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## **Economic Recession, Hawking and Students Dropout of School in the Five Eastern States of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was carried out against the observed increasing number of students who drop out of school with the objectives of investigating the dropout rate and the extent economic recession is responsible for students' dropping out of school and going hawking in the five Eastern States of Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A random sample of 250 teachers (148 public and 102 private) drawn from private and public schools and a 7-item structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.79 as well as data on school enrollment change between 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 academic years were used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using mean and t-test conducted at 0.05 probability level. Findings were that economic recession negatively affects school enrollment and has pulled many students out of school and pushed them into the streets to hawk. The educational implications of these are increasing number of illiterates and criminals in the society and general backwardness in the future educational development of these states. It was recommended among other things that government should make educational policies that will have broad financial sponsorship scope to avoid the negative influences of economic recession affecting the formal school system.*

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**Key words:** *economic recession, hawking, school dropout and recession-occasioned hawking.*

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### **Introduction**

School dropout is a universal phenomenon in almost all countries of the world and has attracted the attention of researchers (Ashimolowo *et al.*, 2010). Both in times of economic boom and times of recession, students dropout of school for reasons which could be as result of parental poverty (Mathias and Dada, 2013); sickness (ANON, 2016), or for some other reasons. Before recession set in in Nigeria, the President of the country Goodluck Jonathan had raised alarm over the high rate of school dropout in some states of the federation. Now that economic recession has set in, one wonders what the situation is, considering the effects of economic recession on household income. Within the area of study, it is observed that civil servants have not been paid their salaries for the past 8 months, retirees for the past one year (with the exception of Anambra State). Productivity within the economic activity cycle is very low. Purchasing power of people is very low. Many families are not able to afford 2 "good" meals a day.

In the face of all these difficulties, many parents are not able to continue sustaining their children at school. Their "wise option" is withdrawing their children from school and sending

them into the streets to hawk goods to make money to help feed the family. In consequence, many children of school age are seen roaming the streets hawking during school hours when they should be in school studying. Many of these children may not return to school again. This phenomenon contributes to increase the number of illiterates in the society in future. These observations have attracted the attention of these researchers to investigate the influence of recession-caused hawking on the number of students who dropout of school and the involvement of these students in street hawking.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study was carried out with two objectives of finding out:

- 1) If the number of school dropouts within the period of Nigeria's 2015/2016 economic recession is increasing or decreasing;
- 2) The extent these school dropouts are involved in street hawking.

### **Keywords**

The following key words will be seen within this study: Economic recession, hawking, school dropout, recession-occasion hawking.

**Economic Recession:** Economic recession is a significant decline in economic activities across the economy, lasting longer than a few months. It is visible in decline in industrial production, employment, real income and wholesale-retail trade (Osolor, 2016).

**Hawking:** A hawker is a vendor of merchandise that can easily be moved from one place to another. Therefore, street hawking entails selling of various items on the street such as satchet water, bottled water, bottled or canned drinks, beef rolls, sausage rolls, sweets, gums, sunglasses, phone accessories, and others (Komolafe, 2015).

**School dropout:** School dropout is the situation where a student withdraws from school before completing a course of instruction.

**Recession-occasioned hawking:** In this study, this term refers to one getting involved in hawking activities as a result of the hardship caused by economic recession.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Students' drop out of school has become a serious problem that has occasioned researchers to investigate the causes (Ashimolowo, Aromolaran, and Inegbedion, 2010), effects on students (Mathias and Dada, 2013) and to proffer solutions to the menace (Hoyano and Keenam, 2007). Researches have shown that hawking is one of the many factors that pull students out of school (Faruta, 2013). Others include the nature of the learning environment (Ekanem, Apebende and Ekefre, 2008), child labour (Anumaka, 2012), socio-status of parents (Okoji, 2013) and family structure (Ikodiya, 2016).

Recently in Nigeria generally and in the South Eastern States of Nigeria in particular effects of economic recession have made many parents unable to pay their children's' school fees. Parents, particularly civil servants and retirees from public sector of the economy have been so impoverished by months of unpaid salaries, pensions and other allowances accruing to them (ANON, 2016) that they have no other means of meeting up with their family needs than sending their children/wards to the streets to hawk assorted wares. Many of these students

hawk in the morning before going to school, some leave the school and go to hawk when they feel that no serious studies are going on in the school, another group go hawking after school while so many absent themselves from school completely and go hawking for a whole day. Continuous absenteeism from school emanating from economic-recession-hawking leads to students' dropout of school.

Parents who have regular means of livelihood like civil servants, renown traders, artisans, and craftsmen have hitherto refused their children from going to hawk because of its ugly consequences which are either social, academic, or psychological. With economic recession in Nigeria some of these parents, particularly the civil servants, who are owed months of salaries (ANON, 2016) have no choice but to send their children/wards to the streets to hawk some goods to make money to help the family, especially in feeding, having closed their eyes to the negative effects.

Apel (2009) enumerated the effects of street hawking on students when he wrote that apart from denying children basic education, hawking by secondary school students exposes them to physical danger such as road accident, exposure to communicable diseases, environmental pollutants, poor academic performance, psychological problems like smoking, unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, low school enrolment and other vices. The high rate of indiscipline, drug abuse, prostitution and stealing going on in the society can be attributed to the biting effects of economic hardships (Crosson, 2008; Onwuzuluike, 2007 and Hughes, 2009).

Considering the fact that hawking by students had long existed in South Eastern States of Nigeria and that all the years gone no solution had been found to it, now that economic recession has set in what the state is in this area becomes a disturbing matter. More so, what the state of students' academic performance presently is in this era of economic recession needs to be investigated. Finding answers to these problems is what this research is all about.

## **Methodology**

To carry out this study the descriptive survey research design was adopted. This is because the study described the in-situ situation of hawking occasioned by economic recession and its influence on the number of students who drop out of school. This study concentrated on students within the age bracket of 7 years to 15 years. This age bracket is assumed to be more vulnerable to use for hawking by parents/guardians and also the group mostly affected by parental socio-economic conditions.

The academic years 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 were chosen for the study because they form transition academic years between two governments of no economic recession and economic recession in Nigeria. The study used 5 schools (two public and three private) randomly selected from each of the 5 South Eastern States of Nigeria (giving 25 schools altogether) for the study. From each of the 25 schools 10 teachers were purposively sampled to give a sample size of 250 teachers.

Research question one was answered using absolute differences in school enrollment at the end of the second term of those academic sessions 2014/15 and 2015/16. These were used as the index of dropout rate as they were converted to percentage. A 7-item structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.79 was used for data collection to answer research question two. A cut-off mean of 2.50 was used to decide on items accepted or rejected. Students' t-test conducted at 0.05 level of significance was used to test the hypothesis.

### Research Questions/Hypothesis

The following two research questions and one hypothesis were stated to guide this study:

1. To what extent has economic recession influenced the number of students who drop out of school?
2. To what extent is economic recession responsible for the number of students who drop out of school and go hawking?

### Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of private and public secondary school teachers on the influence of economic recession on the number of students who drop out of school and go hawking.  $P < 0.05$ .

### Data Presentation

#### Economic Recession and the Rate of Students drop out of school.

**Table 1: A table showing School Enrolments in 2014/15 and 2015/16 and the Rate of Students Dropout in South Eastern States of Nigeria**

Academic years	Abia	Imo	Anambra	Ebonyi	Enugu
2014/2015	1445	1562	1479	1125	2530
2015/2016	1250	1435	1422	1011	2396
Dropout Rate	195	127	57	114	134
% Dropout Rates	13.5	8.13	3.85	10.13	5.30

Results of data analysis presented in table 1 showed that there is an increase in the rate of student dropout from school between 2014/2015 academic and 2015/2016 academic year. The table shows that the state of Abia has a drop out rate of 195 or 13.5 percent, Anambra has a rate of 57 or 3.85 while Ebonyi and Enugu respectively have dropout rates of 114 or 10.13 and 134 or 5.3 percent.

#### Extent Economic Recession is Responsible for Students' dropout of School and Hawking

**Table 2: A table showing Results of Data Analysed the Extent Economic Recession is Responsible for Dropping out of school and Hawking.**

S/N	Items	X	R/A
1	I see many of my students on the streets hawking.	3.21	A
2	I feel economic hardship is responsible for students dropping out of school	3.94	A
3	Economic hardship is responsible for my students going out hawk in the streets.	4.00	A
4	Parents who had hitherto refused their children going to hawk now send them to go and hawk.	2.97	A
5	Many teachers in my school equally send their children to go and hawk.	2.64	A
6	Economic recession leading to non-payment of salaries is responsible for students dropping out of school.	3.45	A

7	The number of students who hawk in the streets will continue to increase with persistent economic hardship	4.00	A
<b>Cluster mean</b>		3.46	

Results of data analysis presented in table 2 show that the teachers agreed to a very great extent that economic recession is responsible for students dropping out of school and going to hawk on the streets. This was observed from the cluster mean which had a value of 3.46. The table showed that teachers see their students hawking in the streets (mean, 3.21). Their feeling is that economic hardship is responsible for the students dropping out of school (mean, 3.94). They also think that economic hardship is responsible for students going to hawk on the streets (mean, 4.00). Parents who had before this time refused their children going to hawk now on their own send the children to go and hawk (mean 2.97). Teachers equally send their children to go and hawk (mean, 2.64). Economic recession leading to non-payment of salaries is responsible for students dropping out of school and going to hawk (mean, 3.45). The number of students who hawk on the streets will continue to increase with persistent economic recession (mean, 4.00).

### Hypothesis

**Table 3: Results of Hypothesis Test on the opinion of Private and Public Secondary School teachers on the Influence of Economic Recession on Students Hawking**

Sources	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	df		Tcal	crit	Decision
Private School Teachers	100	3.00	0.10	148	<0.05	1.32	2.00	Do not reject Ho
Public School Teachers	150	2.98	0.14					

Result of hypothesis test presented in table 3 showed that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of public and private secondary school teachers on the influence of economic recession on the number of students who go out of school to hawk. This implies that both public and private secondary school teachers express the same opinion on the influence of economic recession on the number of students who leave school to go and hawk. This was observed from the calculated t of 1.32 which is less than the critical t at 0.05 level of significance.

### Discussion of Findings

Based on this study the researcher observed that there is a decline in school enrollment in the five South Eastern States of Nigeria which are Abia, Ebonyi, Anambra, Imo and Enugu States. This trend is an anomaly in a country where the fertility rate of adolescents is high and where the general population is on the increase. This according to Besong (2010) is not good for Nigeria's general development. Besong (2010) opined that this trend will impact negatively on students' access to formal education. The abnormality of this trend stems from the fact that the students' enrollment decline in public schools cannot be attributed to transfer to private schools and vice versa. This tallies with the results of the hypothesis test where both the private

and the public secondary school teachers expressed the same opinion economic recession is responsible for the students' dropout of schools and going to hawk on the streets.

Teachers in this study possess dual personality as members of the school community as well as members of the larger society. They observe events in the schools and the larger society too. In this study they agreed that they see their students hawking and even agreed that parents who before this time did not allow their children to go and hawk have started doing otherwise. More so, the teachers unanimously agreed that economic recession is responsible for the increase in the number of students who drop out of school and get involved in street hawking. Hughes (2009) had observed this trend during economic recession and said that child abuse is rife in the period of economic hardship street hawking appears to be an easy means of sustaining the family during economic hardship (Fawole and Asumgbade, 2003) and has been embraced by parents as panacea to economic hard hit.

### **Implications of the Study**

An educational implication of this study is that economic recession is experienced in all the states studied and economic recession has similar influence on school enrollment, hawking and school dropout conditions. The five states will likely suffer the brunt of having more illiterate persons created during this economic recession when their economies recover. Further, the states will suffer in future fighting adult illiteracy rather than concentrating and directing their resources towards improved educational developments.

Creating more illiterates through school dropouts will likely accelerate the emergence of more criminals and social misfits thereby slowing down social and economic development in these areas.

### **Conclusions**

Economic recession has drastically affected educational development. Teachers are owed months of salaries; their children go and hawk to help make ends meet; parents cannot pay their children's school fees or buy learning kits for them. In consequence, many children are dropping out of school. As a result of these drop outs from school more illiterates and potential criminals are raised in the States. This is also creating future educational problems for the States.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this study the following recommendations were made:

For sustainable development in education government should make educational policies that will not allow any socio-economic problems that arises in the society to easily influence the education system.

Parents should be creative in thinking to find after-school works that will enable their children/wards to contribute to their family upkeeps instead of sending them to the streets to hawk.

Considering the negative consequences of street hawking and unwanted pregnancies by female students, parents should shun sending their children/wards into the streets to hawk goods.

Students who drop out of school because of economic recession or some other thing else, should not see it as the end to formal education but should be advised to sustain their interest in schooling and to resume formal education when circumstances improve.

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