



PREVALENCE OF STUDENTS' DROP OUT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EBONYI STATE



Emeka Nwinyinya (Ph.D);

Alexander Okezie Onwu (Ph.D)

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Ntasiobi, C. N.Igu (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Management and Foundational Studies,
Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike, Ebonyi State.
All correspondence to: Emeka Nwinyinya (Ph.D), Email:nwinyinyaemeka@gmail.com

Abstract

The study investigated prevalence of students' dropout in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. Three research questions guided the study. The population of this study comprised all the 120,882 students in 222 public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The instrument tagged Prevalence of Students Dropout Scale (PSDS) was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument incorporated other useful data from the Students' Annual Census Report Chart, Students Records. The instrument was presented for face validation by three experts, one expert from Measurement and Evaluation option of Science Education Department and two experts from Educational Administration and Planning (option) in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in Ebonyi State University. The reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha Analysis yielded a coefficient of 0.76. The data collected was analyzed using frequency and percentage to answer the research questions 1, 2 and 3 on prevalence of students' dropout. Graphs were also used to illustrate the results. The findings among others revealed that the prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools by education zones, recorded high students' dropout in Abakaliki, Afikpo and Onueke zones in Ebonyi State. The finding is indeed worrisome and could be detrimental to the future of Nigerian students, especially in Ebonyi State. Among other recommendations, special intervention fund should be made available by the State government to revive the schools that are about to collapse and possibly cater for the educational needs of students in order to reduce high prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Keywords: Secondary school and prevalence of students' dropout.

Introduction

A student who completes secondary school is likely to acquire some measures of competency, life skills and lifelong education required to become useful in Nigeria. This has become necessary since Nigeria government, across the world have demonstrated commitment in the development of secondary schools by providing them with reading materials, home grown feeding programmes, building of classrooms, equipping schools with computers, employed more teachers, among others. However the efforts of Nigeria government to ensure that every individual in society receives basic education seems to be jeopardized with many students likely to drop out of school.

School dropout has become a critical issue confronting the education system across the world, Nigeria inclusive. School dropout could be defined as a student's untimely removal from school (Achilike & Achilike, 2016). A dropout is a student who abandons school before the end of the final year of the educational stage or cycle in which the individual is enrolled (UNESCO 2013). When some students drop out of the school, they may find it difficult to go back to the school and such could deny

them the opportunity to receive a diploma or certificate of completion. In other words, there is no doubt that any student who withdraws from school prematurely ends up not obtaining any certificate of graduation. According to Ajaja (2012), the concept of dropout in the educational system has piqued the curiosity of many academic professionals and the general public in terms of potential solutions. In the school context, the term "dropout" could be refers to individuals who quit school without permission from the administration, either to attend another school or to stay at home. It is also necessary to note that dropping out of the school cannot just happen without some related causes.

The causes of school dropout affecting the education system in Nigeria may be numerous. Accordingly, the major social causes of dropping out of school include reduced political participation, increased demand for social services, increased crime rates and poor levels of health (Azam, 2007). Others are lower earnings, teeming youth unemployment, prospects of unholy behaviours and greater likelihood of health problems (Thurton, Donaldson, Coladarci and Davis, 2006 Ogiri, 2016). It is clear from the foregoing, that by dropping out of school, most students severely limit their chances of economic and social well-being in the future. This is in tandem with the view of Maton & Moore, (2010) that the problem of dropping out of school indeed has negative consequences on both the individual and society and therefore needs to be the concern of every member of the society. In addition, dropout is not a mere problem that affects an individual but it is a problem that affects the entire community as it has been noticed that certain dropouts get involved in crime and other social vices (Jamil, Waters and Soyibo, 2010). This has become a worrisome situation because (UNESCO, 2013) reported that the population of dropouts in secondary school is alarming across the world. This by implication may result in low levels of secondary school completion. With the UNESCO report of dropout and non-completion of secondary school education, many individuals leave school without obtaining even the most fundamental skills. Failure to complete secondary school not only limits future career opportunities for children but also represents a significant drain on the limited resources that countries have for the provision of secondary education. However, Ogiri, (2016) opines that a study of this nature is pertinent and crucial as it is meant to raise awareness concerning school dropout and to understand more specifically the phenomenon of school dropout in public secondary schools, especially in Ebonyi State.

In Ebonyi State, the case of school dropout is a critical issue affecting many secondary schools. It is also necessary to note that school dropout of students in secondary schools has been observed to exist. It is very common to see secondary school aged children on the streets and public places in Ebonyi State during school hours; even during exams. Observably, the schools in Ebonyi State showed that every year some students for one reason or the other stop coming to school. The challenge so far is to ascertain if the existence of school dropout could be prevalent. Prevalence is something that exists or is very common at a particular time or in a particular place (Hornby, 2010). Prevalence is the percentage to which a population is affected with a particular problem. In this paper, prevalence means the percentage of students' dropout mostly in Ebonyi State. However, to the best knowledge of the researchers, past related studies supporting this study remains largely unexplored with different socio-cultural background and methodology. Again, the prevalence of school dropout among secondary school students has not been widely ascertain. It is on this ground therefore, that investigating on the prevalence of students' dropout in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State becomes necessary.

Statement of the Problem

The overarching idea of Nigeria's educational system is centered on two fundamental issues: integrating the individual into a sound and successful citizen, and providing equitable educational opportunities for all citizens at levels of education mostly in secondary school. Secondary school is an important component of the Nigerian educational system. As a result, secondary education has been treated seriously from its inception, not only as a necessary certification for decent jobs, but also as a gateway to sound higher education, both academic and professional. However, it has been observed that secondary school dropout rates in Ebonyi State seem to be increasing. Every educational zone in the state is seen to have experience dropout of students in secondary school. It is very common to see secondary school aged children on the streets and public places in Ebonyi State during school hours; even during exam. Observably, some schools showed that every year some students for one reason or

the other stop coming to school. Efforts by the teachers and school authorities appear not yielding any positive result to keep some of these students in school or help those who have dropped out to come back to school. Many studies may have been conducted on issues related to school dropout in Nigeria but it seem that the prevalence of school dropout among secondary school students has not been widely explored especially in Ebonyi State. This however inspired the interest of the present study to investigate on students' dropout in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State

Purpose of the Study

The following specific purposes guided the study:

- (1) Ascertain prevalence of students' dropout in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State by education zone.
- (2) Determine the prevalence of secondary school dropout in Ebonyi State Local Government Areas.
- (3) Determine the gender distribution of students dropping out of public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- (1) What is prevalence of dropout in secondary schools in Ebonyi State by education zones
- (2) What is the prevalence of students dropping out of secondary school in Ebonyi State by Local Government Area?
- (3) What is the gender distribution of secondary school dropouts in Ebonyi State?

Methods

Ethical Considerations

The researchers adhered to the ethical consideration of conducting research in the secondary school education board, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The researchers ensured that the useful information of the respondents of this study were strictly confidential

Design of the study

The researchers adopted a descriptive survey research design which was used to elicit information from the respondents based on the research objectives of this study. It also seek to collect data and describe in a systematic manner what exists or absence of what is being investigated (Ali, 2006; Nworgu 2015). This design is deemed appropriate for this study because it merely examined the prevalence of students dropping out of secondary schools in Ebonyi State, with no variable modification.

Study Area and population

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Ebonyi State which is one of the states in the South Eastern region of Nigeria. The state is famously known as the "Salt of the Nation," called after massive salt lake deposits at Okposi and Uburu Communities in Ebonyi State's Ohaozara Local Government Area (FGN, 2015). The population of this study comprised all the 120,882 students in 222 public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Instruments of the study

The instrument tagged Prevalence of Students Dropout Scale (PSDS) was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument incorporated other useful data from the Students' Annual Census Report Chart, and Students Records (SEB, 2019/2020) academic session.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was presented for face validation by three experts, one expert from Measurement and Evaluation option of Science Education Department and two experts from Educational Administration and Planning (option) in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in

Ebonyi State University. The necessary corrections were acknowledged before incorporated it in the final version of the instrument.

Reliability

The reliability of the instrument was trial tested and further subjected to Cronbach Alpha Analysis which yielded a coefficient of 0.76.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers used six research assistants; two for each of the zones Afikpo zone, Onueke and Abakaliki zones. In order to gain access to the respondents (teachers) two letters of introduction were collected from the Head, Department of Educational Foundations, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. A letter was presented to Chief Supervising Principals (CSPs) of the three education zones requesting for the release of the zones' annual census reports on students enrolment form 2015 to 2019 academic sessions. These letters help in gaining access to the information as regards this study..

Data Analysis

After the returned copies of the questionnaire were cross-checked for completeness of responses, the data collected was analyzed using frequency and percentage to answer the research questions 1, 2 and 3 on prevalence of students' dropout. Graphs were also used to illustrate the results

Results

The results of data analyses are presented in tables under the research questions as follows:

Research Question One. What is Prevalence of Dropout from Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State by Zones?

Table1: Summary of Prevalence of Students' Dropout from 2015- 2019/20 Sessions by Zones

Zones	Sessions Prevalence (%)			
	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Abakaliki	2.84	12.98	-11.71	26.35
Afikpo	6.8	0.68	13.56	-0.85
Onueke	-11.22	4.03	0.88	10.16

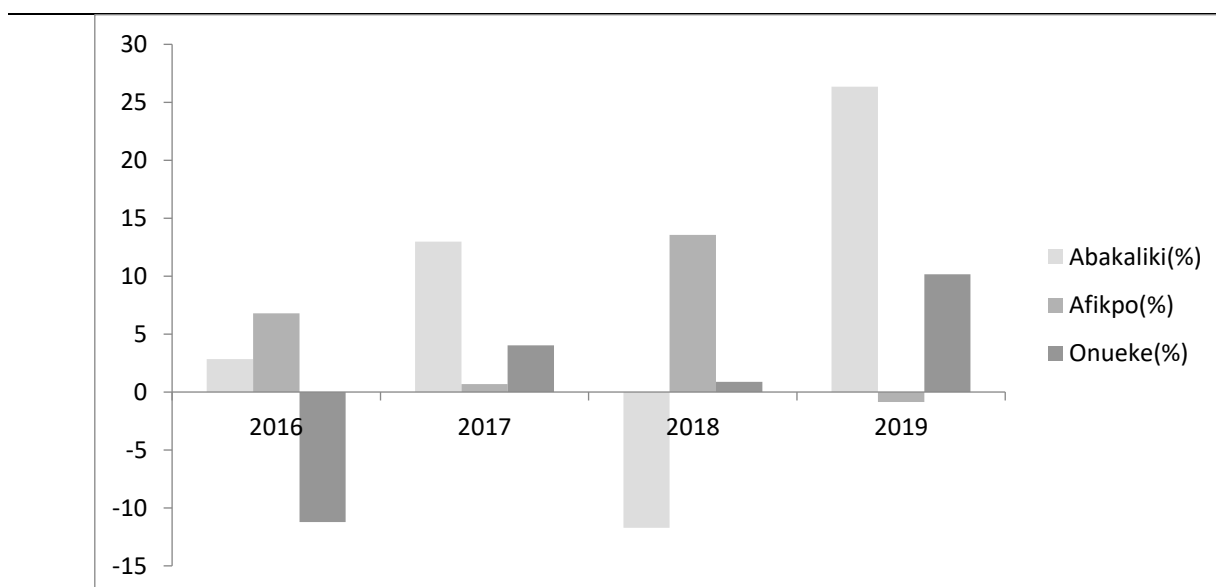


Figure 1: Bar Chart illustration of the Students' Dropout by Educational Zones in Ebonyi State

Table 1 show that Prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools in Ebonyi State from 2015 to 2019/20 academic sessions by Zones. In 2016, 2017 and 2019 Abakaliki Zone recorded prevalence rate of 2.84%, 12.98% and 26.35% respectively for students' dropout from Public Secondary Schools. In 2018, the table showed -11.71% which indicated no record of students' dropout in the public secondary schools in the Zone. The result is illustrated in figure 1. Afikpo Zone in 2016, 2017 and 2018 recorded 6.8%, 0.68% and 13.56% respectively as prevalence of students' dropout from all the public secondary schools in 2019, -0.85% was recorded which indicated no record of students' dropout in the public secondary schools in Zone. Figure 1 depicts the end product. In 2017, 2018, and 2019, the recorded prevalence of student dropout from all public secondary schools in Onueke Zone was 4.03 percent, 0.88 percent, and 10.16 percent, respectively. In 2016, the table shows -11.22% which indicated no record of students' dropout from public secondary schools in the Zone.

4.1.2 Research Question Two. What is the prevalence of students' drop out from secondary schools in Ebonyi State by Local Government Areas?

Table 2: Summary of Prevalence of Students' Dropout from 2015- 2019 Sessions by LGAs

LGAs	2016	2017	2018	2019
ABAKALIKI	2.66	1.31	4.95	15.23
EBONYI	4.61	21.47	-10.18	16.84
IZZI	15.28	-3.69	-16.79	46.84
OHAUKWU	-22.4	27.54	-40.36	34.29
AFIKPO	3.47	1.84	12.69	-2.9
NORTH				
AFIKPO	7.29	-0.62	22.0	3.60
SOUTH				
IVO	4.6	-8.88	1.09	-11.23
OHAOZARA	5.93	3.54	10.62	12.78
ONICHA	12.67	-0.98	17.72	-2.84
EZZA NORTH	-13.06	-1.28	4.55	20.16
EZZA SOUTH	-14.21	-6.09	-2.74	14.23
IKWO	-21.57	19.17	6.64	10.73
ISHIELU	9.78	-0.98	-8.64	-11.81

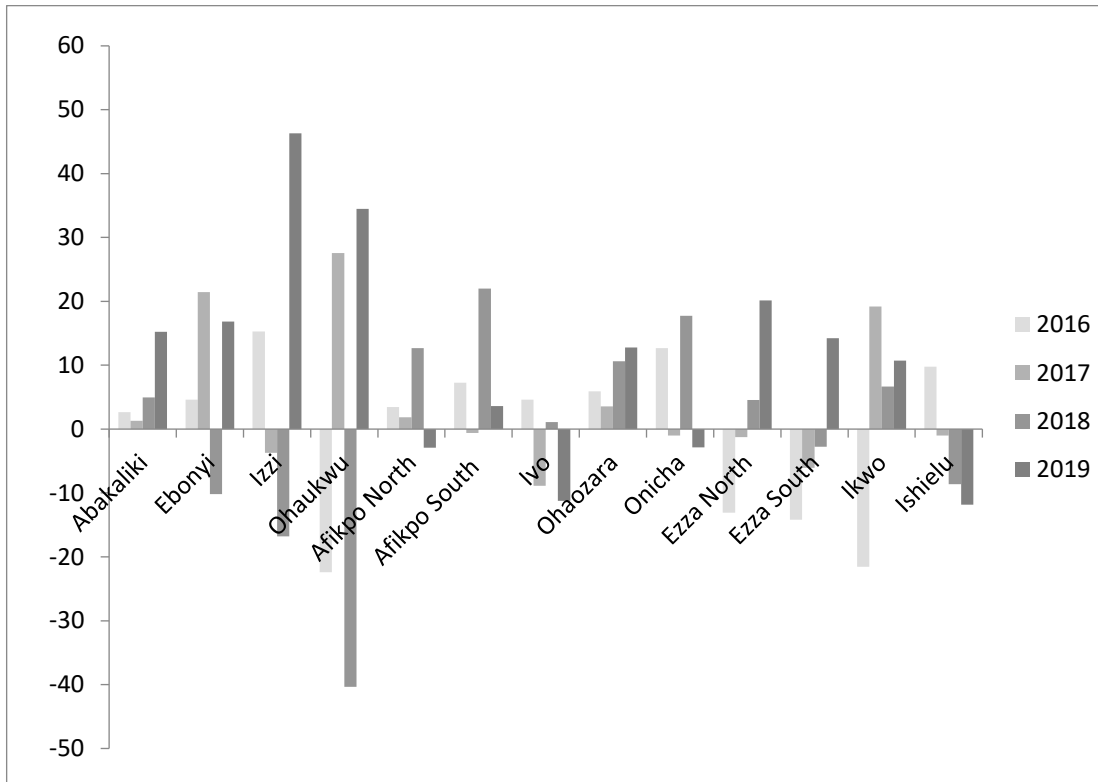


Figure 2: Bar Chart illustration of the Students' Dropout by LGAs in Ebonyi State

Table 2 shows that prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary school in Ebonyi State from 2016 to 2019 academic sessions by Local Government Areas. In 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, Abakaliki LGA recorded prevalence rate of 2.66%, 1.31%, 4.95% and 15.23% respectively for students' dropout from public secondary schools in Ebonyi State shows that prevalence of students dropout is gradually dwindling by every session and attention needs to give them. In 2016 and 2019 showed prevalence rate of 15.28% and 46.84%, for students' dropout need urgent intervention by the government and stakeholders in public secondary schools in Izzi LGA. Ohaukwu in 2017 and 2019 recorded second highest prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools in Ebonyi state 27.54% and 34.29% show that attention should be given to them to curtail increase in dropout in the LGA. Ohaozara LGA in 2016 to 2019 sessions recorded prevalence of students' dropout in all the years and it calls for attention to dwindle the dropout rate. In 2016 and 2018, Onicha LGA recorded prevalence rate of 12.67 and 17.72 showed that effort of government and others are not enough to reduce prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary school in the LGA. Ezza North LGA in 2018 and 2019 shows 4.55% and 20.16% deserved to tackle students' dropout prevalence rate. In 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively, the table shows that 19.17%, 6.645 and 10.74% recorded year to year increase in prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary school in Ikwo LGA.

4.1.3 Research Question Three. What is the prevalence of Students Dropout from Public Secondary School in Ebonyi State by Students' Gender

Table 3 Prevalence of Students' Drop out from Public Secondary School by Gender

GE	2015	2016		Prev		2017	Prev		2018	Prejv		2019	Prevalen	
ND	NO (%)	NO(%)		alenc		NO(%)	alenc		NO(%)	alenc		NO (%)	ce	
ER					e			e			e			
M	3195	48.	31	48.1	(0.49	29	50.	(1.62	27	43.	(6.95	23	52.	(5.25)
AL	5	592	08	02	%)	21	84	)	54	89	%)	84	96	
E			5			0	7		8	0		4	7	
FE	3380	51.	33	51.8	(0.49	28	49.	(2.74	34	55.	(6.64)	26	47.	(8.76)
M	6	407	53	97	)	23	15	)	76	79		85	03	
AL			8			6	2		5	0		3	2	
E														

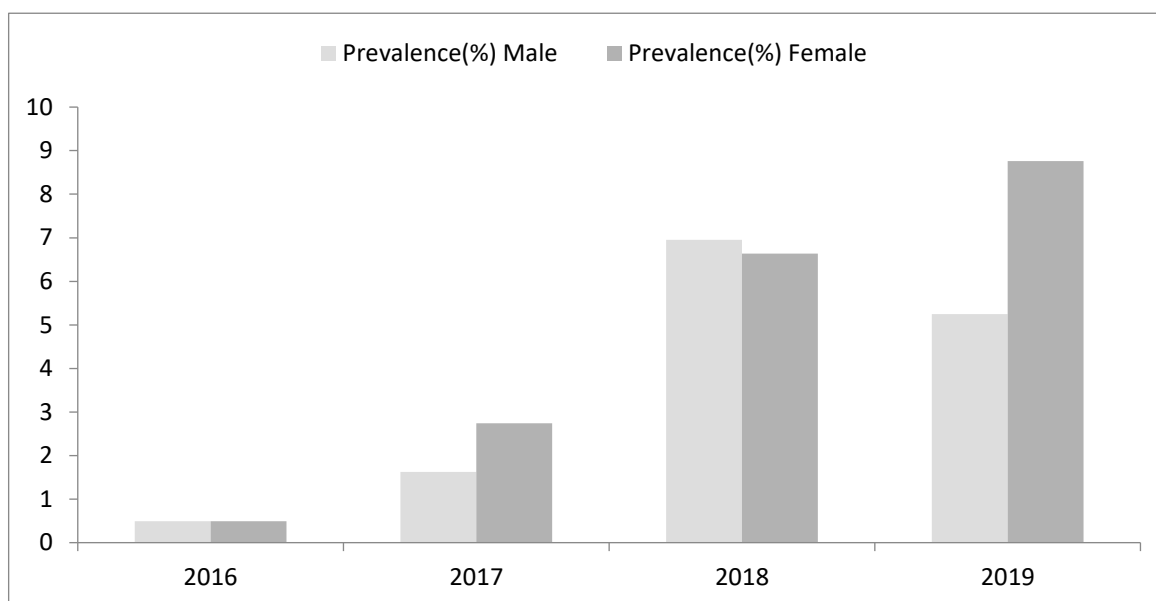


Figure 3: Bar Chart illustration of Students' Dropout from Public Secondary School by Gender

Table 3 shows that the male prevalence of dropout from public schools in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 was 0.49%, 1.62%, 6.96% and 5.24% respectively. The female students' dropout from Public Secondary School was 0.49%, 2.74%, 6.64% and 8.76%. This reveals that female students dropped out more from Public secondary school in the years of the study cumulatively.

Discussions

Prevalence of Students' Dropout from Public Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State by Zones.

The result shows on Prevalence of Students' Dropout from Public Secondary School in Ebonyi State from 2015 to 2019 academic sessions by educational zones recorded high in 2016, 2017 and 2019 in Abakaliki Zone. In Afikpo Zone, in 2016, 2017 also recorded high prevalence rate of students' dropout from all the public secondary schools in the zone. Onueke Zone in 2017, 2018 and 2019 recorded prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools in the zone. The high prevalence of school dropout of students recorded in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State by zones is indeed a worrisome situation that may affect the progress of the country and the general society. This is because education is the key to national development and so, any attempt to take it for granted could be disastrous to the future well-being of Nigerian students mostly in Ebonyi State. Therefore, the finding of this study is in tandem with the view of Maton & Moore, (2010) that the problem of dropping out of school exist and it has negative consequences on both the individual and society. In addition,

dropout of school is not a mere problem that affects students alone but it is a problem that affects the entire community as it has been noticed that students that dropouts of school get involved in crime and other social vices (Jamil, Waters and Soyibo, 2010). The finding of this study further agreed with the (UNESCO, 2013) reported that the population of dropouts in secondary school is alarming across the world. This by implication may result in low levels of secondary school completion. With the UNESCO report of dropout and non-completion of secondary school education, many individuals leave school without obtaining even the most fundamental skills. Failure to complete secondary school not only limits future career opportunities for children but also represents a significant drain on the limited resources that countries have for the provision of secondary education.

Prevalence of Students' Dropout from Public Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State by Local Government Areas

The result shows on the Prevalence of Students' Dropout from Public Secondary School in Ebonyi State from 2015 to 2019 academic sessions by Local Government Areas. In 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, Abakaliki LGA recorded prevalence rate of students' dropout from public secondary schools in the Local Government Area. The rate of dropout in 2016 and 2019 shows that there was high prevalence rate of students' dropout that needed corroborative urgent attention by the government stakeholders and state ministry of education to come for aid of the LGA before grasses will take over the school premises due to high rate of dropout from schools in Izzi LGA. The result also shows in Ohaukwu in 2017 and 2019 recorded second highest prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools in Ebonyi state and serious attention should be given to them to curtail increase in students' dropout in the LGA etc. Onicha LGA also recorded prevalence rate of students' dropout from schools and effort of governments and others are not enough to reduce prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary school in the LGA. The point is that anything, including the high rate of dropping out of school which affected students mostly in the rural or local areas is becoming a critical issue of concern. This could be very dangerous to the future of the students if not addressed. This by implication tends to limit the students chances of economic and social well-being in the future. However, Ogiri, (2016) opines that a study of this nature is pertinent and crucial as it is meant to raise awareness concerning school dropout and to understand more specifically the phenomenon of school dropout in public secondary schools, especially in Ebonyi State.

Prevalence of Students' Dropout from Public Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State by Gender

The data mainly demonstrates that the male student frequency of dropout schools in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 was significant, particularly in 2018 and 2019. This is consistent with Juneja's (2001) observation that if a school is considered too far away from home, young girls drop out more frequently due to their vulnerability to sexual harassment by rapists (Colclough et al., 2000; Nekatibeb, 2002). During the study period, the female prevalence of students dropping out of public secondary schools was significantly greater than the male prevalence of students dropping out of public secondary schools. In a practical approach, the government must consider sensitization to support girl-child education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools by education zones, local Government Areas and gender recorded students' dropout in Abakaliki, Afikpo and Onueke zones. However, Onueke, Izzi, Onicha, Ezza North and others recorded greater percentage of students' dropout from public schools and the percentage of female students' dropout is more than male students.

Recommendations

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Special intervention fund should be made available by the state government to revive the schools that are about to collapse and possibly cater for the educational needs of students in order to reduce high prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.



2. Considering the high prevalence of students' dropout from public secondary schools by Local Government Areas, in Ebonyi State, there should be awareness campaign on the danger of dropping out of school. In addition, Authorities of Local government areas with the support of State government, NGOs/corporate organizations should introduce free education and scholarships to the students who are prone to drop out of the school in Ebonyi State.
3. Government at all levels should give adequate attention to gender related issues and most importantly protect the right of female students by allowing law to take its course on abuse of female students and that will encourage them to bounce back in their numbers to school for learning.

Limitations of the study

Like other quantitative studies, one of the limitations of this study is the inability of the researchers to cover more years of information related to the prevalence of school dropout in Ebonyi State.

Again, the inability of using complex research analytical tools (i.e., using both quantitative and qualitative approach) in this study may not give the generalizability of the findings.

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