

## **PARENT-TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CAUSES OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NSUKKA METROPOLIS, ENUGU STATE**

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**Abstract** - The study investigated parent-teachers' perception of socio-cultural causes of out-of-school children in metropolis, Enugu State. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study employed cross-sectional design. A total of 250 parent-teachers were sampled. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled 'Parent-teachers perception of socio-cultural causes of out-of-school children questionnaires' (PTPOSCOSCQ) which has an overall reliability index of 0.74. The instrument was face validated by experts from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The questionnaire were completed and collected back immediately thereby ensuring a 100% return. The data collected for the study were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed the causes of out of school children to include poverty, poor educational backgrounds of parents, poor school infrastructure, domestic conflict, disability, gender discrimination, natural disasters, limited access to school and poor quality of education. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female parent-teachers regarding the socio-cultural causes of out-of-school children in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu State. This study emphasizes the importance of enhancing educational access and reducing the number of out-of-school children. To achieve this goal, the study suggests that the government should implement policies that promote universal education. These include allocating more funds to the education sector, constructing new schools, and hiring additional teachers to cater for the increasing number of children seeking education.

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**Keywords:** Parent-teachers', perception, socio-cultural, causes, out-of-school

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### **Introduction**

Behind every out-of-school child lies a complex web of socio-cultural factors. Do male and female parent-teachers perceive the socio-cultural causes differently? The global issue of out-of-school children (OOSC) persists. A recent report from UNESCO reveals a disturbing trend: 6 million more children are now missing out on education, pushing the global total to a staggering 250 million. (UNESCO, 2023). Nigeria, along with India and Pakistan, has the highest number of OOSC worldwide, underscoring the significant challenge of out-of-school children in Nigeria (Raliyat et al., 2022). Nigeria ranks second globally, after India, with approximately 16 million children not attending school, accounting for one-fifth of the world's total out-of-school children (Salman & Ibrahim, 2023; Ndanusa et al., 2021). This number has steadily increased from 8.7 million in 2014 to 13.2 million in 2015 and 16 million in 2019 (Sahara Reporters New York, 2019). Notably, Nigeria accounts for 45% of West Africa's out-of-school children (Bayagon, 2018). In Enugu State, the issue is particularly concerning, with 416,832 children aged 3-18 (though this study is concerned with ages 1-12) not in school in 2014, and over 20,000

children out of school in 2022, representing 0.2% of Nigeria's total out-of-school children (UNESCO, 2022; Enugu State Government, 2019). The situation is further exacerbated by Nigeria's rising unemployment rate, which increased from 23.13% in 2018 to 40% in 2022 (Utomi, 2022), and widespread poverty, with an estimated 89.5 million individuals living in extreme poverty in 2020 (Ayoade & Farayola, 2021). Additionally, the presence of a large number of unemployed graduates has also contributed significantly to the issue of out-of-school children.

Out-of-school children are widely defined by different scholars. Out-of-school children are youngsters aged 1-12 lacking access to functional education (Ojelade Aiyedun, & Aregebesola, 2019). They are also defined as those not enrolled in formal education, excluding pre-primary education. Ogunode, Chinwuba & Ayoko, (2022) describe them as failed by governments and parents in providing quality basic education. Salman and Ibrahim (2023) attribute the absence of school-age children from educational institutions to specific factors. In the context of Nsukka metropolis, out-of-school children refer to those not enrolled in pre-primary, primary, or secondary education within the official age range. The study was carried out to ascertain if the increasing number of out-of-school children in Nigeria is due to poverty, cultural practices, insecurity, lack of access to education facilities, inadequate funding, and ineffective government policies as stated by Adeleke and Alabede (2022). The complex causes of Nigeria's high number of out-of-school children have severe consequences, including increased crime rates, illiteracy, and poverty (Raliyat, Umma & Aisha, 2022). Key contributing factors include poverty (Ayoade & Farayola, 2021; Adeleke & Alabede, 2022; Utomi, 2021; Aliogo, 2020), high fertility rates driven by cultural and religious factors (Ogunode & Stephen, 2021), corruption affecting education management (Ogunode & Stephen, 2021; Ololube, 2016), climate change (US National Academy of Sciences, 2020), poor implementation of the 2003 Child Rights Act (Raliyat et al., 2022), inadequate education funding (Ogunode & Stephen, 2021), and household characteristics like parental education and wealth (Shehu, 2018). Parents-teachers can significantly contribute to understanding the diverse factors driving this issue.

Parent-teachers are educators who are also parents, prioritizing educational aspects and cultural practices that promote intellectual growth and a supportive learning environment, equips students with critical thinking and problem-solving skills. (Teachers Institute, 2024; Lasne, 2018). They are vital resources for children's learning and development, contributing to their overall growth and societal success. A strong parent-teacher partnership fosters student and family engagement, leading to successful social, cultural, and academic outcomes. The importance of positive parental involvement in parent-teacher relationships is emphasized (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009). The interplay between socio-cultural factors and gender dynamics exacerbates the issue of out-of-school children, creating intricate and deeply entrenched barriers to education. One key aspect where this interplay is particularly evident is in how gender roles and expectations influence parental decisions regarding children's education, further complicating efforts to address the out-of-school problem.

Gender refers to the socially constructed expectations, roles, and identities assigned to individuals based on their perceived biological sex (Naz Chaudhry, 2012). This complex concept combines biological differences with culturally defined norms, which vary across cultures and time. Gender disparities in education lead to differing experiences and outcomes for out-of-school boys and girls. Research by Naz and Chaudhry (2012) reveals that gender biases create educational obstacles for both males

and females. In some cases, cultural norms favor males' education, posing unique challenges for the females, including early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and restrictive cultural beliefs that limit their educational opportunities. Although, male and female teachers participate equally in various aspects of life, including family responsibilities, community involvement, and recreational activities (Sebastian, Banate and Saquin, 2022), their perceptions about issues are likely to differ. Despite education's crucial role in individual and national progress, many school-age children in Nigeria, including Nsukka metropolis, lack access to formal education. This absence has severe negative consequences (UNESCO, 2020). Efforts by the Nigerian government and international organizations, such as Universal Basic Education (UBE) program and Girls Education Project (GEP), have been made, but progress is slow (Ojelade, Aiyedun & Aregebesola, 2019). This study investigates male and female parent-teachers' perception of socio-cultural causes of out-of-school children in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu State

### **Statement of the Problem**

The trend of out-of-school children undermines progress towards Education for All (EFA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many children are instead engaged in activities like begging, farming, or idleness during school hours, disrupting social balance. This is influenced by deep-seated socio-cultural factors, ultimately impacting both individual and societal well-being. Parent-teachers are key stakeholders affected by out-of-school children. Teachers witness the consequences of out-of-school children, observing declining attendance. Parents, particularly those who desire their children's education but face barriers, endure profound emotional trauma. This raises a critical question: what is the broader socio-cultural impact on OOSC? Investigating gender differences in perceptions among parent-teachers is essential to understanding the socio-cultural factors contributing to out-of-school children.

### **Research question**

1. What are the causes of out-of-school children as perceived by parent-teachers in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu State?

### **Hypothesis**

2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female parent-teachers on the socio-cultural causes of out-of-school children in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu State.

### **Methods**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Creswell (2014) defines descriptive research design as a method that aims to accurately describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. This approach helps researchers understand a group or phenomenon by collecting data through surveys, interviews, or observations. The study was carried out in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Nsukka Local Government is one of the seventeen (17) local governments in Enugu State. It is one of the historical local governments as it houses the prestigious University of Nigeria. The Ede-Oballa, Nsukka, Eha-Alumona, Okpuje, Opi-Agu, Edem, Umuabor, Opi, Opi-Agu, Okpaligbo, Okutu, Okpuje, Obukpa, and other communities are included in Nsukka Local Government Area Council, which is located in the town of Nsukka. The choice of this area for the study was based on the fact that there exist many schools and still there seems to be increasing number of out-of-school children seen on the streets of Nsukka daily. The population of the study was parent-teachers, that is, teachers who are parents from the 38

public primary schools in metropolis. The population of the study was parent-teachers, that is, teachers who are parents from the 38 public primary schools in metropolis. The sample size for the study was 50 parent-teachers from five public secondary schools in Nsukka metropolis. First, random sampling technique was used to select five secondary schools, while purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 parent-teachers from each of the five schools to serve as respondents for the study. Therefore 50 parent-teachers were used for the study. The researchers acknowledging the potential limitation in representativeness due to the sample size (5 out of 36 schools), focused on gathering detailed data from a smaller sample. Future research may benefit from larger samples to enhance generalizability. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items split into two sections A and B. Section A addressed the bio-data of the respondent, while section B addressed the information on causes of out-of-school children, with a four-points routine skilled response with such options as Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD), and Disagreed (D). The instrument was face validated by three experts, two were from the Department of Social Science Education, and one was from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Science Education both from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The experts examined the items in terms of clarity of statement, relevance of the contents and sustainability of the rating scale adopted. The suggestions and inputs of the experts were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument. The internal consistency of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha analysis which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.75. An introductory letter from the HOD was used to obtain permission to administer the instrument in the selected schools. The respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and the modalities to administer the questionnaire. The items on the questionnaire were duly explained to the respondents for easier understanding. The researchers ensured immediate collection of the filled questionnaire on the same day and enhanced 100% return. Data gathered from the study were collated and statistical analyzed in accordance with the research questions. Descriptive statistics of mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviations (SD) was used to answer research questions 1, with criterion mean score of 2.50 and above for acceptance. T-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A p-value < 0.05 indicates statistically significant results, so the null hypothesis will not be accepted. A p-value > 0.05 indicates no significant results, so null hypothesis will be accepted.

## Results

**Research question 1:** What are the causes of out-of-school children as perceived by parent-teachers in metropolis, Enugu state?

**Table 1: Mean ratings and Standard Deviation on the causes of out of school children as perceived by parent-teachers in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu state**

S/N	Item Statements	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Poverty	50	2.68	0.86	Agree
2.	Poor educational backgrounds of parents	50	2.87	0.98	Agree
3.	Poor school infrastructure	50	2.76	0.78	Agree
4.	Domestic conflict	50	2.81	0.93	Agree
5.	Disability	50	2.74	0.79	Agree
6.	Gender discrimination	50	2.92	0.54	Agree
7.	Child labour	50	2.84	0.98	Agree
8.	Natural disasters	50	2.56	0.62	Agree

9	Limited access to school	50	2.85	0.67	Agree
10	Poor quality of education	50	2.87	0.65	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	50	<b>2.79</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 1 shows the causes of incidence of out of school children as perceived by parent-teachers in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu state. The mean scores of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are 2.68, 2.87, 2.76, 2.81, 2.74, 2.92, 2.84, 2.56, 2.85 and 2.87. These mean scores are above the 2.50 acceptance benchmark mean value for decision taking which implies that they are accepted. Therefore the causes of incidence of out of school children as perceived by parent-teachers in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu state include poverty, poor educational backgrounds of parents, poor school infrastructure, domestic conflict, disability, gender discrimination, natural disasters, limited access to school and poor quality of education. Also, the grand mean of 2.79 with standard deviation of 0.81 implies that the respondents agreed that the items on Table 1 are the causes of incidence of out-of-school children as perceived by parent-teachers in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu state.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female parent-teachers regarding the socio-cultural causes of out-of-school children in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu State.

**Table 2: A t-test analysis on the difference in the perceptions of male and female parent-teachers on the causes of out-of-school children in Nsukka metropolis**

Gender	N	Mean	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	15	2.61	-0.69	49	0.47
Female	35	2.97			

The analysis on Table 4 shows that the t-cal (0.69) is not significant at 0.47 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, there was no significant difference in the mean score of parent-teachers perceived causes of out of school children in Nsukka metropolis based on gender. This suggests that male and female parent-teachers had almost similar level of response on the causes of out of school children in Nsukka metropolis.

## Discussion

The causes of incidence of out of school children as perceived by parent-teachers in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu state include poverty, poor educational backgrounds of parents, poor school infrastructure, domestic conflict, disability, gender discrimination, natural disasters, limited access to school and poor quality of education. This is in line with Okoh, Emenike, Doma and Akinsola (2020) who reported that poverty, child labour, teenage pregnancy and distance to school are the major causes of children out of school in the North Central Geo-Political zone. Also, the findings corroborate the findings of Salman and Ibrahim (2023) that poor implementation of UBE Programme, poor implementation of Child Act law, corruption, high fertility rate, insecurity challenges and poverty are the factors responsible for large out-of-school children in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The findings supported the findings of this present study probably because of the increased importance of education in recent times and also increased awareness on the impact of socio-cultural factors on out-of-school children.

There was no significant difference in the mean score of parent-teachers perceived causes of out of school children in Nsukka metropolis based on gender. This suggests that male and female parent-teachers had almost similar level of response on the causes of out of school children in Nsukka metropolis. The result is in line with tha of Triviño-Amigo et

al. (2022) and Deku and Vanderpuye (2017) who asserted that there are no significant differences between male female perception. This is in contrast with that of Wood (2012) who opined that there is a significant difference between perceptions of female and male teachers. Again, Subrahmanyam (2016) who reported that gender plays a role in these trends and that across the world, females are more likely than males to be out of school because females are more likely than males to be out of school relate to social power structures and socially-constructed norms that define the roles that boys/men and girls/women should play. These gender roles affect the rights, responsibilities, opportunities and capabilities of males and females, including their access to and treatment in school.

### **Conclusion**

The causes of out-of-school children as perceived by parent-teachers in Nsukka metropolis, Enugu state include poverty, poor educational backgrounds of parents, poor school infrastructure, domestic conflict, diseaseability, gender discrimination, natural disasters, limited access to school and poor quality of education. The effects of having children out of school are far-reaching and devastating. These children are exposed to various social vices, such as prostitution, cultism, and drug addiction, which can lead to a life of crime and violence. This, in turn, contributes to a higher crime rate, reduced civic participation, and a negative impact on the country's economic growth. Moreover, out-of-school children are more susceptible to exploitation, poor health care practices, and ultimately, unemployment. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and disadvantage, making it even more challenging for these children to break free. To address this issue, it's crucial that the government and stakeholders work together to implement educational policies and increase the budget for education. This will help ensure that underprivileged children have access to quality education, reducing the likelihood of them falling prey to social vices and related problems.

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