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## A socio-cognitive impact of class-skipping syndrome on learners communicative and linguistic competence among private school students in Lagos state, Nigeria.

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### Abstract

A significant number of parents are always in a rush that their children or wards should finish secondary at an age that learners have not attained cognitive maturity. The negative impact of unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome has enormous effect on the educational system, cognitive and linguistic competence and the social and academic wellbeing of learners. The study examined parental perception towards unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome among private schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised to guide the study. A Questionnaire on Perceptions towards Unhealthy Curriculum and Class Skipping Syndrome was used to collect the data. The instrument was validated through face and construct validity while the Test Re-test method was used to obtain a reliability correlation co-efficient of 0.72. The instrument was administered on 120 parents randomly selected from six private schools on the basis of rural and urban geographical locations. The results showed a significant relationship between class skipping syndrome and student's social communicative and linguistic competence on academic wellbeing. Likewise, there is a significant relationship between unhealthy curriculum and student's academic, communicative, linguistic and social wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State. So, it was concluded from this study that unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome when excessively applied on students may negatively affect student's wellbeing and there is a strong relationship between academic stress and reduced academic performance. It is recommended that parents, teachers, policy makers, educational administrators, career and counseling centers should put in place mechanisms that can lessen the negative impacts of unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome on the students. Structures and infrastructures needed for proper implementation of Nigerian educational policy should be put in place.

**Keywords:** socio-cognitive impact, parental perception, unhealthy curriculum, class skipping syndrome, private school

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### Introduction

The extent to which schooling is able to foster social mobility hinges upon the education system's ability to loosen the ties between academic opportunity and the life circumstances inherited by individuals at birth (Piraino & Haveman, 2006) [23]. Such aims are halted when education becomes a wealth-based rather than an ability-based endeavour. In developed countries where the public education can accommodate universal enrollment, privatization policies promote a competitive alternative. Where the supply of education is still insufficient to achieve universal enrollment use private markets to expand supply, while shifting costs away from government. Private financing through private schools increases resources for education by collecting user fees from parents. This policy can increase revenue to enable expansion of supply and redistribution of educational opportunities through scholarships for children from poor families (Mingat & Tan, 1986) [19]. Private education sector is making a substantial contribution to the expansion of educational access in Lagos. This is particularly impressive, given that roughly one-half of the state's population lives below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012) [20]. Even many of the poorest households are paying to send their children to fee-based private schools; 59% of children from ultra-poor households across the state are attending private schools. Many

of these poorer students are able to access basic education through the increased availability of low-cost private schools. Given the size and contributions of the private school sector, the experience of Lagos offers insight into the role of schooling markets and private provision relevant for other urban contexts in low- and middle-income countries.

Despite the potential benefits of private schooling, relying on private markets can undermine educational equity and universal access. Private financing relies on a strong demand and ability to pay. Even minimal school fees can harm equity in countries where schooling has high opportunity costs from children's wage labour and domestic work. This effect can fall disproportionately on the poor children from rural areas, and parents not economically viable to consistently afford school fees may adopt alternative measures that may not be educationally productive. Private schools may exclude students who are poor, live in remote areas, are developmentally disabled, or are otherwise more costly to educate (Gordon & Whitty, 1997) [12]. Some research suggests that low-cost private schools can play a positive role in promoting equity, asserting that such schools have the potential to give access to education to poorer communities (Alderman, 2001; Tooley, 2004) [1]. Tooley (2004) responds to criticisms that for profit schools will seek to charge

high fees, suggesting instead that entrepreneurs are motivated by a desire to serve the poor, however charging excessive fees would run against such interest. In this formulation, the profit motive is viewed as a factor in promoting socio-economic equity. Meanwhile, the literature reveals little evidence that the very poor cannot afford even the lowest of fees (Cameron 2011), while little evidence is offered that subsidies or scholarships for private schools are available for the poor on a large scale (Harma, 2010). Such issues are likely causes of unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome for learners among private primary schools in Nigeria characterized by work load in terms of assignments, home-work, home lesson teaching added with house chores are of negative impact on students' social and academic wellbeing. Parents' prompt academic challenges on learners in order to allow their wards complete primary and schools quickly not considering its impacts on learners. This scenario was reported by Vanguard (2007) the average Nigerian student spends a minimum of eight hours in school daily, just as teachers spend minimum of nine hours to ensure they cover the overloaded curriculum of twenty subjects on or before the end of a term. Vanguard's investigations have revealed. Our findings further revealed that in a quest for teachers and parents to assist students cover the syllabus within three months in order to skip classes, the available options are for class teachers and parents to engage students for additional hours after school, as parents also employ the services of lesson teachers after school hours. The scenario has since snowballed into students spending the most of the day, moving from one lesson to another, with little or no time for relaxation. Siesta for students is now a thing of the past. As asserted, change in sleeping habits, vacation and breaks, change in eating habits, increased work load, and new responsibilities among students can result in a decreased performance in the academic accomplishments and can affect both the physical and mental health of students. Pariat, Rynjah, Joplin & Kharjana, 2014) [22].

Presently most privates in Nigeria ushers their learners to secondary school from primary five skipping primary six classes. Indeed, pupils have a unique cluster of overloaded experiences circumstance or event that threatens to disrupt people's daily functioning and causes them to make adjustments. If learner's well-being is negatively affected, it exacts some amount of pressure on learners. It consequently affects their cognitive, linguistic and communicative ability. Problems of financial difficulties, health issues, conflicts with friends, all carry force or pressure on person's body -mind and spirit. Some of the pressure or forces originate from the environment but most often comes from within learners resulting in stress, anxiousness, regret, discouragement and low confidence. Unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome has a major influence on mood, our sense of well-being, behavior, and health of learners, healthy learners may be adaptive and typically do not impose a health burden, however, if the threat is unremitting, the long-term can damage health (Schneiderman, Ironson & Siegel, 2005) [25].

The essence of unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome among Nigeria private schools is to reduce burden of tuition fees. This makes learners to skip classes otherwise known as double promotion which is detrimental not only to learner cognitive maturity but to quality of Nigerian educational system. Under the 6-3-3-4 education system, children are expected to

spend six years in primary school, three in junior secondary school (JSS), three years in senior secondary school (SSS), and four years in the university or other tertiary institutions. With the signing of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Law in 2004, the first nine years of basic education (six years of primary and three of JSS are free and compulsory in public schools. Public primary schools' pupils spend the stipulated six years, but many of their private schools counterparts hardly do so. Despite the efforts by Lagos State Ministry of Education to ensure that private schools comply with the laid down system, the practice among private schools in Nigeria is for pupils to enter secondary schools from primary five thereby skipping primary six classes. The result is that many young pupils enter secondary school and even university ill-prepared academically (N.P.E, 2004). Hence, the need for parents to know the dangers inherent in not putting a child through the right foundation is very paramount. The culture of parents sending their children to secondary school early because of the bandwagon effect, bragging rights, and economic reasons of reducing payment of school fees is on the increase. Pupils now leave primary schools at the age of ten instead of the normal twelve years when they should have been cognitively mature. Moreover, some parent believe that their children should leave primary school at the age of nine and eight when they are not yet fully mature because they want to avoid continuous payment of school fees and they want their children in secondary schools at all cost.

In view of the exorbitant tuition charged by private school in Nigeria, arguments abound as to whether these private secondary schools contribute to the development of secondary education in Nigeria and by extension to national development. On the contrary, it's observed that these schools are established to fill the gap created by the ineffectiveness and dilapidating nature of public schools. Some analysts agree that these private secondary schools are too expensive for majority of Nigerians to afford, thereby prompting unhealthy curriculum and class skipping or double promotion since the main motive behind their establishment is profit making. This study intends to investigate the impact of unhealthy curriculum and class skipping on the linguistic, social and general academic wellbeing of learners. The dearth of literature on this issues makes this study pertinent because it has the potential to undermine the quantity and quality of output of Nigerian educational system considering producing graduates for global competitiveness.

### **Linguistic and Communicative Competence**

In the current globalized world, English is the foremost language of communication and the primary language of the internet, providing individuals with opportunities to develop English proficiency in the formal and informal context. This is the aim of our curriculum developers in Nigeria.

The status of English in the world is increasingly characterized by those who use it as a second or additional language, rather than by its native speakers (Jnkins, 2015). English is not only spread globally but also appreciated locally (Mufwene, 2010).

Simultaneously, researchers have raised concerns regarding the use of English at the expense of other indigenous languages as well as the lack of inclusion of student's existing language resources in the classroom (Genoz & Gortaner, 2018).

Considering the tremendous advantages of English language and the increased mobility, economic development, information technology, international cooperation and other processes related to globalization, a timely question is to what extent will our pupils master the language if they continue to be encumbered with numerous subjects in the primary schools and still skip classes or get double promotion (at all cost) bearing in mind that the English language and communication skills are structured hierarchically and the curriculum does not provide for skipping of any aspect of the scheme of work.

Moreover, to what extent and how do our pupils learn and use languages in the classroom to enable their inclusion in the local and global communication?

Traditionally, languages have been taught separately in the school context, and although recent trends have suggested multilinguals and their languages resources be used as reference, but researchers have disagreed (Adenle, 2018).

Most researchers agree that exposure to and the use of the target language is crucial for language learning, but many also emphasize that speakers' first language (L1) occur naturally in the classroom discourse and among their peers. So, the question remains that how will class skippers meet up with the challenge? How will they fill the vacuum of the classroom learning and peer interaction which is crucial to language learning and effective communication?

### Theoretical Framework

Theoretically this study is anchored on two sociological theories of educational access, attainment, and learning to better understand the relationships between private schooling in Nigeria and social equity prompting unhealthy curriculum and class skipping in Lagos State, Nigeria. These two theories Raftery and Hout's (1993) Maximally Maintained Inequality and Lucas's (2001) Effectively Maintained Inequality are commonly used by sociologists to understand the links between education expansion and social stratification. The two theories seek to explain some of the driving forces behind loopholes in public schools and persistent inequality caused by private schools within Nigeria education systems. Learners from more educated parents, more political, financial, and social affluence, have distinct advantages over less-affluent students in virtually every society globally (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001; Hout, 2006)<sup>[7, 15]</sup>. The maximally maintained inequality (MMI) maintains that structural inequalities in educational attainment that exist between the poor and rich parents educational scarcity (Raftery & Hout, 1993). This enables the rich to afford exorbitant school fees and the poor resorting to class skipping to evade payment of school fees as charged by private schools. So long as a certain level of schooling such as a full cycle of primary education is not available universally, the socio-economically privileged will be the first to exploit its advantages. Thus, the full benefits of primary or secondary education participation will not be openly available to the less-advantaged socioeconomic groups until the more-advantaged maximize their opportunities and reach saturation of the given education level (Ayalon & Shavit, 2004)<sup>[5]</sup>. This inequality is manifest through parents to overloading learners with academic work in order to skip classes and reduce payment of school fees while upper class families keep their children in schools for the normal educational access (Hout, 2006)<sup>[15]</sup>

Moreover, the second theory of Effectively Maintained Inequality by Lucas's (2001) explains how social inequalities are perpetuated even after quantitative schooling saturation. The theory accounts for class differences in the amount of education people receive, accounts for differences in the type or quality of education people receive. The upper-class parent is opportune by their wealth to provide qualitative education and better employment opportunities for their children. Educational inequalities decrease over time, access to varying academic tracks and stratified curriculum in the education system lead to differential post-schooling opportunities, including employment or continued progression into higher education institutions (Lucas, 2001; Marks, 2013)<sup>[18]</sup>. For opponents of education privatization, critiques of market-driven education reforms are largely influenced by the reasoning found within this theory that unaffordable costs of accessing private education will lead to under-consumption by the most vulnerable, thus creating quantitative inequities in education attainment levels between socioeconomic groups. Such assertions have been investigated thoroughly within the empirical literature (Aslam, 2009; Hsieh & Urquiola, 2006; Pal & Kingdon, 2010)<sup>[4, 21]</sup>. The principles of this theory have been found effective to demonstrate how socioeconomic advantages are used by families to obtain higher quality opportunities through elite school sectors, sometimes public (Languille, 2016; Oketch, Mutisya, Ngware, & Ezech, 2010)<sup>[16]</sup>, but more often private (Green, Machin, Murphy, & Zhu, 2012; Torche, 2005)<sup>[11]</sup>. The bulk of research on private schooling in low and middle income developing countries such as Nigeria has not paid much attention to the issues of unhealthy curriculum and class skipping. Thus, this study, has utilize the sociological import of these two theory of Raftery and Hout's (1993) Maximally Maintained Inequality and Lucas's (2001) Effectively Maintained Inequality explain that unequal educational opportunities for students leading to unhealthy curriculum and class skipping in private schools in Lagos State Nigeria can result in cognitive immaturity and negatively affect learner's communicative competence, linguistic competence and social-wellbeing which in turn retard the global competitiveness of output of Nigerian educational system.

### Research Questions

1. Is there any significant relationship between unhealthy curriculum and students social and academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State?
2. Is there any significant relationship class skipping syndrome and students communicative, social and academic wellbeing among private school students in Lagos State?

### Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between unhealthy curriculum and students communicative, social and academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State.
2. There is no significant relationship between class skipping syndrome and students communicative, social and academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State.

### Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used in carrying out the study, this research design was considered most appropriate because it

provides wider scope for obtaining information needed for the purpose of the study. The population for this research consists of parents of students in the private schools on the basis of rural and urban geographical area of Lagos State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty parents were randomly selected from six private schools on the basis of rural and urban geographical locations. A Questionnaire on Perceptions towards Unhealthy Curriculum and Class Skipping Syndrome was used to collect the data. The instrument consists of a series of questions drawn from the two hypotheses raised in the study, was for the purpose of gathering information from the respondents. The plain reason for the adoption of this instrument is that it is cheap and did not require much effort from the respondents. It also has a standardized answer that makes the data simple to compile. The researcher hereby used closed ended types of questions which allow the respondents to pick an answer from a given number of options, from Obvious, Rarely, and Never.

The instrument was validated through face and construct validity while the Test Re-test method was used to obtain a reliability correlation co-efficient of 0.72. After data collection, the instruments were checked for completeness and errors, the questionnaires were then arranged, coded and the major statistical test used in analyzing the data collected for the study was Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Statistical Tool.

### Presentation of Data Analysis and Result

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between unhealthy curriculum and students social and academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between unhealthy curriculum and student's social on academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State.

**Table 1:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between unhealthy curriculum and student's social on academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	Sig. level	r-cal.	r-tab.	Decision
Unhealthy curriculum and student's social	100	8.47	3.17	98	0.05	0.898	0.257	Reject H <sub>01</sub>
Academic wellbeing	100	3.19	2.64					

From table 1 above, it reveals that a total of one hundred respondents were captured in the study as unhealthy curriculum and student's social recorded a higher mean and standard deviation scores of 8.47 and 3.17; while academic wellbeing have a relative low mean and standard deviation of 3.19 and 2.64 respectively. With degree of freedom 98 at 0.05 level of significance, correlation coefficient (calculated value) was 0.898 while correlation table (table value) stood at 0.257; Since  $P > 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is thereby rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship

between unhealthy curriculum and student's social on academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State is retained.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between class skipping syndrome and students social and academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between class skipping syndrome and student's social on academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State.

**Table 2:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between class skipping syndrome and student's social on academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	Sig. level	r-cal.	r-tab.	Decision
Class skipping syndrome and student's social	100	5.69	4.48	98	0.05	0.919	0.257	Reject H <sub>02</sub>
Academic wellbeing	100	3.19	2.64					

However, table 2 above, reveals that a total of one hundred respondents were captured in the study as Class skipping syndrome and students social recorded a higher mean and standard deviation scores of 5.69 and 4.48; while academic wellbeing have a relative low mean and standard deviation values of 3.19 and 2.64 respectively. With degree of freedom 98 at 0.05 level of significance, correlation coefficient (calculated value) was 0.919 while correlation table (table value) stood at 0.257; Since  $P > 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is thereby rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between class skipping syndrome and student's social on academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State is retained.

### Discussion of Findings

Most public schools are without classrooms and the few available classrooms are without chairs and tables. Science schools are without laboratories and the few available laboratories are without equipment and chemicals. A lot of school sare without libraries and the few libraries available are with books that are older than the parents of the potential readers. In such a situation, can children acquire appropriate skills? In public schools, teachers are largely neglected, despised, degraded, belittled, looked down upon and often denied motivation and incentives. This treatment causes frequent strike actions by teachers (Babayomi, 1999) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Consequently the clarion call onto stakeholder to help finance education has led to the proliferation of private secondary schools in Nigeria.

There is a large body of research demonstrating that private schools may be filling sizable supply gaps where governments fail to adequately deliver basic educational services (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2008; Barrera-Osorio *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[2]</sup>.

The private educational sector has significant contributions to quantitative educational mobility in the form of increased educational access and attainment to many previously neglected social groups in Lagos, Nigeria. The growth of private school in Lagos offers evidence that private schools have grown in direct response to failures in the supply and delivery of basic education services (Baum, Cooper, & Lusk-Stover, 2018). However, there is also strong and consistent evidence that laissez-faire private schooling tends to lead to increased levels of class consciousness and other negative indices (Pal & Kingdon, 2010 & Verger, 2016) <sup>[21]</sup>.

Some of these negative indices are unhealthy curriculum and class skipping or double promotion on the social and academic wellbeing of learner prompted by parents so as to cut-down on payment of tuition fees charged by profit-centred private schools. Across Lagos, Tooley and Yongstrom (2014) <sup>[29]</sup> found out that the school choices of the poorest students are constrained by cost, with selection largely being constrained to free public and the lowest-cost private schools. This prompted the rush and overloaded academic activity that affect students social and academic wellbeing. The issue of class skipping syndrome by Ashley (2014) <sup>[3]</sup> in systematic review on the affordability of private schooling asserted that poverty seemingly overrides preference' for the poorest households in their school choice decisions and this prompted the rush leading to double promotion and some modules, levels and classes are sipped to save school fees. Class consciousness on part of the upper class and to maintain the status-quo has led to the large majority of children in private schools, particularly those at the upper ends of the cost spectrum, tend to come from the most-socially-privileged families paying exorbitant school fees and perpetrating unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome (Chudgar & Quin, 2011) <sup>[9]</sup>.

The effect unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome on students wellbeing is of a strong relationship between stressful life events and reduced academic performance there is also a link between health related quality of life and stress (Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley & Whalen, 2005; Misra & McKean, 2000). Negatively, unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome result in stress and other health dangers such as loss of energy, elevated blood pressure, depressed mood, difficulty in concentrating, impatience, nervousness and strain which impair their academic performance hamper linguistic and communicative competence, and also affect physical and psychological health (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001) <sup>[10]</sup>. Consequently, unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome reflecting overloaded academic activity inhibits students academic performance in higher education thereby limiting their academic achievement and creating difficulty to stand out in tests or examination (Smith, Johal, Wadsworth, Smith & Peters, 2000) <sup>[26]</sup>.

unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome when excessively applied on students may result in that high level of stress during the first year of higher education forecast lower level of overall adjustment and can make the students more susceptible to many social and psychological problems, thus leading to a lower grade point average (GPA) in the final year (Winter & Yaffe, 2000) <sup>[30]</sup>. When learners well-being is negatively affected its exact some amount pressure on learners as it relates in academic and real life as to how certain issues that carry force applied to human life. Educationally, the quality of graduate produced by Nigerian higher education may not stand the test of time in the global competitive economy.

### Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate sociological import of parental perception towards unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome among private schools in Lagos state, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty parents were randomly selected from six private schools on the basis of rural and urban geographical locations. A Questionnaire on Perceptions towards Unhealthy Curriculum and Class Skipping Syndrome will be used to collect the data. The results showed a significant relationship between class skipping syndrome and student's social on academic wellbeing likewise there is a significant relationship between unhealthy curriculum and student's social on academic wellbeing among private schools in Lagos State. So it was concluded from this study that unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome when excessively applied on students may negatively affect students wellbeing and is of a strong relationship between academic stress and reduced academic performance as well as a link health related issues and quality of life. The aftermath on students higher education aspirations may lead to cognitive immaturity during the first year of higher education forecast lower level of overall adjustment and can make the students more susceptible to many social and psychological problems, thus leading to a lower grade point average (GPA) in the final year.

### Recommendations

The findings of this study will help the parents, teachers, policy makers, educational administrators, career and counseling centres, and the University administrations to put in place all those mechanisms that can lessen the negative impacts of unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome on the students. Structures and infrastructures should be put in place for proper implementation of Nigerian educational policy and prohibited inappropriate skipping of classes and double promotion by parents so as to evade payment off school fees.

The finding spurs intellectual awareness that when learners well-being are negatively affected by unhealthy curriculum and class skipping syndrome. it exact some amount pressure on learners as it relates in academic and real life thereby academically affecting the quality of graduate produced by Nigerian higher education as regards standing the test of time in the global competitive economy.

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