

# FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST THE GIRLCHILD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*The paper discusses the concept of girl-child education, right of child education, with the benefit of girl-child education. The important of girl-child education to the development of any cannot be overemphasized. There is a saying that “if you educate a girl, you educate a family and nation”, however in Nigeria, the education of the girl child is hampered by various factors subsumed into, social exclusion, location of the school, cultural biased and religion, etc. It is observed that this factor hinders the girl-child access to education. To solve this problem it is suggested that there should be a re-orientation in societal preference for the male-child especially as modern development has proved that girls (women) are in no way inferior to boys (men) amongst others. The paper concluded that educations the right of every girl-child.*

**Keywords:** *Girl-child education; girl-child’s, cultural and religious practices, early marriage*

## **Introduction**

Education is the process of acquiring the knowledge, skills, required to be self-sufficient in life. Asiegbu, Okorji, and Bosah, (2014) opined that education inculcates in individual knowledge, skills, good character, and desirable values which will enhance development and lead to self-actualization. Education is a human right, therefore every citizen both male and female must be given the chance to seek educational programme

considered worthwhile by the Nation. Edynyang(2000) stated that education has proven to be a key determinant of social change. Through education, one develops insight for critical thinking and effective judgment. Hence it is observed that Nigerian women are not given equal access to education in the same vein pointed out that the girl child in Nigeria has limited access to education. According to United Nations International fund (UNICEF 2009), education is the right of every girl everywhere and also the key to transforming both the life of girl and the life of her community. Girls without education are denied the opportunity to develop their full potential and to play a productive and equal role in their families, their societies, their country and their world at large. Education therefore becomes an important tool available to empower women with in the family and within society .The global figure for out of School children is estimated at 121 million, 65 million are girls with over 80 percent of these girls in sub-sahara Africa including Nigeria (UNICEF, 2007). Over 5.5 million girls are out-of-school (UNESCO, 2014).

According to Stronquist (2000) politically, the girl-child is relegated to the background in the society. They are in most cases under-represented in the decision making process because of the notion that, a woman's place is in the kitchen. The problems also compounded by the girl-child's deficiency in educational qualification. Today, girl-child education is a matter of concern for nations in the world. Girl-children are discriminated against thereby making it difficult for them to exercise their rights. A number of negative thoughts and actions are expressed on the girl-child which includes; they are victims of various traditional and cultural practices. To set the girl-child free from all these negative hold, there is need to provide her education that will give her sound mind to reason, to liberate her from poverty, and develop her as well as the nation in which she lives. With education, the girl child can become a self-sufficient adult who has more decision and control over her life. Girl's education is good economics. It is the best investment in a country's national development. We know this. Educating girls enhances growth rates and reduces social disparities. Women with higher educational qualifications are more likely to be in formal wage employment than those with only primary schooling (NPC, 2009). Therefore the paper seeks to find out factors militating against the girl- child education in Nigeria.

### **The concept girl-child**

The girl child is a biological female offspring from birth to 18 years of age. The National Child Welfare Policy (1989) as cited by Ada (2007) defines the girl-child as a female below 14 years of age. Offorma (2009) defines the girl-child as a

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biological female of offspring from birth to eighteen(18) years of age. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescences ages of development. Furthermore, Mvendaga, Ifeanyichukwu and Apine(2014)defined the girl-child as a young female person who would eventually grow into a woman and marry. **Benefits of Child Girl Education** According to UNICEF, (2004) the benefits extend beyond the girl in affecting her family and the society as a whole, the benefits to society include enhanced economic development, education for the next generation, healthier young girls and families and fewer maternal deaths. Uzoma (2013) opined that women's education leads directly to better reproductive health, improved family health, economic growth, for the family and for society, as well as lower rates of child mortality and malnutrition. Eliza (2012) supported that women with better education shows improved family life, as they tend to have smaller families and better reproductive health planning information and services in achieving desired family size, thus increase women education influences the level of fertility, population growth, and infant and child mortality, family planning as well as improved health. Furthermore, in the words of Kobani and Nkpolu (2014) a woman's literacy also increases productivity and self-employment in the informal sector. They further stated that the educational level of rural women is linked to increased productivity in agricultural sector in many developing countries. He argues that literacy assists people to acquire skills and knowledge that help to facilitate better use of natural resources and other agricultural inputs, hereby increasing their productivity. Therefore, if the vast majority of our women are educated, their personal development can be enhanced remarkably, and their children and husbands also stand to gain tremendously.

### **Factors militating against the girl child education**

The following factors constitute hindrance to girl child education. They include:

1. **Schools Factor:** According to Ovri (2011) the school charged with the society to educate the child qualitatively. In same vein certain factors are responsible for hindering the girl child access to quality education. This, Azikiwe (2000, Onyiyama and Odeh 2001) supported stating that, the very few ones that managed to gain access is hampered by the schools. This includes the location of a school, the facilities and environment amongst others. The location of the school is determining factor towards the girl-child assess to school. The following factors are considered. Is the

school within areas unable distance? Does it have proper facilities for girls? Is it a safe environment? Is it free of violence? If not, parents are unlikely to ever send their daughter to school.

2. **Son's preference:** A study in the southern part of Adamawa state revealed that fathers are deliberately not allowing their daughter to go to school because they consider investment in female education as unprofitable, since the girls are likely to end up in another man's home (Abubakar, 2003).
3. **Violence:** violence against girls and women has been identified as a key barrier to girls' education. Sexual harassment during educational pursuit creates serious emotional and psychological strain on the girl-child.
4. **POVERTY:** According to Ediyang(2020) Poverty is one of the most important factors for determining whether a girl child can have access to education or not. The girl child often discriminated against in terms of the quality of the schools they are sent to, and the costs parents are willing to pay for their education. The high cost of education is the biggest deterrent to families educating their daughters.
5. **Social- exclusion:** Social exclusion is an additional barrier to girls going to school. In the northern, Muslim girls are more likely to be excluded than their non-Muslim counterparts. Certain groups of girls are more likely to be excluded from school on the basis of culture, ethnicity, and religion. According to Akinbi & Akinbi (2015) stated that over the years culture has continued to play a leading role and barrier to gender equality in education in Nigeria. This could be traced to the patrilineal nature of Nigerian society that is male dominated and based on male chauvinism that subjects the women to playing the secured fiddle position to the men. According to Okafor and Arinze,(2012), Some of the cultural obstacles to women education include subjecting women to early marriage, educating the boys in place of girls, demand girls to be inferior and destined to play the roles of wife and mother. In the North, Jades and Debban, 1996 cited in Akinbi, & Akinbi (2015) stated that the principle of Islamic early marriage and special way of dressing for females have also been seen as contributing much to keeping many girls away from schools especially in the North. This Clough and Lawin in Awoniyi(2001) supported by stating that Islam has been associated with low participation of female in schools.

## **Conclusion**

Education in any normal society is accepted as an instrument to power, prestige, survival, greatness and advancement for men and women. Girl-child education remain a veritable tool in nation development. Thus development of any society would be grossly lopsided if the girl-child is not given quality education. Girl-child with basic education could easily gain employment in the formal labour force and therefore contribute not only to her family income but the National GDP. When girls are gainfully employed, they provide financial support to their families especially during economic recession hence an educated woman with a good earning power can help reduce the financial problems of the family and thus avert frustration and other financial problems.

Kofi Annan (2001) said in respect of Girl-Child Education that “No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings and re-investment at the family, community and ultimately country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works. It is a long-term investment that yields on exceptionally high return”.

## **Recommendations**

In the light of the above importance of educating the girl-child, the following recommendations were made:

Gender balanced curriculum and education policies should be established because such curriculum must consider the interest of the girl-child so that she is motivated to learn

- ❖ Government should stop Girl-child hawking should be stopped through public enlightenment and legislation.
- ❖ Government at all levels should make concerted effort to alleviate poverty at the grassroots, as this will undoubtedly overcome the challenge of not sending the girl-children to school by parents for reason of poverty.
- ❖ Parents should be enlightened to encourage the girl-child to acquire basic education, at least, that will make her reliant and to secure a better future for her.
- ❖ Also there should be a re-orientation in societal preference for the male-child especially as modern development has proved that girls (women) are in no way inferior to boys (men).
- ❖ Governments should also make a promulgation by rising the age of marriage for girls to at least twenty (20) years of age or above.

- ❖ Government should strengthen non-formal education as it offers a chance to continue education, empowering adult women—building their confidence and education levels – can have a powerful impact on enrolling more girls in schools.  
Cultural beliefs and practices which militates against female enrolment in schools such as early marriage should be addressed There should be a re-orientation in societal preference for the male-child especially as modern development has proved that girls (women) are in no way inferior to boys (men).

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