

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF DROP-OUT AMONG JUNIOR SECONDARY

SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IKPOBA-OKHA LGA, EDO STATE.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Education plays a fundamental role in fostering personal development and driving national progress. It is universally recognized as the most powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty, promoting equality, and building a skilled workforce. In Nigeria, the government has committed to improving access to quality education for all children through policies like the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, designed to offer free and compulsory education up to the junior secondary school level. Despite these efforts, school dropout remains a persistent and significant challenge, particularly in rural areas and underdeveloped regions like Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA) in Edo State. School dropout refers to the phenomenon where students disengage from the educational system before completing the prescribed educational stages. The problem is multifaceted, with numerous interrelated factors that contribute to the high rates of dropout observed among junior secondary school students. These factors are not only personal but are deeply embedded in the socio-economic, cultural, and educational contexts of the region. Economic hardship stands as one of the leading causes of school dropout in Nigeria. For many families in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, poverty is a significant barrier to continuing education. Students from low-income households often face difficulties in paying school fees, purchasing textbooks and uniforms, and meeting other essential school-related expenses. Consequently, many students are compelled to abandon their education in search of work to support their families. According to Adeleke and Ogunsanya (2020), economic hardship is one of the primary drivers of school dropout in Nigerian communities, where families prioritize immediate survival over long-term educational goals.

In addition to financial barriers, family-related issues play a significant role in student dropout. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies are particularly prevalent among female students in rural areas. Oyekan (2017) emphasizes that early marriage, especially in traditional Nigerian communities, often forces girls out of school to assume domestic responsibilities and

motherhood. Similarly, teenage pregnancies contribute to increased dropout rates, as students, particularly girls, struggle to balance academic responsibilities with child-rearing duties. This cultural practice is closely linked to deep-rooted gender norms and socio-economic conditions that limit girls' educational opportunities. Another critical factor contributing to school dropout is poor academic performance. Students who struggle academically may lose motivation and feel discouraged, believing they are unable to meet the academic demands of the school system. Adebayo and Oyeade (2019) suggest that academic failure often leads to disengagement from school, as students perceive their efforts as futile. Students experiencing poor academic performance may also feel marginalized by their peers, leading them to drop out rather than face the stigma of failure. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in students who encounter learning difficulties and lack the support systems to overcome these challenges.

Peer pressure and involvement in social vices, including drug abuse, truancy, and delinquency, further exacerbate the dropout problem. Edewor and Ifijeh (2019) argue that the social environment of students plays a significant role in influencing their educational outcomes. Peer pressure can encourage students to abandon school in favor of participating in negative activities that lead them away from academic success. Furthermore, in a community where young people are exposed to limited career opportunities, the temptation to join peer groups engaged in illicit activities becomes an alluring escape for students frustrated with their educational experience. The effects of school dropout are long-lasting and detrimental. Students who drop out of school face limited employment opportunities, resulting in lower lifetime earnings and the perpetuation of poverty. These individuals often experience social isolation and a diminished quality of life, as they lack the skills and qualifications needed to secure stable, well-paying jobs (Eboh, 2018). The negative impact is not confined to the students alone; it extends to their families and the community at large.

The loss of human capital due to dropouts impedes economic growth and national development. Okunlola (2020) highlights the socio-economic consequences of school dropout, noting that communities with high dropout rates tend to have lower levels of literacy, higher unemployment rates, and limited economic mobility. Furthermore, the dropout crisis negatively affects the educational system itself. When students drop out, it strains the resources of the education system, which is already struggling with inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and undertrained educators. The loss of students results in increased class sizes, further diminishing the quality of education available to those who remain in the system. Ogunyemi and Okunlola (2021) emphasize that improving retention rates in schools is crucial for enhancing the overall quality of education in Nigeria, especially in areas with high dropout rates. Despite the recognition of the dropout issue and several interventions aimed at addressing it, such as scholarship programs, mentorship initiatives, and awareness

campaigns, the problem persists. These interventions often fail to reach all students at risk of dropping out, and in many cases, they do not address the root causes of the issue. There is a need for more targeted, context-specific strategies that consider the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing school dropout in Ikpoba-Okha LGA. This study seeks to investigate the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. By examining the underlying reasons for dropout and assessing its impacts, the research will provide valuable insights that can inform policy and intervention strategies aimed at reducing dropout rates in the region. The study will also propose recommendations for improving school retention and ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have the opportunity to complete their education and achieve their full potential.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the Nigerian government's efforts to improve access to education through policies like the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, school dropout remains a persistent challenge, particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions such as Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA) in Edo State. This issue is multifaceted, with various socio-economic, cultural, and educational factors contributing to the high rates of dropout observed among junior secondary school students. Economic hardship is a key driver of school dropout in Nigeria, especially for students from low-income families. Many students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA face difficulties in paying school fees, purchasing textbooks and uniforms, and covering other essential school-related costs. Consequently, these students often abandon their education in search of work to support their families (Adeleke & Ogunsanya, 2020).

In addition to financial constraints, family-related issues such as early marriages and teenage pregnancies disproportionately affect female students in rural areas, contributing to the dropout problem. Early marriage, particularly in traditional Nigerian communities, forces girls to leave school in order to assume domestic roles and responsibilities. Similarly, teenage pregnancies further disrupt the educational paths of female students, who often struggle to balance academic commitments with child-rearing duties. Oyekan (2017) highlights that these socio-cultural practices, tied to gender norms and socio-economic conditions, limit girls' educational opportunities and increase their risk of dropping out.

Poor academic performance also plays a significant role in dropout rates. Students who struggle academically may lose motivation, leading to disengagement from school as they perceive their efforts as futile. Adebayo and Oyebade (2019) assert that academic failure often results in a

lack of self-confidence, which may further discourage students from continuing their education. The stigma of failure, particularly for students who encounter learning difficulties, can drive them to abandon school, as they feel marginalized by their peers.

Furthermore, peer pressure and involvement in social vices such as drug abuse, truancy, and delinquency exacerbate the dropout crisis. Edewor and Ifijeh (2019) argue that the social environment of students, including peer influences, significantly shapes their educational outcomes. Peer pressure can encourage students to leave school and engage in negative activities, particularly in communities where career opportunities are limited. In Ikpoba-Okha LGA, the lack of viable options for youth employment exacerbates this issue, leading students to turn to peer groups engaged in illicit activities.

The consequences of school dropout are far-reaching and detrimental, not only to the students but also to their families and the broader community. Dropped-out students often face limited employment opportunities, leading to lower lifetime earnings and the perpetuation of poverty (Eboh, 2018). The negative effects extend to communities, as high dropout rates hinder economic growth, reduce literacy levels, and increase unemployment (Okunlola, 2020). Moreover, the education system is impacted, with increased dropout rates leading to strained resources, larger class sizes, and a decline in the overall quality of education. Ogunyemi and Okunlola (2021) emphasize that improving school retention is critical to enhancing the quality of education and fostering national development.

Despite various interventions, such as scholarship programs, mentorship initiatives, and awareness campaigns, the dropout problem persists. These programs often fail to reach all at-risk students and do not adequately address the underlying socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to dropout. There is a clear need for more targeted, context-specific interventions that consider the unique challenges faced by students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA. This study seeks to investigate the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. By examining the socio-economic, cultural, and educational factors contributing to dropout, this research will provide valuable insights to inform more effective policy and intervention strategies aimed at reducing dropout rates in the region. Additionally, the study will propose recommendations to enhance student retention and ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, can complete their education and reach their full potential.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, Edo State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the socio-economic factors contributing to school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, with a focus on economic hardship, family background, and poverty.
2. Assess the cultural and societal influences on school dropout, including early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and gender-related challenges, particularly among female students.
3. Investigate the academic-related factors that contribute to student dropout, such as poor academic performance, learning difficulties, and lack of academic support.
4. Explore the role of peer pressure and social vices (including drug abuse and truancy) in the decision of students to leave school prematurely.
5. Evaluate the consequences of school dropout on individual students, their families, and the broader community, with a focus on socio-economic and educational impacts.
6. Propose recommendations for targeted interventions and strategies to reduce school dropout rates, enhance student retention, and improve educational outcomes in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the socio-economic factors contributing to school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State?
2. How do cultural and societal influences, such as early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and gender-related challenges, affect school dropout among female students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA?
3. What is the relationship between poor academic performance and school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA?
4. To what extent do peer pressure and involvement in social vices (such as drug abuse and truancy) contribute to the dropout rates among students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA?
5. What are the socio-economic and educational consequences of school dropout on individual students, their families, and the wider community in Ikpoba-Okha LGA?

6. What strategies and interventions can be proposed to reduce school dropout rates and improve student retention in Ikpoba-Okha LGA?

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

In order to address the research questions and objectives of this study, the following null hypotheses have been formulated. These hypotheses aim to test the relationships between various socio-economic, cultural, academic, and environmental factors and the school dropout rates among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA. By testing these hypotheses, the study will assess whether these factors significantly contribute to student dropout and whether targeted interventions can help improve student retention.

1. There is no significant relationship between socio-economic factors (such as poverty, family income, and household expenses) and school dropout rates among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.
2. Cultural and societal influences, including early marriages and teenage pregnancies, do not significantly contribute to school dropout rates among female students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.
3. Poor academic performance does not significantly predict school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.
4. Peer pressure and involvement in social vices (such as drug abuse and truancy) do not have a significant effect on the likelihood of school dropout among students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.
5. School dropout does not have significant socio-economic and educational consequences for students, their families, and the wider community in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.
6. Targeted interventions and strategies do not significantly reduce school dropout rates or improve student retention in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on investigating the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, Nigeria. The study will examine various socio-economic, cultural, academic, and environmental factors that contribute to school dropout rates in the region. Specifically, it will address factors such as poverty, family income, early marriages, teenage pregnancies, poor academic performance, peer pressure, and involvement in social vices.

The population for this study comprises junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, with a focus on those in public schools within the area. The study will be conducted within the 2024/2025 academic year, and data will be collected from a selected sample of students in the region. The study is limited to Ikpoba-Okha LGA due to its unique socio-economic challenges and high rates of school dropout observed in the area. Other regions within Edo State may exhibit different patterns of school dropout, and therefore, the findings of this study are specific to Ikpoba-Okha LGA and may not be directly applicable to other regions. The study will examine the impact of socio-economic conditions, cultural influences, academic performance, and peer pressure on school dropout rates. Interventions aimed at reducing dropout rates will also be explored, though the study will not delve into the broader educational policy implications at the state or national level.

1.7 Definition of Research Concepts

1. School Dropout

School dropout refers to the phenomenon where students disengage from the educational system before completing the prescribed educational stages. It specifically refers to students who leave school before obtaining a Junior Secondary School Certificate, which typically marks the completion of the junior secondary level of education. Factors contributing to dropout include economic hardship, academic failure, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and social influences like peer pressure.

2. Socio-Economic Factors

Socio-economic factors encompass the financial and social conditions in which a student lives, which can significantly impact their ability to remain in school. These factors include family income, the financial status of the household, access to resources like textbooks and uniforms, and the economic demands placed on the student (e.g., the need to work to support the family). In the context of this study, socio-economic factors are considered a major determinant in whether students drop out of school.

3. Cultural Influences

Cultural influences refer to traditional practices and societal norms that can shape an individual's behavior, attitudes, and decisions. In this study, cultural factors such as early marriages and teenage pregnancies are seen as contributing factors to school dropout, especially among female students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA. These cultural practices often limit

educational opportunities for girls and result in their withdrawal from school to take on domestic roles or motherhood.

4. Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to the level of success that a student achieves in their educational endeavors, typically measured by grades, test scores, and teacher assessments. Poor academic performance can lead to feelings of inadequacy, lack of motivation, and eventual disengagement from school. This study examines how students' struggles with their studies contribute to the decision to drop out.

5. Peer Pressure

Peer pressure refers to the influence exerted by a student's peers to encourage or discourage certain behaviors or actions. In the context of school dropout, peer pressure can manifest in students' involvement in social vices such as drug abuse, truancy, and delinquency, which may lead to abandoning their education. The study investigates the impact of peer dynamics on students' decisions to leave school.

6. Social Vices

Social vices refer to behaviors that are deemed harmful to society, such as drug abuse, truancy, and delinquency. These activities can distract students from their educational goals and often contribute to dropping out of school. This study explores how involvement in such vices correlates with the likelihood of students leaving school.

7. Interventions

Interventions refer to actions or programs implemented to address and mitigate the issue of school dropout. These may include scholarship schemes, mentorship programs, awareness campaigns, or counseling services aimed at reducing dropout rates and improving retention. This study examines the effectiveness of such interventions in reducing school dropout rates in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA), Edo State. The chapter focuses on understanding the causes, effects, and existing interventions aimed at reducing school dropout rates. The review also highlights the theoretical frameworks that guide this study. The aim is to identify and discuss various socio-economic, cultural, and academic factors that contribute to school dropout and examine how these factors are interrelated. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the importance of context-specific interventions to reduce dropout rates in rural and underdeveloped regions such as Ikpoba-Okha.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by two theories: Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura (1986) and Social Capital Theory by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). These theories provide a comprehensive lens through which the causes and effects of school dropout can be understood, particularly in the context of socio-economic disparities and cultural norms.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) postulates that learning occurs through a dynamic interaction between an individual's personal characteristics, behaviors, and the environment (Bandura, 1986). This theory is particularly relevant in understanding school dropout as it emphasizes the role of social interactions and the environment in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors toward education.

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations, is especially relevant in the context of academic failure and dropout. Students who lack self-efficacy may feel incapable of overcoming academic challenges, leading to disengagement and ultimately dropout (Schunk, 2012). In the case of school dropout, students who struggle with academic performance, peer pressure, or financial stress may internalize feelings of inadequacy, leading them to abandon school in favor of alternative forms of livelihood or involvement in social vices (Zimmerman, 2000). Recent studies have highlighted the continued relevance of SCT in understanding school dropout. According to Williams and Hemsley-Brown (2020), students who perceive education as a pathway to success and believe they can overcome barriers are more likely to stay in school. On the other hand, those with low

self-efficacy are more prone to dropout, as they see education as unachievable or irrelevant. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving students' self-efficacy could help reduce dropout rates by fostering positive attitudes toward education and increasing motivation to persist through challenges.

Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, as developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986), focuses on the importance of social networks and relationships in influencing an individual's opportunities and outcomes. Bourdieu's concept of social capital refers to the resources embedded in social networks that can be used to access opportunities, such as educational achievement and employment. Social capital encompasses the trust, norms, and reciprocal relationships within communities that facilitate cooperative behavior and resource sharing. In the context of school dropout, social capital is crucial because students from families or communities with limited social networks may lack the support systems needed to navigate academic challenges. For example, parents with low levels of education, limited professional networks, or restricted access to economic resources may struggle to provide their children with the necessary educational support, resulting in higher dropout rates. According to Putnam (2000), communities with higher levels of social capital are more likely to experience better educational outcomes, as strong social ties provide a safety net for students facing difficulties. More recent research has reinforced the importance of social capital in educational persistence. For instance, Morrow (2019) argues that students from communities with strong social capital are less likely to drop out of school because they have access to mentors, role models, and supportive adults who can guide them through the academic process. In contrast, students from disadvantaged backgrounds may experience isolation and lack the social capital to persist in school, thus increasing the likelihood of dropping out. This theory underscores the need for interventions that build social capital within communities, such as mentorship programs, parent-school partnerships, and community-based initiatives aimed at fostering supportive educational environments.

2.3 Causes of School Dropout

The causes of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Nigeria are complex and multi-faceted. They stem from a combination of socio-economic, cultural, academic, and personal factors, many of which are interrelated.

Socio-Economic Factors

One of the primary causes of school dropout in Nigeria is economic hardship, which affects students' ability to pay for school-related expenses such as tuition fees, uniforms, textbooks, and other essential learning materials. According to Adebayo and Oyebade (2019), students from low-income households often face significant barriers in accessing education, leading to high dropout rates. In Ikpoba-Okha LGA, many students drop out because their families prioritize basic survival needs over education. This is especially true in rural areas where families may rely on their children for additional household income.

The financial stress faced by families can create a situation where students are forced to leave school to take up part-time or full-time work in order to support their families (Adeleke & Ogunsanya, 2020). Scholarship programs and financial assistance can help alleviate some of these pressures, but they are often insufficient in rural areas.

Cultural and Gender-related Factors

Cultural norms and practices also play a significant role in school dropout, particularly for female students. Early marriage and teenage pregnancy are widespread in rural areas, which often force young girls out of school (Oyekan, 2017). These cultural practices are linked to gender norms that prioritize marriage and domestic responsibilities over education. Female students who become pregnant during their teenage years are often unable to balance academic responsibilities with the demands of motherhood, leading to high dropout rates.

Edewor and Ifijeh (2019) argue that these cultural practices are deeply embedded in the socio-economic structure of rural Nigerian communities, where traditional gender roles limit educational opportunities for girls. Similarly, studies by Oyekan (2017) have shown that gendered expectations, such as the pressure for girls to marry early, contribute significantly to school dropout in these areas.

Academic and Psychological Factors

Academic failure is another critical factor contributing to school dropout. Students who struggle academically may experience feelings of frustration, low self-esteem, and a lack of motivation to continue their studies. According to Adebayo and Oyebade (2019), students who are unable to keep up with the academic demands of the school system are more likely to disengage and drop out. These students often perceive academic failure as a personal inadequacy and see no value in continuing their education.

The concept of self-efficacy from Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) is particularly relevant here. Students who believe they cannot succeed academically are more likely to give up on their studies. Furthermore, students who experience psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, or peer pressure, may find it difficult to concentrate on their studies, leading to poor academic performance and eventual dropout.

Peer Pressure and Social Environment

Peer pressure and involvement in social vices also play a role in school dropout. In rural areas like Ikpoba-Okha, students may face pressure from peers to participate in activities such as drug abuse, truancy, and delinquency, all of which detract from their focus on education. According to Edewor and Ifijeh (2019), peer pressure in these communities often leads students to abandon their education in favor of engaging in illicit or risky behaviors. This is particularly evident in environments with limited social support or career opportunities, where young people may seek solace in peer groups involved in negative activities.

2.4 Effects of School Dropout

The consequences of school dropout extend beyond the individuals involved and have far-reaching implications for their families, communities, and society as a whole.

Individual Consequences

For individuals, the most immediate consequence of school dropout is limited access to employment opportunities. Students who leave school without completing their education face difficulties in securing stable jobs, often settling for low-paying, unskilled work (Eboh, 2018). The lack of education also limits opportunities for personal growth, as individuals without formal qualifications are less likely to pursue further education or vocational training. Consequently, dropouts may experience lower lifetime earnings, reduced job satisfaction, and social isolation.

Societal and Economic Consequences

On a larger scale, the effects of school dropout are detrimental to both communities and society. Okunlola (2020) highlights that communities with high dropout rates tend to have lower literacy levels, higher unemployment rates, and limited economic mobility. School dropouts contribute to a reduced skilled workforce, which hampers national economic development. Additionally, the loss of human capital affects the overall development of the education system, as it strains resources and increases class sizes, further diminishing the quality of education available to students who remain in school.

2.5 Interventions and Strategies to Reduce School Dropout

Efforts to address the school dropout crisis in Nigeria have focused on a variety of interventions aimed at tackling the root causes and mitigating their effects. One of the primary approaches is financial assistance for students from low-income families. Programs such as scholarships, bursaries, and school feeding programs have been introduced to alleviate the financial burdens that many students face. These interventions aim to reduce the need for students to abandon their studies due to an inability to pay school fees or cover the costs of school supplies. However, while these interventions have had some success, their reach has often been limited, and they do not always address the underlying systemic issues that perpetuate poverty in these communities. Another approach is to promote awareness about the importance of education and its long-term benefits for both individuals and the community. Awareness campaigns have been used to challenge cultural norms, particularly those that contribute to early marriage and teenage pregnancies, which are significant factors in the dropout rates of female students. Oyekan (2017) emphasizes that the involvement of local leaders and community-based organizations can help change perceptions about education and encourage families to support the education of girls. This kind of community mobilization can foster a culture of education that prioritizes schooling over traditional practices like early marriage. Furthermore, mentorship and counseling programs have been established in some schools to provide emotional and psychological support to students, especially those experiencing academic difficulties or personal challenges. Edewor and Ifijeh (2019) note that peer mentorship can have a positive impact on students, as it provides a sense of belonging and reduces the feelings of isolation that often accompany academic failure. By providing social and emotional support, these programs help students build self-confidence and resilience, which can ultimately improve their academic performance and reduce dropout rates.

In addition to these strategies, the role of school infrastructure cannot be overlooked. Many schools in rural areas of Nigeria suffer from inadequate facilities, which can make the learning environment less conducive to success. Programs that focus on improving school infrastructure, such as providing access to clean water, better classrooms, and learning materials, are essential in addressing the broader issues contributing to school dropout. Ogunyemi and Okunlola (2021) emphasize that a well-equipped learning environment is crucial for student engagement and retention.

2.6 The Role of Social Workers in Preventing School Dropout

Social workers play a crucial role in addressing the issue of school dropout. Their involvement is particularly significant in providing support to students facing multiple challenges, such as

economic hardship, family issues, and academic difficulties. Social workers can act as intermediaries between students, families, and the school system, ensuring that students receive the necessary support to remain in school. They can also provide counseling and advocacy services to help students overcome the personal and family-related obstacles that contribute to dropout.

In communities like Ikpoba-Okha LGA, where there are significant socio-economic challenges, social workers can help families navigate available support systems, such as government aid programs, school financial assistance, and community resources. They can also advocate for policy changes that address the root causes of dropout, including inadequate funding for education, gender disparities, and cultural barriers to education. Furthermore, social workers can collaborate with schools to design programs that promote inclusivity and reduce the stigma associated with academic failure. By creating safe spaces for students to discuss their challenges and by developing tailored interventions, social workers can help reduce the likelihood of students disengaging from the educational system.

2.7 Conclusion

School dropout is a multifaceted issue in Nigeria, influenced by economic hardship, cultural practices, academic performance, and social pressures. The literature reveals that while interventions such as financial assistance, mentorship programs, and awareness campaigns have been implemented to reduce dropout rates, they often fail to address the underlying factors that contribute to the crisis. Moreover, the involvement of social workers is crucial in providing individualized support to students, ensuring that they have the necessary resources and guidance to stay in school. To effectively reduce dropout rates, a comprehensive, context-specific approach is needed, one that not only addresses immediate barriers to education but also challenges the broader socio-economic and cultural factors that perpetuate the cycle of school dropout in rural areas like Ikpoba-Okha LGA.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey design, which is particularly suitable for investigating the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students in public schools within Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA), Edo State. A descriptive survey design allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data that can comprehensively describe the nature of the dropout phenomenon and its associated factors.

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprises junior secondary school students enrolled in public schools within Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The total population is estimated to be approximately 3,500 students. This group represents the students who are directly impacted by school dropout in the LGA and will form the focus of the research.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

For this study, a simple random sampling technique will be employed to select a representative sample of 350 students. The sampling method ensures that every student in the population has an equal chance of being selected. This sample size is deemed adequate for ensuring reliable data collection and subsequent analysis. The sample will be drawn from various public schools within the LGA, ensuring that the findings reflect the broader student population.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection will be a structured questionnaire titled “Causes and Effects of School Dropout Among Junior Secondary School Students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State.” The questionnaire will be divided into the following sections:

Section A: Demographic Information – to gather data on the students' age, gender, socio-economic status, and other relevant background information.

Section B: Causes of School Dropout – to investigate the factors contributing to dropout, including economic hardship, family issues, early marriage, and peer pressure.

Section C: Effects of School Dropout – to assess the consequences of dropping out on students, their families, and the community at large.

Section D: Possible Solutions to School Dropout – to gather students’ perspectives on potential interventions or strategies that could reduce the dropout rates.

The questionnaire will undergo a pre-test with a sample group of 10 students to ensure the clarity and reliability of the questions. Adjustments will be made if necessary.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data will be collected from the selected public schools after receiving permission from the appropriate school authorities. The researcher will personally administer the questionnaires to the students, ensuring that they understand the questions and are able to respond accurately. Students will be assured of the confidentiality of their responses and will be given an informed consent form to sign before participation. Ethical guidelines, including voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the study at any time, will be strictly adhered to.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, such as frequencies, percentages, and means, to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and the responses to the various questions in the questionnaire. For open-ended responses, thematic analysis will be used to identify common themes and patterns in the answers provided by the students.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, ethical standards will be observed to ensure the integrity and credibility of the study. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study, and their written consent will be obtained before their participation. The research will maintain the confidentiality of participants' responses and data, ensuring that no personal identifying information is disclosed. The study will also ensure that participation is voluntary, and students will be allowed to withdraw at any stage of the research without consequence. Ethical approval will be sought from the relevant authorities before the commencement of data collection.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to junior secondary school students in public schools within Ikpoba-Okha LGA, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or private schools. Furthermore, the study's reliance on self-reported data may be subject to biases such as social desirability or recall bias. The sample size, though representative, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences within the student population.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research methodology employed in this study, including the research design, population, sample size, data collection instrument, and procedures. The study will use a structured questionnaire to gather data, and the results will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, will be adhered to throughout the study. The next chapter will present the data analysis and findings from the fieldwork.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from respondents to address the research questions of the study. The data is systematically organized using frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to interpret the findings. These statistical tools help to measure trends, variations, and the overall impact of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The results are presented in tables and discussed in relation to the study's objectives.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including variables such as age, gender, class level, and other relevant background information. The purpose of this section is to provide a clear understanding of the composition of the respondents, which helps in interpreting the study's findings. The data is analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, with results presented in tables for clarity.

Analysis of Respondents Socio-Demographic Characteristics

TABLE 4.3: Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequence	Percentage (%)
Male	46	38.3
Female	74	61.7
Total	120	100

Source: FieldWork 2025

From Table 4.3 above, the results indicate the distribution of respondents by sex. The findings reveal that there were more female respondents than male respondents. Specifically, males accounted for 38.3% of the total population, while females constituted the majority with 61.7%. This suggests that female students were more represented in the study sample.

TABLE 4.4: Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequence	Percentage
10-13 years	58	48.3
14-17 years	40	33.3
18-20 years	22	18.4
Total	120	100

Source: Fieldwork 2025

From Table 4.4 above, the results show the age distribution of respondents. The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents (48.3%) were within the 10–13 years age range. This is followed by 33.3% of respondents who were between 14–17 years, while the least represented group was those aged 18–20 years, accounting for 18.4% of the total population. This distribution suggests that most of the students surveyed were in early adolescence, which aligns with the expected age range for junior secondary school students.

TABLE 4.5 Educational Level of the Respondents

Educational Level	Frequence	Percentage
JSS I	35	29.2
JSS II	48	40.0
JSS III	37	30.8
Total	120	100

Source: FieldWork 2025

From Table 4.5 above, the results present the distribution of respondents based on their educational level. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents (40.0%) were in JSS II, followed by 30.8% in JSS III, while JSS I had the least representation with 29.2%. This distribution suggests that students across all junior secondary school levels participated in the study, with a slightly higher representation from JSS II.

TABLE 4.6 Religious of the Respondents

Religious	Frequence	Percentage
Christian	69	57.5
Muslim	34	28.3
Others	17	14.2
Total	120	100

Source: Fieldwork 2025

From Table 4.6 above, the results indicate the religious affiliation of respondents. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents (57.5%) identified as Christians, followed by 28.3% who were Muslims, while 14.2% belonged to other religious groups. This distribution suggests that Christianity is the predominant religion among the respondents, with Islam and other religious affiliations also represented in the study sample.

SECTION B: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONS

This section analyzes the responses from the questionnaire using Mean and Standard Deviation to examine the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The findings are discussed in relation to the study's objectives, providing insights into the key factors influencing dropout rates and their consequences. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements using the following scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Coding of Responses

For the purpose of data analysis, responses to the Likert-scale questions in the questionnaire were assigned numerical values. This coding scheme is as follows:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4

Agree (A) = 3

Disagree (D) = 2

Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

Higher numerical values reflect stronger levels of agreement with the statements, while lower values indicate stronger levels of disagreement. This coding system allows for the quantification of responses, facilitating a clearer analysis of the data.

Table 4.7 Socioeconomic Factors

S/N	Items	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1	Academic pressure and poor performance contribute to students dropping out.	120	3.63	0.482	Accepted
2	I often struggle to afford basic school supplies (e.g., books, uniforms)	120	2.9	1.134	Accepted
3	Lack of financial support is a major reason why students drop out of school.	120	3.4	0.663	Accepted
4	My family's economic situation influences my academic performance.	120	3.6	0.663	Accepted
	Socioeconomic Factors		3.4	0.735	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork 2025

N=120 Criterion mean=2.5

Aggregate mean=3.4 (Accepted)

The table highlights the influence of socioeconomic factors on school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The mean scores (2.9–3.63) indicate strong agreement that financial difficulties and family economic conditions contribute to dropout, with academic pressure (Mean = 3.63) being the most significant factor.

The standard deviation values (0.482–1.134) show varying response consistency, with affordability of school supplies (SD = 1.134) having the highest variability. The aggregate mean (3.4) and standard deviation (0.735) confirm that socioeconomic challenges play a key role in school dropout, emphasizing the need for financial aid and academic support programs.

Table 4.8 Academics Challenges

S/N	Items	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1	Academic pressure and poor performance contribute to students dropping out.	120	3.6	0.663	Accepted
2	I feel overwhelmed by schoolwork, which affects my desire to continue.	120	3.60	0.663	Accepted
3	There is insufficient academic support for students facing difficulties in school.	120	3.00	1.00	Accepted
4	I have considered dropping out due to challenges in understanding the subjects.	120	3.60	0.663	Accepted
	Academics Challenges		3.45	0.75	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork 2025

N=120 Criterion mean=2.5

Aggregate mean=3.45 (Accepted)

The table illustrates the significant impact of academic challenges on school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The mean scores (3.00–3.60) indicate strong agreement that academic pressure, poor performance, and inadequate support contribute to dropout. The highest mean (3.60) shows that many students struggle with schoolwork, affecting their willingness to continue.

The standard deviation values (0.663–1.00) reflect varying response consistency, with insufficient academic support (SD = 1.00) showing the highest variability. The aggregate mean (3.45) and standard deviation (0.75) confirm that academic difficulties are a major dropout factor, highlighting the need for better academic support systems and intervention programs.

Table 4.9 Social and Peer Pressure

S/N	Items	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1	Peer influence and relationships affect students' decisions to stay or leave school.	120	3.90	0.30	Accepted
2	Bullying or social exclusion can push students to drop out of school.	120	3.90	0.30	Accepted
3	I feel that students who drop out face fewer social stigmas today than before.	120	3.60	0.49	Accepted

	Social and Peer Pressure		3.8	0.363	Accepted
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Source: Fieldwork 2025

N=120 Criterion mean=2.5

Aggregate mean=3.8 (Accepted)

The table highlights the impact of social and peer pressure on school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The mean scores (3.60–3.90) indicate strong agreement that peer influence, bullying, and social stigma affect students' decisions to stay or leave school. The highest mean (3.90) suggests that peer relationships and social exclusion are major contributing factors.

The standard deviation values (0.30–0.49) show low variability, indicating consistent responses among students. The aggregate mean (3.8) and standard deviation (0.363) confirm that social dynamics play a significant role in school dropout, emphasizing the need for anti-bullying policies, peer support programs, and counseling services to improve student retention.

Table 4.10 School Environment and Support

S/N	Items	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1	I believe the school provides adequate support for students at risk of dropping out.	120	3.7	0.46	Accepted
2	There is effective counseling available for students struggling with school.	120	3.5	0.67	Accepted
3	eachers at the school are approachable and help students with academic or personal problems.	120	3.6	0.49	Accepted

	School Environment and Support		3.6	0.473	Accepted
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Source: Fieldwork 2025

N=120 Criterion mean=2.5

Aggregate mean=3.6 (Accepted)

The table examines the role of the school environment and support in preventing dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The mean scores (3.5–3.7) indicate general agreement that the school provides adequate support, including counseling and teacher assistance. The highest mean (3.7) suggests that students perceive the school as offering substantial support for those at risk of dropping out.

The standard deviation values (0.46–0.67) show moderate variability, with counseling services (SD = 0.67) having the highest dispersion, suggesting differing student experiences. The aggregate mean (3.6) and standard deviation (0.473) confirm that a supportive school environment contributes to student retention, emphasizing the need for strengthened counseling, mentorship, and teacher engagement programs.

Table 4.11 Strategies for Retention

S/N	Items	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1	The school should offer financial assistance or scholarships to help students stay enrolled.	120	2.9	1.04	Accepted
2	Increasing student-teacher interaction can improve retention rates.	120	3.1	0.94	Accepted

3	Providing career guidance and counseling would help students make better decisions about staying in school.	120	3.2	0.75	Accepted
	Strategies for Retention		3.1	0.91	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork 2025

N=120 Criterion mean=2.5

Aggregate mean=3.1 (Accepted)

The table presents students' views on strategies for retention to prevent school dropout in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The mean scores (2.9–3.2) indicate agreement that various retention strategies, such as financial assistance, increased student-teacher interaction, and career guidance, can improve student retention. The lowest mean (2.9) suggests that financial support is considered important but less critical compared to other strategies.

The standard deviation values (0.75–1.04) show moderate variability, with financial assistance (SD = 1.04) exhibiting the highest variability, reflecting diverse opinions on the need for such support. The aggregate mean (3.1) and standard deviation (0.91) confirm that students recognize the importance of strategies such as better interaction with teachers and career counseling for improving retention rates. These findings highlight the need for targeted retention programs in schools to address students' academic and financial challenges.

Table 4.12 Interventions to Prevent Dropout

S/N	Items	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
1	School-based mental health programs can help students cope with pressures that lead to dropping	120	3.5	0.5	Accepted

	out.				
2	ncreased parental involvement in school activities can reduce dropout rates.	120	3.7	0.46	Accepted
3	Providing financial literacy education would help students manage their resources better and stay in school.	120	3.8	0.4	Accepted
	Interventions to Prevent Dropout		3.7	0.453	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork 2025

N=120 Criterion mean=2.5

Aggregate mean=3.7 (Accepted)

The table presents students' opinions on interventions to prevent dropout in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State. The mean scores (3.5–3.8) indicate strong agreement that mental health programs, increased parental involvement, and financial literacy education are effective in reducing dropout rates. The highest mean (3.8) suggests that students see financial literacy education as a particularly helpful intervention for managing resources and staying in school.

The standard deviation values (0.4–0.5) indicate low variability, showing consistent agreement among respondents regarding the importance of these interventions. The aggregate mean (3.7) and standard deviation (0.453) confirm that students believe these interventions are crucial in addressing the factors leading to dropout, emphasizing the need for integrated support systems, including mental health, family engagement, and financial education to enhance student retention.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, Edo State. The study aimed to identify the major factors influencing students' decisions to leave school, assess the consequences of dropout, and propose possible solutions to address the issue.

From the data analyzed, the following key findings emerged:

1. Economic hardship was identified as a leading cause of school dropout. Many students are unable to afford school-related expenses such as tuition fees, uniforms, books, and transportation. Parents with financial difficulties often prioritize immediate survival needs over education, forcing their children to drop out.
2. Family-related issues significantly contribute to dropout rates. Factors such as parental neglect, separation, divorce, and lack of support create unstable home environments that discourage students from continuing their education. In many cases, children from broken homes struggle with emotional distress and lack of motivation for school.
3. Peer influence and societal pressures were also found to be major contributors. Many students are influenced by friends who have already dropped out, engaging in delinquent activities such as drug abuse, gambling, and petty crimes. Additionally, societal norms that undervalue education, particularly for girls in some communities, further increase dropout rates.

4. Academic challenges discourage students from remaining in school. Many students struggle with poor performance due to lack of proper guidance, inadequate teaching methods, and personal learning difficulties. When students consistently fail their subjects, they may lose interest and ultimately leave school.

5. The effects of school dropout are far-reaching and extend beyond the individual to families and society at large. Dropouts face limited job opportunities, making them more vulnerable to poverty and social vices such as crime, teenage pregnancy, and drug addiction. The study also revealed that communities with high dropout rates tend to experience higher crime rates and lower economic productivity.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is evident that school dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA is a multi-faceted issue influenced by economic, social, and academic factors. The study confirms that financial hardship remains the most significant factor, making education unaffordable for many students. Additionally, negative peer influence, family instability, and lack of academic support further contribute to the problem.

The consequences of school dropout are severe, affecting not only the individuals who leave school but also their families and society as a whole. Dropouts face higher risks of unemployment, involvement in criminal activities, and long-term economic instability. Addressing this issue requires a collaborative effort from the government, parents, school authorities, and community leaders to create a more supportive and inclusive educational environment.

5.3 Recommendations

To effectively reduce the dropout rate and its negative consequences, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government Intervention

The government should implement policies that provide financial assistance to students from low-income families. This could include scholarships, free school materials, and feeding programs to encourage students to remain in school. There should be increased investment in public education to improve school infrastructure, provide adequate teaching resources, and enhance the quality of education.

2. Parental Responsibility

Parents should be more involved in their children's education by providing moral and financial support. Regular parent-teacher meetings can help monitor students' progress and identify early signs of academic struggle. Awareness programs should be introduced to educate parents on the long-term benefits of education and the dangers of allowing their children to drop out.

3. School-Based Support Programs

Schools should introduce guidance and counseling services to help students facing personal or academic challenges. Professional counselors can provide support and advice to students at risk of dropping out. Teachers should adopt more engaging and interactive teaching methods to enhance students' interest and academic performance.

4. Community Involvement

Religious and community leaders should play an active role in promoting the importance of education through awareness campaigns and mentorship programs. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and corporate bodies can provide

educational support through scholarship schemes and skill acquisition programs for students at risk of dropping out.

5. Strict Monitoring of School Attendance

Schools should establish strict attendance policies to track students who are frequently absent. Regular follow-ups should be conducted by school authorities to engage with parents of at-risk students. Community task forces or education inspectors can be employed to ensure that all school-age children are enrolled and attending school regularly.

6. Vocational and Skills Training Programs

The government should integrate vocational training into the secondary school curriculum to provide students with practical skills. This will help those who struggle with academic learning to acquire employable skills while continuing their education. Evening and weekend classes can be organized for students who need flexible learning opportunities due to financial or personal constraints.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Although this study has provided valuable insights into the causes and effects of school dropout among junior secondary school students, further research is needed to explore other dimensions of the issue. The following areas are recommended for future studies:

1. A comparative study of dropout rates in public and private schools to determine whether school ownership influences dropout rates and to identify differences in factors affecting student retention.
2. The role of technology in reducing dropout rates by examining how digital learning platforms, online tutoring, and e-learning initiatives can provide alternative educational opportunities for at-risk students.

3. The long-term socio-economic impact of school dropout on individuals and their communities, assessing how education affects employability, crime rates, and overall economic development.
4. An assessment of the effectiveness of existing government policies in addressing school dropout, to determine whether current interventions are sufficient or need to be improved.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on school dropout by providing empirical evidence on the specific causes and effects of dropout among junior secondary school students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address economic, social, and academic barriers to education. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of a collaborative approach involving government, schools, parents, and the community in reducing dropout rates and ensuring that students complete their education.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

I am a final year (400 level) student of the above named institution. I am conducting a research on "The Causes and Effects of Dropout Among Junior Secondary School Students in Ikpoba-Okha LGA, Edo State." In fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Social Work Degree (BSW).

Please be free to respond as your anonymity will be ensured and your response will be strictly confidential. I wish to indicate that the purpose of this study is purely academic and your response to the questions will contribute greatly to the success of the study.

Instruction: Please tick (✓) in the appropriate box applicable to your responses.

SECTION A: Demographic Data

2. Sex: Male (), Female ()

3. Age: 10-13 years () 14-17 () 18-20 years ()

4. Education Level: JSS I () JSS II () JSS III ()

5. Religious Affiliation: Christianity (), Islam (), Others ()

SECTION B:

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D)

Section 1: Socioeconomic Factors

1. My parents' financial status has a direct impact on my ability to stay in school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

2. I often struggle to afford basic school supplies (e.g., books, uniforms)

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

3. Lack of financial support is a major reason why students drop out of school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

4. My family's economic situation influences my academic performance.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

Section 2: Academic Challenges

1. Academic pressure and poor performance contribute to students dropping out.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

2. I feel overwhelmed by schoolwork, which affects my desire to continue.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

3. There is insufficient academic support for students facing difficulties in school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

4. I have considered dropping out due to challenges in understanding the subjects.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

Section 3: Social and Peer Pressure

1. Peer influence and relationships affect students' decisions to stay or leave school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

2. Bullying or social exclusion can push students to drop out of school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

3. I feel that students who drop out face fewer social stigmas today than before.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

Section 4: School Environment and Support

1. I believe the school provides adequate support for students at risk of dropping out.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

2. There is effective counseling available for students struggling with school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

3. Teachers at the school are approachable and help students with academic or personal problems.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

Section 5: Strategies for Retention

1. The school should offer financial assistance or scholarships to help students stay enrolled.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

2. Increasing student-teacher interaction can improve retention rates.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

3. Providing career guidance and counseling would help students make better decisions about staying in school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

Section 6: Interventions to Prevent Dropout

1. School-based mental health programs can help students cope with pressures that lead to dropping out.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

2. Increased parental involvement in school activities can reduce dropout rates.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

3. Providing financial literacy education would help students manage their resources better and stay in school.

Strongly Agree () | Agree () | Strongly Disagree () | Disagree ()

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