

# INFLUENCE OF EARLY SCHOOLING ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA: INTERVENTION FOR COUNSELLING

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## Abstract

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 2004, placed early child care and education (ECCE) into the mainstream of Education in Nigeria. Since then, several efforts have been made for the education of children to begin at an earlier age. Parents push their children into school at a very tender age and place high expectations on them. The children have to live up to the expectation of their parents and societal demands. With so much pressure on them, they resort to poor social behavior such as substance use and cheating in examinations. This paper investigated the influence of early schooling on poor social behavior among adolescent students in secondary schools in Delta state Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was 14,479 senior secondary school two students. The sample was 1300 early and typical students. Instrument for data collection was a substance use inventory questionnaire (SUIQ) and examination malpractice questionnaire (EMQ). These instruments have Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.77 and 0.67 alpha level. Two research questions were raised and answered. Data was analyzed using percentages. Findings from the study indicated a high degree of poor social behavior of early entrants of students to secondary schooling in substance use abuse and examination malpractice. Based on this, the study recommended that students should be made to start secondary schooling from the ages of 11 years, 5 years for primary school and 3-5 years for pre-school.

**Keywords:** Early schooling, burnout, poor social behavior, examination malpractice, substance use.

## Introduction

Formal education through schooling prepares the individual with the skill to survive in his or her immediate environment and to contribute to national growth and development. This is done taking into consideration the maturational level of the individual. Ugoma, et al. (2019), strongly asserted that the education of the child is a process that draws out the best in the child with the aim of producing well- balanced personality, culturally refined, emotionally stable, ethically sound, mentally alert, morally upright, physically strong, socially efficient, vocationally self-sufficient and internationally liberal.

The year 1999 in Nigeria, the Universal Basic Education was launched, and the UBE Act of 2004 placed early child care and education (ECCE) into the mainstream of education in Nigeria. Since then, several efforts have been made for the education of children to begin at an earlier age. Parents in Nigeria, especially in Delta State, are rushing their children to school despite their tender age.

Early schooling in view of this paper, is the formal education available to children between 1-2 years of nursery school, 3-4 years of primary school and 8-9 years of secondary school. This means that by 3-4 years, the child who started nursery school has completed it. And the child who started primary school by 3-4 years will have completed it between 8-9 years and proceeds into secondary school between 8-9 years. In many cases in Delta State, the primary 6 class is

almost phased out. The trend is that the child passes to primary five class and is admitted into the secondary school, (Ovie, 2022).

This early schooling is very different from the normal early child care and education (ECCE), stipulated by Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 2014. According to this policy, pre-primary education is the one-year education given to children at ages 5 years, prior to their entering primary school. The purpose of this early child exposure to schooling among others, shall be to inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiring and creating through exploring nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit, and teach the rudiments of letters, colors, shape, and form through play.

On the other hand, primary education as referred to in this paper, is the education given in institutions for children 6-12 years plus. This being the case, the goals of primary education are to inculcate literacy and numerical and the ability to communicate effectively, and lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking. While secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage with the broad goals of useful living within society and higher education. On this account, the secondary education shall be of six years duration given in two stages: a junior secondary stage and a senior secondary stage. Jean Piaget propounded a cognitive development theory in 1936 and outlined four distinct stages of cognitive development of children where each stage marks a shift in how they think and understand the world in the nature of learning behavior and morality. Pin pointedly, Piaget asserted that at ages 12 years upward, children are capable of concrete and abstract reasoning. This stage is termed formal operation. This is the stage at which children transition from primary to secondary schooling.

A study was carried out in New York by neuroscientists Giedd et al. (2009), using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), to scan the brain of children and young adolescents in view of their cognitive readiness for schooling and social behavior. Their findings indicated that the prefrontal cortex of the brain undergoes prunings from ages 5 years, 8 years, 16 years and 20 years upwards. Further findings from the study by these researchers showed that early exposure of the prefrontal cortex and the parietal lobe to complex academic activities and social behavior, can be impulsive, unpredictable and risky (Giedd et al., 2009).

Social behavior is the activity of an individual or group of individuals which qualifies, modifies or otherwise alters the act of another individual or societal norms, (Eric et al., 2005). On the other hand, poor social behavior or antisocial behavior, means behaving in ways that purposefully disregard the rights of others and break societal rules and laws. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V-TR), of antisocial behavior (ASB), are children with an inappropriate recurrent pattern of stubborn, hostile and defiant behaviours exhibited mostly by school age children (Eric & David, 2005). According to study.com. (2021), individuals with antisocial behavior are withdrawn from society and are against societal traditions and norms. This is different from being shy or asocial. A shy individual is reserved in a party setting but is not against the norms of society. Also, the asocial individual is a person that is not social (without social) but is not against societal rules and laws. Antisocial or poor social behaviour is against societal rules and laws. Some behaviors that characterize antisocial behavior according to study.com (2021), are theft, vandalism and crime, lying and deceitfulness, violating social norms and rules, drugs and alcohol abuse, and other forms of behavior

Some prominent factors that may influence the development of antisocial behavior, according to the same authors include the school environment, friendship group, social status, and family personality.

Alan et al. (2000), see early schooling as a correlate of antisocial behavior. According to this study, teenagers exposed early to academic training and whose grades are low are more prone

and vulnerable to antisocial behavior. Elkind (2010), using a descriptive survey research design carried out a study in West Hartford with High School Students who were early entrants to schooling on antisocial behavior. His findings surprisingly indicated that, 75% of young adolescents who were engaged in schooling early by their parents become burnt-out easily academically, as against 25% who were late or normal entrant to schooling, leading to examination malpractice. Again, the study of Elkind (2010) and Robert et al (1981), on burnout identified five stages of burnout academically as honeymoon stage, fuel shortage stage, crises stage, and hitting the wall stage.

It is the last stage that characterizes antisocial behavior. This is because when young adolescents in schools are having low grades, aware of imaginary audience, that they will no longer gain the support of their parents, they take to antisocial behavior such as cultism, examination malpractice, drugs abuse and alcoholism where they feel they can be supported. Many studies have been carried out in some states of Nigeria and some Western countries on drug abuse or substance use and other forms of antisocial behavior. Sophia (2017), in Akoko North East of Ondo state of Nigeria, studied students' antisocial behavior on academic performance. In Oyo state, Ojo (2015), studied prevalence of antisocial behavior among students with hearing impairment while Dan (2007), studied the antisocial behaviours of children and parental influence. In Delta State Nigeria, there is a paucity of studies in relation to early schooling on poor social or antisocial behavior among secondary school students. It is based on this, that this paper examined the extent of poor social or antisocial behavior in examination malpractice and substance abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria in order that counseling can be carried out on them.

### **Purpose of the study**

In recent times in Nigeria, particularly Delta State, it is observed by the current study, that there is an increase in antisocial behavior in alcohol abuse, substance use disorder and examination malpractice among schools students. The current study is therefore aimed at finding out the influence of early schooling on poor social or antisocial behaviours in substance use and examination malpractice among secondary school students Delta state, in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the extent of substance use among early and typical secondary school students in Delta State, in Nigeria?
2. What is the rate of examination malpractice behaviour among early and typical secondary school students in Delta State, in Nigeria?

### **Methods**

The study made use of a descriptive survey design. This is because the study stands to address early schooling on the poor social behavior of secondary school students in Delta State. The population of the study consists of 14,479 senior secondary school students spread across three educational zones in the state. The sample of the study is 1000 early students entrants and 300 late entrants to schooling. Multistage sampling techniques through purposive sampling were used to select two educational zones out of the three zones ( Delta North and Delta South ). Simple random sampling was used to select 25 secondary schools from the local government areas and 40 students each from the secondary schools. Instruments for data collection were substance use inventory questionnaire (SUIQ) and an examination malpractice questionnaire (EMQ). Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency. Hence the reliability coefficient of 0.77 and 0.67 was obtained for the instruments. Data were

analyzed using percentages. The percentage was obtained by the total respondents over the sample of the study, divided by hundred.

**Table 1**

Results showing the extent of substance use among early and typical students in secondary school

Questionnaire items	Respondents					
	Early Entrant			Late Entrant		
In your opinion, indicate the extent to which students in your school use the following types of substances/drugs	Always n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	No Response n(%)	Always n(%)	Sometimes n(%)	No Response n(%)
Tramadol	700(70%)	220(22%)	80(8%)	150(50%)	50(17%)	100(33%)
Marijuana	300(30%)	400(40%)	300(30%)	60(20%)	120(40%)	120(40%)
Tobacco/smoking	500(50%)	400(40%)	100(10%)	70(23%)	35(12%)	195(65%)
Alcohol	500(50%)	200(20%)	300(30%)	100(33%)	70(23%)	130(43%)
Codeine	100(10%)	400(40%)	500(50%)	50(17%)	100(33%)	150(50%)
Caffeine	600(60%)	350(35%)	50(5%)	120(40%)	50(17%)	130(43%)

Table 1 above, showed the extent to which students in the secondary schools formed the habit of substance use, especially tramadol, caffeine, alcohol and tobacco. The extent of tramadol use by early entrants was 70%, Caffeine 60%, followed by alcohol 50%, tobacco 50% and marijuana 30%.

When this was compared with that of late entrants, tramadol use was 50%, marijuana was 20%, alcohol 33.3%, tobacco 23.3% and caffeine 40%.

**Table 2**

Results showing the rate of examination malpractice behavior by early and typical student entrants into secondary school

Questionnaire items	Respondents					
	Early Entrants			Late Entrants		
By your observations, indicate the rate at which the following behaviors during examinations are carried out by students in your school	Always	Sometimes	No Response	Always	Sometimes	No Response
GIRRAFFING (ie, stretching the neck to spy at another student's answers)	900(90%)	80(8%)	20(2%)	70(23%)	100(33%)	130(43%)
Writing prepared answers on laps, palms, concealed by the uniform	400(40%)	300(30%)	300(30%)	100(33%)	150(50%)	50(17%)

Students contributing money to pay teachers in the school to solve examination questions for them	600(60%)	200(20%)	200(20%)	150(50%)	100(33%)	50(17%)
Impersonation.	300(30%)	300(30%)	400(40%)	60 (20%)	50(17%)	190(63%)
Leaving your own school To enroll in miracle centers to Write WAEC and NECO Examinations	800(80%)	150(15%)	50(5%)	80(27%)	120(40%)	100(33%)
Carrying prepared answers To the hall unnoticed by The supervisor	750(75%)	100(10%)	150(15%)	35(12%)	70(23%)	195(55%)
Downloading Answers from cell Phones.	600(60%)	300(30%)	100(10%)	87(29%)	87(29%)	126(42%)
Arranging with Supervisors to write the exams Outside the hall	650(65%)	203(20%)	147(15%)	60(20%)	35(12%)	205(68%)

The rate at which students' antisocial behaviour on examination malpractice, is shown on Table 2, where 90% of the early entrants depended on others by spying, 65% pay supervisors and invigilators to write the exams for them outside the hall, 60% pay their teachers to write for them, 70% will go to centres termed miracle centres where there are prepared answers and 30% impersonate. When this is compared with the typical student entrants, 70% depended on others for spying, 50% pay their teachers and invigilators to write for them, 26.7% will go centres termed miracle centres where there are prepared answers and 20% impersonate, this is relatively low.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study showed that early schooling into secondary education is a precursor to antisocial behavior in substance use disorders and examination malpractice. This is indicated in Table 1, where early entrants into secondary school abused drugs such as tramadol 70%, caffeine 60%, Marijuana 30%, alcohol 50%, tobacco 50% and codeine 33%. On the other hand, late entrants into secondary school abused tramadol at 50%, marijuana at 20%, tobacco at 23.3%, alcohol at 33.3%, codeine at 33.3% and caffeine at 40%. These findings agree with the study of the Neuroscientists, Gield etal (2009), who opined that early exposure of the prefrontal cortex and the parietal lobe of the brain to complex academic training and social activities could be very impulsive, unpredictable and risky. It also agreed with the findings of Elkind (2010), who concluded that adolescents exposed to early schooling become burnout easily academically, leading to antisocial behavior in examination malpractice, drugs abuse and alcohol abuse.

### Counselling Intervention

Developmental psychology considers the individual's growth, development and maturity before they are exposed to complex tasks such as academic training. Cognitive development theory by Jean Piaget and others, emphasized maturity before meaningful learning can occur. This is supported by Neuroscientists who scanned the organs of learning and social behavior (prefrontal cortex and parietal lobe) and pointed out that these organs undergo gradual development unto maturity from 5 years, 8 years, and 16 years upwards. This sequence of

developments follows the normal exposure of the child and adolescent to critical tasks such as academic training in school. Below this sequence of development and its exposure to schooling amounts to academic burnout, academic abuse and violence, leading to antisocial behavior referred to in this paper as substances use disorders and examination malpractice. This is unethical and unhealthy for a growing nation like Nigeria.

Based on this, the following recommendations are made

1. Students should be made to start secondary school between the ages of 11-12 years upward, 5-6 years upward into primary school and 3-4 years upward into pre-school and not below these years.
2. Awareness is needed to guide parents to avoid hurrying their tender children through academic training. This campaign can be made through social media, public address systems by the government and counselors who may have direct contact with parents during the process of admissions. And through the publication of this journal article.
3. Private school owners should strictly adhere to the laid down education policy on the specific age brackets children are expected to be before they are admitted into the school.
4. Monitoring of schools by the ministry of education is necessary to ensure that children are not hurried into academic training.
5. Double promotion and jumping from one class to the other in the name of intelligence should be avoided.
6. Investigation on miracle examination centres should be carried out to avoid examination malpractice. This is a dark spot in the educational system of Nigeria.
7. Counselling on substance use by students should be carried out by students in the school system from time to time. So that they can see the dangers of drugs abuse and avoid it immediately
8. Reinforcement through rewards for good behaviors and punishment for deviant behavior of students, should be enforced in the school system
9. And finally, healthy and educative clubs can be formed by the school management where students are encouraged to join. Secret clubs should be prohibited.

## Conclusion

Teaching and learning in a formal educational setting, is built upon the maturity of the cognitive, physical, emotional and moral entity of adolescents. This sequence of development follows the normal or typical exposure of the child and adolescent to critical tasks such as academic training in school. Hurrying of underaged children through academic training leads to academic abuse of the child which could also lead to impulsive, unpredictable and risky behavior (Gield, 2009). Such behaviors are drug abuse, alcohol abuse and examination malpractice, found out in this current study. This can affect the entire well-being of the child in society and hinder the scientific and technological growth of the nation. This implies that the child and the adolescent exposed to academic training at the typical age, acquires skills for successful living in the society and contributes meaningfully to the growth and development of his or her nation.

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