

**Causes and Consequences of Parental Negligence and Abandonment
on Elementary School Children Academic Performance in Kwara
Central Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study was a descriptive survey type. The population of this study comprised parents whose children attend elementary schools in Kwara Central, Nigeria. 15 parents were randomly picked from the pupils of each of the ten selected elementary schools. This formed a target population of 150 parents of primary six pupils for the study. The researchers designed a questionnaire to get information from the respondents (parents). Mean was used to answer the research questions without a corresponding hypothesis, while the formulated hypothesis was tested using an independent t-test, at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that the causes of child abandonment in Kwara Central include unwanted pregnancy, lack of proper parental orientation, and lack of sufficient money for child upbringing; and the perceived consequences of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central, Nigeria, were negative. It also revealed a significant gender difference in the perceived consequences of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central. It was recommended that Parents should be oriented on the consequences of parental negligence and abandonment, and the need to avoid them. Intervention programmes should be organized for students suffering parental negligence and abandonment, and male parents should be more enlightened on the need to prevent child abandonment and neglect to improve their academic performance.

Keywords: Causes, Consequences, Parent, Negligence, Abandonment, Elementary, Children

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Introduction

This study is essential to examine the causes and consequences of parental abandonment and neglect on elementary children's academic performance in Kwara Central, Nigeria. Parental abandonment and neglect of a child could be a cog in the wheel of ensuring smooth acquisition of knowledge among many categories of learners. Mascolo (2023) describes parental abandonment as a situation in which parents or guardians leave a child without providing essential care for him or her. This implies that word abandonment is an expression of leaving, forsaking, deserting, and being uncaring for. The act of child abandonment and neglect is also synonymous with parental failure in discharging their responsibilities to their children, intentionally or unintentionally. Child neglect can be defined as “inadequate care of children by parents, including failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision, which puts them at risk of harm” (Wikipedia, 2024). According to Study.com (2024), child neglect suggests that a child is not being fed or cared for properly, is not being provided for, is not being supported in their needs, is not being educated, or is not being supervised.

Child abandonment and neglect are the root of all societal menace, and if it is addressed would bring about a crime-free society. Criminal Law (2020) observed that some countries worldwide have enacted laws and adopted the United Nations Convention against the act of child abandonment and neglect. For instance, the United States of America Constitution is written with rules for parents that can be stripped of custody rights for their children if they are found guilty of child abandonment and neglect. According to the Child Act, no child should be subjected to unfair or cruel treatment in Nigeria.

This is backed by another portion of the 1999 constitution under section 34 that stipulates that every individual, including children, inclusive have rights to respect and dignity. This is more pronounced in another segment of the Act dealing with violence against persons that specifically describes the act of abandoning and neglecting children without caring for them as a criminal offence (Prime Progress, 2023). Despite the clear-cut rules and regulations against child abandonment and neglect, their proliferation in society is assuming an alarming dimension of social vices and a security threat to the people around the world.

Prevalence of Child neglect and abandonment

According to Perkarsky (2022), there were 3.9 million cases of child abuse reported in the United States of America, with 7.1 million of the children being affected, 2.1 million cases investigated, and an estimated 618,000 of children being identified as victims of child abuse and neglect. 76.1% of them were neglected medically, 16.5% physically abused, 9.4% sexually abused, and 0.22% trafficked for sex abuse. The finding also indicated that girl children were more maltreated than boys, and infants and young

children are at a higher rate of risk of being abused. The Center A Place of Hope (2024) observed that one out of seven children in the United States is either abandoned intentionally or unintentionally, and this permeates through the child's childhood to adulthood. This is not different in Africa and its sub-regions including Nigeria. Nigerian streets have many abandoned and neglected children involved in hawking, begging, and at an advanced level, some children are involved in social vices, prostitution, robbery, cultism, drug abuse, hooliganism, and other vices, according to (Onyekakeyah, 2024).

He lamented the day when some unfaithful parents left their children on the street and took off. Abdullahi (2023) also noted that 48 cases of child abandonment were reported in Gombe State, Nigeria, while about 130 cases of human rights violations were reported by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and it was so shocking. Prime Progress (2023) also reported that in Lagos State, Nigeria, a two-day-old baby was abandoned and dumped in the sewage tank. This is a regular occurrence on a monthly basis. The questions of why and how such becomes rampant and the orders of the day from one area or the others in Nigeria remain a source of investigation to researchers such as ours. This shows the extent of proliferation of issues of child abandonment in Nigeria, of which Kwara Central cannot be exonerated.

Types of child abandonment and neglect

In the same vein, Study.com (2024) identified four types of child neglect, which include physical, medical, educational, and emotional. 123helpme.com (2024) identified many forms of child maltreatment that are tantamount to child negligence, which are physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, and emotional abuse. The Center A Place of Hope (2024) also identified physical, emotional, and unintentional (death) as categories of child neglect and abandonment.

Causes of Child Abandonment and Neglect

Abandonment and neglect of children are the result of broken families, poverty, divorce, rejection of family planning, poor government, unwanted pregnancies, religious and cultural prejudice, polygamy, and inaction of the government. (Criminal Law, 2020). According to UniProject (2024), poverty and resource depletion are among the factors that prevent parents from attending to their children's needs, which can result in abandonment and neglect (Criminal Law, 2020). UniProject (2024) attributed causes of parental abandonment and neglect to poverty and depletion of resources that hinder parents from meeting their offspring's needs. Avdibegovic and Brkic (2020) had offered some theoretical explanations of causes of child abandonment and neglect, which they opined rest on parental deficits, environmental deficits, and ecological transactional deficits models. The basis for the first of these models lies in the fact that parents are directly responsible for caring for their children and not the responsibility of the communities. In

other words, parental inappropriate care for their wards is directly sourced for child abandonment and neglect. What can be noticed here is that this model does not consider the interaction effects of socio-economic shocks like inflation, unemployment, economic recession, and others that affect parental duties and obligations within a family. Second, the environmental deficit model derives its argument from the assumption that resource deficiencies in the environment constitute the primary source of parental neglectful and abandoned behaviour towards their children. That is, parents' physical resources to meet their children's needs are drained. Third, the ecological transactional model also accounts for the context in which the family experiences more stress than they are able to manage, potentially leading to neglectful and abandoned behaviors from parents.

Prime Progress (2023) highlighted three reasons that push some parents to indulge in the act of child abandonment. These include assumptions of witchcraft, poverty, and a low level of family planning and sexuality education. It is reported that in 5000 population of Southern Nigerian people, 5 of them, usually the young children, are vulnerable to witchcraft accusations and thus abandoned and neglected. Poverty is also a menace advanced for incidence of child abandonment. It is reported that inflation in Nigeria economy has exposed about 133 million people, parents inclusive to live below the poverty line, thus they abandon and neglect their children for fear of watching them suffer in their own hands. Low level of family planning and sexuality education among teenage parents aggravate their behaviour towards abandoning their children after delivery. Onyekakeyah (2024) opined that despite the wide affirmation that poverty is the major cause of child abandonment, several other factors, like indiscipline, broken marriages, and single parenthood, are plausible sources of why some parents neglect and abandon their children. Several factors contribute to this problem, including educational, social, cultural, and psychological factors.

Consequences of child abandonment and neglect

Consequences of child abandonment and neglect take numerous dimensions.

Study.com (2024) states that child abandonment and neglect can lead to challenging learning experiences, low self-esteem, nightmares and bedwetting, headaches and pain to private parts, running away from home, unwanted pregnancy, external aggression towards others, self-harm, and suicide. Similarly, 123helpme.com (2024) also observed that issues of child abandonment and neglect are closely associated with emotional and physical damage of neglected children. The Center A Place of Hope (2024) observed far-reaching consequences of children's abandonment and neglect, including brain damage, which could translate to memory loss and thus affect the children's cognitive development, which is also a prerequisite for effective academic performance in school. Physically, abandoned and neglected children often exhibit the following dispositions:

poor personal hygiene, lack of basic needs like clothes, food, shelter, and health care. Those emotionally abandoned are confronted with issues of poor control of feelings, anxiety, depression, isolation, impulse, low self-concept, and low level of interest. Those whose parents neglect or abandon them for reasons of loss or death pass through the combined consequences of physical and emotional neglect and abandonment. This implies that all aforementioned could account for the bad attitude and social problems the children go through or develop during adulthood.

Low academic performance of students in the examinations is challenging and disturbing to teachers at the elementary level of education. This may not be connected to the children's factors alone but associated with the social dimension of parental neglect and abandonment. Some parents' views on involvement have changed due to socio-economic factors, with the expectation that increasing involvement in the labour force will help make the home more socio-economic viable. This often turns out to be children's abandonment, neglect, or abuse because children that involve in hawking, begging, and housework are deprived of schooling. Those who are enrolled in schools are more devastated and have suffered various forms of parental negligence and abandonment. Some students are not receiving their basic needs in the school, e.g. school fees, school stationery and food. They form part of the experiences of pupils in elementary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Several studies have been done on parental negligence and abandonment on children's academic performance. For example, Onolemhenmhen and Osunde (2019) examined child neglect as the predictor of academic performance of senior secondary school students in Edo State and found that educational neglect individually predicted students' academic performance while social neglect did not. Nwogwugw et al (2017) examined Southwest children that involve in domestic service and hawking and discovered that a high incidence of child labour was due to poverty. They observed that children that physically abandoned and neglected by their parents could be negatively influenced personally and educationally and run the risk of kidnapping, dying, sexual abuse, child labour, emotional abuse, child prostitution, child trafficking, street wandering children, and the almajiris. Despite the prevalence of parental neglect and abandonment of children cases in Kwara State, few intellectual efforts have been directed to uncover the causes and consequences of this on the academic performance of students, most especially at the elementary level of education. This spurs the interest of the researchers to examine the causes and consequences of parental negligence and abandonment on children's academic performance in elementary schools in Kwara, Central Nigeria.

Objectives of the study.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the causes and consequences of parental negligence and abandonment on children's academic performance in elementary schools in Kwara, Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined

- i. The causes of parental negligence and abandonment of children in Kwara, Central Nigeria.
- ii. Parental neglect and abandonment and its impact on child academic performance as perceived in Kwara, Central Nigeria
- iii. Assessment of influence of parental neglect and abandonment on academic performance of children between gender in Kwara, Central Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What are the causes of parental negligence and abandonment of children in Kwara, Central Nigeria?
- How do the children of Kwara Central Nigeria, consider the negligence and abandonment of parents affect their academic performance?
- How do the parents' negligence and abandonment affect the academic performance of the children in Kwara, Central Nigeria, comparing the two genders?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant gender difference in the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara, Central Nigeria

Methodology

This study was a descriptive survey type. The population of this study comprised parents whose children attend elementary schools in Kwara Central, Nigeria. 3 Local Government Areas were randomly selected among 4 LGAs that make up the Kwara Central, while 50 elementary schools were randomly picked in each of the three selected LGAs. This implies that 50 parents were randomly picked from pupils of each of the three selected elementary schools. This formed a target population of 150 parents of primary six pupils for the study. The researchers designed a questionnaire to get information from the respondents (parents). The questionnaires were divided into sections A and B. The questionnaires were sent to parents (hard copy) through their children, through the consent letter from the heads of the 3 selected schools. Mean was used to answer the research questions without a corresponding hypothesis, while the formulated hypothesis was tested using an independent t-test at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results of the Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0 was used for the analysis.

Research Question 1: What are the causes of parental negligence and abandonment of children in Kwara Central?

To answer research question 1, responses obtained on the causes of child abandonment and neglect by parents in Lagos state were coded and subjected to descriptive statistics of the mean. The decision as to the causes of child abandonment and neglect in Lagos state was based on the benchmark of 2.50. This was achieved by finding the average of the numerical points for the responses as $(4+3+2+1)/4$. In which 4 represents Strongly Agree, 3 represents Agree, 2 represents Disagree, and 1 represents Strongly Disagree. Items with a mean score of 2.50 and above are the causes of child abandonment in Lagos state, while items with a mean score below 2.50 are not among the causes of child abandonment in Lagos state. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1:

Mean and rank ordering of the causes of parental negligence and abandonment of the child in Kwara Central

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Ranking
1	parents' inability to have sufficient money for the child's upbringing	3.64	3 rd
2	lack of education of the parents	3.50	6 th
3	divorce and broken marriage	3.56	5 th
4	lack of proper orientation from the parents on how to train a child	3.66	2 nd
5	unwanted pregnancy, which leads to the birth of the child	3.72	1 st
6	lack of support from extended family	3.20	9 th
7	loneliness and social isolation of children	3.18	10 th
8	drug abuse and alcoholism	3.24	8 th

9	unresolved mental health issues from parents	3.46	7 th
10	difficulty bonding or nurturing with the child	3.62	4 th

Keys: 2.50 – 4.0 = Cause Child Abandonment;
0.01 – 2.49 = Does not Cause Child Abandonment

Results in Table 1 show the causes of child abandonment in Kwara Central. As shown in the table in the order of ranking, the causes of child abandonment in Kwara Central include unwanted pregnancy, lack of proper parental orientation, insufficient money for child upbringing, difficulty bonding or nurturing with the child, divorce, and broken marriage. Other causes are a lack of education (illiteracy) of the parents, unresolved mental health issues from parents, drug abuse and alcoholism, lack of support from extended family, and loneliness and social isolation of children. Since all the mean scores in Table 1 are greater than the benchmark of 2.50, this implies that all the points raised are causes of child abandonment and neglect by parents in Kwara Central.

Research Question 2: What is the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central?

To answer study question 2, responses on the perceived impact of parental carelessness and desertion on academic achievement of children in Lagos State were coded and submitted to mean descriptive statistics. The judgment regarding the perceived influence of parental carelessness and abandonment on the academic achievement of children in Lagos State was based on a 2.50 benchmark. This was accomplished by calculating the average numerical point for each response as $(4+3+2+1)/4$. In this case, 4 indicates Strongly Agree, 3 indicates Agree, 2 indicates Disagree, and 1 indicates Strongly Disagree. A grand mean score of 2.50 or higher indicates that the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of children in Lagos State is negative, whereas a grand mean score less than 2.50 indicates that the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of children in Lagos State is positive. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2:

Analysis of the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central

S/N	Parental negligence and abandonment of the child influence the pupil's academic performance in the following ways	Mean
1	Distracting pupils' attention from class work	3.60
2	Making negative thoughts in the minds of pupils that they can't do well in school due to the neglect of their parents.	3.40
3	Making pupils act waywardly and perform poorly during classes	3.30
4	Making pupils emotionally depressed negatively affects their academic performance	3.46
5	Making pupils join a bad gang affects their academic performance	3.32
6	Making pupils disrespect learning and miss classes	3.28
7	Making pupils quiet and hardly answering questions during lessons in the classes	3.28
8	Making pupils entertain fears and lack concentration in class	3.26
9	Making pupils perform poorly in termly and promotional examinations at the school	3.52
10	Making pupils indulge in social vices that prevent them from doing well in their class work	3.60
11	Making pupils mentally retarded for learning purposes	3.50
12	Making pupils emotionally unstable and thus causing them to perform poorly in class work	3.52
13	Making pupils always sad, thus negatively perform in academic activities	3.54
14	Making pupils feel frustrated with learning	3.38

15	Making pupils fail in solving the assignment given by their teachers	3.54
Grand Mean		3.43
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Keys:	2.50 – 4.0 = Negative Influence;	
	0.01 – 2.49 = Positive Influence	

Results in Table 2 show the perceived influence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central. The observed grand mean score of 3.43 was within the benchmark of “Negative Influence”. This means that the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central was negative.

H0₁: There is no significant gender difference in the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central

Table 4:

Summary of t-test analysis of gender difference in the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central

Gender	No	Mean	Std.	t-value	Df	p-value	Remark
Male	57	50.53	2.61	3.07	148	0.01	Not Significant
Female	93	52.11	3.28				

Results in Table 4 showed a t-value of 3.07 and a p-value of 0.01, which the p-value is less than 0.05 (0.01 < 0.05). Since 0.01 is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not accepted. This means that there is a significant gender difference in the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on

the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central, which is in favour of female respondents.

Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained from this study, it could be concluded that the causes of child abandonment in Lagos state include unwanted pregnancy, lack of proper parental orientation, lack of sufficient money for child upbringing, difficulty bonding or nurturing with the child, and divorce and broken marriage; the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Lagos State was negative.

Discussion

The discussion was done based on the outcome of these findings. The study revealed that the causes of child abandonment in Kwara Central include unwanted pregnancy, lack of proper parental orientation, lack of sufficient money for child upbringing, difficulty bonding or nurturing with the child, and divorce and broken marriage. This means that parents don't just abandon their children without a cause. The other causes as observed in the study are lack of education of the parents, unresolved mental health issues from parents, drug abuse and alcoholism, lack of support from extended family, and loneliness and social isolation of children. Among the observed factors are divorce and broken marriage, which in most cases happen as a result of conflict between husband and wife. This finding is in relation to that of Criminal Law (2020), which identified broken homes, poverty, divorce, lack of family planning, bad governance, unwanted pregnancy, armed conflicts, religious and cultural beliefs, polygamy, and government inaction as causes of child abandonment and neglect.

The findings of the study also showed that the perceived consequences of parental negligence and abandonment on the performance of the children in Lagos State were negative. This means that parental negligence and abandonment were perceived to exert a negative influence on the academic performance of the children. This result is possible where parental negligence and abandonment distract students from learning comfortably, cause negative thoughts in the students due to experience, and this affects their performance and makes them to act waywardly and perform poorly during classes. This is supported by the submission of Kaplan Learning Centre (2023), which identified educational institutions as among the areas under which the consequences of parental neglect are felt by the students. This finding implies that students neglected by their parents are likely to perform poorly in their academic endeavors. This observation corroborates

that of 123helpme.com (2024) that issues of child abandonment and neglect are closely associated with emotional and physical damage of neglected children. The findings of this study also supported Adubale and Alude (2017) that, on average, children who are abandoned and neglected possess lower academic ratings at school and may eventually be suspended from school for backwardness.

The findings of the study also showed that there is a significant gender difference in the perceived influence of parental negligence and abandonment on the academic performance of the children in Kwara Central in favour of female respondents. This means that the female parents sampled for this study had different opinions as to the influence negligence of parental and abandonment on the academic performance.

Recommendations

From the findings of the data study and tested hypotheses, it is recommended that:

1. Parents should be oriented on the consequences of parental negligence and abandonment and the need to avoid it.
2. Intervention programmes should be organized for students suffering parental negligence and abandonment.
3. Male parents should be more enlightened on the need to prevent child abandonment and neglect to improve their academic performance

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