

## ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY- FORWARD

<sup>1</sup>Kabiru Isah Inuwa, <sup>2</sup>Siyudi Muhammad Inuwa

<sup>1,2</sup>Registry Department

Federal College of Education (Technical) Bichi

Email: [kabiruisah783@gmail.com](mailto:kabiruisah783@gmail.com)

Phone NO: 08143456184, 09165076703

### **Abstract**

*The paper examined the challenges of out of school children in Nigeria and their implications for counselling. The report jointly released by UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Education for All Global Monitoring Report on the Number of out of School Children in Sub-Saharan Africa (2015) shows that the number of out of school children and young adolescents is on the increase, reaching 124 million in 2013. The report is more demeaning to sub-Saharan Africa, which constitute 50% of the world out of school children. The study attempted a review of the situation in sub-Saharan Africa as well as its implication for Nigeria and school counsellors. The causes of school dropout in our school system are varied which include poverty, ignorance, poor school environment, bullying, school phobia, academic problem among others. The effects of out-of-school children on parents, governments and the society were also highlighted, which include among others, high crime rate, unemployment, poor condition of service, lack of skills and certificates, low self-esteem and poor physical well-being. Based on the conclusion reached, it is therefore recommended that school counsellors, parents, communities and government should take proactive measures to encourage children and school dropouts to return back to the school.*

**Keywords:** Dropout, Out-of School, UBE programme, Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria, UNESCO.

### **Introduction**

United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2022 stated that: "Nigeria has about 20 million out-of-school children. Globally, the organization submitted that there are 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide (who) are still out of school. The organization also revealed that India, Nigeria and Pakistan have the highest figures for out-of-school children globally" (Raliyat,et.al 2022) Nigerian out-of-school children figure has oscillated between 10.5 million and around 15 million for more than a decade, with the situation growing worse due to the degenerating security situation in the country. The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report (2020) indicated that sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the most children and youth out of school with 98 million children and young people excluded from education. It is also the only region where this number is increasing; out-of-school rates are falling more slowly than the rate at which the school-age population is growing. "The region with the second highest out-of-school population is Central and Southern Asia with

85 million. The top three countries with the most children and youth excluded from education are India, Nigeria and Pakistan." Data compiled by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in partnership with the Global Education Monitoring Report, showed that Nigeria has about 20 million out-of-school children, placing it second after India, a nation with over one billion population. Pakistan comes third. The three countries have the highest figures for out-of-school children globally (Raliyat, et.al (2022) Nigeria is home to about 20 million out-of-school children with 33 per cent from the northeast which is the highest proportion of its school-age children that are out-of-school. This was followed by North-central with 26 per cent; North-west with 25 per cent; South-south, with 24 per cent; South-west with 22; and South-east with 19 per cent. It is imperative to discuss the causes of out-of-school children and the social implications in Nigeria (Leadership paper, 2022). This paper is aimed to examine the factors responsible for the significant rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria, its social implications and suggests the way forward.

### **Concept of Arts**

Art is a visual language whose statement records man's response to a multiplicity of environmental stimuli. Such stimuli can be social, political, cultural or even religious in closed or open societies (Enamhe and Echeta, 2007). The term „arts“ includes but not limited to music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts relates to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by the diverse peoples of this country, and the study and application of the arts to the human environment. Arts refer to the theory and physical expression of creativity found in human societies and cultures.

### **Concept of Social Science**

There are two interpretive meanings given to the term “social science”. One sees it as the field of academic scholarship that explores aspects of human society. The other variant of the concept defines social science as the scientific study of society. A careful deconstruction of these conceptions of social science indicates a convergence of underlying unity in definition, and also points to two important features: as fields of study and as an instrument of social change both of which try to understand man's behavior in relation to other men and to the environment, and secondly, the activities of man as an individual in a group (community, society, nation etc.). In other words, social sciences consist of those fields of study which are concerned with human relationships and interaction with fellow men and with the environment he lives in Mole and Ugwu (2009). In this direction, they are those mental or cultural sciences which deal with the activities of the individual as a member of a group. They are those fields of academic scholarship that explore aspects of human society (Hunt and Colander, 2008). Social science is a major category of academic disciplines concerned with society and the relationships among individuals within a society. It in turn has many branches, each of which is considered a social science.

### **Concept of Education**

The term education can be used in three ways to mean a process, a system and a goal. It is a planned process for purposeful learning (Ukpong, 2014). In Nigeria, education is carried out in three levels: the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. These levels are supposed to groom pupils into realizing their potentials. Nigeria as a developing nation is interested in developmental imperatives whose goals and philosophies are associated with the importance of the system to the needs of the individuals and society. It is stated in the National Policy of Education (NPE) Section 1:7 that, "Educational activity will be centred on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfillment; and efforts will be made to relate education to overall community needs". These goals and philosophies are meant to develop young people into effective citizenships but have proven difficult to achieve. Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves (Meltzoff *et al.*, 2009).

### **Concept of Out of School Children**

According to the United Nations, out-of-school children refer to children who are yet to be enrolled in any formal education, excluding pre-primary education. The age range for out-of school children is 6-11 years. Out-of-school children are school-age children that are supposed to be in schools but are not in schools due to parental and governmental failures to provide accessible quality education for them. Out-of-school children are young children in the age group of 1 to 12 that are roaming the street without access to a functional educational system (Ojelade, *et al.* 2019). Out-of-school children are the children whom the government and the parents have failed to provide quality basic education for. The term "out-of school children" is a non-attendance of the school of school-age children for some established factors.

### **How the Social Sciences Contribute to National Transformation**

Social science is a major propeller to national transformation and a potent instrument for furthering it. This is evident from the activities of arts and social science based research institutes established to act as agencies of development. For instance, the consultancy arm of the African Regional Center for Information (ARCIS) at the University of Ibadan is known for packaging information for several government agencies and companies in Africa. The Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIRO), established in 1955, is also involved in conducting social science researches which are used for both national and industrial transformation. In the universities there are also research institutes such as the Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER) in the University of Ibadan; Economic Development Institute Unit, and the Human Resources Research Unit in University of Lagos; the Institute for Governance and Development in Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma; and Institute of African Studies in University around the world. The mandate of these institutes is to carry out researches on specific Socio-political, cultural, economic, and educational issues. The education generated from such researches serve as veritable ingredients for national transformation. For instance, NISER focuses attention on the range of problems of the Nigerian economy with particular attention to specific

problems such as unemployment in Nigeria, economic development, the public service in national economic planning and the structure of Nigerian imports and its implication for national development. Publications of research institutions are very indispensable tools for policy makers, economic planners, scientists and other researchers alike. Such institutes include: Cocoa Research Institute (CRI), Rubber Research Institute (RRI), Oil Palm Research Institute (OPRI), Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi (FIIRO), Project Development Institute (PRODA), Institute for Medical Research (IMR) etc. Similarly, the Human Resources Research Unit in the University of Lagos is concerned with the social conditions of Nigeria. Its policy oriented research is designed to seek urgent means of practical applications to local problems. For instance, Government publications constitute a mirror of the functions of government and its agencies, instrumentalities and subventions (Mole, 2007). Since government is a two-way political system between the government and the governed, for an effective interaction of the two, the activities of the government are brought to the notice of the governed through government publications. Such publications include: Technical reports, reports of committees and commissions, audio-visual materials etc. Planners and economists rely heavily on statistical reports to plan and project into the future. Inadequate use of statistics could lead to false or wrong planning, e.g. population of Nigeria. Annual Reports of Ministries, Departments and Quasigovernmental Organizations; are used to determine their level of performance. Comparison can be made over the years to determine factors responsible for levels of performance as a guide for improvement.

**Factors or causes of out of school children in Nigeria.** There are many factors responsible for out-of-school children in Nigeria. Some of the factors include; poor funding of education, corruption, poor implementation of Child Rights law, insecurity problems, Lack of political will to address the problems, high rate of poverty, and high fertility rate

**Poor Funding for Education:** Poor funding of education at all levels of education is responsible for a large number of out-of school children in Nigeria. This position is supported by Ogunode & Stephen (2021) who observed that the budgetary allocation for the educational sector is inadequate and below the recommendation of UNESCO 26% for developing countries like Nigeria. The little funds released for the administration of Basic education are diverted by the officials and political office holders. The corrupt practices at the administrative level of basic Education are among the factors that are responsible for the shortage of funds for the administration of Basic education in Nigeria. Shortage of funds for the internal administration of primary schools in the country is caused by the administrative corruption in the administrative offices and ministries in charge of primary school administration. There are many factors responsible for poor funding of education especially the universal Basic education programme in Nigeria. Raliyat,et.al. (2022) observed that 26 of 36 states failed to provide the matching funds needed to access the N33.6 billion funding provided for rehabilitating basic schools and interventions in infrastructural facilities development, capacity building programmes and provision of learning-teaching materials by the federal government through the Universal Basic Education Fund between 2015 and 2021.

**Corruption:** Nigeria is also responsible for out-of-school children. This position is also maintained by Ogunode & Stephen (2021) who submitted that the problem of out-of-school

children in Nigeria is also caused by corruption in the administration of Basic education initiatives. This position is attested to by Ololube (2016) and Ogunode, et.al. (2021) who claimed that Nigerian educational institutions are plagued with corruption and this is hindering development in the sector. Vanguard newspaper, (2020) reported that the sum of N1.83 billion released to Kwara state government in July 2016 as the states share of UBE grant for 2014 and 2015 was returned to the Commission because the Kwara State Government reportedly “diverted” its N1.45bn counterpart fund which it had initially deposited with some banks. Adegboyega (2019) observed that transparency International documented that “66 percent of the money Nigerian governments allocate to education was stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

**Poor Implementation of the Child Right Act:** Another factor responsible for the high rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria is the poor implementation of the child right act which makes it compulsory for all children to go to school. Raliyat, et.al. (2022) submitted that some states have failed to domesticate the Child Rights Act 2003. Over the years, successive governments have adopted programmes to foster free, compulsory child education, culminating in the National Policy on Education 2004 and the passage of the Child Rights Act 2003 which mandates nine years of compulsory schooling for children. Ogunode (2020a) posited that some states government in Nigeria have failed to domesticate the Child Rights Act 2003, most of them are in the North, the region that hosts the largest number of out-of-school children. Nigeria domesticated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a child by passing the Child's Right Act (CRA), but the law is not enforced.

**Insecurity Problems:** The high rate of attacks on educational institutions across the country is also responsible for a large number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Ogunode (2020a) and (Raliyat, et.al. 2022) observed that the spate of attacks on schools and abductions of students in the country have also contributed to the increase in the scourge of children not going to school. Raliyat, Umma, & Aisha, (2022) revealed that the situation had been growing worse due to the degenerating security situation in the country. Ten states are at the top of the log regarding Nigeria's 20 million out-of-school children. Kano State leads the pack while Akwa Ibom, Katsina and Kaduna follow closely. Other states that rank high on the list are Taraba, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara and Bauchi. Most of the states are the state where insecurity is high. For instance, Authorities in North-West, Nigeria had shut down more than 4,000 public primary schools across the state, and over 4,000 public secondary schools were among the closed-down schools. According to him, over 300, 000 to 400,000 thousand students and pupils are at home after the incident of the Chibok school students' kidnap without considering the effects on the internal administration of the school, especially the learners (Sabi, 2021).

**Lack of Political Will to Address Out-of-School Problem:** The lack of political will to develop basic education at the state and local government level is also responsible for the out-of-school children. The state government and local government that are in charge of the administration and management of basic education are not demonstrating any political will to develop the sector. This position is supported by the federal government when she accused some northern state governments of alleged mismanagement of the basic education funds in their state. Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, made allegations

against some state governments. The Minister also observed that the situation was discouraging the federal government's bid to intervene in the educational programme, noting also that the problem with the Almajiri education was that it was wrongly implemented.

**Poor Implementation of the UBE Programme:** The poor implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria is also responsible for the high out of school children. The UBE programme was designed to provide free and compulsory ten-year basic education for all Nigerian children. The policy of Universal Basic Education (UBE) which mandates the government at the state and federal levels to give compulsory, free and quality education to every child of school age has not been fully implemented in Nigeria due to many challenges. Ogunode (2020b) identified the problem militating against the effective implementation of the UBE programme in Nigeria to include: shortage of funds, shortage of infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, corruption, and poor implementation of the Child right act

**High Rate of Poverty:** The high rate of poverty among Nigerians is also responsible for out-of-school children. The rising poverty that forces parents to put children in the labour market and street hawking, and the breakdown in social and family life are some of the causes of the high rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria. This position was reaffirmed by Ogunode (2020a) and Musa (2019) that many Nigerian parents cannot send their wards to school due to the high rate of poverty. Many basic schools in Nigeria pay some fees like examinations and PTA dues. Such fees are handled by households. When family resources are low, a family will have to choose one or two children to attend school while the others stay at home. Older children, orphans, and girls are most likely to be left out. Poverty and parental decision-making supported by cultural practice of the people remain two difficult challenges, which are viewed as common denominators for unequal access to education for the girl-child (Academy for Educational Development, 2002). In addition, Ayoko (2022) observed that the initial decision for a child to attend school and the chances of a child to become educated depend on the attitude, cultural and religious beliefs of the parents or guardian. The present economic situation in Nigeria is seriously affecting parents' readiness to send their children to school, thus, creating an increase in the total number of out-of-school children in Nigeria (Ndanusa, et.al, 2021).

**High Fertility Rate:** The fertility rates of Nigerians are high. Due to religious and cultural factors, many Nigerians have more than one wife and they give birth to more children, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Ogunode, et.al. (2021) observed that another big problem militating effective implementation of primary school education policies is the raising population of children enrolling on primary school education in Nigeria. Educating this high population required a lot of financial commitment to engage human and material resources. The population of Nigeria is rising every day and the cost of educating the huge teeming population is high. NOUN (2012) observed that the structure of Nigeria's population has always shown a large youth base. This is the group that requires education at all levels, and this gives rise to demand in excess of the capacity of education. Akpan (2000) stated that the increasing demand for education has given rise to the demand by parents and their children for educational opportunities. This, however, affects educational planning in Nigeria.

### **Challenges of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria**

The social implications of large out-of-school children in Nigeria include; security challenges, shortage of skills and manpower in future, bad international image, high level of illiteracy, high socio-economic and dependency and child marriage and pregnancy

**Security Challenges:** The high rate of out-of-children in Nigeria has led to insecurity challenges in many parts of the country especially the Northern part of the country. Raliyat,et.al. (2022) cited Rukayat-Garba that “20 million out-of-school children represent a grim future, one characterized by grave socio-economic and security consequences for Nigeria”. According to Raliyat,et.al. (2022), research has it that children who are out of school are often used to perpetrate crime and other ills in society and also observed that this deficiency will affect all aspects of human life as there will be vacancies in several areas that demand skills acquired through education at school. Ndanusa,et.al. (2021) observed that this army of out-of school children poses a potential threat to the society in future if nothing is done to arrest the situation. Evidence shows that virtually all indicted and arrested notorious kidnappers are not well educated. They have either basic education or no education at all. Charity,et.al. (2020) findings showed that children who are out of school are often used to perpetuate crime and other ills in society and children who are out of school are used to commit some crimes. Birdi,et.al. (1997) found that there exists a relationship between participation in required training courses, work based development activities and job satisfaction.

**Shortage of skilled Manpower in the Future:** The large out of school children in Nigeria can lead to a shortage of manpower in the future. When children are not provided with educational opportunities and meaningful skills, it will affect the country in the long run. A World Bank document entitled “Nigeria Development Update (June 2022): The Continuing Urgency of Business Unusual,” revealed that with many children out of school in Nigeria, in years to come, there will be a lack of adequate and appropriate manpower in the future. Ndanusa,et.al. (2021) opined that people with no skill set and lacking basic education are more likely to become a burden to society. Sequel to the employability of the uneducated youths who lack the ability of creativity and innovative ideas to subdue their environment, most of these Nigerians become redundant and unproductive. This is an unhealthy situation for development in any human society. The concomitant effect of a situation like this is an increase in the wave of criminal activities and crimes. Charity,et.al. (2020) did a study and found that children out of school in many areas will lack manpower in the future and manpower will be lacking in some areas in the future. Also out of school children will affect child upbringing as many baby mothers will lack the knowledge to raise their children.

**Bad International image:** The high out-of-school in Nigeria is capable of giving the country a bad international image as a country with a high concentration of children that are not in school. Nigerians in different parts of the world will be faced with questions such as; what is your country doing to address the problem of out-of-school children? In every international conference in education, it is Nigeria`s name that rings bell when it comes to school dropout or children that are out of school.

**High Level of Illiteracy:** The problem of high out-of-school children in Nigeria can lead to high illiteracy levels in future if these children are not provided with educational opportunities. According to Raliyat,et.al. (2022), with Nigerians population of 216 million,

implies that almost 10 per cent of its people are headed for a lifetime of illiteracy. For a country with a literacy rate of just 62.02 per cent, all efforts should be geared towards achieving mass literacy, not nurturing another generation of illiterates. The executive director, of the Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education (CHRICED), submitted that out-of-school children are posing a serious threat to the future of the country.

**High Dependency burden:** Ndanusa,et.al. (2021) observed that one other very serious implication is that it breeds poverty and imposes a heavy dependency burden on well-to-do relatives. To put education within the context of national development is to appreciate its utility as an engine of economic development, productivity, technology, employment opportunities and individual empowerment. The authorities cannot remain lukewarm or nonchalant to the fate of the out-of school population in Nigeria without endangering her prosperity. The role of education is to unleash the potential of the Nigerian youth in creative thinking, and systematic skill-set to participate effectively in the fast-changing global market of ideas.

**Child Marriage and Pregnancy:** Child marriage and pregnancy in Nigeria especially in the Northern part of Nigeria is another negative effect of children being out of school. When the girl child is not engaged in school, the next plan for her is to get married. The high rate of out-of-school girls in Nigeria is among the major factor responsible for child marriage and pregnancy. Charity, Emenike,et.al (2020) found out in their studies that out-of-school syndrome among female children led to early teenage marriages and pregnancies. Omoeva,et.al. (2004) and Nguyen & Wodon (2014) concluded that early marriage as a result of the girl child being out of school has a significant effect on the girl child's education. Hotzet.al. (2005) also pointed out that the impact of teen parenting on maternal education and the negative effects on income declining over time may make teen parents to be more resource constrained during their children's earliest years, a period critical for child development.

### **Modalities that can reduce the rate of dropouts in Nigeria**

All the stakeholders involved in education should work as a consortium to reduce the rate of school dropout in Nigeria. They should develop viable modalities that will ensure effective preventive and re-entry programme for students, which should be focused on the under listed several key areas:

- Developing and implementing systematic, early warning signs to identify students that are at the risk of dropping out of school and apply the necessary preventive measures.
- Creating a more personalized environment that will facilitate teaching and learning.
- Identify through the use of data the incoming students with history of academic problems and apply appropriate intervention strategies.
- Developing and implementing a co-ordinated outreach and a referral system to improve service delivery for the return of dropouts back to the class.
- To establish parent/school liaison to identify at-risk students.
- To develop statewide capacity for implementing public intervention strategy.

To analyze cases of school dropouts data with the mandate to find out why students quit schooling and how to better solve the problems.

### **Conclusion**

This paper discussed the concept of out-of-school children in Nigeria, the factors responsible for large out-of-school children in Nigeria and the social implications. The paper identified causes of out-of-school children to include: poor funding of education, corruption, poor implementation the Child Right act, insecurity problems, lack of political will to address the problems, high rate of poverty, and high fertility rate. The paper also concluded that the social implications of out-of school children include security challenges, a potential shortage of skilled manpower, a bad international image, a high level of illiteracy and high socio-economic and dependency rate.

### Recommendations

In order to find a lasting solution to the problems of out-of-school children in Nigeria, the paper recommended the following:

1. The federal, state and local governments should come up with a national policy to address the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria.
2. Government should build more Basic schools across the country and funding for basic education should be increased.
3. The government should put in place adequate monitoring mechanisms for full implementations of educational policies and programmes designed and formulated to improve the enrolment of children in school.
4. The government can use part of subsidy funds to provide instructional and learning materials for teachers and students across the country.
5. To prevent fund diversions, government should mandate various anti-corruption agencies in the country to monitor the funds allocated for the development of the UBE programme.
6. The government should provide adequate security by addressing the issues causing insecurity problems in the country.
7. The government should provide social security packages for the rural dwellers. This will help in increasing school enrolments of school going age children.
8. The burden of cost of education should be reduced by eliminating school fees, providing cash transfers, and shifting sociocultural norms and beliefs that prevent school enrollment.

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