



Family Integrants Obstructing Pupils' School Attendance and Girl-Child Education in Plateau State: Current Status and Challenges for Counsellors

Grace Ohunene Momoh

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Jos, Nigeria

augustinaanakwe@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study is hinged on finding out the family integrants obstructing pupils' school attendance, the girl – child education and proffering solution to it via counsellors' strategies. The samples were three hundred (300) parents and twenty (20) counsellors. This brought the total sample to three hundred and twenty (320). A descriptive survey design was used. Instrument for the data collection was a validated questionnaire. It's reliability was determined using Cronbach alpha test which was at 0.78. Analysis of the data was done through the use of simple descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage and mean computation. Findings revealed major integrants impeding parents from allowing their children to attend school regularly. They also affect the girl – child education. Such integrants include poverty, illiteracy and socio-cultural practice. Recommendations made include; poverty alleviation programmes for indigent parents, sensitization and legislation against children withdrawal from school for what ever reason.

INTRODUCTION

A family is said to have been established as soon as a man is married to a woman. The family goes through different stages. These stages can be categorised into three, which are Beginning, Expanding and Contrasting (BEC) stages. The beginning stage as the name connote is the starting point. It is the moment of dreaming dreams and a moment of having high expectations. By the time the family is blessed with children, expanding stage sets in. it is a stage in which the family size is enlarged. When these children grow up and they begin to live the house, the family size will be reduced. The

Determinants of Pupils' School Attendance in Plateau State, Nigeria

family keeps reducing until the two people who started it are left alone. This is the contrasting stage. Each of this stage of the family has its own challenge.

The challenges in the first and third stages only affects two people and in the second stage, the challenges affects both parents, children and others like uncles, aunties, nannies and in some cases grand parents. The large nature of this stage one, makes the challenges more difficult to surmount. It is this second stage of the family that this paper focuses on. As it has been observed, the challenges at this stage affect not only the parents but the children in particular. It is for this reason that this paper intends to find out those family integrants obstructing or affecting pupils' school attendance and the girl – child education.

School attendance means being present in school to participate in all the activities scheduled for each school day. When a child is not present in school, he or she is bound to miss from the activities that have taken place. It is for this reason that (Malcom, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk 2003) posit that absence is damaging. Damaging in the sense that whatever missed, might not be easily regained. This shows that, school attendance is important. But it is sad to say that there are family integrants that affects pupils' school attendance. The family is expected to encourage good attendance. But when the family is faced with encumbrances of life, the tendency to look down on school attendance is obvious.

Apart from school attendance, another variable that the family integrants affect is the girl – child education. The girl – child education in this context refers to the female child's education. Education is known facts, ideas and skill that has been imparted (Roget's II, 1995). This meaning of education is encompassing. It shows that when a child is educated, he or she is enriched with facts, ideas and skills. When a girl – child is prevented from going to school, it means that such a girl will not be educated. If she is not educated she will lack three important elements for life which are facts, ideas and skills. It is important to note that some of the reasons why a girl – child may not go to school, emanates from the family.

UNICEF Report (2002) shows that the National literacy rate for females is 56% compared to 73% for males and that in certain states of Nigeria, the female literacy enrolment and achievement rates were much lower. The earlier the girl – child education is encouraged, the better it will be for the Nation. Having looked at these two key variables affected by family integrants, the question then, is what should be done? Part of what should be done especially from the counsellors' point of view is what this paper touched on. Since counselling is a helping profession, it is expected that the study will look into the current status of the family integrants, the challenges it poses to the counsellor and proffer solution to them. Findings from this study will sensitize families and counsellors. It will also help to improve school attendance and the girl – child education.

Purpose of the study

This study sought to investigate the family integrants that obstructs pupils' school attendance and the girl – child education. In addition, to proffer solution via counselors' point of view.

Research questions

The study attempted to provide answers to the under listed questions as a pathway to achieving the purpose of the study.

1. What are the family integrants that affects pupils' school attendance?
2. What family integrants affects the girl – child education?
3. What solutions will counselors proffer to these problems?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises of parents and counsellors in Jos metropolis and environs. The sample of parents was three hundred (300), while that of the counsellors was twenty (20). A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting parents sample, while simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the counsellors.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a validated questionnaire. The validity was established by experts in the unit of guidance and counselling. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 through chonbach alpha test was realised. The instrument sought information on the family integrants against pupil's school attendance, the girl – child education and the counsellor's view point in handling these problems.

Data collection and analysis

Simple descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage and mean computation were used to analyse the data collected. The mean response was in the basis of four point likert-type scale v12; strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). The results and analysis were based on the research questions raised in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: What are the family integrants affecting pupils' school attendance?

Table 1: Mean scores on the family integrants affecting pupils' school attendance.

S/ N	Items	Grand scores	Mean scores
1.	Parent's low value for education leads to their children's poor school attendance.	925	2.89
2.	Parents' low literacy level, affects the child's school attendance.	1118	3.49
3.	The poverty level of parents prevent them from allowing their children have consistent school attendance	1150	3.55
4.	The socio cultural beliefs of parents constrain them from encouraging consistent school attendance of their children.	1068	3.34
5.	Parents' lack of time with their children makes them unprepared for school.	909	2.84

The table above shows the family integrants obstructing or affecting pupils' school attendance. The mean score of each item is well above 2.00 which is the average mean score. This shows that each of the item stands as a militating factor against pupils' school attendance. The three prominent means are 3.55, 3.49 and 3.34, which shows that poverty level, low literacy level and socio cultural beliefs of parents affects pupils school attendance. This is in line with Momoh (2009) discovers that the poverty level of parents prevent them from meeting the material/physical and psychological needs of pupils that will help improve pupils literacy level. For pupils to have consistent school attendance, parents' literacy level needs improvement. If parents are not educated, they will not be able to educate or show their children the way to formal education. The need for parents to be educated and also spend quality time with their children is necessary. This will encourage them to improve in their school attendance.

Research question 2: What family integrants affect the girl – child education? Table 2 presents family integrants that affects girl – child education. Further illustration of the result is shown in Figure 1.

Table 2: Percentage scores on the family integrants affecting girl-child education.

S/N	Items	Positive Scores		Negative Scores	
		N _e	%	N _e	%
1.	Preference for male – child education is higher than the girl – child education.	203	63	117	37
2.	Poverty level of parents is detrimental to the girl – child education	281	88	39	12
3.	Low literacy level of parents prevent them from valuing girl – child education.	275	85	45	15
4.	Socio – cultural practices are against girl – child education.	243	76	77	24
5.	Feminine nature of the girl – child makes parents to prefer them staying at home than their male counterparts.	264	82.5	56	17.5

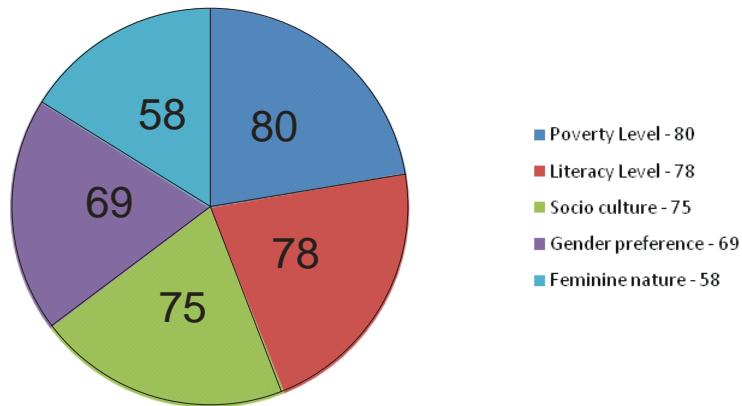


Figure 1: Pie chart showing family integrants.

The table and the pie chart show clearly that poverty level of parents affect girl – child education. Talking about parents, A UNICEF Report (2002) says that many Nigerian parents, especially in large families with limited resources, enrol boys in school instead of or before the girls. This also shows the gender preferential level of families.

Mangvwat (2006) opines that poor family finance makes families to prefer investing funds in educating boys rather than girls. Mangvwat equally observed that traditionally, female child’s place is seen as being strictly in the

Determinants of Pupils' School Attendance in Plateau State, Nigeria

home and requires little or no formal education. While the male counterpart should be educated to take their rightful place in the world. As a matter of fact, in some culture, it is a taboo to educate female children because they are to get married early in life.

The feminine nature of the girl – child that enables her to carry out house chores efficiently, and also cater for her siblings, expose her to abuse by parents. In line with this, Adewole in Mangvwat (2006) observes that women are regarded as second or minor to men. As a result, women prefer to have their daughter stay at home and serve as source of the family's labour. She cooks, clean the compound and baby sits. This notion has to change.

Research question 3: What solution will the counselor proffer to these problems?

Table 3: Counselors' intervention to family integrants against school attendance and girl – child education.

S/N	Items	Positive Scores		Negative Scores	
		N _e	%	N _e	%
1.	Organising Parents/Counsellors meeting for the purpose of interaction and enlightenment on school attendance and girl – child education.	18	90	2	10
2.	Organising seminars for parents on poverty alleviation.	15	75	5	25
3.	Encouraging parents to attend adult – education class	20	100	0	0
4.	Giving talks on topics like “culture” and “education” during P.T.A. meetings.	17	85	3	15
5.	Creating awareness on female achievers.	20	100	0	0
6.	Sensitizing Parents on importance of education to increase their value for education.	20	100	0	0
7.	Encouraging government to re enforce policy on education for all agenda.	20	100	0	0

Table 3 presents the result of how the school counsellor should go about handling the family integrants obstructing pupil's school attendance and the girl – child education. All the items are seen to be sources of help in handling the problems. This is further illustrated in the bar chart below.

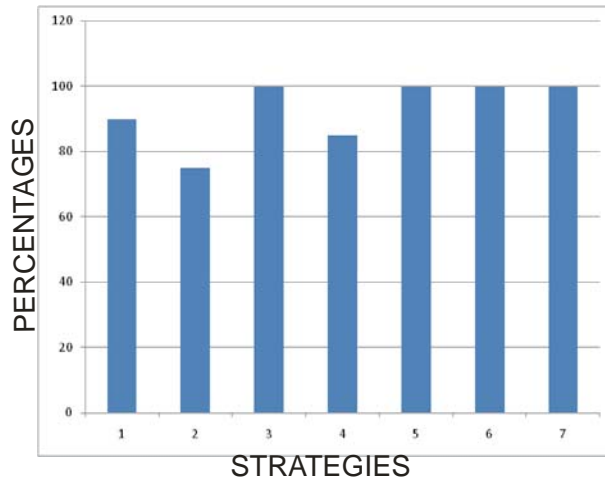


Figure 2: Counsellor’s strategies for handling family integrants against school attendance and girl – child education.

Key

-
- 1 - Parents/counsellor meeting
 - 2 - Seminars for poverty Alleviation
 - 3 - Adult – Education
 - 4 - Talk on relevant topics
 - 5 - Awareness on female achievers
 - 6 - sensitization on importance of education
 - 7 - encouraging government to re - enforce policy
-

The issue of school attendance is an important one. It has a lot of influence on the education of the child. Gone are those days when education was relegated to the background because of lack of knowledge of its relevance. Nwagwu (1976) posits that education gives opportunities and power without which man is merely a splendid slave and reasoning savage. In line with this, Elaigwu (2006) consents that quality education is expected to address critical issues such as the dignity of labour, quality leadership, industrial harmony, political stability, religious tolerance, national unity and integration among others. Children deprived of consistent school attendance will not be able to get quality education. Therefore, there is need for the counsellor to help organise Parents/counsellor meeting.

Determinants of Pupils' School Attendance in Plateau State, Nigeria

Parents/Counsellors Meeting

This type of meeting is necessary. It will bring about interaction between parents and counsellors for the purpose of finding out more on the challenges faced by them. Encouragement is given especially in the area affecting pupil's school attendance and girl – child education. This is because if any child is denied education, such a child is denied quality life. What will be the usefulness of life, if it is not qualitative? Parents need to know that the best thing they can give their children is education.

Poverty Alleviation Seminars

The above results show that one of the major family integrants affecting school attendance and girl – child education is poverty. Onabanjo (1996), stresses that there is household poverty at the federal, state and local government levels. In addition, Esan (1996) asserts that children are assets, from whom profits can be derived by sending them out to make money either by selling wares or by sacrificing their youth and strength so that their parents and siblings may survive. Indeed poverty is around and it is affecting children's school attendance and girl – child education. There is need for seminars, workshops to be organised particularly at the grass root level where poverty prevails much. This will enlighten and awaken parents to what they can do to survive well. This can be done by inviting resource persons to teach people basic skills in areas like soap, pomade and candle making. Training on skills that will also make parents employable will be good.

Encourage Adult – Education

Many adults need education to improve in certain areas. To some, the ability to read and write helps them to improve in their career. While those who are semi – illiterate need training such as inservice course to improve. The counsellor can help through referral service to appropriate place they can obtain help.

Talks on Relevant Topics

This is very relevant to this study because the negative attitude of parents to school attendance and girl – child education is due to lack of knowledge in these areas, for example a talk on culture. This will help them to disregard culture that prevents children's progress. Talks on education will also make parents know the importance, the relevant need and what it entails.

Awareness on Female Achievers

The country is blessed with female achievers, Women of calibre who made it because of education and hard work. Women of reputable standing. Some of

Grace Ohunene Momoh

these women could serve as resource persons, so that parents will see and admire them.

Sensitization on Value for Education

Value for anything serves as an impetus to achieving such a thing. In like manner, if parents have value for education, they will encourage their children/ward not to miss or absent themselves from school. They will also ensure that their female children go to school. They will also monitor their performance. The counsellor has a lot to do in this type of sensitization.

Policy Re – enforcement

There are many policies on education. Policies such as; education for all (EFA) (1990), universal Basic Education (UBE) (1998) and Nation policy on education (2004) should be re – enforced by the government. The counsellor has a dual role to play here. He or she should help the government in assessing the implementation of these policies. Checking whether the objectives are being achieved or not. More also, the counsellor should help bring the people's complaint to the government.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the family integrant that obstruct pupils' school attendance and the girl – child education. It concludes that the major variables include parents' poverty level, parents' low literacy level, socio – cultural and the feminine nature of the girl – child. It discussed the current status of the problem and the challenges for the counsellors. After which the following recommendations were made for appropriate action to be taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- . Parents should ensure that their children/ward have consistent school attendance.
- . Parents should pursue their girl – child education with all vigour and dedication.
- . School administrators and teachers should take school attendance of pupils more seriously and refer absentees to the school counsellor.
- .School counsellors should handle cases of absenteeism and girl – child education with all dedication.
- .Government should sponsor seminars, workshops that will be organised to help alienate poverty in the community.

Determinants of Pupils' School Attendance in Plateau State, Nigeria

. Government should enact a law against withdrawal of children from school without any just reason

REFERENCES

- Elaigun, O. P. (2006). The Girl – Child and Rights to Qualitative Education in Nigeria: Implication for Guidance Services Programme. In Journal of Nigeria Academy of Education, Nigeria: Abdul –Shedam Press Ltd.
- Esan (1996). Education What next? In the Progress of Nigerian Children, Lagos, Africa Book Builders Ltd.
- Federal republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education (4th Edition): Lagos: Nerde Press.
- Malcom H. Wilson, V. and Kirk, s. (1995). The SCRE centre university of glosgow Research Report no. 424.
- Mangvwat, B (2006). Politics of Basic Education and Gender Issues. In journal of Nigerian academy of Education, Nigeria: Abdul – Sedam Press Ltd.
- Momoh, G. O. (2009). An investigation on effect of avsenteeism on pupils' literacy Education in Plateau State, Nigeria Imlication for Counselling, An unpublished Article.
- Nwagwu, N. A. (1976) UPE Issue, Prospects and Problems, Benin – city; Ethiope publishing corporation.
- Onabanjo (1996)
- Roget's (1995). The New Thesaurus (5th edition), New York Houghton Mifflin company.
- UNICEF (1990). Education for all no excuses, New York: Authur
- UNICEF Report (2002). Education for all New York.
- Universal Basic Education (UBE) 1998