

# **ATTITUDE OF PARENTS TOWARDS GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN KEBBI STATE**

**<sup>1</sup>OSUNRO, KOLAWOLE SIYANBOLA., & <sup>2</sup> TYOAKAA, LAZARUS MVENDAGA**

**<sup>\*1& 2</sup>National Teacher's Institute Kaduna, Birnin Kebbi Study Centre**

**<sup>\*1</sup>Email: osunrokolawole@gmail.com**

**<sup>2</sup>Email: lazaruskyoakaa@gmail.com**

## **ABSTRACT**

The study investigated the attitude of parents towards girl-child education in Birnin-Yauri area of Kebbi State. The sample for this study was 200 parents of female Junior Secondary School Students (JSS 1-3) drawn from 2041. Five instruments designed by this researcher were used to collect information for the reasons that make parents disallow their female children from having access to free universal basic education. It was discovered that: parents' level of education, occupation and level of poverty, ignorance, religion, tradition and belief etc. are the major causes. It was recommended that counselling of the parents and community leaders' enlightenment is needed as a follow up for girl-child education, empowerment programme for the rural dwellers to enable parents earn income, provision of well-equipped schools that are children friendly and close to girl-children homes as well provision of scholarship for girls up to senior secondary school level.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Parents, Girl-Child Education

## **INTRODUCTION**

Parents are mainly influenced by traditional beliefs regarding the ultimate roles of women and girls in the society. Conventionally in Africa, the only roles available to women were those of wives and mothers. Women were thus seen as nurturers and mainly as providing support for men who worked to provide for the family. Being physically weaker, women were therefore also perceived being less capable and requiring the protection and guidance of men. These beliefs have prevailed even in current times when socio-economic changes have made tertiary education necessary, not just for the purpose of providing income earning opportunities with the degrees but also for the potential to contribute to the improvement in the standards of living of individuals, families and communities. Education is one of the basic means of human and cultural self-realization as well as a means of realizing the productive power of a nation. Education is better regarded as that form of learning which lead to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude which enable one to adjust and contribute to the environment one find him/herself. It is that formal type received in institutions, as well as the type acquired in the informal situation, incorporating adult and non-formal education. It also embodies the various form of learning which leads to acquisition of permanent literacy (Akinkahunsi, 2019).

In a similar vein, education is the light that shows the way, medicine that cures and the key which opens all doors. Its relationship with development has been well established. One of the main aims of education is to train children for day to day living, which include enabling them care for the need of the family as well as the nation. A successful education should also foster in children the joy and happiness of living and to help them to take their place in the society as well as balanced individuals. In his opinion Aliyu (2009), education improves health, productivity, bringing about empowerment and reduces negative features of life such as child labour. There have been important linkages between education and socio-economic development of any society and the international community and governments all over the world have recognized and made commitments for citizens to have access to education. The importance of education in building an egalitarian society cannot be overemphasized. Probably, this was why the National Policy on Education (2014) states that every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his or her ability. Corroborating this fact Aliyu (2009) opined that because of the importance of education, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that every person has a right to education. In 1990, the World Conference on "Education for All" which took place in Jomtien, Thailand, declared among others that every person shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.

The Christian missionaries in the 19th century opened modern educational methods, but they usually focused on boys. After early experiments they settled on promoting ideology of domestic femininity imparted through girls' schooling. Despite the colonial and post-colonial ideal that women ought to be educated just to serve decorative or child-bearing maternal roles, these institutions taught women to play central economic, corporate and familial roles in their communities. The ideals of Western education have remained while much of the infrastructure and funding left with the colonial presence. Particularly in Nigeria, formal education was seen as a policy making tool, as women's formal education has been linked to having effects on "population growth, health, nutrition, fertility, infant mortality, and changes in women's productivity and earnings." Researchers have cited some disadvantages however to this reliance on women's formal education.

Education is the key to achieving sustainable development of any nation. It is an economic, cultural and a social right. The right to education indicates the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. It therefore, becomes crucial to ensure that all girls around the world have the same chances to receive education as boys. Countries with better gender equality and less gender disparity in primary and secondary education are more likely to have higher economic growth. This is because the education of the girl-child is a key factor in the development of the country, communities and the individuals with regard to their families, employment opportunities, economic empowerment, social accomplishment and the like. According to Obanya (2004), education for women and girls, when considered from the full

empowerment perspective, has the following advantages: Self-improvement (the intellectual, psychological, technical, socio-economic and political dimensions of full empowerment through education and possibility of these leading to an improved quality of life), on the quality of family and societal life as well as for future generations; improved state of nutrition, health, child care, family welfare – laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning right from the cradle (Obanya, 2004).

Nigeria is a society which is prevalent with gender stereotypes and biases, which places a high premium on the male gender (Para-Mallam, 2010). From the moment a child is born the gender role education process begins. Male child is perceived as an asset in most Nigerian homes. For females, the belief is that they will eventually marry and ‘come under’ their husbands hence they are treated as inferior. Furthermore, to perpetuate the superiority of the male child over the girl-child, the girl-child is trained to put herself below her male siblings. In some homes, in order to make up for the financial inadequacy of the family, the girl-child is sent out to hawk in order to raise money for the family needs. Some of the girls are married off at a tender age so that the bride price will be spent on the education of the boy-child and on other family needs. In some cases, the girl-child may be given off for domestic labour in urban area for a regular income to the family. These traditional beliefs and practices have successfully provided two different developmental grounds in the same home for the growth of the boy-child and the girl-child (Ezeliora & Ezeokana, 2011).

The psychological effect of gender stereotypes and socio-cultural beliefs on the girl-child is the internalization of the low value accorded them by society (Ezeliora & Ezeokana, 2011). Most of the common stereotypes that appear to threaten the female gender include: the belief that men are stronger than women, the belief that education of women is a waste of resources, the belief that men are the bread winners (even though it is known to be untrue in our economy), the belief that an educated girl will become morally lax, the belief that a woman’s place ends in the kitchen. The belief that the male child will be a support for parents in the old age, the belief and high value placed on marriage and motherhood and their accompanying gender specific roles. These traditional practices/beliefs impose a lot of restrictions on the female gender in tradition Nigerian society especially in the northern part of the country.

It is regrettable that despite our progress as a society there is still an under estimation of the value of the girl-child. Women and girls who constitute over 50% of the nation’s population have been discriminated against and effectively denied education which is one of the fundamental human rights and a veritable tool for development and empowerment. This paper sought the attitude of parents towards girl child education in Kebbi state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effects of gender stereotypes: on the girl-child in African society, where a girl is not allowed to have access to education has conditioned girls and women to believe that women are inferior

to men, that her place is in the home and that she is therefore there to be seen and not to be heard. These stereotypical beliefs against female gender have become entrenched in the minds of girls and women as they internalize these faulty messages from authority. As a result, the girl-child suffers emotional disorientation, which at times results to feeling of insecurity and poor self-esteem (Hiuzer, 2002; Ezeliora & Ezeokana, 2011). Several studies maintain that negative stereotypes often cause negative responses, which can manifest themselves in the stereotyped individual's reactions, performance on a task, motivation, and low self-esteem. Negative stereotypes hinder peoples' ability to fulfill their potential by limiting choices and opportunities (Santrock, 2001). Despite studies conducted and funding of girl-child education by international and national bodies the problem of girl-child education still persists in some parts of Kebbi state, Nigeria particularly in Birnin-Yauri community of the state. There is need to remedy the situation hence the study was conducted.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to find out the extent to which:

1. parents' level of education contributes to girl-child education in the study area
2. parent occupation contributes to girl-child education in the study area
3. cultural and religion beliefs of parent contribute to girl-child education in the study area
4. parents' level of information awareness contributes to girl-child education in the study area
5. early child marriage contributes to girl-child education in the study area

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does the parents' level of education contribute to the girl child education?
2. To what extent does the parents' occupation contribute to girl child education?
3. To what extent do the cultural and religious belief of parents contribute to girl child enrolment and completion of Junior Basic Education?
4. To what extent does the parental level of ignorance influence girl-child enrolment in school and completion of JSS?
5. To what extent does the early marriage disallow female students from completing JSS?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized the Ex-post facto design on a population of comprising 2,041 parents of girl-children of school age ranging from 13-14. All the girls attend the Junior Secondary Schools in the community. Also, focus groups comprising teachers, parents and community leaders were contacted for input. The purposive random sampling technique was used selecting four

secondary schools consisting of 2 Day Schools and 2 Boarding schools. Using the stratified random sampling technique, 200 parents were selected from the schools (150 males and 50 females).

A well-structured questionnaire having five sections was used to elicit responses from the parents addressing the following:

1. Section A: Parents' Level of education and Girl-Child Education
2. Section B: Impact of Parents Occupation and Poverty level and Girl-Child Education
3. Section C: Parents' Cultural belief and Religion and Girl-Child Education
4. Section D: Parental level of Ignorance and Awareness and Girl-Child Education
5. Section E: Parental preference for Early Marriage and Pregnancy hindrance to Girl-Child Education

The questionnaire was validated by experts and had a 0.88 reliability index. The administration of the questionnaire was a success and was carried out following a correct design procedure. The frequency and percentage statistics was used to analyzed the data collected.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does the parents' level of education contribute to the girl child education?

**Table 1: Extent to which parents' level of education affect the girl-child education**

Variable	Frequency	%
No Education	120	60.00
Primary Education	60	30.00
Secondary Education	18	9.00
Tertiary	2	1.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From the Table 1, above 120 (60%) of the respondents have no western education at all and this predict the reason why majority of them do not appreciate value or necessity of western education for their daughters. Only 2 (1%) have NCE.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do the cultural and religious beliefs of parents contribute to low girl child enrolment and completion of Junior Basic Education?

**Table 2: Parental Occupation and poverty and girl child education**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Farming	130	65.00
Fishing	65	32.50
Trading	2	1.00
Civil Service (Government Employee)	1	0.50
Technician	2	1.00

<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.00</b>
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From Table 2, 130 (65%) of the respondents are peasant farmers followed by 65 (35%) whose occupation is fishing. Traders and technician represent 2(1%) and the least is Civil servant accounting for 1(0.5%).

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does the parents' occupation contribute to girl child enrolment and completion of school JSS?

**Table 3: Parental Cultural and Religious Belief and girl-child Education**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Tradition Religion	170	85.0
Islam	25	12.5
Christianity	5	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 revealed that 170 (85%) are traditional worshippers while 25 (12.5%) of the respondents are of the Islamic faith. The least is 5 (2.5%) are Christian.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does the parental level of ignorance influence girl-child enrolment in school and completion of JSS?

**Table 4: Parental level of Ignorance and Awareness and Girl-Child Education**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
What is UPE?	10	5.0
Have heard of UBE?	5	2.5
Are you aware of Child Right Act?	3	1.5
Are you aware that it is illegal to withdraw girl child from school?	10	5.0
Are you aware that there is free education for girl-child up to the University level in Kebbi state?	21	10.5
Do you know denial of girl-child education is a crime?	12	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that 21 (10.5%) of the respondents are aware of free education for girl-child up to the University level in Kebbi state while 12 (6.0%) acknowledge that denial of girl-child

education is a crime. Next, 10 (5.0%) know what UPE stands for and are aware that that it is illegal to withdraw girl child from school. In addition, 5 (2.5%) have heard about the UBE. Finally, 3 (1.5%) are aware of the Child Right Act.

**Research Question 5:** To what extent does the early marriage disallow female students from completing JSS?

**Table 5: Parental Preference for early marriage and girl-child Education**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Early marriage fetches high bride-price	20	20.0
Early marriage make me not to invest on girl-child education	20	20.0
It is against my tradition to allow female children to remain at home after reaching puberty	20	20.0
Allow girls to go to school can expose them to immorality	20	20.0
Early marriage enable me have many grandchildren	20	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5 showed that all items on the Table got 20%. This indicates that cultural stereotype beliefs of sending female children to early marriage and the so called benefits attached to it is highly cherished among the local people, which will not let go for any reason whatsoever.

### **Discussion of findings**

From the result, the study revealed that most parents do not have positive attitude towards the education of their girl child. Education level also affects the parent attitude towards girl child education. Parents belonging to middle class families have highest percentage awareness of scholarships related to girl child education. Parents belonging to the higher socio-economic status have more favourable attitude towards the education of their female children.

Parents' attitudes towards education play a huge role on learning and academic success of their children. Parents Attitude and Practice towards the Girl Child Education in Birnin-Yauri local government area of Kebbi State in Nigeria: The study found evidence in support of the assumption that gender stereotypes pose great threat to the girl-child and that girls suffer the consequences of a patriarchal structure that is based on inequality and injustice. Children

particularly girls are seen as very vulnerable and easily manipulated therefore they are more prone to the effects of gender stereotyping. The need to address this phenomenon and its attendant problems through open and distance learning and thus safeguard the future of the girl-child remains germane. The findings are in accordance with Offorma (2009) who stated that sub-Saharan Africa has the highest number of girls out of school among which Kebbi state is one.

Also the findings are in line with Tyoakaa et al (2014) who also stated the level of girl child out of school in Nigeria is very high and shocking. The findings further revealed that the above mentioned factors are really affecting the girl child education in Yelwa Yauri and needs to be looked into without delay. The results of this finding have added to existing factors inhibiting girl child education such as gender inequalities, early marriage, teenage pregnancy etc.

### **Recommendations**

1. Regular visit to the parents: for proper counselling on their girls' education and scholarship offer to the girl-child.
2. Employment and posting of female teachers with special allowance for those posted to the rural areas.
3. Schools should be made safe for the girl-children through the provision of separate toilets for the girls, there should be enough provision of classroom, furniture, and feeding and more so school should be close the girls' home.
4. Empowerment programmes should be established in the rural areas to address the issue of poverty.
5. Adult and Non-formal education facilities should be made available to rural dwellers at no cost.

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