

# PSYCHOSOCIAL DEPRIVATION OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

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## Abstract

This study investigated psychosocial deprivations among nursery school pupils in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The sample consist of 150 pupils who were drawn through proportionate random sampling technique from 6 public nursery schools in the area of study. Four research questions were posed and data for their investigation were collected using copies of researchers developed questionnaire called Psychosocial Deprivation and Pre-school Assessment Questionnaire (PDPSAQ). The test – retest reliability co-efficient of this instrument within an interval of two weeks is 0.89. The teachers interpreted the items in the questionnaire to the pupils and scored their responses. All the research questions were answered with simple percentage test statistic and the results show that nursery school pupils suffer psychological and social deprivations. It also shows that girls suffer more psychological and social deprivations than the boys. These results were discussed and some useful recommendations made one of these is that parents/guardians should desist from differential socialization of male and female children.

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**Keywords:** Deprivation, psychosocial, pre-school, children.

## Introduction

The recent years have continued to witness an increasing volume of research reports on the effects of the environment on the child's development. The rising interest of scholars in this area of research is based on their recognition that the child's intellectual development is not entirely governed by genetics or maturation. Experience which the growing child gains

through interaction with things and people within the environment facilitates his learning process. This is why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) listed inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc as one of the purposes of early childhood/pre-primary education. Beside providing experiences, the timing and quality of experiences provided to children also significantly influences learning. This assertion is in harmony with the report of Johnson and Medinnus (1974) that any exposure to learning during the critical period, even if brief, brings out behaviour at a normal pace but deprivation until the period has passed, results in permanent injury, leaving a lasting inferiority.

In Nigeria like any other society of the world, quality experiences tend to be available for some children and not for others depending on a number of socio-psychological factors. The pre-school years are very crucial in the child's life because it is at this stage that the foundation for the child's success in school and life generally are laid. It is a period when growth is most rapid in both physical and mental characteristics and when the environment can shape a child's behaviour in social and intellectual spheres. During this period, the favourable and unfavourable outcomes of the child's experience have lasting consequences. Havinghurst (1994) maintains that the child at this stage learns among other things to form simple concepts of social and physical reality, relate oneself emotionally to parents, siblings and other people and also distinguish right and wrong and develop conscience.

Although Nigerian educationists and educators know these facts and in their educational policies and practices develop strategies that are deemed most likely to enhance proper academic and social adjustment among children, many school children continue to exhibit signs of social maladjustment and academic underachievement. One factor which seems to be responsible for this problem is psychosocial deprivations which many children suffer at the crucial stage of development. Psychosocial deprivation refers to failure in meeting the child's psychological and social needs (Isangedighi, 1996). It is a state of psychological and social deficiency which could be objective or sensed (Stang and Wrigheman, 1981). Deprivation is of varying degrees, but the greater the extent of it, the worst for the individual as a learner.

Psychosocial deprivation contributes to loss of precocity among children, (Agbakwuru, 2009). Its major causes in Nigeria include wide spread ignorance among most parents on how to stimulate the intellectual and social development of their children, high rate of unemployment and mass poverty which make it very difficult for most parents to

provide adequately the needs of their families, as well as very large sizes of most families which make adequate and quality parental interaction with their children very difficult.

Research reports (Isangedighi, 1996; Johnson and Medinnus, 1974; Bloom, 1976; and Dearden, 1979) have shown that psychosocial deprivation of children leads to social apathy, deficiency in social discrimination, demonstration of excessive desire for attention and love, antisocial behaviours, poor language and mental development, deficiency in abstract thinking as well as aggressiveness and impulsivity. These make it impossible for children to maximally benefit from any educational programme no matter how lofty such programme maybe.

Regrettably, the volumes of research reports on the effects of the environment on the child's development seem to be lopsided. Many researchers who have carried out studies on the interaction between the environment and development have ignored the sub-area of psychosocial deprivation of pre-school children. The effect of this is that the situation regarding the forms and degrees of social and psychosocial deprivations as well as the influence of sex on the problems of social and psychological deprivation of nursery school pupils remain unclear. This study was therefore embarked upon to fill this gap in knowledge. The results will form the basis for recommendations to reduce or completely eliminate psychosocial deprivations of children in our society.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are posed to guide the investigation:

1. What forms of psychological deprivations do nursery school pupils suffer?
2. What forms of social deprivations do nursery school pupils suffer?
3. To what extent do boys and girls differ in their percentage scores of experiences of psychological deprivations?
4. To what extent do boys and girls differ in their experiences of social deprivations?

### **Research Method**

This study was conducted in Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The area was chosen for this study because education is the greatest industry of the people. Thus, the area of study provides a large pool of population from which adequate sample size can be drawn from. The population of study consists of all public nursery school (early child care centers) in all the 50 public nursery schools in the area of the study. Statistical data

collected from Ezinihitte Local Government Education Authority puts the number of the population at 2,175 pupils comprising of 1,118 boys and 1,057 girls. Out of this population, simple random sampling technique was used to draw two nursery schools from each of the three zones (Ezi-East, Ezi-Centre and Ezi-West) of the local government area for the study. From these six nursery schools, a sample of 150 pupils was drawn through the proportionate random sampling technique. The adoption of proportionate random sampling technique was considered appropriate because the number of pupils in each of the nursery schools is not equal.

Relevant data for statistical analysis were collected from the pupils through their teachers. The teachers were educated on the purpose of the research and their roles as research assistants. Each of them was given copies of a 20 items researchers' developed questionnaire called "Psychosocial Deprivation of Pre-School Assessment Questionnaire (PDPSAQ) for data collection. They were taught how to interpret each item in the questionnaire to the pupils and score their answers/responses accordingly. The biodata in this questionnaire are five items while the remaining 15 items elicited responses for answering the four research questions posed for the study. Because of the difficulty of knowing precisely the degree of agreement or disagreement of the pupils on a likert-type scale, the 15 items in the instrument were developed as a yes or no response.

The test re-test reliability co-efficient of the instrument within an interval of two weeks with 15 pupils who were not part of the study was 0.89. The four research questions were answered with simple percentage test statistic.

## Results

The results of the statistical analysis of the four research questions are presented in the following tables:

**Table 1:** Simple percentage rank order of forms of psychological deprivations experienced by children.

Rank	Items	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
1	Lack of trust in children's ability to do certain things.	111	74	39	26	100
2	Blocking the spirit of adventure in children	108	72	42	28	100

3	Discouraging children from being inquisitive.	105	70	45	30	100
4	Restriction of children's activities.	100	67	50	33	100
5	No recognition of children's actions and activities.	93	62	57	38	100
6	Lack/inadequate rewarding parental attitude.	90	60	60	40	100
7	No satisfaction of children's need for new experiences.	88	59	62	41	100
8	Non appreciation of children's efforts.	60	40	90	60	100
9	Lack of parental affection.	41	27	109	73	100

The results on table one show that pupils yes percentage scores for items 1-7 are all greater than half, that is, 50 percent while their percentage yes scores for items 8 and 9 are below 50 percent. What this means is that the low yes percentage scores of the respondents to items 8 (non appreciation of children's efforts) and item 9 (lack of parental affection) is an indication that they do not suffer deprivation of these items. On the other hand, their high yes percentage scores to items 1-7 indicates that they suffer deprivation of these items. The conclusion derivable from these results is that nursery school pupils suffer a number of psychological deprivations.

**Table 2:** Simple percentage rank order of forms of social deprivations experienced by children.

Rank	Items	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
1	Undemocratic attitude of parents in dealing with children.	130	87	20	13	100
2	Non involvement of children in decision making.	126	84	24	16	100
3	Inadequate time/opportunity for social interaction with one's parents	93	62	57	38	100
4	Lack of richly stimulating environment for children.	91	61	59	39	100
5	Indifference to children's actions and activities.	90	60	60	40	100

The results on table two show that the yes percentage scores of the pupils to all the 5 items exceeded half that is 50 percent. Their high yes percentage scores to these items indicate that they experience these social deprivations. The conclusion which can be drawn from these results is that nursery school pupils experience social deprivation.

**Table 3:** Simple per centage analysis of degree of psychological deprivations suffered by boys and girls.

Sex	Number	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
Boys	83	35	42	48	58	100
Girls	67	51	76	16	24	100

The results on table 3 show that while 35 boys representing 42 percent and 48 boys representing 58 percent responded yes and no respectively, 51 girls representing 76 percent and 16 others representing 24 percent responded yes and no respectively. The yes responses indicate the magnitude of psychological deprivations suffered by nursery school pupils while the no responses indicate the level of psychological deprivations that nursery school pupils do not experience. Looking at the yes and no percentage scores of the boys and girls, it is evident that the boys suffer less degree of psychological deprivations than the girls.

**Table 4:** Simple per centage analysis of degree of social deprivations suffered by boys and girls.

Sex	Number	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
Boys	83	30	36	53	64	100
Girls	67	54	81	13	19	100

The results on table 4 show that while 30 boys representing 36 percent and 53 others representing 64 percent responded yes and no respectively, 54 girls representing 81 percent and 13 girls represent 19 percent responded yes and no respectively. Since the yes responses show the level of social deprivations being experienced by nursery school pupils and the no responses show the level of social deprivations which they are not experiencing, the conclusion which can be drawn from this result is that girls suffer more than the boys in terms of social deprivations.

## Discussion

The results of research question one show that nursery school pupils suffer a lot of psychological deprivations. This result collaborate the findings of Isangedighi (1996) and Agbakwuru (2009) which show that children in Africa suffer much social and psychological

deprivation. Parental ignorance or lack of competence in child rearing causes these deprivations. These deprivations in turn cause psychological poverty in children. An extreme psychological deprivation of stimulation may actually retard body growth, and can result in “deprivation dwarfism”.

In a related way, the results of research question two show that nursery school pupils also suffer a lot of social deprivations. This situation is very unfortunate when one recalls that children who are deprived suffer social, emotional, intellectual and even speech defeats. (Dearden, 1979). Therefore, such children cannot benefit maximally from any educational plans no matter how lofty such plans may be. This is true because the potentialities of human mind do not naturally unfold as genetically determined, but require active participation of a stimulating environment in order to attain normal development.

The third research question sought to find out the influence of sex on the experience of psychological deprivations among nursery school pupils. The result shows that more girls (76%) experience psychological deprivations than boys (42%). This result is a reflection of the traditional Igbo society child rearing practice which places high premium on the boys than on the girls. Traditionally, the males are expected to be more forceful, aggressive, domineering, adventurous, etc. than the girls. The females on the other hand are expected to be more co-operative, submissive, caring, gentle, etc. than the males. (Agbakwuru and Ekechukwu, 2008). The result of this differential socialization of the males and females is that males are given more psychological and social freedom than the females. The restriction of the females’ freedom is what is referred to as psychosocial deprivations in this paper.

Finally, the fourth research question investigated the influence of sex on social deprivation. The result also shows that more females (81 percent) suffer social deprivations than the males (36 percent). The different ways of socializing boys and girls in traditional Igbo society owing to societal expectations also accounts for the higher degree of social deprivation experienced by females.

### **Recommendations:**

In the light of the results of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Parents/guardians should desist from the differential treatment they give to their male and female children through the process of socialization. This recommendation is very important because such differential treatments/exposure to experiences marks the

beginning of gender based violence – a situation which has fatal, physical, chronic, and mental, reproduction and negative health behaviours/consequences on women.

2. Professional guidance counsellors should enlighten parents/guardians on the negative effects of deprivations on the holistic development of children. This recommendation demands that professional guidance counsellors should give due attention to family counselling.
3. Teachers and administrators of nursery schools should educate parents/guardians of their pupils on the psychological and social needs of children and how parents/guardians can satisfy these needs. Such ceremonies such as welcome/orientation programme, graduation ceremony, inter-house sports competition, etc. provide excellent occasions for educating parents/guardians on these issues.

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