

Original Paper

Existential Realities of Out- of - School Children in Kano Metropolis: Implications for Policy Implementation in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of the menace of out-of-school children in Kano metropolis. The study used qualitative method of investigation to investigate the social economic conditions of the children, factors that keep them on the street and possible ways of taking them off the street back to school. Data revealed a harsh and deplorable living conditions of the children. It was also revealed that poverty, negligence by parents, high rate of divorce and ignorance on the part of parents are the major reasons why the children remain on the street. Taking the children out of the street would require effective implementation of social policies on family life, poverty reduction and the universal basic education act of 2004.

Keywords

Existential realities, out-of-school children, polity implementation, Kano metropolis

1. Introduction

Education is an unalienable right of every human being. As such, right to education is one of the fundamental rights recognized and guaranteed by international and regional instruments. Education is a basic human right for all and is important for everyone to make the most of their lives. Other human rights include the right to freedom from slavery or torture and to a fair hearing. Right to education is a unique right because it helps people to access all of their other human rights. Education improves an individual's chances in life and helps to tackle poverty (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2011). The idea of universal basic education is derived from the United Nation's Declaration on Education for All (EFA), Millennium Developments Goals (MDGs) which later transformed into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Attention of government at different levels, United Nation (UN), United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), non - governmental organizations (NGOs), international agencies and private individuals has been drawn to the problem of out-of-school children

in the world more especially in the developing countries in Asia and African countries. According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2018) there are about 258 million children and youth that are out of school in the world.

In Africa, it is estimated that more than half of the African continent population of about 700 million people are under the age of 25-30 and most are denied good education or training. About 300 million of 350 million school age children and youth are not on track to reach minimum level of the secondary school skills. Out of them, 240 million will not even achieve primary level learning and nearly 160 million are not at school at all. This means Africa is a home to one third of all children who are not learning around the world (Global Education Monitoring, 2017),

Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013) provides that the philosophy of Nigeria's education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside formal school system. Nigeria being a member of the United Nations and a signatory to many international treaties and conventions on the rights of the child to free and compulsory education, launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999 with a view to providing quality basic education for all school age children irrespective of their economic, social, ethnic, religious or any other considerations. The UBE programme is meant to universalize access, improve quality and enhance equity in UBE delivery, especially through strengthening of partnerships with states, local governments and other critical education stakeholders (UBEC, 2019).

In order to give more bite to the policy, the UBE act (2004) was enacted to give legal backing to the implementation of the programme. Also, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was established to coordinate federal efforts while State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) were also established with a view of domesticating the UBE act at the grassroot levels. The act provides that a parent who contravenes section 2(2) of the act commits an offence and is liable to on the first conviction, to be reprimanded; on second conviction, to a fine of N2000 or imprisonment for a term of 1 month or to both. Subsequent conviction attracts a fine of N5000 or imprisonment for a term of 2 months or both. Aside the UBE, many projects are being undertaken by the federal government, state government, United Nation (UN), UNICEF and other international agencies in order to reduce the frightening figures of out of school children in Nigeria.

However, in spite of this lofty ideas and programmes, Nigeria still has one of the largest number of out - of - school children in the world. According to Grace (2004), majority of children who dropped out completely from school move to hawking on the street, looking for incomes to survive and they are denied their educational opportunity. While some hawk before they go to school in the morning, some do the hawking in the evening after schools hours and some may not have the opportunity for formal education in their life time. Ugoduluwa and Anakwe (2004), stated that hawking in the main street by out of school children who's their ages ranges between 7-15years is highly detrimental to children physical, mental, psychological, social and emotional development of children. Street hawking is a

kind of child abuse that endangers the health of the children, interferes with their education and deprived them of normal happy child hood life.

Economic predicament of most families has forced millions in Nigeria to find ways of supplementing their income. For poor families, children become the centerpiece of such decisions, thus, parents are exposing their children to various economic activities such as street hawking, hard labour and menial jobs, which finally hinders them from attending schools. Among the world out- of- school children, over two-third are in the south-west Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. However based on recent statistics, it appears that Nigeria carries close to 20 percent of the global burden. A survey conducted by the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF 2018) indicated that the population of out of school children in Nigeria remains around 10.5 million which is the highest number in the world. It implies that in every five of the world out of school children one is in Nigeria even though primary education is officially free and compulsory in the country. According to Sonny Echono, Permanent Secretary Federal Ministry of Education, latest school census in 2019 indicated that the states with the most out-of-school children were Kano, Akwa - Ibom, Katsina, Kaduna, Taraba, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara, Oyo, Benue, Jigawa and Ebonyi States. Kano as the commercial capital of Northern Nigeria occupies a strategic position. The Kano metropolis has an estimated 989,244 children were not enrolled in the school (NBS, 2020).

Previous studies on the plight of out- of - school children in Nigeria and in Kano have mostly been from the perspective of governments, non - governmental organizations, scholarly opinions and position papers on what can be done to alleviate their plight. This study, however, is a qualitative study aimed at exploring the day - to day life experiences of these children from their own perspective, The objectives of the research are to:

- i. To explore the social and economic conditions of out of school children in Kano State metropolis.
- ii. To identify the factors that contribute to keeping the children out of school.
- iii. To identify the possible ways taking out of school children back to school.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2021), a child is a young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of maturity. Biologically, a child is a human being between the stages of birth and puberty, or between the development period of infancy and puberty. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2004) defines a child a minor as younger than the age of majority. Children generally have fewer rights and less responsibility than adults, they are usually unable to make serious decisions, and legally must be under the care of their parents or other responsible caregiver. During early childhood, children do learn through observation, experimenting and communicating with others and adults are expected to supervise and support the development process of the child, which then will lead to the child's autonomy. As children grow older into middle childhood and adolescent stages, they make new friends and gain new skills, which will enable them to

become more independent and enhance their individuality. During middle childhood, children are expected to enter the school years, where they are presented with a different setting than they are used to. In a school setting, they are supposed to start new social relationships, learn new skills and start to imbibe the values of the larger society.

Definition of a child differs from one society to another. In Singapore, for example, a child is legally defined as someone under the age of 14 under the “Children and Young Persons Act” whereas the age of maturity is 21 years old. In United States immigration law, a child refers to anyone who is under the age of 21. In Nigeria, any individual who is below the age of 18 is considered a child. The National Child Welfare Policy of 1989 defines a child as anybody who is below the age of 12 though the a draft decree promulgate afterwards set the age of a child in Nigeria as 18 years or below By virtue of being a child, the individual is supposed to be cared for by way of proper feeding, housing, clothing and education. The ideal existential reality a child is that he or she has the basic needs of life provided for him. In situations when this ideal is not attainable, the child has to face an ugly and challenging reality of fending for himself or herself.

Reality refers to all that exists in the universe and the way humans relate with them. Greg (2020) observed that reality may be mental or physical. When reality is perceived to be mental, we can best connect it through introspection and deep thinking that would show past experiences. Alternatively, humans perceive reality mentally through revelations in which cosmic mind is believed to communicate directly to the mind. When reality is perceived to be physical, reality becomes a matter of mass and energy. In other words, science becomes the avenue for us to know what is real. Everything in existence has their own reality. Human beings have their reality as stone has its reality. But do they have the same or similar reality? How do we have access to the reality of a being that do not communicate? The reality of non - living things is therefore what human being do with them or how they interact with them. Human beings can use stones in constructing their roads, building and the like, stones cannot do the same with human beings. Hence, the reality of human beings is incomparable to that of inanimate objects. Humans are sentient beings with feelings and ability to respond to stimuli in their environment. Physical reality of a group of people or society comprises the type of weather, climate, soil, water bodies, they are endowed with. Their social reality typifies the kinds of relationships that exists and that they cherish and respect. These may include family, friendship, neighborliness, community relations, nationhood, statehood and the like. Economic reality refers to the natural resource they have and how such resources are explored and allocated within members of society. Economic reality manifests in human conditions such as wealth, prosperity, poverty, development, underdevelopment, employment, unemployment and the like.

The word ‘existential’ is an adjective that could find applicability in three ways. First, it relates issues that pertain to human existence. Secondly, it could apply to perspective to an issue as conceived by existentialism as a philosophical movement. Thirdly, it could relate to an idea derived from experience rather than the one derived from reflections or theories. While allusion would be made to existentialism

as a philosophical school of thought, the focus of this paper is exploration of concrete life experiences of out- of - school children in the street of Kano metropolis.

As posited by Kierkegaard (1962), a foremost existentialist, rational human beings by nature tend to seek meanings of life and life events. They always want to know why. In a situation when they could not find the why of life occurrence, they tend to either give up, put an end to life, create a larger life in the transcendental world as means of consolation, or decide to live with the absurdities associated with life and living. The harsh reality being faced by out of school children and what the future holds for them, poses an existential question not only to the ‘victims’ but to the entire society as the we as humans are intricately interconnected. For the children, life tends to be appear full of absurdities and meaninglessness and their seeming unresolvable conditions tend to generate for them confusion.

Like all human being street children are a feeling, thinking and acting being in need of food, warmth, accommodation, love, respect, education and all the basic needs of life. In the absence of these basic needs, what kind of adults are they going to become. The psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a popular theory about human motivation based on what he called a ‘hierarchy’ of needs. All humans, he said, have a variety of needs. Some of these relate to basic survival instinct, we all need food, warmth and shelter. Once these needs are satisfied, we will be motivated by the need for safety and strive for an environment in which we feel physically and emotionally safe and secure. At the next level, we seek experiences that make us feel loved, cared for and accepted by others. We need to feel that we belong in a group. Beyond this, we will seek to feel good about ourselves, to feel appreciated and to receive feedback that leads to a positive self-image. Once these needs are met we will seek to meet other, higher order needs, referred to as “self-actualization” encompassing the need to seek new knowledge and understandings, the need for aesthetic experiences, the need to use our talents to the full and challenge ourselves to “be the best we can be”. All humans can and do move up and down this hierarchy of needs at different points in their lives.

2. Methodology

Qualitative research method is the adopted in conducting this study. Qualitative research is the process of collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences (Tashakkori, & Teddlie, 1998). Qualitative research relies on data obtained by the researcher from first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, participant observation, recordings made in natural settings, documents, and artifacts.

2.1 Participants

The participants were ten (10) children of school age but who were not in school. They were mostly street hawkers, and beggars rooming the streets. Out of the ten (10) out- of - school children who participated in this research, three (3) were living with their biological parents, five are not living together with their parent as a result of divorce while two have lost their parents. Most of them are from outside Kano city by birth. Researcher and the research assistants interacted and mingled with the

children very closely so that they freely agreed to participate in the study. The major places and roads where the children were found and interviewed in Kano Metropolis are: Zaria Road, BUK Road, ZOO Road, Kurna, Rijiyar Iemo, Sabon Gari, Yan'kura, Ibrahim Taiwo, Gwammaja, Naibawa Yanlewo quarters. The study also included one (1) official each from Kano State Basic Education Board and the State Ministry of Social Development. The children and the officials were properly briefed about the objectives of the study and their consent sought. They were assured of the confidentiality of whatever information provided in the course of the study. The 12 participants were those who consented freely to participate in the study.

2.2 Instrumentation

For the purposes of this research work interview schedule was developed and used to collect the data from the participants. The interview schedule was developed by the researcher and validated an expert in Sociology and another expert in Educational Psychology. Through direct contact with the victims of Out of School Children within Kano metropolis. Aside the initial reconnaissance and familiarization, each of the interviews spanned around 30 to 45 minutes. The interview took place in the area where and when the participants liked it to happen.

2.2.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of reducing large amount of data collected in order to make sense of them. Hatch (2002) defined it as the organization and interrogation of data in way that enables the researcher to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, interprets, critiques, and generate theories.

Data for this study were collected in Hausa language. The data were transcribed and later translated into the English language. After transcribing the collected data, the researcher coded the data in a way that gives meaning, patterns and connections among the data in a way that provides an understanding of the research questions.

3. Settings

Kano metropolis is the second largest industrial and commercial center in Nigeria. It is therefore experiencing a rapid growth rate from pre-colonial to post-colonial era. The total area of Metropolitan Kano is now 499 square kilometres (193 square miles), with a population of 3,931,300 (Nigerian Information Portal, 2020). Hausawa and Fulani otherwise known as Hausa-Fulani are predominant people of the state. Other dominant ethnic groups in Kano include the Yoruba and Ibo (as the large segment of the non-indigenous population), Nupe, Tiv, Idoma and many others. The dominant religion in the urban Kano is Islam followed by Christianity and it is followed mostly by the non-indigenes. The culture of Kano people is Hausa-Islamic culture, culture and religion in Kano are so interwoven that a distinction is hardly discernible. Presently, kano state metropolis comprises the six core urban local governments which are: Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kano Municipal, Nasarawa and Tarauni and two peri-urban local governments Kumbotso and Ungoggo. Also the metropolis comprises many markets

local and international such as Sabongari, Kantin Kwari, Singa market Dawanou market, Yankaba and Naibawa Yanlemo Vegetables markets in the area of Kano State Metropolis.

4. Results

Social economic condition of the out - of - school children

The responses of the participants to the question on their socio-economic wellbeing revealed their harsh, poor socio - economic conditions. All the children had to depend on themselves for their daily needs. Some of them were also under pressure to provide for their parents or grandparents who are mostly aged or sick. They were not in school because they had to feed, clothe and house themselves. Most of them were not living with their parents and the few that lived with their parents also needed to provide for themselves. They live in large dilapidated or uncompleted buildings and they relied heavily on food vendors for the food supply. They all engage in one economic activity. All of them had at one time or the other engaged in street begging in order to source take off capital for the small business they were engaging in on the streets. On the average they made N400 (less than one dollar) in a day.

In the words of one the participants:

I live in an uncompleted building because my parents do not live here. I don't have anybody here in Kano. I only go the uncompleted house to sleep at night. I cannot cook food so I buy my food from food vendors and Tuwon Shinkafa is my favorite food. I sell yoghurt from which make ₦400-500 profit per day (Participant 4. 01st July, 2021)

Another participant said:

I live in my parents' house but they do not give me food nor money for food. I buy my food from food vendors who sell rice and beans (my favourite food) from the money I make from my business. I sell cold sachet water on the street. I make between 200-250 profit per day especially during dry season when the weather is hot so people used to drinks a lot of water. (Participant 3. 01st July, 2021)

Also another participant said:

I live in my parent house but I am usually on this street to sell my goods. Most times I feed myself but my mother gives me food whenever she has something to cook and when I'm at home. Food vendors who sell shawarma are my good customers because it (shawarma) is one of my favorite food. I make N700-N1000 profit per day. (Participant 4. 01/July/2021)

In the words of a participant who is an orphan:

I live in my grandmother house because my parents have died. My grandmother does not have money to do anything for herself let alone for me. I need to feed her and take care of her before I go out for my business. When I return, I also need to bring her something to eat. Buying Hausa traditional food from food vendors and I use to make 400-750 profit per day. Rice is my favorite food always. (Participant 2. 01/July/2021)

In line with the same idea about the factors, another participant revealed that:

My parents are no more and my grandmother who takes care of me send me out to sell groundnut oil so that we can have money to eat. She is doing her best but she is old and weak. She is always sick. We are just trying to manage our lives with what I'm able get from this business. (Participant 2. 01st July, 2021)

One of the official alluding to this point said:

There are many factors that are contributing to the rising number of out of school children. The most obvious ones are: Death of parent, extreme poverty, poor parental care, lack of conducive learning environment in many schools especially in rural areas". (Officer from Ministry of Rural and Community Development. O. Participant 1. 10th July, 2021)

He further said:

These children are experiencing a lot of challenges in their life especially based on their social and economic wellbeing. Mostly they are roaming around the streets trying to find what to eat for them to survive. Some of them are sent to streets by their parents/guardians looking for money to assist the family financially. Majority of these children came to cities from far different places, without knowing anybody in urban centers. That is why some are living in uncompleted buildings, some in a rented shop and few among are staying with their biological parents. These children buy and eat local food from food vendors due to their economic standard. Sometimes due to the pressure and trauma of their socio-economic hardship they engage in to drug abusing and stealing people's properties for them to have something to eat". (Officer from Ministry of Rural and Community Development Kano. O. Participant 1. 10th July, 2021)

Another official had this to say:

Socially these categories of children are living in dirty condition which is indication of poor parental concern for them. Some of them also live in uncompleted buildings and shops while female among them mostly live together with their grandmothers who are not capable of providing their daily needs such as food, clothes, shelter and even water to drink". (Officer of State Universal Basic Education Board. O. Participant 2. 10th July, 2021)

What are the factors that keep the children out of school?

Responding to the question on why they were not enrolled in school, the participant expressed their desire to be enrolled in school but they could not because some of them are orphans and those who had parents lack parental support. The parents either do not know the value of education or they do not have the wherewithal keep the children in school. The biggest challenge most of the children are facing is how to meet their basic needs of food when they attend schools. They tend to remain on the street hawking so as to get their food since the parents are not there for them.

In the words of one the children:

When I go to school, I cannot get the money with which I can buy food to eat because I need to feed myself. I do not have anybody to feed me. My parent are very old and they are very poor, so

they cannot afford to take the responsibility of my education, this is the reason why I am here trying to look for money so that I can feed myself and buy food for my family. (Participant 8. 01st July, 2021)

The problem is not just about poverty, it is also about ignorance, some parents and guardian do not consider western education as necessary. One of the children said:

I'm not living with my parents. I live with my grandmother and she didn't enroll me to formal school because she does not like it. If she likes, she could afford it because I learnt they don't pay fees in government schools but she just does not like it, so there is no way I can go to school. (Participant 4. 01st July, 2021)

Alluding to the same point, another participant said:

I am not together with my parents. My parents are not together again. My mother is married to another man. I live with my grandfather and most his friends also lack good understanding of western education so he does like sending me to school, that is why I had missed the opportunity. He prefer that I come to this street to sell things and sometimes to 'shine' peoples' shoe to make some money. if I attend school, I cannot make money to take care of my needs. (Participant 5. 01st July, 2021)

Another participant said:

I have lost my two parents. My uncle brought me to Kano. He is poor and has many children so I have to fend for myself. I used to attend school but it was difficult to get food when I was attending school. Life was very difficult then because I was always hungry. Now I can make some money from selling face mast. I need to take care of myself. (Participant 9 11th July, 2021)

Another orphan lamented

I left school as soon as my parents died. My grandmother who I lived with was a trader in groundnut oil and I used to help her in her business so I could not go to school. . When she died, I started selling sachet water and drinks to feed myself but I also beg people for money when things are very hard. (Participant 10. 01st July, 2021)

The responses of the participants who were officials of the State Ministry of Rural and Community Development and Universal Basic Education on the plight of the children revealed that government are fully aware of the travails of the kids and they are taking steps to ameliorate the problem throught programmes such as:

Free and Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education, in Kano State.

Better Education Service Delivery for All initiative (BESDA from 2019-date)

School feeding programme

Formalization of Almajiri and Tsangaya System (formalization of Almajiri schools) a

Recruitment of over 8,000 Professional temporary staffs to assist in primary and junior secondary schools.

They however, contended that the government seems to be overwhelmed by the scale of problem considering the population of the children. They attribute the plight of the children to poor parental background, high rate of divorce and lack of conducive learning environment in schools.

What are the possible ways to get the children out the street?

The participants, both the children and the government officials were asked what they think can be done to get the children enrolled in schools. The children had little to say in this regard as some of them simply responded that they did not know what to do. Some of them however, solicited for government and non- government support in order to get them enrolled in school. The officials placed a lot of the burden on government, community leaders and wealthy people in the community. One of them had this to say:

Parents are supposed to be very vigilant about their wards education. Government also has to put more efforts in educational sector and create more awareness programs especially through mass media channels. This will help the parents to be more aware of the consequences of children that are excluded from schooling. (Official from State Universal Basic Education Board. O. Participant 2. 10th July, 2021)

She added that:

Stakeholders are also supposed to create forum and committee within their areas to rehabilitate and monitor their children behavior more especially those who have dropped out from school or are about to be. School management and community elders in their respective areas have to be organized and prepare orientation for the parents from time to time to highlight the effects and impacts of allowing their wards to drop-out of school”.

A participant called for government’s support for indigent parents by saying:

If government can put more effort in providing necessary assistance to the people with low income like our parents surely we can get an opportunity of being in school. (Participant 6. 01st July, 2021)

Another participant suggested:

Government and stakeholders are supposed to call the attention of our parent to take care of us so that we can be in the formal school system. Government should find a way to make parents take care of their children. (Participant 5. 01st July, 2021)

Another participant suggested that:

Government and rich people can help poor children to withdraw them from the street and help us to go back to school. Government need to tell our parents and convince them to enroll us into school”. (Participant 2. 01st July, 2021)

4.1 Discussion of Findings

From the finding of this study, it can be seen that the menace of out -of -school children is more of a social problem than an educational problem. Many of the children are out of school due to the lack of parental care and negligence, poverty, death of parents, divorce and so forth. This is in line with the

assertion of Ihejirika (2013) that, factors such as child abandonment, family inability to feed their children and provide their needs for education, clothing as causes of increase in the number of out- of - school children. He further notes that the family plays the function of giving the child early foundation in his learning process right at home but due to the economic situation of many families, many Nigerian are either not educated at all, or stop schooling because their parents could not afford to send them to school, some children are not able to attend any educational institution or have to stop school on the way or drop-out of school because of the irresponsibility of their parents.

Anderson (1980) in the same vein, posits that some children stop school / drop out of school as a result of the type of upbringing they receive at home. These scholars also support and validated this research findings by mentioned parents' and family's negligence as causative agent among the factors that contribute to rising figures of out of school children in Nigeria. He opined that poverty is the major cause of out of school children in this research findings which many families are struggling with poverty, some parents are jobless while others are local traders, labourers, messengers, cleaners, farmers, etc. who most of the time have periodic income which make them live below poverty line in which they cannot be able to afford the education of their children. will finally increase the number of out of school children.

Ihejirika (2013) noted that most families in third world countries are living from hands to mouths. In other words, all their struggle is to afford what to eat, any other issues like health, education, clothes are secondary issues. Families living under this condition find it very difficult to sponsor their children's education.

Ogunshola and Adewale (2012) said that "the socio-economic status of parents is one of the major causes of out of school children in most of the northern states included Kano which lead the other states in term of the situation of out-of-school children with about 1.3 million of out of school children in Kano. This also is in the line of this research findings whereby socioeconomic of majority of this research respondents shows that economically and socially they are not comfort and they are living in devastation environment.

5. Implications for Policy Implementation

Almost of the issues that are associated with the menace of out-of-school children as identified in this study, are social in nature. Hence, there is the need for the Nigerian state to review some of its social policies It is also noteworthy that Nigeria's problem is not lack of policies but rather lack of political will to implement the policies. Many lofty policies are not being implemented or not properly implemented for political, cultural and religious consideration. The problem of out- of - school children in Nigerian streets is an existential problem not just for the children but for the entire society because of the spiral effect which such a mass of uncultivated and uncared for people would have on the peace and security of the nation in the near future. The society is already witnessing the consequences by a surge in insecurity across the county especially in the North. Hence, the government and the citizens should

see addressing this challenge as matter of life and death. Existing social, economic and educational policies need to be activated in the following areas:

Family/marital laws need to be strengthened. The government needs to show more interest in the capacity of intending couple to shoulder the responsibility of child rearing by way of providing the basic needs of the unborn child needs to institute to control marriage and procreation. Necessary checks should be done to ensure that intending couples have what it takes to take care of child. There is also the need for mandatory pre - marital counselling in the areas of life skills, population education, family planning education. It is a fact that culture and religion have a strong influence when it comes to the issues of marriage and raising children. However, educating and re orientating people before marriage as a mandatory requirement would be beneficial. With proper orientation, intending couples would learn to live a more responsible life by having the number of children they can afford to cater for.

Poverty is at the root of the menace of street children in the study area and in the larger Nigerian society. This implies that existing poverty reduction programmes needs to shift focus to ‘uneducated’, illiterates, low income earners as they represent the larger proportion of those who contribute to the menace of out -of- school children in the Nigerian society. At the moment, a lot of the attention are being given to young graduates while the uneducated are largely left out. That could be responsibility why all the efforts of the government towards poverty reduction appear like a drop in the ocean.

The government should adopt a carrot and stick approach in the implementation of the UBE act (Jabaar,2019). School feeding programme is a good (carrot approach) initiative that seems to be working. Also a comprehensive enlightenment and re - orientation programmes should mounted across the country to sensitize the populace on the importance of basic education. However, these should be complemented with a stick approach of prosecuting erring parents in line with the extant laws in order to serve as deterrent for others. As it is now, the law is just existing in the books.

6. Conclusions

Findings from this study have shown that the existential reality of out- of - school children in the study are was that of harsh social economic condition. The children could not be in school because they had to provide their own basic needs of food, shelter and clothing as their parents are either dead, in abject poverty or simply insensitive to their plight.

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