

Parental Attitudes and Girl - Child Education in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was designed to find out parental attitudes towards Girl-child Education in Edo State. A sample of four hundred and fifty (450) participants were randomly selected from Benin metropolis. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents from all works of life. The instrument used for data collection was a likert scale questionnaire titled "Parental attitude towards girl child Education". The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using t-test of independent sample and one- way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the hypotheses, all at alpha level of 0.05. Findings revealed that parents have positive attitude towards girl-child education. But parents from the southern part of Nigeria residing in Benin Metropolis were more disposed to girl child education than those from the northern parts. And also results showed that parents who are Christians have better attitude towards girl-child education. It was therefore recommended that parents' attitude could be enhanced through enlightenment campaign and adult literacy program.

Keywords: Girl-Child, Education, Parental attitude, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The girl child education has become a major issue in most developing countries especially in Nigeria in which Edo State belongs. In Nigerian culture, there is the belief that women are second class citizens. Women are traditionally believed to be weaker sex and therefore need the support and protection of men. Many parents have the attitude that educating girls is a waste of time and money because they will eventually be married out and their education would only profit their husbands and their families. Furthermore, parents believe that boys will become the breadwinners of their families and consequently must be educationally empowered for the task ahead. Girls were considered a risk to educate because they were vulnerable to physical and sexual harassment.

According to Ekejiuba (2011), the issue of poverty has further aggravated the situation of girls' lack of access to education because some parents when faced with scarce resources choose to educate boys rather than girls. These traditional beliefs and parental poverty have been found to foster negative attitudes which limit parents support for girl child education. Other hindrances to girl child education in Nigeria according to Olumukoro and Omiunu (2011) includes cultural inhibitions, erroneous interpretations of religious injunctions, traditional practices, early betrothal of girls in marriage, gender insensitivity to educational environments, societal preference for the male child and over burdening of the girl-child with household chores and labour. Without parental support, any efforts to improve girl child education will be greatly hindered.

Education is a fundamental right for all including girls and women. Women according to UNESCO (2007) through education could contribute to the improvement in the standards of living not only to their immediate families but to the society in general. Girls' education does not only empower girls, but it is the best investment in national development. The UNICEF document emphasized that education helps the girl to be self confident, participate effectively in the society and protect them from HIV/AIDS and other sexual exploitations. It further asserts that girl's education also helps in reducing children and maternal mortality rate and controlling diseases and improving health status. The realization of the need for education for all segments of the world's population has intensified global attention to education for all. Goal 2 of Education For All (EFA) according to Imhabekhai (2011) provides that member state shall ensure that by 2015 all children particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. Adenipekun (2009) reported that 10million school age

children in Nigeria are out of the formal school system with more than 60percent of this figure being girls residing in the northern part of the country.

Concerted efforts are being put in place by governments and other interest groups on girl child education. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2004) clearly stated that equal educational opportunities should be given to every Nigerian child irrespective of gender or location of the recipient. Parajuli and Acharya (2008) noted that Gender equality in education, which is supposed to be achieved by 2015 (both formal and non formal) is however not only about ensuring access to education for girls and women, but more importantly, the completion of good quality education for both boys and girls so that they can use their education to have a convincing positive effect on their own lives and in their communities. The Pan African conference on the education of girl child marked a mile stone in meeting challenges of achieving education for all in 21st century. Drawing strength from Pan African conference on the education of girl child, the National task force on girl child education was inaugurated on 28th October 1993 under the umbrella of the National Women Commission(NWC) now federal ministry of women affairs and youth development. Similarly, the UBE was inaugurated in 1999 which geared toward the provision of compulsory education to all Nigerian children. Currently, the Girls' Education Project (GEP) which was launched in December 2004 in partnership with UNICEF has recorded tremendous gains in girl child education as well. The question is; Have parents responded favorably to these invitations of girl child education? Despite these notable and encouraging efforts made by government, there seemed not to be positive attitudes of parents towards girls' education. Women are still marginalized in terms of education. UNESCO(2005); Oleribe (2002) and Ekejuba (2011) discovered that women in Nigeria are harder hit in poverty than men due to disparity in education and the prevalence of early marriage which tend to further impoverish women and subject them to statutory discrimination. Certain socio-cultural practices also prevent girls from having access to western education. There is a general belief and fear that educated women might not be able to have children and might not be submissive to their husbands, this has also led to marginalization of girls in education.

2. Research Problem

In the urban center especially in Benin metropolis, girls are observed to be the ones frequently engaging in petty trading such as hawking pure water, groundnut, garden egg, bread and so on during school period in order to make extra income for the family. Many parents find that the opportunity cost of education is too high. Therefore, the income from such activities contributes towards raising the family's standard of living. Worst still, girls have been the victims of neglect as a result of cultural practices and traditional norms. There are still some cultural practices such as early girl marriage and girl initiation which aimed at preparing them for woman hood and marriage at the expense of their formal education. The tables below show the disparity between males and females enrolment between 2006 and 2010 in junior and senior secondary schools.

Junior Secondary School enrolment between 2006 and 2010 in Nigeria

	Schools	Males enrolled	Female	Mf total	F%
A 2006					
Public Schools	8.183	1,494m	1.148	2.642	43.4%
Private schools	2,432	159,332	132,282	291,614	45.3
B 2010					
Public schools	2,561	2,260m	1.842m	4.124m	45.2
Privates schools	878	443,453	441,663	885,016	49.9
Total	3,439	2,703m	2.306m	5.010m	46.0

Senior Secondary School enrolment between 2006 and 2010 in Nigeria

Year	Males Enrolled	Females	Total MF	F%
2006	1.021	.770m	1.791	42.9
2010	1.304	1.586m	2.890	54.8
(public schools)	492,053	378,223	879,194	43.5
(private schools)	181,651	188,253	369,904	50.0%

Source: Adopted from Nwagwu (2014), Key Note address at the conference organized by Faculty of Education, University of Benin. P. 21

Such aforementioned facts make people to cast doubts on whether parents still hold to their culture and social status with regards to educating their girl child even when education through UBE has been made free and compulsory to all in Nigeria. This paper is therefore aimed at investigating current parental attitudes towards girl child education.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess parental attitudes towards girl child education in Edo state specifically to determine if differences exist in the attitude of parents as a result of income level, religion and region (north and south). The study therefore sought to answer the following research question and test these hypotheses.

- What is the attitude of parents towards girl child education?

3.1 Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents of low and high income group towards girl child education.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents from northern and southern Nigeria towards girl child education.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents of different religions towards girl child education.

4. Method

A total of 450 respondents were purposively sampled from Benin metropolis. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive research survey. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire titled "Parental attitudes towards girl child education". The instrument designed has two sections: Section A deals with demographic information about parents while section B is likert scale instrument requiring respondents to tick appropriate column regarding girl child education.

The instrument was validated by three experts in Faculty of Education while the Cronbach alpha was used to analyze data collected through pretesting of the instrument to thirty respondents who were not part of the study. A reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained.

The instrument was administered by the researchers to sampled parents living in Benin metropolis. The data collected were analyzed with t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at the significant level of 0.05.

4.1 Data Analysis

Research question 1: What is the attitude of parents towards girl child education?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of parents' attitude towards Girl child education.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Test Mean	Decision
Attitude	447	40.91	6.07	37.5	Positive

From the table, the mean 40.91 is greater than the test mean 37.5. Therefore it is clear that parents have positive attitude towards girl child education.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents of high and low income level towards girl child education.

Table 2: Differences in the attitude of parents towards girl child education based on income.

Variable income	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value	Sig (2 tailed)
High	155	40.92	5.71	420	-0.134	0.894
Low	267	41.00	6.49			

$\alpha=0.05$

The data in Table 2 showed that in comparing attitude of parents of different income level towards girl-child education, the t-statistics revealed that there was no significant difference $P > 0.05$. Therefore hypothesis is retained. There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents of different income levels towards girl child education.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents from Northern and Southern Nigeria towards girl-child education.

Table 3: Difference in the attitude of parents towards Girl-child education based on location.

Zone	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value	Sig (2tailed)
North	81	35.86	7.26	426	-8.872	.000
South	347	42.10	5.27			

The Data in the table 3 showed that in comparing the attitude of parents from North and South residing in Benin metropolis towards girl-child education, t- statistics revealed that there was a significant difference, in favour of parents from the southern part of Nigeria. This led to the conclusion that parents from the south have favourable attitude towards girl-child education than those from the North.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents of different religions towards Girl-child education.

Table 4: Difference in the attitude of parents towards Girl-child education based on religion.

Religion	N	Mean	SD
Islam	121	38.45	7.69
Christianity	323	41.82	5.09
African Traditional Religion	3	42.00	.000

A summary of Analysis of Variance of table 4 above.

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Between Group	1002.656	2	501.328	14.404	.000
Within Group	15425.941	444	34.804		
Total	16455.591	446			

Table 4 shows analysis of variance in the attitude of parents of different religion towards Girl-child education. The F ratio produced 14.404 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, there is significant difference in the attitude of parents of different religion towards girl-child education. It can therefore be said that parents who are Christians have better attitude towards girl-child education.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that parents have positive attitude towards Girl-child education. The findings of this study contradicted that of Egun (2009) who noted that women are still been marginalized in terms of education and sees is as a waste of time and money, because they will eventually be married out and their education would profit only their husband and families. The change in attitude of parents could as a result of change in the roles of women in the contemporary society. Women now have to complement their husbands in terms of improving the standard of living in their immediate families.

The study showed no significant difference in the attitude of parents of high and low income group towards girl-child education. This result could have been influenced by the increasing liberalization of access to education and declining discrimination against females in contemporary society. And this according to Kazaure (2005) is leading to educational empowerment and socio-cultural emancipation of families. He noted that in some cases, women are household heads especially in towns where they have become wealthy and exposed to professional practice. Another factor influencing the findings of the study is that universal basic education is made free and compulsory. This is well stated in the "The Child Right Act, 2003 Section 15 which provides that the child has the right to compulsory and free

primary education".

The study also indicated that parents from the South have favourable attitude towards girl-child education than those from North. The reason for this finding could be that early marriage is still being practiced in the Northern part of Nigeria. According to Kazaure (2005) young girls are usually married out between the ages of 11 – 13 years. These teenagers are given out for marriage with the hope of retaining their Virginity. This cultural value has made girls to be victims of child of forced marriage. This situation has resulted in higher illiteracy rate among women in the northern part of Nigeria than in the south. Women in the south are now adequately represented in teaching, management and governance. This to a great extent has encouraged girl child education. Osokoya (2008) citing Ezio (2005) reported that about 30% of Nigerian teenagers drop out of school having begun child bearing before the age of 18. The emerging data on the incidence of teenage pregnancy as noted by Osokoya (2008) indicates a higher rate in the North East and North West zones of 40%, 41% and in the South East and South West zones respectively.

The study further found out that Christian parents have better disposition towards girl child education than muslim parents. What must have informed this result is that many young girls especially in Islamic culture are subjected to early marriage by parent before they can acquire or complete formal basic education. According to Imhabekhai (2011) some culture believe that the "purity" of the young bride is cherished and can only be guaranteed if the girl gets married at a tender age and many married women still stay in Purdah according to Islamic way of life. Therefore, the need to acquire education does not arise. The findings collaborates with Adenipekun (2009) as quoted in Imhabekhai (2011), that indicated that ten million school age children are out of the formal school system in Nigeria with more than 60% of this figure being girls residing in the Northern part of the country.

6. Conclusion

It is generally believed in Nigeria that the best education for the girl child is such that prepares her for a good wife and motherhood, raising children and providing family care. The attainment of accelerated sustainable development in the world and particularly in developing countries of which Nigeria is inclusive require active participation of all the citizens including male and females. In this study, there were differences in parental attitude towards girl-child education. Their attitude were influence their socio-economic status, their location and religious and socio-cultural beliefs among others. In all these, parents residing in Edo state generally have positive attitude towards education of the girl child. This disparity in the findings especially with parents from the Northern pat of Nigeria and those of them who are muslims could be attributed to ignorance. Since basic education is free and compulsory, the girl-child should be allowed to realize her potentials and improve her quality of life.

7. Recommendations

The right of the girl-child to free primary and secondary education must be protected by government. It is recommended that strict enforcement of the legislation that compels parents to enroll all children including the girl child to formal basic education be carried out.

Parents' positive attitudes towards girl-child education could be increased and improved through enlightenment campaign and adult education programme. Parents should be encouraged to attend adult programme and this can be enforced through community leaders.

Government should make girl-child education free and more attractive by enforcing the mid-day meals programme in all the states. This will help to reduce family expenditure on the child especially in the face of poverty that is prevalent in our societies.

Incentives by way of scholarship and prize awards through government and NGOs should be instituted to motivate girls in formal and non-formal educational system. This will also encourage parents in their responsibility towards girl child.

There is also the need to strengthen Non-formal school programme to cater for girls who dropped out of school as a result of pregnancy.

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