



Digital Literacy and Out-of-School Children in Nigeria

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Article Information


<https://doi.org/10.69798/76780466>

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Published by: Koozakar LLC.
Norcross GA 30071, United States.

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Edited by: Adeyemi Akinola PhD 

Abstract

This article explores the Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 which declared that access to basic and quality education for all children and young adults is a right, and not a privilege. In spite of this declaration, more than 15million Nigeria children and young adults are out-of-school and remain illiterates. This menace poses threat to security architect and economic growth of the country. Hence, the need for digital literacy as an alternative educational platform to reduce the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Four research questions were raised to guide this study. A descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for this study. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 110 respondents from Egbeda local government area, Oyo State, Nigeria. A self-structured questionnaire was used to generate data. The demographic data and research questions were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage. The finding of the study revealed that out-of-school children exists in Nigeria. It was revealed that out-of-school children is caused by death of one or both parents, divorce, poverty or low income, absence of free education, hunger and gender discrimination. Finally, the finding revealed that digital literacy has positive impact on the reduction of out-of-school children in terms of accessibility, learning opportunities and attainment of education for all. The study therefore recommended that digital literacy through mobile learning enhances critical thinking, innovations, cognitive development, emotional stability and mental growth of the child, which should be developed to complement traditional mode of learning. The study concluded that digital literacy is a potent weapon in reducing the number of out-of school children in Nigeria for achieving sustainable development.

Keywords: Digital literacy, out-of-school children, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic bedrock to which every facet of development rest upon to thrive ranging from human, physical, social, political, environmental, and economy development. It is a single best investment countries can make to build a prosperous, resilience, healthy, just and equitable society. A nation cannot be classified as a developed nation when less than seventy percent of its citizenry are literate, in which most countries in African continent fall short of this indices. Hence, illiteracy is a cankerworm that retards the potential growth and development of under-developed and developing nations, and indeed a clog on the wheel of their path to prosperity. The short-fall in the nation's educational standard manifest from the recent report of United Nations Children's Emergency Fund ([UNICEF, 2024](#)), which stated that there are 18.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria, who lack access to basic and qualitative education.

The Education for All movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. The movement was launched at the World conference on Education for All in 1990 by UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the World Bank. Participants endorsed an expanded vision of learning and pledged to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade 2005-2015. Ten years later, with many countries far from having reached this goal, the international community met again in Dakar, Senegal and affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All. They identified six key education goals which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

- Goal 1: Expand early childhood care & education
- Goal 2: Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
- Goal 3: Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
- Goal 4: Increase adult literacy by 50 percent
- Goal 5: Achieve gender parity by 2005, and gender equality by 2015
- Goal 6: Improve the quality of education.

Furthermore, Chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ([FRN, 1999](#)) specifies

the fundamental aims and objectives of education for the nation. Section 18 states that government shall make efforts to eradicate illiteracy by providing:

1. Free, accessible and compulsory universal elementary education;
2. Free tertiary education; and
3. Free adult and non-formal education and literacy programmes.

Similarly, Sustainable Development Goal 4 is a target set to ensuring Inclusive, Equitable and Quality Education and the Promotion of Lifelong learning Opportunities for All. It recognizes several impediments for universal education and attempts to address them through targets to increase the number of scholarships to students in developing nations and create educational facilities that are gender sensitive and disability inclusive. However, in spite of creation of Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal 4 by international community and their commitment in ensuring universal education for all the children, youth and adults in under-developed and developing nations, efforts, resources (human and materials) and commitment put in place by most countries in African region fall short of achieving those targets, thereby becoming unrealistic by 2030 and beyond. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to education". An estimated 244 million children and youth between the age of 6 and 18 worldwide were out-of-school in 2021, of which 118.5 million were girls and 125.5 million were boys. Today, the number of out-of-school children has grown beyond 250 million globally, of which over 100 million children from Africa are out-of-school. Of all regions, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion. This number includes children who never started formal schooling and children who started school but later dropped out ([UNICEF, 2024](#)).

Out-of-school children refer to a non-attendance by school-age children for some established factors. They are children of ages 6-11 years which is the official primary school age range, they are not enrolled or attending either primary or secondary schools, excluding pre-primary education, formal or non-formal education program. These children possess varying degrees of education, some of them may have attended school in the past (pre-primary

education) but dropped out, some will attend in the future and some will never go to school (UNESCO, 2014). Furthermore, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) expressed concern that Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children globally, with only sixty-three percent (63%) of primary school children regularly attending school. The UN agency lamented that a staggering 10.5 million primary school-age children and an additional 8.1 million at the junior secondary level are out of school in Nigeria. UNICEF further expressed deep concern with the rate of out-of-school children, and low learning achievement in the country, especially in the North-East and North-West sub-regions (UNICEF, 2024).

In Nigeria, North-East region has the highest number of out-of-school children with 3.0 million, followed by the North-West with 2.5 million, followed by North-Central 2.2 million, South-West 1.2 million, South-South 1.1 million and South-East 713,176 out-of-school children (Abubakar, 2020). It is quite worrisome to discover that those children who leave school at an early age are vulnerable to unemployment, poverty, early marriage, and pregnancy. Some of the factors fueling drop-out or out-of-school rates include poverty, gender disparity, disability, family catastrophes, divorce, war and conflict as well as perceived low return on investment for education. High rate of children being out-of-school put strain on architectural security of the country, as many of these children can easily be lured into arm-robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, drug dealer and other social vices and criminal activities with negative effects on peaceful atmosphere of the community. Literature reveal that out-of-school children suffer emotional trauma, depression, negative self-concept, and low self-esteem. In most cases, the children roam the street when their colleagues are in school, hawking, stealing, truancy and engaging in other social vices (Ojelade, Aiyedun & Aregbesola, 2019). The current situation of out-of-school children in Nigeria is having half-baked education which is equivalent to being an illiterate, most school-age children lacks emotional support that guarantees sustainability in life, when all the three domains of education cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain are not reflecting in one's life, then the dream of living a self-sustaining, independent and self-reliance life becomes a major problem (Abdulkareem, 1999). Therefore,

developing alternative learning opportunities that take into account these reasons for high rate of drop-out and out-of school children are necessary to provide school age children and young adults appropriate learning opportunities to consolidate their basic knowledge and competencies, equip them with the relevant skills needed to obtain employment, becoming business owners and entrepreneurs or engage in other productive work (UNESCO, 2018).

The technology-driven and computer age ushered in information and communication technology (ICT) and computer assisted tools for mobile and electronic learning program which enables digital learning process and accessibility of school children who may be out-of-reached or inaccessible due to their location, types of occupation or lifestyle such as nomadic and the pastoralist children (Olaniran, 2018). The American Library Association defines digital literacy as the "ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills (ALA, 2017). Digital literacy is also defined as a person's ability to perform various tasks in a digital environment using technological tools or gadgets such as computer, mobile or smartphones, tablets, internet and other portable devices to deliver educational contents, facilitate learning experiences, and empower learners anytime, anywhere leveraging on accessibility, flexibility and versatility of mobile technology (Adelore, 2016). While digital literacy initially focused on digital skills and stand-alone computers, the advent of internet and use of social media, has resulted in the shift in some of its focus to use of mobile devices for learning. It is now evaluated as an individual's ability to communicate information through typing skills and ability to produce text, images, audio, and visual interactions using digital platforms and technologies (Ojelade *et al.*, 2019).

Digital technology has augmented classrooms with many classrooms being designed to use smart boards and audience response systems in replacement of traditional chalkboards or whiteboards. It allows mobile learning, virtual learning, online courses, and video conferencing with wider coverage of audience anywhere in the world. Therefore, implementation of different technological tools will allow the clientele reach

their goals more quickly and with more outstanding results, while offering flexibility of learning at their pace and time. It involves locating, evaluating, and communicating effectively between the facilitator and the clientele. Digital literacy complements traditional literacy of reading, writing and simple arithmetic. It bridges the gap between the traditional methods of teaching into modern methods using technological devices especially mobile phones for learning in order to reduce the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria (Adelore & Ojedeji, 2019). It is against this background that this study examine the efficacy of digital literacy programme on reducing out-of-school children in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent do out-of-school children exists in Egbeda Local Government Area, Oyo State Nigeria?
2. What are the causes of out-of-school children in Nigeria?
3. To what extent do out-of-school children affect community members?
4. To what extent does digital literacy programme capable of reducing out-of-school children in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of out-of-school children

According to the United Nations (2020), out-of-school children refer to children who are yet to be enrolled in any formal education, excluding pre-primary education, they are further categorized as never enrolled and drop outs. The age range for out-of-school children is 6-11 years. Out-of-school children are school-age children that are supposed to be in schools but are not in schools due to parental and governmental failures to provide the accessible quality education for them. Out-of-school children are young children in the age group of 1 to 12 that are roaming the street without access to a functional educational system (Ojelade *et al.*, 2019). The concept of out-of-school children covers early childhood development education, primary education, junior secondary education, senior secondary education, and early tertiary education and it is not as a result of one single

event, and therefore has more than one proximate cause (Amoo, 2018). The reality of out-of-school children is that basic education has always be community driven. Community leaders such as traditional rulers, missionary groups, town unions, social groups and associations are the custodians of education and key drivers of ensuring that children of school age are enrolled in schools but in recent time education is now the sole responsibilities of federal, state and local government areas (Adewale and Tahir, 2021). The term out-of-school is an inclusive concept and includes:

- Out of schooling of school age children: This is non-attendance of school age children for some established factors.
- Children dropping out from school: These are children who dropout from school before completion of any school programs: primary, junior secondary, senior secondary or others.
- De-schooling is another form of out of school. It is seen as leaving western education for Qur'anic education or vice versa. Many children in Northern Nigeria attend only Qur'anic schools, where they are taught to memorize and recite the Qur'an, but not the numeracy, literacy and life skills needed to function effectively in today's world (Raliyat, Aishah & Umma, 2022).

Concept of Digital Literacy

The phrase "digital literacy" encompasses media literacy, technology literacy, computer literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) literacy. Adewale and Tahir (2021) defines digital literacy as the learner's capacity to adapt to a digital environment through a self-directed learning, productive skills and employment using digital technologies. A digital literate individual becomes a socially responsible member of their community by acquiring knowledge, spreading information, creating awareness and helping others to learn. Being digitally literate means being able to adapt to the changes brought about by computers and digital technology in ways that make learning conducive and accessible, and ultimately accomplish educational goals (Aderinoye, 2004). Adelore and Ojedeji (2019) sees digital literacy as any educational service that supplies a learner with general electronic information and educational

content that aids their acquisition of knowledge, regardless of location or time. It is, therefore, one of the key competences required for optimum functionality in human and as an emerging paradigm in a long tradition of technology-mediated learning. Mobile learning is seen as the acquisition of any knowledge and skill through the use of mobile technology, anywhere, anytime that results in an alteration or change in behavior (Aderinoye, Ojokheta & Olojede, 2007).

Benefits of digital literacy through Mobile Learning

1. Access to learning anytime, anywhere: One of the significant advantages of mobile learning is its flexibility and accessibility. With a smartphone or tablet, learners can access educational resources, courses, and learning materials at their convenience, whether they are at home, on the go, or in transit. This anytime, anywhere access eliminates barrier to learning imposed by traditional classroom settings and empower learners to pursue education at their own pace and time (UNESCO, 2018).
2. Personalized and adaptive learning experiences: Mobile learning enables personalized and adaptive learning experiences tailored to individual preferences, interests, and learning styles. Educational apps, platforms and digital resources can analyze user data, track progress, and recommend personalized learning pathways based on learners' strengths, weaknesses and goals. This personalized learning approach to learning enhances engagement, motivation, and retention by providing learners with content that is relevant, meaningful, and aligned with their learning objectives (Adam *et al.*, 2016).
3. Rich multimedia content and interactive learning: Mobile devices offer a rich multimedia environment that supports diverse learning modalities and enhances engagement through interactive, immersive experiences. Educational apps, videos, podcasts, games, simulations and augmented reality (AR) applications provide learners with interactive learning experiences that stimulate curiosity, creativity, and exploration. Multimedia content can convey complex concepts effectively through visualizations, animations, simulations and real-life learning process which enables learners to actively participate in the learning process, reinforce their understanding, and apply their knowledge in practical contexts. An example includes the fact that learners can now have access to several content-creation tools either for assignments or projects (Adelore and Ojedeji, 2019).
4. Collaborative and social learning: Mobile learning facilitates collaborative and social learning experiences that encourage interaction, communication, and knowledge sharing among learners. Social media platforms, messaging apps, discussion forums, and collaborative tools enable learners to connect with peers, exchange ideas, and collaborate on projects in virtual learning communities. Peer-to-peer learning fosters collaboration, communication, and teamwork skills while providing opportunities for peer feedback and support. Virtual study groups, online forums and community-driven learning initiatives create a supportive learning environment where learners can share resources, ask questions, and engage in meaningful discussions with peers and educators (UNESCO, 2018).
5. Continuous learning and skill development: Mobile learning promotes lifelong learning and continuous skill development by providing learners with access to a diverse range of educational resources, courses, and learning opportunities. Whether they are seeking to acquire new skills, advance their careers, or pursue personal interests, learners can find relevant and up-to-date content on a wide range of topics through mobile learning platforms and apps. Micro learning modules, short videos, tutorials, and bite-sized lessons cater to learners' busy schedules and enable them to learn in small, manageable increments. This flexible approach to learning allows learners to focus on specific skills or topics of interest, acquire new knowledge gradually, and apply what they have learned in real-world contexts (UNESCO, 2018).
6. Overcoming barriers to education: Mobile learning has the potential to overcome barriers to education imposed by factors such as geography, socioeconomic status, or physical

limitations. For learners in remote or underserved communities with limited access to traditional educational resources or infrastructure, mobile devices offer a lifeline to educational opportunities and resources that would otherwise be out of reach. Mobile learning initiatives and digital literacy programs can empower marginalized populations, including refugees, immigrants, and individuals with disabilities to access quality education, acquire valuable skills, and participate more fully in society (UNESCO, 2018).

Thus, when out-of-school children are thoroughly exposed to technological tools in the learning environment and develop digital literacy skills in the process, they are better equipped with necessary skills for coping with the world daunting tasks (Adelore, Adedoja and Ojedeji, 2017).

The Rate of Out of School Children in Nigeria

According to UNICEF (2024) report, Nigeria is home to 18.5 million out-of-school children, with the bulk of this figure comes from the northern region of Nigeria. The statistical breakdown of rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria shows that 33 per cent are from the Northeast which is the highest proportion of its school-age children that are out-of-school. This was followed by North-west with 26 per cent; North-central with 25 per cent; South-west with 24 per cent; South-south with 22 per cent; and South-east with 19 per cent. The incessant attack of Boko Haram insurgency in the North has contributed immensely to the increase in the number of out-of-school in Nigeria, most especially in the north east. The present state of insecurity in the Northern region of Nigeria has been traumatic for children as they are forced to flee from their homes in fear, to witness killings, or to live as Internally Displaced Persons (Abdulkareem, 1999). Recent study revealed that as a result of the incessant attacks on schools, over one million school children have been forced out of school while their teachers have also been forced to stay away from school. Some schools have been forced to shut down and the deserted school buildings have been converted into shelters for internally displaced persons (Abubakar, 2020).

Causes of out-of-school children in Nigeria

The following the root cause of out-of-school children in Nigeria:

1. **Poverty:** There are close link between poverty and out-of-school children or dropping out of school. Statistical data as well as empirical research pointed that children from better off households are more likely to go to school and remain in school, whereas those from the poor family are more likely never attend or drop out of school. The system of educational provision at the community level generates conditions that can ultimately impact on the likelihood of children to drop out from school, as most parent lives in abject poverty (UNESCO, 2014).
2. **Gender Discrimination:** Barriers of educating the girl child is also another major challenge contributing to the issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Gender discrimination can result in fewer opportunities for girls to attend school when there is lack of parental care, poor perception and ignorance on the essence of educating girl child (Amoo, 2018).
3. **Poor Funding of Education:** Good governance and educational development cannot be sustained when 26% budgetary allocation for education as advocated by UNESCO has not been fully implemented in Nigeria. The federal government established the National Commission for Nomadic Education in 1989 to provide access to basic education to the nomadic population of the country, to boost literacy and equip them with skills and competencies to enhance their well-being and participation in the nation- building process. However, little or no success has been recorded so far (Charity *et al.*, 2020).
4. **Inappropriate Planning and Implementation:** Planning is sine qua non to successful implementation of educational policies, some states have failed to domesticate the Child Rights Act 2003 which is essential to education for all and sustainable development goals (Gusau, 2022).
5. **Poor School Environment:** School environment plays a vital role on children being out-of-school. Motivation comes externally on the part of children, in a school environment where there are enough ventilation, good sitting arrangements, clean environments and care by teachers and parent, this will enhance children

academic performance and a source of motivation to remain in school without being dropping-out. However, if otherwise, it gives rise to increase in the rate of out-of-school children in the country (Utomi, 2021).

6. **Insecurity:** War and conflict causes disruption to conducive learning environment, school infrastructure and facilities, making it difficult to transmit knowledge to children. It discourages students from pursuing education, reduce enrollment and quality of education. Insecurity leads to the closure of schools, especially in parts of northern Nigeria due to Boko Haram incessant war and conflicts (Daramola, 2023).

Effects of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria

Gusau (2022) highlights the effects of out-of-school children on individual and society as follows:

1. **Political Instability:** An uneducated population can be more susceptible to manipulation, leading to potential political instability, war and conflict.
2. **Reduced Workforce Productivity:** A less educated workforce lead to shortage of skilled manpower and low productivity which hinder a country's economic growth.
3. **High crime rate or security challenges:** Out-of-school children engages in criminal activities due to limited opportunities and lack of guidance, they will be influenced with bad peer group, and armed robbery gang.
4. **Health Issues:** Lack of Education can also lead to poorer health outcomes, as people may not have the knowledge to make informed decisions about healthcare.
5. **Social Inequality:** Lack of education can perpetuate social disparities, as marginalized groups are often disproportionately affected by being out-of-school.
6. **High Level of Illiteracy:** Illiteracy means ignorance or the lack of knowledge in a specific aspect. Functional illiteracy, on the other hand, is used to describe a situation where a person

has writing and reading skills considered inadequate to perform employment duties that demand reading and writing skills that go beyond the basic level. The challenges of illiteracy cut across gender, age, race, geographical location, and culture (Abubakar 2020).

7. **High Unemployment Rate:** Out-of-school children syndrome contribute immensely to high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths. Unemployment rate in Nigeria has reached alarming proportion in which more than 40 per cent of the youths who are qualified to be employed are not gainfully employed.
8. **Bad International Image:** Out-of-school children syndrome create bad international image of the country, as majority of this children engages in highway and street begging during school hour. A good image results in respect, prestige, economic collaboration and growth.

Impact of Digital literacy on out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Digital literacy has been of great transformation in the way teaching and learning is done in our world today, particularly occasioned by the rapid advancement in technology. Digital literacy through information and communication technology support the use of mobile learning for instruction, which has been projected to extend learning opportunities to mass learners, in particular to those previously hard-to-reach via traditional education approaches. In light of the fact that many learners might never be able to afford a personal computer or enroll into formal education again, the application of mobile learning appears to be essentially important. With regard to learners, mobile learning has already proved its capability to help improve literacy and numeracy skills; encourage independent and collaborative learning experiences; identify areas where learners need assistance and support; mitigate resistance using ICTs; engage reluctant learners; enable learners to remain more focused for longer periods and promote self-esteem and self-confidence (Adelore, 2017).

UNESCO (2018) opine that digital literacy bridges the gap of inequality that exists between children of the less privileged, children of those in the high and middle class homes and to create a level playing ground for children from poor homes through educational programmes such as distance learning, remedial education, computer assisted instruction and formal education. Therefore, digital literacy now comes as an alternative learning process that promote social inclusion and economic empowerment, helps in increasing school enrolments of school-age children and to avoid more occurrence of the scourge of out-of-school children in Nigeria (Amoo, 2018). In addition, mobile learning represents a transformative shift in the way education is delivered, accessed, and experienced in digital age. By harnessing the power of mobile technology, educators and learners can break free from the constraints of traditional learning environments and embrace a more flexible, personalized, and accessible approach to education. From anytime, anywhere access to learning resources to personalized, adaptive learning experiences, mobile learning offers a wealth of opportunities for lifelong learning, skill development, and empowerment. As mobile technology continues to evolve, the potential for mobile learning to revolutionize education and empower learners around the world is limitless (UNESCO, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design of survey type. The population of the study comprises of all out-of-school children in Egbeda Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. A sample size of one hundred and ten (110) respondents were randomly selected for this study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for this study. A self-structured questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 shows that 63(57.3%) of the respondents were male while 47(42.7%) were female. This shows that the majority of the respondents were boys, though the study is center on both genders.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	63	57.3
	Female	47	42.7
	Total	110	100
Age	1-5 years	22	20
	6-10 years	14	12.7
	11-15years	42	38.2
	16 years and above	32	29.1
	Total	110	100
Religion	Christianity	62	56.4
	Islam	46	41.8
	Traditional	2	1.8
	Total	110	100
Educational Qualification	Primary	31	28.2
	Junior secondary	43	39.1
	Senior secondary	36	32.7
	Total	110	100
Parent occupation	Civil servant	26	23.6
	Farmers	32	29.1
	Traders/Business	34	31.0
	Politicians	16	14.5
	Others	2	1.8
	Total	110	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The result on age of the respondents shows that 22(20%) of the respondents are between age of 1-5 years, 14(12.7%) of the respondents shows the age range of 6-10years, 42(38.2%) of the respondents shows the age range of 11-15 years, 32(29.1%) of the respondents shows the age range of 16years and above. The result on religion of the respondents shows that 62(56.4%) of the respondents are Christian, 46(41.8%) of the respondents are Muslim, and 2(1.8) of the respondents are traditional believer. The result on educational background of the respondents shows that 31(28.2%) of the respondents possessed primary school certificate, 43(39.1%) of the respondents possessed junior secondary school certificate and 36(32.7%) of the respondents possessed senior secondary school certificate. The result on parents occupation of the respondents shows that 26(23.6%) are civil servants, 32(29.1%) are farmers, 34(31.0%) are traders, 16(14.5%) are politicians, and 2(1.8%) are others. The result shows that traders occupied the majority of parent occupation of the respondents.

Table 2: Respondents' view on the existence or otherwise of out of school children in Nigeria

S/N	Items		Response				Total
			SA	A	D	SD	
1.	I am aware of children who are currently not enrolled in any formal education system	Frequency	58	31	19	2	110
		Percentage	52.7	28.2	17.3	1.8	100
2.	Education for all is a basic right for children not privilege	Frequency	60	42	6	2	110
		Percentage	54.5	38.2	5.5	1.8	100
3.	The cost of education act as barrier to further my education	Frequency	18	79	6	7	110
		Percentage	16.4	71.8	5.5	6.3	100
4.	My family did not support my education	Frequency	42	45	13	10	110
		Percentage	38.2	40.9	11.8	9.1	100
5.	I did not assimilate in class and I left formal schooling	Frequency	56	40	8	6	110
		Percentage	50.9	36.4	7.3	5.4	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

The result in Item 1 revealed that 89(80.9%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 19.1% disagreed. Item 2 revealed that 102(92.7%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 7.3% disagreed. Item 3 revealed that 97(88.2%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 11.8% disagreed. Item 4 revealed that 87(79.1%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 20.9 % disagreed. Finally, Item 5 revealed that 96(87.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement while 14(12.7%) disagreed. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that out-of-school children exists in Egbeda Local Government Area, Oyo State Nigeria. The finding lent credence to [UNICEF \(2024\)](#) which stated that Nigeria is home to 18.5 million out-of-school children, with the bulk of this figure comes from the northern region of Nigeria. The statistical breakdown of rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria shows that 33 per cent are from the Northeast which is the highest proportion of its school-age children that are out-of-school. This was followed by North-west with 26 per cent; North-central with 25 per cent; South-west with 24 per cent; South-south with 22 per cent; and South-east with 19 per cent. The incessant attack of Boko Haram insurgency in the North has contributed immensely to the increase in the number of out-of-school in Nigeria, most especially in the North East. The present state of insecurity in the North Eastern region of Nigeria has been traumatic for children as they are forced to flee from their homes in fear, to witness killings, or to live as Internally Displaced Persons ([Abubakar, 2020](#)).

The result in Item 6 revealed that 110(100%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement while (0%) none against the statement. Item 7 revealed that 84(86.4%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 26(23.6%) disagreed. Item 8 revealed that 110(100%) agreed with the statement while (0%) none disagreed. Item 9 revealed that 80(72.8%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 27.2% disagreed. Item 10 revealed that 78(70.9%) agreed with the statement while 32(29.1%) disagreed. Item 11 revealed that 110(100%) agreed with the statement while (0%) none disagreed. Lastly, Item 12 revealed that 100(91%) agreed with the statement while 10(9%) disagreed.

The result of the finding revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that absence of complete free-education, poverty, lack of parental care, absenteeism, poor academic performance, and death of parent are the major causes of out-of-school children in Egbeda Local Government, Area, Oyo State, Nigeria. This is in line with [UNESCO \(2014\)](#) which stated that poverty, poor funding of education, academic problems, school phobia, bullying, poor school environment, ignorance, bereavement (death) of parents, negative attitude towards education, corruption, indirect costs of schooling, lack of awareness, distance and accessibility, natural disasters, lack of basic infrastructure, inappropriate planning, lack of implementation of child's rights act, disabilities, cultural and social norms, gender discrimination, pregnancy, child labor, hunger, financial constraint among others are causes of out-of-school children

and they can only be overcome when every citizen of Nigeria accept his/her responsibility which covers a whole life of an individual. It also lay credence to [Abubakar \(2020\)](#) which asserts that as a result of the incessant attacks on schools, over one million school children have been forced out of

school while their teachers have also been forced to stay away from school. Some schools have been forced to shut down and the deserted school buildings have been converted into shelters for internally displaced persons.

Table 3: Respondents' view on causes out-of-school children in Nigeria

S/N	Items		Response				Total
			SA	A	D	SD	
6.	I don't care attitude by parent has led many children out-of-school	Frequency	64	46	-	-	110
		Percentage	58.2	41.8	-	-	100
7.	Death from one of the parent can lead to children being out-of-school	Frequency	44	40	21	5	110
		Percentage	40	36.4	19.1	4.5	100
8.	Divorce is a major cause of out of school children in my community	Frequency	62	48	-	-	110
		Percentage	56.4	43.6	-	-	100
9.	Parents given birth to many children enables some children to being out-of-school	Frequency	46	34	15	15	110
		Percentage	41.8	31.0	13.6	13.6	100
10.	Lack of care and support by parents to monitor their children lead to out of school children	Frequency	50	28	22	10	110
		Percentage	45.5	25.4	20	9.1	100
11.	Challenges leading to out-of-school children could be traced to poverty or low income within the household	Frequency	78	32	-	-	110
		Percentage	70.9	29.1	-	-	100
12.	Absence of complete free - education gives room for out-of-school children	Frequency	72	28	6	4	110
		Percentage	65.5	25.5	5.4	3.6	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4: Respondents' view on effects of out-of-school children in Nigeria

S/N	Items		Response				Total
			SA	A	D	SD	
13.	High crime rate is a major effect of out-of-school children in my community	Frequency	60	48	1	1	110
		Percentage	54.5	43.6	0.9	1.0	100
14.	High unemployment rate is the bane of out-of-school children in my community	Frequency	48	60	1	1	110
		Percentage	43.6	54.5	0.9	1.0	100
15.	Most out of school children have low self-esteem	Frequency	60	-	48	2	110
		Percentage	54.5	-	43.6	1.9	100
16.	The scourge of out-of-school children create bad image of the community	Frequency	48	46	6	10	110
		Percentage	43.6	41.8	5.4	9.2	100
17.	The menace of out-of-school children leads to high level of illiteracy in the society	Frequency	30	60	15	5	110
		Percentage	27.3	54.5	13.7	4.5	100
18.	The effect of out-of-school children results to poverty and poor socioeconomic development	Frequency	54	50	2	4	110
		Percentage	49.1	45.5	1.8	3.6	100

Source: Field survey, 2024.

The result in Item 13 revealed that 108(98.1%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 1.9% disagreed. Item 14 revealed that 108(98.1%) strongly agreed with the statement while 1.9% disagreed. Item 15 revealed that 60(54.5%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 50(45.5%) disagreed. Item 16 shows that

94(85.4%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 14.6% disagreed. Item 17 shows that 90(81.8%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 20(18.2%) disagreed. Lastly, item 18 revealed that 104(94.6%) strongly agreed that out-of-school children results to poverty and poor

socio-economic development, while 6(5.4%) disagreed.

The result of the findings revealed that insecurity due to high crime rate, unemployment, bad image of the country, low self-esteem, high level of illiteracy, poverty and poor socio-economic development are the effects of out-of-school children in Nigeria. The finding lent credence to UNESCO (2014) which stated that out-of school syndrome usually results to political instability, reduced workforce productivity, high crime rate, insecurity challenges, social inequality, health issues, economic disparity, high level of illiteracy, high unemployment rate, high socio-economic and dependency issue, poor condition of service, lack of

skilled labour, low self-esteem, poor physical well-being, shortage of manpower and bad international image. The result also corroborated with the findings of Raliyat, Aishah and Umma (2022) who asserted that health issues, shortage of skilled manpower, high level of illiteracy, economic impact, social inequality, and high dependency burden as the consequences of out-of-school children syndrome in the society. No wonder why Abubakar (2020) opined that violent criminals, looting and stealing of community basic infrastructures, hacking of useful sites, causing nuisance and destroying peaceful atmosphere of the community are the effects of out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Table 5: Respondents' view on the impact of digital literacy on out-of-school children

S/N	Items		Response				Total
			SA	A	D	SD	
19.	Educated parents applies their knowledge, experience and exposure to protect their children from being out-of-school	Frequency	56	42	10	2	110
		Percentage	50.9	38.2	9.1	1.8	100
20.	Readiness of parents and children both in social and emotional factors prevent out-of-school children	Frequency	72	37	1	-	110
		Percentage	65.5	33.6	0.9	-	100
21.	Effective communication between parents and children reduce the menace of out-of-school children	Frequency	43	63	3	1	110
		Percentage	39.1	57.3	2.7	0.9	100
22.	The use of ICT through Digital literacy helps to reduce out-of-school children	Frequency	48	31	11	20	110
		Percentage	43.6	28.2	10.0	18.2	100
23.	Digital literacy through mobile learning enhances participatory and self-directed learning of out-of-school children.	Frequency	38	65	6	1	110
		Percentage	34.5	59.1	5.4	1.0	100
24.	Digital literacy provides a good accessibility platform to reach out-of-school children who live far away, rural and remote areas.	Frequency	16	85	9	-	110
		Percentage	14.5	77.3	8.2	-	100
25.	The combination of traditional literacy with digital literacy is capable of reducing illiteracy among out-of-school children in my community.	Frequency	39	37	33	1	110
		Percentage	35.5	33.6	30.0	0.9	100

Source: Field survey, 2024.

The result in Item 19 revealed that 98(89.1%) of the respondent agreed with the statement, while 12(10.9%) disagreed. Item 20 shows that 109(99.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, while (1)0.9% disagreed. Item 21 shows that 106(96.4%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 4(3.6%) disagreed. Item 22, indicated that 79(71.8%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 31(28.2%) disagreed. Item 23 revealed that

103(93.6%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 7(6.4%) disagreed. Item 24 shows that 101(91.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, while only 9(8.2%) disagreed. Finally, item 25 shows that 76(69.1%) of the respondents agreed that the combination of traditional literacy with digital literacy is capable of reducing illiteracy among out-of-school children in my community, while 34(30.9%) disagreed.

The result from the finding revealed that educated parents utilize their knowledge to protect their children from being out-of-school, readiness of parents in social and emotional factors, effective communication between parents and children, the use of ICT and mobile learning enhance self-directed learning, combination of traditional mode of learning with digital literacy is capable of reducing out-of-school children in Nigeria. The findings lent credence to [Adelore, \(2016\)](#) who opined that digital literacy through information and communication technology support the use of mobile learning for instruction, which has been projected to extend learning opportunities to mass learners, in particular to those previously hard-to-reach via traditional education approaches. In light of the fact that many learners might never be able to afford a personal computer or enroll into formal education again, the application of mobile learning appears to be especially important. With regard to learners, mobile learning has already proved its capability to help improve literacy and numeracy skills; encourage independent and collaborative learning experiences; identify areas where learners need assistance and support; mitigate resistance using ICTs; engage reluctant learners; enable learners to remain more focused for longer periods and promote self-esteem and self-confidence.

The finding is also in line with [UNESCO \(2018\)](#) which asserted that mobile learning represents a transformative shift in the way education is delivered, accessed, and experienced in digital age. By harnessing the power of mobile technology, educators and learners can break free from the constraints of traditional learning environments and embrace a more flexible, personalized, and accessible approach to education. From anytime, anywhere access to learning resources to personalized, adaptive learning experiences, mobile learning offers a wealth of opportunities for lifelong learning, skill development, and empowerment. As mobile technology continues to evolve, the potential for mobile learning to revolutionize education and empower learners around the world is limitless.

CONCLUSION

The scourge of out-of-school children presents a real challenge to education, socio-economic, cultural, political and overall national development

of any nation. Parental negligence, lack of proper upbringing and motivation, gender discrimination, death of one or both parents, divorce, absence of complete free education, poverty, hunger, poor funding of education, poor learning environment and war were among the several factors causing out-of-school children in Nigeria. However, the advent of digital literacy presents a great transformation and innovative change in the way teaching and learning is being done in our world today, particularly occasioned by the rapid advancement in ICT technologies and mobile phone usage. The study therefore concluded that digital literacy through mobile learning should be developed and promoted to complement traditional mode of learning to facilitate teaching and learning process for the disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized group in order to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, literate and illiterate, with the ultimate goal of reducing the scourge of out-of-school children in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the study therefore recommended that:

1. Digital literacy has brought about a good accessibility platform to reach out-of-school children who live far away in rural and remote areas. Hence, the need to deploy digital literacy to facilitate learning and complement traditional mode of learning.
2. The use of mobile phones for learning as well as social media platforms such as via sms, WhatsApp and Facebook platforms should be encouraged. It enhances participatory and self-directed learning to out-of-school children.
3. Government and educational policy maker should formulate law on the implementation of combining traditional literacy with digital literacy to reduce the level of illiteracy among out-of-school children in urban and rural communities across the country.
4. Government should strive to adequately fund education as advocated by UNESCO, and make it totally free at both primary and secondary level with provision of uniform and writing materials for less privilege children in order to remove out-of-school children from our streets and create a peaceful and conducive learning environment free from crime and social vices.

5. Parents need to go back to the basis of “providing a warm, supportive home environment that supports exploration and self-directed, autonomous learning, that will greatly increase the chances of having an academically successful children”

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