

CHILD NEGLECT AS PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined child neglect as the predictor of academic performance of senior secondary school students in Edo State. Specifically, the study determined the extent to which child neglect (Educational and social neglect) individually and jointly predicts the academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in the state. The ex-post facto research design was adopted. The multistage sampling technique was used to draw a total sample of 1,505 senior secondary schools, one (SS1) students in the 311 secondary schools in the three senatorial districts of Edo State. Two instruments titled child neglect questionnaire (CNQ) and the academic performance Proforma in English and Mathematics were used for the study. The result showed that child neglect (educational and social neglect) combined significantly predicted students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Edo State ($P < 0.05$). However, only educational neglect individually predicted students' academic performance while social neglect did not. It was therefore recommended that in compliance with the federal government's goal of providing compulsory, basic and qualitative education for every Nigerian child, the State government should declare house-to-house campaign on the evils of child neglect. This will help to bring to the awareness of parents, teachers and significant others the consequences of their actions on children in their academic pursuit.

KEYWORDS: *Child Neglect, Academic Performance, Victims of Child Neglect*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

Providing universal primary education and education for all children (especially in the countries of Sub-Sahara Africa) is one of the set goals of the United Nations that has suffered a serious setback as a result of the current global economic crisis (Azi & Saluhu. 2016). This has hit hard on the dependent economy of Sub-Sahara African countries like Nigeria with the resulting consequence of poor welfare for school children. In Nigeria, the poor welfare of children is an effect on the socio-economic conditions of their parents. Nwajiuba and Oni (2017) lamented that the population of Nigerian children that are engaged in alternative jobs as a means of survival to support their family income, and their education is still on the increase. He added that the increasing number of children with poor welfare is responsible for the poor academic performance of students at the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (JSSCE)

Academic performance refers to the learning outcome of a student in a subject or group of subjects over a period of class instructions. Duruji, Azuh and Oviasogie (2014) defined it as the degree of a student's accomplishment on his/her

studies. They noted that the conventional approach for measuring level of academic achievement of a student in a subject or group of subjects within a period of instruction is often expressed in standard grades of percentages.

The level of the student's performance could be said to depend on how well he/she meets the standards set out by an institution, a teacher or an external examination body either set up by the government or an independent outfit. Hence, a Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE) candidate could be said to have passed or have a high level of performance in a core subject like English Language and Mathematics if he/she made an average score of 70%, 60% or even 50%, while another could be said to have failed if the score falls significantly below the aforementioned scores; (all depending on the examiner, educational institution or researcher).

English Language and Mathematics are compulsory subjects that learners have to pass at the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE) and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE), to qualify them for any course of their choice. Unfortunately, Duruji, Azuh and Oviasogie (2014) reported that a student's academic performance in JSSCE in the past few decades has recorded abysmal performance in both external and internal examinations. They added that the chief examiner in 2010, May/June West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) reported poor performance of students in English Language. This performance declined in 2014 to 43.97%, while in 2015 only 41.09% made at least five credit passes in JSSCE (including Mathematics). Kolo, (2015) attributed the marginal decline in the student's performance to various socio-psychological challenges confronting children-child abuse, child labor, and child neglect among others.

Educational neglect covers all forms of material, moral, financial and academic deprivation that a child could suffer in matters pertaining to their schooling or student needs at school. A child that is educationally neglected is often one that lacks material resources, moral, financial and academic support to carry on with various engagements at school while the other aspect of child neglect (social neglect) connotes all forms of victimization, marginalization or alienation that a child may suffer from parents, teachers, peers, siblings or significant others within his immediate environment (Akoloh et al, 2016)

Within a learning environment, Olusi (2013) submitted that children who are victims of neglect appear to constitute more problems at school. This is because they are the least successful in cognitive tasks when compared to their other counterparts who are not physically, educationally, or socially neglected. He added that they are also more fearful, inattentive, pathetic, insecure, maladjusted and unable to compete favorably with their peers academically. Socially, they demonstrate inappropriate behaviors and are not accepted by their classmates. To address some of these challenges, Aluede (2017) recognized the relevance of school-based counseling and counselors in addressing the aforementioned challenges confronting children at school.

THE PROBLEM

In view of the lofty ideas of the senior secondary school education, it is stipulated that it be provided unhindered. Unfortunately, the abysmal achievement of students in Nigeria has been and is still a source of concern and research interest to educators and other stakeholders in education. This is because of the great importance that education has on the national development of the country. All over the country, there is a consensus of opinion about the fallen standard of education in Nigeria (Adebule, 2004). It has been observed that parents and educators are in total agreement that their huge investment on education is not yielding the desired dividend while teachers complain of student's low performance in both

internal and external examination Kolo (2015).

The Federal Government of Nigeria declared free and compulsory primary education to all Nigerian children irrespective of their socioeconomic status as stated in the National Policy on Education. Some parents/guardians sometimes make children stay at home to assist them in domestic chores, go to the farm, and even accompany them to buy and sell on market days in order to support their education and support family income. The non-enforcement of the Child Rights Act in Edo and other states as well as high level of poverty continues to worsen the plight of the Nigerian child (Olusi, 2013). This constitutes the worry of the researcher.

Hypothesis of the Study

Educational and social neglect do not significantly predict students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Edo State.

Scope of the Study

The study examined child neglect as predictor of academic performance in two core subjects – English Language and Mathematics among Senior Secondary School two students in Edo State. This is because English language and Mathematics are core subjects which must be credited before a candidate can be admitted into any university in the country. Only Senior Secondary School one (SSS1) students (2015/2016 school year) were covered in the study. SSS 1 students who have just successfully completed a standardized examination (Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination) (JSSCE) were chosen to provide responses on issue bordering child neglect because of the standardized examination result needed for the study.

Basically, child neglect covers three (3) dimensions, namely physical neglect, Educational neglect and social neglect. The researcher covered only educational neglect and social neglect because these relate more to the learning environment (the school) in the state to be able to meet the target population for the study.

Design of the Study

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. The ex-post facto research design is one that describes the magnitude of association between two or more variables as well as the extent to which the independent variable causes variation in the dependent variable (Saunders, Lewis, & Thorhill, 2003). Unlike the correlational research design, which is a design template that aims at determining the magnitude and direction of the relationship between two or more distinct variables, the ex-post facto design further determines causation in the measure of association between two or more variables. Hence, the ex-post facto research design was used because the researcher seeks to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between the independent variable (child neglect) and the dependent variable (academic performance). Furthermore, the design was adopted because it helped to show the extent to which the independent variable (child neglect) caused changes in the dependent variable (students' academic performance).

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of the 30,626 Senior Secondary School (SSS1) students in the secondary schools in the 311 secondary schools in the Senatorial districts of Edo State comprising of five thousand nine hundred and thirty-five (5935) in the Edo Central Senatorial District, sixteen thousand four hundred and fifty-one (16451) in the Edo South Senatorial district and Eight thousand two hundred and forty (8240) SSS 1 students in Edo North Senatorial District.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 1505 Senior Secondary School one (SSS 1) Students was used for the study. The multistage sampling technique was used. In the first stage, Edo State was stratified into the three senatorial districts namely: Edo Central, Edo South and Edo North Senatorial district. At the second stage, all the local government areas in the three senatorial districts were purposefully included in the sampling procedure. In the third stage, only two schools from each local government were drawn by simple random sampling technique. In the last stage, all the SSSI Students from the selected schools per local government area were included in the study. This procedure yielded a total sample size of 1505 SSSI students. The choice of the sample size is informed by the need to draw a sizable number of SSSI students to represent each local government in the state.

Instrument of the Study

Two (2) instruments were used for the study. The items in the first instrument were adapted from standardized scales and integrated into the questionnaire titled: Child Neglect Questionnaire (CNQ) while the other instrument was a student academic performance perform in English Language and Mathematics. The (CNQ) was used to collect data on the victims of child neglect of SSSI students in secondary schools. The questionnaire was divided into two Sections. A and B. Section A was used to collect data on the name of schools, sex, age and examination number of students in their just concluded Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE). Information on the examination numbers of students in their just concluded JSSCE was used by the researcher to match the response of students on their performance in their just concluded examination.

Section B of the questionnaire deals with child neglect. This section contained (10) items adapted from the Colorado Child Right Initiative (2003). The report of the Colorado Child Right Initiative (2003) identified a list of various areas of child neglect covering physical, educational and social neglect. To avoid the multicollinearity issue among the variables, items in the physical domain of child neglect such as balanced diet of adequate calories per day, child access to portable water for domestic use and play top among others was completely excluded. Hence, the items covered two (2) dimensions of child neglect namely: Educational neglect (items 1-5) and social neglect (items 6-10). Furthermore, the researcher in the course of adaptation and modification, some slang expressions were removed and substituted with formal terms. For instance, item 8 on social neglect reads "*I stay away from other buddies at school because they consider me unfriendly*". This was modified to "*I spend most hours at school alone because my peers consider me unfriendly*". The response rate of the items was on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree 4 Agree-,3 Strongly Disagree- 2 Disagree-1.

The second instrument (students' academic performance) was used to collect data on the student's academic performance in their last junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE) in English Language and Mathematics. Through the help of the students' examination number that was obtained from the filled questionnaire, data on the performance of participants (SSS I students) in English Language and Mathematics in their just completed JSSCE was obtained and correlated with their responses to the items on child neglect in the instrument (CNQ). This procedure is quite consistent with the work of Kolo (2015) and Azi and Saluhu (2016). To fit into the four point rating of the independent variable, child neglect, the average score of students in English language and Mathematics, in percentages (%) was used. The instruments were validated by experts in the field and the reliability of the educational neglect was 0.83 and 0.80 for social neglect. Leey and Ormrod, (2012). Submitted that a Gutterman reliability alpha of.75 or higher for any scale, inventory or questionnaire within the field of Education and related disciplines may be adjudged reliable. Hence, the

instrument (CNQ) was considered reliable for use.

Method of Data Analysis

Percentages (%), mean (x) and standard deviation (S.D) were used to describe the demographics of respondents and the presentation of results while the multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLRA) was used to test the hypothesis. The technique was used to determine the extent to which the independent variable (child neglect) individually and jointly predicts the dependent variable (students’ academic performance). The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 levels of significance. Participants with a mean score of 2.05 or higher were adjudged victims of child neglect while participants with a mean score of 1.00 to 2.49 were regarded as non-victims.

A benchmark mean (X) score of 2.05 or higher was used as the criterion mean for determining victims of child neglect among participants. This score was obtained by adding up the four (4) Likert scale responses (Strongly Agreed 4 Agreed- 3 Disagreed -2 and strongly Disagreed -1) and dividing the sum of the response score (10) by the total number of scales (4) to give 2.50. Hence, participants with a mean score of 2.05 Or higher were adjudged to be victims of child neglect while those with a mean score less than 2.50 were considered as non-victims. After administering all the copies of the questionnaire (n=1505), a total of 1492 copies of the questionnaire representing 99.1% were found useable while 13 (0.9%) were either incorrect or incomplete field of participants. Hence, only 1492 copies of the questionnaire were used for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Presentation of Data

From a total 1505 questionnaires distributed, a total of 1492 copies of the questionnaire representing 99.1% were found usable while 13 (0.0%) were incompletely fielded and removed.

Table 1: Analysis of Students’ Academic Performance in English Language and Mathematics in Secondary Schools in Edo State

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
English Language	Failed	319	21.4
	Pass	522	35.0
	Good	180	12.1
	Distinction	471	31.6
	Total	1492	100
Mathematics	Failed	309	20.7
	Pass	533	35.7
	Good	182	12.4
	Distinction	468	31.4
	Total	1492	100

Note: 60-100% (Distinction) 50-59% (Good) 45-49% (Pass) 44% and below (Failed)

Source: Field Survey (2017)

Result in Table 1 above showed that 319 students representing 21.4 failed English Language. 522 (35.0%) passes, 180 (12.1%) had good grades while 471 (31.6%) had distinction. For Mathematics, 309 students’ representing 20.7% failed, 533 (35.75) passed, 182 (12.2%) had good grades while 468 (31.4%) had distinction. Hence, the majority of the respondents passed English Language and Mathematics at a score fairly below average (45-49%).

HYPOTHESIS

Educational and social neglect do not significantly predict students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Edo State.

To test this hypothesis the multiple linear regression Analysis was used to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The results of the analysis are presented in table 2.

$$R = .252^a$$

$$R\text{-square } (R^2) = .063$$

$$\text{Adjusted R-square} = .060$$

$$F_{(2,659)} = 22.255$$

Table 2: Summary Result of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Showing the Relative and Joint Effects of Child Neglect on Students' Academic Performance in senior Secondary Schools in Edo State

Model ^a	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value	Sig.
Regression	45.167	2	22.584		
Residual	668.735	659	1.015	22.255*	.000 ^b
Total		713.902			
Unstandardized			Standardized		
Coefficients			Coefficients		
Model	β	Std. Beta	T-Val.	P-val.	Remark
(Constant	4.19	.	14.90		
Educational neglect	-.688		-5.563		Signi
Social neglect.	.147	.09	1.508	.13	Not sign

a. Dependent Variable: Academic performance

b. Predictors: (constant), Educational neglect, Social neglect

*t-value and f-value is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

Note: The total degree of freedom (df) of 661 is indicated less a unit value (1) which is captured by the constant

Data in Table 2 showed that the f -value of 22.255 which tests for the joint effect of the predictor is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This implies that educational and social neglect jointly and significantly predicts students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Edo state. The r-value (R) of .252 showed that the strength and direction of the predictors (educational and social neglect) with the dependent variables (student's academic performance) are weak and positively related respectively. The r-square (R^2) and adjusted r-square (R^2) are .063 and .060 respectively. These coefficients (.063 and .060) are the goodness of fit of the model which showed that 6.3% to 6.0% variation in students' academic performance can be attributed to educational and social neglect (child neglect) among senior secondary school students in Edo State.

The result further showed that educational neglect ($\beta = -.688$, dt-val.= - 5.563) was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This implied that a unit increase in educational neglect will bring approximately 0.69% ($\beta = -.688$) decline in students' academic performance in Edo State. On the other hand, the social neglect ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that educational neglect individually predicted students' academic performance in Edo State while social neglect did not.

The findings showed that child neglect significantly predict students' academic performance in Edo State. This may be due to the inability of students' parents/guardians to get relevant educational and material resources they need to promote learning. Some of these resources cover appropriate health care, quality meal, good shelter that protects from environmental dangers and failure to access them, may affect a child emotionally as the child will always compare his/her background, parent's attitude and care to that of his classmates. Such a child may feel depressed at the great disparity between him and his peers. This could result in lower such students' academic morale and performance.

Result agrees with that of Lekwa and Anyaogu (2016) that child neglect as a result of economic recession has resulted in poor performance of students at school. Result concurs with that of Ogbugo-Ololubei (2016) that child neglect as a result of parents' socioeconomic status adversely affected students' academic achievement.

Result disagrees with that of Adeyemo and Babajide (2012) that there is no significant relationship between socio--economic disadvantaged students and their academic achievement.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that in compliance with the federal government's goal of providing compulsory, basic and qualitative education for every Nigerian child, the state government should declare house-to-house campaign on the evils' of child neglect. This will help to bring to the awareness of parents, teachers and significant others, the consequences of their actions on children in their academic pursuit.

Implications for Guidance and Counseling

Results from this study have implications for Guidance and counseling in the following ways:

- In this study, it was established that child neglect (educational and social neglect) jointly predicted the academic performance of students in Senior Secondary Schools in Edo state. The adverse effect of this menace has serious implication for Guidance and counseling in schools in the area of providing the school intervention programme. The provision of a school intervention programme by counselors will enable parents/guardians, teachers and school support staff as well as significant others to understand their actions and inactions that may be considered to trample on the fundamental human right of a child of school age as well as his/her right to qualitative education.
- Secondly, the adverse effect of this child related problem suggests that more counselors need to be recruited in secondary schools to help victims build coping strategies needed to live above their predicament. This is needful because the emotional trauma associated with a neglected child may affect their school behavior, attendance, and social life among other peers. Consequently, full scale intervention that involves all stakeholders, teacher, parents, social workers, psychologists' government and non-governmental organization is necessary to ensure victims of child neglect are well adjusted at school. In this regard, Guidance counselors may need to draw up an intervention plan for child neglect victims to sensitize parents and guardians of victims on the importance of giving their children the best legacy which is education.
- The finding has implication for Guidance and counseling to play their support roles as in-loco-parentis. The counselor must possess certain qualities and characteristics which will make students gravitate to him/her. He/she must have empathic understanding. That is the ability to transpose oneself imaginatively into the feeling of young learners. Counselors should establish rapport with learners that they serve in order to establish an open line of communication between them and the students. This implies building and maintaining counselor-learner

relationships. This allows the two of them (school counselor and student) to function in an association of mutual trust are respected.

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