

GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION AND ITS SOCIO- ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

By

Elewa, Cecilia

**Department of Educational Foundations
University of Port Harcourt
Rivers State**

Abstract

Girl-child education refers to the empowerment of the girl-child with a view to equipping her to face the challenges and demands of the society she finds herself. This paper therefore examines the socio-economic implications of the girl-child education in Rivers State. It employs two research questions to guide the research with 0.05 level of significance established for hypotheses. A sample size of 620 participants was selected across the senatorial districts in Rivers State out of a population of 32,809 by employing a proportional and stratified random sampling technique. The instrument titled “Socio-Economic Implication and Girl-child Education Questionnaire” (SIGEQ) was drafted for data collation. It was validated using content and face validity and reliability ascertained employing the test-retest approach with reliability index found to be 0.76 through the Pearson product correlation coefficient. This study employed mean and standard deviation to carry out analysis of the research questions while revealing that socio economic challenges such as poverty, teenage pregnancy, socio-cultural practices as well as early marriage significantly affect the education of the girl-child. The paper recommended amongst others that the girl-child should not be discriminated with regards to health care, enlightenment, culture as well as political affairs and sensitization campaigns be put in place to educate relevant stakeholders on the benefits of educating the girl-child.

Keywords: Girl-child education, socioeconomic implications and sustainable development

Introduction

According to UNESCO report in 2003, female make up approximately 50% of the world’s active population. They have the potential to contribute significantly to the national development of any country in the areas of agriculture, manufacturing, transportation and distribution. As such, there is need for women to be enlightened and equipped to contribute their own quota to the sustainable development of any

society they find themselves. Education of women particularly the girl-child has continued to challenge nations globally. This is as a result of social and economic challenges that most countries specifically developing countries face through discrimination in practically every aspect of lives making them victims of numerous traditional/cultural beliefs and practices. The implication is that they are exposed to segregation, discrimination and

suffer from inferiority complexes as they are reduced to stay in the kitchen. To set them free from these discriminatory and negative practices there is need for them to acquire education that equips them with the ability to differentiate between superstitions and objective practices as well as liberate them from the strangles of poverty while developing their capabilities to contribute their quota to their nation of residence. Education of the girl-child has the potential to becoming a self-sufficient person who has more decision and control over her actions (Adedokun et al, 2010). According to Esomonu (1999) “we need women to create blissful homes, have well educated and well-behaved children. It is after building a home, that the task of national building can be a success”. As such, it can be deduced that education must start from the girl-child which supports the adage quoted by Onyido (2011) which says “educate a man, you educate an individual, but educate a woman, you educate a nation”. This adage therefore summarizes the importance and significance of education to the girl child, humanity and the entire nation because focus on education guarantees the future of generations. If all barriers obstructing the growth and emancipation of women are eliminated, Alkali (2000) opines that “women can lead, lead to the battle, if necessary fight for her society and win for

her people”. In essence, as a result of education, a girl’s self-awareness, self-assertiveness within the society as well as consciousness to engage in the development of her nation is increased (Awe, 1992). Hence, it is imperative that special attention should be dedicated to the education of the Girl-child as this will not only empower the girl-child but also put the nation on the path of advancement.

Concept of the Girl-Child

The girl child can be defined as a female offspring who is between the age of birth to eighteen years. Most cultures view it as the stage prior to when they turn to adults. Onyido (2011) posits that it covers the period during their crèche, nursery (0-5 years), primary (6-12 years) as well as the period of secondary school (12-18 years). As such during this phase, the young girl-child is under the supervision, care of an adult who can be her sponsor, guardian, parent or older sibling. It is in this phase that the process of physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional development begins (Onyido, 2011; Adekola et al, 2016).

The idea behind education of the girl-child integrates the needed attitudinal and cultural training that her guardian or parent may offer her at home in order that they become useful, capable and respectful

citizens of their societies and country in general. it encompasses in addition the vocational training and teaching in skills such as sewing, baking, weaving, interior decoration, computer training as well as make up to mention but a few.

However, a number of socio-economic implications impact girl-child education such as:

1. Financial challenges of families
2. Early Marriage
3. Societal expectation towards the Girl-Child
4. Teen Pregnancy

Financial Challenges of Families

In developing countries such as Nigeria, poverty has been identified as a significant influencer in the education of the girl-child. Poverty has forced families to make choices between educating the male or female children and as a result of patriarchal prejudice in the African society, the male child is usually chosen over the female child. Thereby, under-equipping the girl-child for the demands of the society.

Early Marriages

In most African societies, the practice of early girl child marriage has been practiced. It is estimated that about 16 million girls get married globally (WHO,

2018). This hinders the education attainment of girls because many of them are forced to drop out of school to meet the demands of their matrimonial home.

Societal Expectation Towards the Girl-Child

Scholars have long opined that societal expectation has critically impacted the education of the girl-child. For instance, societal expectations for marriage sees parents pressure their girls to go into marriage rather than chase their careers. According to Bayisenge (2010) the failure of their daughters to get married in African societies exposes parents to ridicule and condemnation from these societies.

Teen Pregnancy

In typical African societies, teenage pregnancy is frowned upon and this leads to parents view marriage as means of avoiding early pregnancy. It is believed that the earlier a girl gets married the less likely she gets pregnant (Brambaifa child marriage). The result of these pregnancies lead to denial of the opportunity to obtain education and in most cases leaves the girl-child traumatized by the experience.

Statement of the Problem

Most societies are challenged by a number of socio-economic issues for instance, rising levels of poverty, ignorance,

inflation, little of no regard for the rights, rising case of teenage pregnancies, early marriages to mention but a few. This has particularly affected the life of the girl-child who has continued to experience stigmatization, denial of their rights, victims of traditional/cultural practices as a result of these socio-economic issues which consequently have implications on the education of the girl-child. This is worsened by the patriarchal influenced society in most African societies.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of socio-economic implication on the education of the girl-child in Rivers State. The study primarily focuses on the following objectives:

1. Examining the extent of relationship that exists between poverty levels of families and the education of the girl child.
2. Examining the relationship between early marriage of teenagers and the education of the girl child in Rivers State of Nigeria

Research Questions

The researcher generated the following questions to guide the study:

1. Is there any relationship between poverty levels of families and the

education of the girl child in Rivers State of Nigeria?

2. What is the relationship between early marriage of teenagers and education of the girl-child in Rivers State of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between poverty levels of families and the education of the girl child in Rivers State, Nigeria

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between early marriage of the girl child and the education of teenagers in Rivers State of Nigeria

Methodology

This study was limited to investigating the socio-economic implications of the girl-child education in Rivers state of Nigeria. To this effect, the study extensively examines the extent of relationship that exists between socio-economic challenges such as poverty levels of families, early marriages, teenage pregnancy and the education of the girl child. Rivers state was chosen because of its position as the treasure base of the nation. The study was carried out among UBE pupils from various secondary schools in Rivers state

with particular focus placed on the 32, 809 female students in these schools (Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board - RSSSB). Employing proportional and stratified random sampling techniques, a sample size of 620 was selected.

A zoning technique was employed in selecting the sample with a view to ensuring equal representation across the West, East, North and South senatorial zones, this allocated 205 respondents to each zone. A self-designed instrument or data collation titled “Socio-Economic Implication and Girl-child Education

Questionnaire” (SIGEQ) containing two parts tagged: “A” and B” was used for data collection. The four-point likert scale was employed as mode of response to the instruments and a criterion mean of 2.5 adopted. The reliability of the instrument was carried out through the test-retest method and using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics the reliability index of 0.76 was obtained, while the validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts. The research questions were analyzed employing mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD).

Analysis of Result

Research Question One: Is there any relationship between poverty levels of families and the education of the girl child in Rivers State of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation on the relationship between poverty levels of families and the education of the girl child in Rivers State of Nigeria

S/No	Items	\bar{x}	S.D	Decision
1	Poverty influences most parents choices in giving their girl-child opportunities for education.	3.3	0.9	Accepted
2	The level of education of parents influences the education of their girl-child.	2.7	1.0	Accepted
3	Poor people do not have the basic necessities to educate their girl-child.	3.0	0.8	Accepted
4	Education is central to development	3.2	1.1	Accepted
5	Policies on education can overcome the impact of poverty on the girl-child.	3.1	0.9	Accepted

N = 620, criterion mean = 2.5

From table 1 it can be deduced that propositions 1, 2, 3,4 and 5 were all

accepted with mean scores of 3.3, 2.7, 3.0, 3.2 and 3.1 respectively. As such, there is

a relationship between poverty levels of families and education of the girl child.

In support of this finding, Ucha (2010) states that a major consequence of poverty is poor education of the girl-child education. Education may play an instrumental part in reducing poverty. According to the World Bank, education forms the basis of development. It enhances advancement economically, promotes productive nationally as well as encourages innovation and instills values of democracy and social cohesion. Ucha further noted that in Nigeria, the population with no education account for

most of the poor. The education system in Nigeria can be regarded as a failure compared to other countries in the world. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has a right to education”. This right to education has been denied to many Nigerians of which many of them can be considered invisible to the society now. This deprivation of education applies more to females than males, because they are considered the inferior sex. Hence, educating them is seen as unnecessary as they are expected to marry as early as possible.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between early marriage of teenagers and education of the girl-child in Rivers State of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation on the relationship between early marriage of teenagers and education of the girl-child in Rivers State of Nigeria

S/No	Items	\bar{x}	S.D	Decision
6	Early marriage is encouraged by poverty.	3.5	0.9	Accepted
7	In certain parts of the country, early marriage of the girl-child is allowed.	3.4	1.1	Accepted
8	Early marriage of the girl-child is allowed to preserve the value of virginity.	3.2	0.9	Accepted
9	Early marriage is encouraged by tradition and religious beliefs	3.2	1.2	Accepted
10	Early marriage of the girl-child impacts her education.	3.8	1.1	Accepted

N = 620, criterion mean = 2.5

Table 2 indicates the extent early marriages of the girl child impacts the

education of the girl child. From the table therefore, it can be deduced that items 6, 7,

8, 9 and 10 with mean scores of 3.5, 3.4, 3.2, 3.2 and 3.8 respectively were all accepted. This indicates that there is a relationship between early marriages of the girl child and the education of the girl child.

This finding tallied with the view of Erulkar and Bello (2007) who opined that early marriage of teenagers exist in some parts of Northern Nigeria, South East and South-South Nigeria. The reason for this acceptance is targeted at preserving the virginity of the teenager as a result of fears about pre-marital sexual activities in order to mitigate or eliminate promiscuity of the girl-child, and other socio-cultural and religious norms. Furthermore, they Erulkar and Bello state that because of the lack of knowledge and selfish nature, in most cases they overlook the adverse impact these practice have on the girl-child and the advancement of the community. It is disturbing that the girl-child is helpless and cannot be resist these offers. As such, the negative affects of marrying early on the girl-child impacts the wellbeing of the girl-child in that, it impedes the education, economic empowerment and awareness on reproductive health services of the girl-child. These factors enables the girl-child make informed judgments, improve the

capability to leverage resources and take part in decision making within the community.

Conclusion

Girl-child education is one of the most important tool and investment that could be used for the future of any country. It increases a woman's opportunities of obtaining a well-paid job, raising a healthy family, preventing the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, STIS/STDS to mention but a few. The study focused on the socio-economic implications of the education of the girl child in secondary schools in River State. This study sort to investigate how poverty, early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect the education of the girl child. The result of the findings presented and discussed above clearly indicate that all the dependent variables (poverty levels of families, early pregnancy) had a direct significant relationship with the independent (variable education of the girl child).

Recommendations

Based on the results from the findings and conclusions reached the following recommendations were proffered:

- The Government should introduce policies that encourage the education

- of the girl-child such as free education for the girl-child particularly in rural areas.
- The girl-child should be allowed to acquire a sound education with a view to enabling her free herself from the shackles of societal prejudice.
- The girl-child should be free from forced marriage and allowed to make her choice as an adult.
- Policies should be introduced by policy makers that deter parents from educating their male offspring's alone.
- The Government and non-governmental agencies should introduce programmes that sensitize the populace on the benefits of educating the girl child.

References

- Adedokun, M.O.; Ekundayo, H.T.; &Gbenro, A.I. (2010). Girl-Child Education: A critical Issue for National Development. *Continental J. Arts and Humanities 2: 25-31*.
- Adekola, P. O., Akanbi, M. A., &Olawole-Isaac, A. (2016).A Qualitative Assessment of the Effects of Child Marriage on Female Education and Entrepreneurship in Northeastern Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Multidisciplinary Studies ISROSET*, 2(1), 7-15.
- Alkali, Z. (2000). Female Empowerment and National Development: A Perspective. *Nigerian Journal of Development 1 (1&2), 1-11*.
- Awe, B. (1992). (ed): *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspectives*. Lagos: SankorelBookcraft.
- Erulkar, A. & Bello, G. (2004).The Experiences of Adolescence in Rural Amhara Region, Ethiopia.UNFPA, UNICEF, and Population Council. Population Council, New York.
- Esomonu, P.M. (ed.) (1999). Women Education for Active Participation in the Next Millennium.*WICE Book of Readings*, Akwa, MARPAJ Educational Research Publishers.
- Onyido, J.A. (2011). The Girl-Child Education in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Way Forward. In O. Stephen; O.C. Emma, and D.I. Ajaebo (Eds.).*Issues and Challenges in Nigerian Education in the 21st Century*, Volume 11.

- West and Solomon Corporate
Ideals Ltd.
- Onyido, J. A. &Brambaifa, A. P.
(2018).Girl-Child Marriage in the
Nigerian Society, Causes, Impacts
and Mitigating Strategies. *World
Journal of Social Sciences and
Humanities*, 4(2), 104-110.
- Ucha, C. (2010). Poverty in Nigeria: Some
Dimensions and Contributing
Factors. *Global Majority E-
Journal*, vol. 1, No.1. pp. 46-56.
- WHO (2018) Adolescent Pregnancy.
Retrieved Online
[[http://www.who.int/news-
room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-
pregnancy](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy)]
- WHO (2013) Child Marriage. Retrieved
Online
[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/ne
ws/releases/2013/child_marriage_2
0130307/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/child_marriage_20130307/en/)