



PARENTS' AND COMMUNITY'S SUPPORTS GIRL-CHILD SCHOOLING IN A LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent of support that parents provide in promoting girl-child education in Ijebu-ode local government area in terms of school materials, funding, health care, and extra-curricular facilities. The paper also reported the general attitude of the community towards girl-child education. A sample of 1167 respondents participated in the study, drawn from twenty-five junior secondary schools in the local government. A questionnaire of two sections was used to collect data. Section A consists of respondents' age and sex while section B consists of items on parents supports. Five research questions guided the study. Data collected were analysed with descriptive statistics. Findings showed that parents' support on financial commitment, health care, extra-curricular facilities, and school materials towards the promotion of girl-child education was high, but the attitude of the community towards girl-child education was still below average. The paper recommends that Government, NGO's, parents, and the larger community double their efforts in removing existing obstacles.

Key words: *Support, Denial, Girl-child, Education, Globe, Community*

Introduction

Women in Nigeria have had various challenges in order to obtain equal education in all forms of formal education in Nigeria. Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since 1948 adoption of the universal declaration on human rights. To ensure equal access to education, the Nigerian national policy on education states that access to education is a right for Nigeria children regardless of gender, religion and disability (NPE,). Before 1920, primary and secondary education in Nigeria was within the scope of voluntary Christian organization. Out of 25 secondary schools established then, three were girls only and the remainder were exclusively for boys. In 1949, only eight out of a total of 57 secondary schools were exclusively for girls and by 1960, there were 14 notable girls' school and 61 boys only (Wikipedia 2015).

In Nigeria, there are large disparities between the education that boys and girls receive, many girls do not have access to adequate education

past a certain age. There are various cultural and socio-economic issues that prevent women from having adequate access to education. Women stay at home and learn to tend their family instead of attending school. The Nigeria tradition was explained as a tradition that attaches higher value to a man than a woman, whose place is believed to be the kitchen. The Nigerian society has been dotted with peculiar cultural practices that are potentially hurtful to women's emancipation, such as early or first marriage, wife-inheritance and widowhood practice (Wikipedia 2015). In the olden days, parents did not believe in female education (when we are talking about modern or western education). They preferred to send male child to school rather than female. The general belief was that female child needed only traditional education or informal education to live her life because no matter the certificate, she is going to end up in the kitchen. It was this situation that created the clarion call for girl-child education.



Educating Girl-Child

Education is the whole process of the development of an independent and integrated personality. It entails training and acquisition of special skills, knowledge, attitude, and values needed by an individual to be responsible and which will enable him to contribute his own quota to the growth of the society of which he/she is a member. It is a lifelong process and aims at imparting skills needed to live meaningful life and for an individual to adjust well to his/her immediate environment and the ultimate world on universe in which he/she finds himself/herself (Abri and Jekayinfa, 2010). One can look at education in different dimensions, such as political, social, economic, health, religion, science and technology education etc. These aspects constitute a complete life style. Education is very important for every child whether boy or girl, since one cannot do without another. There is nothing that a boy can do that a girl cannot do. Therefore there should be no discrimination against the education of the girl child.

If we educate a girl, the overwhelming benefits extend far beyond the classroom. The impact of giving a girl in a developing country a quality education can be felt in the families, communities, and future generations (Stoltz, 2011). The sustainability and progress of all religions depend on the success of women across the globe and that "The future must not belong to those who bully women. It must be shaped by girls who go to school and those who stand for a world where our daughters can live their dreams just like our sons" (Obama 2012). USAID (2015) suggested ten top reasons why female education is important. These include literacy rates among the female. Female are most vulnerable to trafficking when they are under-educated and poor but if they are educated the problem of human trafficking will be reduced. Across the globe, women are underrepresented as voters and restricted from

political involvement. In order to resolve this, the United Nations women's programmes on leadership and participation suggests that civic education, training and all round empowerment will ease the gap of political representation. Apart from this, children of educated mothers look healthy than the children of uneducated mothers. Another reason is safe sex, that is, if girls are educated, it will serve as "window of hope" in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in the society.

A girl child is educated so as to avoid early marriage. If they receive seven or more years of education, the wedding date is delayed. Furthermore, increased in participation reduces fertility rates over the time which contributes to smaller families. Education also empowers a woman's wallet through boosting her earning capabilities. To UNESCO, (2015) a single year of primary education has shown to increase a girl's wages later in life by 20 percent. When girls are provided with equal rights and equal access to education, they go out to participate in business and economic activity; this will improve feeding, clothing and providing for entire families, in other words, it reduces poverty.

In accomplishing girl-child education, parents have their role to play. According to Dickson (2011) these comprises the following: Be a role model for learning, pay attention to what your child loves, tune into how your child learns, practice what your child learns at school, set aside time to read together, connect what your child learns to everyday life, help your child take charge of his learning, don't over-schedule your child, Keep TV to a minimum, learn something new yourself and explain to your child. The question is: How much of these and others not mentioned by Dickson do parents provide using the perspectives of school girls? Do parents support girl-child schooling maximally?



Objective of the Study

This study therefore examined the parents' support to girl-child education in terms of how they provide school materials; provide extra-curricular facilities and health care towards girl-child education. Also it looked at the general attitude of the community toward girl-child education in Ijebu-ode local government area, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study area is Ijebu-ode, which is a local government in Ogun state, south-west Nigeria. The name ijobu-ode according to history is a combination of the two persons namely; AJEBU and OLODE who were conspicuous as leaders of the original city. The city is located in south-western Nigeria, close to the A121 Highway. The city is located 110km by road north-east of Lagos. Ijebu-ode is the headquarters of Ijebu Division of Ogun State. It is the home of the paramount ruler of Ijebu Land. It has a population of 154,032. There are three tertiary institutions in the city (naijatowns, 2014).

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the parents give financial support to girl child in their education?
2. How much of school materials do parents provide for girl-child in their education?
3. What is the level of extra-curricular facilities that parents provide for girl-child in their education?
4. To what extent do parents provide healthcare for girl-child education?
5. What is the general attitude of the community towards girl-child education?

Method

Descriptive sample survey was used. The population of this study comprised all Junior secondary School female students (JSS2) in Ijebu-ode local government area. Their average age was thirteen years. Twenty-five junior

secondary schools were randomly selected out of thirty-four schools (about 74%). From each school, an arm of JSS2 class was selected by simple sampling technique. All female students in each selected class formed the participants in the study. The total sample was 1167. The instrument used was questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher to find out the extent to which parents support girl-child education financially, with school material, provide healthcare, extra-curricular facilities and how the students perceive the community's attitude to girl-child education. The questionnaire is divided into two sections, section A covers the respondents' information on age and sex while section B covers 20 items on parents' support to girl-child education. The participants responded on options that ranged from Very rare, Rarely, Occasionally, Sometimes, Frequently, Usually and Every time. The options were weighted one to seven respectively. The questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and validated by two senior colleagues. Its reliability was determined by trial testing it twice at another local government area with year two female students in public secondary schools. A correlation coefficient of 0.811 was obtained.

Findings

The descriptive statistics of level of support that parents provide to girl child education is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Parents support to girl child education

Supports	N	Mean	SD	Rank
Financial support	1167	21.66	5.92	1 st
Health care	1167	20.30	5.98	2 nd
School materials	1167	20.19	5.58	3 rd
Extracurricular facilities	1167	18.75	5.66	4 th
Community Attitude	1167	14.60	7.21	5 th

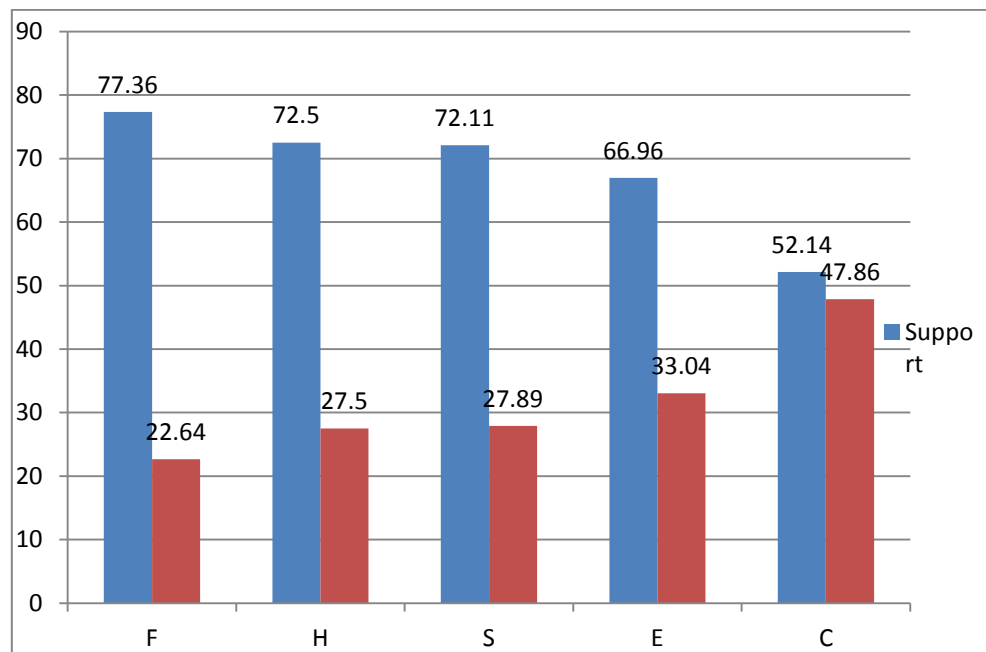


Figure 1: Bar graph showing parents support to girl child education

KEYS

- F= Financial Support
- H= Health care support
- S= School Material Support
- E= Extra-curricular facilities
- C= Community Attitude

The blue bars represent level of support while the accompanied red bars represent the level of denial. The denial is just the percentage balance of support to make 100%. From both the table and the graph, financial support tops the list and this takes the form of payment of school fees, PTA levy, extra lesson and money for mid-day meal. This came first with the mean score of 21.66(77.36%) which implies that parents financial support to girl-child education is on the high side while the remaining 22.64% amounts to level of denial of financial support, which is quite substantial. In ranking, financial support was followed by health care support with the mean score of 20.30(72.50%). The health care support tested include taking girl-child to the hospital when needed, getting them necessary female toiletries, toothpaste and fruits as part of their meals. The result of health care support shows that parents do handle girl-child health matters seriously. The balance of the percentage (27.50) is considerably very low. Provision of

school materials came third with the mean score of 20.19(72.11%). The provision of school materials takes the form of purchasing textbooks, school uniform, save money for girl-child education and concern with their performance in school. This level is still good enough considering the delicate life of school girls. The implication of the balance (27.89%) is that not all girl-child in school are being catered for when it gets to school materials.

The provision of extra-curricular facilities, takes the form of supporting the girl-child education with sporting materials, cutlasses, hoes and brooms, story books and craft materials. This came forth with the mean score of 18.75(66.96%). This indicates that parents' support is above average while 33.04% indicates that not all girls are being given the necessary extra-curricular facilities when needed.

Community support for girl-child education was rated about average with mean score of 14.60(52.14%). This is



in the form of the level of registering girl-child for schooling while the balance of 47.86% constitute negative behaviours such as engaging girl-child to do some work at home during school hours, introducing girl-child into early marriage and encouraging girl-child to wait till male-child finish his education. The above result indicates that community support is average, which shows that there are a lot of gaps to be covered by the community. The community has not been taking girl-child education important.

Discussion

The result above showed that out of five areas of supports investigated, parents do give high support to girl-child education by paying the school fees regularly, giving them money for mid-day meal, paying PTA levy and organizing extra lesson for them so as to improve their performance. This is in line with the suggestion of Akinolu and Akinpelu (2010) in a study titled Social Studies curriculum and gender sensitivity, that women involvement in education and educational development of women requires urgent attention financially because education serves as a tool for development and must be accessible equally. In the school, financial support to girl-child education will improve their attendance, punctuality, regularity and concentration. On the contrary, if a parent fails to pay the school fees it will affect the girl-child academic performance negatively instead of progressing, the reverse will be the case. Similarly, other supports like giving them money for mid-day meal, paying PTA levy and organizing extra lesson for them will promote attendance and interest in schooling. Indeed, if any of these is missing it may lead to girl-child lateness to school, absenteeism or truancy habit. The student may not be healthier enough or happy while in class and if the girl-child is missing extra lesson, definitely she will be backward in her studies. Despite the high level of financial support to girl-child schooling, the

score implies that not all parents support the girl-child education financially. In Nigeria educational system, parents need to support government in all conditions before things can work out perfectly. Education also empowers a woman's wallet through boosting her earning capabilities. To UNESCO, a single year of primary education has shown to increase a girl's wages later in life by 20percent (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore, no amount that a girl-child education will cost, parent should try to support them more financially.

In health care, parents do give support above average based on the above result. Health care will energizes students and develop their intelligent quotient (Lawal, 2015). If they are not healthy they can't sit down comfortably in class to learn. Result shows that parents are fairly concerned with health care of girl child towards their education by taking them to hospital when needed, giving them fruits as part of their meal and providing toiletries for them, especially for those who have reached the age of puberty. If a girl-child lacks any of this health care, it can lead to stealing and begging. Such a girl becomes notorious among her mates. This finding of health suggests that the future of girl-child education is bright.

Parents support on provision of school materials was also found to be satisfactory. Having all necessary materials for learning will better their performance, because it promotes presence and concentration in the class and keeping students away from bad attitude and other school malpractices. School materials support is necessary and essential because it strongly promotes high level of performance. When women are provided with such equal rights and access to education, they grow up to participate in business and economic activity, which in turn increase their earning power and income. More effects are found in combating against current and future poverty through feeding, clothing and providing for entire



families. The report on provision of school materials such as textbooks, school uniform and school fees though shows high support, the level of denial also indicates that not all girl-child are being catered for in this respect.

Parent support to girl-child in the area of extra-curricular facilities needs to improve so as not to cause set back towards the girl child education. Anything that will bring positive change or contribute positively towards the girl-child education should be provided. For example, regular provision of sportswear, storybooks, cutlasses and craft materials as at the time of need is very important. Any denial of these will lead them to be roaming about the street which can expose them to child abuse, trafficking, sex harassment, robbery, prostitution and so on.

Furthermore, the present level of community supports to girl-child education needs to be looked into. Community needs to support girl-child education collectively by encouraging parents to register girl-child in school as at when due not when they desire. The community needs to discourage girl-child to do some work at home during school hours. Community condemnation of sending them errands that will while away their time is its responsibility. Community that supports early marriage or that puts marriage as its first priority, rather than something that should come last after they might have finished their education is not promoting girl-child education. It is the community responsibility to encourage one another to educate both male and female child rather than encouraging girl-child to wait till male child finishes his education. Therefore community needs to improve on the supports mentioned above, knowing fully that if all these were fully achieved, the community will benefit immensely. It will increase literacy in girl-child education, stop human trafficking, increase women representation in politics, and avoid female early child marriage. Moreover,

there will be safe sex, smaller families, poverty reduction and increase a girl's wages later in life. The findings of Solomon (2014), in his work on gender factors in schools and sustenance of social justice and peace development in Nigeria, were corroborated in this study that community support for girl-child education needs attention. Adegoke, (2016) suggested that a zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment be put in place and policy statement must be published. The recommendation of Kolawole (2017) is relevant to this finding that participatory decision making that will involve women workers should be encouraged by management to motivate women delivery of duties, and encourage communities to further support girl-child education.

Recommendations

Based on the above results, parents have to step up their support for girl-child students by funding in the area of school materials, assisting in extra-curricular activities and giving health care. The community should also improve on their attitude towards supporting girl-child education. This study recommends that girl-child education needs support from all angles, such as nation, state, city, town, community, village and so on, because the sustainability and progress of all regions depend on the success of women across the globe. There should be equal treatment for male-child and female-child. The idea of girl-child waiting for male-child to finish his education before a girl-child could get admission into school should stop; there should be equal rights and equal access to education.

Government should organize sensitization workshops to the entire community particularly on girl-child education to give them orientation on the benefits of educating girl-child and the implications of not educating girl-child. Such sensitization should include erasing the impression that men can do some work that women cannot do, and to make them understand their roles towards nurturing girl-child so



as not to go astray. Sensitization could be by citing examples of women leaders. There are countries with women leaders such as Denmark (Helle Thorning- prime minister), Cristina Fernandez (president of Argentina), Margaret Thatcher formal prime minister of United Kingdom (Time, 2016). In Nigeria we have female leaders as ministers, deputy governors, commissioners, vice chancellors and so on. As at today Mrs Kemi Adeosun is the minister for finance in Nigeria. Dr Okonjo Iweala had served in such capacities before. Government and NGO's, should seek to the eradication of child abuse, human trafficking, girl -child early marriage, sexual harassment and other social problems that keep girl-child education low.

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