

CONSEQUENCES OF STUDENT DROP OUT ON NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

This paper explored the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria, examining the underlying causes, the social implications, and proposing potential solutions. The revealed several factors contributing to the prevalence of out-of-school children in Nigeria, including poor funding of education, corruption, ineffective implementation of the Child Rights Act, insecurity, lack of political will, widespread poverty, and high fertility rates. The paper highlighted the social implications of out-of-school children, such as increased security challenges, a future shortage of skilled manpower, a negative international image, high illiteracy rates, and significant socioeconomic and dependency issues. To address these challenges, the paper recommended that the federal, state, and local governments develop targeted programs to reduce the number of out-of-school children. It also emphasized the need for adequate funding of the education sector across all levels of government to ensure accessible and quality education for all children in Nigeria.

Introduction

The issue of student dropout has long been a critical concern for the Nigerian educational system. Despite significant progress in educational reforms and investments in recent years, the challenge of retaining students across all levels of education persists. High dropout rates not only undermine the goals of universal education but also have far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

In Nigeria, student dropout is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. With millions of children and youths exiting the education system prematurely, the Nigeria as nation faces the risk of losing a substantial portion of its future workforce and intellectual capital (Oyekan, 2023). This issue is further exacerbated by disparities in educational access, the quality of teaching, and the availability of resources across different regions, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

The consequences of these dropouts are multi-dimensional. From an economic perspective, high dropout rates contribute to the underdevelopment of human capital, limiting national productivity and innovation. Socially, students who leave school early often face limited opportunities for social mobility and are at a higher risk of unemployment, poverty, and involvement in criminal activities. Culturally, the erosion of knowledge and skills due to declining educational participation poses a threat to Nigeria's rich heritage and intellectual growth.

United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2022 stated revealed that India, Nigeria and Pakistan have the highest figures for out-of-school children globally” (Raliyat, Umma, & Aisha, 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, 2024), 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, Umma, & Aisha (2022).

This study seeks to explore the underlying causes of student dropout in Nigeria and its implications for the educational system. It aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how dropout affects various aspects of national development, including workforce development, social integration, and economic sustainability. By understanding the root causes and consequences of student dropout, the study will contribute to developing effective strategies to reduce dropout rates and foster an inclusive, resilient, and quality-driven education system for all Nigerians.

Literature Review on the Impact of Out-of-School Children on School Enrollment in Nigeria.

Education plays a crucial role in national development, serving as a tool for poverty reduction, empowerment, and social transformation. However, in Nigeria, the high number of out-of-school children (OOSC) poses a significant challenge to achieving universal basic education. This section reviews existing literature on the impact of OOSC on school enrollment in Nigeria, examining key factors, consequences, and potential solutions.

Numerous studies have identified socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors as significant contributors to the OOSC crisis in Nigeria. According to Okeke et al. (2020), poverty is a leading cause, as many families lack the financial resources to afford school fees, uniforms, and supplies despite free education policies. Additionally, Akinyele and Uka (2018) highlight the role of insecurity, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where violent conflicts have led to school closures and displaced millions of children.

Cultural factors, such as early marriage and gender biases, further exacerbate the issue. UNICEF (2020) notes that societal norms often prioritize boys' education over girls', leading to high dropout rates among girls. Similarly, nomadic lifestyles among pastoralists and fishing communities make consistent school attendance difficult, as noted by Adegboye et al. (2019).

Research indicates that children from low-income families are less likely to attend school due to costs associated with uniforms, textbooks, transportation, and other school-related expenses (UNESCO, 2020). Moreover, child labor and family responsibilities force children to work, further limiting their access to education (Montenegro & Patrinos, 2014).

The level of parental education is also closely linked to children's access to education. Studies show that children with parents who have little or no education are more likely to be out of school (UNICEF, 2019). Additionally, parents' employment status affects their ability to support their children's education, as unemployed or low-wage earners may struggle to afford school-related costs or support children in school attendance.

Research indicates that access to education in rural areas is lower compared to urban areas due to geographic isolation and lack of resources (Psaki et al., 2016). Additionally, distance from schools, especially in marginalized communities, discourages enrollment.

Studies highlight that conflict disrupts access to education, leaving children vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and economic hardship (Save the Children, 2020).

Gender disparities in education are a significant contributing factor to out-of-school children. In many countries, especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, girls are less likely to attend school due to cultural norms, early marriages, and societal

expectations around household roles (UN Women, 2018). Studies show that providing targeted interventions to promote girls' education can have a substantial impact on reducing the number of OOSC (Subrahmanian, 2017).

Children with disabilities face exclusion from mainstream education due to physical, social, or policy barriers. Research by UNESCO (2019) demonstrates that inclusive education systems are critical to addressing the needs of children with disabilities, thus reducing the number of out-of-school children.

Educational policies that fail to address the diverse needs of children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, contribute to high numbers of out-of-school children. Poor quality of education, lack of teacher training, and inadequate curriculum relevance hinder students' ability to thrive in the education system (World Bank, 2018).

Ineffective school governance and lack of accountability in education systems can lead to disparities in access to schooling. Studies show that regions with weak educational management and poor administrative support are more likely to face high numbers of out-of-school children (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2016).

In an increasingly digital world, children who lack access to technology face disadvantages in learning opportunities. Research by the Brookings Institution (2019) highlights that digital divides exacerbate the educational gap, especially for children in remote or disadvantaged communities who cannot access online learning resources.

The prevalence of OOSC has profound implications for school enrollment rates in Nigeria. Adedeji and Oluwasola (2021) observe that the high number of OOSC creates a negative cycle, where reduced enrollment undermines the effectiveness of educational policies and programs. This trend disproportionately affects rural and conflict-prone areas, where schools often lack adequate infrastructure and qualified teachers.

Moreover, the existence of OOSC influences the perception of education within communities. According to Okon et al. (2017), communities with high numbers of OOSC are less likely to value formal education, further discouraging enrollment. This situation is compounded by the weak enforcement of compulsory education policies, as documented by Eze and Amadi (2020).

The ripple effects of low school enrollment due to OOSC extend beyond education, impacting Nigeria's socioeconomic development. Studies, such as those by Olanrewaju et al. (2018), indicate that regions with high OOSC rates experience lower literacy levels, higher unemployment rates, and greater social inequality. These issues perpetuate cycles of poverty and insecurity, further straining government resources and hindering national growth.

Several policy interventions have been implemented to address the OOSC crisis and its impact on school enrollment. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program and the Safe Schools Initiative are among the most notable efforts.

However, Ubong and Ibrahim (2019) argue that these programs face challenges related to inadequate funding, corruption, and poor implementation. To improve enrollment rates, scholars emphasize the need for targeted interventions, such as conditional cash transfers, school feeding programs, and the inclusion of marginalized groups in policy design (Ajayi et al., 2020).

Causes of Student Dropouts in Nigeria

Student dropout is a significant issue in Nigeria's education system, affecting both primary and secondary levels, as well as tertiary institutions. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon:

Financial Constraints

Poverty is a significant factor contributing to student dropout rates in Nigeria. Many families living below the poverty line struggle to meet the financial demands associated with education. Finding from the research conducted by Okeke, Adeyemi, & Tijani. (2020) suggest that, these financial burdens include not only school fees but also the cost of essential educational materials such as uniforms, textbooks, writing materials, and other supplies required for a conducive learning environment. Without these, it becomes challenging for students to keep up with their studies, which can result in poor academic performance and eventually lead to dropout.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Learning Resources

Poor infrastructure such as inadequate classrooms, insufficient learning materials, and a lack of basic amenities (e.g., libraries, laboratories, and toilets) discourage students from continuing their education. In support of this view Balogun, (2022) states that poor infrastructure plays a significant role in discouraging students from continuing their education in Nigeria. In many rural and urban areas, schools suffer from a lack of basic facilities and resources, which negatively impacts the quality of education and the overall learning experience. Below are key aspects of how inadequate infrastructure contributing to student dropout:

Overcrowded classrooms lead to ineffective teaching and learning environments, making it difficult for students to stay engaged. Many schools in Nigeria, especially those in rural areas, operate with overcrowded classrooms where the student-to-teacher ratio is disproportionately high. This makes it difficult for teachers to provide personalized attention, leading to lower academic performance and a lack of interest among students.

The absence of essential learning materials such as textbooks, notebooks, writing supplies, and digital resources hampers effective learning. A research conducted by Ajayi, (2021) found that some schools, students are forced to share outdated

textbooks or don't have access to libraries or other reference materials, making it difficult to keep up with the curriculum.

The absence of basic facilities such as adequate toilets, clean water supply, and proper sanitation facilities can significantly affect the health and comfort of students. Schools with poor sanitation facilities are often associated with unhygienic conditions, which can lead to the spread of diseases and discourage both students and teachers from continuing their education.

The lack of investment in school infrastructure can be attributed to limited government funding and poor community involvement in the management of schools. Without collaboration and adequate financial support, schools remain in poor condition, forcing students to either seek better institutions or abandon their education altogether.

Low Quality of Education

Low-quality education due to poorly trained teachers, outdated curricula, and insufficient teaching resources results in students losing interest in their studies. Low-quality education remains a pressing issue in Nigeria, contributing significantly to student dropout rates. Several interrelated factors, including poorly trained teachers, outdated curricula, and insufficient teaching resources, play a role in diminishing the quality of education and negatively impacting students' interest and academic performance.

Nigeria's educational curricula are often outdated and not aligned with current global trends, technological advancements, or the needs of the modern job market. As a result, students are taught concepts and skills that are no longer relevant or practical in real-world applications. The lack of a dynamic curriculum tailored to the evolving economic and social needs discourages student engagement, as they fail to see the value of what they are learning in relation to future opportunities.

Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors

In many rural and marginalized communities, cultural practices such as early marriage, child labor, and gender inequality discourage or limit access to education for children, especially girls. Low-quality education remains a pressing issue in Nigeria, contributing significantly to student dropout rates. Several interrelated factors, including poorly trained teachers, outdated curricula, and insufficient teaching resources, play a role in diminishing the quality of education and negatively impacting students' interest and academic performance.

One of the primary reasons for low-quality education in Nigeria is the insufficient training and professional development of teachers. Many teachers in public schools lack the necessary pedagogical skills and subject-matter expertise, which hampers effective teaching. Inadequate teacher training programs result in educators who are unable to adapt to modern teaching methodologies, especially in subjects

requiring critical thinking, problem-solving, and technological literacy. This limits students' ability to fully grasp and retain knowledge

Poor Health and Safety Issues

Poor healthcare services and rising health concerns, such as malnutrition, communicable diseases, and lack of access to medical support, lead to frequent absenteeism and dropout. Many students suffer from illnesses such as malaria, malnutrition, and waterborne diseases due to inadequate healthcare and poor living conditions. Frequent absenteeism caused by illness often leads to falling behind academically, which can result in dropping out. Stress, anxiety, and depression, often unaddressed in Nigerian schools, negatively impact students' ability to concentrate and thrive academically, pushing them toward disengagement and eventual dropout. Also Armed conflicts, terrorism (such as Boko Haram attacks), banditry, and communal clashes disrupt education systems, especially in northern Nigeria. Students and parents often avoid schools in unsafe areas for fear of abduction, injury, or death.

Corruption as a Cause of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria

Corruption significantly contributes to the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Ogunode and Stephen (2021) emphasized that mismanagement within basic education initiatives aggravates this problem. Corruption in the education sector, as highlighted by Ololube (2016) and Ogunode et al. (2021), includes fund diversion, procurement fraud, and unethical practices like "sex-for-grades" and examination malpractices. Similarly, transparency International reported that 66% of funds allocated to education in Nigeria are stolen, impacting access, quality, and outcomes in education. Across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), corruption risks include resource misallocation, teacher absenteeism, fake qualifications, and corrupt recruitment practices.

Corresponding to transparency International, UNESCO reports that ineffective education systems cost governments globally \$129 billion annually, with Nigeria among the 37 countries where investments in education yield poor learning outcomes. Despite significant spending, poor-quality education persists, delaying meaningful improvements in primary education and leaving millions of children out of school.

Poor Implementation of the Child Rights Act

The poor implementation of the Child Rights Act (CRA) is a significant factor contributing to the high number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Despite the CRA, passed in 2003, mandating nine years of compulsory education, many states, particularly in the northern region, have failed to domesticate or enforce the law.

Raliyat, Umma, and Aisha (2022) noted that some states failed to align their policies with the CRA, hindering its effectiveness.

Although the Act domesticated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a Child, enforcement remains weak. UNICEF reported that as of 2022, five states—Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kano, and Zamfara—have yet to enact their versions of the CRA. This failure to implement and enforce the law has left many children, especially in regions with high out-of-school populations, without access to education.

Lack of Political Will to Address Out-of-School Problem

A lack of political will at the state and local government levels is a major factor contributing to Nigeria's out-of-school children crisis. State and local governments, responsible for basic education, often fail to prioritize its development. The federal government has accused northern state governments of mismanaging basic education funds, which has discouraged further federal interventions. Additionally, the Nomadic Education scheme have suffered from poor implementation and inadequate cooperation from state governments, hindering their goals to increase literacy and equip marginalized populations with skills.

For example, state governments have failed to meet requirements to access N33.6 billion in federal funding for rehabilitating basic schools, as revealed by Punch (2022). This demonstrates a lack of commitment to providing quality mass education, despite its recognition by the United Nations as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for eradicating poverty and driving sustainable development. Poor leadership and neglect of education across all levels of government continue to exacerbate the crisis, delaying progress toward universal basic education in Nigeria

Security Challenges

The high number of out-of-school children in Nigeria contributes significantly to insecurity, particularly in the northern region. With over 20 million children out of school, the socio-economic and security implications are severe. Research cited by Raliyat, Umma, and Aisha (2022) indicates that out-of-school children are frequently exploited to perpetrate crimes and societal ills. This lack of education creates a pool of vulnerable individuals who may be recruited by disgruntled politicians or criminal groups, fueling insecurity such as kidnappings and other violent activities.

Studies show a clear link between low education levels and criminal behavior. Many notorious kidnappers and criminals arrested in Nigeria have limited or no education. Out-of-school children often face rejection, unemployment, and frustration, leading them to engage in criminal and social vices. These outcomes not only affect individuals but also burden society, resulting in significant economic

losses in terms of productivity, tax revenues, and wages over their lifetimes. Ultimately, the high dropout rate hampers Nigeria's economic development and technological advancement.

Poor funding

Poor funding is a major factor contributing to the high number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Studies, including those by Ogunode and Stephen (2021), reveal that budgetary allocations for education in Nigeria are far below UNESCO's recommended 26% for developing countries. Corruption further exacerbates this issue, as funds allocated for basic education are often diverted by officials. This has led to insufficient resources for primary school administration and universal basic education programs.

Raliyat, Umma, and Aisha (2022) highlighted that 26 of Nigeria's 36 states failed to provide matching funds to access N33.6 billion allocated for improving basic education infrastructure and teaching resources between 2015 and 2021. Ogunode (2020a) noted that Nigeria's persistent underinvestment in education has hindered its development. For instance, in 2022, only 7.9% of the national budget was allocated to education—far below the recommended threshold. Historical allocations between 2011 and 2022 were consistently below 11%, with a steady decline from 10.7% in 2015 to just 5.68% in 2021. These inadequate investments have resulted in poor infrastructure, limited teacher support, and insufficient learning materials, undermining the quality of education nationwide.

Consequences of Student Dropout on the Nigerian Educational System

Reduced Literacy Levels

High dropout rates significantly lower literacy levels across Nigeria, creating a widespread barrier to achieving universal basic education and advancing the overall educational system. Findings from the study conducted by Adedeji, & Oluwasola (2021) shows that When students leave school prematurely, they miss essential foundational knowledge and skills, such as reading, writing, and critical thinking, which are vital for personal and societal development. This deficiency perpetuates a cycle of illiteracy, particularly in marginalized communities, where access to education is already limited (Balogun, 2022).

According to Oyekan, Ayorinde, & Adenuga, (2023) the impact extends beyond individual students to the broader educational system. Low literacy rates diminish the effectiveness of educational programs and policies designed to improve learning outcomes. For example, initiatives targeting advanced education, such as vocational training or tertiary education, often rely on a literate population as a foundation. When this is lacking, the pipeline of skilled and knowledgeable individuals needed to sustain these programs is weakened, ultimately stunting the country's development. Furthermore, low literacy levels reduce the ability of

citizens to participate actively in democratic processes, economic activities, and social development. It limits access to information, hinders problem-solving, and increases dependency on external support. Consequently, the high dropout rate not only compromises the quality and effectiveness of the educational system but also exacerbates social inequalities and hinders the nation's overall progress toward sustainable development goals.

Wasted Resources

When students drop out, the investments made in education, such as infrastructure, teacher training, and learning materials, are rendered ineffective, as the intended benefits fail to materialize. Educational infrastructure, including school buildings, classrooms, and facilities, is designed to accommodate and support a specific number of students. When dropout rates rise, these facilities become underutilized or even abandoned in extreme cases, resulting in a misallocation of resources and wasted public funds.

Save the Children International (SCI). (2023) advocate teacher training programs, which aim to equip educators with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver quality education, also lose their impact when students are not retained in schools. Trained teachers face diminished job satisfaction and morale when classrooms are empty or when their efforts do not translate into measurable educational outcomes due to high dropout rates. This can lead to reduced enthusiasm for teaching and a decline in the overall quality of instruction.

Similarly, learning materials, such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and digital tools, go unused or underutilized when dropout rates are high. These materials often represent a significant portion of educational budgets and are intended to enhance learning experiences. When students leave school prematurely, these resources fail to fulfill their purpose, creating a gap between investment and outcomes.

Moreover, the wastage of these investments undermines public and donor confidence in the education system, potentially reducing future funding opportunities. It also stalls progress in national and international educational goals, such as achieving universal basic education or improving literacy and numeracy rates. In essence, the high dropout rates not only represent a loss for individual students but also a substantial setback for the broader educational ecosystem and society as a whole.

Overburdened System

Student dropouts place a significant strain on the educational system by disrupting planning, resource allocation, and overall efficiency. Effective educational planning relies on accurate projections of student enrollment and retention to ensure that resources, such as funding, infrastructure, and personnel, are allocated appropriately. High dropout rates introduce uncertainty, making it difficult for

policymakers and school administrators to develop accurate budgets and implement long-term strategies.

For instance, schools are designed with specific teacher-student ratios in mind to ensure effective instruction and classroom management. When dropout rates increase, these ratios are skewed, leading to an underutilization of teaching staff in some areas while overburdening others. Teachers assigned to classrooms with declining student numbers may find their roles diminished, which can affect morale and productivity. Conversely, areas with high enrollment due to migration or other factors may experience overcrowded classrooms because resources have been misallocated to areas with declining student populations.

The disruption caused by dropouts also extends to the management of physical resources. Infrastructure, such as classrooms and learning facilities, may be overbuilt in regions with high dropout rates, leading to wasted space and maintenance costs for unused facilities. Conversely, in areas where dropouts result in uneven enrollment, existing resources might become strained, with schools struggling to accommodate unexpected surges in student numbers.

Additionally, dropout rates can complicate the implementation of government and donor-funded education programs. Many of these programs are performance-based, with funding linked to metrics such as enrollment and retention rates. High dropout rates can jeopardize the ability of schools to meet these targets, potentially resulting in reduced funding and further resource shortages.

In summary, student dropouts disrupt the equilibrium of the educational system by creating inefficiencies in resource allocation and planning, undermining the ability of schools to provide equitable and effective education. This ripple effect hampers the system's capacity to deliver quality education and achieve broader developmental goals

Lower National Academic Performance

A high number of student dropouts significantly diminishes the overall performance and ranking of the Nigerian educational system, negatively impacting the country's global education reputation. Internationally, education systems are often evaluated based on key performance indicators such as enrollment rates, retention rates, literacy levels, and the quality of learning outcomes. Okoliko, & Adebayo, (2025) observed that a high dropout rate directly lowers these metrics, portraying an image of systemic inefficiency and underperformance. This diminished reputation has far-reaching consequences. On a global scale, Nigeria's educational system may be perceived as inadequate, which can deter international partnerships, collaborations, and investments in the education sector. For example, global organizations and donor agencies may be reluctant to fund educational initiatives in a system that struggles to retain students and demonstrate tangible

progress. This hesitancy exacerbates the challenges of underfunding, leaving the sector ill-equipped to address the underlying causes of dropouts.

Furthermore, the high dropout rate reduces Nigeria's competitiveness in the global arena of education. Countries with robust educational systems attract international students, researchers, and partnerships, contributing to their economic and intellectual growth. Nigeria's struggle with dropouts hinders its ability to participate effectively in this global exchange of knowledge and innovation. On a domestic level, the high dropout rate undermines public confidence in the educational system. Parents and guardians may question the value of education if they perceive it as failing to deliver consistent results. This skepticism can discourage enrollment, further perpetuating the cycle of dropouts and poor performance.

Moreover, the long-term impact on the workforce and national development is profound. A poorly ranked educational system produces fewer skilled graduates, limiting the country's ability to compete in the global economy. This deficiency affects industries reliant on high-quality human capital, such as technology, healthcare, and engineering, which are critical to sustainable development.

In summary, the high dropout rate not only tarnishes Nigeria's global education reputation but also creates a cascading effect that limits international support, reduces competitiveness, and hinders national development. Addressing this issue is crucial for restoring confidence in the system and positioning Nigeria as a leader in education and innovation.

Erosion of Human Capital Development

Student dropouts significantly hinder the development of a skilled and educated workforce, which has profound implications for economic growth and Nigeria's global competitiveness. A robust and educated workforce is the backbone of any thriving economy, contributing to innovation, productivity, and sustainable development. However, high dropout rates undermine these outcomes in several critical ways. Student dropouts significantly hinder the development of a skilled and educated workforce, which has profound implications for economic growth and Nigeria's global competitiveness. A robust and educated workforce is the backbone of any thriving economy, contributing to innovation, productivity, and sustainable development. However, high dropout rates undermine these outcomes in several critical ways ie Reduction in Human Capital, Missed Opportunities for Innovation, and Social Instability and Economic Consequences.

Encouragement of Social Vices

Student dropouts are significantly more likely to engage in criminal activities and societal vices, which not only disrupt social stability but also exacerbate challenges for the educational system and society at large. This cycle of disruption and

insecurity creates a cascade of adverse effects, undermining efforts to build a safe and prosperous nation. Without access to education and the opportunities it provides, many dropouts face limited prospects for legitimate employment. This economic vulnerability often pushes them toward criminal activities as a means of survival. Youths who drop out of school may be more susceptible to recruitment by criminal organizations, gangs, or insurgent groups, especially in regions already plagued by insecurity, such as parts of Northern Nigeria. As dropouts engage in vices like substance abuse, theft, or violent behavior, communities become fragmented and trust among citizens diminishes. This erosion of social cohesion creates an environment where collective efforts to improve educational outcomes are undermined, as individuals prioritize personal safety over communal development. Crime and insecurity stemming from dropouts deter foreign investment and economic development, as businesses are reluctant to operate in unstable environments. This lack of economic activity further limits job creation and economic opportunities, exacerbating the conditions that lead to school dropouts in the first place.

Conclusions

This paper explores the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria, examining the factors contributing to the high number of out-of-school children and the social implications associated with this crisis. Key causes identified include poor funding for education, corruption, inadequate implementation of the Child Rights Act, insecurity, a lack of political will to address the issue, high poverty rates, and a high fertility rate.

The paper concludes that the social implications of out-of-school children are significant, including increased security challenges, a potential shortage of skilled manpower, a negative international image, a high level of illiteracy, and a high socio-economic dependency rate. These factors collectively hinder Nigeria's development and contribute to long-term societal challenges.

Recommendations

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

Targeted Poverty Alleviation Programs: Implement conditional cash transfers for families, ensuring children attend school. Expand school feeding programs to incentivize attendance and reduce household financial burdens.

Strengthening Security in Conflict Zones: Establish safe school zones and increase funding for the Safe Schools Initiative. Deploy security forces to protect vulnerable schools and create trauma-informed education programs for displaced children.

Cultural Sensitization Campaigns: Partner with community leaders, religious groups, and NGOs to challenge harmful cultural norms and advocate for equal access to education for boys and girls.

Improved Policy Implementation and Monitoring: Ensure strict enforcement of the Universal Basic Education Act through regular audits, increased funding, and accountability mechanisms at all government levels.

Infrastructure Development: Invest in building and rehabilitating schools, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas. Provide adequate teaching resources, sanitation facilities, and specialized education for nomadic populations and children with disabilities.

Flexible and Inclusive Education Models: Introduce mobile schools, e-learning platforms, and community-based learning centers tailored to the needs of nomadic groups and displaced populations.

Partnerships with Stakeholders: Collaborate with international organizations, private sectors, and civil society groups to mobilize resources and share best practices for tackling the OOSC crisis.

Legislation Against Child Labor and Early Marriage: Strengthen laws against child labor and early marriage, ensuring enforcement to keep children in school.

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