FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF EARLY SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN-AT-RISK IN PLATEAU AND NASARAWA STATES, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

High prevalence of single parenthood and communal clashes coupled with poverty make some children vulnerable in the North Central zone of Nigeria, with the attendant consequence on their school adjustment and achievement. Ameliorating this problem requires a better understanding of their immediate environment. Previous studies have concentrated largely on government and non-governmental interventions, and on the isolated effects of the family and school with little emphasis on the combined effects of the three immediate environments. This study, therefore, examined the combined prediction of family (Parents educational background, family structure and home learning environment), community (community location and available social facilities) and school (school location, class size, teacher's educational qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) factors on early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa states, Nigeria.

The study adopted survey design. Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) with high records of communal clashes and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were purposively selected from each of the six senatorial districts in the two states. Ten public primary schools were selected across the three LGAs from each senatorial district, making a total of 60 schools. Twenty primary one pupils who scored five and above out of 10 in the screening exercise from each school as well as their parents (1213) and class teachers (103) were selected. Children-at-Risk Checklist (for screening), School Adjustment Rating Scale (for teachers) (r=0.86), Parents' Questionnaire (r=0.80), Community Facilities Inventory, School Environment Inventory, Mathematics (r=0.60) and English Language (r=0.89) achievement tests were used for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance.

The children are 52% boys and 48% girls from single parent homes (15.2%), poor backgrounds (86.0%) and IDPs (62.7%). Family, community and school factors had a joint significant prediction on achievement ($F_{(10,1201)}$=24.64; R=.41) and early school adjustment ($F_{(10,1202)}$=6.47; R=.23) of children-at-risk. They contributed 16.3% and 4.3% to their variance respectively. Family factors had a joint significant prediction on achievement ($F_{(3,1208)}$=4.93; R=.11) and early school adjustment ($F_{(3,1209)}$=7.22; R=.13). Community factors had a joint significant prediction on achievement ($F_{(2,1209)}$=62.04; R=.31) and early school adjustment ($F_{(2,1210)}$=1.52; R=.05). School factors had a joint significant prediction on achievement ($F_{(5,1206)}$=38.29; R=.37) and early school adjustment ($F_{(5,1207)}$=6.65; R=.16). Parents educational background (β=.12; β=.02), family structure (β=.04; β=.01), home learning environment (β=.03; β=.06), community location (β=.00; β=.23),

available social facilities (β=.12; β=.14), school location (β=.13; β=.11), class size (β=.01; β=.21), teacher's educational qualification (β=.07; β=.01), school physical environment (β=.16; β=.07) and availability of play facilities (β=.00; β=.07) had relative contributions to early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk respectively.

Family, community and school factors positively predicted early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa states. There is the need to provide free learning materials and supports for these children, while their communities and schools should be adequately equipped with social amenities and play facilities.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty the Creator and Sustainer of all beings.

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Glory be to God Almighty and to Jesus Christ the Saviour of mankind forever and ever. Amen

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Joseph Bako ATUMBA in the Department of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State under my supervision.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1.   Background to the Study

Children are the sustainers of the society and every culture appreciates this fact. Hence, efforts are made to give them the best care, attention and education possible. There is also a growing awareness that the early childhood period is a crucial time of development and that it lays the foundation for later adult performance (Darragh, 2010). However, for children to develop and learn in a healthy and normal way, it is important to meet their basic needs for food, safety and security, healthcare, affection as well as interaction with the environment. When children are provided adequate nourishment, a stimulating environment, care and other basic needs along with appropriate educational experiences, their growth and development will be enhanced. Thus, they are most likely to reach their full potentials and also become useful members of the global society.

On the other hand, when children spend their early years in a less stimulating, or less emotionally and physically supportive environment, their development in particular could be affected and may lead to cognitive, social and behavioural delays (UNESCO, 2013). There are some children who for various social, cultural, economic and political reasons spend part or most of their early years in such less stimulating and supportive environments without meeting their basic needs. This category of children may not actually be able to reach their full potentials hence they are referred to as children-at-risk. They are those children, who for no fault of theirs, are disadvantaged as a result of loss of parents, parents' poverty, internal displacement consequent upon disasters as well as some man-made problems such as socio-political and ethno-religious crises. Crises create emergencies that make children most vulnerable (UNICEF, 2009). Save the Children (2015) affirmed that such children often experience psychological distress that could affect their ability to learn. In addition such children will, later in life, have difficulty dealing with complex situations and environments (World Health Organization, 2009). Children-at-risk also include those from broken or dysfunctional homes and whose parents are too poor to meet their needs. Oluwasakin (2010) revealed that parental distress and anxiety may disrupt the normal emotional development of the children. Such children may learn behaviours that negatively affect their well-being and abilities to adapt and contribute to a healthy and productive society. These children are also at the risk of

mental retardation due to minimal cognitive stimulation, neglect and abuse (Ajaero and Onokala, 2013).

In addition a high level of adversity and stress during early childhood can increase the risk of stress-related diseases and learning problems that may stretch well into adult years. Children in such a situation may experience difficulty in adjusting early to school. This might invariably lead to difficulties in academic achievement. However, if such children are exposed to early intervention package they may attain positive academic achievement. Similarly their lifetime earnings, social and economic independence, citizenship, and self-satisfaction will be enhanced (Agency for Instructional Technology, 1987).

Children-at-risk are also sometimes referred to as vulnerable children (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2010). Some other terms used to refer to this category of children include: street children or poor children. This category of children lack adequate basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter, safety, parental support, health care, and education needed for normal childhood development. They are at the risk of never reaching their God–given physical, social, emotional and mental potentials. Some of these children take to some extreme measures to meet their basic needs and are at the risk of being exploited, attacked, sexually abused, recruited or lured into armed groups and being trafficked. Some among them resort to street begging, hawking and doing menial jobs at local eateries. As long as the basic rights and needs of these children are compromised, they are at the risk of maladjustment, low academic achievement, poor conflict coping skills, and economic dependency later in adult life.

Furthermore, Ortiz (2013) revealed that children-at-risk have maladaptive classroom behaviours that include talking out, out of seat, touching others, off-tasks behaviour, and noncompliance. These activities of the children could decrease their time of engagement in useful academic tasks like learning writing or some pre-reading skills. Of course such children may experience low academic achievement. Gansemer (2006) supported this assertion and said by the time homeless and highly mobile children enter school, homelessness has already affected their social-emotional, physical and academic lives. They are already behind and needing to play "catch up" with peers from a stable home environment. The need to study them is premised on the fact that children-at-risk are susceptible to negative lifestyles (Ortiz, 2013), dropping out of school and might become miscreants in the society. In

2

addition studying the context in which they are growing up can provide useful insight into the factors that affect their adjustment to and achievement in school. This could guide subsequent policies and programmes of practitioners, the government or international development partners for children, particularly children-at-risk. These children therefore need additional attention because they are significant in number.

According to Stand4kids (2010) around the world, there are 1.2 billion children-at-risk. Tagurum, Chirdan, Bello, Afolaranmi, Hassan, and Idoko (2015) reported that approximately 25% of an estimated 70 million children in Nigeria can be characterized as vulnerable. These children have a right to education as education has potential benefits for people who are disadvantaged. The United Nations' Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stipulates, among other basic principles of children's rights, that every child (male or female) is entitled to receive compulsory basic education and equal opportunity for higher education depending on individual ability. This will enable the child participate in decision-making and solutions since the child also has a right to be heard. Nigeria as a signatory to the UNCRC has a responsibility of taking care of all categories of children in the provision of adequate, functional and accessible education. Accordingly, Hamza (2010) revealed that Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country. The question then is whether all children access this opportunity to start school with ease.

In the modern world, a major event that takes place in the life of the child during early childhood is starting school. Margetts (2005) reported that starting primary school can be both an exciting and challenging time as children adjust to some changes the transition brings. The changes, according to Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthew and Kienhuis (2010), are obvious in the physical structures of the school, the social environment such as teachers and children of different ages to interact with and make new friends. It is very important for the child to cope with as well as adjust to the changes brought about this time. For instance, Shah and Sharma (2012) opined that optimal adjustment to the learning environment seems to be a precursor to maximizing achievement of students. This is in conformity with Phatudi (2007), Okunola (2004) and Margetts (2000) assertion that successful start in school is associated with future school success and academic achievement. The implication is that some intervention efforts such as parenting education and free primary education

advocacy should be carried out in order to assist school age children in particular those who are at-risk to adjust successfully to school.

Adjustment to school is the ability of the child to adapt to and learn optimally in the classroom by being emotionally and socially developed to cope with the people and activities within and outside the classroom. Margetts (2005) argued that the child who makes satisfactory initial adjustment to school is more likely to be successful in his/her future progress in academics than a child who has difficulty adjusting to the school life. For a successful adjustment, a children-at-risk need to possess some skills. Okunola (2004) and Margetts (2005) enumerated some of the skills to include problem solving skills, behavioural and academic skills, self reliance and competence. Doherty (2004) similarly cited empirical findings that demonstrated unequivocally that the attributes children bring to school, especially their behavioural dispositions, social and relationship building skills, self regulatory skills and ability to communicate, are important determinants of how well they adjust to school. The skills are therefore gamine for a child's early school adjustment.

Other researchers like Raju and Rahamtulla (2007) supported this view by regarding adjustment as a process of finding and adopting modes of behavior suitable to the environment. To them, adjustment is the process by which a living organism (in this case, the school child-at-risk) maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. In the adjustment process, the school child-at-risk makes attempts to deal with stress, tensions such as that of meeting new children, adults and also dealing with conflicts in order to meet his needs. In this process, the individual makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment (Raju & Rahamtulla, 2007).

The harmonious relationships affect virtually all aspects of the child's development intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, behaviourally and morally. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004) argued that the quality and stability of a child's social interactions in the early years lay the foundation for a wide range of latter developmental outcomes that really matter. These outcomes include – assertiveness, self confidence and sound mental health, motivation to learn, achievement in school and later in life, the ability to control aggressive impulses and resolve conflicts in non violent ways.

Therefore, the beginning of school is a critical period especially for children-at-risk because the period is marked by a change in children's environment at a time

when their cognitive and social capabilities are also changing (Huffman, Merlinger & Kerivan, 2000). Huffman, Merlinger and Kerivan (2000) further revealed that children's academic and social trajectories are formed in early stages of public primary schools. In primary one for instance, the work of children begins to be seriously evaluated in a comparative manner by teachers as well as by mates and parents. When children-at-risk of low academic achievement are not properly adjusted to these changes, their future social development and academic achievement might be compromised. Margetts (2005), The Black Family Initiative (2013) and UNESCO (2013) asserted that the greater the prevalence of children-at-risk almost certainly would lead to increased expenditures for educational programmes since these children will lack adequate academic skills. School adjustment problems are thus pervasive. This is because they have lasting or cumulative effects and the potential costs to the individual child, his/her family and to society. There is a need therefore to study early school adjustment and to identify predictors of children-at-risk's adjustment to the first year of school as well as their academic achievement.

Academic achievement, according to Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger and Wirthwein (2015), represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in school. What this implies is that at the end of the second school term, for instance, a primary one pupil should be able to identify, count, order and write at least numbers 1-10 in a mathematics test as stipulated in the Primary 1-3 Mathematics Curriculum. The child should also be able to identify and read out the English alphabets A-Z. Such a child would then be said to have achieved academically. This assertion was corroborated by Steinmayr, et al (2015) who reported that academic achievement indicators include grades, or performance on an educational achievement test. These indicators could be said to mirror the intellectual capacity of the child. The quality of teaching, the competence of teachers and class size, have been shown by Steinmayr, et al (2015) to predict academic achievement.

There are family factors (parent's educational background, family structure and home learning environment), community factors (location and available social facilities) and school factors (location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) that can predict children-at-risk's early adjustment and academic achievement in school. Every individual is from a family, which is ideally made up of father, mother, children and some close

relations who interact for the mutual benefit of the whole society. Almost all families in every culture want their children to do well. They have aspirations of facilitating the holistic development of their children. They also desire lower rates of high risk behaviour and increased social competence of their children (Arndt & McGuire – Schwartz, 2012; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The family is the child's first place of introduction to certain cultural experience available in the society. The child needs to be trained to modify his purely self centered interests and to cooperate in the activities of and for the welfare of others. From the very beginning he imitates the speaking and eating habits of his family and gradually reflects attitudes learned in the home toward elders. Good or bad behaviours that are exhibited at home are carried by the child into these relationships with persons outside the home. The child epitomizes and exhibits the quality of the upbringing in the family. The upbringing has been found to be critical to the child's readiness to adapt as well as achieve academically in the school (Olatoye, & Agbatogun, 2009). Similarly, Moore (2006) affirmed that families are the most critical setting for the development of children, and family risk factors, such as poverty, single parenthood, and low parental education levels, regularly have been found to undermine children's development.Such family factors like the family structure, parent's educational background and home learning environment are critical to early school adjustment and achievement of children.

Family structure refers to whether it is a single parent family or family with both biological parents. Baiyewu (2009) and Igwe (2010) lamented that transformation overtime has put more pressure on the ideal family with the rise of single parent (one-parent) families. Baiyewu (2009) for instance, observed that one-parent families in the past which were the result of death of a spouse are now the result of divorce, abandonment of spouse, parental negligence, deliberate choice of single parenthood; unmarried females bearing children and agreeing to stay alone with the children. The implication of this on children is that, some of them grow up with deviant behaviours because they are generally less supervised and there is also less communication between them and the parent. They may find it difficult to stay in school and would consequently perform poorly. For instance divorce is said to disrupt relationships among family members. Berns (2004) asserts that divorce affects the parenting style of both the custodial and non-custodial parent. The custodial parent (usually the mother) may become more authoritarian and restrictive, and the non custodial parent (usually the father) becoming more permissive and indulgent.

6

Divorce affects the children's behaviour, with children becoming more aggressive, rebellious and manipulative. Divorce would likely affect the positive adjustment of children to school. This is supported by Margetts (1999) who showed that the absence of, or difficulty with social or cognitive skills, and the presence of problem behaviour generally impact on children's adjustment to school and is seen to indicate maladjustment. Thus, children from divorced families could be at the risk of low academic achievement. For instance, Berk (2008) observed that some of the consequences of divorce that may be long-term are that children and adolescents of divorced parents continue to score slightly lower than children of continuously married parents in academic achievement, self esteem, social competence and emotional and behavioural adjustment. This observation conforms to the assertion of The Black Family Initiative (2013) which states that children who are not successful early in school have greater problems with later behavioural, emotional, academic and social development. This calls for adequate attention for these children-at-risk. It would therefore take the understanding and collaboration among the family, the community and the school to assist children from divorced background to adjust early and also achieve academically in the primary school.

In another study, Okunola (2004) observed that the absence of a father could have adverse effects on a child's socialization and physical, mental and emotional development. She added that, it was discovered that boys whose fathers were absent for one reason or the other comprised a disproportionate number of low academic achievers. The reason for this low academic performance according to The Black family Initiative (2013) is because single parents are the primary and frequently sole source of financial support for the family. Such single parents therefore have less time to help children with homework, are less likely to use consistent discipline and have less parental control. On the other hand Amato (2005) found that children growing up with two continuously married parents are less likely to experience a wide range of cognitive, emotional and social problems, not only during childhood but also in adulthood. Thus the child in the family where both parents are continuously living together and all other things being equal may have better chances of early adjustment to and academic achievement in school. So the family structure has effects on the adjustment and academic achievement of school children at risk. The extent of these effects needs to be studied; and this study is therefore apt in that direction.

Closely related to the family structure is the parental educational background. Adewumi, Olojo and Falemu (2012) asserted that achievement of children improves when parents play certain roles in their children's learning in the early stage. Parents should act as teachers. They should create a home environment that promotes learning and reinforces what is being taught at school and develop the life skills that will make children to become responsible adults. Parents are also to act as supporters by contributing their knowledge and skills to school, enrich the curriculum and providing extra services and support to pupils. They should act as advocates by helping their children negotiate the school system and receive fair treatment from adults. In addition parents should serve as decision makers in advisory councils of the school, curriculum committees and management teams. This will make them to have some confidence in the school.

Parents' ability to perform these roles effectively to a large extent will depend on their level of education. In Nigeria, young children usually remain under the custody of their mother in the event of the death of the father, separation or divorce. Since the mother has a strong influence on the child as his first teacher, her level of education is critical to the child-at-risk's adjustment and achievement in school. Osanyin (2009) asserted that the education of the mother is one of the major determinants of the child's health, welfare and development. Okunola (2004) also reported that there is evidence that the educational levels of mothers are related to patterns of raising children and the patterns are linked to achievement in school.

Faize and Dahar (2011) similarly observed that children spend most of the time with their mothers. The mother takes care that the child learns the social etiquettes as well as religious education. Mothers who are illiterate may not provide a good or stimulating academic environment for their children and this may result in poor school performance. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) reported that parental education was positively related to parent-teacher contact. They added that the more educated the parent, the greater their involvement in their children's education. Some parents probably lack relevant skills and appropriate perception of parents as 'co-educator' because of lack of extended personal education experience. This assertion is also supported by Akinsanya, Ajayi and Salomi (2011) who opined that a child from a well educated family with high socio-economic status is more likely to perform better than a child from an illiterate family. The reason proffered by the authors is that the child from an educated family has a lot of support, such as decent and good

8

environment for academic work, parental support and good guidance, enough textual and academic materials as well as balanced diet. On the other hand, the child from an illiterate and poor family may lack such a support and thereby suffer malnutrition. A malnourished child consequently will have reduced ability to work, poor attention span in class, increased illness and tiredness, which may impact negatively on early school adjustment and academic achievement (Ogundele, 2004). The negative impact of parents who are illiterate may be mitigated if the family lives in harmony and gets involved in their children's work. Family harmony entails all members of the family, father, mother, children and significant adults living and working together as a whole for the best interest of the child. It is the harmonious co-existence in family life. A harmonious family lacks nagging, quarreling and fighting between and among members (Yap & Tau 2011). Children in such a family would likely develop the skill of peaceful coexistence and a 'give-and-take' character where every individual is valued. This skill is also necessary for the child to be able to settle problems with his peers or teachers in a non-violent manner at school.

One other family factor that affects early school adjustment is home learning environment. The environment, according to Akinbote (2010), refers to either the tangible and intangible things or conditions natural or man-made which directly or indirectly affect the life of an individual or a group of people. It thus means that an environment involves both the human interactions as well as interactions with materials and resources around the person. The child's adjustment and achievement in school is likely affected by the home that provides for cognitive stimulation. Smart, et al (2008) observed that parent-child bond or attachment influences children's social and behavioural development. School children who are less securely attached to their parents are less liked by peers and teachers, are regarded as being less socially competent and having more behaviour problems by the teachers, and are perceived to be more aggressive by their classmates. On the other hand Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edward and Hayes (2008) found that higher level sensitivity in father's interactions with the child was related to lower behaviour problems, emotional problems and conflict with teachers, and higher social skills. But fathers who are mostly absent from home might not provide the needed interactions for their children. For instance Mboya and Nesengani (1999) stated that migrant labour is common in South Africa, with the absentee rate of working men in rural areas being more than 50%. It was found that this negatively influenced early school adjustment and academic

9

achievement of children, because school performance is enhanced by the presence of both parents. What these authors however failed to reveal is how the relationships at home provide for the child's learning. Further the home learning environment that would likely be beneficial for children-at-risk will be that which has play materials such as leggo, letters of the alphabets, colourful books, journals, writing and painting materials that can stimulate different patterns of interactions. In addition the members of the family should be those who answer the child's questions, allay his fears and show interest in his school work. Evidence (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003) suggests that parental involvement in early learning has a greater impact on children's well-being and achievement than any other factor, such as family income, parental education or school environment. Supporting parents to help them provide a positive home learning environment is therefore likely to improve outcomes for children-at-risk. This suggests that the involvement of the family in their children's school work should be investigated.

The family is not only the context in which the child exists. The community factors could also be critical to understanding early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk. The community involves people and services which contribute to the general wellbeing of children and their families, thereby affecting their preparedness for and consequent adjustment to school. Schools themselves exist in the community just as the family is also a sub-set of the community. The relationships among the families, the community and the school, influence children's transition to school and their ongoing connection with school (Dockket & Perry, 2007). It is the culture of the community that forms a fundamental source of the content of the curriculum for the school.

Every community has a geographical location (Okoro, 2006) either rural or urban where a group of people live under common laws, sharing a common custom, norms and values. It also shares common source of water, possible electricity and market or health center. The community in the rural area may not have electricity or pipe born water (Okoro, 2006). The community in the urban area may have some but not all the social amenities that the municipality may have. Such also is the situation of urban slum communities. Wherever they are located, Berns (2004) asserts that communities are structured to serve key functions. They produce, distribute, as well as consume products for example, in agriculture, industry or services. The community also instills its norms and values in its members (particularly children)

10

through tradition, modeling, and or formal education. Through group pressure the community enforces its values on members by making them to conform to laws. The community fulfils the need for companionship in churches and businesses. The community enables its members to cooperate to perform tasks too large or too urgent to be handled by a single person. Examples include supporting a primary school with money to buy equipment, or building bridges across streams or even building a health care centre.

Communities that have available social facilities and services do provide both structural and social support for families and children during the transition of children to school (Dockket & Perry, 2007). Berns (2004) opined that factors in the community that have impact on socialization include population density and characteristics, arrangement and types of houses, and play setting. She added that economic factors play a central role in shaping daily lives of families who live and work there. The neighbourhood setting affects children's mobility, exposure to adults, friendship patterns, and types of play. For instance, if the community has public taps, secured-wells (See pg 144), boreholes, town halls, farms and recreation centres as well as people's experiences, the children-at-risk will benefit when they get involved and thus transfer some knowledge to school. On the other hand children growing up in communities with high rates of poverty are also likely to have fewer playgrounds, parks and libraries and to have less access to high quality early education programs (Kids Count, 2005). This is probably the picture of some communities in Nigeria. Further, such a less stimulating environment of the community will affect adjustment and academic achievement of children, particularly those at-risk.

The relationship of some community factors to the adjustment and achievement of school children has been explored by researchers. Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards and Hayes (2008) found that the non metropolitan (rural) status of the community; compared to metropolitan (urban) community has been associated with lower literacy scores in children of different ethnic groups in the first year of school. Neighbourhood disadvantages (lack of basic infrastructures, friendliness) have been found to relate to school readiness (Berk, 2008 & Berns 2004). Further, high level of neighbourhood poverty is related to poorer child cognitive outcomes and physical health, both in urban and rural locations. The reason is because of paucity of stimulating materials in such an environment. It will take a reciprocal interaction between the community and the school to be able to help the school children at risk

11

adjust early and to also achieve in school. Berns (2004) argued that the community is a more valuable resource for children if the schools view it as an educational resource and if the community as well opens itself to the children, particularly to those at risk of maladjustment.

The African traditional community for instance, opens itself to children because it sees the children as members of the community that must be socialized or educated, not only by the immediate family, but by the larger community. Okoro (2006) supported this assertion by saying that in the African traditional community, the child is seen as the child of the community. The extended family and every adult member of the community ensure that the child grows well and behaves in line with the norms and values of the community (Akinbote, et al. 2001). Unfortunately, according to Okoro (2006) however, this tradition appears to be fading away in Nigeria due to so many factors such as contact with foreign ideals and values, political and ethno-religious crises. Other reasons for these changes are traceable to industrialization, globalization, international travel and the internet and electronic communication (Oduolowu, 2011). She added that there is now greater family mobility, migration to urban and commercial cities which leads to separation of families. The child in such a mobile family will be at the risk of maladjustment and poorer achievement because there is likely going to be little touch with the community.

The ecological model of child development of Bronfenbrenner (1979) has long postulated that any individual unit is embedded within larger units that exert reciprocal influences over each other. Consequently there is the need to explore some school factors that have effects on early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk. School factors such as school location, class size, teacher's qualification, school's physical environment and availability of play facilities have been shown to predict early school adjustment and achievement of school children (Odinko, 2002, Fajinmi, 2006 & Steinmayr, 2015).

School location denotes whether the school is cited in the urban or rural area. The location of school has effect in resource provision for teaching and learning. Researcher's like Odinko (2002), Fajinmi (2006) and Fasan (2010) revealed that schools cited in the cities typically have better resources. Odinko (2002) argued that such schools in the cities have, in addition to better resources, better qualified teachers because highly qualified teachers prefer to live in cities and also more

intellectual aiding materials are usually available for students. The assertion is that such advantages enjoyed by urban dwellers may have typically influenced their higher achievement than the rural dwellers. Odinko (2002) and Fajinmi (2006) asserted that the locations of schools at times, undermine the achievement of learners. For instance, Fajinmi (2006) reported that rural public primary school pupils in Nigeria performed in secondary entrance examination at a level below their urban primary school counterparts. This, she hypothesized, may be due to exposure to modern day learning equipment and competitive nature of the urban centre. The disadvantage offered by the rural location of the school can be turned around to help the adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk by collaborating with the community.

Class size is one school factor considered to influence pupils' adjustment and academic achievement. Ikitde (2007) observed that one commodity which is not in short supply now in Nigeria is school children. In his opinion, a major problem which primary school teachers face in almost all parts of Nigeria is large class sizes. Corroborating this observation, Odinko (2002) and Oluwasakin (2010) observed that the greater the numbers of children of the same age in the same classroom environment, the greater they draw on teacher's attention. This in turn makes it difficult for the teacher to provide appropriate nurture and interaction needed by the respective child. What could be inferred here is that a small size class is more beneficial for both teaching and learning especially in the primary school. Ekine (2009) found that the benefits of small size classes include greater pupils satisfaction, high pupil morale and pupil friendliness whereas, large size classes are characterized by pupil apathy, friction and frustration.

The benefits of small classes probably result from teacher's ability to gain pupils' attention, control class activities, and provide individualized instruction. In the opinion of Odinko (2002), these desired benefits of small classes should be taken into consideration by organizers of early childhood programme because when children are able to receive constant individual attention from the teacher, they get better adjusted and consequently learn and achieve better in school. Small size classes may therefore be of tremendous benefits to early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk.

Teacher's qualification has been identified as one of the predictors of academic achievement. For instance, Odinko, William and Donn (2009) reported that

professional preparation that provides a solid understanding of what and how to teach is essential for teachers to improve and provide quality teaching-learning activities in classrooms. Tella (2008) asserted that a teacher who doesn't have both the academic and the professional teaching qualification would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his/her subject. Tella (2008) said that teachers must possess a professional knowledge base and exhibit knowledge of the subject matter. Successful teachers have a vast repertoire of instructional strategies and techniques that reflect their knowledge of the subject. This statement conforms to Odinko, et.al (2009) who reported that when teachers are well trained, they tend to have better improvisational skills and can better utilize teaching aids/materials. They also found that higher quality interaction tended to occur more between trained teachers than with untrained teachers. Tella (2008) opined that two central measures of elementary and secondary school teacher qualifications are teachers post secondary education and their certification. He however, observed that higher teacher qualification without a corresponding conducive school environment does not make better students. What can be learnt here is that the teacher should possess a professional qualification and should also be interested in the profession. These together with a conducive school environment could enhance the performance of the learners. In addition teachers at the primary school level must be those who are sensitive, warm and not harsh. This may probably help teachers to assist children-at-risk to adjust and also achieve in school.

Another school factor of interest is the school's physical environment. Research has consistently shown that school environment has the greatest potential to influence children's education (Adeyemo, 2010). Akinbote and Omojafor (2009) asserted that the issue of schools providing good quality education goes beyond what children learn and how they learn. They emphasized that it is also about the environment in which they learn. Therefore, the type of environment to which the children generally and children-at-risk in particular are exposed, will greatly determine to a great extent whether or not the natural abilities of the child will be developed and fully utilized. Akinbote and Omojafor (2009) further opined that the design and layout of the school environment which includes the building, interior finishing, outdoor space, room arrangement as well as appropriateness of equipment and learning materials have a profound impact on the child's all round development. It is a known fact that children interact a lot with the environment and therefore might

14

exhibit capacities that are shaped by the environmental experience to which they are exposed. This suggests that the environment is critical to school adjustment and their academic achievement of children-at-risk.

While other researchers stress that school buildings are of critical importance to the teaching and learning process, some argue on the relationship between physical characteristics of school buildings and educational outcome (Adeyemo, 2010). Less attention however has been given to relationship of the school buildings to early school adjustment of children-at-risk. Yet researchers such as Moyer cited in Adeyemo (2010) are of the view that school building design features and component have been found to have a measurable influence on pupils' learning and performance. The overall impact of a school building on pupils can either be positive or negative, depending on the condition of the building.

Akinbote (2010) has revealed that the learning environment can both reflect in and influence the behaviour of the learners. This suggests that the primary school learning environment to which children generally and children-at-risk in particular are exposed to will influence their school adjustment and academic achievement. In Nigeria, the public primary school buildings are generally in a state of disrepair and dilapidation (Ahupa & Ushie, 2008; Atumba 2007). The infrastructural decay as reported by Ahupa and Ushie (2008) shows that out of a total of 332,408 classrooms in the 44,292 public primary schools in Nigeria, only 140,134 classrooms were in good state with a balance of 157,819 needing massive rehabilitation. The available classrooms are thus overcrowded and ill-furnished. A child that comes newly into such a classroom will experience some difficulties in adjusting. Adeyemo (2010) corroborated this when he revealed that overcrowded school building and classrooms have a negative influence upon pupils' performance, especially for minority and poor pupils. He added that proper and accurate hearing is essential to pupils' ability to learn in the classroom. Noise distracts interests in learning and influence the performance of pupils especially those of them who are at-risk. If the children-at-risk are going to adjust early to school and also achieve academically, the school environment must be conducive and stimulating.

For the school environment to be stimulating, there needs to be availability of play facilities. Ideally, the school is supposed to offer adequate opportunities for the children to develop their physical, mental, social and emotional domains. All children have a need to play, and diverse play opportunities are a key to both a quality play

15

experience and the integration of all children (Huckstadt, Kalousek, Kutska, Plumb and Vann, 2004). The primary one children need play materials, which Okunola (2004) said can stimulate different patterns of interaction, routine and play activity. There is a generally accepted theory that children learn better through play (Maduewesi, 1999). Through play children learn at ease taking turns, communication, self-control and even the concept of number. Therefore the school should have blocks, swings, sliding equipment, see-saws, climbing frames and puzzles. Games are also avenues for the children to expend their energy during breaks or during Physical and Health Education. In addition, access to play experiences afford children of varying abilities from diverse backgrounds opportunities to make choices, take on some challenges while learning and having fun. Research has shown that although children in the primary school years have gained many skills, they continue to learn in active ways, need physical activity to promote both motor and cognitive skills, and need support and opportunities to refine social and language abilities (Bredekamp, 2011). Opportunity for physical activity is offered when schools provide enough play facilities for the children. This may likely aid early school adjustment as well as achievement of children-at-risk.

The concern being expressed now is about societal changes that have decreased children's opportunities to play. Child labour and exploitation, war and violence, and abject poverty are some of the causes of decrease in opportunity for children to play (Cengage Learning 2012). The security situation in many parts of Nigeria today may likely decrease children's opportunity to play. Another reason is that many school teachers are concerned with completing their scheme of work for the term. Thus their emphases have been on reading and mathematics. This has serious implications for children-at-risk's learning because cognitive capacity is significantly enhanced by physical activity (Cengage Learning 2012). Play is the right of school children as documented in Article 31 of the United Nation's Convention on the Right of the Child. When primary schools make available play facilities, children from all backgrounds will likely adjust early to school, enjoy school based activities and succeed academically.

The findings of different studies conducted locally on school adjustment such as Okunola (2004) and Fasan (2010) focused mainly on home and school adjustment of preschool children. Likewise findings of Olumodeji (2002) centred mainly on some socio-economic factors as correlates of psychosocial adjustment of street

children. Elsewhere, Margetts (2003) found personal, family and social influences on children's early school adjustment. The works cited above have been done mainly on normal children and not on children-at-risk. Even the work of Olumodeji (2002) which was on street children in a state in Nigeria did not examine the adjustment and achievement of school children. The findings of these works seem inadequate and sometimes conflicting on the effects of family and school factors on the adjustment and achievement of primary school pupils. In addition, no work, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, dealt extensively with early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk in the Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria. This is why it is necessary to conduct a study to find out factors that predict the early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Frequent communal/ethno-religious crises in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria have attendant consequences on the social and economic life of the people. The resultant effect of the crises is that it has put many children at risk. Such children may not reach their full potentials and become useful members of the society. They are deprived of their basic needs. The stress associated with their displacement, the destruction of their communities, the loss or poverty of their parents, among other things, could have negative impact on the child's school adjustment, learning and achievement. Such children need attention in order to identify the nature and causes of their problem and the possible help needed. Most of the previous studies on school adjustment concentrated on government and non-governmental interventions and on the isolated effects of the family and school with little or no emphasis on the combined effects of the family, the community and the school on early adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk. This study, therefore, investigated the combined prediction of family (Parents educational background, family structure and home learning environment), community (community location and available social facilities) and school (school location, class size, teacher's educational qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) factors on early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria.

1.3   Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the composite contribution of the family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment) to:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

2. What are the relative contributions of the family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment) to:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

3. Which of the family factors will predict:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

4. What is the composite contribution of the community factors (community location and available social facilities) to:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children at risk in North-Central, Nigeria?

5. What are the relative contributions of the community factors (community location and available social facilities) to:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

6. Which of the community factors will predict:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

7. What is the composite contribution of the school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) to:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

8. What are the relative contributions of the school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) to:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

    (b) achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

9. Which of the school factors will predict:

    (a) early school adjustment, and

18

(b)   achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

10.   What is the composite contribution of the family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment), community factors (community location and available social facilities) and school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) to:

(a)   early school adjustment, and

(b)   achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

11.   What are the relative contributions of the family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment), community factors (community location and available social facilities) and school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) to:

(a)   early school adjustment, and

(b)   achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

12.   Which of the composite contribution of the family factors, community factors and school factors will predict:

(a)   early school adjustment, and

(b)   achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

1.4   Scope of the Study

The study covered children-at-risk in primary one, their teachers and parents in public primary schools in Plateau and Nasarawa States in North-Central Nigeria. The public primary schools were involved in the study because they were thought to have more of the children-at-risk who may not have attended pre-primary/nursery school than the private schools. Primary one pupils, between ages 5- 6+ who just entered the formal school system were involved in the study because of the possibility of their having more adjustment problems in school than those who already had pre-primary school experience. Topics such as whole numbers, addition and subtraction of numbers not greater than 10 from the Primary 1Mathematics Curriculum as well as tracing and copying some letters of the alphabet from the English Language Studies Curriculum for Primary one were covered in the achievement test.

1.5   Significance of the Study

This study is considered significant as it would offer information on some family, community and school variables that positively stimulate and enhance proper school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk. Parents would become aware of how their relationships and involvement at home could either help or mare early school adjustment and academic achievement of their children-at-risk. The study would also offer clues to primary school teachers and administrators on how to detect and effectively support children at the risk of maladjustment to school and low academic achievement. Furthermore, the teachers would be enabled to treat such children with some care and also try to teach the children resilience. This could help primary school teachers to de-emphasis punishments in order to change the behaviours of children. Parents and teachers could thus become aware of the need to harmonize their resources for their children's learning and social development. This could help to reduce the stress children-at-risk experience when they come to school and thus enhance their adjustment and academic achievement.

It is hoped that the findings of this study would assist the various communities to realize the importance and impact of proper planning and making adequate provision for certain facilities for the young ones. In addition, the findings could positively influence the attitudes of Nigerians towards the provision of social amenities for the benefit of the children and the general public. Moreover the findings of this study could encourage the government to provide a child-friendly school environment that would not only enhance the early school adjustment but also the all round development of children in general and children-at-risk in particular.

1.6   Operational Definition of Terms

Family Factors: These are some variables which characterize the child's home. They include: family structure, parents' educational qualification and home learning environment, which could affect children's early school adjustment and achievement.

Family Structure: This is the composition of a family involving father, mother and the children and relations or involving only one parent and the children.

Community Factors: These include location (rural or urban), social facilities and services such as playgrounds, healthcare centers and town halls which are critical to early adjustment to school and achievement of primary one pupils.

School Factors: These include, school location, class size, teacher's qualification and school physical environment and availability of play facilities.

Children-at-risk: These are vulnerable children who are at the risk of not being able to fulfill or realize their full potentials and become useful members of the society due to the loss of their parents, parents' poverty or poor housing. They also include the children internally displaced by socio-political and ethno-religious crises. They therefore start school without the social skills needed to learn. They are consequently vulnerable to difficulties in school, class repetition or drop out.

School Adjustment: This involves the acquisition and retention of certain social, emotional and academic skills by primary one pupils which are critical to their establishing meaningful social ties with peers, teachers, and thereby settling happily in the school system and progress successfully in their academics.

Community resources: These include the local market square, town hall, churches and mosques, social amenities such as source of portable water, recreation centres and health care centres that influence early social, emotional and cognitive development of children.

Rural community: This is an area which possibly has no basic amenities like portable water, health care centre and school.

Urban community: This is an area which has some basic amenities like source of portable water, health care centres, schools, commercial banks, parks, playgrounds, markets and places of worship.

Academic Achievement: This refers to performance of children at risk measured by Mathematics and English Language achievement tests in the study.

Poor Housing: This refers to the new shelters of families that are internally displaced. They include make-shift tents of animal skins, corn stalks, grasses, and sack which often compromise the health and general well-being of the children. These may not meet the physiological needs of the children.

School Location: This refers to where a public primary school is sited in an urban or rural community.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviewed previous works that are relevant to the study in the following areas:

2.1   Theoretical Framework

2.1.1   Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems theory propounded by Bronfenbrenner (1979) offers a complete account of contextual influences on children's development (Berk, 2008; Nollmeyer, 2009, Awopegba, Oduolowu, & Nsamenang, 2013). The theory states that an individual's development reflects the influence of several environmental systems. It explains how everything in a child and the child's environment affects how a child grows and develops. It states that with development, children entre new environment where they assume new roles, engage in new activities and form new relationships (Sylvester, 2007). The ecological theory says that even though new environments set the stage for development, it is the child's interactions with objects and other people in those environments that are the primary mechanisms of development. In other words the theory describes and maps the various contexts and levels of settings that influence children's development. It sees the child as one developing within a complex system of relationships which are affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. Changes or conflict in any one layer will produce a ripple effect throughout other layers. For instance, divorce, separation or death of a spouse may affect the child's relationship in the family, neighbourhood and school. To study a child's development then, we must look not only at the child and her immediate

22

environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment such as the community and society as well.

Bronfenbrenner perceived the environment as a series of nested structures, including but also extending beyond the home, school, and neighbourhood settings in which children spend their everyday lives (Berk, 2008; Brewer 2007; Shaffer, 2005; Berns, 2004). This means that the developing person is said to be at the center of and embedded in several environment systems (Shaffer, 2005). These environmental systems range from the family, which is the immediate setting, to more remote contexts such as the school and community. Bronfenbrenner labeled different aspects or levels of the environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem(European Association for Counselling, 2011).

According to Shaffer (2005) each of these systems is thought to interact with the others and with the individual to influence development in important ways. Such an interaction or relationship could be said to be bidirectional. For instance, a child that has a characteristic of being bright and articulate may affect her environment by causing her parents to send her to a better school. The school in turn may influence her by improving her academic skills. The academic skills will further affect her environment by attracting friends who have high career aspirations. This continues in an ongoing cycle of interaction and development. Bronfenbrenner in Vasta, Haith and Miller (1995) argued that these sorts of interactions are difficult to study if the child is removed from the natural environment in which they occur. In other words, you need to study the child's interaction at home, community and school to be able to understand his development.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological system theory is represented in his Ecological Model of development shown in figure 2.1.
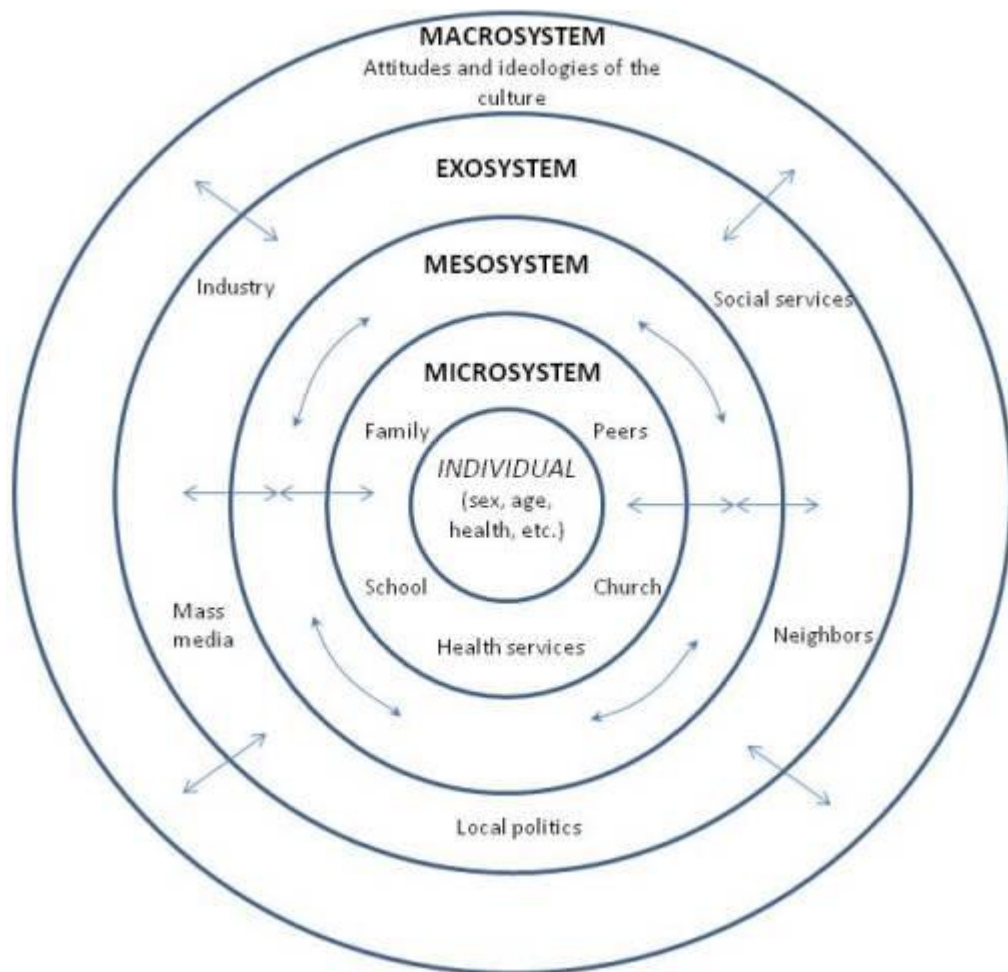
Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the environment as a series of nested structures. Adapted from Shaffer (2005).

The first basic structure in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the environment is the **Microsystem**. This innermost environmental layer refers to the activities and relationships with significant others experienced by children in a particular small setting such as family, school, peer group or community (Berns, 2004; Shaffer, 2005). According to Berns (2004), the family is that setting that provides nurturance, affection, and a variety of opportunities. It is the primary socializer of children in that it has the most significant impact on their development. Children who are not adequately nurtured or loved, especially those from dysfunctional families as well as those from crises devastated areas, may have developmental problems. Similarly children who do not have a stimulating environment (e.g without sufficient opportunities to manipulate objects, model desirable behaviors, initiate activities or are not exposed to language rich environment) will be at a disadvantage. Research has shown that this early

24

disadvantage will persist and even worsen as these children progress through school, unless there is an intervention from some child care programmes (Jones & Holmes, 2010, Siddiqi, 2009; Berk 2008; Brewer, 2007; Kolstelnik, Soderman & Whiren, 2007; Shaffer, 2005; Berns, 2004; Love & Raikes, 2004; Vasta,et al,1995).

Another setting in the Microsystems is the School. It is in the school that children formally learn about their society. The school teaches reading, writing, mathematics, Social studies, science and some cultural and creative arts. Teachers in the school encourage the development of various behaviors by acting as role models. They also provide motivation for children to succeed in learning (Berns, 2004) and consequently become productive, members of their society (Berk, 2008).

In the Microsystems children are not only influenced by the people in the systems, but their own biological characteristic such as their habits, temperaments, physical characteristics, and capabilities also influence the behaviours of companions. According to Shaffer (2005) an extremely irritable or temperamentally difficult child can alienate her parents or even create friction between them that may be sufficient to impair their marital relationship. According to the ecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate microsystem break down, the child will not have the tools as well as the necessary skills to explore other parts of his environment. So Microsystems are truly dynamic contexts for development in which each person influences and is influenced by all other persons in the system.

The second basic structure in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the environment is the **Mesosystem**. This refers to the connections or interrelationships between two or more of children's Microsystems such as the family and the school, or the family and the community (Berns 2004, Shaffer 2005, Berk, 2008). The impact of the mesosystems on the children depends on the number and quality of interrelationships. Bronfenbrenner in Shaffer (2005) believed that development is likely to be optimized by strong, supportive links between microsystems. Berns (2004) corroborated this and reported some research findings which said a child who goes to school alone on the first day has only a single link between the home and school. The link is the child himself. Where there is little linkage between home and school in terms of socialization values, expectations, and experiences, there also tends to be little academic achievement by the child. On the other hand, where all these links are strong, there is likely to be academic competence. When the style of family interaction was similar to that of the school, in that both settings encouraged

25

children's participation, academic performance was enhanced (Berns, 2004, Berk, 2008; Gananathan, 2011; Janus 2011 & Osanyin 2012). It therefore follows that the more numerous the qualitative links or interrelationships between children's microsystems, the more impact they have on adjustment and academic achievement. Mesosystems then, provide support for activities of microsystems (Berns, 2004).

Beyond the mesosystem is the **exosystem** which is the third basic structure in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the environment. The exosystem represents individuals and physical settings that do not directly interact with the children but which may influence their development (Berns, 2004; Shaffer 2005 & Nollmeyer, 2011). The father's workplace is an exosystem. Though young children rarely follow their parents to work, the work environment influences the parents, who in turn, influence the children. If parents enjoy their work or not, the children's emotional relationships are considerably influenced (Shaffer, 2005). Simply put, if the parents, for instance are out of job or poorly paid the child is affected. Berk (2008) said the exosystem supports can also be informal, such as parents' social networks friends and extended family members who provide advice, companionship, and even financial assistance. Research confirms the negative impact of a breakdown in exosystem's activities. Families who are isolated by unemployment or socially isolated, with few personal or community based ties, show increased rates of conflict and child abuse (Osanyin 2012; Oduntan, 2010 & Berk, 2008). This could be true of a child from a single-parent family or poor family. A child from such background will find it difficult to adjust and achieve in school.

The outermost level of Bronfenbrenner's model is the **Macrosystem**. The macrosystem contains a variety of influences such as ideology, laws, customs, social class, cultural values in which Microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems are embedded (Nollmeyer, 2009; Berk, 2008 & Estes, 2004). The macrosystem is a broad, overarching ideology that dictates how children should be treated, what they should be treated, what they should be taught, and the goals for which they should strive. Shaffer (2005) opined that these values differ from culture to culture (and across subcultures and social class) and can greatly influence the kind of influences children have in their homes, neighbourhoods, schools and all other contexts that affect them, directly or indirectly. This shows how the macrosystem can have an indirect yet still significant influence on the child.

The ecological system theory of human development is very relevant to this study because a child's early adjustment to and achievement in school is a function of some family, community and school factors that interact together. This suggests that children-at-risk would adjust better when the community, the family and school cooperate in the upbringing of the children. Phatudi (2007) reported that, children adjust better when they are supported by teachers and parents as well as peers they regard as friends. The child as an individual is embedded within a web of relationships which exert reciprocal influences over each other. The school should be in touch with the child's family and the family should also give information on the child to the school by constantly visiting the school. Lacour and Tissington (2011) supported this suggestion saying that one technique for creating a positive relationship with parents is through the sharing of positive comments about the student with the parents, particularly for children-at-risk. According to Lacour and Tissington (2011) the positive comments about their children helped the parents to feel accepted in the school environment which is typically a large barrier for families living in abject poverty. In turn, the parents were more willing to help with school related activities both in the school and at home, thus creating a partnership between parents and school. The community also should be interested in what goes on in school since it expects the school to transmit its values and mores to its younger members. Therefore, transition from home to and eventual adjustment to as well as achievement in school is likely affected by family, community and school factors. The effects need to be investigated. This study investigated these factors as they could predict early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria.

2.1.2   Psychosocial Theory of Development

Another very important theory relevant to this study is the psychosocial theory of Development by Erik Erikson (1959). Erikson concentrated his study on the study of the ego-a sense of self. The theory states that the child's developing identity is a reflection of relationships with parents and family within the broader context of society. In other words Erikson placed importance on social influences which impinge on the individual in the course of life. This, Erikson did in his psycho-social stages of ego (or personality development). Erikson theorized that human beings face

eight major crises, or conflicts, during the course of their lives (Oduolowu, 2011; Shaffer, 2005). It shows that life is a series of lessons and challenges which help individuals to grow. Simply put, Erikson's theory describes the impact of social experience across the whole lifespan. The stages are adapted in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1:   Erikson's Stages of Development

Approximate Age	Psycho-social Crisis
Birth to 1 year	Basic trust versus mistrust
1 to 3 years	Autonomy versus shame and doubt
3 to 6 years	Initiative versus guilt
6 to 12 years	Industry versus inferiority
12 to 40 years (Young adulthood)	Intimacy versus isolation
40 to 65 years (middle adulthood)	Generativity versus stagnation
Old Age	Ego integrity versus despair

Source: Adapted from Shaffer (2005)

Each of the conflicts has its own time for emerging, as dictated by biological maturation and the social demands that the developing people experience at particular points in life (Shaffer, 2005). Maduewesi (1999) explained that each crisis must be resolved satisfactorily before the individual can go on to the next stage.

However this present study's concern was on the first four stages which cover the early childhood period from birth to the school age period. During birth to 1 year, the psychosocial crisis is between trust versus mistrust. During this period, the infant must learn to trust others to care for its basic needs. If caregivers are rejecting or inconsistent in their care, the infant may view the world as a dangerous place filled with untrustworthy or unreliable people. The mother or primary caregiver is the key social agent at this stage.

From age 1 – 3 years, the psycho-social crisis is between autonomy versus shame and doubt. Here children must learn to be 'autonomous' – to feed and dress themselves, to look after their own hygiene, and so on. According to this theory

failure to achieve this independence may force the child to doubt his/her own abilities and feel shameful. Parents are the key social agents (Shaffer, 2005).

The crisis in ages 3 to 6 years is that of initiative versus guilt. The pre-school children here attempt to act grownups and will try to accept responsibilities that are beyond their capacity to handle. According to Shaffer (2005), they sometimes undertake goals or activities that conflict with those of parents and other family members and those conflicts may make them feel guilty. The successful resolution of this crisis requires balance. The child must retain a sense of initiative and yet learn not to impinge on the rights, privileges or goals of others. The family is the key social agent. We learn here that when children emerge from their first few years without sufficient trust in caregivers and without a healthy sense of individuality, the seeds are sown for adjustment problems (Berk, 2008), which might inadvertently affect their academic achievement.

From ages 6 to 12 years, the psycho-social crisis is industry versus inferiority. Children must master important social and academic skills. This is also the period when the child compares himself or herself with peers. When children are sufficiently industrious, they will acquire the social and academic skills that make them feel self-assured. On the other hand when they fail to acquire these important attributes they will have feelings of inferiority. The significant social agents are teachers, other adults and fellow pupils. The period between 6 to 12 years have implication for this study because it corresponds to the primary school period, the scope of this study.

Erikson's theory is relevant to this study as it stresses our rational, adaptive nature. During the primary school period, the child is facing real-life issues such as meeting academic challenges or establishing good relations with and gaining acceptance from peers. The proper resolution of the challenges has implications on the child's adjustment to and academic achievement in school. Teachers should seek to maintain or enhance the child's pride in accomplishment. This is an important contributor to a healthy sense of achievement and to the development of a positive academic self-concept.

In other words the parents and the teachers should encourage initiative and also promote industry in the preprimary and school age children respectively. For the preprimary school children, they should be given a great deal of freedom to explore their world. Allow them to choose activities they can engage in and provide exciting

29

materials that will stimulate their imagination. Then you need to encourage social play with peers and fantasy play. Don't criticize them but rather be a good model.

For the primary school child, Santrock (2005, 2009) opined that teachers have a special responsibility for children's development of industry. It was Erikson's hope that teachers could provide an atmosphere in which children become passionate about learning. He urged teachers to mildly but firmly coerce children into adventure of finding out that they can learn to accomplish things that they themselves would never have thought they could do. When you look at children at the primary school, you see their thirst to know. A number of them came to primary one steeped in curiosity and a motivation to master tasks. Accordingly, Erikson opined that teachers should nourish this motivation for mastery and curiosity. Teachers can challenge the pupils to be productive, but should not be too critical. The Psychosocial theory therefore seems to suggest that children-at-risk could have opportunities for many successes, their negative social experiences notwithstanding. This could be attained through early childhood/primary education.

2.2   The Importance of Early Childhood / Primary Education

Education generally has a crucial preventive and rehabilitative part to play in fulfilling the needs of the children. It can transform children's lives and can instill in them community values such as tolerance and also promote justice and respect for human rights. It also enhances peace, stability and interdependence (Atumba, 2007; UNESCO, 2002). Akinbote (2012) corroborated this assertion by stating that education has become one of the most powerful weapons for reducing poverty and inequality as well as improving health and the general well being of the individual. It is also used for laying the foundation for a sustainable growth and development of modern societies. The rate of development in any society is therefore intrinsically tied to a well organized, managed and supervised education system. Apanpa (2002) similarly affirmed that children, as members of a community, have the right to enjoy the benefits from all the basic facilities and resources in the community so that they can develop into responsible members of that community or any other community in the future. Every community is therefore expected to offer early childhood education to its children.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) according to Osanyin, Jegede, Ajayi and Iroegbu (2012), Darragh (2010) and Kostelnik, Soderman and Whiren (2007), refers

30

to educational programmes serving children from birth to eight years and their families. It is designed to promote children's intellectual, social, emotional, language and physical development and learning. It could therefore be regarded as the foundation level for later academic life and should be properly laid.

UNESCO (2013) referred to it as early childhood care and education (ECCE). The organization asserted that ECCE is featured as the first EFA goal ('Expanding and improving comprehensive ECCE, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children'), acknowledging its role in laying the foundation for lifelong learning. Similarly, Ifakachukwu (2011) stated that ECE represents the first important step in achieving the goals of education for all (EFA). High-quality ECCE has been shown to have multiple benefits to children and society; the benefits are greatest for disadvantaged children. Darragh (2010) stated that high-quality early childhood education for all can support and promote social equity as well as reduce risk factors which can interfere with learning and succeeding in school. Kostelnik, et al (2007) added that such education translates into a wide array of programmes attended by children of many ages. Thus early childhood education includes programs for infants and toddlers, as well as preschool, kindergarten and primary school programmes. These programmes may be public or private; targeted at low income or high income families; and administered by a variety of community institutions. What this means is that early childhood education is designed to make care and learning accessible to all children. It could be owned by private, public, community or some institutions of higher learning having it as laboratory/demonstration school.

Oduntan (2010) similarly referred to the concept as early childhood care and education. She defined it as education that supports children's survival, growth, development and learning – including health, nutrition, hygiene, cognitive, social, physical and emotional development – from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non formal setting. There is no doubt a general consensus that the first eight years of life lay the foundation for many knowledge bases and skills required for successful school adjustment and later adult competence (Odinko, 2002; Shaffer, 2005; Ige, 2011; Laverick & Jalongo, 2011). This is because neuroscientists characterized early development as rapid, plastic, complex and flexible. Speed of the early development exceeds any other period in life. Osanyin (2012) consequently stated that the major position concerning early childhood education therefore is that the environment should provide nourishment for the child's development and that the

content and the form of his education should be different from those of the adults. Thus this window of educational opportunity must be taken seriously by the parents, the community and the school.

According to Ekine (2009), primary education is the structure upon which the other educational levels are built. Primary education develops in its recipients the capacity to learn, to read and use mathematics, to acquire information and think critically about the information acquired. Bruns, Mingat and Rakotomalala (2003) stated that primary education serves as the gateway to all higher levels of education that train the scientists, teachers, doctors, and other highly skilled professionals needed by every country. Other importance of primary education includes faster diffusion of information in the economy, which is crucial for increased productivity among workers and citizens (Nanda, 2009). On the other hand, when a large percentage of children do not complete primary education, the productivity of the labour force, the potential knowledge-driven development, and the reservoir of human potential from which society and economy can draw are fundamentally constrained (Bruns, Mingat and Rakotomalala, 2003). Primary education therefore, is capable of empowering the children to make better choices, seek a voice in the society, and enjoy a better life. What can be inferred from this assertion is that denying any child primary education is tantamount to denying him life skills and thus crippling his immediate and future life. It is in recognition of the importance of primary education that the present democratic government in Nigeria is implementing free basic education to enable every child have access to education by the year 2015 in pursuance to EFA goal (Ekine, 2009). The objectives of sending children to the primary school in Nigeria include:

- The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
- The laying of sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- Citizenship education as the basis for effective participation in and contribution to life and society;
- Character and moral training and development of sound attitudes;
- Developing in the child, the ability to adapt to his changing environment;

- Giving the child the opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity

- Providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the society. (Nzeribe, 2004)

To achieve the objectives of primary school education, pupils are taught to read and write in the English Language Studies and the language of the environment. Mathematics is also a core subject that is taught. Through Social Studies and Civics, children learn about the local community and the country as a whole. In addition, subjects like Religious Knowledge, Physical and Health Education, Agricultural Education, Basic Science and Technology, Cultural and Creative Arts, Home Economics and Computer Studies are taught in order to achieve the objectives of Primary Education in Nigeria. All children who are opportuned to enroll in and also complete this level of education will therefore be enabled for a better life. Nevertheless, there are some children who may not benefit maximally from early childhood/primary education. They are the children-at-risk.

2.3   The Children-at-Risk

It is generally believed by researchers that the first eight years of life lay the foundation for many knowledge bases and skills required for successful school adjustment and later adult competence (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2004; Darragh, 2010; Laverick & Jalongo, 2011). The amount of education children receive will determine their future. Children, according to World Watch (2009) are those who challenge the adults to be better people and many times embarrass the adult into action by their conviction of what is right and good in this world. Thus the single radical effort for saving the world is to transform the way children are raised. Consequently, there are several programmes for children's general well being including their nutrition, care and education.

However, there are some children who for various social, cultural, economic and political reasons may not benefit maximally from formal education. They are those children, who for no fault of theirs, are disadvantaged as a result of loss of parents, parents' poverty, poor housing or internally displaced either as a result of their parents' occupation or due to some man-made problems such as socio-political

and ethno-religious crises. Such children therefore lack the basic needs of life. The challenges in living condition experienced by many families today could affect children's normal development. Darragh (2010) indentified the challenges to include a lack of safe shelter, the inability to put enough or nutritious food on the table, and violence. Children's development in the present, and their life opportunities in the future can be seriously affected within these families. Offord Centre for Child Study (2012) referred to children-at-risk as children with some social, emotional and health problems, children with aggressive behaviour problems, those who start school without the skills needed to learn and those who grow up in single-parent families. These children are at the risk of maladjustment as well as low academic achievement because their basic rights to safe environment and protection are compromised. As long as these children's basic needs are not adequately met they would not be able to attain self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs presents human needs in a pyramid (Darragh, 2010). Physiological needs represent the base, where the basic needs of food, shelter and water are met. It is on this foundation that safety and security will now support the development of the children. Thereafter the need for love and belonging is activated in which children seek secure relationships with parents, peers and other important adults such as the teacher. The next level is that of self-actualization where children are able to attain and accept their ideal self. However children-at-risk may need much attention if they are to reach the level of self-actualization.

According to Stand4kids (2010) around the world, there are 1.2 billion children-at-risk. Tagurum, Chirdan, Bello, Afolaranmi, Hassan, and Idoko (2015) reported that approximately 25% of an estimated 70 million children in Nigeria can be characterized Children-at-risk. Such children lack adequate basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter, safety, parental support, health care, and education needed for normal childhood development. They are at the risk of never reaching their God–given potential physically, socially, emotionally and mentally. Some of these children take to some extreme measures to meet their basic needs by resorting to begging, street hawking and menial jobs at local eateries. They are therefore at the risk of child labour being exploited by traders, food vendors, rapists, drug addicts, and human traffickers. The implication for those of them attending primary school is lateness to class or frequent absenteeism. Of course such children may experience low academic achievement. Gansemer (2006) supported this assertion and said by

34

the time homeless and highly mobile children enter school, homelessness has already affected their social-emotional, physical and academic lives. They are already behind and needing to play "catch up" with peers from more stable home environment. Thus, if they are not helped to adjust properly to school and to achieve academically, they may turn out to be a nuisance to the society.

The children-at-risk also have a right to education. This is because of the potential benefits of education to people who are disadvantaged especially this group of children who may be said to fall in the category of the children who have difficulties in making transition and adjustment to school (Janus, 2011). The United Nations' Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stipulates, among other basic principles of children's rights, that every child (male or female) is entitled to receive compulsory basic education and equal opportunity for higher education depending on individual ability. Nigeria as a signatory to the UNCRC has a responsibility for taking care of all categories of children in the provision of adequate, functional and accessible education.

Schooling is the most universal service that children (from every race, culture and social status) have access to. According to Atumba (2007) and UNESCO (2002) school education has a crucial preventive and rehabilitative part to play in fulfilling the needs of children. It can transform children's lives and can instill in them community values such as tolerance and also promote justice and respect for human rights. It enhances peace, stability and interdependence as it has become one of the most powerful weapons of reducing poverty and inequality as well as improving health and the general well being of the individual. It is also used for laying the foundation for a sustainable growth and development of modern societies. It has therefore become necessary to find out how family, community and school factors could predict the early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk.

2.4   Family Factors and Early School Adjustment of Children.

School adjustment of children is a great phenomenon that is of great concern to educators as well as researchers. Early childhood educators and parents need to know what they can do to help their children adjust to as well as benefit from school. This is because well adjusted pupils usually value what they are learning, are positively involved in classroom activities and receive high grades (Adhiambo, Odwar & Mildred, 2011). On the other hand poor school adjustment leads to low

35

academic achievement, behavioural problems, discordant educational aspirations and even school dropout (Raju & Rahamtula 2007).

Toheed (2012) argued that an individual is not born adjusted or maladjusted. It is his/her physical, mental and emotional potentialities that are influenced and directed by the factors of environment in which he/she found him/her self that adjustment or maladjustment gradually develop. The first environment that has profound influence on adjustment of the child is the family or home. The family is said to be one of the oldest and most important institutions of man that is meant to regulate and integrate his behaviour as he strives to satisfy his basic needs. Toheed (2012) reported various studies which confirmed that if a family relationship has been good, not only during childhood but also during adolescence, the person will develop into a well adjusted individual. It is in the home that the child first becomes aware of other individuals who comprise his social environment with whom he would interact.

Various researchers looked at different family factors as they relate to school adjustment of children. Okunola (2004) reported empirical findings that home factors such as socio-economic status, educational background, home type, parental involvement and family size, influence achievement, social development, ability to care for self and overall adjustment of children to school. Toheed (2012) looked at parent-child relationship, parent divorce, step families, single-mother family and working mothers as some family factors that are related to adjustment. She reported that children from divorce family show poorer adjustment than their counterparts in non divorced families. Children and adolescents in step families have adjustment problems also. They, like those children from the divorce families, had academic problems, externalizing and internalizing behaviours, lower self esteem and delinquency. Those from the single mother family were more likely to report maladjustment compared to those living in non-divorced-two biological parent family. These findings are in consonance with Baiyewu (2009) on single parent's children. He found that such children grow with deviant behaviours because they are generally less supervised. Thus they can be found being truants in school.

The family factors of interest here are family structure, parents' educational background, and home learning environment. Each child is a distinct individual and thus responds differently to changes brought about during the start of school. Family structure has some influence on how each child adjusts to first year of school life where the child meets much bigger group of children of different ages and quite

36

definite rules and ways of doing things. Family structure refers to whether it is a single parent family, or family with both biological parents. Amato (2005) Opined that children growing up with two continuously married parents, are less likely to experience a wide range of cognitive, emotional and social problems, not only during childhood but also in adulthood. He reported that compared with other children, those who grow up in stable, two-parent families have higher standard of living, receive more efficient parenting, experience more co-parenting, are emotionally closer to both parents, and are subject to fewer stressful events and circumstances. What may likely be the explanation of Amato's finding would be that continuously married couples are supportive of the child's emotional growth, and economically they might be stronger than the single-parent family. Children from a natural and stable home usually have more positive attitude towards school (Adeyemo, 2010) and thus would adjust well to school life. Well-adjusted pupils usually value what they are learning, are positively involved in classroom activities and receive high grades (Adhiambo et al, 2011).

Some children from single-parents have been shown to have problems with adjustment to school. Obisanya (2009) observed that traditional family structures are breaking down as a result of increased urbanization, changing patterns of employment and mass migration of peoples within and across national borders. Consequently, an increasing number of women are becoming heads of households with dual responsibilities of bringing up their children without much support as well as having to earn money to provide for the basic needs of the family. Baiyewu (2009), while lamenting the rise of single families and their effects on children's adjustment, said that such children are less supervised and there is also less communication between them and the parents. He particularly reported that children of single-mothers or those from a divorced family grow up with deviant behaviours. Divorce is said to disrupt relationships among family members. Berns (2004) asserted that divorce affects the parenting style of both custodial and non-custodial parent. The custodial parent (usually the mother) may become more authoritarian and restrictive, and the non-custodial parent (usually the father) becoming more permissive and indulgent. A child in such a situation is torn-apart emotionally. Toheed (2012) opined that good or bad behaviour that are exhibited at home are carried by the child into his relationship with persons outside the home. Thus the family attitude during disharmony becomes an important consideration in the adjustment of a child to school. Berk (2008) while

examining the effect of divorce on children said, the more parents argue and fail to provide children with warmth, involvement and consistent guidance, the poorer the children's development. Berk added that cognitive immaturity of preschool and early school-age children often makes it difficult for them to grasp the reasons behind their parents' separation. Younger children often blame themselves and take the marital breakup as a sign that both parents may abandon them. Hence, these children are more likely to display anxious, fearful and angry, defiant reactions than older children. Berns (2004) corroborated this by citing research which found that families of divorced mothers who had custody of their children were less likely to eat dinner together or play together than intact families. This implies less care and ineffective communication.

Overall Berk (2008) asserted that exposure to stressful life events and inadequate parenting magnifies the problems of temperamentally difficult children. Toheed (2012) revealed that children of the divorced family show poorer adjustment than their counterparts in non-divorced families. The children are also said to have low self-esteem, social competence, and emotional and behavioural adjustment. Of course since such children are not well regulated, they will find it difficult to cooperate with classmates, share equipments, focus attention during lessons and may also fail to follow teacher's instructions. This assertion was supported by Okunola (2004) who observed that the absence of a father could have adverse effects on children's socialization and physical, mental and emotional development. The extent to which family structure has adverse effect on the school child's adjustment need further to be studied. Thus this study will be valuable in that direction.

Parents' educational background has implication on the child's adjustment to school. Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards and Hayes (2008) found that parents' educational level is related to better socio-emotional, language and cognitive development in children of various ethnic backgrounds. Similarly Berk (2008) reported that higher levels of maternal education are related to better cognitive and language abilities. What can be inferred here is that parents' level of education is related to the cognitive and language abilities of the child. When a child has better language ability, he will be able to communicate well with his teachers, classmates and significant others in the family, community and school. Researchers like Berk (2008), Smart, et al (2008), and Okunola (2004) found that maternal education levels are related to patterns of raising children as well as to better social and behavioural

development. In Nigeria, young children remain under the custody of their mothers in the event of the death of the father, separation or divorce. Since the mother has a strong influence on the child as his first teacher, her level of education is critical to the child's adjustment.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) reported that parental education was positively related to parent-teacher contact. They added that the more educated the parents, the greater was their involvement in their children's education. For instance when a mother has some level of education, she will be able to accompany her primary one child to school for at least, the first three weeks so the child can get adjusted to school life. This link is important.   Unfortunately some parents lack relevant skills and appropriate perception of 'parents as co-educators' because of lack of extended personal education experience. The Nigerian situation attests to this assertion. The literacy level of mothers in Nigerian rural areas is lower than those in the urban area. The National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) 2011 revealed that in Nigeria 49% of women in rural areas and 22% women in urban areas has no formal education. This means almost half of the mothers in Nigerian rural areas have no formal education and the situation might even differ between the north and the south. The children of these women are at the risk of poor social and academic development and need to be assisted to adjust to school. The fact that a large number of the women in the rural areas are without formal education means that coupled with poverty, their children will be disadvantaged when they start attending primary school. Akinsanya, Ajayi and Salomi (2011) opined that while the children from well educated families enjoy adequate nutritious food, decent and good environment for academic work, parental support and guidance, the children from illiterate and poor families may lack the adequate nutrition, protection and guidance necessary to support adjustment to school.

Also family harmony is a related factor that affects adjustment in school. The family that lives harmoniously has the parents, children and significant adults living and working together for the good of the whole especially for children. A harmonious family lacks nagging, quarrelling and fighting between members (Yap & Tau, 2011). Children in such family would most likely develop the skill of peaceful co-existence involving a give-and-take character where every individual is valued. These skills are necessary for the child to be able to settle problems with his peers or teachers in a non-violent manner at school. This is an aspect of positive adjustment to

39

school. On the other hand any family that lacks harmonious co-existence is said to be a family in disharmony. In such family is found a situation of rancour, nagging and quarreling which definitely breeds aggressive children who fight, kick and throw away properties of their classmates. Thus, there is need to investigate the composite effects of the family factors on the adjustment of children-at-risk to school.

One other family factor that affects early school adjustment is home learning environment. The environment, according to Akinbote (2010), refers to either the tangible and intangible things or conditions natural or man-made that directly or indirectly affects the life of an individual or a group of people. It thus means that an environment involves both the human interactions as well as interactions with materials and resources around the person. The child's adjustment and achievement in school is affected by the home that provides for cognitive stimulation. Smart, et al (2008) observed that parent-child bond or attachment influences children's social and behavioural development. School children who are less securely attached to their parents are less liked by peers and teachers, are regarded as being less socially competent and having more behaviour problems by the teachers, and are perceived to be more aggressive by their classmates.

On the other hand Smart, et al (2008) found that higher level sensitivity in father's interactions with the child was related to lower behaviour problems, emotional problems and conflict with teachers, and higher social skills. But fathers who are mostly absent from home might not provide the needed interactions for their children. For instance Mboya and Nesengani (1999) stated that migrant labour is common in South Africa, with the absentee rate of working men in rural areas being more than 50%. It was found that this negatively influences early school adjustment and academic achievement of children, because school performance is enhanced by the presence of both parents. What these authors however failed to reveal is how the relationships at home provide for the child's learning. Further the home learning environment that will be beneficial for children-at-risk will be that which has play materials such as logo, letters of the alphabets, colourful books, journals, writing and painting materials that can stimulate different patterns of interactions.

In addition the members of the family should be those who answer the child's questions, allay his fears and show interest in his school work. Research evidence suggests that parental involvement in early learning has a greater impact on children's well-being and achievement than any other factor, such as family income, parental

education or school environment (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Supporting parents to help them provide a positive home learning environment is therefore a vital part of improving outcomes for children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is possible when the involvement of the family in their children's school work is investigated.

The reviewed research findings have not said much about the early school adjustment and academic achievement of children that are traumatized through communal, religious or other social conflicts. Therefore it has become necessary for an investigation into the family factors that predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria.

2.5   Family Factors and Academic Achievement of Children.

School adjustment is related to academic achievement of the child.   In essence, some researchers see good academic achievement as an index of positive school adjustment (Adhiambo et al, 2011 and Raju & Rahamtula, 2007).   It is therefore critical to also investigate the family factors (family structure, parental educational background, home learning environment/parent-child relationship) as they relate to academic achievement of the children-at-risk. Margetts (2005) argued that the child who makes satisfactory initial adjustment to school is more likely to be successful in his/her future progress in academics than a child who has difficulty adjusting to school life. The family structure plays a significant role in this regard.

Two parent families have been found to be beneficial to their child's academic achievement most especially when both parents are actively involved. Gadsden and Ray (2003) indicated that the earlier fathers become involved in their children's learning and socialization, the better. They argued that even fathers with limited schooling can, through their involvement in their children's schools and school life, be considered an important influence in their children's academic achievement. Consequently Gadsden and Ray (2003) found that fathers who were moderately or highly involved in their children's school life, had children who were significantly more likely to receive high marks and never repeat a grade. What can be learnt here is that even parents in rural areas who have little formal education can help their children achieve academically if both of them are involved in the children's school life. It is agreed that mothers stay more at home with their children and so do have stronger influence on their children's academic achievement. But Gadsden and Ray's

findings showed that a little involvement by the father would help the child. The concern is now the fathers who are mobile workers. Mboya and Nesengani (1999) stated that migrant labour is common in South Africa, with the absentee rate of working men in rural areas as being more than 50%. It was found that this negatively influences children's academic achievement, because school performance is enhanced by the presence of both parents.

Academic achievement of the child from a single-mother for instance may be problematic when the mother herself is not much involved because of work related stresses. Further children from a family that experienced divorce suffer emotionally and academically. For young children, after divorce, they stay with their mothers who had to play dual roles of father and mother to take care of them. Deprived children can turn out to be truants in school and possibly end up as criminals in the society.

Divorce disrupts relationships among family members. Berns (2004) and Margetts (1999) showed that the absence of or difficulty with social or cognitive skills, and the presence of problem behaviours (as found in some children from broken homes) generally impact on children's adjustment to school and poor or low academic performance. Berks (2008) collaborated this when she observed that some of the consequences of divorce, that may be long-term, are that children and adolescents of divorced parents continue to score slightly lower than children of continuously married parents in academic achievement, self-esteem, social competence and emotional and behavioural adjustment. What can be inferred from this would be that the child from a divorced family may often be unhappy, especially in the event that the mother tries to transfer her depressive mood and frustration of the broken relationship to always making such comments like, it was the child's father who has caused all the troubles and that she can only do her best in the care and education of the child. Such a child comes to school sad and lost in thought and may not benefit maximally in the school's educational activities. His performance will be negatively affected. Such children-at-risk can receive help from family relations, the school staff and some caring members of a well organized community with social services such as committee for the care of orphans, and vulnerable children.

Okunola (2004) supported this assertion when she said boys whose fathers were absent for one reason or the other comprised a disproportionate number of low academic achievers. The parents therefore need to be made aware of the need to

provide a favourable home environment which can stimulate the child intellectually. When a child is denied this right, he will develop a negative attitude towards learning environment (Adeyemo, 2010). Such a child also tends to take things lightly and is very resistant and unserious concerning school activities. The result of such behaviour of course would be poor academic achievement.

Closely related to the family structure is the educational background of parents. Research has consistently shown that the kind of mental challenge to which a child is exposed at various periods is likely to determine the kind of mental abilities which he possesses. According to Adeyemo (2010) and Okunola (2004) a child whose parents are educated would likely perform better than a child from a semi-literate or illiterate home. Adeoye and Raimi (2007) stated that children who come from educated home (i.e. where either or both parents are educated) achieved higher than those that come from predominantly non-educated home (i.e. where both parents have no formal education). For instance, if parents are themselves well educated and successful in life, they will further stimulate their children to achieve. Educated parents encourage their children to develop interest in school work by providing for them textual and non-textual materials both for home and school use to enable them succeed. On the other hand the poor and uneducated family may not be able to make such provisions available for their children, thereby widening the achievement gaps between their children and the children of the educated and wealthy family (Berns, 2004 and Adeyemo, 2010).

The mother's level of education has been of interest to researchers in the early childhood education field because young children spend more time with the mothers. Okunola (2004) reported that there is evidence that the educational levels of mothers are related to the patterns of raising children and the patterns are linked to achievement in school. Fasina (2011) reported that the extent or level of the parental educational attainment and exposure determines the age at which the child is being enrolled to school. Faize and Dahar (2011) affirmed this by observing that mothers who are uneducated may not provide a good or stimulating environment to their children, thus, resulting in poor school performance. What can be inferred here is that an educated mother, who helps her child with his school work, would have her child achieve at school. On the other hand if a woman has no formal education, then her child's achievement in school may suffer. So it could be asserted that more educated parents can improve their children's academic achievement by involving in

43

their educational interests and by providing them help and support in educational issues (Nasir, 2012).

Proper interactions of the school and the family (parents) could assist every child to achieve academically. The knowledgeable teacher can help the illiterate parents, especially the mother, to see how she can be involved in her child's education even through asking questions on how the child fared in school and also encouraging the child to do his home work as well as securing help from any literate, willing adult in the neighbourhood to put her child through academically.

However, for the child's family to have a positive impact on his academic achievement, the family must be in harmony. Family harmony is indexed in peaceful co-existence of the members. The type of home a child comes from affects the learning behaviour of the child (Adeyemo, 2010 and Fasina, 2011). A home in which positive attitudes are not encouraged, love is not given and affection denied, will not be a suitable home environment for a growing and developing child. Such a child may perform poorly in school. Adeyemo (2010) and Okunola (2004) argued that children from the natural and stable home environment usually have a more positive attitude towards learning. They have been seen over the years to be more successful academically. This is due to the peaceful co-existence at home.

Furthermore, parent-child relationship that is nurturing and warm is a home environment that can help children to perform well in the school. The parent child relationship is known through the parenting styles employed by parents. Parents that are warm and nurturing in their relationship with the children have been found to foster academic achievement. Janus (2011) and Ekine (2009) opined that parental involvement in their children's learning is a predictor of school readiness and academic achievement. When parents participate in their children's education, grades and tests scores improve, attendance is more regular, more homework is completed; dropout rates decrease and in the long run, children are more likely to enroll in higher education. Adeyemo (2010) supported this when he said the way and manner a child behaves in school is a function of the relationship that exists between him and his parents at home. Studies by Adeyemo (2010), Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), and Olumodeji (2002) have shown that a child who is loved and cared for by his parents, responds positively to school work in terms of academic performance while those children deprived of love and care by parents, perform poorly in school. The lesson therefore is for parents, no matter what condition they find themselves in, to strive to

show love, care and involvement in their children's education. When such children get properly educated, they will turn out to be of great benefits to their parents and the community in general. The community should also play a supportive role especially to the families of indigent pupils.

However, the reviewed research findings have not said much about the early school adjustment and academic achievement of children that are traumatized through communal, religious or other social conflicts. Therefore it has become necessary for an investigation into the community factors that predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States, Nigeria to be carried out.

2.6   Some Community factors and early school adjustment of Children.

The family is a subset of the larger social unit, the community. Community factors that affect early school adjustment have been discussed by researchers. Of interest to this study are community location and the available resources and services such as places of worship and markets, which could predict early school adjustment. The need to investigate them is anchored in the Ecological system theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and the psychosocial theory of development by Erickson. The ecological systems theory sees the child as developing within a complex system of relationships which are affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. These environmental systems range from the family, which is the immediate setting, to a more remote context such as the broader culture indexed in the community. Thus to understand the child, his community needs to be investigated since they interact with the child directly or indirectly through the family and the school in reciprocal ways. Berk (2008) stated that social interaction in particular, cooperative dialogue with more knowledgeable members of the society is necessary for children to acquire the ways of thinking of and behaving that make up a community's culture. What can be inferred here is that a community which has for instance, town hall, market, playground facilities, well educated individuals and other professionals would likely be beneficial to the child's positive adjustment not only to that community but the school environment. Of course an optimal adjustment to the learning environment seems to be a precursor to maximizing achievement of students (Shah & Sharma, 2012).

One important characteristic of the community is its rural or urban location in which children are brought up. The value which is held by the particular community translates to how they relate to their children and thus help them adjust to school. For instance in the Traditional African communities, a child is seen, not only as the member of his biological and extended families, but as an integral member of the community. Thus Okoro (2006) and Akinbote (2006) opined that the child is the child of the community. The child in the Igbo community is called "Nwa Oha/Nwa Ora" (the community child, the child of everyone). The community therefore permits the child freedom of playing all around and also makes sure the child is brought up in a proper way so he can be useful to himself and the entire society. But the community can only help the child's social development to the level of its exposure and to the level of its available resources. Some families and communities, particularly in poverty stricken areas, do not value or understand formal education. Children in such situation could be unprepared for the school environment (Lacour & Tissington, 2011).

Okoro (2006) said the community has most of the public facilities of life-common source of water, possible electricity, and market, hospital or health care centre and then school. Through communal labours in securing the source of water, or building the market square or a bridge across the stream, the child learns the skill of cooperation which is necessary for early school adjustment. This view was corroborated by Bronfenbrenner in Teaching Strategies (2010) who argued that children develop within interconnected systems. The systems are dynamic and interactive, and each has a powerful impact on a child's development. Okoro (2006) therefore opined that there should be a reciprocal relationship between the school and the community. The school can use the available resources in the community to the benefit of learners and teachers. For instance the local craftsmen, artisans, historians are valuable resource persons who can contribute both to adjustment and achievement of children. Education humanizes the child and disposes him to fit into the fabric of the social community, thus the community makes available its resources for the education of the child (Okoro, 2006). The physical features such as the rocks, mountains, the blacksmith's shop, the local ginnery among others, could be explored by the school for the good of the child. What can be inferred here is that when new pupils are taken to tour important sites and meet with important members of the

46

community, they are helped to settle in school because of the feeling that they are valued as members of the community.

The church building could be used to accommodate school children as a classroom, in the event of either dilapidation of the school building or even population explosion probably as a result of influx of people from some troubled communities. On the other hand the school buildings serve the community as meeting centre, particularly the community that has no town halls. It is a centre of meetings, film shows, workshops, marriage ceremony, reception of dignitaries etc. The fields could be used for cultural days, festivals, novelty football matches to unite neighbouring communities etc. When a child sees this cooperation, he is helped to also value staying in school with children from different backgrounds. Berns (2004) is of the opinion that the community is a more valuable resource for children if the schools view it as such and if the community as well opens itself to the children.

It should be noted that available social facilities and services in the community could provide both structural and social support for families and children at times of children transition to school (Dockket and Perry, 2007). However the research findings discussed above focused mainly on how the school can utilize existing community facilities but have not explicitly indicated how the children's experience with the local facilities in the community can enhance the early school adjustment of children-at-risk. Therefore this study investigated the presence or absence of community facilities and how they predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria.

2.7   Community Factors and Academic Achievement of Children

There are community factors (community location and available resources and services) that are thought to relate to the academic achievement of children. Children in school or at home are expected to learn the values and mores of their community or the wider society. Just as the home factors are strongly related to the cognitive reasoning and school achievement of the child (Adeyemo, 2010 and Nasir, 2012) the community factors could be related to the child's academic achievement.

Writing on community location, Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards and Hayes (2008) reported that nonmetropolitan status (i.e. rural location) compared to metropolitan status (urban location) has been found to be weakly associated with lower literacy scores in children of different ethnic backgrounds in the first year of

school. What can be inferred from their finding is that a community in a rural area has some association with lower literacy for primary school pupils and that could be due to lack of stimulation from the inhabitants of the place and also lack of stimulating materials. This assertion is supported by the claims of Berk (2008) and Berns (2004) when they said neighbourhood disadvantage has been found to relate to school readiness. High levels of neighbourhood poverty are related to poorer child cognitive outcomes both in urban and rural locations. The dimension added to the understanding of the location of community as it relates to academic achievement of children is that, whether a community is located in an urban slum e.g. *Bere* in Ibadan and *Ungwan Rogo* in Jos, or in rural area, there will be less stimulation of the young children's cognitive domain because of paucity of stimulating materials in such environment. For children to do well, they need to see and also handle materials of different shape, colours, textures and sizes. These will offer help for the children to learn to sort, classify, compare and sequence. Their knowledge grows as they experiment, make discoveries, and modify their easier way of thinking to incorporate new insights (Smart, et al, 2008).

When children attend school in the community located in a poor neighbourhood the link between the school and the community is weak as the community may not offer much learning opportunity to complement what is taught the child in school. The ecological system theory offers an insight into the connections as the school and the neighbourhoods are systems which impact on each other in a reciprocal way (Teaching Strategy, 2010). For the developmental potentials of the children to be supported the school, the family and the community have to communicate, noting how they can strengthen each other around the child and for the child.

Similarly research has shown that there is disparity between children's academic achievement between rural and urban areas and between poor and non-poor communities due to inequalities in the distribution of facilities and resources. For example Teaching Strategies, (2010) opined that rural and slum areas usually have fewer cognitive resources, such as libraries, museums and fewer social resources as local clubs, parent school groups etc. The lack of these or their ineffectiveness do negatively affect cognitive development and by extension achievement of children. Children's achievement, particularly for children-at-risk, is affected by the values of community (Lacour & Tissington 2011). The authors explained that some families

48

and communities, particularly in poverty stricken areas, do not value or understand formal education. This leads to school children who are unprepared for the school environment.

The means of assisting these children would be through the school seeking partnership with the families and communities with the aim of getting them involved in the school process. The school should provide tips to parents for assisting pupils in becoming academically successful. For children-at-risk, Lacour and Tissington (2011) suggested that one technique of creating a positive relationship with parents (and also the community members) is by sharing positive comments about the school child with the parents. This will make parents feel welcomed and be involved in school. The lesson here is that, if members of the community, even though located in rural areas where resources are in short supply, can cooperate with each family and then the school, the academic achievement of children could be improved. The literate or educated members of the community, in conjunction with the school staff, can organize adult education classes for parents so that they will be able to assist their younger children academically. Such an understanding among the family, the community and the school is important for the early school adjustment and achievement of the children. The studies reviewed have not dealt extensively with the relationship of community factors to academic achievement of children-at-risk. Thus it is necessary to study the influence of community factors on academic achievement of children-at-risk. There is also the need to investigate school factors which relate to early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk.

2.8   School Factors and Early School Adjustment of Children.

One of the most influential contexts for shaping the course of human development is the school. Berns (2004) stated that the school is society's formal institution where learning takes place. As a socialization agent, it provides the intellectual and social experiences from which children develop the skills, knowledge, interest and attitudes. The school therefore offers a key into important life skills to the child. The education offered in school has been recognized by the United Nations, the African Union (AU), United Nations International children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Nigerian Government as the right of every child. This opportunity to attend primary school is an inalienable right of every child no matter the social, religious or ethnic background.

However, starting school has been identified as a major challenge facing many children in their early years. This is because starting school is a complex process for any child and his or her family. Margetts (2002) and Janus (2011) opined that the process of adjustment to school starts well before children actually cross the threshold of the school building, and it involves balancing the expectations with excitement, and known with unknown. Children approach starting school with different emotional behaviours. These emotional behaviours need to be properly managed to influence the early adjustment and academic achievement of children in a desirable way. Margetts (2002) opined that social and emotional difficulties in the early years of schooling can predict risk of education and social problems in the following ten to twelve years. On the other hand Janus (2011) affirmed that successful adjustment to the school environment increases the child's enjoyment of school based life, including play, education and social relations with other children and adults. The implication of the above statement is that the school setting should be able to present a supportive environment for children to interact under the guidance of knowledgeable adults who are able to assist them learn the rules of social interaction. In addition the knowledgeable adults should be able to provide play-based activities that support child-directed exploration and learning by hands-on experience (Doherty, 2004). The primary one pupils especially need play based activities and concrete objects to be able to learn effectively and fast.

There is therefore a need to investigate the school factors as they relate to early school adjustment of children-at-risk. School factors of interest to this study are the school location (urban or rural), class size, teacher's qualification, school's physical environment and the availability of play facilities.

School location means the place where the school is (urban or rural). School location has effect on human, materials and structural provisions for teaching and learning. Odinko (2002), Fajinmi (2006) and Fasan (2010) showed that schools sited in the cities have better resources and better qualified teachers who prefer to live in cities. Such advantage may have typically influenced higher achievement among the urban dwellers than the rural dwellers. What these researchers did not, however, say or reveal is whether school location has any relationship with early school adjustment of new entrants like the primary one pupils and particularly children-at-risk. Thus, the present study investigated some school factors related to early school adjustment of children-at-risk. For instance a school that is located some distance away from the

50

child's home or located across a stream would affect the early adjustment of the child to school. A child who has to trek a distance of more than three kilometers every school day or who has to be carried across a stream to attend school may sometimes feign sickness because of his phobia for water. This assertion is supported by McGowen (2007) who stated that the human brain is a physiological system and can be stimulated, both positively and negatively, by its surroundings. He further revealed that the surrounding in which people function can greatly impact moods, satisfaction and self-worth. It is therefore obvious that where the school a child goes is sited could affect how early he/she adjust to the school-based life.

A child can only adjust to school when his inner self and his skills agree with or can cope with the schools. When children exhibit a range of social skills associated with cooperation, initiating interaction, assertion, and self-control, they are more likely to adjust easily to school. On the other hand, difficulties are likely to arise when children are non compliant, disorganized, distractible or when they are anti-social (Margetts, 2002).

Early school adjustment is interplay of other school factors besides the school location. The class size has also been seen to relate to early school adjustment of children. Class size is the average number of children in a classroom; it also denotes the ratio of children to a teacher in a classroom. The National Policy on Education (2004) outlined in Section 4 (19g) that for effective teaching and learning (in the primary school), the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:35. However, with the introduction in 1999 of the Universal Basic Education, which is free, researchers have reported population explosion in public primary schools, with less commensurate increase in classrooms to accommodate them. Ikitde (2007) asserted that one commodity which is not in short supply now in Nigeria is school children. He further revealed that a major problem which primary school teachers face in almost all parts of Nigeria is large class sizes. The implication of the situation according to Odinko (2002) is that the greater the numbers of children of the same age in the same class, the greater the draw on teacher's attention. This in turn makes it difficult for the teacher to provide appropriate nurture and interaction needed by the respective child. Of course the primary one pupils, especially at the beginning of the first term, are still trying to figure out how they will adjust to the new environment full of strange children and adults, coupled with the demand of school routines and rules. Every child at-risk needs a close adult i.e. the teacher who will pamper, encourage and motivate him so

51

he can fit into the school life. It is when a child adjusts well to the classroom that he can learn. For instance Sylvester (2007) posited that children who exhibit behavior problems have lower achievement, but, in classrooms where teachers provide high levels of emotional support, such children's achievement is commensurate with that of their peers.

A small class size is believed to be beneficial to teaching and learning. For instance, Odinko (2002) and Ekine (2009) found that the benefits of small size classes include greater students satisfaction, high pupil morale and pupils friendliness, whereas large size classes are characterized by pupil apathy, friction and frustration. What can be inferred here is that the small size class offers more benefits probably because the teacher gains pupils' attention, controls class activities easily, and also provides individualized instruction. When children are able to receive constant individual attention from the teacher, they feel liked and therefore get easily adjusted. The classes for the primary one pupils should be smaller i.e. pupil - teacher ratio of 1:25, because the children are still in their formative years and for children at risk they need constant individual attention that is nurturing and reassuring.

Other researchers on the other hand have criticized the hypothesized advantages of small sized classes. For instance, Ekine (2009) reported that in other countries there were no longer class size effects. This is supported by Adesoji and Olatunbosun (2008) who argued that research does not support the expectation that classes will of themselves result in greater academic gains for students. They observed that the effects of class size on student learning vary by grade level, pupil characteristics, subject areas, teaching methods and other learning interventions. Also Afolabi in Adesoji and Olatunbosun (2008) found no significant relationship among the class size and students' learning outcomes. Since the data available from literature on class size are inconclusive, it is necessary to further investigate its effect on early school adjustment of children-at-risk being one of the school factors.

One other school factor of interest is the teacher's qualification as it relates to early school adjustment of children-at-risk. Much attention has been given to teacher's educational qualification as it relates to academic performance of children in school. Odinko, Williams and Donn (2009) reported research findings which showed that when teachers are well trained, they tend to have better improvisational skills and can better utilize teaching aids/materials. Further, Odinko, et al (2009) found that higher quality interaction tended to occur more between trained teachers

than with untrained teachers. For instance, Tella (2008) reported that a teacher who does not have both the academic and the professional teaching qualification would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his subject. Odinko, et al (2009) found that the benefits of employing qualified teachers at the preschool level in Nigeria, was one that Nigeria's preschoolers are largely being denied. Their study revealed that significant group differences in the use of instructional time were observed between teachers who have some kind of teaching qualification and those who do not. What Tella (2008) and Odinko, et al (2009) however did not state is whether there is any relationship between teacher qualification and early school adjustment of children. Nevertheless, if a teacher is professionally qualified, especially those who have Early Childhood Education background or a degree in child development, he/she will be in a better position to help children adjust to school. Such a teacher will relate with the children in a warm and nurturing manner. Teaching Strategies (2010) said children learn best when they interact with people in a rich environment. In other words the classroom should be organized as a community where children learn in collaboration with each other and their teacher.

Lev Vygotsky cited in Teaching Strategies (2010) explored social interaction and concluded that it is crucial to children's learning. He found that children need to talk about problem in order to solve them and talk about concepts in order to understand and apply them. If therefore a teacher is not close to the children or not the type that understands working with children, he may not be able to get the pupils adjusted to school life. It should be noted that there are potentials that are imbedded in children which the teacher need to know and build upon. Vygotsky used the term Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to describe how children learn about a particular experience. The lower limit of the zone represents what the child can do independently while the upper limit is what the child can do with the help of others which are more knowledgeable.

There is the need for the teacher to help the child by being close to him. The process of helping a child to build knowledge and understanding is called Scaffolding in Vygotsky's theory. Just as scaffold helps a builder reach a high roof, scaffolding helps a child perform skills at a higher level than he/she could by working independently (Vasta, Haith & Miller, 1995; Shaffer, 2005; Brewer 2007). This a teacher can do when he is able to pay individual attention to pupils. Margetts (1999),

Doherty (2004) and Early (2004) all asserted that relationship between a teacher and the pupils do not just provide a context for learning, they actually affect the brain. Nurturing and positive interactions between the qualified teacher and the primary one child, is thought to release chemicals that promote brain development, and consequently the development of a coping strategy by the young child.

A qualified teacher therefore is expected to have some characteristics in addition to his education. Colker (2008) after a survey of 43 early childhood educators, garnered 12 characteristics needed by a qualified teacher. They include passion, perseverance, risk taking, pragmatism, patience and flexibility. Others are respect, creativity, authenticity, love of learning, high energy and sense of humour. An early childhood educator with these characteristics also knows that children get adapted to the school life when they receive commendations of efforts they put in school activities. To get even a truant pupil to adjust requires that a teacher should always give some verbal commendation to the child before his peers and even before parents.

For the qualified teacher to be more effective in his job of helping children-at-risk adjust to school, the school's physical environment must be conducive. It is therefore necessary to investigate not only the teacher's qualification but also the school's physical environment as it relates to adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk.

Research has consistently shown that the school environment has the greatest potential to influence children's education (Adeyemo, 2010). McGowen (2007) similarly stated that the surroundings in which people function can greatly impact moods, satisfaction and self worth. The interpretation of this statement could be that when children come into an environment that is attractive and conducive they are happy and would want to tell others that their school is a nice place to be. By this they get adjusted quickly. McGowen therefore suggested that school officials must not only deal with the students in prevention of misbehaviour, but also on the physical nature of the building. Teacher's retention is associated with school facility design (McGowen, 2007). What can be inferred here is that the type of physical structures of a school may tell whether a teacher will remain in the school or not. Similarly the physical structures might tell whether a child would like to remain in the school or not and as such would adjust easily to school life. Moyer in Adeyemo (2010) asserted that the overall impact of school physical environment and structures on pupils can

54

either be positive or negative, depending on the condition of the buildings. However researchers seem to focus more on the influence of school factors as they relate to academic achievement of normal children with less attention given to the influence of the school physical environment on early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk. For example when the child comes into a class with the floor not properly done, full of dust, his/her health is affected. Similarly a school's general environment that is not inviting, without well kept grass lawns and flowers and other things to entice the children may make it difficult for them to show interest and therefore adjust and learn. For children to adjust early and also benefit from what the teacher will offer, the physical environment must be enabling. Tassoni, Bulman, Beith and Robinson (2005) revealed that stressed and anxious children find it harder to learn, show inappropriate behaviour and may not wish separating from their families. A school environment that is attractive and conducive will not only help such pupils adjust to school but also achieve academically especially if there is availability of play/learning resources.

Research (Oluwasakin, 2010) has also shown that play materials and learning resources available in the school stimulate different patterns of interaction, routine and play activity. Okunola (2004) reported that children learn through play. Spaces to play in small or large groups, to work and also to create, are legitimate needs of children. When a school has play materials like blocks, swings, sliding equipment, climbing frames, see-saw and puzzles, a social atmosphere is created around children as they play together. Odinko (2009) stated that play is one of the most important means for the development of child-initiated self-directed activity. A visit to a nursery or primary school where different play materials are, reveals that the first thing some children do as they arrive the school premises in the morning is to head straight to play. Even a child who came moody can be helped if he finds where to play. This assertion conforms to the argument of Bruce in Odinko (2009) that a child always behaves beyond his average age and above his daily behaviour during play activities. The provision of play materials in the school is therefore very critical to adjustment of children to school. Through play the children develop physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. It is during play children get integrated into group of friends; learn to take turns, the skill of cooperation, communication, self-control and even the concept of number. Little wonder then, researchers assert that although children in primary school years have gained many skills, they continue to learn in active ways,

need physical activity to promote both motor and cognitive skills, and need support and opportunities to refine social and language abilities (Bredekamp, 2011). What can be inferred here is that play is beneficial to all children and so the school should have play and learning resources.

In many schools of Nigeria today there are inadequate play facilities and there are also security challenges which have decreased children's opportunity to play in school. Play cements relationships among peers and thus enhances school adjustment and academic achievement of children. The research findings reviewed so far focused mainly on the school factors as they relate to school adjustment of normal children. This study therefore investigated the school factors as predictors of early school adjustment of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria.

2.9   School Factors and Academic Achievement of Children.

The qualities of teaching, competence of teachers, and class size, have been shown by Steinmayr, et al (2015) to predict academic achievement. The location of a school has been found by other researchers to affect the academic achievement of children. Odinko (2002) and Fasan (2010) reported that schools located in urban cities typically have better resources, better qualified teachers and more intellectually aiding materials are usually available for students. Such advantages enjoyed by urban dwellers may have typically influenced their higher achievement than the rural dwellers. Odinko (2002) further found that in a reading literacy study conducted, pupils in the cities were found typically more proficient than the children from small villages. The explanation for this variance could be that the child in the city is surrounded by a good number of literate persons and other means of instruction such as the television while the child in the village is surrounded by people who may not have any or little literacy.

Fajinmi (2006) similarly found that the location of school at times undermine the achievement of learners. For instance, rural public school pupils' performance in secondary school entrance examination is usually lower than their urban primary school counterparts. This, she hypothesized, may be due to exposure to modern day learning equipment and competitive nature of the urban centre.

Since the human brain is said to be a physiological system, it can be stimulated, both positively and negatively, by its surroundings (McGowen, 2007). If then the school location has been shown to affect adjustment, then school location has

56

effect on achievement. Adhiambo, Odwar and Mildred (2011) supported this assertion when they said well-adjusted students usually value what they are learning, are positively involved in classroom activities and receive high grades. Poor school adjustment leads to low academic achievement. Further research is therefore needed to show the correlation between the school location and academic achievement especially of children-at-risk. This study therefore was an attempt in that direction.

Another school factor which researchers found to have effect on academic achievement is the class size. Researchers have found out that greater gains in student's achievement occur in classes with few students than in large classes (Adeyemo, 2010). Ekine (2009) found that individual attention and sustained time of thinking were associated with smaller classes. Researchers over the world are emphasizing class size reduction. Great School Staff (2012) asserts that class size reduction in the early grades helps students to achieve because there is greater opportunity for individual interaction between students and teachers in a small class. Etsey (2005) found that good teaching is best done in classes with smaller numbers of students that allow for individual attention. Adeyemo (2010) also corroborated the findings and added that small classes also enhance safety, discipline and order. Ekine (2009) found that pupils in smaller classes scored highest in achievement test. Adesoji and Olatunbosun (2008) however asserted that research does not support the expectation that classes will of themselves result in greater academic gains for students. They observed that the effects of class size on student learning vary by grade level, pupil characteristics, subject areas, teaching methods and other learning interventions. The concern however is whether this assertion will hold true with children-at-risk in rural primary schools.

Adeyemo (2010) similarly made a very important observation when he said reduction in class size does not however guarantee quality if qualified teachers and appropriate classroom buildings are not available to cater for the expansion in the number of class rooms. He quoted Olayemi (2001) as saying that students learn more from teachers with strong academic skills`. Similarly studies have also shown that students learn more from experienced teachers than they do from less experienced ones (Adeyemo, 2010 and Barnett, 2004). This assertion was also supported by Akinbote (2006) when he said in assigning teachers to the lower classes (i.e. 1-3) of the primary schools, qualified and experienced teachers should be preferred. The

conflicting findings about the effect of class size needs to be investigated especially as it relates to the school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk.

School's physical environment is thought to be very critical for academic achievement of the pupils. Adeyemo (2010) asserted that the school environment should be conducive enough so as to enhance learning. Schools should be built with necessary facilities such as properly constructed and equipped classrooms, furniture, games facilities, laboratories, libraries and many other facilities. The unfortunate thing with Nigeria is that, many public primary schools operate in class room blocks that are dilapidated and lack furniture. As a result, many pupils sit under trees, which serve as shield from sunshine and rain (Adeyemo, 2010 and Atumba, 2007). Inadequate space and facilities inhibit teaching and learning which invariably affect academic performance. Thus the school environment could probably encourage or stifle learning (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). For instance, if for lack of enough classrooms which are in good condition, pupils are overcrowded in class, there will be disruption of learners' mental activities and situation that generally initiates against effective teaching and intellectual development of learners.

Similarly most of the public primary schools lack some basic learning resources which do aid learning such as blocks, puzzles, large letters, pegs and rods for counting in the lower classes. There is need therefore for an investigation into some school factors to see their relationship to early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk.

2.10   Appraisal of Literature

Based on the findings of most researchers, there are strong indications that the adjustment and academic achievement of school children are influenced by some family factors (educational background, structure, parental involvement), community factors (the location, available social facilities) and school factors (location, class size, teachers educational qualification, school physical environment and availability of play materials). Researchers (Phatudi, 2007; Margetts, 2005 and Okunola, 2004) agree that successful start in school is associated with future school success and academic achievement. The implication is that collaborative efforts should be devoted to assisting school age children to adjust successfully in school. Though researchers such as Odinko (2002) suggested that policy makers, educators and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) should initiate and actively implement empowerment

programmes that will develop them educationally, the adjustment and academic achievement problems of the children-at-risk have not been adequately addressed. This study therefore sought to provide an empirical base that could assist families, communities as well as the primary schools teachers to adequately assist in the early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk in Nigeria.

Most of the previous studies on school adjustment reviewed concentrated mainly on government and non-governmental interventions and on the isolated effects of the family and school with little or no emphasis on the combined effects of the family, the community and the school on early adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk. This study, therefore, investigated the combined prediction of family (Parents educational background, family structure and home learning environment), community (community location and available social facilities) and school (school location, class size, teacher's educational qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) factors on early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study, variables in the study, the population, sampling technique and sample. It also presents the instruments and their validation processes, procedure for the study and the data analysis.

3.1   Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of the *Ex post facto* type. This is because no attempt was made to manipulate any of the variables of interest in the study. This design was considered appropriate because it made it necessary to collect factual information on the situation of early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk.

3.2   Variables in the Study

3.2.1 Independent Variables

The independent variables in the study are:

i. Family Factors
a. Parents' educational background
b. Family structure
c. Parent involvement/home learning environment

ii. Community Factors
a. Location- Rural or urban
b. Available social facilities and services.

iii. School Factors
a. School location
b. Class size
c. Teachers' educational qualification
d. School's physical environment such as availability of classroom, playground and learning materials.

3.2.2 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in the study are:

a. School Adjustment
b. Academic Achievement of pupils

3.3 Population

The target population for the study was primary one pupils, their teachers and parents in public primary schools in Plateau and Nasarawa States. Primary one pupils with or without pre-primary education background were involved because they are just entering the formal school system. Also they have just left the familiar care of parents and other caregivers, to a more formal school setting with teachers and other children where they need to establish friendships. Thus, the children involved were those who are most likely to have problems of school adjustment. Public primary schools were used for the study because they are thought to have more of the children-at-risk in primary one than the private schools. Plateau and Nasarawa States were purposively selected from the North-Central States of Nigeria because of their proximity to each other and because both States share some common cultural and geographical features. Their citizens are mainly farmers, pastoralists, traders, artisans and civil servants. Nasarawa State was carved out of Plateau State on October 1, 1996. Thus, they both share a common history. In addition both States serve as cultural melting pots as they lay between the core northern and southern Nigeria. They are multiethnic in nature and have also experienced widespread political and ethno-religious crises and the two States have been playing host to a great number of internally displaced people which involved many children that fall under the category of children-at-risk.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study consisted of sixty public primary schools, one hundred and three (103) teachers of primary one, one thousand two hundred and thirteen (1213) primary one children-at-risk (boys and girls) and one thousand two hundred and thirteen (1213) parents of the primary one pupils in Plateau and Nasarawa States. Multistage sampling technique was used in selecting participants from the three senatorial districts of each of the states. From each senatorial district three Local Government Areas (LGAs) with high records of communal clashes and/or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were purposively selected. Four public primary schools were purposively selected from the LGA that has more schools while three public primary schools were selected from each of the remaining two LGAs selected in the senatorial district. Thus ten public primary schools were selected from each of

senatorial districts, making a total of thirty (30) primary schools per state. Sixty (60) primary schools from the two states were involved in the study. From each school primary one class was selected. From each of primary school at most 20 pupils were purposively selected from primary one classes with the aid of their regular classroom teachers. The researcher, the research assistants and the selected teachers identified the primary one children-at-risk using the Check List for Identifying Children-at-risk in Primary one. This was complemented by such school records as the admission registers, class attendance register, Orphans and Vulnerable Children forms and Parish Action Committee on HIV and Aid (PACHA) registers. The admission registers, Orphans and Vulnerable Children registers and Parish Action Committee on HIV and Aid (PACHA) registers have provisions for family information such as name, address, occupation and telephone number. The head teachers were also involved in the identification of the children-at-risk because most of the school records like the admission registers are kept by them. In addition some parents had given useful information about their children or wards to them. Parents' consents were sought verbally before involving their children in the study. The child that qualified for selection was one who is from a poor or single family, or one who is internally displaced as result of socio-political or ethno-religious crises, an orphan or one from a divorced family. In the selection no two children-at-risk of the same parents were involved.

Also the teachers of the pupils selected from each school were participants in the study. A total of one hundred and three (103) primary one teachers were involved in the study. These teachers were chosen because they are familiar with the pupils as their classroom teachers. They were able to provide useful information about the pupils as well as about some parents. Furthermore, all one thousand two hundred and thirteen (1213) parents of the primary one pupils selected were involved in the study. In other words parents of children selected were automatically involved in the study and were reached through their children and staff of the schools. They were chosen because being parents of the children they could provide useful information concerning their children's home background, school progress and other information needed. The sample distribution is shown on Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sample Distribution

Sample	Plateau State	Nasarawa State	Total
Number of Selected Schools	30	30	60
Number of Selected Teachers	46	57	103
Number of Selected pupils	600	613	1213
Number of Selected Parents	600	613	1213

3.5   Instruments

The following seven instruments were used to generate data for this study.

i.   Check List for Identifying Children-at-risk in Primary One

ii.   School Adjustment Rating Scale (SARS)

iii.   Parents' Questionnaire (PQ)

iv.   Community Facilities' Inventory (CFI)

v.   School Environment Inventory (SEI)

vi.   Mathematics Achievement Test for Primary 1 (MAT-P1).

vii.   English Language Achievement Test for Primary 1 (ELAT-P1).

3.5.1   Check List for Identifying Children-at-Risk in Primary One

The instrument was developed by the researcher. It was used by the primary one class teachers as well as the head teachers to identify the children-at-risk involved in the study. It was developed after some consultation with head teachers, primary one class teachers and officials of Justice Development and Peace/CARITAS (JDPC) a.k.a Social Justice and Human Development for Peace Initiative. JDPC is a faith based and non-profit organization of the Catholic Church. JDPC serves all humanity regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation in such aspects as Civic education, Rural Water Supply, Street Children, Juvenile delinquencies (under the Care for Children Programme) among other things. The 10 items were carefully developed based on such documents as JDPC handbills and newsletter, transfer/admission forms and

63

admission registers in the primary school. (See Appendix I). The items are some common characteristics of children-at-risk garnered from the documents mentioned above. A child was considered at-risk and selected for the study, who had at least five (5) out of the 10 characteristics on the checklist.

The Check List for Identifying Children-at-Risk in Primary One was validated first by some primary school teachers in Plateau State, who did not participate in the study. They commented on the clarity of the language, relevance and the ability of the instrument to identify children-at-risk. The supervisor's critical assessment of the language and appropriateness of the items on the instrument led to the final draft of the instrument.

3.5.2   School Adjustment Rating Scale (SARS)

The School Adjustment Rating Scale (SARS) was adapted from Gresham and Elliott's (1990) Social Skills Rating System. It was used for the assessment of children's social skills and behaviours. It was reduced from the initial six sections to four sections. Sections A and B sought for pupil and teacher demographic information respectively. Sections C and D consist of 25 items in the domains of social skills and problem behaviour. The social skills domain (items 1-16) includes subscales of cooperation, assertiveness and self-control. The problem behaviour domain (items 17-25) includes the subscales of externalizing behaviour, internalizing behaviour and hyperactivity. Teachers were to rate frequency of specific behaviours by ticking either 'Very Often', 'Often', 'Sometimes' or 'Never'. (See Appendix II).

The draft SARS was given to some lecturers and students in the Departments of Teacher Education, Guidance and Counseling and the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan. It was also given to some public primary school teachers in Plateau State for validation. They were asked to ascertain the relevance, level of clarity and ability of the instrument to measure what it was intended to measure. Their corrections and suggestions that the language should be simple for ease of understanding were taken into consideration and shown to the supervisor before the final copies of the instrument were produced.

The SARS was trial-tested on 30 primary one children-at-risk in two public schools in Plateau State, which did not form part of the study. Cronbach Alpha was used to analyze the responses of the participants and the reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained.

3.5.3 Parents' Questionnaire (PQ)

The parents' questionnaire (PQ) was developed by the researcher to measure parents' involvement in the child's education. The Instrument is made up of three sections (A, B&C). Sections 'A' and 'B' sought for pupil's and parent's information. Pupil's name, school, class, gender and number of siblings were supplied by the parents. Parents' information sought includes, name, address, relation to the child, current marital status and educational qualification. Section 'C' consists of ten (10) items on parent involvement in the child's school activities. For questions 1-8, the scoring was done on a four point scale of Never, Once, Twice and 3 times or more to indicate the level of parents' involvement in a week. For statements 9 and 10, the parents were expected to tick any of the options 'Not at all', 'Few' or 'All' and 'Not at all', 'Sometimes' or 'Always' respectively. Parents of the primary one pupils that were involved in the study were the respondents to this instrument. (See Appendix III).

The validity of the instrument was established by subjecting it to the criticisms of the supervisor, lecturers, statistical analyst and higher degree students of the Departments of Teacher Education, English Language and the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan. They were asked to ascertain the relevance, level of clarity and ability of the instrument to elicit the information it is intended to elicit. Based on the recommendations of these experts, some items were expunged and others modified. Initially it was a multi-section instrument with twenty five (25) items on a three point Likert-type scale. But after the validity the items were reframed and the Section 'C' reduced to ten (10) items on a four-point scale to measure parents' involvement in the child's school activities at school and at home.

The PQ was trial-tested on 30 parents of primary one children-at-risk in two public schools which did not form part of the study. Cronbach alpha was used to analyze the response of the participants and the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.80.

3.5.4 Community Facilities Inventory (CFI)

The community facilities' inventory (CFI) was developed by the researcher with some items adapted from Okoro, (2006) and Okunola, (2004). The CFI was designed to ascertain the availability of the facilities and resources in each of the communities where the study was carried out. Information sought include: name of

community, location, LGA, and state. In addition facilities such as health care centre, church, mosque, playgrounds and market square were assessed on a two-point scale of Available and not Available. (See Appendix IV). The researcher and/or his assistants took the inventory in the communities involved in the study.

To establish the validity of the CFI draft copies were given to some lecturers and some test and measurement experts in the Institute of Education and Teacher Education Department of the University of Ibadan. They were asked to ascertain the comprehensiveness and relevance of the items. Their observations were incorporated in the design of final copy of the instrument which was approved by the supervisor.

3.5.5   School Environment Inventory (SEI)

The school environment inventory was adapted from Okunola (2004) and Oluwasakin (2010). It was designed to find out the existing facilities in the school environment to see how they could influence early school adjustment and academic achievement of primary one pupils at risk. It sought information such as the name of the school, LGA, State, Well-ventilated classrooms (3 windows on each side of the wall), Child-size chairs, child-size tables/desks, space/playground, swing, see-saw, etc. The researcher and the research assistants completed the school environment inventory by ticking Available and adequate, Available but inadequate, Not available.(See Appendix V).

The School Environment Inventory was given to some school owners, the supervisor, some lecturers and statistical analysts in the Teacher Education Department for validation. They were asked to ascertain the relevance and comprehensiveness of the items. Their observations and suggestions were considered in the design of the final copy of the inventory that the supervisor approved.

3.5.4. Mathematics Achievement Test for Primary 1 (MAT-P1).

This instrument was developed by the researcher based on the content of the Primary One Mathematics Curriculum aspect of the UBE programme. It was used to generate pupils' academic achievement scores in mathematics. The instrument is divided into three sections: A, B and C. Section 'A' tested the pupils' ability in the area of number and numeration. Section 'B' tested their ability in addition of sum not greater than 10, while Section 'C' tested them on number order 0-10. The pupils were

required to either write down the correct number of things in a box or supply the missing numbers in blank spaces. (See Appendix VI)

The instrument was given to some lecturers and higher degree students of the Department of Teacher Education and the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan. Some primary one Mathematics teachers in Plateau, who did not participate in the study, were also given the draft copies of the MAT-P1 in a focus group discussion for validation. They were asked to comment on the content, adequacy, structure, language and relevance of the instrument. The instrument was then shown to the supervisor. All their recommendations were taken into consideration in the design of the final copy of the instrument.

The MAT-P1 was trial-tested on 30 primary one children-at-risk in two public primary schools in Plateau State that were not involved in the main study. The responses of the participants were analyzed using Kuder Richardson (20) and a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.60 was obtained.

3.4.7 English Language Achievement Test for Primary 1 (ELAT-P1)

The instrument was developed by the researcher based on the content of the Primary One Curriculum (English Language Studies) of the UBE programme. The instrument is divided into three sections, 1, 2 and 3. Section '1' tests the pupils' ability in tracing and copying some letters of the alphabet. Section '2' tests their ability in recalling and writing letters of the alphabet in order while Section '3' tests their ability in matching things with the same colour. (See Appendix VII).

The items included in the instrument were given to Test and Measurement experts in the Department of Teacher Education, the Institute of Education and some primary one teachers of English Language, and then the supervisor. They were asked to comment on the content, adequacy, structure, language and relevance of the instrument. Their observations and corrections were incorporated in the design of the final copy of the instrument.

The ELAT-P1 was trial-tested on 30 primary one children-at-risk in two public primary schools which were not involved in the main study. The responses of the participants were analyzed using Kuder Richardson (20) because the difficulty level was not established by the researcher. The correlation coefficient (r) of 0.89 was obtained.

3.6   Procedure for the Data Collection

The researcher sought permission from the Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) of Plateau and Nasarawa States and then Secretaries of the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) selected in the two States for the use of the primary schools. Official letters were given to the researcher both at the SUBEBs and the LGEAs. The researcher visited all the randomly selected schools with photocopies of the letters from their respective Education Secretaries to meet with the head teachers and teachers of primary one. The teachers of the randomly selected primary one classes were briefed separately on the purpose of the research and the roles they were to play. They were trained during an interactive session along with a total of twenty (20) research assistants on what type of information to seek from the parents and how to go about rating children's school adjustment rating scale, SARS. They were well informed about the peculiarity of children-at-risk, how to identify them using the Check List for Identifying Children-at-Risk in Primary one as well as how information about them should be kept in confidence for research purpose only. A session of demonstration of what they were expected to do followed where they completed samples of the SARS for a child each who did not form part of the main study. The teachers each completed at least 20 SARS (for 20 pupils) while the researcher and research assistants with the assistance of the class teachers, administered the pupils' achievement tests on individual basis towards the end of the third term of 2013/2014 school session. The researcher and research assistants completed the inventory schedules (CFI and SEI). The researcher, the research assistants and the selected teachers identified the primary one children-at-risk using the Check List for Identifying Children-at-risk in Primary one complemented by such school records as the admission registers, class attendance register, log book, Orphans and Vulnerable Children forms and Parish Action Committee on HIV and AIDS (PACHA) registers. The head teachers were involved in the identification of the children-at-risk because most of the school records like the admission registers and log books are kept by them. The admission register for instance has provision for parent information like the name, address and phone number. In addition some parents may have given useful information about their children or wards to them. The selection and training of the teachers and research assistants as well as identification of the primary one children-at-risk were done by the second and the third weeks of the third term of 2013/2014 session. The venue for the training of the research

assistants and teachers were the schools that were most central in the district. The researcher and the teachers verbally sought consents of the parents before involving their children in the study.

The fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth weeks were used for administration of the instruments. Children with literate parents were identified by the teachers as well as through questioning of their children. The questionnaires of such parents were sent to them through their children/wards and staff who knew and could reach these parents. For parents who were not literate, they were assisted by the researcher, research assistants and volunteer teachers who lived in the community to complete in information required by the questionnaire. The questionnaires were collated on the eighth and nineth weeks of third term 2013/2014 session. Letters of appreciation shall be sent to all the head teachers of the schools that participated in the study.

Summary of the time-table for the study

i.   First Week: Seeking permission from the SUBEBS, Secretaries of LGEAs and Management of Participating Schools.

ii.   Second and third Weeks: Selection and training of teachers and twenty research assistants through interactive sessions. The training involved teaching them the technicalities of guiding the respondents to complete the questionnaires appropriately. The consent of the parents of the children were sought. The research assistants helped in monitoring the exercise as well as the retrieval and collation of the instruments in their various Local Government Areas.

iii.   Fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth Weeks: Administration of the Instruments.

iv.   Nineth Week: Collation of Questionnaires and results of the achievement tests.

3.7   Method of Data Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed in determining which variables best accounted for most of the anticipated variances in the dependent variables. It also determined the level of their contributions. Degree of predictions was equally ascertained by the result of the multiple regression analysis. In addition descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage and pie-charts were employed to provide information on variables in the study.

4.1   Analysis of Demographic Data

This section presents the demographic information of the pupils and their parents. While Table 4.1 presents information about the pupils, Table 4 presents that of the parents.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Pupils Based on Gender, Class and State

Variable	Freq.	%
Pupils' Gender		
Boys	629	51.9
Girls	566	46.7
No Indication	18	1.5
Total	1213	100.0
Class		
Primary I	1213	100.0
State		
Nasarawa	613	50.5
Plateau	600	49.5
Total	1213	100.0

Table 4.1 shows that 1213 pupils were involved in this study, out of which 52% are boys and 48% are girls. There are more boys than girls in the schools probably because a few parents still prefer to send their boys to formal school. Girls seem to hawk early in the area. All the pupils were in the Primary I class as at the time of data collection. The pupils were from two States in the country, 51% from Nasarawa and 49% from Plateau State. Nasarawa State had more participants because at the time of data gathering there was influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Benue, Plateau, Southern Kaduna, and Taraba States. Children of the IDPs were enrolled in the public primary schools which were free. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 present this information in chart forms.
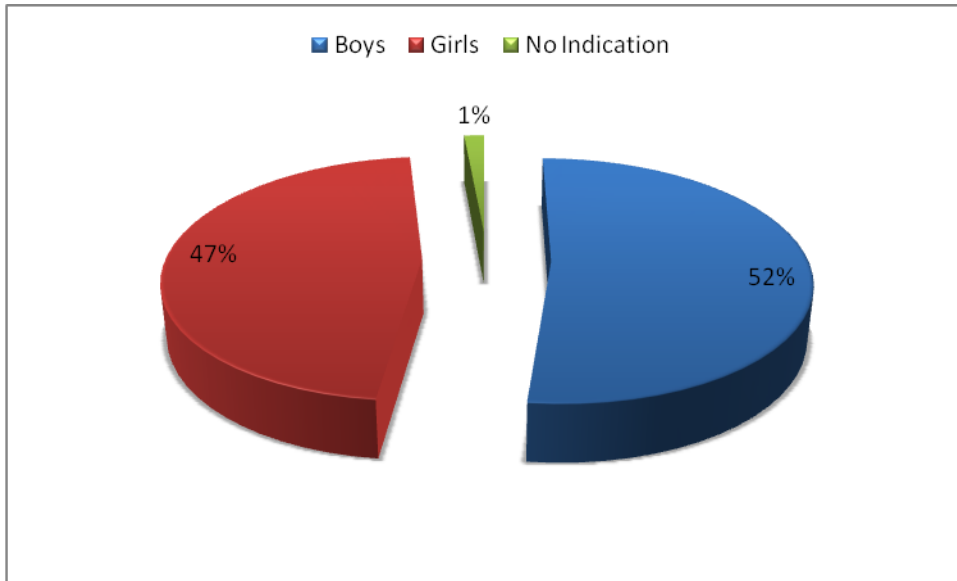
Fig.4.1: Pie Chart showing Distribution of the Pupils based on Gender
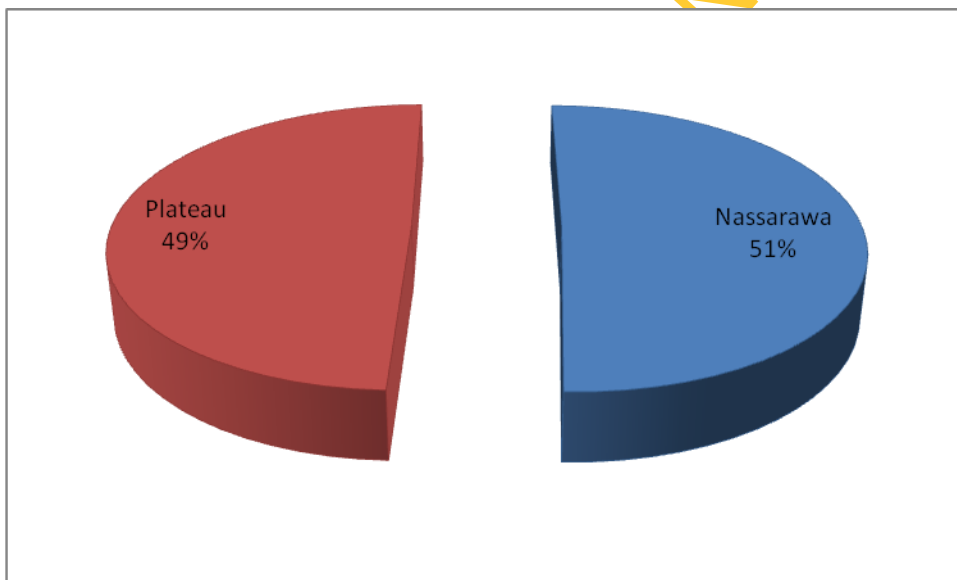
Fig.4.2: Pie Chart showing Distribution of the Pupils Based on their States

Table 4.2: **Distribution of the Parents Based on Gender, Marital status and Educational Qualification**

Variable	Freq.	%
Parents' Gender		
Male	844	69.6
Female	188	15.5
No Indication	181	14.9
Total	1213	100.0
Marital Status		
Never Married	50	4.1
Married	1029	84.8
Separated	08	.7
Divorced	02	.2
Widower	21	1.7
No Indication	103	8.5
Total	1213	100.0
Educational Qualification		
No Formal Educ	419	34.5
Pry Educ.	191	15.7
JSCE	183	15.1
Trade Apprenticeship	19	1.6
SSCE	116	9.6
OND/NCE	105	8.7
First Degree	36	3.0
Masters Degree	26	2.1
No Indication	118	9.7
Total	1213	100.0

Table 4.2 reveals that 1213 parents participated in this study, out of which 70% are male and 16% are female while 15% failed to indicate their gender. Majority of the parents -85%- were married, 4% had never married, 2% were widows/ers, 1% were separated while 9% did not indicate their marital status. The majority of the respondents are married because the study focused partly on family members who are

serving as parents/guardians to the children-at-risk. Even children whose parents are dead stay mostly with married relations. This is meant to provide emotional support for the children. The result also revealed that 35% of the parents who participated had no formal education, 16% had primary education only, 15% had JSCE only, 10% had SSCE only, and 14% had post secondary education while 10% failed to indicate their educational qualification. Figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 present this information in 3 chart forms.
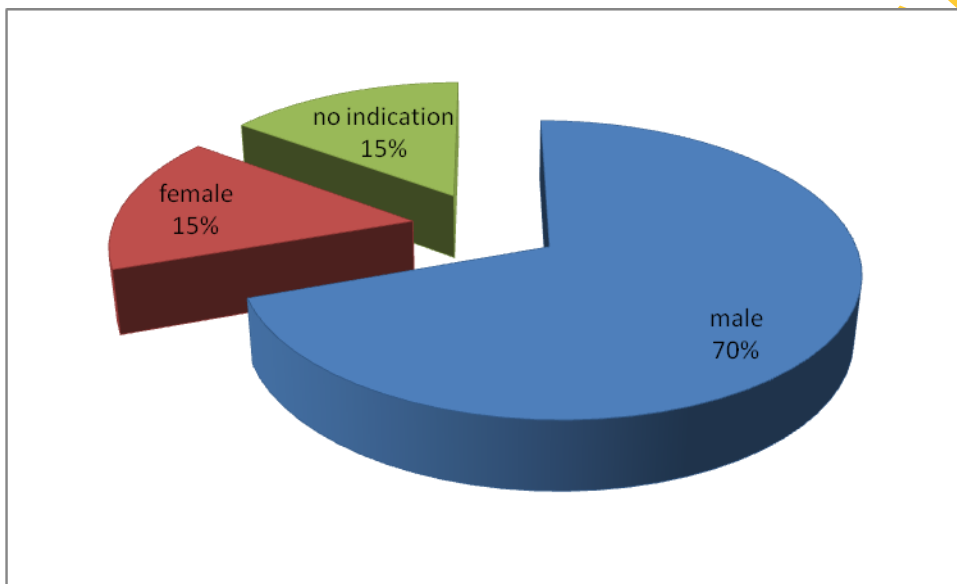
Fig. 4.3: Pie Chart showing Gender Distribution of the Parents
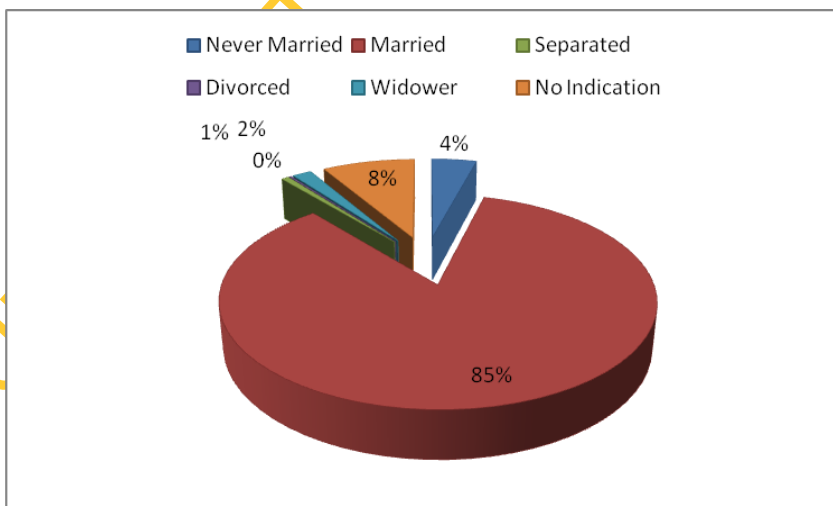
Fig. 4.4: Pie Chart showing Marital Status of the Parents
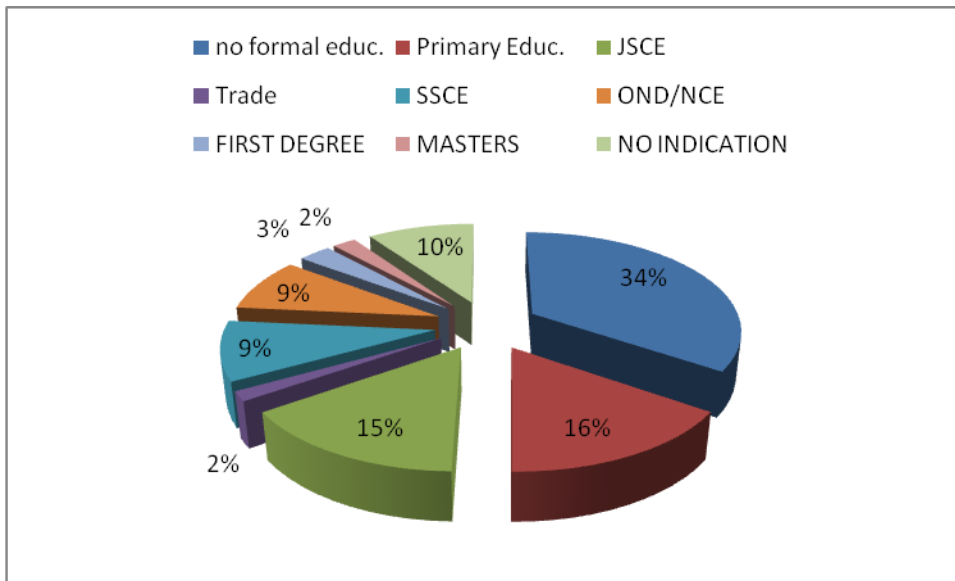
Fig. 4.5: Pie Chart showing Distribution of the Parents Based on Educational Qualification

4.2 Answers to the Research Questions

Research Question 1a: What is the composite contribution of the family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment) to early school adjustment of children-at-risk?

To answer this question, multiple regression was run and the results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Composite Contribution of Family Factors to Early School Adjustment

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	2211.573	3	737.191		
Residual	123510.941	1209	102.160	7.216	.000
Total	125722.514	1212			
R	.133				
R^2	.018				
Adjusted R^2	.015				

Dependent Variable: Early School Adjustment

An examination of Table 4.3 reveals that there is a multiple relationship between family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning

environment) and the early school adjustment (R = .13). Thus, the family factors accounted for 1.5% of the total variance in the early school adjustment (Adjustment R^2 = 0.015). This joint relationship is shown to be significant ($F_{(3, 1209)}$ = 7.22; p<0.05). This implies that the family factors have significant joint contribution (1.5%) to the change in early school adjustment. The remaining 98.5% is due to other factors as well as residuals.

Research Question 1b: What is the composite contribution of the family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning background) to the achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States?

Table 4.4 presents the summary of Regression Analysis of composite contribution of family factors to pupils' achievement.

Table 4.4:   Summary   of   Multiple   Regression   Showing   Composite Contribution of Family Factors to Pupils Achievement

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	28273.139	3	9424.380		
Residual	2308091.847	1208	1910.672	4.932	.002
Total	2336364.987	1211			
R	.110				
R^2	.012				
Adjusted R^2	.010				

Dependent Variable: Achievement

From Table 4.4 there is a multiple relationship between family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment) and the pupils' achievement (R = .11). The finding points to the fact that three family factors are important in determining pupils' achievement. The family factors accounted for 1% of the total variance in the pupils' achievement (Adjustment R^2 = 0.010). This joint relationship is shown to be significant ($F_{(3, 1208)}$ = 4.93; p<0.05).

Research Question 2a: What are the relative contributions of the family factors to early school adjustment?

Table 4.5: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of Family Factors to Early School Adjustment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	67.214	.960		70.034	.000
Parental education	.574	.144	.118	3.987	.000
Family structure	-.392	.212	-.054	-1.853	.064
Home learning environment	-.015	.035	-.013	-.439	.661

a. Dependent Variable: early school adjustment

Table 4.5 reveals that only parental education had significant relative contribution to the pupils early school adjustment ($\beta = 0.12$; $p<0.05$). The remaining two variables viz: family structure ($\beta = -0.05$; $p>0.05$) and home learning environment ($\beta = -0.03$; $p>0.05$) made contributions which are not significant to early school adjustment. This indicates that the higher the level of parents' education the more children adjust early to school.

Research Question 2b: What are the relative contributions of the family factors to pupils' achievement?

Table 4.6: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of Family Factors to Pupils' Achievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	91.112	4.151		21.952	0
Parental education	-0.472	0.623	-0.023	-0.758	0.449
Family structure	0.644	0.915	0.021	0.704	0.482
Home learning environment	0.535	0.15	0.107	3.563	.000

    a. Dependent Variable: Achievement

Table 4.6 shows that out of the three family factors, only home learning environment had significant relative contribution to the pupils' achievement (β = 0.11; p<0.05). Parental education (β = -0.02; t = -0.76; p>0.05) and family structure (β = 0.02; p>0.05) had no significant relative contributions to pupils achievement.

Research Question 3a: Which of the family factors will predict early school adjustment?

Table 4.5 reveals that only the parental education had significant relative contribution to early school adjustment (B = 0.57; t=3.99; p<0.05). Family structure and home learning environment made no significant contribution to early school adjustment. Therefore, it is parental education that predicts the early school adjustment of the pupils.

Research Question 3b: Which of the family factors will predict pupils' achievement? Table 4.6 reveals that only the home learning environment had significant relative contribution to pupils' achievement (B = 0.54; t=3.56; p<0.05). Parental education and family structure did not make any significant contribution to pupils' achievement. Therefore, it is home learning environment that predicts the pupils' achievement.

Research Question 4a: What is the composite contribution of the community factors (community location and available social facilities) to early school adjustment?

Table 4.7: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Composite Contribution of Community Factors to Early School Adjustment

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	314.760	2	157.380		
Residual	125407.754	1210	103.643	1.518	.219
Total	125722.514	1212			
R	.050				
R^2	.003				
Adjusted R^2	.001				

Dependent Variable: Early School Adjustment

Table 4.7 reveals that there is a relationship between community factors (community location and available social facilities) and the early school adjustment (R = .05). The community factors accounted for 0.1% of the total variance in the early school adjustment (Adjustment R^2 = 0.001). This joint relationship is shown not to be significant ($F_{(2, 1210)}$ = 1.52; p>0.05). This implies that the community factors had no significant joint contribution to the change in early school adjustment.

Research Question 4b: What is the composite contribution of the community factors (community location and available social facilities) to the achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa states?

Table 4.8: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Composite Contribution of community Factors to Pupils Achievement

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	217454.183	2	108727.092		
Residual	2118910.803	1209	1752.614	62.037	.000
Total	2336364.987	1211			
R	.305				
R^2	.093				
Adjusted R^2	.092				

Dependent Variable: Achievement

Table 4.8 reveals that there is a relationship between community factors (community location and available social facilities) and the pupils' achievement (R = .31). The community factors accounted for 9.2% of the total variance in the pupils' achievement (Adjustment R^2 = 0.092). This joint relationship is shown to be significant ($F_{(2, 1209)}$ = 62.04; p<0.05). This implies that the two community factors combined are very important when determining pupils' achievement.

Research Question 5a: What are the relative contributions of the community factors to early school adjustment?

Table 4.9: **Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of community Factors to Early School Adjustment**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	66.676	1.654		40.324	.000
Community location	1.006	.586	.056	1.717	.086
Available social facilities	-.053	.100	-.017	-.526	.599

a. Dependent Variable: Early school adjustment

Table 4.9 reveals that both community location (β = 0.06; p>0.05) and available social facilities (β = -0.02; p>0.05) had no significant relative contribution to early school adjustment of primary school children.

Research Question 5b: What are the relative contributions of the community factors to the pupils' achievement?

Table 4.10: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of community Factors to Pupils' Achievement

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	88.261	6.800		12.980	.000
	Community location	26.335	2.410	.337	10.926	.000
	Available social facilities	-1.273	.411	-.095	-3.094	.002

a. *Dependent Variable: Academic achievement*

Table 4.10 reveals that both community location ($\beta = 0.34$; $p<0.05$) and available social facilities ($\beta = -0.10$; $p<0.05$) had significant relative contribution to pupils' achievement.

Research Question 6a: Which of the community factors will predict early school adjustment?

Table 4.9 reveals that none of the community factors had a significant relative contribution to early school adjustment. Therefore, none of the community factors considered in this study predicted early school adjustment of the pupils.

Research Question 6b: Which of the community factors will predict pupils' achievement?

Table 4.10 reveals that both community location ($B = 26.35$; $t = 10.93$; $p<0.05$) and available social facilities ($B = -1.27$; $t = -3.09$; $p<0.05$) had significant relative contributions to the pupils achievement. Therefore, community location and available social facilities predicted the pupils' achievement.

Research Question 7a: What is the composite contribution of the school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and available play facilities) to early school adjustment?

Table 4.11: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Composite Contribution of school Factors to Early School Adjustment

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	3369.829	5	673.966		
Residual	122352.686	1207	101.369	6.649	.000
Total	125722.514	1212			
R	.164				
R^2	.027				
Adjusted R^2	.023				

Dependent Variable: Early School Adjustment

Table 4.11 reveals that there is a multiple relationship among school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and available play facilities) and the early school adjustment (R = .16). The school factors accounted for 2.3% of the total variance in the early school adjustment (Adjustment R^2 = 0.023). This joint relationship is shown to be significant ($F_{(5, 1207)}$ = 6.65; p<0.05). This implies that the school factors are quite relevant and important in determining early school adjustment of pupils.

Research Question 7b: What is the composite contribution of the school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and available play facilities) to the achievement of pupils at risk in Plateau and Nasarawa states?

Table 4.12: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Composite Contribution of school Factors to Pupils Achievement

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	320055.279	5	64011.056		
Residual	2016309.708	1206	1671.899	38.286	.000
Total	2336364.987	1211			
R	.370				
R^2	.137				
Adjusted R^2	.133				

Dependent Variable: Achievement

Table 4.12 reveals that there is a relationship between school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and available play facilities) and the pupils' achievement (R = .37). The school factors accounted for 13.3% of the total variance in the pupils' achievement (Adjustment R^2 = 0.133). This joint relationship is shown to be very significant ($F_{(5, 1206)}$ = 38.29; p<0.05). The finding therefore point to the fact that the five school factors combined are very important when determining pupils' achievement.

Research Question 8a: What are the relative contributions of the school factors to early school adjustment?

Table 4.13:   Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of School Factors to Early School Adjustment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(Constant)	63.003	2.207		28.548	.000
School location	-2.321	.614	-.114	-3.780	.000
Class size	.095	.227	.013	.416	.677
Teachers' qualification	1.481	.576	.076	2.571	.010
School physical environment	.230	.085	.100	2.695	.007
School play facilities	-.046	.065	-.026	-.714	.476

Dependent Variable: Early school adjustment

Table 4.13 reveals that school location has the highest significant contribution to the pupils early school adjustment (β = -0.11; p<0.05). The second in the magnitude of contribution was that made by school physical environment (β = 0.10; p<0.05) while the third was made by teachers' qualification (β = 0.08; p<0.05). But others- class size (β = 0.01; p>0.05) and school play facilities (β = -0.03; p>0.05) made no significant relative contribution to early school adjustment of primary school children.

Research Question 8b: What are the relative contributions of the school factors to the pupils' achievement?

Table 4.14: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of School Factors to Pupils' Achievement

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	94.051	8.963		10.493	.000
School location	-18.382	2.495	-.209	-7.368	.000
Class size	7.260	.924	.230	7.856	.000
Teachers' qualification	-.147	2.339	-.002	-.063	.950
School physical environment	.266	.346	.027	.767	.443
School play facilities	.574	.264	.075	2.172	.030

a. Dependent Variable: Academic achievement

Table 4.14 reveals that class size had the highest significant contribution to the pupils' achievement (β = 0.23; $p<0.05$). The second in the magnitude of contribution was that made by school location (β = -0.21; $p<0.05$) while the third contribution was made by school play facilities (β = 0.08; $p<0.05$). Both teachers' qualification (β = -0.00; $p>0.05$) and school physical environment (β = 0.03; $p>0.05$) had no significant relative contribution to pupils' achievement.

Research Question 9a: Which of the school factors will predict early school adjustment?

Table 4.13 shows that out of the five school variables, only three, that is, school location (B = -2.32; t = 3.78; $p<0.05$), school physical environment (B = 0.23; t = 2.70; $p<0.05$) and teachers qualification (B = 1.50; t = 2.57; $p<0.05$) could predict early school adjustment of the pupils. The remaining two, which include class size (B

= 0.10; t = 0.42; p>0.05) and school play facilities (B = -0.05; t = -0.71; p>0.05) could not predict early school adjustment of the pupils.

Research Question 9b: Which of the school factors will predict pupils' achievement?

Table 4.14 reveals that class size (B = 7.26; t = 7.86; p<0.05), school location (B = -18.39; t = -7.37; p<0.05) and school play facilities (B = 0.57; t = 2.17; p<0.05) are the school factors that had significant relative contributions to the pupils achievement. Therefore, class size, school location and school play facilities predict the pupils' achievement. The other two variables, that is, teachers' qualification (B = -0.14; t = -0.06; p>0.05) and school physical environment (B = 0.27; t = 0.77; p>0.05) could not predict pupils' achievement.

Research Question 10a: What is the composite contribution of the family factors, community factors and school factors to early school adjustment?

Table 4.15: **Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Composite Contribution of family, Community and School Factors to Early School Adjustment**

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	6422.638	10	642.264		
Residual	119299.876	1202	99.251	6.471	.000
Total	125722.514	1212			
R	.226				
R^2	.051				
Adjusted R^2	.043				

Dependent Variable: Early School Adjustment

Table 4.15 reveals that there is a multiple relationship among the whole independent variables (family, community and school factors) and the early school adjustment (R = .23). The independent variables accounted for 4.3% of the total variance in the early school adjustment (Adjustment R^2 = 0.043). This joint relationship is shown to be significant ($F_{(10, 1202)}$ = 6.47; p<0.05). This finding point to the fact that the independent variables combined are very important when determining early school adjustment of pupils.

Research Question 10b: What is the composite contribution of the whole independent variables (family, community and school factors) to the achievement of pupils at risk in Plateau and Nasarawa states?

Table 4.16: **Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Composite Contribution of family, Community and School Factors to Pupils Achievement**

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	397778.951	10	39777.895		
Residual	1938586.036	1201	1614.143	24.643	.000
Total	2336364.987	1211			
R	.413				
R^2	.170				
Adjusted R^2	.163				

Dependent Variable: Achievement

Table 4.16 reveals that there is a relationship between the independent variable (family, community and school factors) and the pupils' achievement (R = .41). The family, community and school factors accounted for 16.3% of the total variance in the pupils' achievement (Adjustment R^2 = 0.163). This joint relationship is shown to be significant ($F_{(10, 1201)}$ = 24.64; p<0.05). The remaining 83.7% could be due to other variables and residuals.

Research Question 11a: What are the relative contributions of the whole independent variables (family, community and school factors) to early school adjustment?

Table 4.17: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of Family, Community and School Factors to Early School Adjustment

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	67.523	2.810		24.032	.000
	Parental education	.598	.142	.123	4.203	.000
	Home learning environment	-.033	.035	-.028	-.939	.348
	Family structure	-.307	.210	-.042	-1.460	.144
	Community location	-.010	.680	.000	-.014	.989
	Available social facilities	-.362	.131	-.117	-2.750	.006
	School location	-2.729	.712	-.134	-3.834	.000
	Class size	.074	.228	.010	.324	.746
	Teachers' qualification	1.362	.571	.069	2.387	.017
	School physical environment	.375	.099	.163	3.771	.000
	School play facilities	.000	.065	.000	-.009	.993

a. *Dependent Variable: Early school adjustment*

Table 4.17 reveals the relative contributions of the whole independent variables taken together. It shows that school physical environment had the highest significant contribution to the pupils early school adjustment ($\beta = 0.16$; $p<0.05$), this is followed by school location ($\beta = -0.13$; $p<0.05$), followed by parental education ($\beta = 0.12$; $p<0.05$), followed by available social facilities in the community ($\beta = -0.12$; $p<0.05$)

and then the teachers qualification ($\beta = 0.07$; $p<0.05$). But others- home learning environment ($\beta = -0.03$; $p>0.05$), family structure ($\beta = -0.04$; $p>0.05$), community location ($\beta = 0.00$; $p>0.05$), class size ($\beta = 0.01$; $p>0.05$) and school play facilities ($\beta = 0.00$; $p>0.05$) had no significant relative contribution to early school adjustment of primary school children.

Research Question 11b: What are the relative contributions of the Independent variables (family, community and school factors) to the pupils' achievement?

Table 4.18: Summary of Multiple Regression Showing Relative contributions of Family, Community and School Factors to Pupils' Achievement

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	75.382	11.332		6.652	.000
	Parental education	-.454	.574	-.022	-.791	.429
	Home learning environment	.276	.141	.055	1.958	.051
	Family structure	.397	.848	.013	.468	.640
	Community location	18.271	2.745	.234	6.656	.000
	Available social facilities	-1.800	.530	-.135	-3.393	.001
	School location	-9.380	2.873	-.107	-3.265	.001
	Class size	6.661	.918	.211	7.255	.000
	Teachers' qualification	-.263	2.301	-.003	-.114	.909
	School physical environment	.716	.401	.072	1.788	.074
	School play facilities	.526	.264	.069	1.989	.047

a. Dependent Variable: Academic achievement

Table 4.18 reveals the relative contributions of all the independent variables to the achievement of the pupils. Community location had the highest significant relative

contribution to the pupils' achievement ($\beta = 0.23$; $p<0.05$). The second in magnitude of contribution was made by class size ($\beta = 0.21$; $p<0.05$). The third was made available social facilities in the community ($\beta = -0.14$; $p<0.05$). The fourth was made by school location ($\beta = -0.11$; $p<0.05$) while the fifth was made by school play facilities ($\beta = 0.7$; $p<0.05$). Others- parental education ($\beta = -0.02$; $p>0.05$), home learning environment ($\beta = 0.06$; $p>0.05$), Family structure ($\beta = 0.01$; $p>0.05$), teachers' qualification ($\beta = -0.00$; $p>0.05$) and school physical environment ($\beta = 0.07$; $p>0.05$) made no significant relative contributions to pupils' achievement.

Research Question 12a: Which of the family, community and school factors will predict early school adjustment?

Table 4.17 the reveals that school physical environment ($B = 0.37$; $t = 3.77$; $p<0.05$), school location ($B = -2.72$; $t = -3.83$; $p<0.05$), parental education ($B = 0.59$; $t = 4.20$; $p<0.05$), available social facilities in the community ($B = -0.36$; $t = -2.75$; $p<0.05$) and teachers qualification ($B = 1.36$; $t = 2.39$; $p<0.05$) are the independent variables that had significant relative contributions to the early school adjustment of the pupils. Therefore, school location, school physical environment, parental education, available social facilities in the community and teachers' qualification were the only independent variables that could predict early school adjustment of the pupils.

Research Question 12b: Which of the family, community and school factors will predict pupils' achievement?

Table 4.18 reveals that community location ($B = 18.27$; $t = 6.66$; $p<0.05$), class size ($B = 6.66$; $t = 7.26$; $p<0.05$), available social facilities in the community ($B = -1.80$; $t = -3.39$; $p<0.05$), school location ($B = -9.39$; $t = -3.27$; $p<0.05$) and school play facilities ($B = 0.52$; $t = 1.99$; $p<0.05$) had significant relative contribution to the pupils' achievement. Therefore, community location, class size, available social facilities in the community, school location and school play facilities could predict the pupils' achievement.

4.3 Summary of Findings

Findings of this study are summarized and presented as follows:

1. Family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment) had a significant composite contribution to early school adjustment of children-at-risk. This means that family variables could influence early school adjustment of the pupils.

2. Family factors (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment) compositely contributed significantly to academic achievement of children-at-risk.

3. Only parents' educational background, out of the three family factors, made a significant relative contribution and could predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

4. Out of the three family factors, only home learning environment made significant relative contribution and could predict the academic achievement of children-at-risk.

5. Community factors (location and available social facilities) had no significant joint contribution to early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

6. Community factors however, made significant joint contribution on academic achievement of children-at-risk.

7. There was no significant relative contribution of community factors on early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

8. Community Location and community's available social facilities made significant relative contribution to the prediction of academic achievement of children-at-risk.

9. School factors (location, class size, teachers' qualification, physical environment and play facilities) had a significant composite contribution to early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

10. School factors (location, class size, teachers' qualification, physical environment and play facilities) also made a significant composite contribution to academic achievement of children-at-risk.

11. Of the five school factors, three (school location, school physical environment and teachers' qualification) made a significant relative contribution and could therefore predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

12. Class size, school location and school play facilities made significant relative

contribution to the prediction of the academic achievement of children-at-risk. The other two (teachers' qualification and school physical environment) could not predict academic achievement of children-at-risk.

13. Family, community and school factors had a significant composite contribution to early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

14. Family, community and school factors had a significant composite contribution to academic achievement of children-at-risk.

15. Five out of the ten independent variables (school physical environment, school location, parents' educational background, available social facilities in the community and teachers' qualification) made significant relative contribution and could predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk. The other five, namely: home learning environment, family structure, community location, class size and school play facilities made no significant relative contribution and could not predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

16. Community location, class size, available social facilities in the community, school location and school play facilities are the five independent variables that made significant relative contribution and could predict pupils' achievement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents the discussion of results, implication of findings and recommendations made based on the findings of the study.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Contribution of Family Factors to Early School Adjustment and Academic Achievement of children-at-risk

The results of the study have established the fact that certain family factors are important predictors of early school adjustment. They are parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment. The result revealed that these family factors have a significant joint contribution to early school adjustment of children-at-risk. This is in agreement with Olatoye and Agbatogun's (2009) finding that various aspects of a child's family experiences are critical to the child's readiness to adapt to the school. This finding is revealing as it is a common knowledge that some parents even if they are not literate would encourage their children to go to school as other children in the neighbourhood who have been to school and have become nurses, doctors, political office holders and engineers. Other parents see starting school as a relief for them. The children are therefore prevailed upon to stay in school. Moreover many parents do not stay through the day at home. They go to their farms, markets or other places of work. Children had to be patient and get used to school as nobody may be at home in the morning. In addition, the maturational level of primary one pupils who are mostly 6 years old, may have helped them agree with their parents to adjust to the school environment. Another inference to make here is that there was establishment of trust between the parents and teachers which was basic to the adjustment of the children to school. Some parents helped their children to adjust to school by allowing the children walk to school with an older sibling and sometimes other adults. It is a common virtue for Africans to tell children to live harmoniously with others. This may have contributed to the children adjusting to school.

The findings also showed that there is a relationship between family factors and the academic achievement of children-at-risk. The results revealed that family factors compositely contributed significantly to the change in the academic achievement of the pupils. This is in agreement with Phatudi's (2007) findings that parents felt it was their responsibility to prepare their children for school even though

91

some of these children had attended preschool. This preparation mainly emphasized parents teaching the children some academic skills. These skills were regarded as important for successful learning in the classroom. Interactions with parents by the investigator during the field work showed that some parents who were not literate do ask their children to show them what they did in school when they are back. The parents then ask literate neighbours to confirm and possibly assist the children in their academic work such as homework.

The results of the study however revealed that it was only parental education that had significant relative contribution to the pupils' early school adjustment. Family structure and home learning environment were shown to have no significant relative contributions to early school adjustment. The revelation that parental education has a significant relative contribution to pupils' early school adjustment is in agreement, to some extent, with Okunola's (2004) findings that home factors such as socio-economic status, educational background, home type, parental involvement and family size, influence achievement, social development, ability to care for self and the overall adjustment of children to school. The result also agrees with the assertion of Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards and Hayes (2008) that parents' level of education is related to better socio-emotional, language and cognitive development in children of various ethnic backgrounds. Similarly Berk (2008) asserted that higher levels of maternal education are related to better cognitive and language abilities. What this implied is that parents' level of education is related to adjustment. For instance when a child has better language ability, he will be able to communicate well with his teachers, classmates and significant others in the school.

However, the findings of the study that family structure and home learning environment had no significant relative contributions to early school adjustment, is quite revealing. This is because the result is not in consonance with the findings of Toheed (2012), Berk (2008) and Okunola (2004) that family structure contributed to early school adjustment. Berk (2008) and Toheed (2012) posited that children of the divorced families show poorer adjustment than their non-divorce families. Such children in addition have been said to be not well regulated and that they will find it difficult to cooperate with classmates, share equipments, and may also fail to follow teachers' instructions. Further, what the finding of this study revealed implies that children-at-risk from both intact families and broken or single families can adjust

early to school regardless of their home environment. They can adjust early as well as learn if allowed access to school.

Another major finding of this study is that only home learning environment had significant relative contribution to the academic achievement of children-at-risk. This is in agreement with the findings of Akinbote (2010) and Eyarefe (2010). Akinbote (2010) that home learning environment involves tangible and intangible things or conditions which are natural or man-made that directly and indirectly affects the child. The home environment that allows for both interactions with humans as well as with materials and resources will stimulate the child cognitively and therefore achievement. So if parents will allow children interact with what they have at home, learning can be enhanced. On the other hand any home that does not provide stimulating learning environment will retard the inquisitive nature of the school age child at risk and consequently affect academic achievement. This agrees with the assertions of Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang, (2013) that parental involvement in early learning, which is part of the home environment, has a greater impact on children's well-being and achievement than any other factor, such as family income, parental education or school environment. The findings of this study therefore implied that parents (single or married) be assisted through social support systems or services by the community, governments, religious and non-governmental organizations to enable them provide supportive home-learning environment. This will invariably improve outcomes for children-at-risk. In addition, this is an illumination capable of directing research institutions, early childhood teacher training institutions, foundations and philanthropists to identify families of children-at-risk and donate locally sourced or manufactured play/learning materials to them as well as creating programmes that will serve them better.

On the other hand, the finding that parental education and family structure had no significant relative contribution to pupils' achievement is quite revealing. This is because it contradicts earlier findings of Adeoye and Raimi (2007), Adeyemo (2010), Akinsanya, Ajayi and Salomi (2011) and Nasir (2012) that while the children from well educated families enjoy a lot of support such as decent and good environment for academic work, parental support and guidance, the children from illiterates and poor families may lack necessary support and thus may not achieve academically. It has also been found by some researchers (Gadsden and Ray, 2003) that fathers who are

93

moderately or highly involved in their children's school life, had children who were significantly more likely to receive high marks and never repeat a grade. Thus the critical point here is to encourage parents of these children-at-risk, especially those of them in the rural areas who have little or no formal education to be involved in their children's school work through visitation to the school, asking questions about the child's progress as well as speaking positively about education. Furthermore, the finding that family structure had no significant contribution to the academic achievement of children-at-risk contradicts the earlier submissions of Berns (2004), Okunola (2004) and Berk (2008) that children from divorced or single families had low academic performance. For instance Berk (2008) noted that some of the long-term consequences of divorce are that children and adolescents of divorced parents continue to score slightly lower than children of continuously married parents in academic achievement, self-esteem, social competence and emotional adjustment. Okunola (2004) also asserted that boys whose fathers were absent for one reason or the other comprised a disproportionate number of low academic achievers. The findings of this study could suggest that children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States of Nigeria may have developed some coping mechanism which had significantly supported their academic achievement. Other possibilities that should be explored is the provision of adequate school facilities which Oluwasakin (2010) reported can help pupils to attain equal educational opportunities and achievements. This implies that children from different family structures and backgrounds can achieve academically.

5.1.2 Contribution of Community Factors to Early School Adjustment and Academic Achievement of children-at-risk

The results of this study have established that certain community factors (community location and available social facilities) could not predict early school adjustment of children-at-risk. The findings showed that community factors do not have significant composite contribution to change in early school adjustment. This revelation is contrary to Lacour and Tissington's (2011) assertion that some communities, particularly in poverty stricken areas, do not value or understand formal education. They further argued that children in such situation could be unprepared for the school environment. The finding of this study negates Lacour and Tissington's (2011) findings probably because of the communal nature of the participants of the

study which encourages social interactions. The community sees everything found in it as valuable for the effective upbringing of the younger generations who are expected to keep the values dear to it. Furthermore, Akinbote (2006), Okoro (2006) and Oduolowu (2011) revealed that in Traditional African Communities, a child is seen, not only as a member of his biological family but as an integral member of the community. Consequently, the child is permitted by the community to play around everywhere though adequately guided and protected by every adult member of the community. It can be inferred that when a child is to go to school other children from the neighbourhood are freely allowed to go together with him thereby providing emotional and social support for the child to adjust to the school. For instance in towns and villages in Plateau and Nasarawa States, some parents who are privileged to have means of transportation such as motor vehicles, boats and canoes, do use them to take children to and fro school.

Another major finding of this study is that there is a relationship between community factors and pupils' achievement. The result showed that community factors compositely accounted for 9.2 per cent variance in pupils' academic achievement. This implies that the community factors have a significant joint contribution to change in pupils' academic achievement. The revelation might have been due to the fact that some of the public schools involved in the study have classrooms, pupils' seats and some textbooks donated by kind-hearted individuals and the communities. Similarly, some community members who are educated were serving as volunteer or PTA teachers, thereby enhancing academic achievement of the pupils. The findings of the research confirmed the assertion of teaching Strategies (2010) that children develop within interconnected systems of which the community is one. The systems are dynamic and interactive and each has a powerful impact on a child's development. Consequently, Okoro (2006) opined that there should be a reciprocal relationship between the school and the community. What the findings of this study imply is that the school children as well as the staff have used the available resources in and around the schoool for both teaching and learning.

The study however found no significant relative contribution of the community factors to early school adjustment of children-at-risk. The study only found that both community location and available social facilities had significant relative contribution to pupils' academic achievement. This might have been due to the willing nature of the community members to take care of young ones. Another

95

finding of the study is that none of the community factors could predict early school adjustment of the pupils. But the community factors were found to predict pupils' academic achievement. The findings seem to confirm Smart, Sanson, Baxter, Edwards and Hayes (2008) who reported that non-metropolitan status (i.e. rural location) as compared to the metropolitan status (urban location) of a community has been found to be weakly associated with lower literacy scores in children of different ethnic backgrounds in the first year of school. The findings of this study also seem to support those of Berk (2008) and Berns (2004) who claimed that neighbourhood disadvantages had been found to relate to school readiness. They went on to say high levels of neighbourhood poverty are related to poorer child cognitive outcomes both in urban and rural locations.

5.1.3 Contribution of School Factors to Early School Adjustment and Academic Achievement of children-at-risk

The findings of this study showed that there is a relationship between school factors school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and school play facilities and early school adjustment. The school factors had a significant contribution to change in early school adjustment. This implies that the school factors affect early school adjustment of children-at-risk. This finding is in consonance with Oluwasakin (2010) who found school variables to have determined pupils' acquisition of social studies skills. The study is also in agreement with Okunola (2004) who found class size, school environment and availability of play materials to have direct contribution to socio-emotional adjustment. Of course successful adjustment to the school environment increases the child's enjoyment of school based life, including play, education and social relations with other children and adults according to Margetts (2008) and Janus (2011).

The study also found a relationship between school factors and the academic achievement of children-at-risk. It revealed that school factors have a joint significant contribution to the pupils' achievement. This revelation is also in agreement with findings of Odinko (2002), Doherty (2004) and Fajinmi (2006) that school factors affect academic achievement. This implies that school factors are very important as they significantly contribute to early school adjustment and academic achievement children-at-risk.

Another important finding of this study is the fact that school location had the largest significant contribution to school adjustment, followed by school physical environment and then teachers' qualification. The fact that school location had the largest relative contribution to early school adjustment is in consonance with McGowen's (2007) findings that the human brain is a physiological system and can therefore be stimulated both positively and negatively by its surrounds. Therefore, the surrounding (in this case, school location as well as the environment) in which people function impacts moods, satisfaction and self-worth. This was also supported by the researcher's observations and experiences with one of the children-at-risk in Plateau state who participated in the study. The boy could not adjust to a primary school in his village. He rather chose to trek for 50 minutes every school day on a rough road ascending and descending a number of rocks and crossing a stream in order to attend a public primary school in the Local Government Headquarters. There he adjusted to other children from the town and other villages. The revelation that teachers' qualification has a significant contribution to early school adjustment is also worth examining. According to Doherty (2004) and Early (2004) relationship between a teacher and the pupils do not just provide a context for learning, they actually affect the brain. By implication nurturing and positive interactions between the qualified or experienced teacher and the primary one child, is thought to release chemicals that promote brain development and consequently the development of a coping strategy by the young child.

Despite unattractive working condition in terms of remuneration, the classroom, teaching aids and other condition of service in which the public primary school teachers in Nigerian operate, the teachers who participated in this study appeared to have assisted the children-at-risk to adjust. Personal observation and interviews revealed that the teachers have seen themselves as serving their community. Others confirmed that they consider the children as their own biological children who will one day become somebody in life. This has helped them to welcome all children especially those of them who have been dislodged by ethno-religious and communal crises. They pay regular visits to the abode of these children to see their parents/guardians.

However, the finding of the study shows that class size and school play facilities had no significant relative contribution to early school adjustment of primary school children. This result is in consonance with Ekine (2009) who reported

that in other countries there were no longer class size effects. The implication of the finding could be perhaps be explained by the fact that though some of the classroom had more pupils than expected the children still got adjusted because of the coping skills they have developed over time especially since then participated in the study having spent about two terms in school.

That school play facilities had no significant relative contribution to early school adjustment of children is quite revealing because it does not agree with Okunola's (2004) findings that availability of play materials in school had direct causal influence on early school adjustment of pre-school children. What the finding of this study implies is that other factors not considered in this study such as the children's age and emotion may have been responsible for the variation. Another point is that the primary school children are capable of improvising some play materials for themselves which helps them adjust to the school. This fact is attested to by the observations of the researcher during field work. In some of the schools visited in Nasarawa State some primary one boys were caught in camera using bamboo woods on tree stumps as see-saw (See pg 141). The girls were seeing during break time jumping over some squares carved out on the ground(See pg 140). Some tied ropes to branches of some trees in the school compound as swings. Now all these improvised play materials and activities are capable of making children adjust early to school even without the government or schools making conventional play materials available.

This study also found that class size had the largest significant contribution to the pupils academic achievement, followed by school location and then play facilities (Table 4.14). The finding that class size had the largest significant contribution is in agreement with Etsey's (2005) who found that good teaching is best done in classes with smaller numbers of students that allow for individual attention. Ekine (2009) similarly found that pupils in smaller classes scored highest in achievement test. Adeyemo (2010) also corroborated the findings adding that small classes also enhance safety, discipline and order are precursors to academic achievement. However, the finding does not tally with Adesoji and Olatunbosun (2008) who argued that research does not support the expectation that classes will of themselves result in greater academic gains for students. They observed that the effects of class size on student learning vary by grade level, pupil characteristics, subject areas, teaching methods and other learning interventions. The finding of this study therefore implies

that there should be reduction in class size. Observations from public primary schools in towns like Jos, Pankshin, Barikin Ladi, Langtang, Shendam in Plateau State and Lafia, Doma, Nasarawa Eggon, Akwanga, Wamba, Keffi and New Nyanya in Nasarawa State revealed that there are between forty and ninety primary one pupils in a single class. Some of the classrooms are having leaking roofs, without ceiling and the floors are not cemented. Others have ceilings destroyed by termites, making some woods to be hanging loosely over the pupils. This situation is not healthy for effective teaching and learning. A reduction in class size is very beneficial as Great School Staff (2012) concedes that class size reduction in early grades helps pupils to achieve. This is because there is greater opportunity for individual interaction between learners and teachers in a small class.

School location was also found to have a relative significant contribution to pupils' academic achievement in Mathematics and English Language. This is in consonance with findings of Odinko (2002) and Fasan (2010) that schools located in urban cities typically have better resources, better qualities teachers and more intellectually aiding materials are usually available for students. What this implies is that schools especially those in the rural areas should be provided play materials of different colours, textures, and makes whether locally sourced or from the international markets. This will enhance the learning of the pupils. Most of the schools visited have very few play materials because they are in the interior without electricity and good roads.

The study however did not find any significant relative contribution of teachers' qualification and school physical environment on pupils' academic achievement. This is surprising as it is not in agreement with Oluwasakin (2010) who found a strong relationship between an aspect of school environment and pupils acquisition of social studies skills. The findings of this study are also not in agreement with Adeyemo's (2010) findings that students learn more from teachers with strong academic skills. In fact Akinbote (2006) observed that in assigning teachers to the lower classes (i.e. 1-3) of the primary schools, qualified and experienced teachers should be preferred. The teachers who participated in the study were self-motivated which probably helped their effectiveness in class. The finding that school physical environment had no significant relative contribution to academic achievement does not agree with Okunola's (2004) finding that school environment has some direct causal links with school success i.e. academic achievement. Similarly

the finding is contrary to Adeyemo (2010) who counselled that the school environment should be conducive enough so as to enhance learning. The findings were however in agreement with Lacour and Tissington (2011) who reasoned that the school environment can stifle learning. This implies that if for lack of enough classrooms that are in good conditions, pupils are crowded in class, there will be disruption of learners' mental activities as well as affect effective teaching and intellectual development of learners. The situation in most of the schools where this study was carried out is that of overcrowding due to influx of internally displaced persons. In Nasarawa State some of the classrooms have gone so bad that teachers initiated a shift system where some arms of the classes come in the morning session while the rest come during the afternoon session. Others use shades of trees while some schools combine primary one and two together in the same room. Though as at the period of the study the state government was renovating some of the classrooms especially in the towns, many school buildings especially in the rural areas are in a state of rot. That teaching and learning is still taking place there could be probably due to the self-motivation by the teachers. The pupils themselves have developed a coping system as well as knowledge construction by themselves despite the fact that most of the school environments were not as supportive. They lack beautiful flowers and surrounding as well as adequate play materials.

The study also found that school location, school physical environment and teachers' qualification were the only school factors that predicted early school adjustment of pupils. Similarly, it was only class size, school location and play facilities that predicted the pupils' achievement. This is in agreement with Gross (2011) who found school location to be the strongest predictor of both Mathematics and reading achievement. This means that children-at-risk will learnbetter if they are adjusted to the school, the teachers' qualification and school physical environment notwithstanding. Furthermore, it can be deduced that this children-at-risk achieved academically due perhaps to some individual characteristics such as self-esteem and self-concept.

5.1.4 Contribution of Family, Community and School Factors to Early School Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Children-at-Risk

The study showed that there is a multiple relationship among all the independent variables i.e. family factors (parents' educational background, family

structure and home learning environment), community factors (community location and available social facilities) and school factors (school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities) and early school adjustment of children-at-risk. This revelation is in agreement with Okunola's (2004) finding that seven out of the nine-predictor variables (namely, mother's level of education, family size, pre-school experience, class size, availability of play materials, school climate and life skills acquisition) which he studied exert causal influence directly on socio-emotional adjustment. The finding is also corroborated by Dockket and Perry (2007) who conceded that relationships among the families, the community and the school, influence children's transition to school and their ongoing connection with school.

The study further revealed that 4.3% of the total variance in the early school adjustment of children-at-risk is accounted for by all the ten independent variables when taken together. This implies that these ten independent variables should be given much attention by the stakeholders in primary education in order to support children-at-risk adjust to the school. The remaining difference (95.7) in variance could be due to the influence of other factors that have not been looked into in this study. Such factors as pupils characteristics (Margetts, 2008), pre-school attendance (Okunola, 2004), pupil's age (Nasir, 2012) and teaching style (Adesoji et al., 2008) among several others may have accounted for the remaining difference in variance of early school adjustment.

In addition the ten independent variables contributed to variance in the academic achievement of children-at-risk. The ten variables accounted for 16.3% of the total variance in the academic achievement of the pupils. This result is in agreement with Oluwasakin's (2010) finding that high positive multiple correlation existed between language of instruction, class size and school facilities with pupils acquisition of social studies skills. This implies that the ten variables should be taken as very important contributors to academic achievement of pupils. They should therefore be given priority in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum contents of Mathematics and English Language which were tested in this study. The remaining difference (83.7%) in variance may have been due to the influence of some other factors like adequate curriculum, classroom climate, proper relationship between administrations and evaluation system of the school (Toheed, 2012) which have not been considered in this study.

The result revealed that there is a relative contribution of the ten variables to early school adjustment. Five of the ten variables (physical environment, school location, parental education, available social facilities in the community and teachers' qualification) had significant contribution to pupils early school adjustment. The relative order of importance of the five predictor variables, with respect to their influence on the dependent variable (from the most to the least important) is: school physical environment should be such that attracts and sustains the pupils' attention as well as moods. The schools which are located whether in the urban or rural areas should be adequately taken care of by the community and the government. Consideration should be given to parental education when it comes to early school adjustment. Parents that are literate can influence their other neighbours who are not literate to get involved in their children's school affairs.

The study however did not find any significant relative contribution of the other five variables (home learning environment, family structure, class size and school play facilities) to early school adjustment of pupils. This result is revealing as earlier studies (Margetts, 2002; Odinko, 2002; Okunola, 2004; Cox, 2004) found some significant relative contributions of some of the variables to early school adjustment. The variance might be due to other pupil, family, community and school variables which this study could not consider.

Another important finding of this study is that a set of five variables had relative contribution to the academic achievement of the pupils while five others had no significant relative contributions to academic achievement of the pupils. The community location had the most significant relative contribution to the pupils' academic achievement. This is followed in order of the magnitude of important relative contribution by class size, available social facilities in the community, school location and then school play facilities. This revelation somehow corroborates the findings of Okunola (2004) that maternal involvement, class size, availability of play materials and school environment exert causal influence on life skill acquisition. Similarly the finding supports Oluwasakin (2010) who found only school facilities as the highest contributor to acquisition of social study skills. It therefore implies that the five variables of this study had significant relative contribution to academic achievement of children-at-risk. Serious consideration should be given to them if children are to achieve academically.

On the hand the study found that parental education, home learning environment, family structure, teachers' qualification and school physical environment had no significant relative contribution to the academic achievement of children-at-risk. This finding does not really agree with the findings of Adeyemo (2010) that when the learning environment is made conducive by the provision of adequate instructional materials, good infrastructure as well as the engagement of enough qualified teachers, the learners become more willing to study, which eventually gives them the essential motivation required that culminates into good academic performance. The variance in this study may have been due to other factors (teachers experience, parents' socio-economic status, and quality control/supervision) which have not been considered in this study. For instance it is possible that the qualified teachers are those who may have been involved in school administration and organization of sports that they hardly prepare lesson notes to enable them teacher the children effectively. Of course this kind of attitude will not be supportive of effective learning by children. Similarly very poor parents may not provide a home environment that stimulates independent learning by the children-at-risk. This also will affect their academic achievement negatively.

The study further reveals that only the school physical environment, school location, parental education, available social facilities in the community and teachers' qualification that predict early school adjustment. These five independent variables should be considered in the making and implementation of policies aimed at helping children to adjust early to the first year in school.

On the other hand the study showed that community location, class size, available social facilities in the community, school location and play facilities predict the academic achievement of children-at-risk. This implies that for children-at-risk to learn effectively in school the community location must be considered. The class size should be such that encourages sharing of learning materials as well as support individual pupil-teacher interaction. Similarly play facilities should be sourced both locally and from the markets to support children's physical, emotional and intellectual development.

5.2   Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship among family, community and school factors with early school adjustment and achievement of children-at-risk in Plateau and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The family factors considered are parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment while the community factors considered are location and available social facilities. The school factors that were considered in the study were school location, class size, teachers' qualification, school physical environment and availability of play facilities.

The results of the study have established the fact that certain family, community and school factors are important in determining the early school adjustment and academic achievement of pupils at risk. Specifically the results have shown that the school physical environment, school location, parental educational background, available social facilities in the community and teachers' qualification are predictors of early school adjustment of children-at-risk.

Similarly, the study has shown that community location, class size, available social facilities in the community, school location and availability of play facilities can predict achievement of children-at-risk.

5.3   Educational Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have certain implication for stakeholders in early childhood education.

Primary school Teachers

The finding that parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment compositely predicted early school adjustment of children-at-risk has implication for the teacher. Children who are just entering formal school systems are from different home backgrounds, having different characteristics and experiences implies that teachers especially those teaching the lower classes, should be very sensitive to the needs of the children. They are possibly going to have some orphans and vulnerable children (children-at-risk) in their classes. They should be tolerant, accommodating, welcoming and should create time to attend to every child in the classroom. Even when they find children who are unkempt and emotionally unstable, there should be no name calling as this may impact negatively on their early school adjustment.

Also the finding that School factors (location, class size, teachers' qualification, physical environment and play facilities) compositely predicted early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk has implication for the teacher. The teacher should still weave in play way method of teaching primary one pupils into every subject. The teacher should thoughtfully improvise play materials locally rather than wait for the supply from the authorities. Furthermore, the teachers are to observe the child in the class, outside the class, on the play ground etc to find out what they love interacting with. For instance some girls were seen during the study playing what is locally called "*Suwe*" where they draw lines in tabular form on ground. A piece of stone or a bottle cap is thrown to fall into one of the rectangular boxes (See pg 140). The child then jumps over with one leg raised up. Now the teacher can incorporate such into his teaching of Mathematics. He can help them get bottle caps of different colours and then tell them to always record the number of leaps they make and how many bottle tops they can pick up while leaping across the boxes. The play could also be used to teach comparative words in English Language such as tall girl, shorter girl etc.

Teachers should also work closely with community members and parents of the pupils in their class especially those children at risk. This includes communication and visits to the parents. This will encourage sharing of ideas all meant to assist early school adjustment and achievement of the child.

The Educational Administrators

The finding that School factors (location, class size, teachers' qualification, physical environment and play facilities) compositely predicted early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk has implication for educational administrators. The focus here is the Chairmen of State Universal Basic Education Boards, the Secretaries of Local Government Education Authorities and the Head Teachers. Chairmen of State Basic Education Boards need to always undertake on-the-spot assessment of schools in their jurisdictions. Though the monitoring units are there, the Chairmen can pay surprised visits to some public primary schools in all the Local Government areas. This will give them the true picture of the primary school teaching and learning environment.

The Chairmen of SUBEBs in collaboration with the Secretaries of LGEAs should source locally produced teaching and learning materials for immediate

105

distribution to the primary schools. These will help the early school adjustment and academic achievement of pupils. In addition, town-hall meetings should regularly be held at the State, Local and community levels mainly to cross fertilize ideas on how best to construct, renovate and maintain educational infrastructures. Outcomes of these meetings could be beneficial to curriculum planners, administrators, teachers and all critical stakeholders in primary education. The consequence of this will be better early school adjustment of pupils from all backgrounds. Of course proper school adjustment is a precursor to academic achievement.

Parents

Parents are principal duty-bearers as far as the right of the child to functional education is concern. The finding of the study that family factors predicted early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk implies that parents are to liaise or collaborate with the school about their children. This will send message to the children that schooling is very important and that their parents value them. Also, parents should not always make negative comments concerning their children's performance as the children are not in a competition with their peers at this stage. Parents who are not literate should always get neighbours who are literate to assist their children at home.

The Community

The finding of the study that community factors (community location and available social facilities) compositely predicted academic achievement of children-at-risk has implication to the community. The school is one of the socialization agents which the community should have access to in this age of science and technology. The community, whether located in the rural or urban area, should therefore make adequate provision for play grounds and play facilities. They could provide see-saw using strong woods with no sharp edges. Similarly, they could provide enough used car and motorcycle tires for children to play under adequate supervision by adults around.

In addition, the community should never leave the building and maintenance of schools to the government alone. The passion with which the traditional society used communal efforts at building bridges across streams, securing sources of portable water, control erosions in the past, should be used to build their schools. In

fact, apart from places of worship, the school should be the finest substantial building in every community. The thinking is that school is the basic knowledge factory for their young ones. They can tax themselves to provide some of the inexpensive instructional materials like the chalkboard, counters, water containers, soap and sands. Efforts should always be made by the community to know what is going in the school. If it notices any shortage of staff, they can prevail on the government to post teachers to the school.

The Government

The study found that school factors (location, class size, teachers' qualification, physical environment and play facilities) could therefore predict early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk. Thus, States and Local governments should pay much attention to the primary school education which is the foundation. Adequate and appropriate classroom buildings should be made available in both urban and rural areas. The efforts by the State Universal Basic Education Boards in the renovations of public primary schools in Plateau and Nasarawa states are commendable. However, the quality of works there is another issue. They should regularly carry out inventory of the school facilities as most schools in the villages are yet to be renovated. In addition, play facilities are really lacking in public primary schools especially in Nasarawa and Plateau states. Efforts should be made to identify children-at-risk in all the public primary schools. This will provide data for the government since it is a common knowledge that birth registration is still an issue in Nigeria. This data will provide information on children who really need special intervention in areas of provision of learning materials, school uniforms and the like. The data could also be used in subsequent drafting of educational policies and programmes. Also government needs to step up the adult and non-formal education. This will improve the parents' education who in turn would help the education of their children.

5.4   Limitation of the Study

The study covered children-at-risk in only sixty (60) out of three thousand, six hundred and seventy (3,670) public primary schools in Plateau and Nasarawa States. Plateau State has a total of two thousand, three hundred and seventy five (2,375) public primary schools while Nasarawa State has a total of one thousand, two

107

hundred and ninety five (1,295) public primary schools. In addition only a total of ten family, community and school variables were considered in this study. This might limit the generalization of the findings of the study.

5.5   Suggestions for Further Study

This study should be replicated in other states of Nigeria to be able to make more valid generalization. Also, studies that will include pupils and other parental and school variables not considered in this study could be carried out to determine which other variables could predict early school adjustment and academic achievement of pupils.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies should be carried out on the children at risk which should cover the whole of their primary education period. Also comparative studies could be carried out to find out differences of the early school adjustment and academic achievement of normal children and orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria.

5.6   Contribution to Knowledge

The study has further established that Family (parents' educational background, family structure and home learning environment), community (location and available social facilities) and school factors (location, class size, teachers' qualification, physical environment and play facilities) could have a significant composite prediction of early school adjustment and academic achievement of children-at-risk. The instruments used for data gathering for this study could also be adapted or adopted by other researchers.

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117

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UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING CHILDREN AT RISK IN PRIMARY ONE

Name of School: ---

LGA: --- State: ---

Name of Pupil: --- Class: ----------------------------

Child's Number on the Attendance Register: --------------- Gender: Boy ☐ Girl ☐

1. Unkempt most times   .

2. Cries most time or sleeps in the class because of hunger (eating nothing before coming to school as well as not bringing along any snacks).

3. Lives with a grandparent because parents are dead.

4. Lives with guardians because parents are separated.

5. Born out of wedlock.

6. Staying in the present community because of crises in their original community, village or town.

7. Is sponsored in school by a non-governmental organization (such as PACHA, JNI, CAN, JDP/CARITAS, e.t.c).

8. From a nomadic family.

9. From a poor family.

10. Lacks basic texts and writing materials.

APPENDIX II

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT RATING SCALE (SARS)

Instructions

This questionnaire is designed to measure **how often** a pupil exhibits (shows) certain social skills. Rating of problem behaviours is also requested. First, complete the information about yourself and then complete pupil's information. This is for research purpose only.

Section A

Teacher Information

8. Teacher's name: _____

9. Gender: Female ☐   Male ☐

10. Highest Qualification:

    SSCE ☐

    GR II ☐

    NCE ☐

    B.Ed ☐

    M.Ed ☐

    Ph.D ☐

11. Type of Appointment.

    Regular Teacher ☐

    PTA Teacher ☐

    Others (specify) _____

12. Number of pupils in your class:

    10-20 ☐

    21-30 ☐

    31-40 ☐

    41-50 ☐

    51 and above ☐

13. Which of the following best describes the location of your school?

    Urban ☐

    Rural ☐

SectionB

Pupil Information

1. Pupil's name: _____

2. School: _____

3. Town/Village: _____

4. State: _____

5. Class: _____

6. Gender of the child: Male ☐

                                              Female ☐

7. Ethnic Group

   Agatu   ☐

   Alago   ☐

   Berom   ☐

   Eggon   ☐

   Geomai   ☐

   Mada   ☐

   Mwaghavul   ☐

    Ngas   ☐

   Tarok   ☐

   Tiv   ☐

   Others (Please specify) _____

Section C

Instruction

Read each item (1-25) and rate this pupil's behaviour during the past weeks by indicating **how often** the pupil exhibits the behaviour described by putting a tick (√) under the appropriate column of **very often, often, sometimes** or **never.**

Please do not skip any of the items.

Social Skills	How Often?			
	Very Often	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
1. Invites others to join in activities.				
2. Uses free time in an acceptable way.				
3. Finishes class assignments within time limits.				
4. Makes friends easily.				
5. Responds appropriately to teasing by peers.				

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6.	Controls temper in conflict situations with adults.				
7.	Begins conversations with peers.				
8.	Follows your directions.				
9.	Cooperates with peers without prompting.				
10.	Volunteers to help peers with classroom tasks.				
11.	Joins ongoing activity or group without being told to do so.				
12.	Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by children.				
13.	Ignores peer distractions when doing class work.				
14.	Keeps desk clean and neat without being reminded.				
15.	Easily changes from one classroom activity to another.				
16.	Gets along with people who are different.				

Section D

Problem Behaviour	How Often?			
	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
17. The child has low self-esteem.				
18. The child appears lonely.				
19. The child is easily distracted.				
20. The child interrupts conversations of others.				
21. The child disturbs ongoing activities.				
22. The child shows anxiety about being with a group of children.				
23. The child doesn't listen to what others say.				
24. This child talks back to adults when corrected.				
25. The child likes to be alone.				

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN
PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parents,

This questionnaire is designed to solicit for information on your primary school child. Please complete the information about your child and yourself. This will be used ONLY for research purpose.

Thanks.

Section A

1. Name of the child (in Full): _____

2. Name of School: _____

3. Town/Village: _____

4. Class: _____

5. Gender of the child: Male ☐

Female ☐

6. Ethnic Group (optional):

Agatu ☐

Alago ☐

Berom ☐

Eggon ☐

Geomai ☐

Mada ☐

Mwaghavul ☐

Ngas ☐

Tarok ☐

Tiv ☐

Others (Please specify): _____

7. How many brothers or sisters has this child at home?

None ☐

1 ☐

2 ☐

3 or more ☐

Section B

Parent Information

8. Name of parent/guardian: _____

9. Gender of the parent: Male   ☐

                            Female ☐

10. How are you related to this child?

    Mother   ☐

    Father   ☐

    Guardian   ☐

    Others   ☐   (Please specify): _____

11. Current Marital Status:

    Never Married   ☐

    Married   ☐

    Separated   ☐

    Divorced   ☐

    Widow/er   ☐

12. Your Highest Educational Qualification:

    No Formal Education   ☐

    Primary School Leaving Certificate   ☐

    JSCE   ☐

    Trade/Apprenticeship Certificate   ☐

    SSCE   ☐

    OND/NCE   ☐

    B.Sc/B.A/HND   ☐

    Master's Degree   ☐

    Ph.D   ☐

13. Your Spouse's Highest Educational Qualification:

    No Formal Education   ☐

    Primary School Leaving

    Certificate   ☐

    JSCE   ☐

    Trade/Apprenticeship Certificate   ☐

    SSCE   ☐

    OND/NCE   ☐

    B.Sc/B.A/HND   ☐

127

Master's Degree ☐

  Ph.D ☐

Section C

Parent's Involvement

How often do you do the following for your primary school child in a week? Put a tick (√) in the column of your choice.

S/N		3 Times or More	Twice	Once	Never
1	I take my child to school.				
2	I discuss my child's school activities with his/her teacher.				
3	I pay surprise visits to my child in school.				
4	I attend PTA meetings.				
5	I participate in the renovation of my child's school.				
6	I help my child with his/her homework.				
7	I place limits on the time my child spends watching television or playing at home.				
8	I discuss the importance of school with my child.				

How often do you do the following for your primary school child in a term?

9. I buy recommended textbooks for my child.

  Not at All ☐

  A Few ☐

  All ☐

10. I get a lesson teacher for my child.

Not at All ☐

  Sometimes ☐

  Always ☐

APPENDIX IV

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

COMMUNITY FACILITIES' INVENTORY

Name of Community: ---

Location:

☐ Rural

☐ Urban

LGA: ---State: ----------------

Facilities	Available	Not Available
Electricity		
Healthcare Centre		
Church		
Mosque		
Playground		
Market square		
Town hall		
Pipe-borne water		
Boreholes		
Stream		
Wells		

Completed by:

Name:…………………………………. Signature & Date:…………………………

APPENDIX V

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT INVENTORY

Name of School: ---

LGA: -- State: -------------------

Key: AA= Available and adequate

AI= Available but inadequate

NA= Not available

	Facility	AA	AI	NA
1	Well-ventilated classrooms (3 windows on each side of the wall)			
2	Library			
3	Child-size chairs for pupils			
4	Child-size table/desk			
5	Space/playground			
6	Swing			
7	See-saw			
8	Slide			
9	Merry-go-round			
10	Climbing frame			
11	Toys for teaching sound			
12	Balls			
13	Plastic letters			
14	Plastic numbers			
15	Counters			
16	Chalkboard and chalk			
17	Clean surrounding			
18	Beautiful and safe surrounding (with flowers)			
19	Flash cards			
20	Drawing and painting materials			

Completed by:

Name:……………………………………. Signature & Date:…………………………

APPENDIX VI

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

OYO STATE

MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT TEST FOR PRIMARY 1 (MAT – P1)

Name of Pupil: …………………………………......……………………….

Gender: ☐ Boy ☐ Girl   Class: …………………….

Name of school: ……………………………………………………….

Duration: 30 Minutes

Section A: The Numbers 1 to 5

Write the correct number of things in each box provided

Example: ✧ ✧ = 2

1. ♡ ♡ ♡ = ☐

2. ☺ = ☐

3. ▯ ▯ ▯ ▯ ▯ = ☐

4. ▢ = ☐

Section B: Count, add and write the correct number in the space provided

1. 1 △
   + 1 △
   ⎯⎯⎯⎯

2. 2 ☾ ☾
   + 2 ☾ ☾
   ⎯⎯⎯⎯

3. 3
   + 2 ↗ ↗ ↗
   ⎯⎯⎯⎯

Section C: Number order 0 to 10

0 ⎯⎯ 2 ⎯⎯ 4 ⎯⎯ 6 ⎯⎯ 8 ⎯⎯ 10

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, OYO STATE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST FOR PRIMARY 1 (ELAT-P1)

Name of Pupil:

……………………………………………...……………………………

Gender: ☐ Boy   ☐ Girl   Class: ……………………….

Name of school:

…………………………………………………………………………

Duration: 30 Minutes

Instruction: answer all the questions

1. **Trace and then copy**

_____

_____

_____
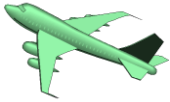
2. **Fill in the missing letters.**

   A   B   ____   D   E   G   ____   I   ____   K
   _____

   M   ____   O   P   _____   R

3. **Draw a line to join the object with the same colour.**
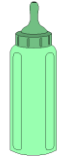
Training of Teachers by the Researcher

Training of Teachers by the Researcher

A parent responding to a questionnaire.

Pupils writing achievement Test.

Pupils playing *suwe* at Pilot Science Primary School, Chessu, Wamba LGA, Nasarawa State.

Pupils improvised see-saw, at a primary school in Akwanga Nasarawa State.

Primary One Pupils trekking back Home after School

The Researcher in an overcrowded Class

Pupils Fetching Water after School

Overcrowded Class without Seats

Training Teachers at L.E.A Primary School, Mbar, Bokkos L.G.A, Plateau

Training of Research Assistants

The Parents responding to Questionnaire through an interpreter