

**PERCEIVED SOCIO-PERSONAL PREDICTORS OF SCHOOL DROP-OUT AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOLS ADOLESCENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC
RECONSTRUCTION**

By

ADIKA LAWRENCE OLAGOKE, Ph.D

lawadika@yahoo.com

+2348033943982

&

OYEDIRAN AYOTUNDE O., Ph.D

Department of Educational Psychology,

Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo

+2348033856252

Abstract

Education the world over is an instrument of economic and technological development. Education is expected to produce competent and skilled workforce to improve the nation in all ramifications. However, if the dream of education is not realised, the nation is plundered into trouble. Dropping out of school is a global problem confronting the education industry round the world. The study focused on perceived factors of drop-out from school among selected secondary school adolescents in Oyo town. The descriptive survey design was used for the study which involved 200 school-going adolescents randomly selected from five secondary schools. A self-designed instrument tagged 'Socio-Personal predictors of Dropping out of School Scale' was used in collecting data for the study. The t-test statistical method was used to analyse the data collected. The two null hypotheses tested were rejected implying a significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents on causes of drop-out in schools. It was recommended that counsellors should put up programmes to reduce drop-out rates among students and schools should be made student-friendly to encourage more adolescents in schools.

Introduction

Education in Nigeria is a vital tool for economic, technological and political development. In fact, without adequate education for the citizens, a nation is doomed because it is only through this vital tool that the society can witness all-round development; it brings wide-ranging benefits to both individual and the society at large. It is considered so important to individual development that the right to primary education is legally guaranteed in most countries of the world. According to Ayodele and Bada (2007), education is an instrument par excellence for effective national development. The importance of education to the Nigerian nation cannot therefore be over-emphasised; scientific and technological development will be mirage if there is no qualitative education. Failure to complete a basic cycle of primary school not only limits future opportunities for children but also represents a significant drain on the limited resources that countries have for the provision of primary education (Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Hunt, 2010).

To be able to realise the laudable benefits of formal education in Nigeria, the Nigerian government at the basic level especially has made education compulsory and free. In spite of the efforts of successive governments in developing nations especially Nigeria to indiscriminately expand and

colossally invest in the formal school system, researches (Ikechukwu, 2000; Ayodele & Bada, 2007 and Adaba, 2001) reveal that school drop-out rate seems high and calls for the attention of all and sundry. Dropping out of school which is simply described as untimely withdrawal from school is an endemic problem in the Nigerian society. According to Fafunwa (1983), it is a global problem confronting the education industry round the world. It is one of the most serious problems that have continued to bedevil the Nigerian education system since independence in 1960 (Ajaja, 2012). Dropping out from school occurs after children have previously achieved access to school (Hunt, 2008).

Scholars have viewed the concept of drop-out in various ways. Ayodele and Bada (2007) felt that drop out of school qualifies those students who could not complete their education programme at any level of education due to one reason or the other. While writing on who could be regarded as a drop-out, Gravenir (1982) opines that drop-outs are students who are no more with the group originally enrolled in the educational system, while Durosaro (1989) was of the opinion that drop-outs are students who left school without completing their courses and those who failed to obtain the terminal certificate and thus unable to utilize the training received, while Umoh (1986) views dropout as a pupil who because of unseen circumstance cannot complete a school program which she/he originally was enrolled for.

There seems to be diverse opinion on the description of the concept of drop-out. For example, Eride (2011) describes it as ‘ a student who was enrolled in school at some time during the school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the following year, or one who was not enrolled on October 1 of the school year although was expected to be in membership i.e was not reported as a drop out the year before, and one who has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district-approved educational program, or anyone who did not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:

- Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state or district-approved educational program;
- Temporary school-recognised absence due to suspension or illness; or
- Death.

These researchers however conceive the concept to mean anyone who could not complete an educational programme at whatever level for whatever reason. This seems to be in agreement with the description of Ayodele and Bada (2007). However, it must be noted that dropping out of school is more of a process than an event; for any student, the process begins in the elementary school.

Statistics on rates of dropping out of school in Nigeria is alarming. For example UNESCO reported that Nigeria accounted for almost a fifth of the world’s out-of-school children. The report said 57 million children were out of school in 2011. The report also said at least one out of every four children that do enrol stayed in school, adding that the figure had not changed since 2000.

Researches abound on the patterns and rates of school drop-out in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1983; Okoye, 1991; Osakwe and Osagie, 2010 & Ajaja, 2012). Predictors of school drop-out could be many and varied. In fact, the causes could be multiple, complex and interrelated depending on the way it has been conceptualized. According to Rumberger and Li (2008), multiple factors in elementary or middle school may influence students’ attitudes, behaviours and performance in high school prior to dropping out. The researchers (Rumberger & Li) identified two types of factors that predict whether students drop out or graduate from school: factors associated with individual characteristics of students, and factors associated with the institutional characteristics of their families, schools and communities.

According to Rumberger and Li (2008), individual factors that predict whether students drop out or graduate from school fall into four areas: educational performance, behaviours, attitudes, and background, while the institutional factors include factors within students’ families, school and communities. In sum, these authors found that poor academic achievement, home environment and access to social and financial resources and several behaviours both in and out of school – including absenteeism, delinquency, and substance abuse – are strong indicators of dropping out of school.

Ikechukwu (2000) on her part found that finance, personal characteristics, societal and home factors greatly predict dropping out of school. High cost of schooling in Nigeria for example has been found to be responsible for how far a student can go in his/her educational pursuit (Okedara, 1986, Fafunso, 1994 & Sheet, et al 1997). Some personal characteristics identified as indicators of dropping out of school include: illness, accident or physical disability or any other external circumstance, on which the student has no control (Ikechukwu, 2000).

Good Community Committee (1995) and Scewertz (1995) identified youth violence (crime), single-parenthood, poverty, drug problem, school instability and rebellion as causes of student drop-out of school, while Sewell (2000) opines that dropping out of school is traceable to: not liking school, suspension or expulsion from school, economic reasons, socio-economic status of the family, friends' influence, pregnancy (for girls), low grades and disciplinary problems.

In a study conducted in America, four in ten drop-outs said they left school because they were failing or they did not like school, just as many males and females reported they were leaving school because of personality conflicts with teachers. More males than females dropped out of school because of suspension or expulsion (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). The researchers also found that although most dropouts reported school-related reasons for leaving school, most female dropouts reported family related reasons.

Dropping out of school can have profound and grave effects on a person's life and of course adverse effects on the family and the society at large. Sometimes, dropouts become nuisance to the society and eventually can become criminals threatening the peace of our society; this necessitates this research. The researchers are of the view that when these factors are known by stakeholders in the education industry, they can be approached and nipped in the bud before it becomes a burden. This will necessitate everyone's hands on deck to build a more virile and useful youths who will eventually be leaders of tomorrow. There is therefore the need for counsellors, teachers, administrators of schools, government functionaries to be aware of the enormity of the problem of dropping out of school in Nigerian society; this necessitates academic reconstruction of the nation's education.

On his own, Zaharia (2013) found that factors such as: Financial problems, parents' educational example, siblings' education, early employment, lack of trust in the education system, early marriage custom, having a child, lack of individual security in the area and the custom of discontinuing education after the eighth grade.

Education brings wide-ranging benefits to both individuals and the society at large. Moreover, International Human Rights Conventions also recognize the right to education. Dropping out of school constitutes educational wastages and eventually, the nation's manpower development is hampered. Also, dropouts from school could become threats to the peace and development of the society.

Research Hypotheses

Two research hypotheses were set for this study. These are:

- i. There will be no significant differences in the perceived socio-economic background of parents and dropping out of school.
- ii. There will be no significant difference in the perceived peer group membership and dropping out of school.

Methodology

Research Design

The descriptive survey design, which has been described as a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way, has been employed for the study.

Population and Sample

The population for the study includes school going adolescents in secondary schools within Oyo town. Since it is not easy and economically able to reach all the population, the researchers used Two-hundred participants randomly selected from five secondary schools in the ancient town. Forty participants each were selected from each of the school, making a total of Two hundred participants with age range of between 11 and 16.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the collection of data for the study was a self-designed scale tagged 'Socio-Personal Predictors of School Drop-out Scale'. The scale has two sections: A and B. Section A contains demographic variables like gender, age range, religion, parental socio-economic background etc. While section B contains twenty question items with responses in two forms: Yes or No. The twenty items were categorised into four with headings like: parental socio-economic background, membership of peer groups, academic performances and school factors.

Data Analysis

The null hypotheses were analyzed using the t-test statistical method to compare the perceived predictors of dropping out of school at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One

This hypothesis stated that there will be no significant differences in the perceived socio-economic background of parents and dropping out of school.

Table 1: showing the differences in the perceptions of respondents on socio-economic factor as a predictor of dropping out of school.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t-cal</i>	<i>t-tab</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Remark</i>
High Socio-economic Background	100	14.19	6.14	198	2.01	1.96	0.05	S
Low Socio-economic Background	100	21.07	8.22					

The above table shows the result for hypothesis one. The mean (\bar{x}) score for high socio-economic background is 14.19, the Standard Deviation is 6.14, while that of low socio-economic background is 21.07 and 8.22 respectively with the Degree of Freedom (df) of 198; the t-cal is 2.01, while the t-tab. is 1.96. The findings show that there is significant difference in the perceptions of respondents as touching school dropouts' socio-economic background. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Table II: showing the differences in the perceptions of respondents on peer group membership and non- peer group membership as a predictor of dropping out of school.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t-cal</i>	<i>t-tab</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Peer Group Membership	100	7.90	3.01	198	2.76			S
Non-Peer Group Membership	100	16.54	2.71			1.96	0.05	

The mean(\bar{x}) score for peer group membership is 7.90, with Standard Deviation of 3.01, while those with non-peer group membership have 16.54 and 2.71 respectively. The t-cal is 2.76, while the t-tab. is 1.96,

with 0.05 level of significance. The findings show that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on whether peer group membership influences dropping out of school. The t-cal (2.76) is greater than the t-tab (1.96), meaning that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on group membership as a predictor of dropping out of school of adolescents.

The above table shows the result for hypothesis two. The mean(x) score for peer group membership is 9.70, with Standard Deviation of 3.01, while those with non-peer group membership have 16.54 and 2.71 respectively. The t-cal is 2.76, while the t-tab. is 1.96, with 0.05 level of significance. The findings show that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on whether peer group membership influences dropping out of school. The t-cal (2.76) is greater than the t-tab (1.96), meaning that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on group membership as a predictor of dropping out of school of adolescents.

Discussion

Hypothesis one sought to find the differences in respondents' perceptions on parental socio-economic background as a predictor of dropping out of school. The hypothesis was rejected in that the t-cal value (2.01) is greater than the t-tab value (1.96). This implies that significant difference exists in the dropout rates of students from low and high socio-economic backgrounds. It implies that students from high socio-economic background are rarely likely to drop out of school like their low socio-economic counterparts. This finding is not out of place as several researchers (Ayodele & Bada, 2007; Oyeyemi, 2005 & Adaba, 2001) have correlated dropping out of school with dropouts' parental socio-economic backgrounds. In the same vein, Alude and Ikechukwu (2000) found that adolescents' attrition from schools has its root in parental socio-economic background. Parents who are poor and could hardly feed their family may have children dropping out of school because of demands of the school. Good Community Committee (1995) also opined that parents' inability to pay their wards' schools fees results into dropping out of schools.

Hypothesis two sought to find the differences in the respondents' perceptions on peer group membership as a predictor of school dropout. The hypothesis was rejected because significant difference exists in the two variables considered. The mean scores were 9.70 and 16.54, while the Standard Deviation was 3.01 and 2.71 respectively, with a Degree of Freedom of 198. The t-cal value was 2.76, while the t-tab value was 1.96. The t-cal value is greater than the t-tab. Value ($2.76 > 1.96$), the hypothesis is therefore rejected. The finding shows that peer group membership influences dropping out of school. This result is in line with previous findings on the subject. For example, Perdue, Manzeske and Estell (2009) found that peer group membership greatly influences adolescents' dropping out of school.

Implications for Academic Reconstruction

From the fore-going, it is imperative to discuss the implications of dropping out of schools by Nigerian teeming population. If the rate continues as predicted by UNESCO, then it could weaken the development of manpower in the country and build a set of adolescents without good future.

As noted by Ikechukwu (2000), it has become glaring that the problem of school dropout has gone beyond the competence and management of parents, teachers and school authorities, the other to turn to is counselling – as a foundation for future academic, vocational, psychological and overall personal growth. Counsellors therefore have the responsibilities of supplementing academic work and entire school life.

If these are to be prevented, then Guidance Counsellors have roles to play in the school system. Counsellors need to work to fulfil the purpose of establishing guidance services in Nigerian schools i.e. to build individuals with good character and morally stable adolescents. Counsellors must ensure they put on

programmes that will enhance good academic performances of students and help to make the school a 'home' for learners. A student-friendly school will retain students more than the unfriendly type.

Enlightenment programmes and community development programmes by the counsellor to enlighten parents and other stakeholders in the education sector to the import of education will ensure good participation by students. Parents will also cooperate in ensuring they provide adequately for their wards and children.

Conclusion

The importance of formal education in the development of the Nigerian nation cannot be over-emphasised. Adolescents must be helped to be able to experience more success and gain more confidence to tackle the academic, social, emotional, physical and vocational problems which have hindered their self-concept and confidence.

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