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ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF FEMALE SCHOOL DROPOUTS: EXPERIENCE FROM SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The menace of female school-drop-outs is becoming an all-pervading phenomenon in Nigeria. The level of vulnerability female school-drop-outs to myriad of social ills is alarming and this has inhibited their role performance as mothers, wives, peace builders and crucial social support for their communities and the country in general. The study sampled 384 out of female adolescent dropouts in South-West Nigeria. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity to ascertain its suitability for the study. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using split half technique. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was used to certify the reliability for the study. Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviation while inferential statistics of Kruskal Wallis test and chi-square test were used to test the hypotheses. 65.5% of the respondents engaged in gambling; 64.6% engaged in violence, among others, implying that female school drop-outs engage in vices such as gambling, violence, stealing and prostitution. It also indicated that female school drop-outs are usually exposed to psycho-social and health related challenges such as stigmatization, depression, alcoholism and sexual promiscuity. Hypothesis tests revealed that there exists significant differences $\chi^2 (2) = 26.82, P < 0.05$ in the causes of female dropouts in schools across the selected states and that there is a significant relationship between socio-economic status and the causes of female drop-outs in Southwest Nigeria. The study recommends the scaling up of sex education among youths and skill acquisition to empower female school drop-outs for socio-economic emancipation.

Keywords: Teenage-pregnancy; School-drop-outs; psychological impacts; social impacts.

DOI:

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as pivotal in the socio-political and economic development of modern societies. Often time, it has been postulated that societies desirous of development must invest in educating its citizens. This is because education is seen as a veritable tool that has the potential of equipping individuals with essential capacities for survival in our challenging society. The Nigeri-

an National Policy on Education (NPE) identified the obligatory role education performs in National Development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). It avers that education as an instrument for national development fosters the worth and development of the individual, primarily for the benefit of the individual and secondly, the general development of the society.

The recognition of the informative and reformative capacity of education inspires the commitment of international and supranational organizations in committing national governments in ensuring that education is made compulsory for its citizens especially at the primary and the secondary levels of education. The NPE as drafted in 1998 provided for equal access education for all Nigerian citizens irrespective of their race, culture, tribe language and/or ethnic backgrounds. The policy stated that "there is need for equality of education opportunities to all Nigerian children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability" (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1998:7). This provision is explicit on the educational needs of every child and the responsibility of government, parent and society on the need to ensure that every child (including female children) gets an equal, undeprived access to quality education. At the World Education Forum in Dakar (United Nations Development Programme, 2000), 164 national governments identified six goals to achieve Education for All (EFA). Goal 5 indicates that gender disparities in primary and secondary school should be eliminated by 2015. The focus is to give girls full and equal basic education. Similarly, Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) aims to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all not later than 2030. These initiatives are targeted at ensuring that female children have access education. There seems to be a global increase in female enrolment at the primary level. In Nigeria, UNESCO (2014) reports showed that there is a 56% increase in female enrolment at the primary level. In spite of this, observations revealed that more females do not advance to secondary school or fail to complete their primary ed-

ucation. Report across major African countries between 2003 and 2007 shows the primary school completion rate. Countries such as Nigeria (83%), Ghana (79%), Benin (72.27%), Niger (62.99%), and Mali (66.98%) have a high primary school completion rate while countries such as Madagascar (34.89%), Senegal (48.20%), and Rwanda (15.99%) have a low primary school completion rate (Demographic Health Survey, 2010). This suggests that the former accounts for a lower drop-out rate than the latter. The gender distribution shows that more females failed to complete their primary education in countries like Madagascar (31.9%), Senegal (34.3%), Rwanda (49.3%), Benin (23%), Niger (30.6%), Mali (23.4%), Nigeria (24%) and Ghana (10.4%) (UNICEF, 2004; Demographic Health Survey, 2010).

A dropout is any student, who for one reason or the other leaves school prematurely before graduation, without transferring to another school (Uche, 2013). Students that drop out from school either voluntarily or involuntarily end up not obtaining any certificate of graduation for which they were enrolled initially. Global attention has been drawn to the issues of premature withdrawal of school age children from schools as its effects on the society and the world are devastating (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006), and Oghuvbu (2008). In Nigeria, school dropout has been a contentious issue and is regarded as one of the challenges confronting the nation's education system since independence (Fafunwa, 1983).

A number of factors can be ascribed as causative factors for this high number of female school drop-outs. Croft (2002) identified the financial circumstances of their parents, guardian or caregiver as possible cause of

drop-out among female students. The effect of financial capacities of the parents were claimed to affect their age of enrolment, their attendance in school and when, if they drop out. Dachi & Garret (2003) supported Croft's view in a study in Tanzania which reported that inability of parents and guardians to pay for the education needs (school fees) of their female children is responsible for the rate of female drop-outs even though they recognized the importance of having their female children educated.

Health and sanitation issues are also considered as potential factors leading to female drop-outs. Kane (2004) opined that illness and death in the family may affect female children's attendance in school as they are more often expected to act as caregivers. Bereavement, for family members and the female children often causes vulnerability to dropout, late enrolment and slow progress (Hunter & May, 2003). UNESCO (2012); Rose and Al Samarrai (2001) recognized that there exist a connection between females' menstruation patterns and dropouts. The World Health Organization (WHO) in a report estimated that 10% of African school-age girls do not attend school during menstruation or drop out when the first period occur (WHO, 2010).

Gendered social practices such as investment disparity between male and female children, teenage pregnancy and traditional domestic roles have been ascribed as likely causes of female drop-outs. Hunt (2008) claimed that primordial African societies see it as a poor investment to educate a girl since she is expected to marry and leave home; her education will then benefit the husband's family rather than her own. Elofsson & Josephine (2012) asserted that teenage pregnancy hinders female access to

education. For example in Tanzania, it is a common practice to expel any female student pregnant while in school (Johnson, 2012).

In a related situation, Bhalalusesa (2000) claimed that in the situation of pregnancy, girls are assumed to take responsibility for the situation while the father suffers no school-related consequences. Kiluva-ndunda (2001) discovered that some mothers pull their daughters out of school once they reach puberty in fear of them becoming pregnant. Boyle et al (2002) recount that most parents often encourage their female children to drop-out from school and marry once they get to the age of puberty. The weathered attention given to reduce the rate of female drop-out across the African continent especially in Nigeria portends more doom for the nation as more of these young females are becoming apparatuses for internal aggression. Most of them are recruited into several ethno-militias cum terrorist organization to perpetuate evil against the state. Some of them are involved in nefarious activities such as prostitution, kidnapping, suicide bombing, stealing, internet fraud/cybercrime and drug peddling. Due to their determination to make meaning of their lives, some of them are engaged in certain delinquent behaviour that might have a life-long effect on their health. It must be noted that this category of person's falls within the productive age base of the nation, any attempt to lose them to the aforementioned conducts might spell doom for the economic development of the nation. To this end, this study seeks to conduct a baseline assessment of the menace of female youth drop-outs in South-West Nigeria with a focus on the system/s that produce them, their livelihood and social engagements.

Research Questions

Sequel to the foregoing, the following research questions were raised:

- i. What are the female dropouts' personal characteristics in south-west, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the causes of female dropouts in the study area?
- iii. Are there any health related issues associated with female dropouts?
- iv. What are the social interventions put in place to integrate female school dropouts?

Objectives of the Study

Broad objective

The broad objective of the study was to determine the psycho-social behaviours of female school dropouts in south-west, Nigeria.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- i. Confirm the personal characteristics of the respondents as determinants of their social background;
- ii. Determine the causes of female dropouts in the study area;
- iii. Identify the health related issues with the female dropouts and;
- iv. Determine the social interventions put in place to integrate female school dropouts.

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of this study are stated in null (Ho) form as follows:

- i. There is no significant difference in the respondents' socio-economic status and causes of female dropout in South-west, Nigeria. (Kruskal-Wallis test)
- ii. There is no significant relationship between females' personal characteristics and the causes of female dropout in

South west, Nigeria. (Chi-square test)

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the South-West geo-political zone of the country. The region comprises Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Oyo and Ekiti States. The population for the study included young females between 5 and 24 years that were unable to complete their secondary school education. There are about 20 million female out-of-school adolescents in Nigeria (UNDP, 2000). Adebowale, et al (2013) disclosed that the northern part of the country accounts for 60% drop-out rate of out-of-school girls due to their low perception of the value of education and early marriage. This gives a total number of 12 million in the other parts of the country. Following the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE, 2011) report, 9% account for the total number of out-of-school adolescent in the South-West. This figure gives us a number of 1,080,000 female out-of-school adolescents in the South-West.

Using the sample size formula $N/N+1(e^2)$ where N is the sample population and e is the coefficient interval which is 5%, the study sampled 384 out-of-school female dropout in the South-West. Stratified sampling technique was adopted. The South-West region was delineated into the five States of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti. In each state, a total of 76 out-of-school females were sampled. In collecting data, the study made use of structured questionnaire and interviews to elicit information from the respondents. A total of 383 pieces of questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity to ascertain its suitability for the study. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using split half technique. A reli-

bility coefficient of 0.70 was used to certify the instrument's reliability for the study.

Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics such as Kruskal Wallis test and chi-square were used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of Respondents' Personal Characteristics

Mean age and standard deviation of the female dropouts were 3 years and 9.18 respectively (Table 1). About 69.3% of the respondents were of the Yoruba ethnic group which shows that female dropouts within the study location were within their earlier twenties, very young and sexually active. It is therefore expected that this age group of females should be sexually active, productive and easily influenced by peer pressure.

Moreover, the age of the respondents is one of the major socio-economic factors that determine the level of dynamism and experience of an individual's particularly in relation to taking decision on the issues relating to their behavior. With respect to their religion, 59.4% were Christians while 45.9% were muslim by affiliation. This implies that Christianity and Islam were the major practiced religions in South-West, Nigeria. Very few (4.8%) were traditional worshippers. Concerning the educational status of the respondents, majority (76.4%) were out of school while just (23.6%) were still in school. Their educational status and been out of school is likely to influence their psychosocial behavior. It was also noted that 57.6% of the respondents were single, having averagely two children and about 50.5%

of them resides with their parents. This implies that most of the female dropouts and their children resides with their parents, this however causes stigma on both the female dropouts and their parents. 65.9% of the respondents indicated that their parents' lives together while 15.7% of them live separately (Table 1).

Causes of Female Dropouts in Schools

The main identified causes of female dropouts in school were: female involvement in household chores (37.6%), quest for money (37.1%), lack of interest in school (35.8%) and 33.2% due to poor economic condition of the family (Table 2). Others predominant causes of female dropouts in schools are engagement in street hawking (28.4%), parent/guardian death or illness (27.9%) and religious and cultural beliefs (26.6%). This is an indication that quest for money, rigorous involvement in house chores and lack of interest are the major identified causes of female dropout in school in south west, Nigeria. This then means that female youths have a high tendency of being forced out of school or unable to complete their education.

In addition, lack of interest on the part of the female dropouts may be adduced to teacher's hostile attitude towards girls. This corroborates the finding of Kukreti and Sexena (2007) who identified desire for money, peer influence, parental irresponsibility as factors of drop out syndrome among girls. He also noted that the quest to provide for their needs in the absence of financial support from their parents prompt most girls to commit in unhealthy relationships for the financial gain (Table 2).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Age (Years)		
Less than 20	124	54.1
21 – 24	74	32.3
25 – 29	20	8.7
30 and above	11	4.8
Mean \pm SD	23.44 \pm 9.18	
Ethnic group		
Yoruba	173	69.3
Igbo	44	19.2
Hausa	04	1.7
Others	08	3.4
Religion		
Christianity	213	59.4
Islam	105	45.9
Traditional	11	4.8
Educational status		
Still in school	54	23.6
Out of school	175	76.4
Marital status		
Married	62	27.1
Single	148	57.6
Divorced	07	3.1
Separated	12	5.2
Number of children		
1 -2	190	83.0
3 – 4	31	13.6
5 and above	08	3.5
Mean \pm SD	2.4 \pm 1.25	
Residency		
With parents	116	50.2
Living alone	26	11.4
Guardians	29	12.7
Family relatives	26	11.4
Husband	32	14.0
Household size		
1 – 4	61	26.7
5 – 8	127	55.4
9 – 12	24	10.5
13 and above	71	7.3
Mean \pm SD	6.67 \pm 4.15	
Parental status		
Living together	151	65.9
Separated	36	15.7
Divorced	16	7.0
Dead	26	11.4

Sources: Field survey, 2024; SD = Standard deviation

Table 2: Causes of Female Dropouts in Schools

S/N	Causes	Frequency	Percentages	Ranking
1	Poor economic conditions of families	76	33.2*	4 th
2	Involvement in household chores	86	37.6	1 st
3	Poor school facilities	58	25.3	8 th
4	Early marriage	42	18.3	15 th
5	Absence of proper security	47	20.5	14 th
6	Lack of interest in school	82	35.8	3 rd
7	Parents/guardian's death or illness	64	27.9	6 th
8	Engagement in street hawking	65	28.4	5 th
9	Unwanted pregnancy	40	17.5	16 th
10	Expulsion from school	38	16.6	17 th
11	Truancy	56	24.5	11 th
12	Religious/cultural beliefs	61	26.6	7 th
13	Peer influence	56	24.5	11 th
14	Quest for money	85	37.1	2 nd
15	Poor academic performance	56	24.5	11 th
16	Abandonment/neglect	31	13.5	18 th
17	Teachers' molestation/indecency	58	25.3	8 th
18	School rules and policies	57	24.9	10 th

Source: Field survey, 2024 *Multiple responses applicable.

Group Involvement ties, trade association and communities
Majority (65.9%) of the respondents did not involve themselves in any of political activities. Only about 25% were involved in Trade Associations (Table 3).

Table 3: Involvement of dropout girls in group associations

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentages
1	Political parties	17	7.4*
2	Trade association	57	24.9
3	Communities	04	1.7
4	None of the above	157	65.9

Source: Field survey, 2024 *Multiple responses applicable.

Social Engagements of School Dropouts tion (Table 4). This implies that female school dropouts engage in vices such as gambling, 64.6% engaged in violence while among others. In addition, the consequences of dropout for female students on the socie-

ty are far reaching. Effects such as susceptibility to poverty, unhealthy relationships, social miscreance, unprotected sexual behaviour and its attending sex related diseases and infections such as HIV/AIDS, Syphilis, Human Papilloman Virus (HPV), Gonorrhoea, Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) are at-

tendant on female school drop-outs in Southwest Nigeria. This category of citizens often becomes a source of burden to the government as they are recruited into unknown terrorists' organizations hereby constituting a threat on the security of the nation (Uche, 2014).

Table 4: Social Engagements of School Dropouts

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentages	Ranking
1	Cultism	117	51.1*	6th
2	Robbery	124	54.1	5th
3	Violence	148	64.6	2nd
4	Stealing	147	64.2	3rd
5	Prostitution	147	64.2	3rd
6	Gambling	150	65.5	1st

Sources: Field survey, 2024 *Multiple responses applicable

Health related Issues and Social intervention to integrate female school drop-outs

The main health related issues experienced by the respondents were: rape (70.3%) alcoholism (67.7%), sexual promiscuity (64.6%) and engagement in unprotected sex (61.6%) – Table 5. This indicates that female school

dropouts are usually exposed to psychosocial and health related challenges such as stigmatization, depression, alcoholism and sexual promiscuity.

In relation to ways in which female dropouts can be integrated, skill acquisition (47.2%), financial empowerment (44.5%) and job cre-

Table 5: Health related Issues with Female dropouts

SN	Variables	Frequency	Percentages	Ranking
1	Sexual intercourse	131	57.2*	8 th
2	Unprotected sex	141	61.6	4 th
3	Multiple sex partners	148	64.6	3 rd
4	Previously had abortion	138	60.3	5 th
5	Forcefully lured into sex	161	70.3	1 st
6	Paid to have sex with you	136	59.4	6 th
7	Smoking cigarette/Indian hemp	128	55.9	9 th
8	Take alcoholic drinks	155	67.7	2 nd
9	Experienced violence/maltreatment	132	57.6	7 th
10	Physical/mental disability	114	49.8	10 th
11	Ailment of medical history	108	47.2	11 th

Sources: Field survey, 2024 *Multiple responses applicable

ation for semi-literate individuals (39.7%) are possible social interventions to integrate female dropouts (Table 6). This finding is in line with the Federal Government in its Education for All review report (2000-2014), which highlighted programmes such as enhancing the image and visibility status of technical and vocational education and training, collaboration with established recognized guild and societies for skill and craft artisans in ensuring standardization and protecting the interest of their members and increased funding for technical and vocational education to give second chances to school dropouts and combat marginalization.

Table 6: Social intervention to integrate female school dropouts

SN	Variables	Frequency	Percentages	Ranking
1	Financial empowerment	102	44.5*	2 nd
2	Skill acquisition	108	47.2	1 st
3	Counselling and orientation	79	34.5	5 th
4	Job creation for semi-literate	91	39.7	3 rd
5	Family support scheme	87	38.0	4 th
6	Farming	64	27.9	7 th
7	Remedial classes	76	33.2	6 th

Sources: Field survey, 2024 *Multiple responses applicable

Test of difference of Causes of female drop-outs across selected states in Southwest, Nigeria

There was a significant difference $\chi^2 (2) = 26.82$, $P < 0.05$ in the causes of female dropouts in schools across the selected states (Table 7). This implies that there are variations and differences in the causes of female dropouts across the states. A post-hoc

mean rank computed to indicate the significant difference in the study locations with respect to the causes of female dropouts showed that there was a significant difference ($\bar{x} = 149.3$) in female dropout in Lagos State (Table 8) implying that the causes of school dropouts is higher in Lagos State when compared to their counterparts in Ogun ($\bar{x} = 107.3$ and Oyo States ($\bar{x} = 88.12$), respectively.

Table 7: Kruskal– Wallis Test - Differences of Causes of female dropouts across the three states in Southwest, Nigeria

	Causes of female dropouts
Chi-square	26.82
Df	2
Significance level	.001

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 8: Mean rank of causes of female dropouts

	State	N	Mean rank
Causes of female dropouts	Lagos State	64	149.3
	Ogun State	118	107.0
	Oyo state	47	88.12
	Total	229	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Test of association between socioeconomic characteristics and causes of female dropouts

Socioeconomic variables considered were: age of the respondents, education status, and religious affiliation. Others were marital status, number of children, residency, household size and parental status (Table 9). There was a significant association be-

tween age ($\chi^2=81.03$, $df=03$, $p=0.01$), ethnic group ($\chi^2=192.8$, $df=02$, $p=0.001$), religious affiliation ($\chi^2=57.37$, $df=02$, $p=0.08$), educational status ($\chi^2=44.37$, $df=01$, $p=0.002$), and the causes of female dropout in school (Table 9). By implication, it means that the age, ethnic group, religion and education status of the respondents were the main socioeconomic variables that influences the cause of dropouts in school.

Table 9: Test of association between socioeconomic characteristics and Causes of female dropouts

Variables	Chi-square value	Degree of freedom	Pearson Value	Decision
Age	81.03	03	0.01	Significant
Ethnic group	192.8	02	0.001	Significant
Religion	57.37	02	0.08	Significant
Educational status	44.37	01	0.002	Significant
Marital status	57.37	03	0.99	Not significant
No of children	74.60	02	0.09	Not significant
Residency	93.99	04	0.86	Not significant
Household size	328.1	03	0.41	Not significant
Parental status	58.81	03	0.72	Not significant

Source: Field Survey, 2024. $P \leq 0.05$ is significant

CONCLUSION

This study has been able to establish the following facts about the psycho-social and economic situations of female dropouts in South-west Nigeria:

The dearth of economic power leading to an unbridled quest for money, rigorous involvement in house chores and lack of interest in schooling are the major causes of female dropouts in schools in south west, Nigeria.

Female youths have a high tendency of being forced out of school or unable to complete their education.

Majority of the dropouts are not involved in any political activities, trade association and communities groups.

The complacency of this group in engaging in any viable venture implies their propensity to engage in various vices.

There is an imperative need for re-integration and empowerment of the female school dropouts through skill acquisition, financial empowerment, and job creation.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the following actions are advised for all stakeholders involved in the development of the girl-child in Southwest Nigeria:

- i) Corrective Instruction: Efforts must be implemented to reintegrate the female school drop-out into the educational system to complete her studies.
- ii) Government and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to empower these females through skill acquisition and financial empowerment, enabling them to achieve financial independence and make autonomous decisions about personal matters.
- iii) Training on Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence should be facilitated to enhance their ICT/AI literacy and keep them informed about worldwide technology advancements. Supply them with digital equipment to facilitate participation in digital trade and various online courses.
- iv) Sex Education: Facilitate training for females regarding their sexuality, the

risks associated with premarital sex, and the consequences of inadequate or incomplete education. Instruct them on ethical and cultural principles that will influence their future employment choices. Training programmes must incorporate issues of self-esteem, self-dignity, the dignity of labor, and diligence.

- v) Parental Care: Parents should be educated on the significance of their attentiveness and supervision of their children, especially daughters. They must fulfill their fundamental obligation of good upbringing for the child and ensure that they inculcate a high sense of discipline and responsibility in the children.
- vi) Government should assume ownership of these programs regarding policy development and implementation. The responsibility for finance, policy development, and overall implementation should rest with the government, supported by local and international NGOs, communities, and parents.

These recommendations are essential for the positive transformation of the lives of female dropouts in Southwest Nigeria specifically and broadly for global development.

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