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Article

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SHORT-TERM SKILL ACQUISITION AS A STRATEGY FOR REDUCING DROPOUT VULNERABILITY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Some secondary school students in Nigeria had dropped out of school as a result of certain economic, social and cultural factors, the former being the most prevalent. This study examined the effect of short-term skill acquisition intervention strategy (SSAIS) on dropout vulnerability among senior secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design. The population comprised all teachers, principals and indigent students in 8 oldest flagship public senior secondary schools in the four divisions of Ogun State as well as officials of State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents. In-depth Interview Guide, Short-Term Skill Acquisition Training Guide, and Students' Drop out Vulnerability Questionnaire (SDOVQ) were used for data collection. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis while quantitative data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Findings suggested that a substantial number of students were at the risk of leaving school prematurely. Also, the result revealed that there was a significant main effect of short-term skill acquisition on dropout vulnerability of Senior Secondary School students in Ogun State ($F_{(1, 397)} = 455.634, p < .05$). The study concluded that short-term skill acquisition strategy has an effect on reducing dropout rate of students. The study recommended among other things

that policymakers should consider developing a comprehensive framework that embeds skill acquisition programmes as a core component of the educational system, particularly in public schools to promote self-reliance and improve school completion rates.

Keywords: Short-term skill, Acquisition, Student Dropout, Secondary Students.

Introduction

Education is regarded as a crucial tool for citizens' proper training and development. The secondary level of education is also seen as strategically designed to equip young ones with fundamental knowledge, skills and values, to fully develop their potentials and contribute significantly to the development of the society. It is therefore supposed to be a fundamental human right of every citizen irrespective of background, location and gender. However, the world is currently experiencing harsh economic conditions, leading to high inflation rate and soaring prices of goods and commodities, making it difficult for people to meet their basic financial obligations. Amid this ugly situation, some innocent children, who naturally should enjoy quality and uninterrupted secondary education are not exempted from the effect of the ugly situation, as some of them had dropped out of school for economic reasons. Dropout vulnerability can be regarded as the likelihood, risk or susceptibility of a student to leave school before completing their education. Although, the dropout syndrome is considered a global issue, it has become so alarming in a developing country like Nigeria. As a matter of fact, the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2023 fixed the number of out of school children in Nigeria at 10.5 million with dropout accounting for more than 35 per cent (UNICEF, 2023). This situation is shocking and has led to public outcry among members of the public. Several strategies had been implemented by the Nigerian Government to reduce school drop-out rate among secondary school students (including conditional cash transfer, scholarship and implementation of free education policy), they appeared ineffective especially as the free education policy covered tuition only. Recent studies conducted by Adeyemo *et al.* (2022) and Ige *et al.* (2024) suggested alternative strategy such as Short-Term Skill Acquisition (STSA) to combat dropout rate among secondary school students. Their suggestion was borne out by the appreciable level of success recorded when the strategy was implemented in higher institutions of learning across different countries. Short-term skill acquisition strategy is a planned, time-bound intervention that equips secondary school students with practical, job-relevant, and life-oriented skills within a relatively short period of time. There is therefore an urgent need to assess the prevalence rate of dropout among secondary school students in Ogun State and determine the possible effect of Short-Term Skill Acquisition (STSA) intervention strategy on dropout reduction among secondary school students in Ogun State.

Problem Statement

The prevailing harsh economic condition in the country has incapacitated some parents from their responsibilities of providing basic educational support for their children, making school attendance, retention and completion uncertain. Therefore, a large number of secondary school students in Nigeria are regrettably dropping out of school mostly for economic reason. As the number kept increasing on daily basis, stakeholders are worried that if nothing is done to reverse the ugly development, it could result to high illiteracy population, poor manpower index and dangerous security concerns in the future. Although, short-term skills acquisition strategy had been adopted to combat the menace at higher institutions with appreciable success, it has not been implemented primarily at the secondary school level.

This is the gap that this study has come to fill by assessing the effect of short-term skills acquisition intervention strategy (SSAIS) on drop-out rate among secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to determine the effect of SSAIS on dropout rate among secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- i. To identify the common challenges faced by Senior Secondary School students that increase their vulnerability to dropout in Ogun State, Nigeria;
- ii. To determine the extent of students' vulnerability to dropout in secondary schools in Ogun State;
- iii. To examine the effect of short term skill acquisition strategy on students' dropout rate in secondary schools in Ogun State; and
- iv. To develop a comprehensive Short-Term Skill Acquisition Implementation Plan (WSIP) that could mitigate dropping out of school for secondary school students in Ogun State.

Research Questions

- i. What are the common challenges faced by Senior Secondary School students that make them vulnerable to dropout in Ogun State, Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent are Senior Secondary School students vulnerable to dropout in Ogun State, Nigeria?
- iii. Is there any significant effect of short term skill acquisition strategy on students' dropout rate in secondary schools in Ogun State?
- iv. What Short-Term Skill Acquisition Implementation Plan (WSIP) could be used to mitigate dropout among senior secondary school students in Ogun State?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of short term skill acquisition on students' dropout rate in secondary schools in Ogun State.

Assumptions

This study assumed that the common challenges faced by Senior Secondary School students increase their vulnerability to dropout in Ogun State. The qualitative component assumes that the lived experiences of teachers, principals and Ministry of Education officials will provide insight into the nature dropout vulnerability, and the role of SSAIS in addressing it. These assumptions position the qualitative data as essential for complementing and interpreting the quantitative findings.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: The Self-Reliance Theory (SRT) served as the theoretical basis for this study. According to Ralph (1846), Self-Reliance Theory is the ability of a country and citizens to plan, finance and implement solutions to its developmental challenges (EduBirdie, 2021). The relevance of this theory to the study is that the high rate of school dropout in Nigeria, fueled by economic hardship is negatively impacting on the growth and development of the society and therefore required concerted efforts by government and other education stakeholders to motivate young citizens to deploy their energy to useful ventures that can fetch them monetary and other positive gains, without interrupting their schooling process.

School Dropout Vulnerability

School drop has been described by different authors according to their perspectives. Generally, it refers to leaving school before certification class. No matter the situation, stakeholders believed that School drop-out should not be allowed for any reason. This is because of the importance of education to individual development and societal growth. Although, the reasons for students' drop out are diverse, it is expedient that countries around the world should ensure that economic reasons do not push students to drop out of school. In a developing country like Nigeria, dropout rate is extraordinarily high. This is extremely dangerous for her development. According to Babalola *et al.* (2022), the high school dropout problem in Nigeria has created serious crisis negatively impacting on the society. The abandonment of formal education by students before the graduation period spells doom for the nation's development and security. Inah and Uzoigwe (2024) suggested some of the causes of high school dropout rates in Calabar Metropolis to include inability to pay school-related costs such as levies, transportation, uniforms, and books. They recommended scholarship schemes, free distribution of educational materials, and government financial aid as effective interventions. A report by Nsofor (2024) suggested that students in semi-urban and rural areas were particularly affected, with absenteeism rising by as much as 40% in some regions. In the same vein, Adeyemo *et al.* (2022) found out that adolescents from single-parent and non-nuclear families were significantly more likely to disengage from school in Ibadan, Oyo State. Again, Ige *et al.* (2024) revealed that high costs of schooling, gender-based cultural expectations, and early marriage were the main determinants of dropout among girls. In a related development, Okpoko (2025) linked poor funding, low infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, and high student-to-teacher ratio to increased dropout rates, especially in public secondary schools.

Short-Term Skill Acquisition

Short-Term Skill Acquisition (STSA) has been successfully practiced in several countries around the world. It is the ability to be trained on a particular simple task or function and become expert in it. Globally, college students' involvement in part-time jobs has increased enabling them to support themselves and supplement their family incomes (Dawar, 2025). The current economic situation in Nigeria suggests that sustainable economic activities can be achieved through Short-Term Skill Acquisition that help people (especially school children) to overcome the current economic hardship impacting on their education. The nature of work there could fit under this initiative are phone repairs, confectionaries, catering, dress making, machine assemblage, candle and soap making. These jobs as noted by Igwe *et al.* (2019) are not in any way infringing on the fundamental rights of children but beneficial to them by having access to extra cash to support themselves in schools and reduce the risk of dropping out of school. In their empirical study, Inah and Uzoigwe (2024) analysed the factors contributing to high school dropout rates in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State. Using a descriptive survey design and a sample of 392 students from public secondary schools, the study found out that poverty was a statistically significant predictor of dropout rates. These researchers observed that many students left school prematurely due to the inability to pay school-related costs such as levies, transportation, uniforms, and books. They recommended scholarship schemes, free distribution of educational materials, and government financial aid as effective interventions. The study's quantitative rigor and focus on student-reported experiences made it a strong relevance to this present study citing that poverty-induced dropout is a recurring national issue. A report by Nsofor (2024) presented

real-time evidence on how rising transportation costs impacted school attendance in Nigeria. Citing interviews with parents, school authorities, and economic experts, the article detailed how inflation in fuel prices has made daily commuting unaffordable for many students. It reported that students in peri-urban and rural areas were particularly affected, with absenteeism rising by as much as 40% in some regions. Although not a peer-reviewed study, the report was grounded in contemporary observations and supported by expert commentary, offering relevant, empirical insight into how economic shocks, especially those affecting transportation can directly lead to increased dropout vulnerability.

Adeyemo *et al.* (2022) conducted a community psychology study that examined the relationship between family structure, mental health, and adolescent dropout risk in Ibadan. Utilising standardised instruments and statistical correlation methods, the researchers found out that adolescents from single-parents and non-nuclear families were significantly more likely to disengage from school. The study linked low parental support and unstable home environments to poor mental health outcomes, which in turn reduced academic motivation. Their work provided important empirical support for findings, on the link between lack of family encouragement and dropout consideration. The study's strength rested in its multidimensional approach to vulnerability, combining psychological, familial, and educational variables. Ige *et al.* (2024) carried out a field-based study in rural communities of Kwara and Osun states to identify the factors influencing girl-child dropout from secondary school. Through surveys and key informant interviews, they found out that high costs of schooling, gender-based cultural expectations, and early marriage were the main determinants of dropout among girls. The study emphasised that households with limited income were more likely to prioritise male education, leaving girls at higher risk. The researchers called for gender-sensitive policies, community sensitisation, and economic empowerment programmes for rural families. This study is relevant to the present study, as it demonstrated how intersecting socioeconomic and cultural constraints influenced dropout vulnerability among adolescents. Okpoko (2025) investigative report critiqued the Nigerian government's under-investment in education, drawing from budget analyses and interviews with educators across different states. It highlighted that national education funding remained below the UNESCO-recommended benchmark of 15–20% of total government spending. The report linked poor infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, and high student-to-teacher ratio to increased dropout rates, especially in public secondary schools. Although journalistic in nature, the article is grounded in fiscal data and stakeholder interviews, which made it a credible source, and relevant to the present study to confirm that systemic underfunding is a key structural driver of educational disengagement.

Methodology

The authors adopted a mixed-method research design involving both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The qualitative approach adopted a narrative research design while the quantitative approach adopted the pretest, posttest, control group quasi-experimental research design. The population of this study included teachers, principals and indigent students in the 8 oldest flagship public secondary schools in the four divisions of Ogun State, Nigeria. These included Remo, Ijebu, Yewa and Egba. It also involved officials of State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The sample size for the study was 427 participants that comprised 8 principals, 16 teachers, 400 students, and 3 officials of the Ministry of Education and Technology. The 8 principals were selected using total enumeration. The 16 teachers were purposively selected based on their utility status. The

400 students were purposively selected based on their vulnerability to dropout of school as identified by their class teachers. The selected schools were: Yewa College, Ilaro, Comprehensive High School, Ayetoro, Abeokuta Grammar School, Idi Aba, African Church Grammar School, Ita-Iyalode, Remo Secondary School, Sagamu, Remo Divisional High School, Sagamu, Ijebu-Ode Grammar School, Ijebu Ode and Ijebu Muslim College, Ijebu-Ode. Three Ministry officials were purposively selected based on the vast information at their disposal on senior secondary education and their ability to effectively grant key informant interview.

Three research instruments were developed by the authors for the current investigation. These include Students' Dropout Vulnerability Questionnaire (SDOVQ), In-depth Interview Guide, and Short-Term Skill Acquisition Training Guide. Students' Drop out Vulnerability Questionnaire (SDOVQ) was used to collect data on the vulnerability of secondary school students to dropping out of school. This questionnaire was adapted from Dropout Risk Assessment Questionnaire developed by Yaseen (2014). It has a total of 10 items structured using four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The In-depth Interview Guide were developed to collect qualitative data from principals, teachers and officials of Ministry of Education on the feasibility and effect of Short-Term Skill Acquisition strategy, challenges affecting school attendance among secondary school students, mechanisms of identifying at risk students, and current intervention and support programmes for at risk students. The Short-Term Skill Acquisition Training Guide is a module developed by the researchers alongside three highly-skilled and experienced artisans who specialised in phone repairing and accessories. The training manual was used as treatment package for participants in the experimental group.

The content validity of the instruments was established through expert opinions of three Professors of Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Management. The test-retest reliability method was used to establish the coefficient of stability of the questionnaire. The coefficients of stability obtained was .88 for Students' Drop out Vulnerability Questionnaire. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, and permission was sought from the Honourable Commissioner, Ogun State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology before the researchers proceeded to the field for data collection. The researchers visited each of the selected school to obtain permission from the principals for the students' participation in the study and also educate them on the purpose of the research work and what they stand to gain from it. The administration was done in phases: pre-session activities, pre-test, treatment, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability and follow-up, and post-test. The pre-session activities include the screening, recruitment, and assignment of participants to the experimental group and control group. The researchers alongside a certified trainer in mobile phone repairs used an average of 60 minutes per day for training sessions on participants in the experimental group for four weeks by following the pre-designed treatment package template (see supplemental page in Appendix 1) while those in the control group were taught only entrepreneurship education. The two groups were administered with the same pre-test and post-test instruments after their respective training sessions. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis while quantitative data was analysed using frequency counts, percentages, descriptive mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance using the SPSS computer software program.

Results

The results obtained in this study were divided into two main sections: The quantitative and the qualitative results. The results are presented below.

Participants' Demography

Result in Table 1 showed that out of the total 400 students who participated in the study, 243 (60.8%) were males, while 157 (39.3%) were females. This indicated a higher representation of male students in the sample, suggesting either a gender imbalance in school enrollment or a possible male-dominated participation in the skill acquisition programme. Age distribution of participants showed that the majority, 284 students (71.0%) were between 15 and 18 years old, which aligned with the typical age range for senior secondary school students in Nigeria. Ninety-two participants (23.0%) were younger than 15 years, possibly indicating early starters or accelerated learners. Only 24 participants (6.0%) were above 18, which reflected students who have repeated classes or started schooling late. Participants were drawn from all three levels of Senior Secondary School. SS1 students made up the largest group with 193 students (48.3%), followed by SS2 students with 148 (37.0%), and SS3 students at 59 (14.8%). The lower number of SS3 students may be due to proximity to external exams, causing a lower participation rate or early school-leaving trends. Participants were nearly evenly splitted between urban (174 students, 43.5%) and semi-urban (173 students, 43.3%) areas, while 53 students (13.3%) came from rural communities. This distribution suggested the study captured a balanced representation from diverse geographic settings in Ogun State, which is essential for understanding how locality affects dropout and poverty-related challenges. Table 1 also showed that a significant portion of the students, 353 (88.3%), lived with their parents, indicating a traditional family structure. A smaller percentage resided with family members (7.5%), relatives (3.0%), or in foster care (0.5%). Only 0.8% lived alone, which highlighted the vulnerability of a very small group who may lack direct family support. These living arrangements have implications for economic stability and educational continuity.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Participants' Students (n = 400)

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	male	243	60.8
	female	157	39.3
Age	less than 15 years	92	23.0
	15-18 years	284	71.0
	above 18 years	24	6.0
Class	SS1	193	48.3
	SS2	148	37.0
	SS3	59	14.8
Residence	urban	174	43.5
	semi-urban	173	43.3
	rural	53	13.3
Living with	parents	353	88.3
	family	30	7.5
	relatives	12	3.0
	foster care	2	0.5
	alone	3	0.8

Data Source: Researchers' field experiment data (2025)

Qualitative Results of Key Informant Interviews

This section used thematic analysis to analyse interview notes taken from interviewees, key informants and respondents of this study. Their responses provided firsthand insights into dropout vulnerability of participants of this study. The thematic analysis technique used for reporting the interview notes was to aggregate the views, responses and submissions of participants, that included teachers, principals, and officials of the Ministry of Education in Ogun State. Each theme analysed was associated with a number of interview questions relevant to these three categories of respondents.

Thematic Analysis of Participants' Responses to Short-Term Skill Acquisition and Dropout Vulnerability

The sub-section presents a qualitative analysis based on responses from teachers, principals, and officials of Ministry of Education to interview questions that focused on identifying challenges that contributed to school dropout and exploring the potential of short-term skill acquisition programmes in mitigating these challenges among secondary school students in Ogun State. Some of the emerging themes from respondents are identified below.

Challenges Affecting Students' Attendance

Majority of the interviewed teachers and principals emphasised that economic hardship is a significant barrier to sustained school attendance and academic success. Although the state government offers free education, parents often struggled to afford supplementary school needs such as uniforms, textbooks, and transport. Additionally, poor nutrition was frequently cited, with reports of underfed students who found it difficult to concentrate in class. Some students were also affected by family instability or were required to work to support their households, leading to chronic absenteeism. The moral decline among youths, attributed partly to the misuse of digital tools, further detracts from effective learning among students. These are captured in one of the interviewees' responses as stated below:

Looking at the effort being put together by the state government in providing free education to our learners, you will see that the government has gone a long way in assisting all learners through the need of primary and secondary school so that they can get formal education, but the constraints that I see is the issue of the economy of the country (KII: TCH, 2025).

Another one said:

You know, like the programme you are bringing now, looking at those, not all of them, the issue of the economy, hike in prices of things, parents find it very difficult to provide necessary things for their children. Let us start from the issue of textbooks. Some of them struggle to get school uniform, after we bring them to school giving them the exercise book but the textbooks that will help them to continue...that lead them to steady learning ..., you know when they get back home the parents might not be able to provide such thereby it will affect such learner because the teacher cannot give all to the class (KII: TCH, 2025).

An interviewed teacher attested that:

You can see, so there will not be concentration in whatsoever even if the teacher comes from heaven, and the learner is hungry, so there is nohow

they will be able to assimilate so it will just come down, and it will just go like that. So another thing is the issue of ehmm degeneration in morality within our youth these days can also be a part of the challenges that we face, and that has to go a long in the issue of our ICT you know everybody is being exposed to one area or the other of things but it is good when you look at the students most of them that involved in such are not making good use of...they're using it negatively so is another way it affecting them (KII: TCH, 2025).

Economic Pressures Lead to Dropout

Interviewees unanimously agreed that economic pressure constitute potent challenges that cause students to drop out of school. The inability to afford transport or daily meals, as well as the expectation to contribute to family income through hawking or menial jobs, often leads to prolonged school absence. When students miss school repeatedly, they fall behind academically and are more likely to discontinue their education entirely. This is reflected in one respondents' statement as observed below.

Yes! Like somebody that the parents may not feed properly cannot come down to school. Definitely it's going to affect. The child that leaves, maybe from here to Rounder, you cannot expect that learner to be trekking everyday. So definitely it's going to be one way or the other affect such learner. At the end of the day, the parent can say hawk to sell these before you can get somethings for school, and that student may not come to school today, and tomorrow. Definitely he will be missing out, and it can affect the learner not to finish (KII: PR, 2025).

Mechanisms for Identifying at Risk Students

Teachers being in close daily contact with students, are well-positioned to identify those in need of intervention. Observable indicators such as torn uniforms, lack of school materials, and absenteeism can be used as criteria for selection. This grassroots approach ensures that the programme reaches those who are genuinely in need and can benefit the most. A school principal reported this as stated below:

It's through their teachers, you know they know them they are together in and out. Definitely they will be able to spot out those students in need of this programme [short-term skill acquisition]. You can go through the teachers, by doing that you will be able to get those learners that're in need of your programme. Getting into the class to see a student with thorn uniform will give an insight that the student needs help, or seeing a student among others without a textbook will tell me that there is a serious challenge (KII: PR, 2025).

Current Intervention and Support Programmes

Majority of the participants interviewed for the study revealed that while some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) occasionally provide uniforms, books, and scholarships, there is no formal or consistent programme designed to keep vulnerable students in senior school. The support that exists is fragmented and insufficient to address the systemic causes of dropout. There is therefore, a pressing need for a more structured, sustainable intervention. One of the school principals remarked that:

We only have NGOs that do come out with various programmes. Like the one I read, the NGO distributed uniforms to students. Some do come up with distribution of exercise books, and others. There is another one coming up which is arrange to address brilliant learners but facing financial issues to further their education. There is an NGO [they have been granted approval] that is requesting for the names of such students (KII: PR, 2025).

An official of the State Ministry of Education reported thus:

I don't think presently in Ogun State we have anyone that belong to the ministry that is doing something like this [short-term skill acquisition training programme] (KII: MoE, 2025).

Based on the insights provided above, short-term skill acquisition programme hold considerable promise as a dropout mitigation strategy. This programme can provide: students with practical, income-generating skills, reduce their economic dependence on struggling households; serve as motivation for students to remain in school by showing immediate and tangible benefits; alleviate the pressure on students to seek work outside school hours; and offer a pathway to financial independence, thus encouraging continued education. The qualitative evidence from key informants strongly supports the implementation plan of short-term skill acquisition as a viable strategy to effect hunger alleviation, dropout rate reduction, and poverty alleviation among senior school students.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

The section provides the analysed data from participants obtained through the administered Students' Dropout Vulnerability Questionnaire instruments alongside the results of the main effect of short-term skill acquisition strategy on dropout vulnerability.

Extent of Students' Vulnerability to Dropout

Results in Table 2 showed that the grand mean dropout vulnerability score among the students was 2.12 (SD = 1.053). According to the study's rating criteria, a mean between 2.00 and 2.99 signified moderate vulnerability to dropout. This suggested that a substantial number of students were faced with challenges that put them at risk of leaving school prematurely. The standard deviation indicated moderate variability in responses, meaning that while dropout risks were not uniform across all students, they are common enough to warrant systemic concern. The item "I find it challenging to meet the financial demands of my education" had a mean of 1.97 (SD = 1.095), placing it just below the moderate vulnerability threshold. This indicated that many students were under financial pressure, though some may still be managed to cope. The relatively high standard deviation reflected high variability in students' financial circumstances. While some students can afford schooling, others likely struggled with tuition, uniforms, or exam fees, making them vulnerable to dropout.

The response to "I often struggle to balance academic commitments with personal responsibilities" yielded a mean of 1.85 (SD = 0.913). This fell within the low vulnerability range but still signaled that a considerable portion of students experienced difficulty balancing school with responsibilities such as household chores, caregiving, or economic activities. This struggle may not be the most immediate factor in dropout risk but is a contributing stressor. On the item "Generally, there is no feeling of happiness in this school", the mean was 2.25 (SD = 1.193). This suggested moderate emotional disengagement, which

is an important predictor of potential dropout. Students who do not feel emotionally or socially connected to school are more likely to disengage and ultimately drop out. The high standard deviation indicated significant individual differences in how students perceived their school environment. The mean score for “Lack of motivation affects my ability to attend classes regularly” was 1.62 (SD = 0.808), which showed low dropout vulnerability from motivational factors alone. Similarly, “I feel unsupported by my institution when dealing with academic difficulties” had a mean of 1.86 (SD = 1.039). These scores suggested that, while motivation and institutional support were relevant, they were not as critical as financial or environmental barriers in this population.

Significantly, “Cost of transportation makes it difficult for me to attend school regularly” scored 2.56 (SD = 1.151), and “I face financial challenges accessing learning materials” had a mean of 2.58 (SD = 1.163). These are the highest mean scores among the items and fell within the moderate vulnerability range, strongly indicated that transport costs and lack of resources like books and writing materials were critical threats to students’ school continuity. These financial barriers were widespread and impactful. The statement “My financial struggle has significantly impacted my academic performance” received a mean of 2.48 (SD = 1.191), and “My family do not encourage me to graduate from secondary school” had a mean of 2.33 (SD = 1.135). These findings reinforced the influence of economic and familial support on educational success. Students who lack family encouragement or experience financial setbacks were more likely to underperform and become discouraged, increasing their risk of dropping out. Interestingly, the lowest mean was for “I have considered dropping out of school due to hunger and poverty”, with a score of 1.77 (SD = 0.844). Although this indicated a low vulnerability level, it is still a concerning sign that a notable minority of students are contemplating dropout because of hunger and poverty. This item points to the intersection of basic needs and education access.

Table 2: Dropout Vulnerability Among Participants of Senior Secondary Schools in Ogun State

S/N	Statements	Responses (%)				Mean	S.D
		SA	A	D	SD		
1	I find it challenging to meet the financial demands of my education.	12.3	21.8	17.0	49.0	1.97	1.095
2	I often struggle to balance academic commitments with personal responsibilities.	7.3	13.3	36.3	43.3	1.85	.913
3	Generally, there is no feeling of happiness in this school.	23.3	16.5	21.8	38.5	2.25	1.193
4	Lack of motivation affects my ability to attend classes regularly.	4.5	7.3	33.8	54.5	1.62	.808
5	I feel unsupported by my institution when dealing with academic difficulties.	13.5	7.3	30.8	48.5	1.86	1.039
6	Cost of transportation make it difficult for me to attend school regularly.	26.8	29.8	16.5	27.0	2.56	1.151
7	I face financial challenges accessing learning materials or resources needed for my studies.	33.3	13.3	31.5	22.0	2.58	1.163
8	My financial struggle has significantly impacted my academic performance.	29.0	19.3	22.5	29.3	2.48	1.191
9	My family do not encourage me to graduate from secondary school.	20.8	23.5	23.3	32.5	2.33	1.135
10	I have considered dropping out of school due to hunger and poverty.	0.5	25.0	25.0	49.5	1.77	.844

Grand mean	2.12	1.053
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Note. SA = Strongly agree (4), A = Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), SD = Strongly disagree (1); S.D = Standard deviation; Criteria for evaluation of mean: Highly vulnerable (3.00-4.00), vulnerable (2.0-2.99), less vulnerable (1.00-1.99); N= 400, % = Percentage.

Effect of Short-Term Skill Acquisition on Dropout

The results in Table 3 showed that the participants with the lowest mean of dropout vulnerability was observed in the Short-term skill acquisition treatment group ($\bar{X}$ = 14.54, SD = 3.924) while the highest mean of dropout vulnerability was observed among participants in the Control group ($\bar{X}$ = 20.26, SD = 6.860). The estimates in Table 4 showed that in the control group, the adjusted mean was 20.568 compared to the unadjusted mean of 20.26, while in the Short-term skill acquisition treatment group, the adjusted mean was 14.227 compared to the unadjusted mean of 14.540. The covariate pretest was set at 21.2475 which was the average value for pretest for dropout vulnerability in this study. From the adjusted mean scores, it could be deduced that the Short-term skill acquisition treatment group showed reduced dropout vulnerability, and the adjusted mean of participants in this group, had its adjusted mean lesser than the mean value of the pretest dropout vulnerability which was set at 21.2475. The result in Table 5 showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of Short-term skill acquisition on dropout vulnerability of Senior Secondary School students in Ogun State, $F_{(1, 397)} = 455.634$, $p < .05$. From the pairwise comparison in Table 6, it can be seen that dropout vulnerability was greater in the Control group compared to Short-term skill acquisition treatment group, a mean difference of 6.342 (95% CI, -6.926 to -5.758). These results confirmed that Short-term skill acquisition training programme significantly diminished dropout vulnerability among public Senior Secondary School students in Ogun State.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Post-test on Dropout Vulnerability

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Short-term skill acquisition	200	14.54	3.924
Control	200	20.26	6.860
Total	400	17.40	6.272

Table 4: Adjusted Means of Participants' Post-test on Dropout Vulnerability

Treatment	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Short-term skill acquisition	14.227 ^a	.210	13.814	14.639
Control	20.568 ^a	.210	20.156	20.981

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: pre_Dropout Vulnerability = 21.2475.

Table 5: Analysis of Covariance of Post-test Dropout Vulnerability by Treatment

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	12204.728 ^a	2	6102.364	694.351	.000	.778
Intercept	542.393	1	542.393	61.716	.000	.135
Pre dropout vulnerability	8938.605	1	8938.605	1017.069	.000	.719

treatment	4004.376	1	4004.376	455.634	.000	.534
Error	3489.070	397	8.789			
Total	136763.000	400				
Corrected Total	15693.798	399				

a. R Squared = .778 (Adjusted R Squared = .777)

Table 6: Pairwise Comparisons of Adjusted Means for Dropout Vulnerability for Each Experimental Group

(I) Treatments	(J) Treatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^b	95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^b	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Short-term skill acquisition	control	-6.342*	.297	.000	-6.926	-5.758
control	Short-term skill acquisition	6.342*	.297	.000	5.758	6.926

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

Discussion of Findings

Findings of this study revealed that dropout vulnerability profile showed that motivation and institutional support may not be pressing issues for most students, financial hardship especially transportation costs and lack of educational materials are the most common drivers of dropout risk. These outcomes corroborated previous findings in literature that financial constraints, transportation challenges, lack of family support, socioeconomic and cultural factors, and inadequate educational funding contribute to students' dropout vulnerability. Emotional detachment from school and poor family support also played meaningful roles. The study's finding that financial challenges contributed to students' dropout vulnerability aligned with broader research in Nigeria. Inah and Uzoigwe (2024) conducted a study in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, and revealed that poverty is a significant factor leading to high school dropout rates. Their research, involving a sample of 392 students, found that financial constraints hindered students' ability to meet educational demands, leading to increased dropout rates. They recommended implementing scholarship programmes to alleviate the financial burden on students from low-income families. Also, transportation costs emerged as a barrier to school attendance, with students reporting difficulty affording daily commutes. A report by Nsofor (2024) highlighted similar situation that soaring transportation costs in Nigeria forced families to choose between schooling and survival. The study indicated that students in low-income families missed up to 40% of school days due to unaffordable transport options, leading to increased dropout rates.

The lack of family encouragement and support was identified in the study as a factor contributing to students' dropout vulnerability. This corroborates the finding of a study by Adeyemo et al. (2022) in Ibadan Municipality. Socioeconomic and cultural factors were also found to play a role in students' dropout vulnerability. A study by Ige et al. (2024) in rural areas of Kwara and Osun states had also identified high schooling costs and low household

income as critical factors influencing dropout rates among girl-child students. The study's findings also pointed to inadequate educational funding as a contributing factor to dropout vulnerability. According to a report by Okpoko (2025), the Nigerian government's expenditure on education has remained below recommended levels, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, lack of learning materials, and insufficient infrastructure. These conditions hindered effective teaching and learning, leading to increased dropout rates.

Conclusion

The project revealed that short-term skill acquisition has a significant effect on reducing the dropout rate among senior secondary school students in Ogun State. Quantitative results showed a marked reduction in dropout vulnerability among students who participated in the short-term skill acquisition programme. Specifically, students in the experimental group recorded significantly lower mean scores compared to the control group. This indicated that the skill acquisition programme enhanced reduced dropout vulnerability among senior secondary school students. In addition, the dropout vulnerability assessment further supports the effectiveness of the intervention. Students exposed to the short-term skill training demonstrated a significant improvement in school retention and engagement, as reflected in lower dropout vulnerability scores. This suggested that empowering senior school students with marketable skills not only enhances their financial capacity but also motivates them to remain in school. The intervention helped them to overcome financial barriers that often lead to absenteeism and eventual dropout most especially among families who struggled to meet basic educational needs. Qualitative data revealed similar findings of daily struggles of students and their families in coping with economic hardships. Interviews with teachers, and principals revealed that lack of educational materials, poor nutrition, and family pressure to engage in income-generating activities were key drivers of school dropout. However, participants also affirmed that introducing skill acquisition programmes in schools offers a practical solution, enabling students to support themselves and reduce the financial burden on their families. The study concluded that short-term skill acquisition was an effective strategy for tackling school dropout and poverty among public senior secondary school students in Ogun State. Short-term skill acquisition provided both immediate and long-term benefits by equipping students with sustainable skills, reducing their economic dependency, and enhancing their educational commitment.

Recommendations for Policy Implementation

Findings of this study have significant implications for educational and social policy formulation in Ogun State. The study demonstrated the effectiveness of short-term skill acquisition in reducing school dropout as well as the need for integrating vocational training into the mainstream secondary school curriculum. Policymakers should therefore consider developing a comprehensive framework that embeds skill acquisition programmes as a core component of the educational system, particularly in public schools serving low-income communities. Such a policy would not only improve school retention but also equip students with practical competencies that enhance their employability and self-reliance. Education policies should be aligned with social protection measures, such as school-based feeding, stipends for vocational participants, and partnerships with NGOs and private sector stakeholders to provide resources and mentorship. With these, government policies can effectively reduce the financial pressures that push students out of school and into child labour or street trading thereby breaking the circle of poverty within the populace. For lasting impact, the researchers recommended that the programme should be scaled up,

institutionalised within the senior school system, and supported through partnerships with government agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and community stakeholders. This would ensure that education remains inclusive, relevant, and responsive to the socio-economic realities of students.

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Appendix 1

Short-Term Skill Acquisition Implementation Plan

Phone Repairing Training Implementation Plan Template				
Pre-sessional Activities				
Pre-test				
Treatment (Short-Term Skill Acquisition Training)				
Programme Title:	Short-Term Skill Acquisition in Phone Repairing			
Duration:	Four (4) Weeks (20 Training Days)			
Target Group:	Public Senior Secondary School Students in Ogun State			
Venue:	The selected 8 Schools in Ogun State			
Facilitators:	Certified trainers in mobile phone repairs and experienced artisans			
Daily Duration:	Sixty (60) Minutes			
Week 1:	Introduction to Phone Repairing (Foundation Skills)			
Day	Lesson Topics	Activities/Discussion	Evaluation	Consolidation with Artisans
1	Orientation and Introduction to Phone Technology	Overview of training, career prospects, safety rules, basic phone components.	Q&A session, safety rule quiz.	Observe local artisan shop operations.
2	Basic Tools and Equipment	Identify and handle screwdrivers, multimeters, soldering irons.	Practical demo and checklist assessment.	Hands-on demo with artisan.
3	Phone Architecture	Internal components: battery, PCB, ICs, camera, speakers.	Labeling and matching exercise.	Discuss with artisan about real-life applications.
4	Types of Phones and Operating Systems	Android, iOS, button phones; pros and cons.	Group discussion, phone OS identification exercise.	Pair with artisan to disassemble phones.
5	Safety and ESD Precautions	Electrostatic discharge control, workstation setup.	Safety drills, peer review.	Artisan mentoring on safe practices.
Week 2:	Hardware Repair Skills			
6	Disassembling Techniques	Opening phones without damage, part identification.	Guided disassembly task	Supervised practice at artisan’s shop
7	Soldering and Desoldering	Use of soldering iron, replacing small components.	Practice exercise, peer critique.	Artisan guides on soldering technique.
8	Replacing Screens, Batteries, and Ports	Practical component replacement.	Role-play repair scenerios.	Hands-on repair tasks with artisan.
9	Troubleshooting Non-Functioning Devices	Diagnosing dead phones, no power issues.	Fault identification worksheet.	Case review with artisan.
10	Mid-Training Assessment	Practical test covering all learned skills.	Individual assessment	Feedback from both trainer and artisan mentor.

Week 3:	Software and Intermediate Repairs			
11	Flashing and Firmware Installation	Introduction to flashing tools and software.	Simulation using flashing box	Artisan-assisted firmware update.
12	Virus and App Issues	Common malware symptoms, uninstallation techniques.	Practice diagnostics	Hands-on work with artisan.
13	Unlocking Phones	Password and network unlocking tools and software	Software walkthrough, practice on test phones.	Artisan demo and student practice.
14	Network and Signal Issues	Antenna, SIM tray faults, IMEI problem.	Fault diagnosis worksheet	Artisan shares real cases and fixes.
15	Software Troubleshooting	Factory reset, hanging issues, recovery mode	Student-run software clinic	Shadowing artisan during software repairs.
Week 4:	Business Integration and Finalization			
16	Customer Handling and Communication	Attitude, ethics, handling complaints	Role-playing, feedback session.	Artisan mentoring on customer service.
17	Pricing and Documentation	Cost estimation, inventory tracking.	Pricing worksheet and invoice demo.	Observe artisan pricing strategy.
18	Setting Up a Workshop	Tools needed, branding, local licensing	Business setup checklist.	Visit artisan shops for feasibility analysis.
19	Final Practical Evaluation	Repair a faulty phone independently	Full practical test and oral defense.	Artisan evaluates trainee competence.
20	Certification and Networking	Presentation of certificates, artisan-trainee match-up	Showcase event and testimonials.	Assign mentor artisans to each trainee for follow-up.
Monitoring and Evaluation:				
■ Daily observation checklists ■ Mid-week quizzes and practical exercises ■ Final project-based assessment ■ Artisan feedback and mentoring reports				
Sustainability and Follow-Up:				
■ Assign participants to artisan mentors for 2-weeks follow-up ■ Register trainees (participants) in a WhatsApp group for continuous learning.				
Post-tests				

Data Availability Statement

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics Statement

This study involved human participants and were approved by Ethical Review Committee of Tai Solarin Federal University of Education. The study was also conducted in accordance with Ogun State Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology requirements. Written informed

consent for participation in this study was provided by individual participant, and/or parents/guardians.

Authors Contributions

ADE: Writing, review and editing. OLA: Writing, review and editing. ADR: Writing, review and editing. OSH: Writing, review, editing, and data analysis.

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Generative AI Statement

The authors declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.