

CAUSES OF DROPOUT AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate and find out the causes pupils' in primary schools in Ebonyi state. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A total of 250 male and 250 female teachers were randomly selected for the study from the four local educational zones of the local government area. Data collected were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation to answer the two research questions and T-test to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the respondents show that the 12 items in the part one and 7 items in the part two of the questionnaire were the socio-economic and school-based factors respectively were the causes of pupils drop out in primary schools in Ebonyi state. In the light of the findings of this study the following recommendations were made that education authorities should train, motivate and encourage teachers on the modern and most effective methods of teaching and the best approach to make the pupils regain interest in their studies; governments at all level should embrace educational reforms which would ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure, teaching and learning resources and other enabling environment in the schools to encourage pupils to be in school; and every school should be made to have well equipped and functional guidance and counselling unit to cater for both career and emotional needs of pupils. This will ensure that the pupils are properly monitored and guided both academically and emotionally.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Education brings many benefits to both individuals and societies. Education is viewed as being fundamental to the development of individuals and as such, the right to primary education is legally guaranteed in most countries of the world (UNESCO, 2005). Education is regarded as a prime mover for the socio-economic development of countries and accounts for as much as 20% of the annual Gross National Product (GNP) of developing nations (Alvares, Gillies, & Biadsher, 2003). This is considered so because education has been found to improve the productive value of human beings by imparting knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour traits referred to as human, social and cultural capital which are required in producing goods and services (Lazear, 2002). In addition to the productive value, education promotes harmonious co-existence,

population control, healthy living, effective citizenship, nutritional adequacy and child upbringing (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985). UNESCO (2005) supports this notion by indicating that education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty and give people opportunity in civil society. With the realization that primary school is important for the achievement of national development, many governments have made access to primary education a basic human right.

Many governments failed to meet Education for All (EFA) Goal 3 which aims at promoting learning and life skills for young people and adults by 2015 due to the high rate of dropout among learners. If pupils are dropping out of school, there is no way in which their learning needs can be catered for. According to Coombs (1970:14) educational planning, in its broadest generic sense, is the application of rational and systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of the pupils and society. Nations cannot achieve the goal of educational development if pupils who start a cohort of dropout of the system for whatever reasons.

Pupils should find it an obligation to complete an educational cycle with aim of meeting their needs and that of society. The main reason why governments make education available to all is that education is considered to develop the individual's intellect, behaviours, attitudes and abilities. Such knowledge and skills empower the individuals so that they become more productive in society. It is not ideal therefore to drop out of school for one would not acquire the necessary talents that make one highly functional in society. It is argued that a high dropout rate diminishes the pool of well qualified people from diverse backgrounds who will enter the professional and political ranks that make important policy decisions (APA, 2010). International human rights conventions recognized the right to education. The right to education has been ratified in succession of UN Conventions, starting from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, which received the status of international law in 1990. According to Article 28 of the Convention, governments have the responsibility of making primary education compulsory and available for free to all. Education is recognized as crucial not only to human development and to the eradication of poverty but also to enable all people to live in dignity (Wills et al., 2006). The Education for All (EFA) movement and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have resulted in more attention being paid to issues of both participation and completion in education. Universal primary education is goal number two of both EFA (Jomtien, 1990; reaffirmed in Dakar, 2000) and the millennium development goals (MDGs), and was adopted by UN Member States in 2000 (UNESCO, 2005). School systems are reaching more children but losing them due to inefficiencies which lead to early school leaving. It is far more difficult and costly to reach children once they leave school than to address the barriers and bottlenecks in the systems (UNESCO, 2012, p.1).

The major concern out of the report is that of global dropout rates, that do not seem to have gone down over the years. In many countries of the world there are high rates of pupils leaving school, worse in the developing world including Nigeria. The objective of primary education in Nigeria is to provide pupils with academic and vocational skills as well as moral ethics but it is unfortunate that these objectives have not been fully achieved due to the high level of dropout among the primary school pupils. Primary education in Nigeria is six years education

cycle .It is compulsory in terms of enrolment and terminal in the sense of being complete in itself. In attempt to improve access to education and achieving universal primary education, the government of Nigeria embarked on country wide programme of universal basic education and established a commission at federal level and boards at various state levels to ensure that every eligible child gets quality education (Ngodu, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Dropping out is a serious problem because it denies individual students their fundamental human right to education. There is general consensus that the school dropout problem has reached epidemic proportions internationally and has become a global problem confronting the education sector round the world (Wotherspoon, 2004). Studies in India for example, as conducted by Rani (2011) found financial difficulties, children not interested in studies, parents not interested in studies, lack of education facilities in the nearby villages and lack of quality education as reasons cited for dropping out. In almost all developing countries school dropout or low completion rates have been a subject of interest to researchers and policy makers for a long time. According to the Poverty Status Report of 2005, the phenomenon of high dropout rates continues to pose a big challenge to the successful implementation of national policies.

The problem of drop-out rate among pupils and students in Nigeria has its untold effects on the life of the individuals and the society in general. It is quite unfortunate that some parents do not allow their children to attend school, who engage them in one form of economic activity or the other. Recently, high drop-out rate has become a public outcry. As a result of the above problems, the researcher is disturbed and motivated to investigate those causes of drop-out in Ebonyi state and also proffer solutions to tackle these problems.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the causes of school dropout among primary school pupils in Ebonyi state.

Specifically the study intends to do the following.

- i. Analyze the influence of parents' socio-economic factors on pupils' dropout in primary schools.
- ii. Establish the school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout.

Significance of the Study

The importance of the study is to examine the causes of school dropout among primary school pupils in Ebonyi state. This research work will be of great advantage to the stakeholders which include the pupils, teachers, heads of schools and government. The pupils will benefit from this study because of the logical approach on the research to clearly identify the importance and benefit. The government, parents, teachers and heads of schools will find this study beneficial in planning and controlling policies to improve education in Nigeria.

The study will be beneficial for the following reasons:

1. Parent: The study will serve as a guide to making decisions and how to motivate the children, especially the girl child, to go to school.

2. Government: Government will equally benefit from the study because it will serve as a guide in formulating policies in reducing school dropouts. It will create an enabling environment for them to actively go to school,
3. Pupils: Pupils will benefit from this study because it will serve as a guide to making relevant decisions that going to school is better than involving in antisocial activities
4. Researchers: Researchers will also benefit from this study because it may serve as a source material for other research works.

Scope of the Study

This study was designed to determine the causes of school dropout among primary school pupils in Ebonyi state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the socio-economic factors causing pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state?
2. What are the school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were developed in the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance. They are:

HO: There is no significant difference in mean responses of both male and female teachers on socio-economic factors causing pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state.

HO: There is no significant difference in mean responses of both male and female teachers on the school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Dropout

Dropout is the serious problem in our schools in which this problem starts in primary school and continues in secondary school which makes an early intervention necessary to try to prevent pupils from continuing on this path through their educational experiences. Dropout is an alarming issue, which affects the socio economic development of any society. Pupils' dropout from school does not only affect the community they belong but also affect the nation at large. Pupils' dropout from schools leads to wasteful utilization of scarce educational resources without achieving the nation's educational aspirations. This does not mean for healthy educational system and would have negative effect on the economy of a state because those who drop out may create higher future cost. The objective of primary education in Nigeria is to provide pupils

with academic and vocational skills as well as moral ethics but it is unfortunate that these objectives have not been fully achieved due to the high level of dropout among the primary school pupils.

School dropout in its simplest meaning is the untimely withdrawal from school by pupils or students. These pupils or students who withdraw from school prematurely end up not acquiring the necessary knowledge or obtaining any certificate of graduation. The issue of school dropout is a global problem confronting the education industry round the world. Researchers like Mohsin, Aslam and Bashir (2004); De Cos (2005); Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006), and Oghuvbu (2008) have since buttressed this fact it is global problem. The issue of school dropout in Nigeria has been with us for a very long time. Fafunwa (1983) noted that dropout is one of the most serious problems that have continued to bedevil our educational system from the colonial period through the period of independence in 1960 and till date. Before our independence, the problem of dropout has already established its grip on our educational system. This can be buttressed with the remark made by Nuffied foundations in 1953 that in the West coast of Africa, a considerable proportion of pupils and students drop out of school each year. This study has come at a time when there is high rate of insecurity in the country as a result of criminal activities and adverse economic condition as a result of mismanagement of the national resources. Survey by both the print and electronic media tends to indicate that over 85% of the criminal activities perpetuated in Nigeria are done by youths who dropped out of school. This development has become a cause of serious concern to all well-meaning Nigerians. This tends to suggest that our educational system is in trouble and thus needs a very serious attention in refocusing it and restructuring it for the attainment of national goals. De Cos (2005) commenting on the importance of graduation from high school noted that with the economy changing from a dependence on manufacturing towards more reliance on technology, services, and a “knowledge based economy”, the need for education beyond high school has grown. 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 wellbeing 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.

Every education system aims to have pupils complete the full primary cycle before either joining secondary schools or joining the world of work (Nduku, 2003; Ngotho, 2003; Mutuma, 2005). When it is apparent that a big number of children drop out of school before completing the cycle, this becomes a major problem because, firstly, children who drop out are pushed out of the education system and prematurely flow into the free world without the necessary knowledge, skills and qualification. When they join their unemployed colleagues, they soon lose the little literacy they had acquired. Secondly, each child that leaves school prematurely leads to economic loss to the government and parents. Thirdly, a child with little education finds it difficult to move upwards along the social ladder. Lastly, school dropouts indulge in antisocial activities such as crime, prostitution, drug and substance abuse, and frustrations may lead some into suicide. School dropouts thus create problems for themselves and the society at large (Mathenge, 1998).

Globally, students drop out from school for some reasons which can be categorized into four clusters. These include school related, job related, family related, and community related. Study by Frendenberg and Ruglls (2007) identified twenty four factors under family cluster; three factors under community cluster and twelve factors under school cluster. The factors identified under family cluster include low family socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic groups, gender, special education status, low family support for education, low parental education, residential mobility, low social conformity, low acceptance of adult authority, high level of social isolation, disruptive behaviour conduct, being held back in school, poor academic achievement, academic problems in early grades, not liking school, feelings of “not fitting in” and of not belonging, perceptions of unfair or harsh disciplines, feeling unsafe in school, not engaged in school, being suspended or expelled, conflicts between work and school, having to work and school, having to work or support family, substance use and pregnancy. In community cluster, the following factors were identified, living in a low income neighbourhood, having peers with low educational aspirations and having friends or siblings who are dropouts. Under school related cluster, these factors were identified, low socioeconomic status of school population, high level of racial or ethnic segregation of students, high proportion of students of colour in high school, high proportion of students enrolled in special education, location in central city, large school district, school safety and disciplinary policies, high-stakes testing, high student –to- teacher ratio, academic tracking, discrepancy between the racial or ethnic composition of students and faculty, and lack of programmes and support for transition into higher classes. While job related cluster entails those students who could not work and school at the same time, those who had to do a job to survive and those who found job.

Theoretical framework

The Daily Trust newspapers of Monday, 24 Jan 2022 reported that the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) has said that 10.5 million children are out of school in Nigeria, which is the highest rate in the world. The problem of school dropout has become a recurring decimal in the sub Saharan Africa. According to Alexander (2011), policies to improve school progression and reduce the numbers of children dropping out of school are critical if Universal Primary Education (UPE) is to be achieved. Children are starting primary school in greater numbers than ever before but dropout rates are significant and lead to low levels of primary school completion in many countries. In Benin, for example, the primary school completion rate in 2005 was 62 percent, although it increased steadily from 38 per cent in 2000. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the primary school completion rate in 2007 was 51 per cent, which was the same completion rate for the country in the early 1990s. In Bangladesh, the primary school completion rate has remained around 60 per cent since 2000. It is based on these facts that this study is conceived and worked on.

Empirical studies

Segumba (2015), in a study, investigated the factors that contribute to drop out problem among the primary school pupils in Temeke district and to find the solution on how to manage it. The study was guided by certain objectives and the sample consisted of six primary schools, 30 teachers, 36 dropout pupils and 1DEO whom were interviewed, 30 continuing pupils and 6 head teachers who were supplied with questionnaires. Also six dropout pupils and six teachers were

involved in focus group discussion. Findings concluded that school factors that cause dropout among pupils included fear of teachers, excessive corporal punishment, overcrowded classrooms, ineffective teaching, persistence poor performance, long distance from school, lack of food provision in school and poor administration. Also the research findings indicated that children from uneducated parents are more likely to dropout from schools than children from educated parents. Furthermore the finding pointed out that girl pupils dropped out more than boy pupils. It was recommended that parents should be sensitized on the importance of education so as to understand their role and involvement in their children education affecting their children education.

In a related development, Niyi, Chinwuba and Ayoko (2022) worked on “Out of School Children in Nigeria: Causes, Social Implications and Way Forward”. This paper examined the concept of out-of-school children in Nigeria, the factors responsible for out-of-school children, the social implications of out-of-school children and suggested way forward. Secondary data were used in the paper. The data were sourced from print and online publications. The paper identified causes of out-of-school children in Nigeria to include; poor funding of education, corruption, poor implementation of the Child Rights Act, insecurity problems, lack of political will to address the problems, high rate of poverty, and high fertility rate. The paper also concluded that the social implications of out-of-school children include security challenges, shortage of skilled manpower in future, bad international image, high levels of illiteracy and high socio-economic and dependency issues. The paper recommended among other things that the federal, state and local governments should come up with programmes to address the problem of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Also, adequate funding should be allocated to the education sector at all levels of government.

The global perspective of school dropout

The findings of UNESCO (2006) study on global gains made towards attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) indicated that many countries have relatively high initial enrolment figures but poor primary school completion rates. UNESCO (2012) Global Report on education stated that there was an urgent need to address the high numbers of children leaving school before completing primary education. The findings by UNESCO (2011) on the global picture towards attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) indicated that about 31.2million primary pupils in 2010 dropped out of school globally and may never return. Bledsoe (2002) pointed out the irony that the richest and poorest countries share the problem of dropout. He contended that in the United States, over 30% of pupils leave school prematurely and this for the most part, condemns them to marginal part in the cultural and economic life of the country. Bacolod and Ranjan (2005) indicated that the annual number of high school dropouts in the USA alone in 2012 was estimated to be about 3,030,000 translating into 8,300 dropouts per day.

In many Latin American countries basic education is near universal, completion rates are low because of high drop-out and repetition rates attainment (Birdsall et al., 2005). Failure to complete is a particular problem for children in poor families, trapping them in poverty. UNESCO (2003) indicated that three surveys done in Canada place the national dropout rate at 18%. In Asia, the problem of wastage through drop-out is rampant. A look at the pattern of

survival for the system as a whole reveals big differences in the proportion class on entrants who reach the end of primary schooling. Korea and Malaysia have a survival rate of approximately 40%. Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka have a moderately high survival rate of 20% (Bledsoe, 2002).

In South and West Asia, out of every 100 pupils who start primary school, 33 leave before reaching the last grade. While in Latin America and the Caribbean, 17 per cent of pupils leave school before completing primary education. South Asian countries, sees 13.54 million of its children leave school before completing primary education. Pakistan has the highest rate of dropouts in the region at 38.5 per cent followed by Nepal with 38.3 per cent and Bangladesh comes third with 33.8%, (UNESCO 2012). The study revealed that Africa has the world's highest drop-out rate. 42% of African school children will leave school early, with about one in six leaving before Grade 2. This means that more than two in five children who start school will not reach the last grade of primary education. Africa has been relatively good at getting children into primary school, but poor at inducing them to complete their primary education. This problem of drop-outs affects many African countries. They spend large amounts of money teaching children who do not stay in school long enough to acquire any qualification. In a study by Oxfam (Watkins, 2000), for example, it was discovered that fewer than one third of the boys and one tenth of the girls aged between 6 and 11 start school and one quarter of those who do start drop out during the first two grades. Girls are more likely to drop out in early stages than the boys are. The average time spent in school by those who drop out is 2.7 years. In Mozambique, the situation was found to be even worse because fewer than half of those who enter grade one reach grade five. This situation seems to envelop other parts of Africa. For example, a progress report on Africa by Mingat et al. (2001) says that in Senegal 65% of each age cohort enters grade 1 and 40% of the entrants reach the end of the cycle, whereas in Chad the figures are 83% and 19% respectively.

The study by Sabates et al (2010), on primary school completion rates indicated low primary school completion rate in 2005 for countries like Benin and Democratic Republic of Congo, due high dropout rate. As a result of substantial rates of drop out and non-completion of primary school, many children are leaving schooling without acquiring the most basic skills. According to Ngodu (2010) tens of millions of primary school age children were out of school in 2008 and that some 43% of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Hadley (2010) indicated that Sub-Saharan Africa region has the highest dropout rate, which rose from 40% to 42% between 1999 and 2009. This meant that more than two in five children who start school may not reach the last grade of primary education. Dropout rates were highest in Chad (72%), Uganda (68%) and Angola (68%), where more than two out of three children starting primary school were expected to leave before reaching the last grade. In contrast, dropout rates were lowest in Mauritius (2%) and Botswana (7%).

Current situation of drop out in Nigeria schools

The current situation of primary pupil drop out in Nigeria is that children drop principally to fulfil their financial needs. Parents do not have money to meets the school expenses of their children. Most of the time there is nothing to feed the family. The family, therefore, rely on the

child for their daily sustenance. This situation is similar to what is obtained in South Africa as reported by Hurler and May (2002).

Secondly, some parents are not conscious of the training of their wards; they are only interested in what the child can bring to the family in terms of financial assistance. To concentrate on the affairs of the family, the child drops from school.

Despite increasing attention on part of the Nigerian government school dropout continue to be a serious problem. The growing literature on school dropout showed that school dropout, when compared to their graduated peers, are more often associated with unemployment, poverty, health problems, sustained dependence on public assistance, single parenthood in females [juveniles delinquency] Christenson, et al., 2000, Rumberger and Lamb, 2003; Karfman , Alt and Chapman, 2004, Vizcain 2005).

Factors Responsible for the rise in primary pupils dropout

There are several factors responsible for the rise of dropout. Some of these factors include the following:

Lack of awareness on the part of the parents;

Majority of parents especially those living in the rural areas have no basic understanding of the need to enrol their children to schools. Most of them believed that since western education comes from white men, it is evil. This notion is very rampant among the Muslims in northern Nigeria. To them, anything western is looked upon with disdain and in contradiction with Islamic tenets. The very few that allow their children to go to school were threatened and compelled to have them withdrawn. This accounts for the outrageous number of out-of-school children in that part of the country. However, a lot needed to be done to clear this misconception, one of which is intensive public enlightenment campaign embarked upon by the government and other relevant stakeholders, massive sensitization involving Islamic clergies to explain why parents should allow their wards to school.

Economic status of families;

Economic status is considered as the position of an individual on a socio-economic scale which measures such factors as education, income, types of occupations and place of residence (Mosby 2009). Similarly, Parents' economic status is seen as the standing of a person or group in a community or society based on education, occupation, income which is often used as a benchmark for investigating health profiles (Segens, 2012). Okwonkwo (1995) noted that deprivation of basic social amenities at home posed a serious challenge in the child intellectual development which can lead to dropping out of school in search of these amenities. Yoau (2000) identifies parent's educational background and student's cognitive ability as significant predictors of children educational attainment

The various studies mentioned above points to the fact that the provision of social amenities by the parents helps significantly in the child's intellectual development and retaining

the child in school. Similarly, there is a relationship between parental educational background and student's academic attainment. Educated parents know the value of education and can do whatever it takes to ensure that their children are educated.

Non-affordability of school fees;

The current economic recession has manifested itself in the various dimensions of human endeavour. A low-income earner could not adequately cater for the needs of his household. The stress of maintaining a family on a low income or something entirely inadequate affects child education (Salawu 2002).

It is important to note that the ability of the parent to shoulder the needs of their children play an important role in a child's educational development (Aliero 2017). Similarly, Wasagu (2002) noted that poverty and access to education cannot be separated. He observed that in Nigeria, where the large portion of the population fall below the poverty line and the rise in the population of the core poor have created conditions in which many Nigerian families could not afford to send their children to school. When the economy is strong, low-income earners will be able to take care of their family adequately. This means the child schooling needs will be well catered for blocking any available chances of dropping out. However, the effects of weak economy transcend to the low-income earner, making it difficult for him to cater for the schooling needs of his child which may cause drop out.

Meagre budgetary allocation;

Budgetary provision allocated to education is very meagre. The allocation cannot cater for the mandatory monthly salaries of teachers, apart from instructional materials and other provisions for the welfare of the teachers. No adequate funds for the training and re-training of teachers. This development implies that education of primary school pupil is seriously affected. This is because no adequate chairs and tables, no instructional materials and even extracurricular activities to attract the child's attention to school. With this scenario playing out, the child is not in any way encouraged to continue schooling.

Lack of accessibility to allocated funds;

To utilize allocated funds constitutes a major setback in the educational development of the child. After the necessary budgetary allocation, it takes a very long time before the actual budget is passed into law. It is not the allocation of the funds that matters, but the accessibility of the funds which most of the time makes project implementation impossible. It is therefore pertinent to note that to be able to implement the outlined projects; there must be easy accessibility to the allocated funds.

Infrastructure;

Infrastructure is considered as a basic requirement for the development of any society. Human resource can be facilitated through education. Okwonkwo (1995) noted that by

deprivation of basic social amenities at home posed a serious challenge in the child intellectual development which can lead to dropping out in search of these amenities.

The various studies mentioned above points to the fact that the provision of social amenities by the parents helps significantly in the child's intellectual development and retaining the child in school.

School Distance;

This is an important determinant for school dropout among students. When school is far from home and there is no effective transportation system, a parent may be afraid of sending their children to school. Children are more likely to attend a school that is closer home than the one that is far. Ainsworth et al (2005) noted that closeness to school had a positive motivating impact, especially on girls.

Early marriage;

This is one of the most important cultural factors leading to school dropout especially in the rural areas. This is because some parents regard girls' education as of no value because they will eventually get married (Holcamp, 2009). When girls reach the age of puberty, this type of parents will prefer them to be married rather than continuing with schooling. This has led to the increase in dropout rate among pupils.

Early Pregnancy;

Teenage pregnancy is also one of the significant factors contributing to school dropout among girls. This is mostly found in rural areas. Mixed schooling and free interactions among sexes have greatly contributed to this development. Similarly, exposure to pornography, sexual harassment and social media have all contributed to this anomaly. This is why it is generally noted that the major reason for girls to drop out of school is early pregnancy.

Cultural factors;

Many traditional values, cultural norms and beliefs tend to have conflicting roles in the educational development of pupils most especially in developing countries of the world. Abena (2008) observed that parents in rural areas are more concerned with the role of girls as mothers, preparation of family menus and other domestic duties. Thus, to them, continuity of schooling more especially by girls was not necessary.

Street hawking;

This is a prominent feature among families of low socioeconomic status in the country. At the age of as low as six a child is expected to contribute to the economic development of the family by hawking commodities especially of low economic value. Some are used as a shop attendants or commercial bus conductors. All these activities prevent children from attending schools regularly which may eventually result in dropout.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The cross-section descriptive survey research design is adopted for this study. This is used to study a sample of population at a single point in time. This design was adopted because according to Ezeh (2005), it enables the researcher to use reliable techniques to collect data from a well-defined population or systematically selected segments of a population for the purpose of determining the attributes of the population. Ezeh (2005) also explained that in survey research design, the purpose is usually to identify the characteristics of a defined population with respect to specific variables.

Area of the Study

The area of the study is Ebonyi state, southeast Nigeria. The study involves using all the government and private primary schools. The state is divided into three educational zones of Abakaliki, Afikpo and Onueke. There are thirteen local government council areas in the state.

Population of the Study

The population for this study is made up of the entire primary school pupils and teachers in all the 1448 primary schools in the area. Accordingly, the state universal basic education board report of 2023 indicates that there are 11,022 teachers in the area, and this forms the population of the study.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling technique was adopted in sampling the working population. The sample for the study is made up pupils and teachers selected from five schools in each of the three educational zones of the state. A criterion to be used in choosing the schools that will be used is that the school should have a reasonable number of pupils and teachers. The final list of schools to be used is arrived at through simple ballot with replacement, of schools that meet the criterion after the purposive sampling. The final list of schools used is arrived at through simple ballot with replacement, of schools that meet the criterion after the purposive sampling. A total of 500 (250 males and 250 females) teachers sampled from the population were used for the research work

Instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire developed by the researcher from literature, consultation with stakeholders in education and personal observation based on the research questions and hypotheses was used for data collection. The instrument is titled "Pupils School Dropout Questionnaire" (PSDQ).

Validation of the Instrument

The face and content validity of the instrument were determined. To ascertain this, the researcher presented copies of the questionnaire together with the topic and purpose of the study, research

questions and hypotheses to three experts for validation. Their comments and suggestions guided the construction of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering copies of the questionnaire on pupils and teachers in two selected primary schools in the neighbouring Cross River state. The scores obtained from the respondents were collated to determine the internal consistency of the instrument in each section. This is done using Cronbach Alpha. The choice of Cronbach Alpha is in line with Howith and Cranner (2011) who recommended Cronbach Alpha as a proper statistical tool for determining the internal consistency of an instrument for a descriptive survey. Internal consistency was measured because the instrument is homogenous in nature.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers together with the help of two research assistants administered the instrument directly to the respondents in the sampled primary schools in the area of study. The research assistants were instructed on how to distribute and collect copies of the questionnaire from the respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t- test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In analysing the data, mean ratings of 4 was regarded as Strongly Agree (SA), 3 for Agree (A), 2 for Disagree (D) and 1 for Strongly Disagree (SD). In analyzing the data for the hypotheses, the t- test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. difference was also upheld for the 7 questionnaire items.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Question One

What are the socio-economic factors causing pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state?

Table1. Mean responses of teachers on the socio-economic factors causing pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state.

s/n	Item statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Decision
1	Poverty among the parents resulting to their inability to provide for their studies.	612	66	6	2	686	3.43	1.10	Accepted
2	Lack of understanding among the parents about the importance of education in the society.	160	300	140	6	606	3.03	1.05	Accepted
3	Illiteracy among the parents and guardians and their inability to understand the meaning of modern education.	176	298	108	16	558	2.79	0.94	Accepted
4	Religious misconceptions	308	300	12	6	313	3.13	1.16	Accepted

	about modern education and the negative implications on the society.									
5	Prolonged lack of meaningful employment after education.	320	262	16	2	305	3.05	1.07	Accepted	
6	Negative cultural practices which discourage modern education in the society.	344	158	48	8	558	2.79	1.01	Accepted	
7	Emphases the society places on material wealth and the quest for its acquisition.	288	240	60	14	602	3.01	1.12	Accepted	
8	Engagement in political tug, cultism and the related vices.	308	254	28	6	596	2.98	0.99	Accepted	
9	Poor implementation of educational reform programmes and its implementations to the institutions.	272	232	64	4	572	2.86	0.97	Accepted	
10	Unnecessary parents'/guardians' interferences in the education of their children.	184	254	76	46	580	2.90	1.02	Accepted	
11	Lack of seriousness by pupils in pursuing their studies.	480	174	32	6	692	3.46	1.20	Accepted	
12	General failure to live up to the expectation by relevant institutions for upholding the importance of education in the society.	312	264	48	4	638	3.19	1.02	Accepted	

The data presented in Table 1 revealed that the 12 items in the table had their mean values ranging from 2.79 to 3.46. This means that each of the mean value is above the cut-off point of 2.50, indicating that they are all the socio-economic factors causing pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.94 to 1.20. This means that each of the standard deviations is below 1.96. It therefore shows that the respondents were not too far from the mean and they were close to one another in their responses.

Research Question Two

What are the school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state?

Table 2. Mean responses of teachers on the school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state.

s/n	Item statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Decision
1	Unfriendly disposition of the teachers among the pupils.	456	232	6	4	698	3.49	1.18	Accepted
2	Lack of proper mobilisation of the relevant agencies on supervision of primary education in the local government to ensure good teacher-pupil relationship.	280	240	68	6	594	2.97	1.05	Accepted
3	Inadequate motivation and encouraging remuneration to make the teachers impressive to the pupils.	296	262	16	8	580	2.60	0.97	Accepted
4	Lack of teaching and learning facilities to encourage and motivate the pupils to study.	388	258	12	4	662	3.31	1.19	Accepted
5	Poor teaching and learning environment in the schools which discourages pupils from going to school.	320	240	60	14	634	3.14	1.14	Accepted
6	Long distances from pupils' homes to schools discourage pupils from going to school.	400	154	28	6	588	2.94	1.01	Accepted
7	Lack of trained and specialist teachers in different subject areas discourages pupils from going to schools.	328	166	28	12	524	2.62	0.92	Accepted

The data presented in Table 2 revealed that the 7 items in the table had their mean values ranging from 2.60 to 3.49. This means that each of the mean value is above the cut-off point of 2.50, indicating that they are all school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.92 to 1.19. This means that each of the standard deviations is below 1.96. It therefore shows that the respondents were not too far from the mean and they were close to one another in their responses.

Hypothesis HO₁:

There is no significant difference in mean responses of male and female teachers on the socio-economic factors causing pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state.

The data for testing the hypothesis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. T-test analysis of the responses of two groups of respondents (male and female primary school teachers of Ebonyi state)

s/n	Item statement	Male teachers N = 250		Female teachers N = 250		t-cal	t-tab	Remark
		X ₁	S ₁ ²	X ₂	S ₂ ²			
1	Poverty among the parents resulting to their inability to provide for their studies.	3.60	0.49	3.56	0.44	0.59	1.96	Not significant
2	Lack of understanding among the parents about the importance of education in the society.	3.10	0.66	3.46	0.50	- 2.77	1.96	Not significant
3	Illiteracy among the parents and guardians and their inability to understand the meaning of modern education.	3.44	0.97	3.14	0.95	- 2.97	1.96	Not significant
4	Religious misconceptions about modern education and the negative implications on the society.	3.71	0.46	3.69	0.46	0.40	1.96	Not significant
5	Prolonged lack of meaningful employment after education.	3.27	0.99	3.44	0.87	- 1.06	1.96	Not significant
6	Negative cultural practices which discourage modern education in the society.	3.00	0.92	2.91	0.83	0.80	1.96	Not significant
7	Emphases the society places on material wealth and the quest for its acquisition.	3.19	1.09	3.28	0.86	- 0.63	1.96	Not significant
8	Engagement in political tug, cultism and the related vices.	2.66	1.08	3.06	0.72	- 2.52	1.96	Not significant
9	Poor implementation of educational reform programmes and its implementations to the institutions.	3.59	0.50	3.40	0.49	- 2.06	1.96	Not significant
10	Unnecessary parents'/guardians' interferences in the education of their children.	3.14	0.79	3.02	0.95	1.06	1.96	Not significant
11	Lack of seriousness by pupils in pursuing their studies.	2.96	0.84	3.17	0.38	- 2.16	1.96	Not significant
12	General failure to live up to the expectation by relevant institutions for upholding the importance of education in the society.	3.26	0.70	3.31	0.47	- 0.73	1.96	Not significant

df = 499

The data presented in Table 2 revealed that each of the 12 items in the table had a calculated t-value less than the table value of 1.96 (two tailed test) at 0.05 significance and 199 degrees of freedom. This indicates that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of

the responses of the two groups of respondents (male and female primary school teachers in Ebonyi state) on the socio-economic factors causing pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state. With this result the null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld for the 12 questionnaire items.

Hypothesis HO₂:

There is no significant difference in mean responses of male and female teachers on the school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout in primary schools in Ebonyi state.

The data for testing the hypothesis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. T-test analysis of the responses of two groups of respondents (male and female primary school teachers of Ebonyi state)

s/n	Item statement	Male teachers N = 250		Female teachers N = 250		t-cal	t-tab	Remark
		X ₁	S ₁ ²	X ₂	S ₂ ²			
1	Unfriendly disposition of the teachers among the pupils.	3.60	0.49	3.56	0.44	- 1.59	1.96	Not significant
2	Lack of proper mobilisation of the relevant agencies on supervision of primary education in the local government to ensure good teacher-pupil relationship.	3.10	0.66	3.46	0.50	- 4.77	1.96	Not significant
3	Inadequate motivation and encouraging remuneration to make the teachers impressive to the pupils.	3.27	0.99	3.44	0.87	- 1.96	1.96	Not significant
4	Lack of teaching and learning facilities to encourage and motivate the pupils to study.	3.00	0.92	2.91	0.83	0.70	1.96	Not significant
5	Poor teaching and learning environment in the schools which discourages pupils from going to school.	3.19	1.09	3.28	0.86	- 0.70	1.96	Not significant
6	Long distances from pupils' homes to schools discourage pupils from going to school.	2.66	1.08	3.06	0.72	- 3.52	1.96	Not significant
7	Lack of trained and specialist teachers in different subject areas discourages pupils from going to schools.	2.96	0.84	3.17	0.38	- 2.86	1.96	Not significant

df = 499

Results

The following findings emerged from the study based on the research questions answered and hypotheses tested. The respondents agreed that there are factors causing pupils drop out from

primary schools in Ebonyi state. These factors were classified under socio-economic and school-based.

The identified socio-economic factors include the following.

- Poverty among the parents resulting to their inability to provide for their studies.
- Lack of understanding among the parents about the importance of education in the society.
- Illiteracy among the parents and guardians and their inability to understand the meaning of modern education.
- Religious misconceptions about modern education and the negative implications on the society.
- Prolonged lack of meaningful employment after education.
- Negative cultural practices which discourage modern education in the society.
- Emphases the society places on material wealth and the quest for its acquisition.
- Engagement in political tug, cultism and the related vices.
- Poor implementation of educational reform programmes and its implementations to the institutions.
- Unnecessary parents'/guardians' interferences in the education of their children.
- Lack of seriousness by pupils in pursuing their studies.
- General failure to live up to the expectation by relevant institutions for upholding the importance of education in the society.

The identified school-based factors include the following.

- Unfriendly disposition of the teachers among the pupils.
- Lack of proper mobilisation of the relevant agencies on supervision of primary education in the local government to ensure good teacher-pupil relationship.
- Inadequate motivation and encouraging remuneration to make the teachers impressive to the pupils.
- Lack of teaching and learning facilities to encourage and motivate the pupils to study.
- Poor teaching and learning environment in the schools which discourages pupils from going to school.
- Long distances from pupils' homes to schools discourage pupils from going to school.
- Lack of trained and specialist teachers in different subject areas discourages pupils from going to schools.

Finding on the Hypotheses

The finding of the first hypothesis tested revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the two groups of respondents (male and female primary school teachers in Ebonyi state) on the socio-economic factors causing pupils drop out from schools in Ebonyi state. With this result the null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld for the 12 questionnaire items.

Also, the finding of the second hypothesis tested revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the two groups of respondents (male and female primary school teachers in Ebonyi state) on the school-based factors causing drop out

among primary school pupils in Ebonyi state. With this result the null hypothesis of no significant difference was also upheld for the 7 questionnaire items.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to investigate and find out the various socio-economic and school-based factors responsible for pupils drop out from primary schools in Ebonyi state. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study, which according to Nworgu (2006), is the one in which a group of people is studied by collecting and analyzing data from few people, considered to be representative of the entire group. A total of 250 male and 250 female teachers were randomly selected for the study from the three educational zones of Ebonyi state. Data collected were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation to answer the two research questions and T-test to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings from the respondents show that the 12 items in the part one of the questionnaire were the socio-economic factors causing pupils drop out from primary schools in Ebonyi state of Nigeria. These factors identified include poverty among the parents resulting to their inability to provide for their studies, lack of understanding among the parents about the importance of education in the society among others.

Again, findings from the respondents show that the 7 items in the part two of the questionnaire were the school-based factors causing pupils drop out from primary schools in Ebonyi state of Nigeria. These factors identified include unfriendly disposition of the teachers among the pupils, lack of proper mobilization of the relevant agencies on supervision of primary education in the local government to ensure good teacher-pupil relationship, among others. The factors identified agreed with the reports from materials consulted in the literature review.

Educational Implications

The findings of this study have far reaching implications both for the success of teaching and learning in the schools and for the pupils to have the right zeal and attitude toward attending school and in pursuit of various careers. When relevant stakeholders in educational sector are made to be fully aware of the various factors causing pupils drop out from primary schools in Ebonyi state, they will be better placed to handle the problem. Stakeholders in primary education in Ebonyi state will gain a lot from this study as it will provide the needed information on the problem.

Parents/guardians, teachers and caregivers will equally benefit from the findings and recommendations of this study. These will help them to adjust and perform much better in their various educational roles among their children.

The findings and recommendations of this research project will be of help to other researchers as these will form a reference material in their works.

Limitations of the Study

- i. The research work focused on Ebonyi state. The implication is that the generality of the country was not considered as to determine the spread of the incidences of pupils' drop out of school.
- ii. It took the researcher extra time and effort to reach the respondents due to distances involved and their tight schedules of activities and to get the teachers in the right frame of minds.
- iii. There were also the challenges of financial and time limitations in the course carrying out this research work.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study the following recommendations are made to solve the problem of pupils drop out from primary schools in Ebonyi state.

- i. Educational authorities should train, motivate and encourage teachers on the modern and most effective methods of teaching and the best approach to make the pupils regain interest in their studies.
- ii. Government at all level should embrace educational reforms which would ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure, teaching and learning resources and other enabling environment in the schools to encourage pupils to be in school.
- iii. Every school should be made to have well equipped and functional guidance and counselling unit to cater for both career and emotional needs of pupils. This will ensure that the pupils are properly monitored and guided both academically and emotionally.

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