

ANALYSIS OF PARENTAL CULTURAL BACKGROUND INFLUENCE ON GIRL- CHILD ENROLMENT AND RETENTIONS IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT UNITY COLLEGES OF NORTH- CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of parental cultural background on enrolment and retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions and correspondent null hypotheses. The study adopted a descriptive cross- sectional research design and the population of the study comprised 15,177 SSII female students from twenty-nine Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria out of which a sample size of 375 respondents was obtained using Multi Stage sampling procedure. Parental Cultural Background, Enrolment and Retention of Girl Child Questionnaire (PCBE&RGCQ) was developed by the researcher to obtain data from the female students of Federal Government Unity Colleges of North Central Nigeria and Proforma on Girl-Child Enrolment and Retention in Federal Government Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the formulated hypotheses were however tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. Findings from the study revealed a significance influence of parental cultural background on enrolment of girl child in Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The results also showed a significance influence of parental cultural background on retention of girl child in Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The study concluded that some numbers of factors influenced the enrolment and retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges of North Central Nigeria thereby denying them the educational opportunities that will enable them pursue their dreams and excel in life. The study therefore recommended among others that government should formulate policies that will intervene to control some outmode cultural practices that prevent the girl child from going to school or making the girl child drop out of school. The government should also come up with a legal framework that will eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and her education.

Keywords: *Cultural, Enrolment, Retention, Unity Colleges*

Introduction

Education is an important foundation that improve the status of women and has also been recognised as a fundamental strategy for development as no sustainable development is possible if women remain un-educated, discriminated against and disenfranchised. Improving and widening access to education, especially basic education, is not only an objective in itself but also accelerates social and economic advancement. The evidence is clear that any nation that invests in girls' education, it will no doubt experience enhanced economic productivity, growth and development. In fact, the World Bank has stated that there is no investment more effective for achieving development goals than educating girls-child (Mbilyini & Mbughuni, 2018). Girls-child education is therefore a vehicle that enhances economic productivity, social development, intergenerational education, social equity and

sustainability of development effort not only of the female gender but the larger society.

The importance of girl-child education to both the family and the community cannot be overemphasized. Madu and Obi (2021) asserted that, female education is very crucial for national development and the role of women cannot be under estimated. There is a general belief that 'when you educate a man, you educate one person but when you educate a woman, you educate a nation'. Similarly, Kiki (2020) emphasized that the girl child needs to be educated to acquire knowledge and skills needed to advance her status for social interactions and self-improvement. The girl child education also prepares her to face reality in the society and teaches her to be a good wife and mother. According to Nwobodo (2018), girl child education is very important for the overall development of the country. The place of women in the development of any society is fundamental such that any deliberate neglect of their education could point to danger for the entire society.

There are number of socio-cultural factors that influenced the enrolment and retention of girls' child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. Mbiti in Joseph (2017) identified four major reasons that are determinant of girl child enrolment and retention in the education system which include greater demand made on girls by their families in connection with household duties, pre-arranged marriages leading to poor enrolment or drop-out of girls from schools, the girls who were circumcised become rude to teachers seeing female teachers as their equals and uncircumcised teachers (female and male) as children thus affecting girls' enrolment and retention in secondary schools. Once the girls undergo Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), they were made to feel that they had become adults and mature. In schools, they become shy and uninterested and most of them get married and others simply drop out of school and stay at home awaiting marriage.

Generally, several factors influenced the educational opportunities of the Girl-child in Nigeria and other developing nations. These factors which are socio-cultural in nature include religious, cultural, political, economic, school and environmental factors. Tyoakaa (2018) also identified religious misinterpretation, cultural practices, income level, early marriage, illiteracy, inadequate school infrastructure as socio-cultural variables that affect girl-child education. Furthermore, ignorance, income level, culture, religion and school related factors are the main indicators that influenced girl-child education particularly in the Northern part of the country. In a similar vein, Ishaku (2021) further stated that some cultural traditions in Nigeria have a significant effect on girl's decision to enroll in school. The patriarchal system governs the hierarchy of duties for men and women in rural communities. One of the fundamental causes of gender inequality is a system that views women as inherently inferior to men. According to Ishaku (2021), a widely held opinion is that girls should stay at home to learn and do domestic duties. As a result, many parents have a bad opinion of girls attending school in the North Central part Nigeria.

Enrolment and retention are key variables in the education industry. Girl-child enrolment and retention refers to the female students who upon admission stay in schools and are provided with the necessary requirements so as to remain in school without dropping out up to the time of sitting for examinations. UNESCO (2022), estimates about 129 million girls around the world to be out of school including 32 million of primary school ages and 97 million of secondary school ages. UNESCO (2022) further announced that there were 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 years who are out of school globally. According to the statistics, India, Nigeria and Pakistan have the highest numbers of out-of-school children globally. From the statistics, Nigeria has about 20 million out of school children out of which girls account for 60% of Nigeria's 10 million out-of-school children due to some barriers such as child marriage, income level and discriminatory social norms. In Nigeria, 30% aged 9-

12 have never been to school at all (UNESCO, 2022).

Consistently, girl child education has not been without challenges. Regardless of the family background, some factors contribute to gender disparities. Some girls are unable to enroll in secondary schools to complete their education. In fact, early pregnancies, poor sanitation facilities in school and absence of support mechanisms especially for girls have contributed a lot to girls dropping out of school (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017). It is worrisome to note that the situation is often worse in rural areas where the decline in girls' commitment to school programs make their retention progress minimal and some end up at primary school level without advancing further to secondary and higher education of learning to pursue good career prospects. The proposition to these practices, as Salvatore (2019) expressed in his research that the falling in educational expenditure in African countries has been triggered by other pressing demands on government budgets and sponsored programmes which have not led to any significant improvements in living conditions in many African countries including Nigeria.

In WAEC executive summary report of 2018 Public candidates' examination in Nigeria, 1.57million candidates sat for the examination out of which 822,941 of the candidates were male while 746,595 were females. Similarly, from the summary, the researcher gathered from the report of the six North-Eastern states of Taraba State, Adamawa State, Yobe State, Gombe State, Bauchi State and Borno State, the enrolment of male and female candidates in Public examinations. It was found that a total of 11,350 males and 7,233 females enrolled in Taraba State, 27,015 and 15,172 for male and female candidates in Bauch State, 12, 664 and 9, 373 for male and female candidates in Adamawa State, 20, 266 and 14, 120 candidates in Borno State, 9,557and 6771 for male and female candidates in Gombe State and 11,819 and 5,079 for male and female candidates in Yobe State respectively. In view of the report, it is clear that male candidates were higher than the number of female candidates. The statistics of the low enrolment of the girl child in WAEC made the researcher more concerned to investigate the influence of parental cultural background on enrolment and retention of girl-child education in North-Central Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

It is a common knowledge that education is the cornerstone of all societal progress and that it must be provided to everyone, regardless of gender. The issues with girl education are a worldwide matter rather than a regional, state, national, or continental one. The most effective tool for man to control his surroundings and map out his future is education. Although there has been significant improvement in the education of girls in Nigeria over the past few decades. However, this development is still unequal and sluggish in comparison. On the one hand, disparities in geography, social class, continue to greatly affect the level of development of women's education between states in Nigeria. On the other hand, in terms of women's education, North Central Nigeria particularly continues to lack behind the rest.

The education of girl child has been a hot button subject for many years. It is still a concern in some areas, particularly in North Central Nigeria. Women have had educational disadvantage when compared to men. The issues with girls' education in North Central Nigeria, in particular, girl child is being schooled traditionally to become good housewife and are prepared for marriage below the age of eighteen years. Cultural indoctrination of hawking by the girl child is practiced over and above sending the girl child to school, some cultures believes that girls should be married rather than go to school, some believes that religion forbid a girl child from going to school, another observation is that parents believe that in face of economic hardship the girl child should be married so that the available little

resources should be used to train the boy child who will remain in the family unlike the girl child who will eventually marry. These has relegated the development of the girl child below expected level of development if schooled which has also made the development of the society where they belong and the nation to be under developed. It is said that training a girl child is equivalent to training a nation because of the impact of the girl child to herself, family and society she finds herself, if she were educated. Hence, this study is set to examine the effects of parental cultural background on enrolment and retention of girl- child in Federal Unity Colleges in North- Central Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to examine the influence of parental cultural background on enrolment and retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria.

The aims and objectives are to;

1. examine the influence of parental cultural background on enrolment of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria;
2. determine the influence of parental cultural background on retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study also raised the following research questions in line with the objectives

1. What is the influence of parental cultural background on enrolment of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of parental cultural background on retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria.

Corresponding null hypotheses were also formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

H₀₁: Parental cultural background has no significant influence on enrolment of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria.

H₀₂: Parental cultural background has no significant influence on retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria;

Methodology

This study adopted an Expo facto research design method. This design is considered most appropriate for the present study which seeks to investigate the influence of parental cultural background on enrolment and retention of girl-child in Federal Unity Colleges in North-Central zone of Nigeria. The design according to Nworgu (2015), focused on how actions that have already occurred can predict certain causes. To this end, the researcher cannot manipulate or modify actions or behaviors that have already occurred, or specific traits and characteristics a participant embodies. Furthermore, this type of design seeks to locate a cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, in this research, a sample considered to be a representation of the entire population of the study was used.

The population of the study comprises of 15, 177 female students from twenty- nine (29) Federal Government Colleges/ Unity Schools in North Central Nigeria. North Central Nigeria consists of six (6) states and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. The states are Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger

and Plateau states. The choice of these population is to assemble schools with similar structures and also to assemble respondents who are exposed to similar cultures, religion, and all the other indices of the study, how parental cultural background influences girl child enrolment and retention in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central, Nigeria.

Table 1: Population of the Study

S/N	States	Schools	No. of Students
1	FCT- Abuja	Federal Government Girls College Abaji	675
		Federal Govt College of Sci. & Techn. Orozo	367
		Federal Government College Kwali	416
		Federal Government Gils College Rubochi	559
		Federal Government Girls College Garki	853
		Federal Government Girls College Bwari	684
2	Benue	Federal Government College Makurdi	245
		Federal Government Girls College Gboko	772
		Federal Govt College of Sci. & Techn. Otukpo	331
3	Kogi	Federal Government College Kabba	397
		Federal Government Girls College Obangede	706
		Unity Secondary School Lokoja	356
		Federal Govt College of Sci. & Techn. Otobi	445
4	Kwara	Federal Government College Ilorin	381
		Federal Government Girls College Omu-Aran	1020
		Unity Secondary School Offa	404
5	Nasarawa	Federal Government Girls College Akwanga	773
		Unity Secondary School Lafia	466
		Federal Government Girls College Keana	623
		Federal Govt College of Sci. & Techn. Doma	258
6	Niger	Federal Government College Minna	338
		Federal Government Girls College Bida	793
		Unity Secondary School Kotongora	451
		Federal Govt College of Sci. & Techn. Kuta	323
		Federal Government Academy Suleja	361
		Federal Government Girls College New Bussa	593
		Federal Government Girls College Jos	556
7	Plateau	Federal Government Girls College Langtang	620
		Unity Secondary School Pankshin	411
		Total	15, 177

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study was 375 SSII female students from the eight (8) selected Federal Government Colleges in the zone. The sample size was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) methods of sample size determination. The study adopted a multi stage sampling procedure in selecting sample size for the study. In the first stage, four states were selected using simple random sampling technique and the selected states were Benue, Nasarawa, Niger and the FCT- Abuja. Simple random sampling technique was employed in order to give every state equal chance of being selected for the study. The names of the states were written on piece of papers, folded and put in a container, shuffled and the researcher drew the school with replacement (i.e. balloting with replacement). In the second stage, eight (8) schools were purposively selected from the four sampled states, with two from each state mostly Federal Government Girls Colleges. In the final stage, proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 375 SSII female students from the eight sampled schools for enumeration.

The sample for the study was presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample of the Study

S/N	States	Schools	No. of Students	Sample
1	Benue	Federal Government College Makurdi	245	17
		Federal Government Girls College Gboko	772	54
2	Nasarawa	Federal Government Girls College Akwanga	773	54
		Federal Government Girls College Keana	623	44
3	Niger	Federal Government Girls College Bida	793	56
		Federal Government Girls College New Bussa	593	42
4	FCT- Abuja	Federal Government Girls College Garki	853	60
		Federal Government Girls College Bwari	684	48
Total			5,336	375

An instrument tagged “Parental Cultural Background, Enrolment and Retention of Girl Child Questionnaire (PCBE&RGCCQ) was developed by the researcher to obtain data from the female students of Federal Government Unity Colleges of North Central Nigeria and Proforma for the Collection of data on Girl-Child Enrolment and Retention in Federal Government Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The instrument which consists of five (5) items was designed based on 4- point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA= 4), Agree (A= 3) Disagree (D= 2) and Strongly Disagree (SD= 1). It was clustered in to two segments of parental cultural background and enrolment of girl child and parental cultural background and retention of girl child in Federal Government Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The researcher visited the sampled schools with the introductory letter from the Educational Foundations Department, Nasarawa State University, Keffi seeking permission to conduct research in the sampled schools with the help of three research assistants selected from the teachers of the sampled schools. The instrument was administered and retrieved on the spot for analysis.

Mean and standard deviations were used in answering the research questions while the null hypotheses were however tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. In answering the research questions, any weighted mean below 2.50 will be considered disagree while above will be considered agree. In testing the null hypotheses, if the p-values were found to be less than 0.05, the null hypotheses will be rejected while for those greater than 0.05 will be accepted or retained.

Results

RQ1: What is the influence of parental cultural background on girl child enrolment in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the Influence of Parental Cultural Background on Enrolment of Girl Child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria

Cultural background on Enrolment	SA	A	D	SD	X	Std.D
Girl-child educational enrolment into secondary schools contributes to the growth and empowerment of women.	205	60	38	72	3.06	1.19
Cultural believes hinder girl-child enrolment into secondary schools of North Central Nigeria.	131	101	64	79	2.76	1.14
Girl-child enrolment into secondary schools is not an economic waste to the family.	147	87	66	75	2.82	1.16
Cultural practices of training only male child hinder girl-child from enrolment into secondary school.	134	115	67	59	2.86	1.07
Some cultures accept encourages the enrolment of Girl-child in secondary education.	132	108	47	90	2.75	1.17
Grand Mean					14.25	
Average Mean					2.84	

Table 3 shows the mean of students on the influence of cultural background on enrolment of girl child in secondary school of North Central Nigeria. The result shows that with an average mean of 2.84 which is more than 2.50 used as benchmark mean, respondents agreed that cultural background has an influence on enrolment of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges of North Central Nigeria.

RQ2: What is the influence of parental cultural background on retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges of North Central Nigeria?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on the Influence of Parental Cultural Background on Retention of Girl Child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria

Cultural Background on Retention	SA	A	D	SD	X	Std.D
Some parents withdraw their girls from school for marriage on the fact that, when they die, their inlaws will perform their funeral rites in a “grand style”.	150	98	50	77	2.86	1.16
Culturally, a girl child is meant to do house work, collect water and fire wood, cook and get married in earliest time possible.	147	102	57	69	2.87	1.12
Some culture believes that attending school may cause a girl not to get married as she may graduate from school at an “old age”	138	92	58	87	2.75	1.18
To some cultures, once a girl attains age of puberty she should no longer focus on education but on how to get married.	117	129	70	59	2.81	1.05
Girl child has to miss school because act as a due substitute to the mother in cases of sickness, absence or death.	135	117	52	71	2.84	1.11
Grand Mean					17.22	
Average Mean					2.46	

Table 4 shows the mean rating of students on the influence of cultural background on retention of girl child in secondary schools of North Central Nigeria. The result shows that with an average mean of 2.46 which is less than 2.50 used as benchmark, respondents agreed that cultural background has an influence on retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria

H0₁: Parental cultural background has no significant influence on enrolment of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria.

Table 5: t-test Analysis on the Influence of Parental Cultural Background on Enrolment of Girl Child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria

	N	X	Std.D	Df	T	P-value
Cultural Background on Enrolment of Girl	375	14.245	3.154	374	87.475	.000

t-test significant since $p < 0.05$ level of significance

Table 5 shows the influence of cultural background on the enrolment of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The result shows that with $t(374) = 87.475$; $p < .05$ (.000) implies that the parental cultural background has a significant positive influence on girl child enrolment in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The formulated hypothesis was therefore rejected since the p-value (.000) is less than .05 alpha level.

H0₂: Parental cultural background has no significant influence on retention of girl child in secondary schools of North Central Nigeria

Table 6: t-test Analysis on the Influence of Parental Cultural Background on Retention of Girl Child in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria

Variable	N	X	Std.D	Df	T	P-value
Cultural Background on Retention	375	14.131	3.099	374	90.935	.000

t-test significant since $p < 0.05$ level of significance

Table 6 shows the influence of cultural background on the retention of girl child in secondary schools of North Central Nigeria. The result shows that with $t(374) = 90.935$; $p < .05$ (.000) implies that cultural background has a significant influence on girl child retention in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. The formulated hypothesis was therefore rejected since the p-value (.000) is less than .05 alpha level.

Discussion of Findings

Results from the research questions one and the null hypotheses one revealed a significant influence of parental cultural background on enrolment of girl-child in Federal Unity Colleges in North- Central Nigeria. Generally, several factors influenced the educational opportunities of the Girl-child in Nigeria and other developing nations. These factors which are socio-cultural in nature include religious, cultural, political, economic, school and environmental factors. Tyoakaa (2018) identified religious misinterpretation, cultural practices, income level, early marriage, illiteracy, inadequate school infrastructure as socio-cultural variables that affect girl-child education. Furthermore, ignorance, income level, culture, religion and school related factors are the main indicators that influenced girl-child education particularly in the Northern part of the country. In a similar vein, Ishaku (2021) further

stated that traditional cultural traditions in Nigeria have a significant effect on girl's decision to enroll in school.

Findings from the research question two and the null hypothesis two also revealed that parental cultural background has significance influence on retention of girl- child in Federal Unity Colleges in North-Central Nigeria. This finding has agreed with the findings of Mbiti in Joseph (2017) which identified four major reasons that are determinant of girl child retention in the education system which include greater demand made on girls by their families in connection with household duties, pre-arranged marriages leading to drop-out of girls from schools, the girls who were circumcised become rude to teachers seeing female teachers as their equals and uncircumcised teachers (female and male) as children thus affecting girls' enrolment and retention in secondary schools. Once the girls undergo Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), they were made to feel that they had become adults and mature. In schools, they become shy and uninterested and most of them get married and others simply drop out of school and stay at home awaiting marriage.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that some numbers of factors influenced the enrolment and retention of girl child in Federal Unity Colleges of North Central Nigeria thereby denying them the educational opportunities that will enable them pursue their dreams and excel in life. These factors which are socio-cultural in nature religious misinterpretation, cultural practices, income level, early marriage, illiteracy, inadequate school infrastructure as socio-cultural variables that affect the enrolment and retention of girl-child in North central Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made inline with the findings of this study:

1. There is need for Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, Religious leaders and traditional rulers to embark on awareness and enlightenment campaigns on not only the importance of western education for the girl-child but also on the need to discard the various cultural and religious misconception that have militated against girl-child education in Nigeria over the years.
2. The government should formulate policies that will intervene to control some outmode cultural practices that prevent the girl child from going to school or making the girl child drop out of school. The government should also come up with a legal framework that will eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and her education.

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