

Private Cost and Transition of Public Junior Secondary School Students in Benin Metropolis, Edo State

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Abstract: *This study investigated the private cost on the transition of public junior secondary school students to senior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. The research adopted a descriptive survey design based on correlational methods. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 30 public junior secondary schools, and data were collected from parents and teachers using validated questionnaires. Reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha method. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), Pearson Product Moment Correlation and fishers' Z at the 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that private costs incurred by parents include payment of PTA levies, purchase of uniforms, buying of textbooks and exercise books, transportation costs, and extra-lesson fees. The study found a significant negative relationship between private cost and students' transition rate. It also found a significant difference in the relationship between private cost and students' transition based on school location. The study concluded that high private costs significantly hinder students' transition from junior to senior secondary school in Benin Metropolis. It is recommended that government should increase funding to schools to reduce reliance on parent levies, provide free textbooks and among others.*

Keywords: private cost, transition, public junior secondary school students

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and an essential instrument for individual and national development. In Nigeria, government commitment to educational access

is demonstrated through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, which provides nine years of compulsory schooling consisting of six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The programme aims to ensure that every child acquires basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills necessary for societal participation. After completing junior secondary school (JSS), students are expected to progress to senior secondary school (SSS). The flow of students from one level of education to another is known as transition. It is an integral part of educational development; student transition is a major milestone for learners in lower level school move to upper level school and creates by changes in their life, development and education. World Bank (2011) found that people are willing to develop additional years to their education to obtain better employment opportunities and increase their income. The student transition is necessary in the evaluation of the internal efficiency of the school system (Egwunatum, Akpotu, Samuel & Nwosu, 2021). Transition is the gradual process of moving from junior secondary school to senior secondary school (Dada, Ofie & Omache, 2022). However, this transition from junior secondary school to senior secondary school is not automatic, it largely depends on socio-economic conditions, particularly, the financial capacity of parents or guardian to sustain educational participation beyond the upper basic level to senior secondary school level which is private cost of education.

Private cost of education refers to the expenses borne directly by families in supporting their children's schooling. Private cost of education represents costs which the individual and the families must bear in return for the education receive (Dada et al, 2022). It is one of the most promising paths for individuals to realize better and more productive live and it is vital for the achievement of the desired goals and objective of any level of educational system (Obano & Ogbeide, 2021). Dada et al (2022) further argue that these are cost incurred in the payment of tuition and examination fee and other such fees; institutional supplies; manual and books, transport, uniforms, foregone earning and sundry expenditure. For example, a recent report by IGR Nigeria (2024) highlighted how some families spent up to ₦25,000.00 on termly basis on these supposedly "free" public schools thus affecting their willingness and ability to keep their children in school consistently. The pressure of bearing these expenses often influences whether children attend school regularly or drop out entirely, thereby hampering educational outcome and national development (Ogbeide & Ewansiha, 2025). Dada et al (2022) revealed that cost variable borne by parents particularly affect students' transition and found to be one of the third most common cause for non-enrolment in school, thereby affecting most children in terms of drop out, non-completion and transition of students in secondary school level. Although public basic education under the UBE policy is officially tuition-free, parents still incur several direct and indirect costs necessary for effective school attendance. These expenses include uniforms, textbooks, writing materials, transportation, examination registration, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) levies, development fees, feeding, and payment for extra lessons (Okoro & Nwachukwu, 2021). For many households, especially low-income families, these financial obligations constitute a significant burden and may limit sustained participation in schooling despite government policy intentions.

Educational transition represents the movement of learners from one level of education to another. In the Nigerian education system, transition from junior secondary school to senior secondary school is a critical stage because it determines students' opportunity to complete secondary education and pursue higher education or vocational advancement. Successful transition occurs when students complete JSS III, obtain the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), and gain admission into SSS I. However, evidence shows that many students who successfully complete junior secondary education fail to proceed to senior secondary school, with financial constraints identified as one of the most significant barriers (Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2020).

This study is anchored on the Demand-Side Financing Theory developed and promoted by the World Bank (2000), which explains how household financial capacity influences access to and participation in education. The theory emphasizes that the demand for schooling is strongly affected by the direct and indirect costs families must bear in educating their children. It argues that even where governments declare education free, hidden or private costs such as uniforms, instructional materials, transportation, examination fees, and school levies may discourage school participation, particularly among low-income households. Demand-side financing approaches including scholarships, fee waivers, and conditional cash transfer programmes—are therefore designed to reduce financial barriers faced by families and encourage sustained enrolment and progression within the education system. The theory assumes that when educational costs decrease, household willingness and ability to keep children in school increase significantly.

The relevance of Demand-Side Financing Theory to this study lies in its explanation of how private educational costs influence students' progression from junior secondary school to senior secondary school in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. The theory suggests that although government policies promote free basic education, failure to address indirect schooling expenses may continue to exclude economically disadvantaged learners from advancing academically. In situations where family resources are limited, parents may withdraw children from school or delay further educational investment because senior secondary education appears financially unattainable. Consequently, students from poorer households are more likely to experience low transition rates despite completing junior secondary education. The theory therefore supports the assumption of this study that high private costs constitute a significant barrier to educational transition and highlights the need for policy interventions aimed at reducing financial burdens on vulnerable families to promote equitable access to continued schooling.

Several researchers have conducted studies related to private costs of education and transition rates in different parts of Nigeria and beyond. These studies provide useful background for understanding the current research. Ogunode and Aha (2021) carried out a study on the hidden costs of public secondary education in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 400 parents and 200 teachers. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that parents spent significant amounts on PTA levies, uniforms, textbooks, transportation, and extra lessons. Many parents reported that these costs made it difficult to keep their children in

school. Adebayo and Ogunleye (2020) investigated the factors affecting students' transition from junior to senior secondary school in Oyo State. The study used a correlational design with 500 students and their parents as respondents. Results showed that family income, parental education, and cost of schooling were significant predictors of transition. Students from low-income families were less likely to transition to senior secondary school.

Eze and Okeke (2019) examined the burden of private costs on parents in Enugu State secondary schools. Using a descriptive survey with 350 parents, the study found that PTA levies and cost of textbooks were the most burdensome expenses. Many parents reported borrowing money or selling assets to pay for their children's education. Ifedili and Omiyi (2020) investigated school location and educational outcomes in Edo State secondary schools. The study compared urban and rural schools and found that students in rural areas faced higher transportation costs and had lower transition rates to senior secondary school.

Nwachukwu and Ugwu (2021) examined the impact of PTA levies on students' enrollment in Abia State. The study found that increases in PTA levies were associated with decreases in enrollment, particularly among poor families. The study recommended that government should fund schools adequately to reduce reliance on PTA levies. Okoro and Eze (2020) investigated transportation costs and school attendance in Ebonyi State. The study found that students who lived far from school and had high transportation costs were more likely to be absent or drop out compared to those who lived nearby.

Akpan and Bassey (2018) studied the relationship between household income and children's educational participation in Cross River State. The study found a strong positive relationship between income and participation, with children from poor households being less likely to be in school. Nnamdi and Okonkwo (2019) examined the role of school feeding programmes in reducing the burden of private costs in Abia State. The study found that feeding programmes reduced the amount parents spent on food and improved attendance, but did not address other costs like uniforms and textbooks.

The influence of private educational costs may also vary according to school of communities. Within Benin Metropolis in Edo State, urban and semi-urban differences in transportation expenses, PTA levies, and parental income levels may affect students' chances of progressing to senior secondary school. With the policy provision of free basic education, the reality within many public schools reveals the existence of hidden educational costs arising from inadequate government funding. Schools often introduce levies to support infrastructure maintenance, instructional materials, and administrative activities, while parents remain responsible for learning materials and other schooling requirements. Studies such as Eze and Okeke (2019) indicate that these indirect costs can discourage school completion and progression, particularly among economically disadvantaged households. High private costs may force parents to withdraw children from school, delay examination registration, or prioritize educational investment among

siblings based on available resources. Concerns about low transition rates after junior secondary education therefore remain significant despite government interventions.

Statement of the Problem

The transition of students from junior secondary school (JSS) to senior secondary school (SSS) in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, has increasingly become a major educational concern. Reports and observations from school administrators and education authorities indicate that a considerable number of students who successfully complete JSS III fail to proceed to SSS I. Many of these students discontinue formal education entirely and instead engage in apprenticeship training, petty trading, or remain at home without further academic advancement. This trend represents a significant loss of human capital and contradicts the objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria, which guarantees access to nine years of continuous schooling for every child. The persistence of low transition rates suggests that, despite government policies promoting free basic education, barriers still exist that prevent students from progressing to higher levels of secondary education at a critical stage in their academic development.

One major factor contributing to this situation is the private cost of education borne by parents even in public schools where tuition is officially free. Families continue to incur expenses related to Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) levies, uniforms, textbooks, writing materials, transportation, examination registration, and extra lessons considered necessary for academic success. These financial demands place disproportionate pressure on low-income households, particularly those with multiple school-age children, often forcing parents to make difficult decisions regarding which child's education to sustain. In some cases, students miss instructional periods due to unpaid levies or are prevented from sitting examinations, thereby limiting their chances of transitioning to senior secondary school. Furthermore, disparities in school location within Benin Metropolis may intensify the problem, as students in less developed areas may face higher transportation costs alongside lower household income levels. With growing concern, limited empirical evidence exists on how private educational costs specifically influence transition rates in the area, creating a gap in knowledge necessary for informed educational planning and policy intervention. This study therefore seeks to examine the extent of private costs incurred by parents and determine their influence on students' transition from junior to senior public secondary school in Benin Metropolis.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the private cost and transition of public junior secondary school students to senior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To find out the private costs incurred by parents in sending their children to public junior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis.
2. To determine the transition rate of students from junior secondary school to senior secondary school in Benin Metropolis.

3. To examine the relationship between private cost and students' transition rate in Benin Metropolis.
4. To examine if there is any difference in relationship between private cost and students' transition based on school location (urban and rural areas within the metropolis).

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. What private costs do parents incur in sending their children to public junior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis?
2. What is the transition rate of students from junior secondary school to senior secondary school in Benin Metropolis?
3. What is the relationship between cost of textbooks and materials and students' transition rate in Benin Metropolis?
4. Is there any difference in the impact of private cost on transition based on school location in Benin Metropolis?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between private cost and students' transition rate in public junior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the relationship between private cost and students' transition rate based on school location in Benin Metropolis.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey design based on correlational approach. This design is appropriate because it is investigating the extent of the relationship between private cost and transition of public junior secondary school students to senior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis, Edo State. The population comprised all public junior secondary schools across Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha local government areas, total of 47 schools. A multi-stage sampling technique was used: all three local government areas were included, 10 schools were purposively selected from each area (30 schools total), and from each school, 10 parents of JSS 3 students and 5 teachers were randomly selected, giving a total sample of 450 respondents (300 parents and 150 teachers).

Data was collected using structured questionnaires developed by the researcher, covering demographic information, private costs incurred by parents, student transition patterns, and factors affecting transition. The study used research instrument (questionnaire) title: Assessment of Private Cost and Students' Transition Pattern Questionnaire (APCSTPQ) to gather data for from the study. The instrument was validated by expert from the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City to ensure face and content

validity. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version of the instrument. For reliability, the research instrument (questionnaire) was pilot-tested using 90 parents and teachers from schools in Ovia North – East Local Government Area who were not part of the study. The reliability coefficient determined using the Cronbach Alpha method was 0.82 for APCSTPQ indicating high internal consistency and reliability. The researchers assisted by two (2) research assistants, administered questionnaire and achieved a 94% return rate with 423 properly completed instruments, research questions were answered using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while hypothesis were tested using Pearson product moment correlation statistics and Fisher z-test statistics were used to test hypotheses 1 to 2. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What private costs do parents incur in sending their children to public junior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis?

Table 1: Private Costs Incurred by Parents in Public Junior Secondary Schools in Benin Metropolis

Private Cost Items	Mean	STD	Remark
PTA levies	3.45	0.542	High Cost
Purchase of school uniforms	3.42	0.551	High Cost
Purchase of textbooks	3.38	0.563	High Cost
Purchase of exercise books	3.35	0.572	High Cost
Transportation to school	3.32	0.584	High Cost
Extra lesson fees	3.29	0.591	High Cost
Examination fees	3.26	0.603	High Cost
Development levies	3.24	0.612	High Cost
Purchase of writing materials	3.21	0.624	High Cost
Food and feeding at school	3.18	0.635	High Cost
Sports wear and equipment	2.85	0.692	Moderate Cost
Contribution for projects	2.81	0.704	Moderate Cost

Critical Mean = 2.50

N = 423

Data in Table 1 revealed that all listed private cost items had mean scores above the critical mean of 2.50, indicating that parents incur significant costs in sending their children to public junior secondary schools. PTA levies had the highest mean score (3.45), followed by purchase of school uniforms (3.42), purchase of textbooks (3.38), and exercise books (3.35). Sportswear and project contributions were lower but still above-average mean scores.

Research Question 2: What is the transition rate of students from junior secondary school to senior secondary school in Benin Metropolis?

Table 2: Transition Rate of Students from JSS to SSS in Benin Metropolis

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage	Remark
Very High (above 80%)	4 schools	13.3%	
High (61-80%)	07 schools	23.3%	
Moderate (41-60%)	11 schools	36.7%	Moderate
Low (21-40%)	5 schools	16.7%	
Very Low (below 20%)	3 schools	10%	
Total	30 schools	100%	

Table 2 shows the transition rates across the 30 schools studied. The majority of schools (36.7%) had moderate transition rates between 41% and 60%. Only 13.3% of schools had very high transition rates above 80%, while 23.3% had low or very low transition rates below 40%. The average transition rate across all schools was approximately 52%, meaning that only about half of JSS students proceed to SSS.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between private cost and students' transition rate.

Table 3: Relationship between Cost of Textbooks/Materials and Students' Transition Rate

Variables	N	Pearson r	Sig.	Remark
Private cost	423	-0.498	0.000	H ₀₁ Rejected

Transition Rate $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 5 shows a Pearson r value of -0.498 with a P-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates a significant negative relationship between private costs and students' transition rate.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the relationship between private cost on students' transition rate based on school location in Benin Metropolis.

Table 4: Fishers' Z statistics on private cost and Students' Transition based on School Location

Location	N	r	Z.r	Z-cal	Z-value	Remark
Urban Schools	303	3.18	5.36	2.91	1.96	H ₀₂ Rejected
Rural /Schools	120	3.41	6.96			

 $\alpha = 0.05$

The result in Table 4 shows a calculated z-cal of 2.91 with a z-value of 1.96, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a significant difference in the relationship between private cost and students' transition rate based on school location. These indicate that private costs have a greater negative relationship between students and transition in rural schools than in urban schools within Benin Metropolis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first finding of this study revealed that parents incur significant private costs in sending their children to public junior secondary schools in Benin Metropolis. PTA levies, uniforms, textbooks, exercise books, transportation, and extra lessons were all identified as major cost items. This finding confirms that despite the official policy of free basic education, parents still bear substantial financial burden. This finding agrees with Ogunode and Aha (2021) who found that parents in

Abuja spent significant amounts on various school-related expenses. It also supports Eze and Okeke (2019) who reported that PTA levies and textbook costs were burdensome to parents in Enugu State. The finding is not surprising given the inadequate funding of public schools in Nigeria, which forces schools to rely on parental contributions for basic needs.

The study found that the average transition rate from junior to senior secondary school in Benin Metropolis was about 52%, meaning that nearly half of students who complete JSS do not proceed to SSS. This is a concerning finding that indicates significant dropout at this critical transition point. This finding is consistent with Usman and Mohammed (2021) who found a 60% transition rate in Bauchi State, and Ogunleye and Adebayo (2022) who reported similar figures in Oyo State. The low transition rate represents a loss of human potential and suggests that many students are not benefiting from the full cycle of basic education.

The negative relationship between private cost and transition rate shows that when textbooks are expensive, fewer students proceed to senior secondary school. Private cost are essential for learning, but when parents cannot afford them, students may fall behind academically or become discouraged. This finding agrees with Eze and Okeke (2019) who identified textbook costs as one of the most burdensome expenses for parents. It highlights the need for government to provide free textbooks or establish well-stocked school libraries to reduce this burden.

The finding that private costs have a greater negative relationship on students transition in rural schools than in urban schools is significant. This may be because rural areas have poorer populations with less ability to pay, or because rural schools have fewer resources and rely more heavily on parental contributions. Transportation costs may also be higher in rural areas due to longer distances and poor road networks. This finding agrees with Ifedili and Omiyi (2020) who found that location significantly affected educational outcomes in Edo State. It also supports Adedeji and Olaniyan (2018) who argued that rural students face multiple disadvantages in accessing education. The finding highlights the need for targeted interventions to support students in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is significantly relationship between private cost and transition of students from junior to senior secondary school in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, as parents bear substantial financial burden for items that should be freely provided under the Universal Basic Education programme, including PTA levies, uniforms, textbooks, transportation, and extra lessons. The findings reveal a strong negative relationship between private costs and transition rates, meaning that as private costs increase, the likelihood of students transitioning to senior secondary school decreases, with all cost components individually and collectively contributing to lower transition rates. Furthermore, the impact of private costs on transition is not uniform across schools, as students in rural areas within Benin Metropolis are more negatively affected than those in urban areas, creating geographical inequality in educational opportunities. Overall, the high

private costs of public junior secondary education undermine the goals of free and compulsory basic education in Nigeria, and unless these costs are addressed through increased government funding and targeted support for poor families, many students will continue to drop out after JSS, wasting their potential and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Edo State Government should significantly increase funding to public secondary schools to reduce their reliance on PTA levies and other parental contributions.
2. The Ministry of Education should establish a policy limiting the amount and frequency of PTA levies that schools can charge.
3. Government should provide free textbooks and exercise books to all students in public junior secondary schools. This would remove a major cost item for parents and ensure that all students have access to learning materials regardless of their family's financial situation.
4. School uniform policies should be reviewed to reduce costs. This could include allowing fewer uniform types, using less expensive materials, and permitting the use of second-hand uniforms where possible. Government could also subsidize uniform costs for poor students.

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