

Indicators of Students' Dropout from Schools As Perceived by Teachers in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated indicators of students' dropout from public secondary schools as perceived by teachers in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. This descriptive research raised and answered two research questions. The population of the study was 1,343 teachers in 26 public secondary schools. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 336 teachers that responded to a questionnaire titled "Indicators of School Dropout Scale (ISDS)". The instrument was subjected to face validity and Cronbach Alpha reliability. The reliability index of .81. Descriptive statistics (Mean) was used for data analysis. The mean scores determined the acceptance or rejection of the rating items. In order to make decisions from results obtained, the criterion mean score of 2.5 was used. The results of the analysis revealed that teachers perceived household and school factors as associated with students' dropout from secondary schools. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teachers perceived students dropping out from public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis to be associated with household and school factors. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that poverty reduction measures should be strengthened in Calabar Metropolis to enable families get higher disposable income for the education their children/wards.

Keywords: Dropout, Household, School factors, Internal Efficiency

Introduction

The future and level of development of any nation depends to a large extent on the quality of education provided to her populace. To achieve any meaningful development, education has been identified as a viable instrument to bring about the desired growth in human development. To this end, the Nigerian government prescribed a 9-year free, compulsory basic education for all children of school going age as stated in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) act of 2004.

Despite all the plans and provision stated in the education policy, millions of school-age children in Nigeria are out of school. Nigeria ranked high among nations where a large population of children (18.3 million) are out of the classroom as reported by United Nations Children's Fund in 2024. This statistic is quite alarming and is also a pointer to the fact that Nigerian education would be a failure if the nation's human capital development cannot match the required workforce needed for national development. The incidence of school dropout has been on the increase in recent times which could be due to classroom shortages, dilapidated infrastructure, (Ameh et al, 2015), health and security concerns, cultural norms, shortage of qualified teachers, limited budgetary allocation, child labour among others. The major social costs of dropping out of school include reduced political participation, increased demand for social services, increased crime rates and poor levels of health. Individual costs include lower earnings, unemployment prospects, and a greater likelihood of health problems and limiting their chances of economic and social well-being in the future (Ahmad et al, 2017).

Dropping out of school refers to the situation whereby a student who enrolled in school quit before the completion of his/her studies. There are various reasons why an individual could drop out of school. Some of the reasons could be inherent in the child; such as sudden disinterestedness in school activities, ill health, death and low level of academic achievement (Ofem et al, 2021). Some other factors could be associated with the teachers such as teachers not teaching well as a result of poor teaching method, lack of interest in teaching profession while on the other hand, the reason for dropping out of school could be concerning environmental issues such as governmental policies, lack of adequate teaching-learning facilities and equipment (Ekaette et al, 2020; Aliero, 2020; Okoi et al, 2024), poor school administration (Zira & Zumo 2020), examination and certification system. Students could also drop out of school because of lack of finance and poor home situation (Inuwa, 2020). The issue of school dropout in Nigeria has been with us for a very long time. Ajaja (2012) noted that dropout is one of the most serious problems that have continued to bedevil our educational system since independence in 1960 from the colonial administration. Ajaja (2012) has categorized reasons why students drop out of school into four clusters that include; school-related, job-related, family-related, and community-related. Mandina (2013) identified a number of factors influencing student dropping out of school. The factors identified include; low family socioeconomic status, low family support for education, low parental education, conflicts between work and school, having to work and school, having to

work or support family, substance use and pregnancy among others. Similarly, other school factors that influence drop out to include; low socio-economic status of school population, high level of racial or ethnic discrimination of students, school phobia, school violence, conflicts (with teachers, school mates) among others.

Rani (2011); Omolade and Audu, (2021) found financial difficulties, child not interested in studies, parents not interested in studies, lack of education facilities in the nearby village, lack of quality education, imposition of parents' choices upon adolescents, lack of privacy, and toilet facilities for girls in school and security reasons as reasons cited by adolescent for dropping out. In Pakistan, Mandina (2013) noted the weak primary education system, non-availability of trained teachers, and parent-teacher relationship as the major causes of dropouts while in the USA, Mandina (2013) identified five major reasons why students drop out of school as including; (i) classes not interesting, (ii) missed school for many days and could not cope again, (iii) spent a lot of time with those not interested in school, (iv) have absolute freedom to do what I like and (v) failing in school.

Another study on girls' dropouts in rural schools identified causes of dropping out of girls from school in rural areas as the reluctance of parents and participation in domestic activities. Another major reason was the problem of financial constraint. The parent's educational status was poor, and they did not give much importance to the education of girls as they did to their sons. They perceived that sons support them in their old age (Kotwal & Rani, 2007). Other studies on dropping out have attributed the phenomenon mainly to poverty (Barton, 2006; Aliero, 2020; Jay et al, 2020; Ibor et al, 2024).

The students who withdraw from school prematurely end up not obtaining any certificate of graduation. The major social costs of dropping out of school include reduced political participation, increased demand for social services, increased crime rates and poor levels of health (Azam, 2007; Nakpodia, 2010; Ajaja, 2012). Individual costs include lower earnings, unemployment prospects, greater likelihood of health problems (Mandin, 2013). It is clear from the foregoing, that by dropping out of school, most students severely limit their chances of economic and social well-being in the future. According to Maton and Moore (2010), the problem of dropping out should be the concern of every member of society since it has negative consequences at both the individual and social levels. Thus, dropout is not a mere problem that affects or impacts an individual but it is a problem that affects the entire community as it has been noticed that certain dropouts get involved in crime (Jamil, 2010).

Stewart (2008) strongly contends that schools attended by students have the sole responsibility and task of reducing dropout rates. In this regard, Mandina (2013) contends that lack of diversity in the school curriculum can predispose students to dropping out, poor policies and practices; student teacher relationships; the nature of the school curriculum; resources and quality of learning. On the other hand, Azzam (2007) contended that many dropouts would have attended schools that have poor facilities and inadequate resources, conditions that affect the performance of the children and ultimately their decision to leave school. It is absolutely clear from the above that the poor quality of education and the schools themselves act as a depressant on the demand for education by children. Thus, if schools are to keep students in schools then there is need to pay particular attention to the quality of education that the children get from such schools.

Fidelis and Sunday (2018) examined the perceived causes of secondary school dropout in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which is a form of descriptive research. The findings were that parents' background, lack of physical infrastructures in schools, unexpected personal problems of students, and indiscipline, crime and drug abuse are the causes of students' secondary school dropout. This has negative effects on the socio-political and economic life of residents of the state, by dropouts contributing to increasing number of illiterates, criminals, unemployed, living in poverty, unhealthy, manual laborers, engaged in prostitution, drug selling, smuggling, robbery and general backwardness in the future educational development of the state.

Effiong and Edet (2019) examined the influence of family background on students' dropout from secondary schools in Yakurr local government area of Cross River State. The results showed students do drop out from schools and that this situation is attributed to certain factors such as family size, parents' attitude, parents' socio-economic status and educational background. Abubakar et al (2022) investigated the causes of female students drop out from secondary school within Sokoto metropolis northwestern Nigeria. The findings of this study revealed among others that early marriage, poor socio-economic status, lack of parent motivation were among the causes of female drop out from secondary school within Sokoto metropolis.

Syed et al (2011) examined the class-wise dropout trend in Government Primary schools in District Mardan and also investigated the impact of multiple factors on dropout phenomenon. The perceptual analysis of the responses of the Questionnaires revealed that the factors are divided into three main categories: institutional problems and procedures; school-

based factors, home-based factors and community factors. Poverty prevents parents from sending their children to school.

Oyinloye (2015) investigated the effectiveness of counselling in reducing the rate of school dropout among secondary school students in Ondo State. It was observed that poverty, lack of interest in schooling, poor academic performance is some of the causes of school dropout. It was also gathered that many school dropouts would become a social menace and that counselling would be an unquantifiable measure for reducing the spate of school dropout in our country. Adequate suggestions for teachers, parents and government to forestall further deterioration and loss of manpower through school dropout syndrome.

Inuwa (2020) in a study used parental factors and school climate scale to collect data from two groups (students/parents of dropouts & non-dropouts). The finding suggested an influential relationship of various natures of parents' occupations on the limitations of children education, by either influencing dropouts from school or supporting non-dropouts to complete schooling. Apparently, parents' occupation, which determined income and prophesizes social mobility (social class and family financial ability) were seen to be related to parent's educational background, and further predicts that types of occupations, with exceptional upsetting consequences on the future of students' education in urban Sokoto state, Nigeria.

Ige and Adenuga (2021) investigated the factors influencing dropout of students, as perceived by the principals in public secondary schools in the Central Senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria. It was found among others that poverty of parents, negative peer influence, negative attitude of teachers, and gender discrimination, influenced the dropout of students. Also, no significant difference was found in the perception of male and female principals, highly and less experienced principals, on the factors influencing dropout of students.

Marina and Ljiljana (2017) identified individual and familial factors students cite as the reasons for dropping out of school or being at the risk of doing so. The research showed that, when it comes to their children dropping out of school, parents tend to blame the child's character traits they deem unchangeable. The failure of school staff to help the child further encourages this belief in parents. In a study in India, Frederick (2014) observed that parental level of education is the most consistent determinant of a child's education. Higher parental education is associated with increased access to education, higher attendance rates and lower

dropout rates Parents, who have attained a certain level of education, might want their children to achieve at least the same level.

Awwalu and Najeemah (2014) identified the possibilities of home and school multiples factors as they best predict student's dropouts in Sokoto Nigeria. The findings indicated that parents social-economic support is the first best predictor on students' dropouts from JSS schools, followed by school administration and classroom ecology respectively. Thus, with an increase of parental socio-economic support, accommodative and productive school administration, which will foster positive classroom interaction and teaching/students' connectedness, student's dropout from school can be minimized.

In Nigeria of today, Senior School Certificate is considered as the minimum required for most jobs and status positions. This development has serious implications for the economic well-being of dropouts and the society at large. In this era of global economic meltdown and global economic competitiveness, Nigeria as a nation that has vision must make concerted efforts to raise the educational attainment of all its youths who are the leaders of tomorrow.

The consequences of dropout for both students and the society are substantial and far-reaching. The decision to drop out is a dangerous one for the student, particularly in this age of technologically controlled economy in which workers needs a lot of skills to compete in the workforce. Dropouts are much more likely than peers who graduated to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison on death row, unhealthy, divorced and ultimately single parents with children who will drop out from high school themselves.

This study has come at a time when there is a high rate of insecurity in the country as a result of criminal activities. Survey of both the print and electronic media seems to indicate that over 85 percent of the criminal activities perpetrated in Nigeria are done by youths. This tends to suggest that our educational system could be in trouble and thus may need very serious attention in refocusing it and restructuring it for the attainment of national goals. This study was motivated by the fact that when the school dropout rate continues to be on the increase and unchecked, there is the likelihood that Nigeria may face a serious problem of lack of skilled manpower and thereby resulting in low human capital strength for a society with emphasis on education and acquisition of education for national development.

Statement of the problem

It is common to see children of school going age hawking and roaming the streets of Nigeria and Calabar Metropolis in particular during school hours. Personal interactions with

some of these out-of-school children suggests that all may not be well with the school system. These students in Calabar Metropolis who leave school without completion may be disadvantaged in the labour market in today's knowledge-based society.

The personal, social and economic development of students who dropout may likely be in danger of being stalled. They may be at risk of social exclusion and life of poverty, less likely to participate in life – long learning than other students who continue and complete their education and training. Government revenue is also affected because these individuals who are supposed to contribute their quota to the economic growth of the nation are unemployed, have health problems, lower or zero earnings, unstable, poor and possess a high likelihood of been involved in criminal activities. Consequently, these students seem not to be fully socially, economically and politically liberated. Majority remains unemployed which creates a lot of fear, anxiety and frustration in their parents.

Government and various non-governmental organizations have over the years made efforts in reintegrating some of these out-of-school children with their parents (especially street kids), provided decent accommodation at a period, provided free basic education, launched poverty reduction schemes, offered scholarships and free books to encourage enrolment. Yet, the problem still persists. It was based on these that the study was embarked upon to provide answer to the question, “what are the indicators of students’ dropout from schools as perceived by teachers in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State?”

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the indicators of students’ dropout from schools as perceived by teachers in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- a) To determine teachers’ perception of household factors associated with student's dropout from public secondary schools.
- b) To establish teachers’ perception of school factors associated with student's dropout from public secondary schools.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- a) What are teachers’ perceptions of household factors associated with students’ dropout from public secondary schools?
- b) What are teachers’ perceptions of school factors associated with students’ dropout from public secondary schools?

Methodology

This study was descriptive survey research. The descriptive survey design is simply engrossed in explaining certain features as it relate to the population (Isangedihi et al, 2004). This design is chosen because of the descriptive and after event nature of the research. Subjects who participated in this study were 1,343 teachers from 26 public secondary schools in Calabar metropolis (8 secondary schools with 560 teachers for Calabar South Local Government Area and 18 secondary schools with 783 teachers for Calabar Municipal Area). These respondents were selected through a stratified sampling technique. The metropolis was divided along the two local government areas to form a stratum (Calabar South and Calabar Municipal). In each of the strata, 25 percent of the teachers were selected to participate in the study using a simple random sampling technique. The sample of the study was 336 teachers (196 teachers from Calabar Municipal and 140 teachers from Calabar South)

A questionnaire titled “Indicators of School Dropout Scale (ISDS)” was used for data collection. The instrument contains 22 items designed on a four-point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1 to elicit information from teachers on their perception of the indicators of students’ dropout from schools. The instrument was subjected to face validity and Cronbach Alpha reliability. The reliability index was .81. Descriptive statistics (Mean) was used for data analysis. The mean scores determined the acceptance or rejection of the rating items. To make decisions from results obtained, the mean responses were computed thus: $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5$. In the light of the above computation, any mean score above 2.5 was accepted, while the mean score of 2.5 and below was taken as rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions of household factors associated with students' dropout from public secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{X}) ratings of teachers' perception of household factors associated with students' dropout from public secondary schools

S/No.	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Forced labour by parents	2.80	0.84	Accepted
2	Broken home	3.00	1.09	Accepted
3	Large family size	3.77	0.98	Accepted
4	Parents level of education	3.01	0.88	Accepted
5	Unsupportive parents	2.52	0.85	Accepted
6	Birth order in the family	2.46	1.65	Rejected
7	Lack of parental monitoring of students' progress	2.51	0.77	Accepted
8	Inability of parents to pay school fees	2.60	1.20	Accepted
9	Negative attitude of parents towards education	2.30	0.95	Rejected
10	Inability of parents to provide materials needed in schools	3.40	1.04	Accepted
11	Lack of parental involvement in the upbringing of the children	3.10	0.70	Accepted
Grand mean		2.86		

Results in Table 1 revealed that the mean score of respondents in all the items except for items 6 and 9 with mean scores of 2.46 and 2.30 respectively were below than the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 2.86 shows that the respondents agreed that household factors are associated with students' dropout from public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, except for birth order in the family and negative attitude of parents towards education.

Research Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions of school factors associated with students' dropout from public secondary schools?

Table 2: Mean (\bar{X}) ratings of teachers' perception of household factors associated with students' dropout from public secondary schools

S/No.	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Lack of physical facilities	3.75	0.85	Accepted
2	Harsh school regulations	3.00	1.02	Accepted
3	Poor conditions of school buildings	3.84	1.00	Accepted
4	Frequent industrial actions by teachers	2.78	0.96	Accepted
5	School is too far from where students reside	2.23	1.15	Rejected
6	Teachers are very wicked	2.22	1.13	Rejected
7	Teachers do not encourage students	2.54	1.16	Accepted
8	Teachers do not teach students well	3.11	0.63	Accepted
9	Inadequate teachers in schools	3.85	0.81	Accepted
10	Inadequate instructional materials	3.68	1.40	Accepted
11	Too much discipline in school	2.45	0.79	Rejected
Grand mean		3.04		

Results in Table 2 revealed that the mean score of respondents in all the items except for items 5, 6 and 11 with mean scores of 2.23, 2.22 and 2.45 respectively were below the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.04 indicates that the respondents agreed that school factors influence students' dropout in public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis, except for school is too far from where students reside; teachers are very wicked; and too much discipline in the school.

Discussions of findings

The results in Table 1 revealed that the mean of most of the items and the grand mean score are above the criterion mean which means that the respondents agreed that household factors are associated with students' dropout from public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis. This result corroborates the findings of Effiong and Edet (2019) who asserted that students do drop out from schools and that this situation is attributed to certain factors such as family size, parents' attitude, parents' socio-economic status and educational background. Fidelis and Sunday (2018) also averred that parents' background, lack of

physical infrastructures in schools, unexpected personal problems of students, and indiscipline, crime and drug abuse are the causes of students' secondary school dropout. Similarly, Rani (2011) opined that financial difficulties, child not interested in studies, parents not interested in studies, lack of education facilities in the nearby village, lack of quality education, imposition of parents' choices upon adolescents, lack of privacy, and toilet facilities for girls in school and security reasons as reasons cited by adolescent for dropping out. Marina and Ljiljana (2017) identified that students cite individual and familial factors students as the reasons for dropping out of school or being at the risk of doing so. This result may have been due to the fact that family's socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, siblings' poor academic performance, family mobility, lack of parental support and educational expectations, negative parental attitude, family responsibilities, parental marital status, family size could possibly contribute to students dropping out from secondary schools.

The results in Table 2 revealed that the mean of most of the items and the grand mean score are above the criterion mean which means that the respondents agreed that school factors are associated with students' dropout from public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis. This result agrees with Ige and Adenuga (2021) who were of the view that poverty of parents, negative peer influence, negative attitude of teachers, and gender discrimination, influenced the dropout of students. Also, no significant difference was found in the perception of male and female principals, highly and less experienced principals, on the factors influencing dropout of students. Marina and Ljiljana (2017) opined that when it comes to their children dropping out of school, parents tend to blame the child's character traits they deem unchangeable. The failure of school staff to help the child further encourages this belief in parents. In the same vein, Oyinloye (2015) asserted that many school dropouts would become a social menace and that counselling would be an unquantifiable measure for reducing the spate of school dropout in our country. This result may have been due to the fact that inadequate and poorly maintained school plants, harsh school regulations, shortage of qualified teachers, excess workload, high student-teacher ratio, outdated curriculum, poor teaching methods, frequent strike actions by teachers, poor instructional delivery, poorly motivated teachers among others could be potent in encouraging students to dropout from secondary schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teachers perceived students dropping out from public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis to be associated with household and school factors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended.

- 1) Poverty reduction measures should be strengthened in Calabar Metropolis to enable families get higher disposable income for the education their children/wards.
- 2) Schools should widen and diversify their curricula to cater to students' varied interests, needs and aptitudes to make school more relevant to the world of work.
- 3) Schools inspection and supervision should be intensified to increase efficiency and quality in the educational system.
- 4) Schools should improve teaching, instruction, school buildings, furniture, facilities and access to support, for struggling students so that the school becomes a place of interest rather than of aversion.

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