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INFLUENCE OF FAMILY SIZE, GENDER AND BIRTH-ORDER ON SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN IHIALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study aimed at determining the influence of family size, gender and birth-order on school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. Consequent upon this, three research questions were asked to guide the study. The research study adopted a survey research design of the descriptive type. The population of the study comprised all the primary and secondary school students who are still within school age but who are not presently in school. A total of 278 dropouts were selected through stratified random sampling technique for the study. A proforma (checklist) indicating the variables under study was used in the collection of data. Percentages were adopted to answer the research questions. It was found that dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State constituted high percentage coming from large family size and children maintaining middle in their ordinal position. For this reason, the study recommended that parents should be educated to choose moderate family sizes that will match with their income status.

Introduction

Dropout is a universal issue and a recurrent decimal in Nigerian educational system. Effort has been on going within the last three decades and in the educational system to bring about all round development of the individual and the human society in general. For instance, the change in educational system from the old system of 6-33-4 to 9-3-4 system of education are just a few. The federal government of Nigeria

through her National Policy on Education (NPE) stated clearly the importance of secondary school education (FRN, 2014). The launching of Universal Basic Education (UBE) and making education compulsory for all levels are some of the efforts made by federal and state governments. The realization of this sustainable development in human and material resources also made federal and state governments in Nigeria to map out huge sums of money for education in their budgets and through agencies like TETFUND. Despite all these efforts at both federal, state and even family levels, the rate at which students drop out of school is alarming especially in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. The drop out problem is pervasive. Ihiala is a place where children enter school and are unable to complete their educational programme.

School dropout is seen as a situation where a child is unable to pursue to a successful end an academic programme such as primary, junior or senior secondary schooling even though he/she is still within the bracket of school age. A child dropping out of school means a lot to both man-power and potential (human and material resource) development of any country. Dropping out means to stay away from the four walls of a school system in non-pursuant of a programme of studies for a particular academic level but in pursuant of trades with the aim of making quick or fast money. According to Tahir (2006), these children are those who lack the necessary motivation in terms of provision of enabling academic environment but who incidentally found themselves in a school system. They do not see school activities as rewarding. These children leave the four walls of the school without regards to completing the grade or level and without transferring to another school.

Studies show that many children who cater school are unable to complete secondary education and multiple factors are responsible for it. These include family background, school factors and societal factors. Before a child enters school, poverty, low education level of parents could add up to affect the child. Family remains the vital cell of the society and the pivot on which the child's development rotates. It plays a significant role in shaping the life of both the individual child and the society. The child has not only the right to live but also the right to receive proper and adequate education. The family and the government owe the child access to

education. Family size affects the rate of dropout in the school system as large families often have less money and children born in these families have few good things to share. This stressful situation increases sibling conflict and creates bitterness among them and this forces the children to drop out of the school (Richardson & Richardson, 2006).

The educational attainment of parents is also a contributing factor to school drop out. Literature reveals that children whose parents are illiterates do not know the value of education and hence these children drop out of school while parents who are well educated are those who are interested in their children's progress in school and as such do not hesitate to help them in school work (Ukah, 1999). Illiterate parents do not provide their children with a home atmosphere conducive for the acquisition and formation of good study habits. Parental income has been found to be a powerful prediction of school achievement and drop out behavior (Pong & Ju, 2000). High parental income makes it convenient to provide more resources to support children's education, including access to better quality schools, private tuition and more support for learning within home. Poverty still remains one of the significant causes of children dropping out of school (Birdsall etal, 2005; Bruneforth, 2006; Cardoso & Verner, 2007). In addition, empirical studies have found that students whose parents monitor and regulate their activities, provide emotional support, encourage independent decision-making are generally more involved in their schooling, are less likely to drop out of school (Liu, 2004; Ainsworth, Beegle & Koda, 2005).

The ordinal position of a child in a family has been found to affect the rate at which children drop out of school. Studies show that birth order of a child has a profound psychological developmental impact on the child. Children identify their ordinal positions in the family and tend to form their own private beliefs about what it means to be a first, middle or last. The child's position in the family affects how he/she sees himself/herself (Chilaka & Asagwara, 2011). The psychological situation of each child in the family is different. The child's opinion of himself and his situation determines his choice of attitude. The middle child or the one occupying a

middle ordinal position is unloved, left out, squeezed and doesn't seem to have a place in the family. The middle child is seen as the lowest achiever academically and the least likely to go to university (Richardson & Richardson, 2006). First born children are more likely to go to university than children in any other position in the family. For example, Uba (1989) is of the opinion that the first child in a family enjoys a good deal of attention and warm relationship which he/she enjoys as an apple of the eye of the family before the second child arrives. He/she is then forced to share the affections of his parents as the new ones are born. By so doing, less attention is given to the first child which compels him to drop out of the school system. Other scholars are of the opinion that the last born in the family are the most dropouts in the school system. The reason is that the last child is noted with neurotic or maladjusted adult who procrastinate continually and miss appointment (Chilaka & Asagwara, 2011). From the profile of dropout children, it can be concluded that older children, first, middle and last birth orders are likely to drop out. Further, much of dropout is taking place at the junior secondary school level.

Some scholars are of the opinion that boys tend to have higher dropout rates than girls and that children living in remote areas are more likely to drop out of school (Colclough, Rose & Tenban, 2000). It was recommended that educational planners need to understand the reasons for dropping out so as to help reduce wastage and improve the efficiency of the educational system.

Students could drop out as a result of a multitude of school factors such as uncongenial atmosphere, attitude, frustration resulting from inability to repeat a class, etc. When students experience school failure, they find school uninteresting and become frustrated with lack of achievement and end up alienated and experience exclusion leading to eventual drop out (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Colclough, Rose & Tenban, 2000; Boyle, Brock, Macc & Sibbons, 2002; Hunter & May, 2003; Liu, 2004). Absenteeism from school and student discipline problems are also predictors of dropping out especially at the secondary school level of education (Grant & Hallman, 2006). Resources in school system influence school dropout rates. When they are studied with pupil teacher ratio, they give a positive and

significant effect on high school and middle school dropout rates (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000).

Poor teaching-learning transactions have been found to lead to low motivation, low comprehension and finally dropping out of school (Chaudhury et al, 2005; Davis & Dupper, 2004). For instance, when teachers do not prepare lessons, do not have well designed scheme of work, do not have time to check the notebooks of the students properly and are not regular in class, learning does not take place (Ghuma & Lloyd, 2007). These classroom practices have adverse impact on the retention of learnt materials by the children. Moreover, the school mounts programmes that enable us achieve the national goal for education. The quality of such programmes coupled with the teachers who are well trained, as well as learning environment, go a long way to determine whether a child should come, remain and benefit from such programmes. Where these are not properly put in place, it makes the child to drop out of school. The child at this point does not benefit from the school environment and her programmes (Tahir, 2006). Teachers should be motivated through regular training to appreciate their jobs and become committed and dedicated to it.

The society in which the child finds himself/herself plays some remarkable roles in the child's attitude to school. In some places in Nigeria, there are strong attachments to get rich quick syndrome, acquiring traditional titles, early marriage, spreading cash at gatherings, etc as ways of exhibiting wealth. Because of this belief, the child's continual stay in school is seen as a big waste of time. Unemployment in the country today has been found to be an important factor that compels students to stay out of school. They imagine a good number of graduates roaming about the street unemployed and decide to take their fate in their hands by taking their presumed short cuts (i. e. dropping out of school).

It is pertinent to note that three theories are responsible for the dropping out of students from school. Firstly is the Maslow's theory of needs. Maslow listed human needs in order of hierarchy which include physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs and need for self-actualization

(realization). For him, people tend to avoid pain. The child wants to get rich quick and will not tend to be motivated when their effort is rewarded. Secondly, is the theory of learning such as classical conditioning of Ivan-Pavlov and operant conditioning.

If the students are given appropriate stimuli, the tendency of responding appropriately and seeing school as an investing place will be there. Voluntary behavior which students experience is capable of holding them back in school. Thirdly is the law of effects (theory of reinforcement). Having the right models in the society is an accepted antidote to dropouts as good behavior will be copied and reinforced.

When a child sees an employed graduate or a model in his society who is doing well, the tendency for the child to model him is assured. So far, the individual child, parents, the family, the society, the school and even the government have been discussed as factors responsible for dropout rate in our country today. It seems to appear that scholars do not agree on those who experience dropout in school more than others. Whereas some scholars are of the opinion that first children in their families drop out more than others, other scholars are of the opinion that middle children drop more while few scholars indicated last children; hence, there are inclusive findings.

These inconsistent findings or inconclusive investigation have no doubt created a gap in knowledge which needs to be filled by further research study like this one.

Objectives of the study

The major aim of the study was to determine the proportion of school dropout in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State influenced by family size, gender and birth-order. Specifically, the study aimed at:

1. Determining the proportion of male school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State influenced by large family size.

ii. Determining the proportion of first-born school dropouts in Ihiala Local

Government Area of Anambra State influenced by large family size.

iii. Determining the proportion of male school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State influenced by birth-order.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were asked to guide the study:

i. What proportion of male school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State are influenced by large family size?

ii. What proportion of first-born school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State are influenced by large family size?

iii. What proportion of male school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State are influenced by birth-order?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all boys and girls who are still within the limit of secondary school age but who are not benefitting from the school programme. These individuals could be found in various towns in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State and in various apprenticeship shades, market places, motor-traffic ways, motor parks, workshops, filling stations, streets, etc. A total of 278 sample size was selected through stratified random sampling technique. A proforma (checklist) indicating the family size, birth-order and gender of the dropouts was used in the collection of data. Family size was divided into three categories namely large, moderate and small family sizes. Small family size is a family with 1-3 children, moderate involves 4-6 children while large family size involves 6+ children in a nuclear family.

Birth-order was divided into first, middle and last ordinal positions of children in their families, while gender was divided into male and female dropouts. The research adopted the use of simple percentages in the analyses of the research questions.

Result:

Table I: The Distribution of Dropouts according to family size and gender

Gender	Family size Large	Moderate	Small	Total *
Male	76(53.5%)	53(37.3%)	13(9.2%)	142(100%)
Female	73(53.7%)	51(37.5)	12(8.8%)	136(100%)
Total	149(53.6%)	104(37.4%)	25(9.0%)	278(100%)

From the above table, there are 142 male school dropouts and 136 female dropouts. Out of this number, 76 dropouts, representing 53.5% of the male dropouts come from large families while 53, representing 37.3%, are from moderate families. The remaining 13, representing 9.2%, come from small family sizes. The percentage of male school dropouts influenced by large family size is 53.5%.

Table II: The Distribution of Dropouts according to family size and Birth-order

Family size	Birth -order			Total
	First	Middle	Last	
Large	36(24.2%)	84(56.4%)	29(19.4%)	149(100%)
Moderate	26(25.0%)	58(55.8%)	20(19.2%)	104(100%)
Small	6(24%)	14(56%)	5(20%)	25(100%)
Total	68(24.5%)	156(56.1%)	54(19.4%)	278(100%)

From the table above, there are 149 school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State who come from large families. 36 out of 149 representing 24.2% are first-born children in their ordinal position in their respective families; 84 representing 56.4% are in the middle in their ordinal position, while 29 representing 19.4% are last in their ordinal position. The percentage of first born school dropouts in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State influenced by large family size is 24.2.

Table Ill: Distribution of Dropouts according to birth-order and gender

Gender	Birth -Order			Total
	First	Middle	Last	
Male	35(24.7%)	79(55.6%)	28(19.7%)	142(100%)
Female	33(24.3%)	77(56.6%)	26(19.1%)	136(100%)
Total	68(24.5%)	156(56.1%)	54(19.4%)	278(100%)

The table above shows that out of 142 male dropouts, 35 representing 24.7% male dropouts are first in their families' ordinal position; 79 representing 55.6% are in the middle in their ordinal position; while 28 male dropouts representing 19.7% are last in their families' ordinal position. Therefore, the percentage of male dropouts who are first in their ordinal position is 24.7.

Discussion

The study found out that dropping out of school occurred more in large family sizes. This finding is in line with the findings of Richardson and Richardson (2006) who stated that the stressful situation in large families increases their sibling conflict and creates bitterness among them. This then forces them to drop out of school since they have few good things to share. This situation is worsened when the family income is low as well (Pong & Ju, 2000).

It was found that gender is not a serious factor dropout in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.

The difference in number does not show that a particular gender is worse affected. The idea may be that children are equally interested in making fast money and so boys as well as girls drop out of school in order to make fast money. There is an indication that both boys and girls who come from moderate and large family sizes are worse affected. Few dropouts come from small family size though, and the reason may be due to other variables like poverty, personality of the child, unconducive school environment, etc.

Conclusion

The study revealed that school dropouts are most common among students from large family sizes. For every child that drops out of school, a great deal of developmental set back occurs in the educational sector and other sectors in the society. The potentials and possible impacts the child could have made to the development of education and other areas are lost. It is not a favourable situation for a developing country like Nigeria which is in need of human resource development and allocates enormous amount of funds in her yearly budget to education. Parents are not well informed on the value of education for the future and this negative attitude is recycling and has become an unbroken chain. Norms, values and beliefs of the society are preserved and propagated through formal education. Where these are undermined through the dropout syndrome, all the gains will be eroded and the future will be bleak. Moreover, dropout has syndrome robed the Ihiala child of the academic skills that will enable him cope with the challenges of the society and wholesome standard of morality Instead, they have taken to street hawking, juvenile delinquency, rape, kidnaping, just to mention a few. Dropout is a bad signal that school environment is not conducive to attract and keep the students in the four walls of the school. The society should change the attitude of recognizing money bags whose sources of income are questionable. This will help the young ones to appreciate education and hence remain in school to benefit from its programmes.

Recommendation

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Having seen the need for providing children basic education, parents should be educated to take/choose small family sizes
2. The educational institution in Anambra State should revisit the curriculum to make it more attractive and practical to children. This will make a child to be self-employed and self-reliance on graduation.
3. The governments of Federal Republic of Nigeria and Anambra State should

not only provide the educational needs of its citizens, but should enact laws prohibiting school dropouts and also embark on grassroot campaign against school dropout.

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