

Holiday Hustle: Why Nigerian Students Can't Catch a Break

By ADEKOLA ZINATULLAH

In a season traditionally meant for rest and rejuvenation, many Nigerian students are still seated behind desks, attending summer classes. Across several states, especially in private schools, what was once a six-week break is now a continuation of academic hustle and both teachers, parents and student have something to say about it.

While some argue that holiday lessons help students stay academically sharp, others believe the reasons run deeper and are not always in the best interest of the child.

“If We Don’t Work, We Don’t Get Paid”

For Mrs. Tayo, a private school teacher in Lagos, holiday lessons are less about choice and more about survival.

“It’s not that we enjoy teaching during holidays,” she told this reporter. “But private school teachers like me don’t get paid during the long break. So, many schools organize lessons just so we can keep earning something. If I stay at home all through, I won’t have transport money to return when school resumes.”

Another teacher, Mr. Joseph in Ibadan, echoed the same concern.

“Our salaries are already small. Once school ends for the term, that’s the end of our pay. Summer lessons help us manage financially. That’s the honest truth.”

Parents Say, “They Disturb Too Much at Home”

On the parents’ side, the reasons for enrolling children in summer school vary but many admitted it’s not always about academics.

“Let’s be sincere,” said Mrs. Onome, a mother of four. “My kids just disturb too much at home. I can’t concentrate on anything. Once they finish eating, they’re already fighting or scattering the house. I had no choice but to put them in holiday school.”

Mr. Kazeem, another parent in Ogun State, added:

“Even if I want them to rest, they won’t. They’ll be pressing phone or running around. The house is noisy from morning till night. It’s easier to just let them go for lessons, at least I get peace till afternoon.”

Interestingly, some parents also say they feel pressured because “every other child” seems to be going for lessons.

“If I leave my son at home and his classmates go for lessons,” one parent said, “won’t he be behind when school resumes? That’s why I had to pay, even though things are tight.”

But What About the Kids?

Despite the justification from adults, students themselves seem less enthusiastic. Many of them feel deprived of the break they were promised at the end of the school year.

“We just finished exams last week, and now we’re back in class,” a JSS 3 student lamented. “I’m tired. It doesn’t even feel like holiday again.” The fatigue and stress among students raise concerns about burnout, especially when education becomes an endless cycle with no breathing space.

A Need for Regulation

Education experts argue that while academic reinforcement is important, holiday lessons should not become compulsory or exploitative.

“There is currently no strong regulation on how schools handle summer lessons,” one consultant noted. “That’s why some schools run full-day classes and charge parents extra, while also using unpaid teachers to generate income.”

If the trend continues unchecked, there’s a risk that holidays which should be a time meant for creativity, rest, family bonding, and outdoor play will become just another academic term in disguise.

Summer lessons in Nigeria have become a symptom of deeper issues: underpaid teachers, tired parents, and a school system that prioritizes routine over recovery. While not entirely bad, the current structure needs rethinking.

Holiday lessons should be optional, flexible, and child-centered not just another round of stress for students or a financial trap for families.

Until then, one thing is clear: for many Nigerian children, the holiday bell may never ring.