

**FACTORS AFFECTING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS'  
ENROLMENT AND RETENTION IN SCHOOLS IN IREPODUN,  
KWARA STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*Education for All (EFA) is an initiative which aimed at bringing educational benefits as well as promoting inclusive education among children of school ages. These according to researchers have not been achieved in many countries including Nigeria. Despite efforts by international organizations, children of school ages in Irepodun, Kwara State still roam about the street during school hours. Studies have shown poor enrolment and retention in secondary schools in Nigeria. It, therefore, becomes imperative to investigate factors affecting students' enrolment and retention in Irepodun to complement existing knowledge.*

*Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Two research questions were raised to guide the study. The study sample comprised 300 participants (40 school principals, 60 secondary school teachers, 70 secondary school students, 30 youths who had never been to secondary school, 30 youths who had dropped out of secondary school, 40 parents and 30 school proprietors). Participants were selected using opportunity sampling techniques. Data was collected using interview questions with 8 items responded to in a face-to-face interview designed by the researchers. Data from the interview were analyzed qualitatively using content and thematic analysis as well as frequency counts and percentage. Findings from the study revealed that parents, school, students, economic and government or political factors play notable roles in the poor state of enrolment and retention in schools in Irepodun, Kwara State. It was recommended for government to stabilize educational policies and properly educate parents, guardians and children on the importance of education.*

**Keywords:** Education for All (EFA), factors, enrolment, retention, education, socio-economic characteristics

## **Introduction**

Education has been seen globally as a ladder to a nation's development. This connotes that, for a nation to be developed, her citizens must be educated. Despite this crucial assertion, millions of school age children are not enrolled in school. This has been a global challenge as many communities and nations are being affected by low enrolment or retention in schools (Carr-Hill, 2005). According to the Chronic Poverty Research Centre's (2008) submission, many school age children are out of school or are unable to complete the basic education. The Education for All (EFA) goals mainly address issues affecting enrolment and retention of school age children in schools. Education for All (EFA) is an initiative which aimed at bringing educational benefits as well as promoting inclusive education among children of school ages. These according to researchers have not been achieved in many countries including Nigeria. Despite efforts by international organizations, considerable number of children of school age in Irepodun, Kwara State still roams about the street during school hours.

It is disheartening to see students of school age hawking and playing on the streets while some are on their way to farm when their peers are in school. Studies, however, have shown poor enrolment and retention in secondary schools in Irepodun to support this observation. Report from the Kwara state ministry of educational (2016) revealed an average of 41,690 primary school pupils, 19,351 junior school students and 18,229 senior school students. This report shows a decreasing trend in students' enrolment and retention in secondary schools. Consequently, students' enrolment tend to reduce as they go higher academically. This depopulates the school and increases the population of dropout (youths) who might pose a threat to the society due to idleness. In a bid to ascertain factors that may affect students' enrolment in Irepodun, Adeosun (2014) submitted that the social and economic condition in Kwara state is more likely to contribute to poor enrolment and retention of students in Irepodun and the state at large.

Poor enrolment and retention in Irepodun is a major educational challenge and it needs urgent attention. Economic, politics and parents are dominant factors considered by many scholars in explaining this educational issue. Parents are in the dilemma of sending or retaining their children in schools due to poor social-economic status among others. (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). Akresh (2008) concluded that enrolling and keeping a child in school involves decision making after considering many variables which include parental beliefs and expectations about the value of education. Parents' perceptions on the relevance of schooling to real life survival needs also influence their decisions on enrolment and retention in schools. Nicaise (2000) also pointed that there is no link between schooling and attaining necessary skills to thrive in the labour market. This could also be responsible for school drop-out rates.

Cultural belief has also been reported as a contributing factor to the falling number of students' enrolment and retention in schools. Some cultures already determine who can access education and who may not (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). Admassie (2003) and Boyle (2002) admitted that many cultures give

preference to the male child being educated over the female child. In some other culture, for example, in the northern part of Nigeria and nomadic areas in Irepodun, girls at the age of 13 with the offshoot of breasts are withdrawn from schools and sent to their husband's house. This affects students' enrolment and retention in schools. According to Amadi, Role, and Makewa (2013), there are differences in the perceptions of teachers and students on cultural beliefs, health and pregnancy, as factors contributing to enrolment and retention in schools among other factors.

Factors affecting enrolment and retention of students in schools can be studied in the context of the people's livelihoods and survival strategies (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). Burgett's (2001) study explained that when school programmes fail to meet students' needs, they might lose interest in the school and in turn, drop out of school. Other studies reported that children from families with low socio-economic status have minimal opportunities of attending school unlike children from average or high social economic status homes (Brown & Park, 2002). According to Ducan and Brooks-Gunn (2000) poverty can contribute to fall in enrolment as well as retention in schools. Sirin (2005) reported family economic status as a strong predictor of students' academic outcome and retention in schools. Danesty (2004) is also of the opinion that poverty has great effect on students' academics as parents lack the required resources to fund their children's education. In his own contribution, Mba (2001) admitted that education and learning may be frustrating for students from poor socio-economic status homes which may lead to them dropping out or not even enrolling in school. He further stressed that good parenting support with strong economic background could enhance students' performance, enrolment and retention in school. This suggests that students from low social economic backgrounds are likely not to enroll in schools or even drop out of school. Other studies also indicated that parents' level of education has a significant influence on their children's enrolment and retention in schools.

In another development, Danesty (2004) attributed drop in students' enrolment to instability of educational policies which has led to decline in educational standards. This was possible through frequent change of ministers, commissioners and political parties with each coming up with different strategies and policies causing disparities in the country's educational practices. The fallen standards according to Danesty (2004) have caused diverse issues ranging from poor academic performance to poor enrolment and retention in schools. In addition, many rural and urban dwellers can no longer afford the increasing educational fees. Hence, leading to many students dropping out of school to engage in petty businesses, hawking, farming and being house helps to make a living. Shittu (2004) also reported poor parental care as a major factor contributing to enrolment and retention of students in schools. He affirmed that some parents ignorantly deprive their wards of opportunities to go to school because they want them to do chores at home and work at farm. Family issues such as death of one parent, divorce or irresponsibility of one parent has also been seen as a major factor contributing to enrolment and retention of school age students in schools. In Shittu (2004) submission, the mother alone may not be financially buoyant to sponsor the child or children if the father is not there to play

his role. Ogundayo (2016) however, suggested that there is need for urgent intervention by stakeholders and educationists in the country to look into the factors responsible for this menace. There are many factors affecting students' enrolment and retention in Nigeria. Natriello (2002) opined that these factors range from individual to institutional factors. Some of the individual factors include: parent's educational status, social economic status, as well as child's willingness among others. Institutional factors may also include teacher factors, school and environmental factors, lack of motivation, among others.

The aim of EFA is being frustrated by poor enrolment and retention of students in Irepodun, Kwara State. Despite the State Government's programme of "every child counts", many students of school age in Irepodun are still not enrolled or have dropped out of school. Hence, a call for immediate intervention- what are the factors responsible for this menace in the study area? This study aimed at investigating the factors affecting secondary school students' enrolment and retention in schools in Irepodun, Kwara State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to identify factors affecting secondary school students' enrolment and retention in schools in Irepodun, Kwara State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors affecting secondary school students' enrolment in Irepodun, Kwara State?
2. What are the factors affecting secondary school students' retention in Irepodun, Kwara State?

### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study to sample stakeholders' opinion on factors affecting secondary students' enrolment and retention in Irepodun. The total population for this study comprised all school principals, teachers, secondary school students, youths who had never been to secondary school, secondary school drop outs and school proprietors. The study sample for this study comprised 300 participants (40 school principals, 60 secondary school teachers, 70 secondary school students, 30 youths who had never been to secondary school, 30 youths who had dropped out of secondary school, 40 parents and 30 school proprietors). The study participants were selected using multi-stage sampling. At the first stage, Stratified sampling was used to divide schools into public and private. This aided even selection of principals, teachers and students. At the second stage, opportunity sampling was used to select principals, teachers and students who were available at the time of research and willing to grant audience to the researchers at the selected schools. Samples were selected in conformity with the provision of the Research Advisors (2006). Lastly, opportunity sampling technique was used to select 30 youths who had never attended secondary school, 30 secondary

school dropouts, 40 parents and 30 proprietors who were available and willing to respond to researchers' questions.

Data was collected using interview questions with 8 items responded to in a face-to-face engagement using questions designed by the researchers. Principals, teachers and students were engaged for 5 minutes each in their schools. Other respondents outside the school (youths, dropouts and parents) who met the required criteria and were available at the time of the research were engaged on the street and their various homes for 5 minutes each to elicit their opinion. Data collected from the interview were analyzed qualitatively using content and thematic analysis as well as frequency counts and percentage.

### Findings

The findings from the face-to-face engagement (interview) with stakeholders were analyzed, summarized and reported using Content and thematic analysis with frequency counts and percentage, as presented in Table 1.

**Research Question 1:** what are the factors affecting secondary school students' enrolment in Irepodun, Kwara State?

**Table 1:** Responses on Factors Affecting Students' Enrolment in schools

Theme	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Parental Factors</b>	Poor Social-economic status/ Financial problem	155	51.67
	Expectation about the value of school	8	2.67
	Domestic chores and business	9	3.00
	Schooling and necessary skills for the labour market	2	0.67
	Irresponsibility of one parent	9	3.00
	Fear or believe that girls will get pregnant/ become prostitutes	3	1.00
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>186</b>	62.00
<b>Student/Child's Factors</b>	Pregnancy	18	6.00
	Lack of employment for senior ones and friends who are graduate	3	1.00
	Individual difference/lack of confidence or self-worth	2	0.67
	Engagement in domestic works/ housemaids	8	2.67
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>31</b>	10.33
<b>School Factors</b>	Teacher's strictness	2	0.67
	Inadequate facilities	5	1.67

	Corruption on the part of school leaders and management	3	1.00
	Distance from homes and villages	24	8.00
	Introduction of fees	3	1.00
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>12.33</b>
<b>Economic factors</b>	Non-payment of salaries	10	3.33
	Hardship/hunger	28	9.33
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>12.67</b>
<b>Government/ political factors</b>	Change in government/policies	1	0.33
	No provision of food in schools	2	0.67
	Irrelevant school curriculum to immediate societal and economic needs	5	1.67
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>2.67</b>
<b>Grand-total</b>			<b>100</b>

**Research Question 2:** what are the factors affecting secondary school students' retention in Irepodun, Kwara State?

**Interview Response:** Responses on Factors Affecting Students' Retention in schools

The interview sessions revealed factors affecting students' retention in schools. A respondent who mentioned parental factor said '*I cannot afford to pay my children's school fees because of financial problem, so I have to withdraw them and take them to my work place to learn*'. A drop out who also responded to researchers' questions confirmed he had to withdraw from school because they could barely afford meals at home talk less of paying school fees. A large percentage of school principals and teachers also mentioned that some parents could not retain their children in school due to poor socio-economic status. Proprietors of schools also lament their ordeal as huge number of students were withdrawn from their schools especially when parents were unable to pay fees due to no salaries or financial problem.

The response to the interview by a lady indicated that she had to drop out of school when she got pregnant and could neither bear the shame nor cope with school. This falls into student/ child's factor as recorded in table 1 above. Another dropout response was '*I have friends who are graduates but let me tell you, we are all back to the street*'. This shows he had lost total interest in school due to this.

A principal while responding to the researchers faulted poor retention of students in school stressed that the school is battling with inadequate facilities. He submitted that schools do not have required facilities to retain students. He said: '*Government is not helping at all. There are no facilities to keep these students in school. If you look at some of our classes, there are no chairs, in some classes they*

*are insufficient. Please, you can help us appeal to government to come to our aid and provide necessary facilities for us'.*

The interview also revealed school factor as another problem of students' retention in schools. A teacher complained that the school is far from students' homes. She said: *'they will have to trek long distances in the morning and also in the afternoon while going back home. So, some of them decided to stay at home'*. In line with this, some proprietors complained they were planning to buy a school bus to convey their students because some had left because of the distance. A drop out also responded and said *'I used to trek to school every day, the distance was too far so I had to stay back at home and sometimes go to farm with my parents'*. Another dropout reported he goes to school once in a while before his father moved to a new place which is far from school. Currently, he follows his father to his workshop to learn. All these factors put together as reported by respondents in various interview sessions contributes immensely to low retention of students in schools.

### **Discussion of Findings**

From the table 1 above, there are five major themes gathered based on responses from the face-to-face interview. They are: parental factors, student/child factors, school factors, economic factors and government/political factors. Among these major factors, parental factor carries the largest percentage of the total population with 155 responses on poor social-economic status. This forms 51.7% out of the total percentage. This finding is supported by Sirin (2005) who reported that family economic status is a strong predictor of students' academic outcome and retention in schools.

Also from the interview, parental expectation and perception about the value of school, negative attitude and lack of interest in schooling were raised by parents. This same factor was revealed during an interview session with a youth who said *'what are they doing in school? I am not just interested in schooling because it will add no value to me other than paper for me to be looking for job, I can work for myself and feed myself'*. This agrees with Akresh (2008) who concluded that parents will enroll and keep a child in school after considering many variables which include their beliefs and expectations about the value of education. Furthermore, getting the necessary and required skills from the school is the least stated factor by 2 parents representing 0.67%. This factor was also conceived by Nicaise (2000) who opined that there is no link between schooling and attainment of necessary skills to thrive in the labour market. Domestic chores have the same frequency (9) and percentage with broken home. The latter puts the bulk of loads on single parents representing 3% of the total respondents. This finding corroborated Shittu's (2004) opinion that mother alone may not be financially buoyant to sponsor the child or children if the father is not in support, dead or not responsible. 1% of the total respondents have the fear of their girls becoming prostitutes. Some believe their female children could be exposed and get pregnant while some believe they won't be able to control their wards if they are well educated.

Also from the findings, student/child's factor includes dropping out of school due to pregnancy, a statement by 18 respondents which forms 6% of the total respondents. This is against Amadi, Role, and Makewa (2013) who asserted that there are differences in the perceptions of teachers and students on cultural beliefs, health and pregnancy, as factors contributing to enrolment and retention in schools. Three respondents revealed that they dropped out of school and lost total interest in schooling because they have friends and senior ones who are graduates without employment. One of these respondent in the course of the interview said *'my senior brother is a graduate but we now go to farm together when he could not get a job, so, what is the essence of going to school'*. Some youths who are out of school reported that they were different from others and do not have the confidence to stay in school because they seem not to understand anything taught in school. This forms 0.67% which is the lowest in this category. 8 children in the category representing 2.67% of the total respondents reported that they have to stay out of school because of their engagement in domestic works as some are housemaids in their master/mistress' houses.

The finding further revealed the school factor. Some youths who are out of school complained of the distance from their various houses to the school. They complained that the first few periods will be covered before their arrival in school in the morning and they will be tired when they get back home, making them ineffective at home or in their various farm. This factor carries 8% which is the largest in this category. Some principals also reported that they have limited or no facilities to entice and keep students in school. Students according to them are not encouraged when there are no chairs/tables and other necessary facilities to ease and foster their education. Burgett's (2001) submission supported this finding by saying that when school programmes fail to meet students' needs, they might lose interest in the school and in turn, drop out of school. Teachers' strictness was also mentioned by 2 respondents as a factor that ended their academic pursuits. This is the lowest in this category. Corruption on the part of the school leaders and management as well as introduction of irrelevant fees was given by 3% of the total respondents.

Another finding of this study is economics factor. Here, some parents (3.33%) complained that they have to remove their children from school because of the economic situation in the country which has kept them in abject poverty. This finding is in line with Danesty (2004) who opined that poverty has great effect on students' academics as parents lack the required resources to fund their children's education. Some complained that non-payment of their salaries has really affected them, hence, engaging in farming and other businesses. As a result, they had no choice than to withdraw their children to support them. 28 respondents which represent 9.3% of the total percentage complained they live in poverty/hardship and hunger. This made them withdraw their children from school as their priority now is how to feed the family and not to go to school.

Government or political factor is another finding of the study. A parent reported that he will take his child back to school if the government can provide food in school. Other stakeholders such as school principals and teachers also complained

of irrelevant and frequent change in school curriculum as a factor affecting students' retention in schools. They submitted that some of these amendments do not really tackle immediate societal and economic needs. This finding agrees with Danesty (2004) who attributed drop in students' enrolment to instability of educational policies, leading to decline in educational standards. Lastly, the least of the reported factors was given by a single respondent which is change in government and policies. This is also seen as a threat to students' enrolment and retention in schools.

### **Conclusion**

Findings from this study reveals that students' enrolment and retention in schools in Irepodun local government area of Kwara state is affected by numerous factors. The study showed that the factors affecting secondary school students' enrolment and retention in schools in Irepodun local government area of Kwara includes: parental, students or child factor, school, economic and government/policy factors. Some of these factors are seen to be unique to the area studied because of their main source of livelihood which is farming. Policies should be made by government to sensitize and help to retain school age youths in schools.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, factors affecting secondary school students' enrolment and retention in schools in Irepodun local government area of Kwara are numerous; hence, the following recommendations might be helpful.

1. Parents and guardians should be given proper orientation on the importance of education as a long term strategy for personal and national development.
2. Children and adolescents should be given proper orientation on how to build their self-worth and have confidence in themselves.
3. Facilities should be made available in schools including transportation to encourage students coming from far distance.
4. Government should address falling economic issues to eradicate hardship and hunger among citizens. Government should also encourage stability in educational policies by introducing and maintaining a curriculum which will cater for learners' interest and make them self-employed after school.

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