

African Research Review

An International *Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*

Vol. 7 (3), Serial No. 30, July, 2013:58-74

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print)

ISSN 2070--0083 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrr.v7i3.5>

Perception of Parents on the Socio-Cultural, Religious and Economic Factors Affecting Girl- Child Education in the Northern Parts of Nigeria

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Abstract

Girl – Child education has been a subject of serious concern in Nigeria. This is because this aspect of education has been bedevilled with problems especially in the Northern parts of the country. Researchers (Usman, 2007) and Daiyabu, 2008) have expressed concern about it and about the various forms of discriminations and sharp practices against the girl-child. Thus, this study investigated the perception of parents on the socio-cultural, religious and economic factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern parts of Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The sample consisted of 1,200 parents and adults purposefully selected from the states in Northern Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Ordinary

percentage and t-test statistical methods were used for the analysis of data. The results revealed that parents favoured boy's education more and regard girls' education as a waste since they will end up in the kitchen. Lack of religious knowledge and issues of poverty also constitute other influences. The test of hypotheses also showed that participants, educated and non-educated, rural and urban, expressed similar opinions regarding socio-cultural and religious factors. However, opinions of male and female subjects differ on the issues relating to economic factors. Based on these findings, it was recommended that girls should be given equal chance as boys in education; there should be a legal support for girl-child education and government should empower parents.

Key words: *Socio-cultural factors, religious factors, economic factors, girl-child education.*

Introduction

Women are over half of the world's population, yet they do two-thirds of the world's work, earn one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one-tenth of the world's poverty (UN, 2007 in Akinpelu, 2007). The following statistic shows the plights of women worldwide. The 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70% are women; women earn three-fourths of the income that men earn in the non-agricultural sector; women occupy only 10% of the parliamentary seats and only 6% of cabinet positions in 55 countries throughout the world; of the total burden of work, women carry an average of 53% in the developing countries and 51% in industrialized countries; of the world's 900 million non-illiterate persons, 65% are women due to the lack of educational opportunities; worldwide, 76 million more boys are enrolled in primary and secondary schools than girls.

UNICEF (2003) noted that in the global political arena, the ongoing debate and action for the upliftment of the girl-child continue to stimulate the involvement of designated UN agencies. Notable among the range of initiatives is that of the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGE) which an aspect of the Millennium Development Goals is. The later was established in April 2000. It draws from the constitution of 13 UN entities and charges like-minded national and international actors to work in concert with the programme to obtain Universal Primary Education and also, by 2015, to bridge the gender status encountered in primary and secondary education. According to Akinpelu (2007), Girl-child education and school attendance trail behind boys in nearly every developing nation. There is no

gainsaying that education is the key to the advancement of girls and women. Emphasis on the need for girl-child education prompted this study.

According to UNICEF (2008), Nigeria is among the West African Countries that have highest number of girls that were out of school. UNICEF (op cit) added that girls make up the majority of the nearly 120 million children who are out of school and even greater majority of those who get opportunity of education do not reach the fifth grade.

Magaji (2010) observed that even though education is regarded as a human right for the realization of human dignity, many factors have been found to be responsible for the low enrolment of girls into schools when compared to the enrolment of boys. Among these factors, according to her, are poverty, socio-cultural impediments, religious misinterpretation of Holy Book; societal negative attitude to women education, early marriage and gender biases. These factors, of course, impede the progress and development of women in society.

UNESCO (2005) identified some attempts by Nigeria to promote the girl-child education. Such attempts include: - Universal Primary Education (1976), the National Policy on Education (NPE) (1977); lowering of cut-off points for admission of girls into secondary schools; scholarships into Science/Technology and Mathematics Education (STME); the promulgation of an edict banning the withdrawal of girls from schools for marriage, the production of blue print on women education by the Federal Ministry of Education (1987) and the declaration of free education for girls in many states in Nigeria (1988). Yet, many girls have not gone to school or have withdrawn from school especially in the northern Nigeria. This is why this paper attempts to find out those factors that are contributory to girl-child education problem in Nigeria and to recommend therapeutic ways of eradicating those impediments.

It should be emphasized that education gives a good means of livelihood and sustenance to women; gives support for their economic role and development, gives and support the education of children education. Children education does not depend on the father's income alone but also that of the mother. It makes the total burden of parenthood to be borne by both man and woman (Magaji, 2010). Since one's level of education to an extent determines ones income and capacity, it is expedient, therefore, that girls get education for better contribution to their families, society and world over.

Statement of the problem

Today, by UNICEF standards, Nigeria has not been assessed to have fared well enough in terms of the social indicators of education, health, and welfare as determinants of the overall indices of child development (UNICEF, 1995, F.M.W and SD, 1996). It is obvious that there are social, economic and political problems bedeviling the Nigerian children. These problems and the policies put in place to address them have had their toll on the welfare and development of the over 39 million children in Nigeria. For example, among the measures put in place to salvage the situation of Nigerian children include the children's Decree, the new political dispensation, the Human Right commission and the Ministry of Woman Affairs with a full department for child development matters. But in spite of these measures, leadership and socio-economic problems in the country have not allowed for effective implementation and monitoring or observance of the rights of the girl-child.

Several researchers have worked on the issue of the girl-child especially concerning their education and various forms of discriminations and sharp practices against them (Ebigbo, 1990; Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 1996; Indabawa, 1992; Giwa and Abdulmalik, 2006; Usman, 2007; and Daiyabu, 2008). These studies have focused on issues of their denied education, promotion of their education or discrimination in admission and recruitment as well as other sharp practices against them. Moreso, most of these studies have been concentrated on small areas - local government, a state or even a town.

However, the present study is interested in investigating the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. It is hoped that the study will take a global look at this problem especially in the entire area where the problem is seriously pronounced.

Research questions

Based on the background to the study and the statement of the problem, the following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the socio-cultural factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?
2. What are the religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?

3. What are the economic factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?
4. Is there any difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?
5. Is there any difference in the opinion of rural and urban dweller participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?
6. Is there any difference in the opinion of male and female participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?
7. What specific counselling interventions can be applied to check this problem in the area?

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate empirically the influence of socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigerian. Specifically, the study investigated:

- i. The socio-cultural factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.
- ii. The religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.
- iii. The economic factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.
- iv. Whether there is any difference in the opinion of male and female, rural and urban as well as educated and non-educated participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.
- v. Whether there are specific counselling interventions that could be applied in checking the problem.

Hypothesis

A part from the research questions, the study carried out the test of some hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the opinion of rural and urban dweller participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the northern part of Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.

Significance of the study

The results of the study would be significant for a number of reasons:

- i. It would become a reference point for decision makers and educational planners to realize the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the advancement of girl-child education in the Northern Nigeria.
- ii. It would serve as a source of enlightenment to parents and guardians on the values of educating the girl-child thereby erasing all the earlier beliefs about educating the girls.
- iii. It would sensitize governments and other agencies concerned with children education in the area to be gender sensitive and ensure gender streaming in admission, award of scholarships and recruitment into various levels and positions.
- iv. The results of this study would serve to save the girl-child from all discriminations, sharp practices as well as exposure to diseases, HIV/AIDS, VVF, unwanted pregnancies, and other forms of dangers.
- v. It would serve as a point of advocacy for the rights of the girl-child to education and equality in other spheres.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research type. This design is suitable for the study because the study attempted a survey and description of

the opinions of a large number of people on the factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.

Population and sample

The target population for this study were the Hausa/Fulani adult males and females in the Northern part of Nigeria.

The sample consisted 1,200 subjects. This sample was selected from six purposefully selected states in the Northern part of Nigeria – Sokoto, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Borno. The reason for the purposive selection was to allow the inclusion of states where the practices of negative attitude towards girl-child education are most predominantly practiced.

In each of these states, four local government areas were randomly selected for the study. In each local government area within each state, 50 subjects were used as subjects of the study; this gave a total of 200 subjects in each state, totalling 1,200 for the whole study. The subjects were made up of adult males and females, educated and non-educate and subjects from both rural and urban settings of the states.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was a self-designed questionnaire titled “Socio-cultural, religious and economic factors affecting girl-child education questionnaire (SCREFAGEQ).

The questionnaire consists of four sections. Section A demands for personal data of the respondents. While sections B, C and D are meant to tap information on socio-cultural, religious and economic factors affecting girl-child education respectively in the areas under review.

Each of sections B, C, and D consists of 10 items requesting information on the three factors of socio-cultural, religious and economic factors affecting girl-child education.

The validity of this instrument was attained by subjecting it to scrutiny of psychometric experts. These experts authenticated the instrument.

However, the reliability of the instrument was established by the researcher using the test-retest method within an interval of two weeks. The reliability coefficient was 0.71. Which was considered high enough for this study?

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered in the different local government areas in each state by the researchers with the support of some trained research assistants.

With the permission of authorities in each local government area, the administration of the questionnaire was done within a period of four weeks. It should be noted that the researchers administered 1,350 copies of the questionnaire so as to be able to get the required 1,200 figure for analysis.

Data analysis

The data collected on this study were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages for descriptive analysis while t-test statistical method was used for the testing of the hypothesis.

Results

The results of this study are presented in the tables below according to the research questions and hypotheses raised and tested in the study.

Descriptive analysis

Research Question I: What are the socio-cultural factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?

Table I: Socio-cultural factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern Nigerian

S/N	Socio-cultural, factors influencing girl-child education	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Family influence	997	83.1	203	16.9
2.	Public criticism of the girl's family	894	74.5	306	25.5
3.	Cultural condemnation of mixing boys and girls	906	75.5	294	24.5
4.	Negative attitude to girl child's formal education	984	82	216	18
5.	Child's right abuses among parents	899	74.91	301	25.08
6.	Positive attitude towards boy child education only	1002	83.5	198	16.5
7.	Criticism of parents who support girl-child educations	909	75.75	297	24.75
8.	Females are culturally meant for domestic works in that area	1008	84	192	16
9.	Lack of education among parents	889	74.08	311	25.91
10	Poor enforcement of social laws on girls right	899	74.91	301	25.08

Table I shows the analysis of participants perception of the socio-cultural factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. From this table, it is revealed that majority of the participants believed that the ten factors identified significantly affect the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. However, items 6 and 8 on attitude to boys' education only and the fact that they believe that girls are culturally meant for domestic works attracted the positive perception of the participants. They are the major socio-cultural factors affecting girls' education in the Northern Nigeria.

Research Question II: *What are the religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?*

Table 2: Religious factors influencing the girl-child education

S/N	Religious factors	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Lack of religious obligation to western school education	1007	83.91	193	16.083
2.	Parents seem to be more committed to marital orientation of girls	1009	84.83	191	15.91
3.	Girl child education is morally condemned	906	75.5	294	24.5
4.	Lack of religious legal action against girl-child education	899	94.91	301	25.01
5.	Fear of early pregnancy or pre-marital sex among girls	1002	83.5	198	16.5
6.	Absence of religious guidance on girl-child education	1008	84	192	16
7.	Parents valued Qura'anic education for girls than western education	1003	83.58	199	16.58
8.	Western education is not religiously building on adherents of Islam	899	74.91	301	25.08
9.	Fear of religious interference	997	83.83	203	25.08
10.	Fear of exposure of girls to the public	1002	83.5	198	16.5

Table 2 shows the religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 10 rank high among these religious factors. In addition, items, 3, 4, 8 and 9 also drew the attention of

many of the participants. Invariably, all the items are considered important in affecting the girls' education in the Northern Nigeria.

Research Question III: *What are the economic factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria?*

Table 3: Economic factors influencing the girl-child education

S/N	Economic factors	Yes	%	No	%
1.	They believe of parents that girls can generate money for the family	999	83.25	2011	16.75
2.	Girls involvement in hawking and daily generation of income	899	74.91	301	25.08
3.	Early courtship of girls attracts money from boys to parents	1010	84.16	190	15.83
4.	Often, girls are made to act guides to beggars thereby generating income	1109	92.41	091	7.58
5.	Parents see school fees payment as a burden	998	83.16	202	16.83
6.	Schools are seen as non-money making venture	1000	83.33	120	6.67
7.	School education is seen as a venture that does not yield immediate benefit	996	83	204	17
8.	Girls are often engaged in works by parents thereby discouraging their education	1007	83.91	193	16.08
9.	Lack of total free education discourages girl-child education	899	74.91	301	25.08
10.	Socio-economic status of families inhibit girl-child education	1013	84.41	187	15.58

Table 3 shows that majority of the participants agreed that all the economic factors identified affect the girl-child education in Northern Nigeria. However, items 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10 seem to be more important economic influences on the girl-child education in the Northern Nigeria.

Hypothesis testing

Three null hypotheses were raised and tested in this study in addition to the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical method. The tables are presented below:

Hypothesis I: *There is no significant difference in the opinion of educated and non-educated participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.*

Table 4: Comparison of educated and non-educated participants on socio-cultural, economic and religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria

Factors	Group	N	Mean	Sd	Df	T	Sign	Remarks
Socio-cultural	Educated	635	37.695	4.111	1198	0.186	0.853	NS
Factors		565	37.582	4.312				
Economic	Educated	735	44.469	17.050	1198	2.123	0.035	
Factors	Non-educated	465	39.779	14.207				
Religious	Educated	681	40.907	15.847	1198	1.397	0.164	NS
Factors	Non-educated	519	44.060	15.638	1198	-1.397	0.164	NS

Table 4 shows the result of the first hypothesis. The table indicates that there is no significant difference between educated and non-educated participants on the socio-cultural factors influencing the girl-child education in the northern part of Nigeria. Also there is no significant difference between the educated and non educated participants on the religious factors. However, educated and non-educated participants differ on the issue of economy. There is a significant difference between the educated and non-educated participants.

Hypothesis 2: *there is no significant difference between the opinion of rural and urban dweller. Participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria*

Table 5: Comparison of rural and urban dweller participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern Nigeria

	Group	N	Mean	SD	DF	T	Sign
Socio-cultural Factors	Rural	388	64.26	14.26	1198	3.76	S
	Urban	812	72.57	18.30			
Economics Factors	Rural	388	13.01	1.22	1198	3.83	S
	Urban	812					
Religious Factors	Rural	388	13.13	1.38	1198	0.87	NS
	Urban	812	12.98	1.27			

On table 5, the results show that there is no significant difference between the opinion of rural and urban dweller participants on the religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern Nigeria.

However, rural and urban dwellers show differences in opinion regarding socio-cultural and economic factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. In both cases the t-value of 3.76 and 3.83 are greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria.*

Table 6: Comparison of male and female participants on the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern Nigeria

	Group	N	Mean	Sd	Df	T	Sign
Socio-cultural factors	Male	768	3.52	0.74	1198	0.56	NS
	Female	432	3.47	0.70			
Economic factors	Male	768	8.67	4.01	1198	8.10	S
	Female	432	10.37	3.88			
Religious factors	Male	768	14.45	3.17	1198	1.65	NS
	Female	432	14.19	3.58			

The above table shows that both male and female participants have similar opinion concerning the socio-cultural and religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the northern part of Nigeria. The table reveals that the

t-calculated values of 0.56 and 1.65 are less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Hence, there is no significant difference on the two factors. However, males and females differ on the economic factors influencing the girl-child education in the area.

Discussion

The first finding of this study on the socio-cultural factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria shows that participants rated all the socio-cultural items high. Hence, fear of public criticism of sending girls to school, cultural condemnation of mixing boys and girls together in schools, females being culturally meant for domestic works, lack of girls rights were considered as the socio-cultural factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. However, among these factors, females being culturally meant for domestic works and positive attitude towards boys' education were rated higher than the others. The above findings support the conclusion of Federal Government of Nigeria (2006), World Bank (2001) and UNESCO (2001) that there is a lot of disinterest and ignorance concerning the education of girls. They observed that many Nigerian girls suffer the society's neglect of their education; such children have become vulnerable to various ills in the society.

Also, the study found out that some religious factors like lack of religious obligation to western education, parental commitment to the girl-child marital life, moral condemnation of girl-child education, lack of religious legal action for girl-child education, fear of early pregnancy, love of Qura'anic education, non-recognition of western education, fear of conversion to other religion, and undue exposure of girls to western education were rated high by participants. These were the religious factors revealed by the participants. These findings support the earlier conclusions of Usman (2007), Bagudo (2007), Giwa and Abdulmalik (2006) and Daiyabu (2008) that many Muslim parents in the Northern part of Nigeria do fear that the involvement of girls in education might bring moral decadence. Such may include female promiscuity, exposure of female bodies, inducement by opposite sex, pre-marital pregnancy, and abortion or illegitimate children. They also observed that girl-child education will threaten girl-child chances of legitimate, cultural and religious marriage which the parents believe would deprive girls Islamic moral training and orientation.

The third research question was on the economic factors influencing the girl-child education in Northern part of Nigeria. The study discovered that factors such as parents' belief that girls can generate money for the family, girls can guide beggars and thus make money, girls early courtship can attract money, school fees payment is a burden, education does not yield immediate gain, family poverty, parental involvement of girls in money-making ventures and lack of free education' were considered as the economic factors influencing the girl-child education in Northern part of Nigeria.

These findings confirm the earlier concern of Ikwen (2006) and Abolarin (2010) that poverty is a major factor that hinders the girl-child access to education. To them, parents look-up to income generating activities involving girls to sustain their families. They observed that parents see school fees as a burden and school as non-money making venture and girls are often engaged in works that could generate financial benefits for the family.

The result of hypothesis one in the study reveals that there is no significant difference between educated and non-educated participants on the socio-cultural and religious factors affecting the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. However, there is a significant difference between the two groups on the economic factor influencing the girl-child education in the area. This finding supports Indabawa (1997) that a number of Muslim parents in urban areas of the North, particularly high socio-economic class, had never allowed their girl-child or boys to hawk, beg or follow adult men and women to beg for alms and yet, they reserved western education and had grown up to become men and women learned scholars, judges, commissioners etc.

The result of the second hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference between the opinion of rural and urban dweller participants on the religions factors influencing the girl-child education in the Northern part of Nigeria. However, both groups differ significantly on the socio-cultural and economic factors influencing the girl-child education in the area. This finding may be because of the locations of these two groups. While religion cuts across them - (Islam), their location in rural and urban areas might have contributed to the differences in their socio-cultural and economic outlooks. This may account for why some Muslims in the cities chose to send their children to western schools even in addition to the Islamic education that they readily believe in: such Muslims might have seen the impact of western form of education on the economy of other city dwellers. Hence, they have

been motivated to follow this path leaving behind the rural dwellers with whom they share the same religious and socio-cultural beliefs. Usman (2011) in his findings asserted that the greatest problems that present themselves in women's education are mostly based on their home background and religion as well as the social community sanctions. He observed that children are brought up right from the beginning with some feelings against western education.

The study also found that male and female participants do not differ significantly in their opinion regarding the socio-cultural and religious factors influencing the girl-child education in the northern Nigeria. However, they differ significantly on the economic factors influencing the girl-child education in the area.

This difference in the opinion of male and female concerning the economic factors influencing girl-child education in the northern part of Nigeria has been supported by Hodges (2001) who observed that mothers involved their girl-child in income generating activities for the family which involves different categories of works including domestic services in private homes, and public settings, street hawking, shop and market stall minders and head loaders in the market places. According to F.M.W.A and S.D (1996), economic factors make street trading and hawking to serve as marriage preparation for girls since girls are expected to meet their suitors during trading; they also help their mothers raise sufficient money towards meeting their daughter's wedding obligations, without which marriage is regarded as having lost its esteem.

Conclusion

This study discovered that parents have negative attitude towards girl-child education in the Northern parts of Nigeria. Parents especially in large families with limited resources send girls to generate income by hawking, getting involved in some immoral dealings with the opposite sex, having early marriage and teenage pregnancy. To turn around these vices, parents should be encouraged to send girls to school so as to be educated, certificated, be skilful and have sources of income for sustainability and development.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are proffered accordingly:

1. Professional counsellors and social workers should create national awareness on women education (including adult education) through public awareness campaigns, rallies, and seminars.
2. Collaborating with government and non-governmental organizations in reviewing school curriculum and teaching materials for gender sensitivity and for sustainable vocational and pedagogical skills.
3. Creating more chances for women employability and empowerment so as to serve as encouragement to later generations.
4. Enactment of legal policy against parents refusing girl-child enrolment in schools (to certification level).
5. Offering scholarship for girls' education at all levels.
6. Encouraging women cooperative societies and empowering women with soft loans for small scale industry and other enterprising ventures in urban and rural areas.

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