



Assessment of the Causes and Consequences of School Dropouts among Government Secondary School Students in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Students are supposed to spend a particular number of years before graduation from school. When a student stops his attendance of the school before the time leading to the completion of the programme, he has dropout. The problem of school dropouts among secondary school students in Nigeria has become a thing of great concern to educationist in the country and the society at large.

This study is, therefore, aimed at finding out the Causes and Consequence of School Dropout among Government Secondary Schools in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. In this study, descriptive survey was used in carrying out the research. Four research questions were formulated. Questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect information for the study. A sample size of 689 students drawn from 4 selected secondary schools was used as the respondents. The data collected were analysed with descriptive data using mean. The findings revealed that the causes of school dropout are as follows: high cost of education, peer influence, early marriage and pregnancies of unmarried girls and the quest to get rich quick. It also revealed that dropping out of school results to inferiority complex, engagement in antisocial behaviours, low ambition, marital discord and decline in national economic advancement. To stop this problem of school dropout, the researchers therefore recommended that the government should reduce the cost of education, parents should endeavour to carry out their responsibilities on their children, educational system should be well administered and guidance counsellors employed in secondary schools.

Keywords: *School dropout; causes; consequences; students; Government Secondary School and Owerri Municipal Council.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In most countries, graduation from Secondary Schools is viewed as the minimum level of educational attainment needed for successful participation of young people in further study and work. This is because in such nations, Secondary Education serves as the foundation for entry into university and other higher institutions of training as well as preparation for entering the labour market. Education is according to [1] is defined as the aggregate of all the means by which a person develops ability, attitude and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society in which he lives [2] in his own definition perceived Education as a process by which people are prepared to live effectively and efficiently in their own environment. The major objective of education is to equip an individual for life and to train him in some specific skills. The system changes from time to time to suit the major set objectives of education. In Nigeria, education aims at ensuring that all citizens pass through school and receive the maximum qualification, skills and knowledge needed for human and societal development. Unfortunately the story has so far changed as education has drastically, dramatically and steadily fallen apart from a place of acquiring competencies and behaviour changes to a place of paper acquisition [2] explained, the legendary great importance formerly attached to secondary school education particularly for male children have tragically disappeared. Some of our youths now see education as a waste of time and

abandon school for trading and other related businesses.

Federal government has been pursuing the goal of getting all educated by trying to bring education at the level that will be affordable to all citizens. Yet, there is however still some hindrances against these set goal. Such hindrances as constant strike, instability in government, lack of teaching staff, high cost of education, inflation and more. In secondary schools, research has shown that many students drop out of school as they are no longer serious with their studies [3,4]. They are always late to school, absent and engaged in acts of indiscipline. Also, some parents display laissez-faire attitudes towards the educational, emotional and material needs of their children. Similarly, the environment which include non-functional school in facilitating learning experiences and association with others have made the students to lose focus on the value of education thereby tend to leave school without a certificate [5,6].

Dropping out of school has its tremendous consequences such as early marriage, marital discord, inferiority complex, low ambition, engagement in anti-social behaviours and decline in economic development. These result in many people being unproductive instead of wealth creators [6-8]. To curb these irrational conducts the researcher determines to investigate the causes and consequences of school dropouts among government secondary school students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem of school dropouts among secondary school students in Nigeria has become a great concern to educationists, parents, various governments in the country and the Nigeria society at large. The school is an institution for educating children, a place where persons are taught to be followers or imitators of an artist or a philosopher [9]. This means that schools are preparing ground for continuance of any criticized society; which has its development through the efforts of many people over the years. Globally, school is regarded as the authentic training field for the acquisition of effective leadership skills. Having recognized this, [10] has as its main goal the creation of an education system capable of ensuring that every citizen is given full opportunity to develop his intellectual and working capacities for his own benefit and that of the community.

Secondary school is a level of schooling after primary school but before university whose participants are called Students like participants at other levels [9]. The school is meant for children between 11 and 18 years to acquire secondary education. The Education Act of 1944 envisaged the provision of Secondary Education for all children which aims at preparing students for higher education, employment and self-employment. A student therefore is a person who is studying at school, college or university who is devoted for acquisition of knowledge [9]. In using the term "Dropout", [9] calls attention to the widespread expectation that students in Secondary Schools should really be in school for a definite time. Consequently, [11] defined dropouts as those who fall out in the middle in the pursuit of their chosen education or vocation. In other words, dropouts refer to individuals who terminate their training before the completion of an educational programme due to reasons within or without the individuals. Therefore, there is the need to bring this to the public focus. Hence, the researchers seek to find out the factors that cause dropping out of school and the consequences of dropping out of school among government secondary school students. Consequently, the researchers tried to find answer to the following questions:

1. What are the factors that cause school dropout among students in secondary schools?

2. What are the consequences of school dropout among secondary schools students?
3. What are the roles of the education stakeholders on eliminating school dropouts in government secondary schools?
4. What are the strategies that can be adopted by the government to prevent school dropout in government secondary schools?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine the factors that Cause School Dropout among Secondary School Students
2. Identify the Consequences of School Dropout among Secondary School Students.
3. Identify the roles of Education stakeholders in eliminating School Dropout in Secondary Schools.
4. Recommend the Strategies that can be adopted to prevent School Dropouts in Government Secondary Schools.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study would be of significance to the stakeholders in education. Such as: curriculum planners and implementers, the students, parents, counsellors, government and the society.

- i. The curriculum planners and implementers would bring into effectiveness the objective of education system which according to [12] is giving the student skills acquisition knowledge that is capable of giving them full opportunity to develop their intellectual and capacities for their own benefit and that of the community.
- ii. Students as the major beneficiaries would become aware of the effects or innate dangers that accompany truancy and the abandonment of schooling. The knowledge learnt may motivate them to stand firm in pursuit of their education even if it seemed difficult.
- iii. The findings will also be useful to the Parents who have significant role to play in encouraging and supporting their wards in schools since home environment, poor parental educational background, as well

as negative attitude of parents towards their children's education affects the academic performance of the students which may cause them to discontinue schooling [13].

- iv. It would help the Counsellors to liaise with the parents, teachers, students and the government in designing appropriate education programmes to benefit the school dropouts of various abilities, interests and needs.
- v. It will energize the government to monitor effectively the activities of both the Teachers and the students in displaying the contents of the curricular

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of School Dropouts

Despite the increase in education for all, few studies focus on the reasons and effects of some students dropping out of school. The School generally is regarded as an authentic field for acquisition of effective and functional skills for self development and developmental participation in the society. Being aware of this, [10] starting from 1981 to 2004, gave a mandate on education per excellence for development in all aspects, and in the country, schools are being spread to make sure that their goal of getting "all educated" is actualized; however, this goal may not be achieved due to the problem of school dropouts in our education system. Evidence around the world has shown that, the level of a child's academic achievement depends on the type of upbringing they are exposed to (Justina N, Hauwa, A.M and Maryam T. J. 2020). That proves that a child's bedrock to later education in life is compared to the quality of knowledge he is drilled through. Justina, Hauwa and Maryam (2020), concluded that junior and high school students whose parents remain involved usually make better transitions and are less likely to drop out of school. Dropping out from the school means leaving school without a certificate. It is also refers to as a student quitting school before he graduates or avoiding entering a higher institution. This type is seen from the progress report on education in Gombe state which revealed that, both male and female students drop out before completion of their enrolled classes but that of "the female drop out at secondary school level is more conspicuously alarming to the end of SS11". The reasons for this withdrawal of girls from school were known to be 'at parents' wish or request" for the purpose

of "early marriage, domestic work or activities of street hawking". This negative attitude asserted by Safiyanu, Talatu and Abubakar (2020) can be attributed to culture and ignorance because Islam does not oppose western education. They do these for fear of chastity, fear of daughters being converted to Christianity, delay marriage and that educated girls may not be submissive wives". In line with this, Oxford Learners Dictionary [9], defined a school dropout as someone who withdraws or leaves school without completing his or her course. In same course, [12] added that, school dropouts are those who fall out in the middle in the pursuit of their chosen education or vocation; the individuals who terminate their training before the completion of the programmes due to reasons within or without the individual. The researchers in view see school dropouts as students who due to some human imbalances physically, psychologically, sociologically, biologically or economically could not complete their intended educational and vocational aspirations but left to pursue other non-school interests. From the above definitions, it is concluded that a school dropout is a student who due to unforeseen circumstance fails to complete an educational programme for which he originally enrolled.

School dropouts can start in different ways but what matters is that it is a deficit to the development of our young adults and nation. It is a negative behaviour which is socially unapproved and unaccepted [14], realized that the influence of parents has been one of the strongest and the most persistent factor that determines the child's attitude towards studying or dropping out of school. Then [14] opined that parents' meddlesomeness in their wards/children's school activities, especially by the so called influential parents who of course out of ignorance influence their wards to self-destruction, waywardness and indiscipline whose terminal point is dropping out of school.

2.2 Causes of School Dropout

Academic Performance: Research report shows that, students who receive poor grades, who repeat a grade, or who are over age for their class; students who were failing or could not meet their school's graduation requirements even if they had put in the necessary effort, is an indicator to dropping out of school. Difficulties in school are strong factors that can influence a student to drop out. Supporting the above statement, [14] in his study underscored that, a

greater number of dropouts are below average in intelligence tests performance and the probability of dropping out of school prior to completion of high school varies inversely with intelligence. That is intellectual skill favours graduation. In addition to this, it is obvious proved by statistical figures that, a school child with emotional disturbances really perform goodly in academics. To this point, Nwamuo 2012 stressed that emotionally disturbed children lack the ability to behave in an acceptable manner consistently in a social environment such as school. Equally, when students show nonchalant attitude towards their studies it may lead to poor performance and thus, dropping out of school. But with positive attitude better grades, test scores and attention are achieved.

Family Economy and background: Parents' socio-economic position together with positive attitude towards education determines the child's chances to attaining schooling. The poor background status of some families tends to have relationship with school dropout. Therefore the higher the child's parents' economic status, the higher the child's educational chances in life. [14] confirmed this, when he underscored that, school dropout rate is higher among the poorer family class than the well to do family class. And Michael in one of his teachings, expressed that, the inability of some parents and guardians to provide good background and show interest in the education of their children has a vital role to play in the performance of some teenagers. The above statements mean that, unless the necessary materials are provided for the learners, all efforts made towards his improvement may not work out effectively. Therefore educational support, both financial and emotional from the family may facilitate a student's stay in school or drop out. Exactly, children may drop out of school as a result of the poor income status of their parents. This aligns with Safyanu.Maimuna 2020 who opined thus, family financial resources, which are associated with parents' occupation and educational attainment, often imply increased learning opportunities both at home and in school. In the family it was observed that, students also are likely to drop out of school if they have a sibling who did so. Truth enough, poor parental control over children is another variable that may have relationship with school dropout rate.

Association with Peers Who Influences Me – Peer Group Influence: [15] expressed that a man of many friends comes to ruin. And another

stated my friend, bad companies ruin good association, good influence. While commenting on this, [16] held the opinion that, from friend we acquire many of our thoughts, mannerism and characteristics. Meaning that, it is the crowd we run with that makes difference in our lives not circumstances we encounter. Bad friends result in defeat while good friends result in victory. The young ones for the desire to achieve peer group acceptance and to conform to the social expectations of the peer culture, join the students who shun education resulting to dropping out of school. An anonymous, a child's specialist, generally held the motion that, "early development in a positive setting is a main reason for the child's future success but where /when the parents can no longer control the child's environment, peer pressure becomes a problem". This shows that, lack of discipline and self control from the side of the permissive parents type, make a child to act anyhow and take their academics with levity knowing that they will not be questioned, (Justina, Hauwa and Maryam , 2020). It is saying that when care givers fail to influence their wards at when due and positively, certainly, it causes the potential dropout students to drop out of high school.

Pregnancies of Unmarried Teenagers: According to, [17], one third of all adolescent births are out of wedlock and another one third of adolescent births following marriage are conceived before marriage. This kind of pregnancies is a main factor why female children drop out of high school because school age mothers are high risks educationally. In addition it was discovered that pregnancies of unmarried teenagers are one of the eighty (80) percent reasons school leavers are dropping school". The pregnancies of unmarried girls of high school of course evoke misery and remorse. Pitifully enough some of these girls get pregnant unknowingly even by unknown person. How awkwardly such situation may be is that, when it is dictated in the school, they are forced out of school; not only out of school but equally receive intense hostility within their communities. And some when they give birth to the baby become unwilling to school again or unable to re-enter school; unable to continue their education and thus become school dropouts.

Early Marriage: Due to the Nigerian belief that women have limited time for marriage and for child bearing, early marriage becomes a prevalence factor for females dropping out of

school without high school certificate [17] in agreement posited that an overwhelming percentage of the youths who marry in high school, drop out of school and only a few re-enter. Early marriage often times as expected brings early childbearing which severely restricts opportunities of young couples for educational achievements. The belief that educated girls may not be submissive wives and that delay in marriage may occur according to report from Gombe state ministry of education is a strong factor bringing about withdrawing of girls from school for early marriage.

Parents Engagement: If parents are engaged early in the child's educational career, the child is more likely to be successful in school. Michael in one of the group sharing, spotted out parents' impact on child's academic by saying, the home provides many things for the child like protection, guidance, shelter and encouragement. Again, the home tries by all means to educate the child with the outside world by interpreting what is happening to /around him. To [17], the child's performance in school will be adversely affected by poor relationship between him and the parents. Both rejection and over protection at home lead to poor adjustment to school work otherwise may drop out of school. It means that lack of parents' interest and investment in their child's education give the child view that education is not important [17] explained that parents, with only four to six years of schooling have the largest percentage of sons and daughters who drop out of school. In addition, the researchers in this research realized that a sizeable number of unschooled parents apparently feel that they been reasonably successful in life and believed that their sons and daughters can do as much without graduating from high school. This kind of family gives no encouragement to the children to study harder. The students may think the best solution is to drop out of high school.

Quest to Get Rich Quick: This is a contagious problem among the growing ones which has always contributed to students dropping out of school without second thought. According to [14], human behaviours is manipulated and controlled by environmental variables. He emphasized that types of environment determines types of behaviour that are most likely to occur at any point in time. Collaborating with this [9] added that, the legendary great importance formerly attached to secondary school education particularly disappeared. Some of our youths see

education as a waste of time amid prefer trading and other related businesses. The youths of nowadays want to get rich quick, answer big boys, influence the world and get where prominent ones are. They are afraid of being called a failure in life, so they choose to drop out of school to make it faster. Perhaps, schooling is a delay. On this point, an anonymous commented thus, materialization has never been pillar for development of human society and lamented that our male children on whom the future of our nation depends were stunning education which is central to human development. Evidently, without the formal education training and skill acquisition [18] noted that, it would be regrettable to discover that our businessmen today might find themselves unable to cope with the complexities of international transaction tomorrow. This is because schooling as [19] observed, makes a different individuals who go through it. It helps to determine behaviour and helps the individual to build up his vocational aspirations. Regrettably, [20] found out that, many adolescents choose different profession without consideration of their individual abilities. It means that though they dread being called a failure in life and want to grab money as quick as possible to face the challenges of life, but if wrong choice of career occurs, definitely, failure in life is bound to occur.

Emotional and Material Needs: I asked a boy 'Why did you drop out from school?' He reported, "I stopped going to school while I was in JSS II. I lacked textbooks, writing materials, sandals etc, and I was always being punished for that. Rightly put, children need protection and security in order to perform and achieve their maximum at school [14]. The child's need for protection and security can come from either the parents or the teacher (s): providing him of his growth and developmental needs; making him belong and loved. According to [12] a child is emotionally and materially neglected when parents fail to provide a loving environment where children feel secured and loved and including their personal and school needs. In collaboration, justina (2020) emphasized that children's positive attitude about school often results in improved behaviour in school and less suspension for disciplinary reasons. This implies that, a child can be pushed to drop out of high school if there is poor parent-student-teacher relationship, lack of learning materials, overcrowded classrooms and hard disciplinary measures. For presence of these factors create emotional imbalances, thus, poor

concentration and poor academics performance which effect desire for continuing schooling.

Unemployment: The dropping out of school among students is well strengthened by the unemployment status of many graduate youths without jobs [21] in their study confirmed the existing knowledge in Imo state. It observed that unemployment phenomenon has continued to exist despite the teaching and learning of skills and the free education in the state. Some looking at the existing problem has considered schooling as a waste of time. A childhood friend once said, School for what? Going to school only to finish and walk along without job? That time I will waste in six years schooling, I will use it to serve somebody and at last become my own Oga and have what I want. Peter, a dropout potential contended, "Why should I continue high school? Those who graduated up to university level, what are they doing? Are they not sitting with us, still begging for money like us?" This has equally contributed to the dropping out from secondary schools. A friend was kidnapped on April this year, 2022. On interaction after gained favour with the boys, asked the boys why they chose to be doing such job. The answer is, "actually, we don't like what we are doing but we can't do otherwise since government failed to give us job. Pray for us". The instability of government, racial and religious crisis in Nigeria gave room for unemployment in the country thereby encouraging school dropout.

Poor Administration: Administration viewed by [22] is the execution of the policies and organization towards its specific goals and it has to do with the actions of the members of the group in the specific situation towards the achievement of the objectives of the group. The school was established to give its participants, full opportunities to develop their intellectual and working capabilities for their own benefit and that of the community, but the reverse is the case. Poor Administration leading to instability in the school system ranging from constant strikes, increase in the duration of schooling, lack of qualified staff, and lack of cooperation in planning and teaching aids, which militate against educational system in our society is a good reason that could make a child drop out of school. Pointing at the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria today, it is noticed that, any student who fails to pass the final school will be forced to drop out of school to learn vocational trade which may not be in the interest of such students.

2.3 Consequences of School Dropouts

Consequences of school dropouts have stinging scars to all it may concern. It is obvious that people who do not earn certificate (a high school diploma) face many more problems later in life than people who earn certificate [14] stressed that, dropouts compared to school graduates tend to be more emotionally troubled, less confident as to their own worth, lower in self esteem and sense of identity, less likely to have structured values personal, social and occupational goals. The consequences of not graduating from high school have serious negative impacts for the students, families, society and the nation at large. The consequences of school dropout on an individual himself are not helping. The dropouts when compared with their peer who got their high school diploma perform low and become less functional in life. This is as a result of incurring poor self -esteem and low ambition. When a student did not complete his high school, he begins to view himself as inferior and labels self as "bad" and start acting accordingly [12]. Such a student feels neglected and rejected and joins a gang where he feels accepted and loved. They end up being taut, cleaners, watchman, gateman, drive, petty traders to say but few for low standard of living [16] in his law stated that, nothing is more difficult to accomplish than changing outward actions without changing inward feelings. The attitude of the dropouts towards themselves and their environment makes them less affective both psychological and socially. This is a fact because our performance is based on our perception of ourselves. On the same view, (17) proves that, as a man thinks within himself, so he is. Not completing the high school has some deficiencies on the victims [12] reported that they are more likely to be hostile, angry feelings and to be resentful to authority in any form – whether home, civil, intellectual and occupational authorities. This is same thing [14] observed and said that dropout increases rate of unemployment and if he is employed, it creates personality problems for the individual and the employee. Admittedly, [12] again finally concluded that school dropout is susceptible to chronic vocational maladjustment and social dysfunction due to lack of adequate vocational and social skill. Students of this kind involve themselves in crimes like robbery, bribery and corruption, drinking, prostitution, smoking, murdering etc. Delinquent behaviours increase.

In the family, the consequences are not left out. [12] in this respect rightly pointed out that the trauma arising from this sometimes results in marital discord because parents see the act of dropping out of school as a social ill which should not be associated with good family. Parents from this kind of families are taken to be weak or lack adequate parental skills in directing their children aright. It sometimes brings a limit in their relationship with neighbours who may not ask their children to keep hid else they become corrupted. Supporting the above statement, According to [17], the families of dropouts do not enjoy mutual acceptance as total persons, deep inter communication and personal satisfaction derived from being in each other's company. In such families, parents become anxious and confused, blaming each other for their children dropout in school. This act above, based on findings has economic effect on the family budget and health.

The dropout of students from high school would definitely create unimaginable possible changes in our society because the dropouts will become "an economic waste". As a result, there would be decline in our national economic advancement. [17] expatiates what it means to be 'economic waste' when they say, a child who drops out of school will not acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies required to be productive member of the society. The child rather as a researcher noticed is exposed to lower inspirational level which gives him chance to lodge in delinquent acts and anti-social behaviours such as moral laxity, social promiscuity, prostitution and fraud. So to say, they cannot contribute effectively to the societal development due to illiteracy. Put in the other way, [12] asserted that school dropouts have little hope of learning normal personal life much less of becoming fulfilled leaders in the 21st century world [17] supported that, they may become nuisance to the society, often taking to drug abuse, armed robbery and other social vices. Evidently, a nation with incontrollable number of school dropouts is a nation with aggressive violent and unproductive citizens [12] postulated. This meaning that, an increases number of dropouts in a country results in poor national growth and development.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study is descriptive survey design aimed at assessing the causes and consequences of

school dropouts in public secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council. It is descriptive design because the study focuses on the opinion of the students on the problem of school dropout among Government Secondary Schools.

3.2 Area of the Study

The area of the study is Owerri Municipal Council which has its administrative headquarters at Owerri along Douglas Road. It is one of the nine Local Government Areas that made up Owerri Zonal Board Imo State. It is situated in the Eastern part of Imo State, bounded by Owerri North and Owerri West. Area of the study covers all the nine Government Secondary Schools in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. Owerri Municipal is purely urban. The residents are predominately civil servants while others engage in some vocations as trading, farming and craftsmanship.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study, (20358 [12096 of males and 8262 of females]) comprises of all the junior and senior secondary schools in the nine Government Secondary Schools in Owerri Municipal Council.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The representative sampling method was used for this study because of the largeness of the population. Random sampling technique was employed to select 4 schools out of the 9 government secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council. This simple random sampling technique gave all the schools under investigation equal chance of being elected. The 4 schools are Comprehensive Development Secondary School Douglas Road, Urban Development Secondary School, Owerri City College and Young Scientist College Owerri, with student population of 3688, 1920, 1081 and 210 respectively, giving sampling population of 6888 (males = 2635 and females = 4253). From each of the 4 schools, 10% of the students were randomly selected to have 369, 192, 108 and 21 respectively. In all a total number of 689 respondents (males =264, females =425) as sample size were used in the study.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a four (4) points Likert scale structured questionnaire. The questionnaire structured was

made up of two (2) sections. Section A was designed to elicit information on the demographic data of the respondents. Section B was designed to elicit information on the causes and consequences of school dropouts among government secondary school students. The instrument was of twenty item questionnaires structured on a four points likert rating scale with options of strongly agreed (SA -4), Agreed (A -3), Disagreed (D -2) and Strongly Disagreed (SD -1). The data collected was analysed using simple mean method.

3.6 Validation of the Instrument

The face validation of instrument was carried out by experts in the school of education, who reviewed, scrutinized, approved and directed it in order to maintain content and face validity. Face validity was carried out in order to determine what it intended to measure.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, it was administered to two groups of secondary school students (senior and junior) not among the 4 sampled schools. A test-retest reliability method was used for the determination. The scores obtained were correlated and the value of the correlation coefficient was 0.0001.

3.8 Administration of the Instrument

The copies of the questionnaire structured for collecting data were distributed personally by the researcher using direct approach, that is, face to face delivery to the respondents which comprised of 689 senior and junior students in

the sampled schools. Twenty (20) item structured questionnaires were administered. To ensure maximum returns of the questionnaire, it was filled and collected immediately and all returned for analysis.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using the simple mean score of the responses of Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Question 1

What are the factors that cause dropout among students in government secondary schools?

Table 1 shows mean score of 3.2 for high cost of education, 3.5 for association with peers who influences me, 3.7 for early marriage and unwanted pregnancies of unmarried girls, 2.9 for quest to get rich shows that the students are of opinion that these factors cause students to drop out of school. Only unemployment as a factor has the mean score of 2.5 which is less than the average mean. This result anchors with the view of [23] which says that man's attitude is caused by his encounter with his environment. That man is naturally good any badness in man is caused by his society and environment. This depicts that, students, drop out of school not because they want to, but because some factors within or without their environment make it so.

Table 1. Factors that cause school dropout

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Decision
1	High cost of education is one of the factors that cause school dropout in our secondary schools.	350 1400	202 606	66 132	71 71	689	3.2	Accepted
2	Unemployment is a factor that causes school dropout of students in our school	160 640	196 588	168 336	165 165	689	2.5	Rejected
3	Association with peers who influences me is a strong factor that causes the students to drop out of school	401 1604	198 594	72 144	37 37	689	3.4	Accepted
4	Early marriage and unwanted pregnancies of unmarried girls causes school dropout.	514 2056	134 402	38 76	30 30	689	3.7	Accepted
5	The quest to get rich quick also causes the male students to drop out of school.	190 760	282 846	147 294	70 70	689	2.9	Accepted

Average mean = 3.1

4.2 Research Question 2

What are the consequences of school dropout syndrome among government secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo state?

With the average mean score of 3.2 in Table 2, three of the items discriminate and were accepted while the remaining two with means below the average mean were rejected as factors that cause drop out. The analysis of the research question 2 proved that dropping out of school is accompanied by negative consequences. This is in consonance with the observation of [17] that the child who drops out from school will not acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences required to be productive member of the society. Furthermore, students may take advantage of the situation to become law-less, and indiscipline may also creep in among the students in that category. Hence they adopt defence mechanism such as aggression, withdrawal, shyness, use of drugs, become impulsive and seek immediate gratification. All imply that dropping out of school affects the social behaviours of secondary school students and the higher the influence, the lower they contribute to the positive growth and development of the nation.

4.3 Research Question 3

What are the roles of education stakeholders on the problem of school dropouts in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State?

The roles of education stakeholders has the average mean score of 3.5 (Table 3). The respondents accepted that education stakeholders have very important roles to play in curbing the problem of dropping out of school as only 1 of the 5 items has a mean less than the average mean. The result is in line with the observation of [13] that home environment, poor parental educational background as well as negative attitude of parents towards their children's education affects the academic performance of the students which many cause them to discontinue schooling. In conclusion, it is incontrovertible that when one has a poor educational background, one has limited chance of performing well academically or continuing staying in high school. This is in agreement with the view of [12] that parents owe it as a responsibility to help their children develop good moral judgment and self-control by looking into the type of activities their children indulge in and friends they keep. Also effective teaching and learning should be instilled by them providing necessary learning materials.

Table 2. Consequences of school dropout

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Decision
1	School dropout contributes to unsteady growth and development of the nation due to lack of manpower	300 1200	208 624	115 230	66 66	689 689	3.0	Rejected
2	Dropout students are often involved in anti-social behaviours like drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, fraud and armed robbery	474 1896	176 528	20 40	19 19	689 689	3.6	Accepted
3	School dropouts usually suffer inferiority complex caused by low self-image, low ambition, low self-esteem and poor performance	380 1520	207 621	68 136	34	689 689	3.3	Accepted
4	These dropouts usually bring social ill and discord to the family relationship.	319 1276	257 771	72 144	41 41	689 689	3.2	Accepted
5	They are always in conflict with themselves, parents, teachers and the society.	284 1136	249 747	112 224	44 44	689 689	3.1	Rejected

Average mean = 3.2

This implies that for children/students to behave appropriately adequate attention is needed because people cannot be taught to read if adequate reading materials are not available.

4.4 Research Question 4

What are the strategies that can be adopted to prevent school dropouts in government

secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council in Imo State?

Looking at Table 4, there is average mean score of 3.3 and only 1 item has the mean less than the average mean. Consequently, all the strategies except funding education at all levels were accepted to be good method to prevent school dropout.

Table 3. The roles of education stakeholders on the problem of school dropout

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Decision
1.	Secondary school curriculum should be modified to accommodate the needs and interests of the students	528 2112	219 387	20 40	12 12	689	3.7	Accepted
2.	Qualified teachers for all subjects should be employed.	430 1720	203 609	41 82	15 15	689	3.5	Accepted
3.	Guidance counsellors should be employed in all secondary schools and counselling centres built for their services.	498 1992	147 441	28 56	16 16	689	3.6	Accepted
4.	Necessary school materials and personal needs for effective learning should be provided for the students.	533 2132	139 417	07 14	10 10	689	3.7	Accepted
5.	Academics and hard work should be encouraged and rewarded more than certificates.	377 1508	231 693	41 82	30 30	689	3.3	Rejected

Average mean = 3.5

Table 4. Strategies to prevent school dropouts

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Result
1	Education is the bedrock of every societal development. It should be funded at all levels.	367 1468	156 468	45 90	31 31	689	2.9	Rejected
2	The communities should support the funding of education initiatives.	385 1540	246 738	31 62	27 27	689	3.4	Accepted
3	Parents and teachers should create conducive environment for better academic achievements.	493 1972	151 453	28 56	17 17	689	3.6	Accepted
4	The working conditions of the public servants should be improved and strike reduced, to increase graduation rate in schools.	427 1708	178 534	48	36 36	689	3.4	Accepted
5	The education stakeholders should speak to the students to determine what they need to be successful in school.	501 2004	156 468	12 24	20 20	689	3.6	Accepted

Average mean = 3.3

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the study's findings, it can be rightly stressed that high cost of education, association with peer or peer influence, early marriage and unwanted pregnancies of unmarried girls, quest to get rich are factors that cause students to drop out of school. Consequently, the dropout contributes to common anti-social behaviours like drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, fraud and armed robbery in the society. School dropouts usually suffer inferiority complex and bring socially ill and discord to the family relationship. Similarly, the result revealed the need to modify secondary school curriculum to accommodate the needs and interests of the students. Qualified teachers for all the subjects as well as guidance counsellors should be employed in all government secondary schools. Some of the strategies to prevent dropouts agreed upon by the respondents include adequate support from the communities. Another strategy identified is the improving working condition of the public servants to reduce incessant strikes affecting graduation rate in schools.

6. RECOMMENDATION

From the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Government should reduce the cost of education in order to be affordable by all, irrespective of economic status of the family.
2. Parent should be supervising their children by knowing the kind of friends they keep and the kind of activities they engage in. This owes to the fact that peer groups greatly influence students especially those that have problems at school or at home.
3. Parents should be made to stand up to their responsibilities by making provision for their wards, engage in education of their wards and thereby discouraging early marriages and unwanted pregnancies of unmarried girls
4. Our educational system should be properly administered by providing necessary and training materials, employing qualified teachers, giving incentives and remunerations to teachers and also offering of courses example vocational courses that will make students more creative.

5. It is recommended that secondary schools should have Guidance counsellors who could counsel students with dropping out syndrome especially the boys who may be adversely affected as a result of peer group pressure.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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