic performance. The following sampled responses represent the perceptions expressed by the participating teachers.

- Students from families with low income levels are more likely to be preoccupied with environmental stressors within their neighborhood such as feelings on insecurity about their safety, and housing status than those from high income earning families. These circumstances are significant contributors towards the detriment of their academic performance. (Participant 3)
- Despite my observation that children from high socioeconomic backgrounds performing poorly in school and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds perform very well, the overall trend is evident. It is not a general case that students from low SES perform poorly, but the higher the economic status of a student's background, the more likely the educational success. (Participant 12)
- Family incomes help a lot because parents are able to get their assistance academically. (Participant 44)

- Affordability of resources required in school is a significant determinant of student's performance. Students from high income earning families have an upper hand in this and thus usually perform better than those from low income families. (Participant 36)
- Income may affect performance if students are not provided with adequate meals or shelter. (Participant 29)
- Family with high income can provide the necessary skills, knowledge, tools, and instruments that are needed by the children which increases the ability to perform well in school. Family income positively influences students' academic performance. (Participant 8)
- Goes along with education status and support (free lunch) (families could be big). (Participant 3)
- When there is scarcity of income, parents concentrate on the basic provisions: food, shelter, and clothing. With little or no left for academic resources, children face difficulties which negatively affect their academic performance. (Participant 10)

On the other hand, various participants had contradicting perceptions about the influence of family income on student academic performance. Their perceptions also contradicted much of the literature reviewed in the second chapter of the present study. The following sample of responses illustrates the teachers' understanding of and experiences with family income as an influence on academic performance.

- Due to the availability of all required resources, students from high income families often do not work hard in school. They usually perform poorly compared to those from low income earners. (Participant 16)

- Economic hardships mostly motivate students towards working hard to improve their academic performance for a better future. In most instances, low family income positively influences academic performance. (Participant 2)
- The average household income of a school's location highly influences students' academic performance. Poorly performing students from low income earning families improving academically in schools located in environments with high average household income. (Participant 26)
- Parent or family income does not have a significant influence towards a student's academic performance in school, parent's attitude towards education does. I have seen well earning parents who rarely provide academic resources to their children. (Participant 20)

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of parental roles on student academic performance.** The fifth question aimed at identifying the participating teachers' perceptions about the influence parental roles have on student's academic performance. Based on the literature reviewed on the influence a student's background SES has on their performance, parental role stood as a significant social feature. Varying opinions were expressed by participants based on their theoretical, empirical, and general observation knowledge and experience. Below are responses that express the participants' perceptions about academic performance as influenced by parental roles as illustrated by the following quotations.

- Parent involvement in student performances boosts the students' confidence when someone they love care. (Participant 4)
- Family forms the social integration shaping of a student more than the school which relies on parent's attitude on their academic performance. Ability of parents to play

- their role towards their children's overall development significantly influences their academic performance. (Participant 41)
- Parents are not as involved. I raise my child how I want to raise my child. (Participant 20)
  - Parents have many roles on their children such as parents as parents, parents as educational decision makers, parents as advocates, and parents as teachers. Each parental role is important. It is a significant contributor towards children's school performance. (Participant 19)
  - Parents that are uninvolved can have a negative effect on student performance. If parents are indifferent about their child's education; the child may lack interest. (Participant 43)
  - Positive attitude towards a child's education is important in determining school attendance and academic achievement of the child. If a parent plays their role well to enhance such an attitude, it would positively influence academic performance. (Participant 34)
  - Home is the first learning ground for everyone and the ability of parents to play their roles fully determines how well shaped their children's growth will be. Consequently, it influences their academic wellness. (Participant 17)
  - Parental role is a significant influencing factor towards children's academic performance. I have seen a general trend of students with "absent" parents performing dismally compared to those whose parents take their full responsibility. (Participant 17)

- Though parents' willingness to commit fully to their roles is limited by SES, it has an influence on the academic performance of their children. (Participant 13)
- Despite the willingness to cater for their parental roles to their children, their attitudes toward education and their children's achievement highly influence their academic performance. (Participant 35)
- Students who receive substantial parental care develop fully socially and are able to concentrate well in their studies as compared to those with poor parent-child relationships and support. (Participant 38)

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of education policies on performance.** The present study aimed at determining teachers' perceptions about the influence of academic policies towards academic performance alongside other objectives as earlier listed.

Consequently, the sixth question in the data collection instruments used sought to collect information relevant to providing to the derived research question. Education policies determine who were doing what tasks, at what time, and in which manner. They regulate the conduct of both teachers and students as well as the circulation of resources relevant to the achievement of set goals. Academic policies are highly linked to government involvement and participation in educations and are not independent of the mandates made by governmental legislators. The present sections illustrate teachers' perceptions from the sampled population on response similarity grouping and sampling basis.

- Depending on socioeconomic levels, resources are limited especially in a low socioeconomic level area. We always get leftovers such as outdated textbooks that rarely aligns with State Testing Standards. (Participant 21)

- Regulation designed for education monitoring in the state determines the resource distribution criteria which limits the ability of certain schools to make significant academic performance improvements. (Participant 14)
- I think there have been strides or motivation made in the right direction but there is much work still to be done. (Participant 3)
- Education policies on teacher motivation and promotion determine how much they invest in their students. It best explains why private schools mostly outdo public ones in performance. (Participant 37)
- Not all students are allowed equal opportunities, and some have a delay in education. (Participant 18)
- Achievement in education is measured using performance quality as per the education policies without the consideration that all schools do not have equal opportunities by the resources at their exposure to perform equally. (Participant 33)
- Inability of education policies to provide fair and equal grounds for all students regardless of the socioeconomic background of the location of their schools limits the achievement of equality in the provision of quality, thus limiting the performance of the disadvantaged students. (Participant 42)
- Loose or tight school management policies have an influence on the academic performance of their students. Tight policies instill restlessness and fear among students which negatively affects their academic performance. (Participant 40)

**Teachers' perceptions of the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning.** Past literature review proceedings indicated a significant relationship between government involvement in promoting equity and the quality of learning in schools. All the



respondents had a unanimous agreement that the government has a significant influence on the achievement of equity in the distribution of resources as well as in the achievement of quality on learning.

- The role of government plays a big part in the quality of learning because they can make sure all socioeconomic levels have the same amount of resources as those to just the high socioeconomic level. (Participant 3)
- I believe the government gives some schools large amounts of funding; it's all left up to the administration on how they distribute the funding. (Participant 42)
- The government is giving schools equity funding so that all students across all socioeconomic levels will have the same education opportunity. (Participant 21)
- Not all students are allowed to attend preschool and not all schools receive additional funds for support programs. (Participant 4)
- Government initiatives begin with good intentions but are unrealistic and mostly ineffective enhancing equity and quality of learning for students. (Participant 33)

### **Descriptive Analysis Results**

Based on the themes generated from the data collected that were imperative towards the provision of a solution to the research questions as well as the achievement of the set objectives, descriptive analysis was conducted. The analysis followed the illustration as per the data analysis procedure outlined in the previous chapter. Participants' responses were categorized according to whether they indicated being against, in support, or in neutral stand towards each of the major themes developed from the analysis of the results. Table 2 illustrates a summary of the descriptive analysis of the data collected through interviews and questionnaires.

Table 2

*Descriptive Analysis Results*

Theme	Support <i>n</i>	Against <i>n</i>	Neutral <i>n</i>
Socioeconomic background significantly influences student performance	40	3	2
Parental occupation has a significant influence on student's academic performance	37	2	6
Parental level of education positively influences student's academic performance	36	7	2
Family income positively influences students' academic performance	42	3	0
Parental roles have a significant influence on students' academic performance	42	0	3
Impact of education policies on performance	43	1	1
Government has a role in enhancing equity and quality of learning	45	0	0

**Similarities and differences across demographics.** The primary data obtained in the present study did show an association with some demographic details of the participants. The similarities and differences across the participants' demographics were identified and presented

above; however, the distinctions drew attention to the following aspects of the teachers' and the charter schools' demographics:

- *Experience.* Teaching experience had a significant impact on teacher's knowledge of the researched topics. Participants with more than five years of working experience were more knowledgeable about how the different SES elements influence students' academic performance. Additionally, participants with teaching experience in schools located in areas serving diverse SES backgrounds had an outstanding understanding of how socioeconomic background dynamic influences student's academic performance.
- *Location.* Participants teaching in the neighborhood serving students of low socioeconomic backgrounds had an imperative understanding of how government involvement has a significant influence on the achievement of equity and the enhancement of quality of learning. Additionally, the teachers displayed substantial experience with the effects of socioeconomic background and parental involvement on academic performance.
- *Faculty.* Teachers of science and technical subjects had substantial knowledge about the effects of parental roles and attitudes about education. These teachers were specifically aware of parents' attitudes about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects.

**Additional data.** As earlier indicated, the present research was aimed at collecting both primary and secondary data relevant in providing solutions to the identified research questions. I selected the most relevant research studies with sufficient and valid findings to back up the primary data results for the improvement of the present study's inference development and

results discussions. The published studies' findings and the primary data findings offered an opportunity to use comparative analysis. Additionally, the secondary data allowed for ensuring the sufficiency and validation of the primary data's results through the cross analysis. Table 3 displays the sources that the current findings support as significant to the respective primary data themes.

#### **Chapter 4 Summary**

Chapter 4 contained the presentation of the findings. The main findings were presented in terms of the significant themes they embraced as per the various variables identified in the current study's theoretical framework. The chapter included the analysis results in addition to the participants' demographics. According to the data obtained and the results from the coding and analysis, the major themes represent the factors that influence students' education performance significantly. The major themes were socioeconomic background, parental occupation, parental education level, and family income affect student performance in charter schools. Teachers of science and technical subjects had substantial knowledge about the effects of parental roles and attitudes about education, but other teachers did not necessarily see the same influence of socioeconomics on student performance. While some teachers suggested having a lack of sufficient evidence with their experience in the teaching profession, others indicated that a parent's occupation and ability to nurture their children's academic performance had no association.

The following table provides a listing of relevant secondary sources for each of the identified themes for the present study. These studies were used since they covered a significant scope on how the two elements; SES background and academic performance relate. However, most of these studies relied on secondary sources. This creates a research gap for the utilization

of primary data in analyzing how each of the themes influence student performance. In addition to this, the conduction of research studies that covers the perception of teachers with regards to the effects of SES background on student performance has acquired minimal research interest. The application of these secondary sources, therefore, were significant in providing platform for validity and reliability analysis as well as comparative analysis with the collected data.

Table 3

*Secondary Sources*

Themes from the Data	Sources that Supports the Data
Socioeconomic background significantly influences a student’s academic performance	Bonefeld & Dickhäuser (2018)
	Häfner et al. (2018)
	Sanjurjo, Blanco, & Fernández-Costales (2018)
A parent’s occupation has a significant influence on a student’s academic performance	Hamzah & Yunus (2018)
	Hanushek et al. (2019)
A parent’s level of education positively influences a student’s academic performance	Guo et al. (2018)
	Hamzah & Yunus (2018)
Family income positively influences a student’s academic performance	Garbacz, Zerr, Dishion, Seeley, & Stormshak (2018)
	Guo et al. (2018)
	Hanushek et al. (2019)
Parental role has a significant influence on a student’s academic performance	Häfner et al. (2018)
	Zong, Zhang, & Yao (2018)
Education policies have an impact on students’ academic performance	Masci, De Witte, & Agasisti (2018)
	Murray et al. (2019)
Government has a role in enhancing equity and quality of learning	Kelchen (2018)
	Li & Kennedy (2018)

The collected information revealed the achievement of equity in the distribution of resources and in improving the quality of learning; teachers also reported that the government has a significant role in this process. The nature of academic policies development by both state and federal government and the individual institutional administration have an influence on student performance and in enhancing equitability and quality of learning. Because the government has the power to institute education policy mandates, the government has the power also to ensure that the policies enhance equity and quality of learning in schools. The following chapter discusses the above findings in light of both the secondary sources as well as the literature reviewed in the second chapter.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of a charter school environment and the association between low SES students and their academic performance. The research questions were:

RQ1: How do teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?

Chapter 4 demonstrated the research findings from primary and secondary data sources. Moreover, the findings were based on the relative assessment of the information obtained from demographic variables. With regards to secondary accounts and the literature checked, the section explored the attained results. The data gathered shows that both the equity and the quality of learning were influenced by the SES of the students.

Given qualitative research was conducted to explore the influence of different socioeconomic statuses on student's academic performance. The study explored different aspects that influenced student performance in related academics. Socioeconomic status, parent income, the role of government, and teachers' perception of the SES affecting children's academic performance were some of the aspects that the study anticipated. Wells (2000) stated that it is essential to consider the socioeconomic background in determining academic achievements. Socioeconomic status has been adversely affecting student performance at school. Whether it be the psychological, physical, or emotional, the effects have been observed to be quite intimidating on student's performance (Hanushek et al., 2019). For these reasons, a person's SES is tightly



coupled with the home environment, and one could argue that SES commands the eminence of academic life for children.

The primary objective of the study was to determine how the parents' SES influences the student's academic performance in school. The secondary objective was to determine the effects of parental income on student academic performance. Features contributing to inadequate academic development and performance among students based on socioeconomic background were identified. Parental occupational status affected student performance as did government-generated education policies. The policies regarding equality and quality of learning across students' SES levels did not appear to benefit students of low SES as designed. These findings are important because children are not always desirably affected by their family backgrounds and develop within households operating under specific parental income characteristics while having no choice about those characteristics. However, schools can affect student outcomes through equity-oriented policies and programs, which will be discussed in this chapter.

Achieving the objectives of the study involved following guidance stated by Newman (2016) that was specifically designed to help achieve the set objectives. The effect of the SES of the family on the educational accomplishments of children is the major problem addressed. Teachers' perceptions of SES influencing charter school student performance was one of the main phenomena considered (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The multiple data collection techniques allowed for gathering ample data from 45 teachers of the two charter schools that could be triangulated. After answering questionnaires, the 15 interview participants were interviewed in their respective schools, and the teachers from each school were interviewed on different days. The questionnaires were administered online through SurveyMonkey, and the 30 participants' questionnaire data formed one of three methods of data collection. Questionnaires

and interviews were vital for the case study's data collection as explained by Yin (2018) and Aberdeen and Bye (2013). Based upon demographics such as the location of the school, subjects taught, teaching experience, and age of the participants, the participants were characterized alongside the data's findings.

After the data collection, I manually coded the obtained information. Questionnaires and interviews involved the same questions. However, there was a difference in the data collection techniques where interviews were audio recorded then transcribed and the questionnaires were submitted online through SurveyMonkey to obtain the required information for the research (Yin, 2012). The data were categorized into the major themes that formulated from the root codes. The use of document analysis allowed for using triangulation, forming a holistic view of the phenomenon, as well as identifying the themes with credibility. The following sections contain information about the relevant answers to the research questions, discussion of the results, discussion of the results in relation to the literature, limitations, implications of the results, and recommendations for further research.

### **Summary of the Results**

Data from the questionnaires and interviews provided an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The study findings were finalized into major themes. The final six themes pertained to the connection between SES and the quality of learning. The final six themes were the following: (a) Influence of socioeconomic background on student performance, (b) Impact of education policies and the government's role on student performance, (c) Influence of parent's occupation on student's academic performance, (d) Influence of a student's family income on their academic performance, (e) Influence of parental roles on

student's academic performance, and (f) Influence of a parent's level of education on a student's academic performance.

## **Discussion of the Results**

To the education practice, in general, the study offers substantial information about what the 45 charter schoolteachers working in two different charter schools know about the influence of SES on student academic performance. In other words, the themes have expanded understanding of how SES impacts the performance of students from two perspectives: (a) teachers in a charter school serving a low-SES geographic area and (b) teachers in a charter school serving a high-SES geographic area. Each of the six major themes is discussed in detail in this section.

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance.** The impact of socioeconomic background on the students' performance was noted by the 45 charter schoolteachers. Based on their teaching practices and experiences in varying socioeconomic backgrounds, the participants communicated that they had complications in describing the role of socioeconomic background on children's performance. Few participants provided clear information about the ways through which SES influenced their students at the two charter schools. However, they noticed that students from affluent family backgrounds received remarkable educational opportunities. They believed that students from low-income families were treated inferiorly and received substandard forms of education. The finding confirms the statements made by Muijs (2007) and Wang and Holcombe (2010) about students from low SES having more disadvantage in terms of education acquisition than their higher SES counterparts. Such incongruent educational opportunities contribute to the achievement gaps found between students of different SES as an aftermath of the socioeconomic segregation found

in public schools (Winans-Solis, 2014). The achievement gap is a well-discussed issue that relates to academic performance and education inequality among students. Also, in line with the current finding that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have less access to equity in educational quality and resources, Soto (2007) confirmed students of low SES had witnessed ethnic or racial segregation.

The findings demonstrated conflicts in awareness by teachers on the influence of socioeconomic background on students' performances. However, Rivkin et al. (2005) put more emphasis on the influence of teachers on academic performance. With great awareness, teachers can deliver the curriculum according to the SES of their students. Some participants stated that the social orientation available to students was a significant factor regarding the academic performance of students. Students who receive social support are indeed likely to demonstrate higher academic performance over students who do not. Based on the present findings, it is evident that the amount of social care afforded to students is dependent on the socioeconomic background of students. Another factor considered regarding academic performance was the social structures available to students based on their backgrounds. High socioeconomic background provided families with the ability to develop sufficient social structures for students, unlike the abilities available to low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Single parenthood status was another vital component of the charter school students' backgrounds that teachers believed to influence academic performance directly, according to the teachers participating in the present study. The findings demonstrated that students from one-parent families show lower academic achievement than those from dual-parent homes. mainly because single-parent students go through psychological and social issues. There are various reasons why parents could be single including the death of one parent and divorce among others.

The discussion is contradicted by Darrow's (2016) concern that single-parenthood affects student performance only when the single parent is ignorant and jobless.

The finding also suggested that students from low-SES are not always able to develop the academic qualities necessary for their performance. Familial economic status is a significant factor in determining the nature of the activities, languages, lifestyles, and social welfare resources that are important to students developing their positive academic qualities. Howard (2013) confirmed that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds enjoy privilege, power, and status that enables them to perform toward higher academic achievement. However, Winans-Solis (2014) contradicted the present study finding by arguing that SES may not be the major factor affecting students' performance.

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of education policies and the government's role in student performance.** Education policies and the government's role in those policies affect student performance in low SES settings. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, education policies regulate who, at what time and in what form, completes certain tasks. The execution of these tasks determines the ways in which teachers and students conduct themselves and the circulation of the resources relevant to the achievement of stated objectives.

The level of resources was significantly determined by the types of education policies as well as the level of SES served by a particular school as demonstrated by Participant 21. Schools serving students of low-SES levels tend to receive old or outdated resources that do not conform to the most-current teaching standards. This finding is contrary to the discussions by OECD (2012) and UNESCO (2014) in which the fundamental purpose of all education systems is to provide equal and high-quality education to every student, whether students were socioeconomically disadvantaged or not. It appears that most of such education policies are not

implemented equally in all schools, especially in the disadvantaged ones, a finding that supports findings by Malin et al. (2017) and Kelchen (2018). Both of these researchers concluded that some policies do not allow all students to prepare themselves completely with regards to career readiness.

Also, Participant 14 communicated that the state's resources are solely dependent on the education policies laid out for the schools by the state. Some schools receive inadequate resources and are limited in enabling students to make significant improvements in their academic performance. These findings show that students from low SES are negatively affected by education policies designed for student performance targets.

The investments teachers make in their students depend on the education policies implemented within schools. Taylor (1997) and Li and Kennedy (2018) agreed that the findings relate to education policies affecting the academic performance of low-SES schools that might not be fully implemented or might be ignored by teachers in public schools due to lack of financial support by the government. Private schools have good policies and assessment results tend to follow their policy and curriculum implementations. Newton (2012) and Riddell and Niño-Zarazúa (2016) supported the idea that in the development of substantial systems and structure, academic assessment through successful education policies is imperative.

In addition, not all education policies provide equity in educational delivery to all students regardless of SES background, as stated in the findings. Educational inequality and unfairness limit academic performance among students from low SES backgrounds (Galat, 2012). This finding confirms Abrajano's (2010) point that equality in education depends on the economic status of students when specific policies afford more priority to the educational needs of students from high-SES backgrounds over those from low-SES backgrounds. Faubert (2012),

Darrow (2016), Field et al. (2007), and Hanushek et al. (2019) agreed that education policies should promote equality and excellence among education environments, regardless of students' SES.

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of parental occupation on student academic performance.** The charter schoolteachers gave different opinions and views regarding the association that could be observed between parental occupation and academic performance. Nevertheless, a high percentage of the interviewed charter schoolteachers claimed that their perceptions were based on their experiences with students whose parents held occupations and shared substantial information. The results, therefore, were limited based on each respondent's knowledge.

Findings revealed that parent occupation is a significant factor in determining the availability of the necessary resources to children. Parents with well-paid occupations are more likely to provide all the needed resources to their children; thus, economic advantages are present in schools. This explanation supports assertions by Little-Harrison (2012) and Liu and Wang (2008), who stated that parents' financial assistance is vital to academic achievement. However, some of the participating teachers suggested that parents' occupation may affect both the time and moral support provided to students. Students who have parents with occupations requiring extra work hours, such as with airlines or information technology, are more likely to receive less moral support than those whose parents' occupations enable parents to spend more time with their children. Westerlund et al. (2013) stated when parents are more prepared to contribute to their children's scholarly accomplishments, their children are likely to perform well in school.

The findings also revealed that parents' occupation influences the overall academic performance of their children, depending on the type of life skills acquired at the job. When

parents acquire the skill necessary for supporting their children's academic success, their children usually perform at higher levels at school. Thus, parental professional status is a motivator for students to work harder and perform better in schools. Various occupations inspire students in their own ways, and the level of inspiration students gain from parental occupation depends on the income supporting the students' academics. Occupations that generate higher income are more motivating to students (Darrow, 2016). Also, the level of professionalism in teaching and counseling affects how students become motivated to pursue professional-level occupations. Darrow (2016) advised parents to be more attentive to providing mental counseling for their children as a means of increasing academic performance.

#### **Teachers' perceptions of the influence of family income on academic performance.**

There was a finding that teachers believe that family income affects student academic performance. Interviews and questionnaires revealed various teachers' perceptions, including negative or positive influence, or lack of influence whatsoever. However, some teachers were inadequately prepared for the question and were unsure whether family income was associated with performance at all.

The findings revealed that environmental stressors are usually associated with students from families with low income. Such stressors include insecurity from the houses and neighborhoods they live in. Students who are exposed to much environmental stress perform poorly at school (Guo et al., 2018). This argument also explains why students from high socioeconomic backgrounds with more income perform better. Families with higher incomes are also able to meet all the academic needs of their children as opposed to families that earn less. Examples of such academic needs that require funds include school fees, purchased books, learning equipment, as well as academic trips and vacations (Hamzah & Yunus, 2018). Families



of low SES might have the means to afford some of the basic education channels that would expose their students to learning. As families obtain higher paying occupations, they have more ability to afford the resources that support their children's academic success.

The findings also suggested that income may be a significant determinant of academic performance in situations where families must meet basic student needs at home. For instance, food and shelter comprise such needs. Families with low income may not be able to provide those, thus interfering with their level of concentration at school. The mental health of students who get inadequate food and shelter is always a factor to be considered since individuals may develop problems such as mental retardation and poor concentration. However, the aforementioned instances only happen in developing countries. Also, Richards and Shahidul (2018) mentioned that the most affected group of families are African Americans, who have a lower income than other ethnic groups. In developed countries, families are able to provide all basic needs to their children, and only that those with low income may be unable to meet essential needs. Students from low-income families are, therefore, expected to underperform academically.

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of parental roles and student academic performance.** Parental roles having a relationship to students' academic performance were in the literature review. However, most of the respondents claimed to lack sufficient knowledge about parents' role fulfillment with their students. However, they had substantial knowledge of how the two factors relate as illustrated below. According to the information collected, students with concerned parents receive a positive drive to do good work in school. The findings revealed that student confidence is a crucial factor affected by parent roles. When the latter is involved in

the academic welfare of their children, the former are confident in handling any academic task because they receive love, trust, and care at all times, as explained by Westerlund et al. (2013).

The findings exposed the adverse effects of a lack of parental involvement in student performance. Students often perform poorly due to the lack of parental involvement in their academic matters, and in single parenthood cases, the absent parent also negatively influenced the academic performance of students. The students showed a lack of interest in education if their parents were not involved. One of the respondents stated that home is a central place for children to learn as much from their parents. Children who do not have parents or guardians perform dismally in school.

The findings also revealed that the ability of parents to commit to their children's education depends on their level of income as well as their SES. Häfner et al. (2018) agreed that parents with more income are more likely to fulfill specific roles for supporting in their children's success with academics. Alternatively, parents in low-SES households may find it challenging to engage with their children's academics as they spend more time searching for money to cater for the basic needs of their children (Häfner et al., 2018). As a result, parents of lower SES levels may not fulfill vital roles for ensuring their children obtain an excellent education.

**Teachers' perceptions of the influence of a parent's level of education on a student's academic performance.** This theme was concerned primarily with the evaluation of how parental level of education influences children's academic performance. The charter schoolteachers presented varied opinions regarding their perceptions of how the level of education impacted their children's performance.

Whereas some agreed, others did not, even as much as others had an unclear understanding and explanation of the relationship. Nonetheless, Participants 1 and 13 vividly expressed their opinions that educated parents are likely to emphasize the importance of education to their children who, in turn, to value education and show higher levels of academic performance. Participant 15 was categorical that a “do-not-care attitude is rampant among children of uneducated parents,” since these children have no role models or examples of education’s value based on their parents’ education level. In essence, the findings show that parents who are educated can, in fact, be role models to their children, thus serving to impact their children’s interest in education positively. As such, parental level of education can be regarded as a motivator that enhances children’s chances of performing better in their academics.

These sentiments are consistent with Wiliam and Thompson’s (2017) views captured in the literature review chapter. The authors stated that education improvement is a great priority for every state, and thus, increasing the level of education will bring benefits to individuals and society in terms of improved economic growth, SES, and social integrations, such as criminal justice and healthcare costs. West (2007) also showed that the SES of the parents was influenced by their level of education, which, in turn, influenced the SES of the child. Based on the findings, it is undeniable there is a direct link between the SES of the student and the level of education of the parents. Howard (2013) added that children from high-SES backgrounds would most likely have educated parents, as compared to their counterparts with low SES.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

At the onset of the study, I set out to focus on two elementary charter schools with teachers in a charter school serving a low-SES geographic area and teachers in a charter school serving a high-SES geographic area. The findings from the present study conducted with charter

schools' teachers advance results reported by West (2007); Winans-Solis (2014); and Wood Fisher, Reynolds, Guzman, and Pedersen (2013) on the impact SES differences have on variations in academic performance. The core purpose of the investigation brought to the fore the following six points to be discussed in relation to the literature: (a) education policies, (b) socioeconomic background, (c) parental occupation, (d) family income, (e) parental roles, and (f) parental level of education.

**Education policies.** It has emerged from the findings that the government plays a central role in developing policies that affect the performance of students. Policies that serve to hinder the acquisition of the fundamental resources needed for enhancing education facilities in charter schools is found to be a significant roadblock in the capacity of charter schools as regards enhancement of their students' performance capabilities. Taylor (1997), Li and Kennedy (2018), Abrajano (2010), and Galat (2012) shared concerns that researchers have raised regarding the inadequate state of educational facilities and resource allocations to schools that are populated by students from disadvantaged SES backgrounds.

**Socioeconomic background.** The study has affirmed the relationship between SES and students' performance as a directly proportional relationship in which students from affluent socioeconomic settings most often have an improved chance of producing higher academic performance. Howard (2013) was categorical that SES empowers students from affluent socioeconomic backgrounds in regard to access to resources as well as educational materials necessary to enhance their performance. SES does result in higher performance outcomes for students of affluence, and students from low SES are less likely to perform at a level equal to students representing affluent SES.

**Parental occupation.** Although a weak link was established to exist between parents' occupation and the capabilities of the students to perform in their academics, the research has established that students who deem their parent's occupations respectful and would aspire to pursue a career in the same field would value the education that would lead to the attainment of such a profession. Similarly, parental occupation is linked to income and ability to afford a higher quality of education opportunities for their children. Hence, parents with better paying jobs or occupations had the higher the likelihood to afford a good education for their children by choosing areas with higher performing public charter schools for their children to attend. Little-Harrison (2012) and Liu and Wang (2008) stated that parents' financial assistance is vital to children's academic achievement. Towards that end, parental occupation was found to influence student performance.

**Family income.** The study finds that the level of family income is directly proportional to the children's performance consistent with Little-Harrison's (2012) findings, indicating that parents with more income are likely to afford better quality education for their children and vice-versa. According to the findings, family income influences the ability to fully meet the academic needs of a student thus their quality of learning. Additionally, family income determines the general ability to provide for their children which influences children's total development, wellness, and academic performance. Children from high earning families are expected to lead quality lives. Their parents can afford to provide a high-quality education, so those children perform better than children from low-wage earning families.

**Parental roles.** The role of the parent as established in the findings is associated with mentorship, in which the parent provides direction to the child on the importance of education. Parents as mentors can play a significant role in motivating their children to perform in their

academics. Parents' roles in shaping academic performance are more significant than the role played by the school (Garbacz et al., 2018). The attitude of parents with regards to student academic performance is crucial as it determines how academic lives were approached by students (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018; Westerlund et al., 2013). Some of the ways in which parents can influence their children's education include making academic decisions, advocating for better policies in schools, and teaching on the matters of academics.

**Parental level of education.** The level of education of parents is equally directly proportional to the academic performance, as educated parents are likely to earn higher incomes, which, in turn, makes it possible for them to afford better quality education for their children. The ability of learners to receive assistance in their studies at home depends on the level of understanding of their care givers on basic school concepts. While parents are the immediate and primary caregivers, their levels of education influence the academic performance of their children. Additionally, the findings indicated that parents with higher education achievements challenge and motivate their children to achieve higher academic goals.

### **Limitations**

The study was strengthened by the comprehensive approach to data collection that involved utilizing the three sources of documents, interviews, and questionnaires. The main limitation affecting the depth of the findings was the limited information teachers had about the SES backgrounds of their students. Some of the teachers did not have a clear understanding about their students' SES or about their students' parents because the teachers lacked details about administrators, parents, or students. Nonetheless, the limitations did not entirely detract from the findings build upon the design of the study as applicable to research and practice.

## **Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

In the present study, the researcher identified the teachers' perceptions of the influences of socioeconomic background on students' academic performances. The findings obtained, as outlined in the previous chapter, might have a significant influence on theory, practice, and future studies of the relationships between education quality and students' academic performance and SES. The present section, therefore, contains the theoretical, practical, and future research implications from the findings of the current study. The presentations of these implications contain material from the literature in detailed explanations of the present study's parameters. The presentation of the implications is not about generalizing but about explaining case specific information related to the current research findings.

**Practical implications.** From the understanding developed in the research findings, teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders in the education practice can use this knowledge by applying it to their areas of expertise with the aims of addressing the given problem, which is on how to improve the performance of students from the low SES backgrounds. The development of academic policies relies on the significant identification of substantial flaws in the existing regulations. Such flaws are pointed out from research findings and reviews by authorities (Riley & Coleman, 2011). Parents should ensure that they pay attention to maintaining a positive attitude of their children's learning to aid in academic performance (Liu & Wang, 2008).

The ability of a study's findings to have an impact on policy development in its field forms its practical implications. The findings obtained in the present study provide information significant in educational policy and regulations development as well the understanding of children's needs by teachers according to their SES levels and conditions. Education leaders might actively apply Maslow's (2014) hierarchy in professional development to inform the level

of commitment that teachers might give to ensuring students feel safe and able to perform academically. In this vein, Maslow's theory can help educators seeking to understand the differences in students that affect academic performance between schools serving students of different levels of SES. The findings might have a practical impact on the development of school improvement policies as well as on resource distribution strategies by relevant authorities. Additionally, the findings provide teachers and parents with substantial information for understanding their students' backgrounds and learning abilities based on their actions in relation to supporting children's academic needs.

The results of this report present significant practical implications for the government, parents, and teachers. To the government, policies have to be aligned such that they cater to the educational needs of the students who are disadvantaged by SES. Parents, on their part, must do what it takes to provide a conducive environment for their children to perform in their academics including the provision of finances, mentorship, and lifestyle that will motivate students from the low SES backgrounds to perform better in their academics. Lastly, teachers should not discriminate against students from low-SES backgrounds but would be well served to afford these children additional academic attention and empathy to assist the children in overcoming their SES-related challenges and to generate improved academic performance.

**Policy implications.** The findings present significant guidelines governing the conduction of research studies on the influence of academic wellness by socioeconomic background. From the findings obtained, and the indifferences obtained, future studies might need to consider the impact single parenthood may pose on the academic wellness of their children compared to children with both parents. Additionally, parent occupation or availability



could affect academic performance as a significant research consideration with the possible inclusion of parents' fulltime availability versus parents' differential availability.

Towards the future implications, the study should be applied in the policy development process by government agencies and education stakeholders with the intention of uplifting the students who are disadvantaged socioeconomically. More so, the findings of this study can be further explored to narrow down the effects of themes presented in the results section. Such a move would serve to lead to a profound understanding of the issue and the ultimate development of appropriate policies that will address dismal performance outcomes among students from low-SES backgrounds.

**Theoretical implications.** The findings obtained by this study have substantial implications in the theoretical development and improvement of theories, models, and frameworks on academic achievement impact by SES as well as equity in the provision of quality education. The OECD's (2012) report indicated poverty and hardship among ethnic minorities in the United States of America lead to disadvantaged access to education facilities. The application of Maslow's (2014) hierarchy of needs concepts revealed that the socioeconomic statuses of parents affect children at schools of different SES levels in diverse ways. Learners with parents of higher SES occupy a different position in the hierarchy of needs, such as needing to have belongingness and self-esteem needs met, which affects their motivation to excel in their academics. On the other hand, learners with parents of lower SES pursue meeting safety needs, even physiological needs for food, daily. They may struggle to commit mental resources to their education and to maintain any belief that completing high school can guarantee better employment options for meeting their safety needs.

The development of theoretical frameworks heavily relies on proceedings from previously conducted studies (Winans-Solis, 2014). The present research's findings provide information substantial in the development of education theories related to the influence of SES on academic performance. In addition to this, the findings have a significant theoretical implication on future development to the OECD from which its framework was founded. To this end, the implications arising from the research reverberate the OECD's (2012) findings noting that, indeed, SES has shaped the realities of many students from disadvantaged backgrounds to the negative. The findings are consistent with the literature review indicating that African American and Latino students are hardest hit by SES, hence dismal academic performance among these groups.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Additional research is encouraged to uncover other sectors relating to the achievements of both the school and students regardless of the SES background check. Other studies will then open up a lot of loopholes and give ways to fill them with the correct information for a better future for each generation. Newman (2016) noted that understanding research should equip the learner with skills on application and duplication of scientific inquiry or investigations. To this end, it is recommended that future research studies on the topic should expound on the topic presented herein. In that esteem, such studies offer deep dissections into influential attributes, such as government policies and parental occupation or economic background, for a better understanding of how such factors in isolation impact the performance of the children. In addition, future studies should be conducted in a broader scope, such as the United States at large, to better contextualize the extent of the problem under investigation.

## **Conclusion**

The present study was conducted to understand teachers' perceptions about the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance. In this study, I answered to the two research questions addressing how teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in each of two charter schools and how teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning of students from all levels of SES. Through the data collected from teachers and the analysis results, the teachers indicated having a perception that socioeconomic background has a significant influence on students' academic performance. In this regard, their views outlined various dimensions of socioeconomic background that affect children's academic performance. These factors were family income and parents' levels of education, occupations, and family roles.

In addition, the teachers found education policies were influencers of children's academic performance. Consequently, the teachers perceived that the government has a significant role in enhancing equality in education. They believe the government has the responsibility to ensure all types of public schools achieve equitable resource allocation and balanced regional development of all schools, regardless of neighborhood location.

The study findings represented a significant contribution to the understanding of the influence socioeconomic background on academic performance based on charter schoolteachers' points of view. The findings of the study lay a foundation on which researchers can develop future studies regarding the influence of SES on children's academic performance, on teachers' perceptions of educating children from low and high SES, and on policymakers and stakeholders responsible for the policies that affect education funding and the role of meeting children's needs in public charter and other public schools.



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## **Appendix A: Participation Invitation Letter for Teachers**

Dear Teacher,

I am a student carrying out a research study on a relationship between low socioeconomic status and poor academic performance. This letter is an invitation for you to take part in my research as a respondent to questions regarding different aspects of the topic under study. The main objectives for the study include determining how teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school and how do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels. Teachers are chosen as respondents for the study as they have in-depth information on the student's performance. The participation of teachers in the research is on a voluntary basis and in case one may wish to withdraw from the research there were no constraints. Besides, there is no need for the teachers to give their names when making responses to the interview questions as there is a need to maintain confidentiality. If you wish to take part in the study, please read the letter of consent below. The participation of teachers is essential as it helps in the relationship between low socioeconomic status and poor academic performance better.

Thank you very much for your participation and time.

Sincerely,

Brittany Strickland,

Concordia University–Portland

## **Appendix B: Letter to the Principal for the Participation of Teachers in the Research**

Dear Principal,

I am a student conducting a research study on the relationship between low socioeconomic status and poor academic performance. The main purpose of writing this letter is to request your permission regarding the participation of your teachers in answering my interview questions regarding different aspects of the topic under study. The research involves investigating on how teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school and how do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels. I selected teachers as the sample size for my topic as Teachers are chosen in this case as respondents for the study as they have in-depth information on the student's performance.

The research will take 30 to 45 minutes of your teachers' time and their participation will be on a voluntary basis. In case one of the teachers will wish to withdraw from the research, they will not be coerced to do so. The information that teachers will give will be for academic use only and confidentiality will be maintained for all information offered. The participation of teachers in this research is a crucial aspect as it may help in understanding the various ways that low socioeconomic status influences the academic performance of students.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Brittany Strickland,

Concordia University-Portland

## Appendix C: Questionnaire Consent Form

**Course name:**

**Assignment name:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher name), understand that I have been asked to take part in the questionnaire activity which is part of the following research questions: *How do teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school? How do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?* Furthermore, as a participant in the research, I understand that it is on a voluntary basis and any information offered to the student will be used for academic purposes only. Finally, I have read the information presented above and by signing below as well as returning the form; I am indicating my consent to participate in the questionnaire project for the University student named below.

Participant name and Signature (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you may have any other question concerning the participation in the project, contact .

**Student name:**

Telephone:

Email address:

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in my research project.

## **Appendix D: Consent Form for Signature to Interview**

Research Project Title: How Teachers Perceive Students' Socioeconomic Background and Academic Performance in Charter Schools

Research Investigator: Brittany Strickland

Dear Research Participant,

This **interview will take a maximum of 45 minutes** of your time. Besides, it is anticipated that the research will not involve any risk and you have the right to withdraw from the interview. Thank you very much for your agreement to take part in the research project. The main aim of the interview consent form is to ensure that you understand all the aspects related to the research interview questions. The interviews, in this case, will be recorded as well as transcripts are produced for purposes of correction of the factual errors.

The information that will be provided by the interviewed teachers will only be accessible by the research investigator. Thus, by signing the interview consent form, it implies that you agree voluntarily to take part in the research project and understand that taking part in the interview is on a voluntary basis. Besides, by signing the form, it shows that one has read all the information indicated in the information sheet and by participating in the research there will not be a form of payment that I will receive. Finally, by signing, the form indicates that I have asked all the necessary questions that I have on the research and understand that one is free to contact the researcher in case of an issue.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix E: Interview Questions for Teachers**

1. How do teachers perceive the influence of socioeconomic background on student performance in a charter school?
  - a. How do teachers perceive the influence of occupation of parents on student performance in a charter school?
  - b. How do teachers perceive the influence of level of education for parents on student performance in a charter school?
  - c. How do teachers perceive the influence of family income on student performance in a charter school?
  - d. How do teachers perceive the influence of parental roles on student performance in a charter school?
  
2. How do teachers perceive the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?
  - a. How do teachers' perceptions of the role of government in enhancing equity and quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels influence student performance in a charter school?
  - b. What are the main key factors that have contributed to various teachers' perceptions the government participation in enhancing equity quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?
  - c. How will you rate the influence of teacher's perceptions on the role of government in enhancing equity quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels influence student performance in a charter school?
  - d. How do teachers perceive the distribution of government funds used in enhancing equity quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels on student performance?
  - e. How do teachers perceive various government initiatives in enhancing equity quality of learning across all socioeconomic levels?

## **Appendix F: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### **What does “fraudulent” mean?**

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### **What is “unauthorized” assistance?**

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

**Statement of Original Work (continued)**

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for the use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

**Brittany Strickland**

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Digital Signature

Brittany Strickland

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Name (Typed)

October 31, 2019

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Date