

SCHOOL IS A SCAM SYNDROME: THE EFFECT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON NIGERIAN YOUTHS AND ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Chinenye Martha Obika-Chigbo
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.
chinenye.obika-chigbo @unn.edu.ng

Abstract

School is a scam syndrome which started few years ago is gradually taking a center stage among Nigerian youths. These youths believe that school has never helped anybody by saying ‘who school don help?’, ‘school na scam’ and other anti-school slogans. With the rise of Yahoo Boys, Get-Rich-Quick syndrome and the onslaught of Artificial Intelligence, many youths are actually wondering if school is actually a scam. Many of them wonder why one should go to school when he can actually join Yahoo boys or go to school and upon graduation discover that there is no job or that robots have taken over the little available jobs. This paper seeks to ascertain if school is actually a scam, investigate if artificial intelligence has in any way contributed to this saying and identify the role of the media in handling this problem. Survey method was used in this research and the paper is hinged on Agenda Setting function of the mass media. Agenda setting function of the mass media is based on the fact that people consider those things reported in the media as important. Findings show that school is not a scam and that the media has a very important role to play in portraying to the Nigerian youths that school is not a scam. The work recommended among others that Nigerian government should provide employment opportunities for the youths as prompt employment after graduation will negate the slogan of school is a scam.

Keywords: School, Scam, Syndrome, Artificial Intelligence, Youth, Media

Introduction

Over the years, education has played a vital role in human development and history has judged educated members of the society fairly. In recent years, there has been a slogan that is aimed at attacking this assertion. Nigerian youths came up with a slogan that says ‘school na scam’, ‘who school don help,’ little wonder what made them start this slogan in the first place. According to Ajilore-Chukwuemeka (2023), School is a Scam movement is premised on the idea that structured education has failed the modern youths mainly because of its lack of usefulness in preparing them for the world. Education has and still remains a vital tool of human development. Benjamin Franklin once said that ‘An investment in education, pays the best interest.’ This is to say that education is the best form of investment to make. It is disheartening to note that some school dropouts are doing better than graduates but that does not mean that education is a scam.

Unemployment, underemployment and the advent of Artificial Intelligence has compounded the woes of Nigerian graduates. Some Nigerian youths have argued that ‘why go to school when everything you want is at the click of your fingers’. Some parents have decided against sending their children to school because of socio-economic status of some graduates in Nigerian. However, great testimonies abound in favour of many Nigerians that have made us proud internationally through academics. The likes of Chimamanda Adichie, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, late Prof Dora Akunyili and so many others out there writing their names on the sands of our time through academics are clear prove that school is not and can never be a scam. The media has a role to play in this by helping our youths to understand that a good education can improve one’s skills and thinking abilities and also guarantees good job prospect and higher income.

In order to understand this work better, it is important to explain the keywords as they are used in this work.

School: What then is school? School is an organized learning environment designed to provide information and skills which helps the students gain a career after graduation.

Scam: For the purpose of this paper, scam can be defined as a confidence trick. It is an attempt to defraud a person or a group after gaining their trust. Nigerian youths believed that they have been scammed because they see school as a fraud.

Syndrome: This is a type of negative behaviour or mental state a particular person exhibits in a particular situation or as regards to a particular thing.

Youth: This is a period of transition from dependence of childhood to adulthood independence.

Artificial Intelligence: This refers to computer systems capable of performing complex tasks that are historically only humans could do, such as reasoning, making decisions or solving problems.

Media: This refers to communication channels through which information is disseminated to a large heterogeneous audience. For the purpose of this work, conventional mass media which include the electronic and print media will be used.

Objectives of the Study: This work seeks to:

1. Ascertain if school is actually a scam.
2. Investigate if the emergence of artificial intelligence has contributed to the slogan of 'school na Scam'.
3. Identify the role of the media in handling this popular saying 'school na scam'.

Literature Review

The literature review conducted in this study include the conceptual clarification, empirical review and theoretical framework. The conceptual clarifications centered on the perspectives, observations and commentaries of scholars concerning the major concepts in this study. The empirical review examined relevant studies done as regards to this study while the theoretical framework concentrated on identifying a fitting theory for this study.

Brief history of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence has been around for decades. In the 1950s, a computer scientist built Theseus, a remote-controlled mouse that could navigate a maze and still remember the path it took. AI grew slowly at first, but with advances in computer speed, computer computing and availability of large data sets led to rapid advances in the field of artificial intelligence. Now, anyone can access programmes like Chat Bot, self-driving cars and others. AI according to Searle (2020) is divided into two major categories. They include:

Weak AI and Strong AI

Weak AI: This refers to some machines that are designed to perform specific tasks and they are limited to those task only. These type of AI systems always excel at their designated functions but lack general intelligence. Example of this is AI assistants like Alexa.

Strong AI: This refers to all AI system that surpass human level of intelligence and can perform a wide range of tasks. However, this type of AI is still theoretical.

A good number of organizations and individuals are using AI to perform some certain functions, and these bots are gradually taking over such areas. Examples of such AI include:

Chat Bot: This is a piece of software that interacts with humans through written language. It is embedded in web pages or through applications to answer customer's inquiries without the need for human agents, this providing effortless customer service. (www.simplelearn.com).

Humanoid Robot: This is a type of robot that resembles the human body in shape. It can interact with humans and the environment. This type of robot is capable of performing a varieties of tasks like lifting and placing items in designated location.

Agricultural Robot: This is any robotic device that can improve agricultural process by performing the farmer's duties that are slow and labour intensive.

Military Robot: This is a remote controlled mobile robot designed for military application. It can be used to transport arms to a particular location and can also be used to search and

rescue missions. It can also be used attack in the battle field.

Articulated Robots: This is a type of robot that is powered by electric motors and is usually used in industries. It has rotary joints and can have up to 10 or more axes. (www.wikipedia.com).

AI is also used in developing self-driving cars like Waymo and Tesla and they are also used to read radiographs and setting of airline prices. As all these are unfolding, humans especially Nigerian youths are concerned that AI is gradually encroaching on human space. Nigerian youths therefore assumed that there is no point in going to school since robots can perform human functions in some industries and establishments. It is worthy of note that Artificial Intelligence is the stimulation of human intelligence that are programmed to think and act like humans. Duggal (2024). AI is the science of making machines that can think like humans. This is a machine that can do smart things and process a large amount of data in ways that humans can't.

Therefore, the emergence of artificial intelligence has contributed to the saying 'school is a scam'. Some youths argued why go to school when everything you need is at a click away. At this point, what is the role of the mass media in handling this slogan 'school is a scam'.

The Role of the Mass Media in handling the slogan 'school is a scam'

Since mass media is communication whether written, broadcast or spoken form that reaches a large heterogeneous audience simultaneously. This can also be referred to as media technologies used to disseminate information to a wide audience. Ojobor (2002). The mass media is a tool used in mass communication which according to Okunna (1999) is a complex process involving the exchange or sharing of information or messages. So, mass media are channels used in sharing information or messages. For the purpose of this work, the conventional mass media which include the print and the broadcast media are used. It can be used effectively to reach out to Nigerian youth and correct the notion of school is a scam. In performing the following functions, the mass media deals with the research problems. This particular topic has generated so much heat that

TVC News Nigeria featured it on its programme called 'On The Street' (2024) and a lot of people interviewed agreed that education is not a scam but an added advantage for anybody that went to school.

The conventional mass media include the following:

Radio: This is the use of electromagnetic waves to send signals over a long distance to deliver information from one place to another. Radio is known for its simplicity, immediacy and intimate features. Radio is also known for its ability to penetrate to the hinterlands and make pictures in the minds of the listener. DurgeshTripathi and Sahdeva (2021) Using the radio, jingles can be produced to promote the importance of education and make the youths to focus on achieving academic excellence.

Television: This is a system for transmitting visual images and sound that are reproduced on screens. The distinctive feature of television is the ability to combine sound and sight. This makes television a much more immersive and engaging medium than other form of media, Suhani (2024). Television programmes should be produced to counter the saying of school is a scam.

Print media: According to Drew (2023), Print media refers to traditional form of communication that disseminate information through printed materials such as newspapers and magazines. The print media is the oldest form of mass communication and it is noted by its timeliness and relatively permanence nature.

The mass media perform various functions in the society and in performing these functions, the mass media can help in handling the saying of school is a scam.

Functions of the Mass Media

- **Information:** This is the primary function of the mass media. The mass media in performing this function informs the audience about local, state, national and international news. These days, the mass media goes as far as telling the news as it breaks through live streaming.
- **Education:** Programmes abound in mass media that is purely for education purpose of the society. In performing

this role, the mass media should structure programmes that should make the youths discover themselves and the potentials in their environment that will led to holistic development of the society.

- **Entertainment:** This is the ability of the mass media to provide diversion and amusement for the audience that will make them escape from boredom.
- **Surveillance:** The mass media perform a 'watchdog function' by holding the society and especially the government accountable to the people. In performing this role, the media keeps an eye on the society and corrects abnormalities through its different programmes.
- **Status Conferral:** The mass media confers status to people and events through news reportage. In performing this functions, the media should give prominence to Nigerian youths who have made it through school
- **Agenda Setting Role:** This is based on the fact that mass media can influence the thinking of members of the society by helping them to make up their minds about a particular issue or topic. In performing this function, the media can report on the negative implication of social vices while extolling the advantages of school.
- **Interpretation and Prescription of News:** The media not only tell the news but also interprets and explains events and situations. In performing this function, the media explains the benefits of education to Nigerian youths thereby encouraging them to go to school.
- **Socialization:** The mass media serves as an agent of socialization, this they do by helping to unify the society by upholding and teaching common social values and norms. In performing this function, the youths can help to become better members of the society.
- **Persuasion:** The mass media through its content can influence the society and

propel them to behave in a particular way. In performing this function, the mass media can actually influence the Nigerian youths on discarding the slogan 'school is a scam'.

The mass media plays a very important role in handling school is a scam syndrome through the use of the print, radio, television programmes in projecting education in a good light. A newspaper media house can profile Chimamanda Adichie who grew up in the university setting and has today become a renowned international writer and public speaker. From this type of success story, the youths will be encouraged to prioritize their education. Magazine houses are also encouraged to always project Nigerians that are making waves academically both locally and internationally. Radio through its ubiquitous nature can produce radio jingles that can condemn the school is a scam slogan and at the same time encouraging the youths to go school. The television is also encouraged to confer status on some young Nigerians who have carved a niche for themselves in academics. The likes of Faith Odunsi, a teenager who defeated participants from Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Australia to emerge a winner of global mathematics tournament. Victory Yinka Banjo who was offered scholarships to the tune of more 5 million dollars by international colleges for making all nine A1s in WAEC 2020. Chika Ofili who won many international awards for creating a new divisibility by seven in Mathematics. These three are Nigerian students making waves internationally through education. By placing prominence on stories like this, the media is able to prove that school is not a scam.

Although some Nigerian youths argue that School focus a lot on reading and writing and this at times neglect the practical aspect of doing things. They are also encouraged to learn complex life skills that are not taught in the traditional classroom setting.

Ajilore-Chukwuemeka (2023) listed four crucial areas education especially at the tertiary level develops students and they include the following:

1. **Academic Development:** This is the rigorous understanding of the theoretical and applicable foundation of a particular

field of academic endeavor. People have been clamouring for an improvement of practical application in Nigeria universities but that does not make the theoretical principles trivial. Instead a combination of practical and theoretical form of learning makes a student outstanding.

2. **Personal Development:** This is ability of a person to improve in his or thinking, behaviour and total outlook about life and environment over a period of time. Education has a way of making people change their perspective about life and open different new dimensions of how to accomplish ones goals and aspirations. 'The Four Walls' of the university has a way of moulding people because education is a moulder.
3. **Social Development:** Formal education provides one of the best social networking platforms for students. Students in their various levels of education meet different types of people in form of classmates. At this stage, many youths develop different social skills that remain useful to them till old age. Being in the same class with someone enables young people to build relationships with little effort that can benefit them throughout their lifetime.
4. **Intellectual Capacity Development:** This refers to the changes that occurs as a result of growth and experience in a person's thinking, conceptualizing, reasoning, judging and handling issues of life. The crazy lecture time-table, back-to-back exams, and never ending assignments and projects has a way of developing a student's intellectual capacity. This also prepares a student to be able to think on his feet and sustain a high level of self-drive.

A system that has these benefits cannot be referred to as a scam. Although some youths argue that some people controlling the world economy did not pass through conventional school, there are certain opportunities you can never access without a higher education certificate. It is only school that can train highly specialized Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers etc. No matter how skilled you are, you can never

read your way through these fields without being taught in a regular school environment.

Although many factors like access to good education, high cost of education, high rate of unemployment etc affect education in Nigeria. Parents are advised to put the future of their above all these factors.

Different studies have been done in relation to the topic of this study, therefore; it becomes imperative at this juncture to examine some of them.

Okpara, G. C. and Ezeador C.N. (2023) In 'Is School Really A Scam? An Appraisal', findings show that school is not a scam because education creates employment opportunities and also helps a person to develop critical problem solving skills. The research focused on finding out if school is a scam without including the role of the media in handling the problem. This created a gap for this study.

Ehioghiren, E.E. et al (2023) In 'Is Education A Scam? A Social Psychological Implications of Abusive Lifestyle And the Way Forward', findings show that education is not a scam and that people who believe that education is a scam are people that believe in lavish and violent lifestyle. These set of people often engage in fraudulent lifestyle. This also created a gap for this study since the role of the media and the effect of artificial intelligence were not part of the variables considered in the research.

Alordiah, F.O. and Kaizar, V. O. (2023) In 'Investigating Why Students in Nigeria Perceive Education as a Scam', findings show that the slogan means that uneducated people are doing better financially than the educated and that many graduates are unemployed. A gap was created for the research since the role of the media was not analyzed in the course of the research work.

This paper is hinged on Agenda Setting theory of the mass media which is based on the idea that what the public think about is set by the media. The Agenda Setting theory was first introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Dr. Shaw in 1972. McCombs and Shaw (1972) opined that media audience learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in that particular news story and its position in the media. Duru (2018) noted that if news item is covered frequently and

prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important. This goes to explain that the media through its programmes help the people to form an opinion about a particular topic of public importance. The Agenda Setting theory of the mass media explores how the view and thought of the public can be altered by what they see or hear in the media. Wogu (2015) states that the big idea behind the agenda setting theory of the mass media is people consider those things reported by the media as important because the media presented them so. Ojobor (2002) states that the Agenda Setting function is closely related to public opinion generation. This means that the media is a powerful tool that shapes and influences how government and society view issues. People learn to place importance to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it.

The media in downplaying the slogan of school is a scam should always lay emphasis on the benefits of education and should not portray activities of flamboyant lifestyle. The mass media through the Agenda Setting function should help the Nigerian youths to see education as a vital tool of human development.

Methodology

Survey method was used in this study because it gave room for investigation of public opinion on the research topic. This method was used to ensure descriptive inquiry that aims to gather big and small samples that describes the attributes of a given population which is usually associated with survey design. The research was conducted in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population for the study is the total number of students in UNN for the 2022/2023 session, which is 35,127, Academic Planning Unit, (2023). Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, the sample size for 35,127 is 379. Therefore, the sample size for this study is 379. Likert questionnaire was used in this study. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researcher used a retest method. Retest method here means administering the questionnaire to the same respondents after an interval of five days. The researcher administered 20 copies of the questionnaire to 20 respondents, their answers were noted. After five days, the same respondents were given the same questionnaire to answer and the researcher discovered 3 errors from the respondents. To calculate the reliability

coefficient, the Guttman scale formula of 1944 was used.

Coefficient = $1 - \text{total error} / \text{total response}$ which is

$1 - 3/20 = 0.15$ therefore $1 - 0.15 = 0.85$.

Therefore, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire = 85% which is very high.

Data collated from the field using the questionnaire were presented using frequency table and percentages.

Discussion of Findings

Return Rate of the Questionnaire

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Returned copies	360	94.5%
Unreturned copies	19	5.5%
Total	379	100%

From the above table, 379 questionnaires were distributed, 94.5% were returned. While 5.5% was lost on transit. Therefore, a total of 360 respondents were used for the study.

Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Gender of Respondents	Frequency	Percentages
Male	246	68.3%
Female	114	31.7%
Total	360	100%

From the above table, the number of male's respondents stood at 246 which is a greater percentage of the population. While the female respondents stood at 114 which is the 31% of the population.

Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age Range of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
16-20	160	44.4%
21-30	122	33.9%
31-40	78	21.7%

Total	360	100%
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The number of respondents between the age of 16 and 20 is 160, the number of students between the age of 21 and 30 is 122, while the number of students between the age of 31 and 40 is 78.

Research Question One: Is school actually a scam? To answer this question adequately, the researcher used the following sub questions.

Sub question 1: Are you aware of the slogan “School na Scam”?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	354	98.3%
No	6	1.7%
Total	360	100%

From the above table, 354 youths are aware of the slogan “School na Scam”. This represents a whopping 98% percentage of the population. While a percentage of 1.7 said that they are not aware of the slogan.

Sub question 2: Do you agree that the slogan “school na scam” can discourage youths from engaging in academic pursuits?

Responses	Strongly	Agree		Disagree	Strongly	Total
Frequency	50	65	0	165	80	360
Percentage	13.9 %	18.1 %	0	45.8 %	22.2 %	100 %

From the above table, 50 respondents strongly agree that the slogan ‘school is a scam’ can discourage some youths from engaging in academic pursuits while 65 respondents agree that youths can be discouraged from academic pursuits. 165 respondents disagree that ‘school na scam’ can discourage youths from engaging in academic pursuit, while 80 strongly disagree that the slogan can discourage the youths from engaging in academic pursuits. This means that a total of 68% of the respondents are of the opinion that ‘school na scam’ cannot

discourage the youths from engaging in academic pursuits, while a total of 32% of the respondents are of the opinion that the slogan can discourage the Nigerian youths from engaging in academic pursuits.

Sub question 3

Do you agree that school can propel the youths to achieve their dreams?

Response Category	Strongly	Agree		Disagree	Strongly	Total
Frequency	128	173	0	36	23	360
Percentage	35.6 %	48 %	0	10 %	6.4 %	100 %

From the above table, 128 respondents which represents the 35.6% of the population strongly agree that school can propel the youths to achieve their dreams. 173 respondents which represents the 48% of the population agree that school can propel the youth to achieve their dreams. 36 respondents which represents the 10% of the population disagree that school can propel the youths to achieve their dreams, while 23 respondents which represents 6.4% of the population strongly disagree that school can propel the youths to achieve their dreams.

The implication is that although the greater percentage of the respondents are aware of the slogan ‘school na scam’, they still believe that the slogan cannot discourage them from engaging in academic pursuits. This shows that school is not a scam.

Research question two: To what extent has the emergence of artificial intelligence contributed to the slogan “school na scam”?

Response category	Very	High	Average	Low	Very Low	Total
Frequency	137	136	40	25	22	360
Percentage	38.1 %	37.8 %	11.1 %	6.9 %	6.1 %	100 %

The response from the respondents above indicated that 137 respondents are of the opinion that the emergence of artificial intelligence has ‘very highly’ contributed to the slogan of “school na scam”, while 136 respondents are of the opinion that artificial intelligence has ‘highly’ contributed to the slogan. 40 respondents are of average opinion while 25 respondents are of the opinion that the contribution of the emergence of artificial intelligence to the slogan is low. 22 respondents are of the opinion that the contribution of artificial intelligence to the slogan is very low. The implication is that the emergence of artificial intelligence has contributed to the slogan ‘school na scam’.

Research question 3: What is the role of the media in handling the slogan ‘school na scam’?

Sub question 1: Have you been exposed to any media messages on the discussion ‘school na scam’?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	354	98.3%
No	6	1.7%
Total	360	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 98.3% of the population are exposed to media messages on the discussion of ‘school na scam’, while 1.7% of the population said that they have not been exposed to media messages on the discussion of ‘school na scam’.

Sub question 2: Do you agree that media messages on ‘school na scam’ has positive impact on Nigerian youths?

Response Category	Strongly	Agree		Disagree	Strongly	Total
Frequency	116	146	0	34	58	354
Percentage	32.8 %	41.2 %	0	9.6 %	16.4 %	100 %

From the above table, 116 respondents strongly agree that media messages on ‘school na scam’ has positive impact on Nigerian youths, while

146 respondents agree that media messages on ‘school na scam’ has positive impact on Nigerian youths. 34 respondents disagree that media messages on ‘school na scam’ has positive impact on Nigerian youths. In the same vein, 58 respondents strongly disagree that media messages on ‘school na scam’ has positive impact on Nigerian youths. The implication is that since 74% of the population are of the opinion that media messages on ‘school na scam’ has positive impact on Nigerian youths, this means that the media is playing an important role in making Nigerian youths not to see school as a scam.

Findings From This Research Show That:

School is not a scam. Although some Nigerian youths coined this slogan out of frustration of feeling that school did not prepare them adequately for life outside school but that has been proven to be false as schools are designed to prepare a student for life outside school. A good example is a Doctor, one cannot become a doctor without going to a medical school.

The emergence of artificial intelligence has contributed to the saying of school is scam because some Nigerian youths feels that the world is gradually becoming robotic. They believe that since robots can perform some human functions, then why waste your time going to school. Of course one can still rise above this factor, go to school and become useful to the society. One of the profound impacts of AI is on employment. Automation is replacing human workers human at unprecedented rate. This is evident on how AI is taking over low skilled jobs, although this improves efficiency and reduce cost. But the youths are raising concerns of job displacements. This however should not deter the youths from going to school because AI still needs human expertise to function properly.

The media has a very important role to play by giving prominence to individuals that have excelled through academics. By so doing, the media has helped in arresting the situation and relegating ‘school na scam’ to the background. After watching news success stories of youthful Nigerians that are making waves in academics both locally and internationally, Nigerian youths are encouraged to focus on their studies.

Conclusion

In the present time, where the youths want to get rich quick and a live lavish lifestyle. The youths feel that school is a scam. However, the benefits of school goes beyond success in academics and the offer of good employment. It equips one with lifelong skills that aid in human development. The emergence of artificial intelligence has made some jobs easier but people should not limit their human development because machines can do what they can do.

Therefore, every Nigerian youths should focus on going to school as school helps them to develop critical problem solving skills and also helps them to be a better member of the society. The mass media should also continue to guide the youths on the best line of action by reporting news that show the importance of education.

Recommendations:

1. The Nigerian government should endeavour to provide employment opportunities for graduates as prompt employment after school will make them negate the saying of school is a scam.
2. The youths are advised to focus on the positive impact of artificial intelligence as this also helps in academics and holistic human development.
3. The mass media should focus on news reports, programmes and features that promote education in various media channels.
4. There are other areas that artificial intelligence affect the youths. Further research on these areas are advised.

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