

CHILD RIGHT VIOLATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL PURSUIT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

BY

Prof. Afolabi Popoola: Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti

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Abiodun Eunice Oluwabukunmi: Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti

Abstract

This study examined child right violation and student's educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State. The study adopted the descriptive survey and correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of 104,817 students, 7,753 teachers in 206 Public Secondary Schools in 16 Local Government Areas in the three senatorial districts in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 135 teachers and 855 students. Two set of instruments tagged "Child Right Violation Questionnaire (CRVQ with $r = 0.72$)" and Educational Pursuit among Secondary School Students Questionnaire (EPASSSQ with $r = 0.71$)" were used for the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the inferential statistics involving Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study showed that the level of students' educational pursuit in Ekiti State was moderate. The study showed that there was significant relationship between child right violation and students' educational pursuit. The study further revealed that child right violation significantly contributed to students' educational pursuit. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that child right violation influences educational pursuit. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government should formulate policies that will protect school children from child labour.

Keywords: Child Right Violation, Educational Pursuit, Secondary School and Students

Introduction

Education is a way of developing desirable habits, skills and pursuits, which could enable the individual to be a good citizen. Education is one of the tools leading individual out into new knowledge and experiences for high growth and development. It is universally recognized as an instrument which is capable of providing solution to socio-economic problems when properly utilized. Olamide and Olawaye (2013) reported that nations and individuals look up to education to provide a cure for poverty, ignorance, mental deficiency, joblessness, bad governance, poor communication system, hunger, inadequate shelter among other socio-economic problems. FGN (2014) in the National Policy on Education said that education is an instrument for national development and social change and that it is capable of maximizing the potential and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society. Educational pursuit is the educational and vocational dreams that students and young people have for their future. Educational pursuits are a developmental process and spans almost through a person's lifetime. According to Lazarus and Ihuoma (2011), Maartje, Karel, Jonatan and Marco (2019) educational pursuit should be initiated as early as the nursery school years through the primary, secondary and to the tertiary school levels.

Measurable aspects of educational pursuit are classroom/school attendance, classroom interaction, participation/activeness in school/class and extra-curricular pursuits. In schools, teaching and learning take place effectively when there is proper attendance on the part of students. Poor classroom attendance could become one of the problems seriously affecting teaching and learning processes. It is noted that students who stay away from school without permission will not only be left out in the learning process but they may also probably end up engaging in antisocial behaviour such as drug abuse, gangsterism, bullying, alcohol consumption, free and unregulated sex, gambling and loitering with their negative consequences and experience.

Globally, irregular attendance in school (truancy) has been regarded as a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the educational programmes and has caused a lot of setbacks for secondary school students in their

educational pursuits (Adeyemi, 2006; (Missopoulos, Argyropoulou & Tzavara, 2018). As a matter of fact, irregular attendance threatens students' academic performance and could lead to student dropping out of school. Consequent upon the observed deterioration in the educational pursuit of students in the area of attendance in school and classroom interaction in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, one wonders if the low educational pursuit of some students is not due to child right violation. Children are regarded as important element of development, therefore, their welfare in the society is an index of social and economic development of that society. But most of them are denied this welfare by violating their basic rights.

Under the Nigerian socio-cultural context, the definition of a child varies widely due to lack of uniformity in the cultural systems. In some ethnic groups, a boy remains a child until initiated into an age-grade society or until he is old enough to contribute physically and financially to community development (Ada & Anake, 2015). But in some societies, childhood terminates at puberty. The National Child Welfare Policy of 1989 defines a child as anybody who is 12 years or below. However, a draft decree puts into law has now set the age of the child in Nigeria as below 18 years. It is pertinent to note that this age definition is already in practice under municipal laws. Parents, and society at large, are therefore under an obligation to provide their children with proper education and to protect them from exploitation arising from early marriage, employment and their negative influence that infringe on their rights.

The term 'right' is often used to describe any advantages conferred on a person by a rule of law. Different jurists have put forward many theories in order to explain the term 'right'. Olukoya (2013) and Jonathan and Zachary (2018) asserted that a right is a kind of claim. Under Section 307 of The Nigerian Criminal Code (1990), a person is considered to be a human being from the moment he becomes independent of his mother's womb, whether the umbilical cord has been severed or not, at birth. Children's rights, therefore, are rights that make for their survival, development, protection and meaningful participation in the society.

With the enactment of the Child's Rights Act of 2003, the welfare and responsibilities of children as well as those of government and institutions towards children became more defined. In addition, the Act makes provision for the enforcement of these rights by imposing strict penalties for abuses, creation of the Family Court, and bringing of Nigeria's child's rights law to global standard (Ladan, 2004; Foster, Olson-Dorff, Reiland & Budzak-Garza, 2017). These rights have been classified into survival rights, development rights, participation rights and protection rights. Under survival rights, children have the right to life; survival and development; health and health services; dignity of the child; and freedom from discrimination. Under development rights, they have the right to leisure, recreation and cultural pursuits; to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; to free, compulsory and universal primary education; to parental care, protection and maintenance. Under participation right, they have the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly; freedom of expression; freedom of movement; right to personal liberty; and under protection right.

There is also the right of the child in need of special protection; right of the unborn child to protection against harm; and contractual right of a child (Child's Rights Act, 2003). The researcher observed that despite the child's right act, these rights could be violated. Children of tender age are employed in industries, trafficked in commercial sex industry and a good number have died due to malnutrition. Considering practical implications of child right violation on students' educational pursuit in schools, this study investigated specifically selected variables of child right violation such as child labour, violent discipline, school bullying, sexual violence and child neglect.

International Labour Organization (2012) defines child labour as any work that deprives children of their childhood, dignity and potentials and which is dangerous or harmful to their physical and mental development. In other words, any work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to the children, that intrudes on their education, desist or deprive them opportunity to go to school, forces them to quit their education prematurely or obliges them to try to combine their education with extensive and heavy work (ILO, 2012). It is important to note that a child assisting her parent in her spare time (could be on holidays from school, closing from school, weekend days etc.) is not considered child labour. It becomes child labour only when it impedes on her educational, moral, psychological wellbeing and when the pursuit is also harmful to her health.

Forms of child labour include street hawking, drug peddling, herding of livestock, children used by the physically challenged in begging along busy streets, child trafficking, child prostitution, slavery practices, and child domestic servitude. Observation has shown that some children are sent out there by their parents or caregivers to hawk on the streets so as to gather money to support the family without giving much attention to their academic pursuits in school. It was also observed that some children were withdrawn from schools to engage in prostitution or serves as house helps to others while some engaged in other menial jobs to bring in money to the family. As a result, the moral and social development of the child lacks the necessary education base and their performance in school is affected. There is no general agreement however, on the influence of these right infractions on the educational pursuit of school children. Axmaher (2010), child right violation is seen as the process by which children are exposed to maltreatments by parents or guardian. He further opined that child right violation is a mistreatment or neglect of the child that result in non-accidental harm or injury and which cannot be reasonably explained. Obekpa (2011) view child right violation as any condition injurious to physical or emotional health that has been inflicted by parents, guardian or other caretakers. Igbo and Ekoja (2013) defines it as a non-accidental injury inflicted on a child by a parent or guardian. The study therefore examined the relationship (if any) between child right violations and educational pursuit of secondary school students in Ekiti State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the preponderance of child right violation among secondary school students in Ekiti State?
2. What is the level of educational pursuit on child right violation among secondary school students in Ekiti State?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated for the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between child right violation and educational pursuit of secondary school students in Ekiti State.

Methodology

The population consisted of all 104,817 students, 7753 teachers and 206 public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 135 teachers and 855 students who assessed child right violations and students educational pursuit. The respondents were drawn from 45 public secondary schools in Ekiti State, using simple random sampling technique. Two research instruments were used to collect data for the study. The first instrument was tagged “Child Right Violation Questionnaire (CRVQ)” and the second instrument was tagged “Students’ Educational Pursuit Questionnaire (SEPQ)”. The face and content validity of the instruments were ensured by experts who ascertained the appropriateness and representativeness of the contents in measuring what it supposed to measure. Test re-test method of reliability was used, to arrive at reliability co-efficient of 0.72 and 0.71 respectively for the two instruments. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze the data obtained. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the preponderance of child right violations among secondary school students in Ekiti State?

In answering the question, scores obtained on Items 1- 25 in Section B of “Child Right Violation Questionnaire (CRVQ)” and the total scores obtainable on each of the dimensions of child right violation were computed. The ratio of the scores obtained by all the respondents to total scores obtainable on each of the child right violation was multiplied by 100 to obtain the level of dominance (%) of each of the child right violation. The results are presented in tables 1.

Table 1: Preponderance of child right violation among secondary school students in Ekiti State

Dimension of Child Right Violation	N	Total Score Obtainable	Respondents Total Score	Total Score Obtainable	Level of Dominance (%)	Ranking
Child Labour	855	17100	7244	17100	42.4	3 rd

Violent Discipline	855	17100	9122	17100	47.9	1 st
School Bullying	855	17100	8009	17100	46.8	2 nd
Sexual violence	855	17100	6408	17100	37.5	5 th
Child Neglect	855	17100	6876	17100	40.2	4 th

Table 1 presents the preponderance of child right violation among secondary school students in Ekiti State. The result shows that violent discipline (47.9%) is preponderance of child right violation among secondary school students in Ekiti State. This is closely followed by school bullying (46.8%), child labour (42.4%) and child neglect (40.2%) while sexual violence (37.5%) is the least in the ranking order. This implies that violent discipline is the preponderance of child right violation among secondary school students in Ekiti State. Table 1 shows the occurrence of child right violation as agree and strongly agree were compressed together and disagree and strongly disagree were compressed together.

Research Question 2: What is the level of educational pursuit on child right violation among secondary school students in Ekiti State?

In analyzing the question, scores relating to educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State were computed. Frequency counts and percentages were used to illustrate the responses to items 1- 20 in Section B of “Students’ Educational Pursuit Questionnaire (SEPQ)”. In order to determine the level of educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State (low, moderate and high), percentile distribution formula was used. Respondents who scored 33.3 percent (33.3) of the total score on educational pursuit and below was categorized into ‘low’ level of educational pursuit while those who scored 66.6 percent (66.6) of total score and above on “Students’ Educational Pursuit Questionnaire (SEPQ)” were categorized into ‘high’ level of educational pursuit. Scores between the low and high educational pursuit groups were categorized into ‘moderate’ level of educational pursuit. Therefore, the low level of educational pursuit starts from 20.0 to 33.3; the moderate level of educational pursuit starts from 33.4 to 66.5 and the high level of educational pursuit is from 66.6 to 100.0. The level of educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State is presented in tables 2

Table 2: Level of educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State

Level of Educational Pursuit	Frequency	Percentage
Low (20.00-33.3)	24	17.9
Moderate (33.4- 66.5)	76	56.2
High (66.6-100.0)	35	25.9
Total	135	100.0

Table 2 presents the level of educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State. The result shows that out of 135 teachers sampled, 24 representing 17.9 percent indicated low level of educational pursuit. Those who indicated moderate were 76 representing 56.2 percent while those who reported high level of educational pursuit were 35 representing 25.9 percent. This shows that the level of educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State was moderate.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between child right violation and educational pursuit.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating to child right violation was computed using items 1–25 in Section B of “Child Right Violation Questionnaire (CRVQ)” while educational pursuit was obtained using items 1- 20 in Section B of “Students’ Educational Pursuit Questionnaire(SEPQ)”. These sets of scores were subsequently subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result is shown in table 3.

Table 3: Child right violation and educational pursuit

Variable	No of schools	Mean	SD	r	P-value
Child right violation	45	42.96	4.88	-0.538*	0.013
Educational pursuit	45	71.03	4.60		

*p<0.05

Table 3 shows that the computed r-value (-0.538) is significant at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant inversely relationship between child right violation and educational pursuit.

Discussion

There was significant relationship between child right violation and students' educational pursuit. This implies that child right violation in terms of child labour, sexual violent, school bullying, sexual violence, child neglect will improve or have direct negative relationship on the educational pursuit of student. What may be responsible for this finding is the fact that secondary school system may not succeed in terms of improved school enrolment without proper protection of child rights. Students may not be able to pursue their education if the school fails to protect the rights of every child. This finding is in agreement with the study of Obekpa (2011) which discovered that violation of child right plays a significant role in the educational pursuit of secondary school students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded in the study that the relationship between child right violation and educational pursuit of secondary school students were moderate. Child right protection is an important factor that contributed to educational pursuit of secondary school students in Ekiti State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the recommendations were as follows:

1. Principals should ensure effective supervision of teachers and students in the school that will aid proper monitoring of teachers and students' activities and government and school management should prioritize students' welfare for higher students' educational pursuit.
2. Teachers should avoid violent discipline of child right violation among secondary school students.
3. Moreover, teachers should ensure that the level of educational pursuit among secondary school students in Ekiti State is high.
4. Also, Government should formulate policies that will protect school children from child labour and Secondary school principals should endeavour to ensure that discipline that commensurate with offences committed by students is meted out on them.

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