



# Application of Reinforcement Strategy for Reducing Male Dropout in Secondary Schools in Enugu State

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which reinforcement strategy was applied for reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. One research question and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised all the 335 (295 and 40) secondary school principals in the public secondary schools and Science Technical, and Vocational schools respectively in Enugu State under the control of PPSMB and STVSMB. It is made up of 175 female 160 male principals in the 273 rural and 62 urban public secondary schools in Enugu State. No sampling was done because the population was small and also served as the sample. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three research experts. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The instrument yielded an overall reliability coefficient of .73, indicating that the instrument is reliable and suitable for the study. The questionnaire was administered and retrieved by the researcher with the help of six research assistants. Out of the 335 copies of the administered instrument, only 318 copies were retrieved while 17 copies were not returned. Data collected with the questionnaire were analyzed using Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) with Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the research question. However, each of the hypotheses was tested using t-test statistics at .05 level of significance. Real limit of the mean scores was applied for the decision rule; the null hypotheses were rejected when the significant level was more than .05 and were not rejected when the significant level was equal or less than .05 level of significance. From the result of the findings, it was concluded that; to a great extent reinforcement strategy was applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. Comparison of male and female principals showed that, there was no significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy was applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State, also, there was no significant difference in the mean response scores of urban and rural Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy, is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. The researcher recommended among others that; reinforcement strategy, should be strengthened both at the urban and rural secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.*

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**Article's QR code****INTRODUCTION**

Education all over the world is regarded as an indispensable tool for enhancing economic growth and national development. It is seen as the cornerstone of development because it forms the basis of literacy, skill acquisition, technological advancement, knowledge acquisition and ability to harness the natural resources of the environment (Okoro, 2024). Antai and Anam (2019) asserted that education nurtures better citizens and helps to upgrade the general standard of living in a society. The education sector in any country is very important because education supplies the skilled manpower needed for the achievement of national economic goals and objectives. It is on this basis that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) outlined in her National Policy on Education, the cardinal aims of education which include among others; the development of the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment; and the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals develop into useful members of the community. These skills are acquired in formal education settings from primary, secondary and tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on secondary education.

Secondary education is one aspect of educational level in Nigeria that is designed specifically to train and prepare students for middle-level services in both manufacturing and service industries. One of the objectives of secondary education according to Atuyi (2019) is the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. It must be emphasized that secondary education in Nigeria is for six years duration, junior secondary school (3 years) and senior secondary school (3 years). The two stages are both vocational and academic in nature. The broad goal of secondary education as stated in the National Policy on Education is to prepare the individual citizen for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education (FRN, 2013). Thus, is seen as the most vital

instrument of change and the bedrock of the nation's economic and manpower development. Obumnaeme (2018), posited that education builds on the capacity of the individual to acquire appropriate information, skills and competencies for personal survival, mental and social emancipation and the development of the nation. It is a vital tool through which individuals are empowered and a major instrument in national transformation. Education is the key to the production of human capital that drives the economy of any nation. The quality of the educational system today can to a great extent shape what the country will be tomorrow (Udoka, 2016).

Formal education which is synonymous with schooling is as a matter of fact indispensable for national development, hence the indiscriminate expansion of the colossal investment in the formal school system. However, in spite of the huge investment in formal education in Nigeria, researches have revealed that school dropout rate seems high particularly among male secondary school students which calls for attention of all and sundry (Ikechukwu, 2019). According to UNESCO (2013) report, fifty nine million children in the world were out of school in 2010, which dropped slightly to fifty seven (57) million children in the world in 2011. The report further stated that sub Saharan African countries account for more than half of all out-of-school children and have the highest out of school rate in the world. Nigeria is reported to account for almost a fifth of the worlds out of school children (Ugwu, 2017).

The issue of male school dropout and out of school children has consequently become a worrisome challenge to the Federal and State Governments of Nigeria. This is probably due to the realization of the social problems that could emanate from having a large population of school dropouts, who do not possess useable skills relevant to the labour market, and therefore, unemployable. Udoka (2016), posited that dropout rate from school is increasing. It is sad to note that it is not every child who starts secondary education that completes his or her education, hence they are called dropout. Dropping out refers to a student quitting school before he or she graduates. It cannot always be ascertained that a student has dropped out as he or she

may stop attending school without terminating enrolment. Obikwelu (2018), described dropout among students as a strong desire born in their heart to leave the school system before normal graduation period. In the same vein, Parker (2023), defined dropout as a kind of hunger-drive that pulls students out of their academic pursuit before the end of the programme. Parker, lamented that if this motivated propelling force is left unchecked, the aims, goals and objectives of the educational system will not be attained. Ugwu (2017), asserted that dropout is a canker worm that has eaten deeply into the fabrics of the educational system in Nigeria. It is estimated that 7.3 million students annually dropout of school in Nigeria. (UNICEF, 2014).

Reasons for dropping out are varied and may include seeking for gainful employment, poor grade, avoiding bullying, family emergency, depression and other mental illness, unexpected pregnancy and boredom from lack of lessons relevant to their desired occupations. Personal characteristics, home, finance and society were found by Ikechukwu (2019) as predisposing factors to school dropout among adolescents. Researchers like Ogunowo (2019), Akonobi (2019), and Okedara (2015), discovered the following factors that can instigate students' dropout tendency as: influences of bad peer group, parent low socio-economic status, and high cost of school, poor instructional methods and teachers' nonchalant attitude, unwanted pregnancy, problem among others. Understanding why students drop out of schools is difficult, because, as with other forms of educational achievement, it is likely to be influenced by individuals and institutional factors. Murithi (2021), lamented that even though a lot has been done by the government to reduce dropout among students in the society, the act seems to still be on the increase in schools and society at large. In view of this, Madziyire (2022), argued that in order to curb dropout among students particularly among the male secondary school students, strategies should be deployed. In the opinion of Charles (2022), many of the discipline strategies relied on by schools over the years are ineffective especially those that involve demanding, bossing, scolding, belittling and punishing as these tactics can keep behaviour partially under control only for a while. Charles added that they can produce detrimental side effect such as uneasiness, fearfulness, avoidance, dishonesty, and undesirable attitude towards learning, overall dislike for school and teachers, inclination to retaliate and for many the desire to leave school as soon as possible. Nwajagu (2022), asserted that reducing male dropout in secondary schools is a very important action of the school life, thus, requires a well thought out strategies. Nwajagu added that such strategies and methods should be non-punishment based. Charles (2022), posited that in reducing dropout among students in secondary schools, strategies to be adopted should be void of scolding, belittling, infliction of physical pain, canning or punishment on a student disobeying the rules and regulations of the school. Maduekwe (2017), noted that strategies in reducing male dropout in secondary schools

should involve among others; the use of reinforcement strategies; and mentoring strategies. The focus of this study is on reinforcement strategy.

Reinforcement strategy is defined as a consequence that follows an operant response that increases the likelihood of that response occurring in the future. Hoy (2021), defined reinforcement as anything that increases the probability that a response will occur. Odi (2019), saw reinforcement as any event or stimulus which will increase the probability of a response reoccurring. According to Hoy (2021), there are two categories of reinforcement; primary reinforcement and secondary reinforcement. Primary reinforcement occurs naturally and does not require the subject to learn anything new. Hoy, stressed that the principle of primary reinforcement is sometimes referred to as unconditional reinforcement. It occurs naturally and does not require learning in order to work. Kendra (2020), noted that primary reinforces often have an evolutionary basis in that they aid in the survival of the species. Examples of primary reinforces include; air, food, sleep, sex, water among others. The secondary reinforcement is also known as conditioned reinforcement. In the opinion of Odi (2019), the secondary reinforcement involves using a reinforcer such as verbal praise, highly preferred activities, stickers, toys and edibles.

Reinforcement can be of a positive or negative nature. When reinforcement is positive the trainer or teacher is adding something to increase or invoke a response. But negative reinforcement is removing something to increase the response (Charles, 2022). An example of this according to Foster (2015), is if a child owes his or her parents a sum of money and the child is struggling to pay it back, if the parents ask the child to pay 90 percent of the money back by a certain date and the child complies, the parents will waive the remaining 10 percent of the balance, this is said to be a positive reinforcement. Hoy (2021), noted that positive and negative reinforcement strategy does not pertain to good and bad. It is adding something away to reinforce behaviour or taking something away to reinforce behaviour.

Reinforcement strategy has been proven to be effective in nearly every sitting (Uzoehina, 2015). Odi (2019), found that reinforcement strategy is hardly applied in the secondary schools as the use of corporal punishment is regarded more. Aleke (2016), revealed that school principals and administrators utilize rewards as reinforcement for good academic performance, however, the same process is not employed in shaping students behavior against dropout. It should be noted that reinforcement is a vital tool in secondary education as it is an act of encouraging good behaviour of a child known to be deviant by praising or rewarding his good behaviour so as to decrease the occurrence of the negative behaviour (Odi, 2019). Studies by Uche (2017), and Ugwu (2019), found that reinforcement is significant in controlling indiscipline and reducing dropout among students. However, the extent to which reinforcement is applied in reducing male dropout among secondary

school students in Enugu State is yet known. This created the gap which this study is set to fill. Close to the reinforcement strategy is the systematic desensitization strategy in reducing male dropout among secondary school students.

Application of this strategy in secondary schools must be permitted and directed by principals who are the heads of the school. Onyeike and Nwosu (2018), noted that principals are the uncompromising leaders of their schools as well as administrators in whose hands lies the future of the institution. Okoli (2015), asserted that the success or failure of secondary school programs depends on the individual principals' ability and leadership skills to maintain the school. Principals' behaviour according to Ngene (2016), normally encourages the subordinates to achieve and maintain the school standard by setting rules and guidelines pertaining to school standard. It is the duty of the secondary school principals to ensure that goals of educational policies and programs are realized. It is worthy to note that the goals of the educational policies and programmes can only be realized through conducive school environment. Nwajagu (2022), asserted that reducing male dropout in secondary school is an effective tool for ensuring that goals of educational policies and programs are realized but however, depends on the leadership strategies of the secondary school principal which is equally affected by factors such as gender of the secondary school principal.

Gender is described as the biological sex of an individual in terms of being male or female. It has to do with socially expected behaviours of male and females. In Nigerian society, there are differences and inequalities in the assignment of responsibilities between women and men, activities taken, access to and control over resources as well as possession of some qualities (Adigwu, 2024). Selpher (2015), stated that there is significant relationship between secondary school principals' gender and effectiveness in school management. Alhourani (2023), observed that female principals are found to motivate students' interest in the school than their male counterparts. Manning (2024), showed that male principals pay more attention to school challenges than the female principals. An ex-post factor design study of 100 male and 100 female high school principals by Ikoy (2023), showed that more female principals (60%) used mentoring approach to motivate students in schools. The observed difference is probably due to man's assumption of their ability to handle and deal with issues, unlike women who may not be prepared to deal with violent situations so they make adequate plans and preparations to prevent such occurrences in the school. The issue of gender has gained much attention with little or no conclusion especially as regards the secondary school principals in reducing male dropout in both urban and rural secondary schools in Enugu State.

Location refers to the urban or rural setting or situation of the school. Sarah (2015), observed that there is significant difference in the performance of secondary

school principals in promoting learning climate in urban and rural secondary schools. Mulkeen (2015), remarked that monitoring of school activities in the rural areas are difficult as factors such as poor security and other administrative arrangements as well as inaccessible roads which keep the principal away forms challenge to adequate school monitoring. Schools in the rural areas are less likely to be visited by external inspectors according to Uduak and Usang, (2015), thus, constituting to a high rate of dropout within the rural schools. Odi (2019), pointed out that even in most rural schools, punishment cannot be used in influencing students punctuality and attendance to school as a result of fear of teachers being harmed by the students. Many cases have been reported according to Odi (2019), of secondary school teachers and principals being ambushed and tortured by students of rural schools.

This researcher is worried that if adequate measure is not applied to reduce male dropout in secondary schools in Enugu State, education delivery might be jeopardized. This is because no meaningful teaching and learning can occur in an environment characterized by students' lack of interest and absenteeism. This situation will further scare away other students from school and encourage teachers' absenteeism. When this happens, teachers' productivity will be affected and by extension, students' performance and quality in the outer world will be adversely affected. As strategies such as corporal punishment has been proved to be counter-productive in reducing male dropout in secondary schools, it has become imperative that another strategy of decline in male dropout among secondary school students should be explored. It is against this background that the researcher is motivated to carry out this research on reinforcement strategy for reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. This constitutes the gap that this study intends to fill.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It has been realized that male student's dropout in secondary school in the six Education Zones of Enugu State is on the increase. Male students seem to have little or no interest in schooling and their studies particularly in recent times. This is evident in the male students' behaviour disposition and regard for education which is nothing to write home about. As a result of male students' poor interest in academics, they portray different types of ill-behaviours among which include boycotting of lessons, watching and practicing of different forms of illicit sexual acts, drug abuse, violence, telling lies, confronting teachers and principals, vandalism, lateness, absenteeism, rioting, cultism to mention but a few. These ill-behaviours have direct effect on teaching and learning process in secondary schools and may not be efficiently controlled with the use of corporal punishment measures that have been adopted over decades which yielded little or no impact.

Stakeholders in education have argued that since strategies such as corporal punishment for purpose of ensuring students' attendance and punctuality to school has not yielded the desired results, another strategy of checkmating male students' dropout should be explored. According to them, these strategies include the use of reinforcement. This approach, according to these stakeholders has the capacity of reducing male dropout among secondary school in students more than any other approach. It is against this background that the researcher is motivated to investigate the extent to which reinforcement strategy in applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six education zones of Enugu State.

### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied for reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. ascertained the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

### Research Question

The following research question is posed to guide the study;

1. To what extent is reinforcement strategy applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and were tested at .05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of urban and rural Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

### METHOD

The researcher adopted descriptive survey research design for the study. Descriptive survey research design is that in which the researcher does not manipulate the independent variable to determine their effect on the dependent variables (Idoko, 2011). It is

deemed suitable for the study because it is concerned with finding out and describing the situation the way it is. Specifically, census survey research design is adopted meaning that the entire respondents were involved. It is considered appropriate for the study following the description of census survey by Odi (2019) as the type of survey research design in which the entire population for the study is used. The design specifies how such data are collected and analyzed. The population for the study comprised all the 335 (295 and 40) secondary school principals in the public secondary schools and Science Technical, and Vocational schools respectively in Enugu State under the control of PPSMB and STVSMB. It is made up of 175 female 160 male principals in the 273 rural and 62 urban public secondary schools in Enugu State. This is based on data obtained from the Post Primary School Management Board Enugu (PPSMB, 2024/2025), and Science Technical, and Vocational schools Management Board.(STVSMB). The entire population of 335 secondary school principals was used for the study. 175 female 160 male principals in the 273 rural and 62 urban public secondary schools in Enugu State respectively. Therefore census sampling was adopted because the population also serves as the sample.

A structured questionnaire named "Application of Reinforcement Strategy in Reducing Male Dropout in Secondary Schools" (ARSRMDSS), developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument has two sections; A and B. Section A contains the respondents bio data while section B has 11 items, structured to assist the researcher in providing answers to the research question that guided the study. The response format for the instrument was 4-point scale of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Little Extent (LE) and Very Little Extent (VLE). Each response option had a numerical value assigned to it as follows;

Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4 points  
Great Extent (GE) = 3 points  
Low Extent (LE) = 2 points  
Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, draft copies of the instrument together with the research topic, purpose of the study, research question, hypotheses, and the developed instrument were given to three experts for validation. Two experts were from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, while the other expert was from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education, all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The experts were requested to assess the relevance, adequacy, suitability and comprehensiveness of the items in addressing the research questions as well as the clarity of the instruction to the respondents. The initial 8 generated items were increased to 11 items as suggested by the validators, while barrel questions and grammatical errors were corrected as well. The validators' comments were used to draft the final

instrument that was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering 20 copies of the questionnaire to a sample of 8 male and 12 female principals from public secondary schools in Ebonyi State and another 25 copies of the questionnaire to a sample of 6 male and 14 female principals in urban and rural schools, in a trial testing to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The choice for Ebonyi State was dictated by the fact that both States have the similar educational characteristics in terms of administration, population and environment. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of all the information they supplied. Data collected from the respondents' were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient was used because the study has multiple response options. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of .73, indicating that the instrument is reliable and suitable for the study. The questionnaire was administered and retrieved by the researcher with the help of six research assistants that were properly briefed on the content of the questionnaire and its administration to ensure that the questionnaire is properly administered. Appointments were booked with the respondents for collection at a later date for those who were not able to fill their own copies of the instrument because of the nature of their job. Out of the 335 copies of the administered instrument, only 318 copies were retrieved while 17 copies were not retrieved.

The data collected with the questionnaire were analyzed using Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) with Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the research question. However, each of the two hypotheses was tested using t-test statistics at .05 level of significance. The analysis was done with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The decision rule; real limit of the mean scores was applied, therefore, the upper and lower limits of the mean is as follows;

Mean scores from 3.50 – 4.49 Very Great Extent (VGE)  
 Mean scores from 2.50 – 3.49 Great Extent (GE)  
 Mean scores from 1.50 – 2.49 Little Extent (LE)  
 Mean scores from 0.50 – 1.49 Very Little Extent (VLE)

The null hypotheses were rejected when the significant level was more than 0.05 and were not rejected when the significant level was equal or less than 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1

To what extent is reinforcement strategy applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State?

**Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Male and Female Principals on the Extent to which Reinforcement Strategy is applied in Reducing Male Dropout in Secondary Schools in the Six Education Zones of Enugu State.**

		N=318						
S/N	Extent reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools include;	Male N=155		Female N=163		Overall		Decision
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>	$\bar{X}_G$	SD <sub>G</sub>	
1	using rewards to encourage academic performance	3.08	0.62	3.07	0.61	3.08	0.62	GE
2	using praise to encourage academic performance	3.38	0.49	3.39	0.49	3.39	0.49	GE
3	affectionate patting to encourage academic performance	3.23	0.58	3.23	0.58	3.23	0.58	GE
4	using smiles to encourage academic performance	2.93	0.73	2.93	0.73	2.93	0.73	GE
5	giving handshakes to encourage academic performance	3.31	0.61	3.30	0.61	3.31	0.61	GE
6	applauding positive behaviour on the assembly ground	3.39	0.74	3.37	0.75	3.38	0.74	GE
7	criticizing negative behaviour on the assembly ground	3.46	0.50	3.45	0.50	3.46	0.50	GE
8	giving scholarships to students to increase academic interest	3.54	0.50	3.53	0.50	3.53	0.49	GE
9	giving higher marks to students who are positively behaved	3.32	0.60	3.31	0.61	3.31	0.61	GE
10	assigning responsibilities to students to encourage positive academic interest	3.00	0.79	3.00	0.79	3.00	0.79	GE
11	providing students with educational incentives	3.15	0.54	3.15	0.54	3.15	0.54	GE
<b>Cluster Mean/SD</b>		<b>3.25</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>GE</b>

Note: X=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent

Data presented in Table 1 shows that all the respondents' responses indicated great extent with their mean points above 2.50, which was set as the cut-off point. The Standard deviation values were small indicating that the respondents' responses are closely clustered around the mean, signifying that their responses are homogenous. The overall cluster mean of 3.25 indicated that the items are to a great extent on application of reinforcement strategy in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. This implies that reinforcement strategy

to a great extent is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

**Table 2: Summary of t-test Analysis of Mean Response Scores of Male and Female Principals on the Extent Reinforcement Strategy is Applied in Reducing Male Dropout in Secondary Schools in the Six Education Zones of Enugu State**

Variables	N	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
Male Principal	155	.123	316	.902	.03831	.31135	NS
Female Principal	163						

NS= Not Significant

The result of t-test analysis in Table 2 shows that the t-value at .05 level of significant and 316 degree of freedom for the items is 0.123 with a significant value of 0.902. Since the significant value of 0.902 is more than the .05 level of significant the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of urban and rural Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

**Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis of Mean Response Scores of Urban and Rural Principals on the Extent to which Reinforcement Strategy is Applied in Reducing Male Dropout in Secondary Schools in the Six Education Zones of Enugu State**

Variables	N	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
Urban Principal	261	.073	316	.942	.02944	.40575	NS
Rural Principal	57						

NS= Not Significant

The result of t-test analysis in Table 3 shows that the t-value at 0.05 level of significant and 316 degree of freedom for the items is 0.073 with a significant value of 0.942. Since the significant value of 0.942 is more than the 0.05 level of significant the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of urban and rural Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research question attempted to elicit the perception of the respondents on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. All items articulated to answer the research question posed, had mean ratings that indicated great extent. This implied that the respondents agreed that reinforcement strategy to a great extent is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. This finding is in consonance with Ugwu (2019), which found that reinforcement is significant in

controlling indiscipline and reducing dropout among students. Similarly, Uzoechina (2015), noted that reinforcement strategy has been proven to be effective in nearly every sitting. The finding however disagrees with Odi (2019), which asserted that reinforcement strategy is hardly applied in the secondary schools as the use of corporal punishment is regarded more. Similarly, Aleke (2016), revealed that school principals and administrators utilize rewards as reinforcement for good academic performance, however, the same process is not employed in shaping students behaviour against dropout. It is, therefore, interesting to note that reinforcement is a vital tool in secondary education as it is an act of encouraging students against dropping out of school.

The comparison of the male and female principals showed that there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. This finding disagrees with Selpher (2015), who found that there is a significant relationship between secondary school principals' gender and effectiveness in management of discipline in secondary schools. The finding however, disagrees with Alhourani (2023), who posited that gender does not impact on principal's leadership effectiveness. Alhourani, further asserted that female principals were as effective as their male counterpart. Therefore male and female principals should be encouraged to use reinforcement strategy in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State

Similarly, on the influence of location of schools, it was found in this study that there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of urban and rural Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. This finding agrees with Anam (2023), who noted that school location has no significant influence on Principals' management of secondary school teachers and students in terms of teaching activities, non-teaching activities, school attendance and school related ethics. Thus serious efforts should be made at applying reinforcement measures in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion of the findings, it was concluded that to a great extent reinforcement strategy, is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. Comparison of male and female principals showed that, there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy, is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu

State. Similarly, on the influence of location of schools, it was found in this study that there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of urban and rural Principals on the extent to which reinforcement strategy is applied in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State. Therefore, the use of reinforcement strategy should be strengthened both at the urban and rural secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

## Educational Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study holds implication for secondary school authorities, teachers and students.

The study holds implication for the school authorities as the result of this study have found better means of reducing male dropout in secondary schools instead of the traditional use of corporal punishment which have yielded little or no result in reducing dropout in schools. The findings of this study will serve as a guide to the school authorities on the best strategy to be adopted in school environment at each given situation while dealing with the issue of male dropout.

The study holds implication for the students who stand to gain more from the results of this study as it will serve as a guide to the students against reducing dropout and will help the students to develop self-esteem, assertiveness and adjustment in behaviour, in the hope of making them better contributors and academic efficient members of society.

The findings of this study holds an implication for the counsellors and teachers whom are saddled with the responsibility of assisting students with educational, vocational and personal social problems of which dropout is one in secondary schools. The educational implication of this study, therefore, provides secondary school counsellors and teachers with better strategy in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made.

1. Reinforcement strategy should be strengthened in secondary schools in reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.
2. Government and school authorities should ensure that reinforcement strategy is utilized in boosting students' interest thereby reducing male dropout in secondary schools in the six Education Zones of Enugu State.

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