

CHALLENGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING OUT- OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of out of school children globally. Out of school children face numerous challenges that hinder their access to education and impact their overall wellbeing. This Paper examines the psychological factors that are influencing the decisions to attend or drop out of schools using an educational psychology frame work. It also examines the challenges that hinder out of schools' children to attain their goals, the key concept of out- of school children's, psychological factors like anxiety and self-efficacy werehighlighted. The paper highlights the long-term consequences for out of school children. Mixed method designs have been used to understand the complexities of out of school's children. Cluster sampling was used to divide the out of school children into urban and rural area the sample size consists of 200 out of schools' children across urban and rural area.Standard questionnaires of Anxiety, self-efficacy and Academic achievement tests, and observation were used to collect data. The datacollected wereanalyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The paper recommends that educational policies and funding should be reviewed to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all children regardless of their background and weaknesses. There is need for collaboration with family, community, and NGO to curtail the menace of out-of school children.

Keywords: Educational Psychology, Challenges, Out-of-school Children, Psychological Factors,

Introduction

Educational Psychology plays a crucial role in understanding how the children learn and develop within the educational settings. Out of schools' children refers to children and adolescents who are not enrolled in formal Education, either due to some barriers or circumstances These children are denied the fundamental right to Education, hindering their personal growth, social development and future opportunities Out-of school children face numerous challenges that hinder their access to education. these challenges are based on the dimensions of exclusion.Some never enrolled in the schools, some are enrolled but drop out of the school because of some factors and some who are enrolled but not regularly attending the schools. See the dimensions below;

The Conceptual and Methodological Framework (CMF) developed by UNICEF (2018) and UIS as part

of the Global out of school children (OOSC) Initiative sees out-of-school children and children who are at risk of dropping out, in terms of five dimensions of exclusion (5DE), namely:

- 1 – Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school.
- 2 – Children of primary school age who are not in primary school or at higher level.
- 3 – Children of junior secondary school age who are not in primary or junior secondary (or higher)
- 4 – Children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out.
- 5 – Children who are in junior secondary school but at risk of dropping out.

The Conceptual Methodological Frame further categorized, dimensions 2 and 3, three mutually exclusive sub-groups based on school exposure, as follows: - Those who attended school in the past and dropped out (drop-outs); - Those who never attended school but will enter in future (late entrants); - Those who will never attend school. Out of School Children: National Averages as of 2008 the estimated population of pre-primary aged children (age 5) was 4.5 million, of which nearly 45 per cent—or 2 million children—were classified as out of school

- Dimension 1: of the total population of five-year-olds, only about 12 per cent were enrolled in a pre-primary school programme of some kind, which highlights the need for expanded pre-primary study opportunities. The 2008 estimated primary age population (6-11 years) in Nigeria was 24.7 million. Out of these, some 7.3 million—constituting 29.6% of the total—were out of school.
- Dimension 2: The junior secondary age population (12-14 years) was about 10.9 million children in 2008, and of this group about 26%, or 2.8 million were classified as out of school
- Dimension 3: On the aggregate, about 10.1 million children who are supposed to be in basic education were not in school (Dimensions 2 and 3 combined). In other words, almost one out of every three primary age children are out of school, and roughly one out of four junior secondary age children is out of school. (Global Initiative for out of school. 2015).

This paper will explore the complexities and challenges, revolving the multifaceted concept of out of school children in order to comprehensively recommend for inclusive and equitable education for all regardless of their background and their weaknesses. Education is a fundamental human right, a crucial driver for economic advancement and a powerful tool for poverty reduction. Hence, no child of school age should be denied access to quality and equitable education. In the Nigerian context, Out of School Children are prevalent in both rural and urban settings, but rural areas, and isolated or deprived areas in general, consistently show higher numbers of out-of-school children (World Bank, 2019).

Out of school children are aged school children that are supposed to be in schools but are not in schools due to parental failure or governmental failure to provide accessible quality education for them. Out of school children are young children in the age group of 1 to 12 that are roaming the street without access to a functional educational system Ojelade et al. (2019). Out of school children are the children that the government and the parents have failed to provide quality basic education. Reducing the number of out-of-school children (OOSC) is a key priority for countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria. This is because more than half of the children globally that have not enrolled in school live in Sub-Saharan Africa, and more than 85 percent of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are not learning the minimum (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018).

Overview for out-of Schools Children

Nigeria has the largest number of out-of-school children in the world (UNICEF, 2018). It is estimated that

one in every five out-of-school children around the globe is in Nigeria. Even though basic education is legally free and compulsory in the country, about 10.5 million children aged 5 to 14 years are out of school. About 50 percent of these children live in the northern region, known to be severely affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. In addition, only 61 percent of children between the ages of 6 to 11 years attend primary school regularly (UNICEF, 2018).

There are so many factors contributing to high number of out-of-School Children in Nigeria. These factors are not only limited to early/child marriage, socioeconomic barriers, Insecurity, conflict, socio-cultural norms, and lack of inclusive policies/practices in schools. But extend to psychological factors that are within the individual and motivated him to act in a proper way.

Challenges for out of school children

There are countless factors attributed for the high number of out of school children in Nigeria. Some of the general factors accounted for this problem are; ineffective educational planning, poor funding, inadequate educational institutions, poor implementation of policies and programme, political instability, corruption, insecurity, high rate of poverty and high population rate (Olamoyegun, et al, 2022).

High Rate of Poverty

The high rate of poverty is among causative agent that accounted for the proliferation of out of schools' children especially in Northern Nigerian. Many parents cannot afford to send their children to school because of the school fees and other financial commitment (Ogunode, et al.2022). World Bank (2022) noted that the number of poor persons in Nigeria will rise from 89.0 to 95.1 million in 2022. The number of poor people was 89.0 million in 2020. The implication of this is that many parents cannot afford to send their children to schools rather they will use them for trading and hooking to make money for the family.

Insecurity

The issue of insecurity is another factor that have pitfalls that escalate the problem of out of school children in Nigeria. Insecurity in Northern part of Nigeria have led to school closure. Nigerian Tribune, (2021) reported that the inconsistency nature of school calendar in Nigerian educational system is no longer news. It is a common occurrence that one higher institution, secondary school or primary school is closed down due to internal crisis or attacks from bandits. Authorities in North-West, Nigeria had shut down more over 4,000 public primary schools across the state, and over 4,000 public secondary schools were among the closed down schools and over 300, 000 to 400,000 thousand students and pupils are at home after the incidence of Chibok school students' kidnap without considering the effects on the internal administration of the school especially the learners. Also, United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF (2021), said at least one million school children among more than 37 school children in Nigeria are afraid to return to school as school's resume, September. Also, it was observed that the numerous attacks on schools by jihadists and criminal gangs in the north have particularly harmed children's education.

Corruption

Corruption is a major problem responsible for high out of school children in Nigeria (Ogunode & Stephen 2021). Corruption has penetrated all institutions in Nigeria including educational institutions. Funds released for the implementation of programmes and policies aimed to reduce out of school children in Nigeria are been misuses and mismanaged and diverted into private pockets. A good example is the national feeding programme with a lot of funds diversion allegation and mismanagement ((The whistler, 2020).

Ogunode and Abubakar (2021) submitted in Nigeria that the funds released for the implementation of the

programme is been looted and mismanaged by some officers handling the implementation across the federation. Transparency International says 66 percent of the money Nigerian governments allocate to education is stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Poor Implementation of Educational Policies and Programme

Poor implementation of educational policies and programme designed to reduce the out of school children is another fundamental factor responsible for the high number of out of school children in Nigeria. There are many policies and programmes such as Child Act Right with the broad objectives making education compulsory for all Nigerian child. Report from Ogunode (2021a) observed that some states governments have not domestic the acts in their various states affecting the implementation of the law.

The National Feeding Programme is another programme designed to promote child education and increase enrolment in the Basic schools. Ogunode & Abubakar (2021) observed that the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) is an educational policy with the aims of increasing primary school enrollment. The National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in public primary schools is designed to reduce the out of school children in Nigeria. The programme started in 2003 and stopped. It was started in 2016 again.

Psychological factors exacerbated to out-of school children

Psychological factors mean Internal characteristics of the mind, that influence person thought and emotions, behavior and mental process. These factors shape how individuals perceive respond to their environment. A number of psychological factors causes children dropping out of school or staying out of school which lead to Educational exclusion and make the children vulnerable and compound so many challenges in their wellbeing and their future prospect in learning and all human endeavor. These psychological challenges include Anxiety, Depression Low self-esteem, Low self-efficacy, Negative attitude.

Anxiety is among the psychological factors that influence out of schools' children and impacting their well-being behaviours and future prospects.it can lead to emotional distress, learning difficulties, avoidance behaviours,physical problem andso on.Children's psychological conditions can predict the intention to drop out of school. The inherent psychological aspects that become a character in a child affect his future success, which is a description of a person's psychological profile (Dongoran et al., 2020).

It is normal that, at some stage in life, every individual will feel anxious when faced with a difficult situation. Each individual will cope with anxiety in different ways. During difficult times, you can support your child to cope with anxiety in effective ways and by doing so, enhance their resilience. Anxiety becomes a problem when it is persistent and prevents them from enjoying normal life experiences for a long period of time. Anxiety may affect children at any age.

The causes of anxiety among out of school children may be differed between young children and teenagers: For small children they may experience Separation anxiety (being afraid to be away from parents) Problems at school such as being bullied, not having friends, not fitting in, friendship conflicts, feeling lost at school, fear of getting into trouble, learning difficulties, not getting along with a teacher. All these can contribute to schools drop out. According to (UNICEF, 2019) 30% out of school childrenexperience elevated anxiety.

Low Self Esteem/Self Efficacy

Self-esteem refers to a person overall sense of worth or personal value it means how much you like, value,

respect and accept yourself. Low self-esteem means feeling inadequate, unworthy or self-critical. Self-efficacy; is a person's belief in their ability to successfully perform a specific task or to achieve a goal. Children with low self-esteem may feel inadequate or incapable of achieving academic success.

When children face academic failure, bullying or lack of encouragement from parents/teachers they may internalize these experiences and begin to see themselves as incapable in the school leading to their withdrawal. A lack of self-efficacy or belief in their abilities to succeed in school, can demotivate children, and making them less likely to withdraw from their Education. Low self-efficacy decreases motivation and interest in learning

Psychological Interventions and Programmes for out of school children

Psychological interventions assist out of school children deal with emotions, behavioural cognitive and social challenges. And the programs aim to reintegrate them into schools and making them productive

Community- Based Self Efficacy Program (CBSP) this program build confidence and motivate out of school-children through community driven support, skills building and mentorship to return to education or vocational skills. And also build emotional and social competence peer support. Source; (Bandura, 1997)

-Trauma Informed Counseling (TIC) this approach recognized the impact of trauma, abuse, neglect and conflict on children and ensures emotional healing and safety. Because many out of school children have been displaced or orphaned or abused trauma informed care will help to reduce flashback fear and emotional numbing. Source Trauma informed care in behavioral health services,

-Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) out of school children often face emotional distress. (e.g. hopelessness, rejection, low self-worth) CBT helps them; to overcome their challenges and reduce risky behaviours e.g. drug use, stealing and fighting, source, Cognitive behavioral therapy for impulsive children. (Kendall, 1993).

Conclusion

The high rate of out of school children in Nigeria is a slight to the giant of Africa not just a slight but it's a time bomb that will soon explode into different social vices, especially in the area of terrorism if nothing is done about it soon. There are policies on ground already, to combat this menace eating deep into the fabrics of our educational system which in turn has posed a major problem in nation building and development. It is therefore up to individuals to be the change we want to see by ensuring that policies put in place by the government are implemented to the letter to address the problems and factors responsible for this educational crisis.

Recommendations

To address the above problems identified as factors responsible for high rate for out of school children in Nigeria, the paper hereby recommended the following:

1. The federal, states and local government should take the issue of educational planning seriously and ensure adequate funds are provided for educational planning in the country.
2. The Federal, State, and Local government should deploy Community vigilantes or security personnel around vulnerable schools. They should also relocate learners to safer zone, or mobile zones in IDP camp.
3. The government at every level should increase the funding of education especially the basic education. By giving them Free compulsory education, and remove all school fees, uniform and

books, and school feeding programme to attract children from vulnerable families.

4. Transparent Funding system, through digital tracking of Education budget at all level of education will restore mismanagement of educational funds that lead to absenteeism and loss of trust in the system.
5. The government should come up with school expansion plans for all forms of education especially the basic education. More Basic schools should be built across the country
6. The government should ensure educational policies and programmes designed and formulated to improve on the enrolment of the children to school should be fully implemented.
7. Every new administration that come on board should develop the political will to continue with the inherited policies and programmes.
8. The government should deploy the various anti-corruption agencies in the country to monitor the funds allocated to the ministries of education. This will help to reduce funds diversion.

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