

ENHANCING GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

RAKIYA RABE¹ (PhD) & ASMA'U ZARMA GOGARAM²

¹Department of Psychology/Counselling
Federal University of Education, Kano

²Department of Adult and Non Formal Education
Federal University of Education, Kano

¹rakiyarabemusa@gmail.com; ²asmauzarma@yahoo.com.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to critically investigate the process of enhancing girl-child education for economic recovery and security challenges in Nigeria. The paper sought to examine the concept of girl-child, girl-child education, economic recovery as well as security. Literature reviewed that girl-child education can be a tool for economic recovery and sustainable security in Nigeria if properly harnessed. Girl-child education is the key to the empowerment of the female child because it allows them to claim their rights and prepare them for the future to assume responsibility as duty bearers for the next generation. The provision of security fence in schools, security outfit at the school gate, school buses, the use of CCTV cameras and adequate legal action against girl-child abuse and other related cases can go a long way in ensuring economic recovery and security in Nigeria through a well organized girl-child education. The study however recommends a nationwide campaign to encourage girl-child education, the continuation of educational programme all levels, the pursuit of higher educational qualification through adult education programmes, provision of hygienic environment, provision of more security network to ensure maximum security, provision of more transportation systems ease transportation to schools and adoption of scholarship programmes that targets girl_child education.

Keywords: Girl-child, Education, Economic Recovery, Security, Nigeria.

Introduction

Girl-child education is an issue of concern that has not been given adequate attention. The issue cut across both the rural and urban areas in the country. Whether a girl needs to be educated or not is an unresolved issue in the latex of most cultures in Nigeria with disparities between the education that boys and girls receive (Makama, 2014). Educating girls is known to be the basis for sound economic and social development. Educating girls produces mothers who are educated and who will in turn educate their children, care for their families and provide their children with adequate nutrition.

It is a well known fact that to educate means to train the mind, character and abilities of individual. Education is a fundamental human right that should be made available to all citizens irrespective of age, sex and nationality. The importance of education in the life of an individual can never be overemphasized. The greatest favour one can do to himself or herself is to secure quality education.

Girls' education is a human right. Educating girls contributes significantly to the development of a stable, prosperous and healthy nation state whose citizens are active, productive and empowered. Women in Nigeria have had various challenges 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 the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. A woman's education is imperative to the advancement

and development of her community and country. Improving women's education can bring tremendous development in a country's economy, and society (Zymaris, 2016).

Education has the real power of transforming your life and changing it for better. It is one of the most powerful tools available to be used for success and greatness. Education is an essential part of any community, because this process promotes getting knowledge and developing skills by people. Education also means getting a degree or some level of schooling by a person. Some people are after diploma or a degree. However, that is not a true purpose of education. It is meant not only to equip a person to be able to get a job and earn some money, but also to have a constructive mind. It installs innovative ideas and ideals, set new aspirations and uncovers new horizons. It has the power of transforming lives. Even today there is such a thing called "Girl effect". Providing good education to girl-child brings transformation and empowers the entire community and country.

The best legacy to give to any female child is education. Any additional year spend in school empowers women greatly. Education is a veritable tool for the sustainable development of any economy. Education of the girl-child is very important as it can bring about great transformation in the shaping the economy of the country. Educating the girl-child can augment economic recovery and ensures sustainable security.

Conceptual Framework

This paper titled "girl-child education for economic recovery and security challenges in Nigeria" has some basic terms that will be conceptualized under this section: girl-child, girl_child education, economic recovery and security.

The Concept of Girl-Child

The term girl-child refers to a female human being from birth to 18 years of age. Ponte (2006) sees, girl children as socially constructed category around female persons between 0 and 18 years. It is the age before one becomes young adult (Atama, 2012). The girl-child is a female child born to the family, community, society or nation (Udeozor, 2003). According to Offorma (2009) girl-child is a biological female offspring from birth to 18 years of age who is able to build her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage. In this paper, the term girl-child is used to mean any female child, normal or special, married or single, mother or not, who have the intellectual ability and is participating in secondary education.

The concept of girl-child has been a neglected phenomenon until after the Beijing Conference of 1995 and the rectification of the Child Rights Act (Isaac, 2014). With gender equity being advocated by both International and National Development Partners, the matter concerning girl-child has now come to limelight in the issue of development most especially on the provision of basic human needs such as education and health care services. Where-as girl-child education is any type of education provided in the society that is aimed at promoting the participation of girls and women in secondary schools.

The Concept of Girl-child Education

Girl-child education is the key to the empowerment of the female child, it allows them to claim their rights and prepare them for the future to assume responsibility as duty bearers for the next generation. In most societies, the female child is often discriminated upon, right from birth to adulthood due to some traditional and cultural practices. Education is the most important empowerment we can give to our female child.

Concept of Economic Recovery

Economic recovery is the phase of the business cycle following a recession, during which an economy regains and exceeds peak employment and output levels achieved prior to downturn. A recovery period is typically characterized by abnormally high levels of growth in real gross domestic product,

employment, corporate profits, and other indicators. During economic recovery, businesses will see an uptick in demand and will start hiring. People will begin going back to work, confidence will start to increase and consumers will open their purses/wallets more. Governments will usually try to bring an economy out of a recession by increasing the money supply (through the lowering of interest rates) and increasing spending (on infrastructure programs, etc.).

The Concept of Security

Security has been defined as the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defense, protection and preservation of core values and the absence of threats to acquire values (David, 2006). Ogunleye, Adewale, Alese & Ogunde (2011) said, security embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrence. On their part, Achimba & Ighomereho (2013) defined security as the stability and continuity of livelihood, predictability of daily life and freedom from psychological harm which result from the assurance or knowing what one is wanted, accepted, loved and protected in one's community or neighbourhood and by people around. In a similar vein Nzewi (2014) described security as the process or means, physical or human of delaying, preventing and otherwise protecting against external or internal, defects, dangers, loss, criminals and other individuals or actions that threaten, hinder or destroy an organizations "steady state" and deprive it of its intended purpose for being.

Benefit of Girl-child Education in Nigeria

Education has significant role to play as far as empowering our girl child for economic development and nation building (Charlse 2018). If education is the key to success in life, it can also help to end discrimination, marginalization, subjugation, inequality and enslavement. There is no doubt women have suffered hitherto in the hands of men. Women in Nigeria have had various challenges to obtain equal education in all forms of formal education in the country. Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Education bestows on every individual including women a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, competence and skills (Charlse 2018).. To ensure equal access to education, the National Policy on Education states that access to education is a right for all Nigerian children regardless of gender, religion and disability. In Empowerment Disparities still exist between men and women in education, employment and income opportunities, control over assets, personal security and participation in the development process.

The importance of education for the advancement of women was highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action, which again identifies it as one of the 12 critical areas of concern and further affirmed it as central for gender equality and women empowerment. The Platform for Action also called for eliminating discrimination in education based on gender at all levels, eradicating illiteracy among women and improving access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education. There are strong links between girl-child education and health; and according to Earth Trends, from 1975 to 1995, gains in women's education in 63 different countries contributed significantly to a reduction in malnutrition. Better education for women also has a direct and positive impact on HIV infection rates. The Education for All report 2011 outlines the impact of education on the health of women and children. Any additional year a woman spend in school increases her survival rate and increases her economic empowerment. A 10% increase in girls' secondary school enrolment in low income countries will save approximately 350,000 children's lives and reduce maternal mortality by 15,000 deaths every year. Illiteracy among women increases child mortality in our communities.

Education empowers women more effectively which would help to abolish gender inequality, develop their potentials, increase social and economic return, improve the quality of life, produce educated and

healthy children and reduce fertility and mortality rates. Education is key to empowering women's participation in decision making in democracy, dynamic transformation of society and shaping the destiny of future generations. The welfare of the world cannot improve unless the condition of women is improved. It is education which can do so by empowering women.

Education aids women to exercise their rights on equal footing with men and participate in national development. "Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life" (UNIFEM). Education can empower women to develop and tap their potentials to the fullest, and they will be able to contribute better to societal development. Fadeyiye and Olanegan (2001) posit that the interest of women, which is still being neglected, can only be served when they are educated. They will then be in a better position to contribute substantially to development in its entire ramification. So, we can't neglect the importance of education about women empowerment.

The recent political interest being shown by educated women in our country have also challenged the uneducated women in the society and the masses at large to understand that the place of women is no longer only in the kitchen. Makama (2014) posits that Nigeria is one of the countries listed amongst the developing nations; this is so because of her inability to harness her resources towards nation building in other sensitive areas that need special attention like the girl-child education. Girl-child education falls under goals two and three of the Millennium Development Goals enshrined under UN's resolution in 1996, and which Nigeria is a member nation. Unfortunately, it received worst treatment because of the lackadaisical/ nonchalant attitude of Nigerian leaders.

Education has special benefits for girls, both when they are young and later as adult women (Collins 2014). The influence on child bearing patterns is one of the most important pathways through which education affects the lives of girls and women. Educated women tend to marry later, have fewer children and are likely to understand what they must do to protect themselves and their families from many diseases. There is a link between educated mothers and the survival of their children. An educated mother is most likely to know that she and her children can be safe from such preventable diseases as polio, measles, diphtheria and diarrhea through immunization.

Education can lead to many benefits, mortality, improvement of child nutrition and health, lower fertility rates, enhancement of women's domestic role and their participation in the domain of politics, improvement of economic productivity and growth and protection of girls from HIV/AIDs, abuse and exploitation. Investment in girls education most likely will yield some of the highest returns on all development investment by generating both private and social benefits that accrue to individuals, families and society at large (Idoko, 2009).

Girl child education inculcates values to the learners and citizens in order to develop effective citizenship. Mezieobi, Ogaugwu, Ossai and Young (2013) proposed that these values inculcated enable the learners understand why they can mitigate against greed, corruption, leadership ineptitude, nepotism, god-fatherism, and other vices that have debased Nigeria's moral integrity and democratic existence as a dignified nation. Orisa (2012) also proposed the inculcation of social values as what Nigeria needs to change from her current corrupt and poverty propensities to life of purity and make a complete U-turn from materialism, moral decadence, false sense of value, tribal feud, religious intolerance, social injustice, economic sabotage to a new national re-orientation of excellence, merit, dignity and intrinsic worth of human life as the basis of Nigeria's value system. The achievement of these values through education promotes social and political stability which creates the enabling environment for economic recovery and stability in Nigeria.

Girl-child education is the key to the empowerment of the female child, it allows them to claim their rights and prepare them for the future to assume responsibility as duty bearers for the next generation.

In most societies, the female child is often discriminated upon, right from birth to adulthood due to some traditional and cultural practices. Education is the most important empowerment we can give to our female child. Girl-child education helps to reduce the effects of poverty. Girl-child education can vitally contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. While two of the goals pertain directly to education, education also helps to reduce poverty, promote gender equality, lower child mortality rate, protect against HIV/AIDS, reduce fertility rates and enhance environmental awareness (Mordi, 2008).

Girl-child education can also improve health and nutrition. According to Kiki (2010), education greatly benefits personal health particularly for girl-child, it profoundly affects reproductive health immunization rates. Education may be the single most effective preventive weapon against HIV/AIDS. If the issue of HIV/AIDS is rampant in a particular country, the force and economic growth will be affected. Again through the awareness of girl-child education, the rate of HIV/AIDS will be reduced to the barest minimum and this will have positive impact on Nation Building.

Girl-child education can help to reduce inequality. Education reduces illiteracy that is one of the strongest predictors of poverty. Primary education plays catalytic roles for those most likely to be poor, including girls, ethnic minorities, orphans, disabled people and rural families. By enabling larger members to share in the growth process, education can be the powerful tide that lifts all boats (Okeke, Nzewi & Njoku, 2008).

The education of girl-child help to lower infant and child mortality rates. According to Ocho (2005), women with some formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements, and adopt improved sanitation practices. As a result, their infants and children have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier and better nourished. If children survive through adequate medical facilities provided by a country, that aspect greatly enhances Nation building.

Girl-child education increase women's labour force participation rates and earnings. Girl-child education has been proven to increase income for wage earners and increase productivity for employers, yielding benefits for the community and society.

Kehinde & Adewuyi, (2015) noted that the best way to attain economic recovery is to adapt vocational and technical education. Thus, in educating a girl-child, it is pertinent to take into cognizance vocational and technical education.

Girl-child vocational and technical education helps to solve the problems of unemployment and reduces the number of people who depend on government for job. When the youths and adults are trained vocationally or technically, it would enable them to be self-reliant in different areas such as electrical, plumbing, automobile, vulcanizing, computer engineering, agriculture, cloth weaving and so on which in turn ensure money circulation in the economy (Khatete & Chepkoech, 2018).

Girl-child vocational and technical education is always serving as a motivating force in individuals to work for the nation because it stimulates technological and industrial development through the production of competent and honest workers who are capable of utilizing the abundant natural and human resources available in a country for economy and industrial growth and development.

It helps to bring about rapid economic development. The survival of individuals will ensure the survival of the country as a nation. To continually meet the needs of the present generation means there must be continued economic growth. The commitment of the Federal Government to place Nigeria amongst the top 20-20-20 economics in the world by the year 2020 can only be realized when the vocational and technical education among others is harnessed to empower Nigerians.

Through Girl-child vocational and technical education, local technology can be developed by indigenous

technicians and technologists. It should be emphasized here that every society has its own peculiar problems. Therefore, it will take the ingenuity of local artisans, craftsmen, technicians and technologists to design and fabricate tools, equipment and simple or complex machines to solve local problems. This eventually will save the nation billions of Naira or Dollars in foreign currency that would have been used in importing machines, most of which break down shortly on arrival in the country because they were not designed for our peculiar environment (Ojimba, 2012).

Girl-child vocational and technical education is not left out in agriculture. It is needed to direct those in the sector towards making the farmer an intelligent user of our natural resources.

Girl-child vocational and technical education is needed in every aspect of our natural life. The problem of juvenile delinquency and crime can be reduced if the youths are given the necessary vocational training that will keep them busy.

Girl-child vocational and technical education is also needed to prevent waste of human resources. So far Nigeria has given very little attention to conservation of human resources. It is obvious that the waste of labour by improper employment can be largely avoided through vocational and technical training. Such training is the most potent remedy for unemployment.

Because of prevailing gender discrepancies, most girls are excluded from school and end up uneducated. It is sad to note that often, the exclusion of girls is because of ignorance on the part of some parents who see the education of the girl-child as a “waste of resources”. They believe strongly that there is no point in educating a girl when sooner than later she would be married off.

Another major setback in the educational development of the girl child is poverty. The low economic status of the rural and urban poor has often resulted in many families withdrawing their female children from school to give room for their male counterparts. Most times, the female child is subjected to street hawking or other petty economic activities to raise money to educate her male siblings. Because of the vulnerability of the girl-child, she is often sexually harassed by teachers and older men who exploit on her naivety, thus resulting in unwanted pregnancies, abortion and its attendant consequences leading to the termination of her education pursuit.

Enhancing Girl-child Education for Economic Recovery and Security

Inno & Bala (2021) suggested ways of enhancing girl-child education for economic recovery and security in Nigeria. They added that the negative impact of economic recession and insecurity can be reduced by considering the following:

Provision of Security Fence in Schools

Most of schools have no security fence, where it exists; it is either broken, too short or has no secured gate or barbed wires. If concrete and tall security fence can be provided for at least girls’ secondary schools, the girls in those schools and their family will feel secured and that will discourage criminals from perpetrating the act of abuse on school girls as has always been the case. Also, these fences should be provided with search lights and security guards at night to be going round the fences.

Provision of Security Outfit at the School Gate

Providing security check points in secondary schools is not traditional in Nigeria. It is only normal to see police guarding government residential quarters, monarch houses, financial institutions, etc. Since the condition of security has reach the level it is now, state and local governments should provide local security or liaise with police and/or army commands to provide security guards to these schools. This will boost the security of schools and build confidence in the school girls, feeling safe and protected.

Provision of School Buses

In some cases, especially in rural setting, girls who travel long distance to attend classes are vulnerable to some security challenges along their ways. This make girls scared of going to school and eventually

drop out of school. But if school buses will be provided, such fear will not be there, and girls will continue to attend schools with confidence that nothing will happen to them on their way. The activities of bad boys and some irresponsible community members who usually block girls on their way to school will be drastically reduced. This can promote girls from a long distance participate in schools.

The use of CCTV Cameras

Information technology has eased the ways schools are supervised now adays. The use of CCTV cameras is now curbing the rate of crime all over the world. The most unfortunate thing is that educational institutions (especially secondary schools) are not enjoying these facilities. With a good school fence and security gate, government only needs to provide CCTV facilities to secondary schools to make these schools completely secured. This will no doubt help in curbing the rate of insecurity threat in secondary schools.

Legal Action against Girl-Child Abuse Related Cases

Most of the laws protecting the right of school children are complicated and mostly not implemented. Where they are implemented, they are not fully enforced. It is sad to note that these efforts have made marginal or no impact on protecting child from violence or specifically reducing incidence of girls related violence. This is largely because these measures have been uncoordinated, not well implemented and largely un-enforced (ICAI, 2012). If these laws were enforced or implemented, gender-based violence would be minimized and girls will equally enjoy the peaceful school atmosphere, hence competing with their male counterparts.

Conclusion

Education is an indispensable tool to economic recovery and maintenance of security. No economic recovery is possible without education. A good knowledge prompts not only economic recovery, but productivity and generates individual income per capital its influence is noticeable at the micro level of an individual family whose combination makes up the nation. This will in turn lead to maintenance of law and order in the society. Girl-child education is the key to the empowerment of the female child, it allows them to claim their rights and prepare them for the future to assume responsibility as duty bearers for the next generation.

Education of the girl-child/ women will help to end discrimination, marginalization, subjugation, inequality and enslavement as such empowering women's participation in decision making in democracy, aids women to exercise their rights on equal footing with men and participate in national development. Girl-child education enables women to respond to the challenges, improve health and nutrition, confront their traditional role and change their life, help control over-population through child birth, reduces child's mortality, help women to mitigate against greed, corruption, leadership ineptitude, nepotism, god-fatherism, moral decadence, false sense of value, tribal feud, religious intolerance, social injustice, economic sabotage to a new national re-orientation of excellence, merit, dignity and intrinsic worth of human life as the basis of Nigeria's value system. The achievement of these values through education promotes social and political stability which creates the enabling environment for economic recovery and stability in the country.

Recommendations

Having established that women contribute a great deal to the economic development of Nigeria, it is therefore worthy to recommend that:

1. There should be a nationwide campaign to encourage women especially those in rural areas and the girl child to seek education notwithstanding their age, religion, and ethnic or cultural influence. The girl child should be encouraged by giving equal admission opportunities with their boys' counterpart and special courses should be given to them, too.

2. Government and private employers of labour should encourage their workers to pursue higher educational qualification through adult education programme to improve productivity and add to the economy.
3. Government should encourage and ensure that the girl child education programme continued in all local government areas of Nigeria, rural areas should always be the focus so as to give room for female genders to explore their potentials in learning.
4. There is need to provide a clean and sanitary environment in schools to ensure a healthy lifestyle and hygienic environment for the girl_child. This will help improve their health status and prevent them from contracting infectious diseases.
5. A provision of more security network is necessary to enhance adequate security of school children especially those in rural areas. The security situation in schools in most cases deters parents from sending their wards to schools.
6. A provision of more transportation systems is necessary to enhance easy transportation of children to schools especially those in rural areas. This will save them the stress of trekking long distance to schools in pursuit of their educational dreams.
7. There is need for the government at all levels to adopt scholarship programmes that will target the girl_child. This will go a long way in easing the financial burdens of parents willing to send their wards to school with little or no source of livelihood.

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