Causes of Female Students Dropout in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State South East Nigeria: Psychological Implications

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Abstract
This study examined the causes and psychological implications of female students’ dropout of secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Southeast Nigeria. The study used descriptive research design guided by three (3) research questions which were in line with the specific purposes of the study. The population consists of 10,898 female students, but since the population is too large and therefore difficult to manage, 144 respondents were randomly selected from both public and private secondary schools using simple random sampling techniques. Respondents were mainly senior secondary school students and teachers. The researchers made questionnaire tagged: causes and psychological implications of female student dropout of secondary schools questionnaire, (CPIFSDSSQ) which adapted likert scale which was used for data collection, the instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.70. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage and mean. The study revealed among others that early marriage among girls, mistaken traditional belief that educating a girl child is a waste of resources, poverty, and unwanted pregnancy, accounts for high rate of female student dropout of secondary school in Ebonyi State. The study also showed among others that low-self esteem, susceptibility to future emotional insecurity cum behavioural problems, are some of the psychological aftermaths of female student dropout of secondary school in Ebonyi State, southeast Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study recommended that government should give free education if possible to secondary school students in the area this will assuage the rate at which female students drop out of school due to their socio-economic backgrounds.

Keywords: Causes, Drop out, Psychological, Implications.

Introduction
Generally, in Africa, the causes and effects of female students’ dropouts in schools seems not to have been well researched. Yet, most if not all developing countries in Africa including Nigeria are dramatically affected economically or otherwise, by the ever increasing female students drop out rate. The concept of dropout in educational system has aroused interest of
many professional academics and the public in general. The term is usually used in schools to refer to those students that leave school without the school’s consent either to another school or to ‘sit’ at home. Loxley in Hussen and Postle White (1985:12) defined dropouts as “those pupils who leave school midway before the final year of their educational cycle in which they are enrolled, which could be primary, secondary or advanced level or even college or university levels”. Chiwore (1986:11) defines drop out as “a pupil who ceases to attend school either temporarily or permanently, before completing the given educational cycle. Female student dropout is a serious problem that enormously impact on national development of Nigeria and Africa in general.

Looking at the term dropout of school, Good Community Committee (1995) observed that the seed of dropping out have been imbibed from childhood. Many children fail to find self-respect or self discipline and capacity to cope with problems in ways that are constructive or have any appreciation on the importance of skills needed for learning. Good Community Committee (1995) and Schewertz (1995) identified youth violence crime, single parenthood, poverty, drug problem, school instability and rebellion as cause of student dropout of school. Sewell (2000) include among many other reasons for student’s dropout as not liking the school, being suspended or being expelled.

In Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular, the real causes of female students drop out has been a contentious subject. The problem has been generally attributed to various factors ranging from over age status, student misbehaviour, limited English proficiency, student attendance, boredom, depression, poor academic performance, lack of sufficient individualized attention, and disconnect between school and academic work. Despite these negative impacts of female student dropout to the society’s socio-economic and political development, they had been very scanty research on the subject. Some research findings indicates that girls’ dropout rate from school is higher than boys in Nigeria. Osakwe, Osagie, Madunagu and Usman (1995) observed that Nigerian girls, for various reasons centered on religious, cultural, socio-economic and school related factors, are not given a fair chance in the educational sector. According to UNICEF 2004, about 7.3 million children do not go to school, out of which 62% are girls (UNICEF 2004). The same UNICEF report indicates that girl’s primary school completion rate is far below that of boys, at 85% compared with 76% for boys. This gender gap means that millions more girls than boys are dropping out of school each year.

Mohammed (2004) opined that a girl may be withdrawn from school in Nigeria if a good marriage prospect arises. Alika and Egbochukwu (2009) found that the socio-economic status of the girls imposes considerable constraints upon their continuing stay in school. National Bureau of statistics (2015) ranked Ebonyi state, the study area the tenth poorest State in Nigeria with poverty rate of 73.6%. This contributes intrinsically and integrally to the rate of female student dropout of secondary school. Also, the natives of the state are still glued to their traditions and customs which one of them is polygamy. This further increases the number of female student dropout of school. Observation denotes that Female students tend to drop out of school due to poverty and polygamy thereby engaging themselves in activities such as farming, petty trading and hawking of grocery products. Some even dropout of secondary school for marriage. Some of the girls that are “privileged” are sent to the urban and peri-urban areas of the state as house helps in rich homes.

Furthermore, some girls who hail from the hinterlands of the study area are not civilized and therefore, have no value attached to education. These scenarios cum local syndromes accounts for high level of female students drop out of secondary schools in Ebonyi State. This study therefore examines the reasons behind female student dropout in secondary school.
in Ebonyi State South-East Nigeria and its concomitant psychological implications. The study adopts some schools from Abakaliki metropolis as case studies to represent other schools cum obtainable scenarios in the periurban and the hitherland of the study area.

Statement of the Problem

Ebonyi State having the poverty rate of 73.6% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015) signifies abundance of low-income families. This socioeconomic background of most families triggers high rate of female students’ dropout of school in the area as male children are given preference in terms of using the family’s merger resources in training them in schools. This lack of educational support in the home on the side of the female students leads to drop out of school with attendant psychological implications. Furthermore, Adaba (2001) noted keenly that parents do not encourage the education of their female children because of the erroneous belief that investing money on the education of female children may end up being waste to the parents as and the husband’s family would reap the fruits of their labour. This is a serious issue in Ebonyi State South East Nigeria where there is high rate of female student dropout. Despite government efforts in encouraging the people of the state via enlightenment campaigns and provision of learning facilities in schools in the state, high rate of female student dropout in secondary school remains unabated. Based on the foregoing, it is in the interest of this study to x-ray holistically the reasons why female student dropout of secondary school in Ebonyi State and their attendant psychological implications thereby proffering remedial strategies cum solutions to check the incidence based on findings.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the causes of female students drop out in secondary schools in Ebonyi State South East Nigeria and its psychological implications. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Find out the remote causes of female student drop out of secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
2. X-ray the rate of female students’ dropout in Ebonyi State.
3. Find out the psychological consequences of female students drop out of secondary school in the study area.

Significance of the study

The result of this study will be of immense benefits to teachers especially guidance and counselors who need to intensify their effort in identifying indigent female students who are likely to drop out of school. It will be an eye opener to School managers and other stakeholders on the rate of female student drop out of secondary school, its psychological effects so that they can work towards assuaging the incidence. The results of this study will also be of immense benefits to the mass media so that through their journalistic approach the incidence of female student’s dropout and its psychological implications will be brought to limelight for educational managers and policy makers to take steps towards ameliorating the problems. Finally, this research work is meant to provide data for other researchers who may wish to open up another vista of inquiry vis-à-vis female student dropout of secondary school especially in the study area.

Research Questions
1. What are the causes of female students drop out of school in Ebonyi State?
2. At what rate do female students drop out of secondary school in Ebonyi State?
3. What are the psychological effects of female students drop out of secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Methodology
This study employed descriptive research design in which few people that represents the entire group were been studied. The design was established to find out the reasons why females’ students drop out of secondary school in Ebonyi State and its psychological implications. The total population of female students in secondary schools in the three education zones of the study area as the time of this survey was 10,898 (Ebonyi state secondary Education Board, 2016). Since this population is too large and therefore difficult to manage, the researchers using simple random sampling selected a total number of fifteen secondary schools where five were government owned secondary schools and ten were private secondary schools in Abakaliki metropolis. The choice of more private secondary schools to that of government owned schools were occasioned by the preponderance of private schools in the study area. The researcher selected one hundred and forty four (144) respondents from fifteen secondary schools. An 18 item-self constructed questionnaire titled causes and psychological implications of female student drop out of secondary schools questionnaire (CPIFSDSSQ) which adapted likert scale was used. The instrument was validated by two tests experts in measurement and evaluation. A test re-test method was used on the instrument and reliability coefficient of 0.70 was realized. This was considered high enough to ensure the reliability of the instrument. The cut off point for the analysis was 2.5 (i.e., mean = 2.5). Therefore, any item with a mean of 2.5 and above was regarded as agreed while mean below 2.5 was regarded as disagree.

Results
Data obtained following the administration of questionnaire was analyzed using frequency count and mean. The results are presented as follows:

Research question 1
What are the causes of female student dropout of secondary school in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Mean values of some of the causes of female student dropout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA (4)</th>
<th>A (3)</th>
<th>DA (2)</th>
<th>SDA (1)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>RX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Early marriages caused female students to dropout of secondary schools</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mistaken belief that educating a girl child is a waste of resources</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Student pregnancy</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lack of parental support/encouragement</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Female students born of uneducated parents stand a chance of dropping out of secondary school</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research question 2
At what rate do female student dropout of secondary school in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Presentation of research question 2 results (mean values).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SDA</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>RX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>More than 60% of female students drop out of secondary school in Ebonyi State Yearly.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.8g</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less than 60% of female students drop out of secondary school in Ebonyi State annually.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>DX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female students drop out more than male students in Ebonyi state</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male students drop out in secondary school are more than female students in Ebonyi state</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>DX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Less than 20% of female students are drop out of secondary school yearly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>DX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female students are susceptible to school drop out more than male students in Ebonyi state</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research question 3
What are the negative psychological effects of female student’s dropout of secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 3: Presentation of research question 3 results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>SDA</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>RX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Potential female student dropout tend to have lower self-esteem than their more successful classmate</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female students who drop out of secondary school frequently interact with low-achieving peers.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female students who drop out of secondary school are prone to emotional/behavioral disorders</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female students who dropouts of secondary school normally have low self-confidence in handling social and</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Ag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
environmental pressures.

5. Female student drop outs of school are usually withdrawn from the society (timid)  

6. Female students dropout are prone to worry and boredom

Discussion of Findings
The respondents in research question 1: table 1, agreed that early marriages, mistaken belief that educating a girl child is a waste of resources, student pregnancy, poverty, lack of parental support and illiteracy of parents are the major causes of female students drop out of secondary schools in the study area with mean scores of (3.08), (2.76), (3.13), (2.72), and (3.15) respectively. These findings are in tandem with Mohammed (2004) who maintained that a girl may be withdrawn from school if a good marriage prospects shows up. It is also in accordance with the findings of Good Community Committee (1995) and Schewertz (1995) that identified poverty among others as causes of student dropout of school. Alike and Egbochukwu (2009) also agreed that poor socio-economic status of the girls (poverty) imposes considerable limitations upon their continuing stay in school. More so, Owuamanam (2002) opined that some people go into marriage when there is no money to pay school fees or take care of their children’s need.

Also, Adaba (2001) noted that parents do not encourage the education of their female children because of erroneous belief that investing money on the education of female children may end up to be a waste when they get married, lose family’s name and that husband’s family will reap the fruit of their labour. In research question 2, indicates that the respondents agreed that more than 60% female student dropout of school in Ebonyi State with a mean score of 2.86. They however disagree that less than 60% of the student’s dropout of secondary school yearly. This is in line with the view of Schewertz (1995), Onwuamanam (2001) and Adaba (2001) that female students engage in premarital sex and result into unwanted pregnancy. They then graduate into their husband’s room. This also accounts for high rate of uneducated women in Ebonyi state.

Results from research question 3: table 3; revealed that psychologically female student dropout of secondary school in Ebonyi State, Southeast Nigeria makes the dropout to experience low self-esteem than their more successful classmates. This is glaring in the recorded mean score of (3.04).This finding is reflected in the withdrawn nature of uneducated women in the state. Findings equally revealed that female student dropout frequently interact with low achieving peers. This recorded a mean score of (2.59). Furthermore, respondents unanimously concur that female students drop out of school in Ebonyi State have low self-confidence in handling social pressure, timidity, worry and boredom later in life with respective mean values of (2.66), (2.94) and (2.61).

Finally, respondents equally agreed that female students’ dropout of school could lead to emotional insecurity cum behavioural disorders later in life. This recorded a mean score of (2.74).

Conclusion
This study x-rayed the causes, rate and psychological implications of female student’s dropout in secondary school in Ebonyi State. The study upheld that early marriages among
girls in the study area, mistaken belief that educating a girl child is a waste of resources, poverty, unwanted pregnancy, lack of parental support and encouragement, accounts for the high rate of female student’s dropout of secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Southeast Nigeria. The study also reveals that low self-esteem, frequent interaction with low-achieving peers, susceptibility to emotional insecurity cum behavioural disorders, are some of the psychological aftermaths of female student dropout of secondary school in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are therefore made:

(i) More guidance and counselors should be engaged in secondary school in Ebonyi State. This will yield a prolific result in the reduction of the rate of female student dropout of school and the concomitant effects psychologically.

(ii) There should be increased sensitization of the citizens of the state on the need to adopt family planning method and reduction in the rate of polygamy. This will intrinsically and indirectly reduce the rate of female student dropout of school in the area.

(iii) Teachers in both public and private schools should strive to establish a positive and respectful relationships with students especially girls. This will enable them discover student who may be prone to school dropout for proper interventional strategies cum referrals as the need may arise.

(iv) Non-governmental organization should help in the advocacy on the need for supportive nurturing families cum home environment. This will aid eradicate permissive parenting styles which have been linked with higher rates of dropout especially among the girl children.

(v) Government should give free education if possible. This can reduce the rate of female student dropout among the female student that wish to dropout on socio-economic grounds. Also scholarships should be given to outstanding female students in academics by the state government. This can spur others to glue to their studies thereby completing secondary education.

References


