

**GIRLS' EDUCATION AS A WEAPON AGAINST THE SOCIETY'S FEMALE GENDER
INFERIORITY COMPLEX**

ODEYEMI, BOLAJI VICTORIA (MRS.)

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FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO, OGUN STATE

E-MAIL: odehyemibolajivictoria@gmail.com TEL: +2348137841171

ODUNEWU, KUBURAT OMOLARA (MRS.)

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO, OGUN STATE

E-MAIL: larrykub96@gmail.com TEL: +2348167785626

**A PAPER PRESENTED AT WITED 8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (HYBRID) AND
AWARD CEREMONY HELD AT YABA COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY, YABA, LAGOS
STATE**

DATE: TUESDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER – FRIDAY, 2ND DECEMBER, 2022

GIRLS' EDUCATION AS A WEAPON AGAINST THE SOCIETY'S FEMALE GENDER INFERIORITY COMPLEX

Abstract

Education enables both men and women to voice their opinions, assert their rights, and reach their full potential in the political, social, and economic spheres. Nigeria, on the other hand, has the largest percentage of out-of-school children in the world-14 million-out of an estimated 206 million people. 60% in this group are female. Aside from patriarchy, traditional preferences, and ethnicity, the vast majority of people believe that girls' education is not as important as boys' education. To curb the gender inferiority complex and enhance the self-belief and contribution of females in society, education is the perfect answer. This research will look at the benefits, contributions, and importance of education for girls' children. To this end, the individuals who participated in the study were chosen using a straightforward random selection procedure. Data collection involved using a questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequency counts. 250 employees were chosen to represent the sample for the study from among the approximately 2000 staff members at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. According to the study's findings, the respondents believed that there was a need to place more priority on female children's education. They also opined that more protective policies against gender discrimination, sexual violence, and others should be put in place for the smooth attainment of this idea. Based on the study's findings, it is imperative for the government to implement sustainable policies to encourage and empower girls' education. Parents, particularly those from rural areas, should be educated and sensitized on the critical importance of girls' education.

Keywords: *Girls' education, gender inferiority, society*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In any democratic society, education is seen as a catalyst for change and an instrument for political, economic and technological development. The National Policy on Education (NPE) stipulates that Nigeria philosophy of education is based on integration of an individual into a sound and effective citizen (FRN, 2004). Education is a potent force that brings about change in the attitude, thought, behaviour, skills, values and interest of individuals (Offor et al., 2019). It is these changes that bring about cognitive, psychomotor and affective orientation required for overall development. These changes could be learnt formally in school and are very crucial to members of a society for growth and development. Education is the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society. It is a process through which the young acquire knowledge and realizes her potentialities and uses them for self actualization, to be useful to herself and others. In every society education connotes acquisition of something good and worthwhile (Offor & Orisa, 2017). Nigeria, with an estimated population of 206 million (Simona, 2020) has approximately 14 million out of school children, making it the highest number in the world (Arit, 2020). Girls make up 60% of this number (Edward, 2021).

The education of a girl - child has faced untold hardship because of the societal perceptions of a girl-child, such as the girl-child is to be nurtured and brought up to play her natural role as a wife, sex partner, baby machine, mother, service to her husband and in-laws. Her place is the kitchen (Osarenren-Osaghae et al., 2019). In other words, a woman has no other purpose but to be a wife and mother to her husband and children respectively. The idea that a woman has no other purpose than to marry and have children has brought a lot of disadvantages and consequently backwardness to the society, in the sense that children have populated the streets, without education, mothers are illiterates that cannot give what they do not have, hamper development in the nation. It has been observed that female children are still disadvantaged educationally, even in this 21st century, but male children are sent to school. When a tour of market places is taken, incidences of house help, hawkers on the streets, it is amazing the number of girls involved in these practices as compared to boys. A girl-child is raped, abused and sent off to early marriage as if this was the only reason she was created by God (Osarenren-Osaghae et al., 2019).

According to Offor et al., 2021, girl child education is a process by which the girl child who transform to women are equipped with the skills, knowledge, habit and expectations that will enable them to be functional to themselves and members of the society. There is no more valuable investment than in girls' education. Educating a girl is one of the best investments her family, community and country can make. It is a well-known fact, that educating a girl in particular can kick start a virtuous circle of development. More educated girls marry later, have healthier children, earn more money and invest back into their families and communities and play more active roles in leading their communities and countries. More educated girls and women aspire to become leaders and thus expand a country's leadership and entrepreneurial talent. Girls' education makes room for future educated generations. More education means greater economic employment for women. Offor et al., 2021, stated further that women with more years of schooling are more likely to find employment, own and operate firms; and earn higher wages. More educated girls and young women are healthier as adults and have healthier children which results to decreased maternal and infant mortality. Educated women are less likely to support militancy, violence, terrorism. Educated girls/women are less likely to be victims of domestic and sexual violence. Educated girl/women is more productive at work and better paid. Educated women help to control population explosion and do not allow their daughters to be victims of early marriage.

The importance of girls' education cannot be overemphasized. The power, courage, social involvement, and peer-to-peer relationships that will come with education can never be denied. It brings the female gender to a level of proper enlightenment and curbs any form of inferiority perception among them. This study explores further the challenges faced by uneducated women and how these challenges affect their personal lives and their immediate society. Also, this study investigates the immense contribution that education will have in the life of a girl child and how education can bring them further towards the actualization of their goals in life and make them compete fairly with their male counterparts (politically, socially, and economically).

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The known problem has been partially resolved. In the Nigeria of the twenty-first century, women's marginalization is a conundrum that needs to be solved. The treatment of girls unfairly is severe; examples include the child bride, unequal treatment of male and female children in the household, parental preference for male schooling, etc. These have had a number of psychological consequences for both sexes, such that the males feel superior to the females. As a result, even if the female appears to be more intelligent, the male child is preferred in a household where one child must be educated by parents or through a scholarship. This has a significant detrimental effect on women, such as increasing illiteracy. From birth, women are instilled with concepts that place them in inferior roles to men, and as a result, this cake is purchased, consumed, and passed down to the following generation. The inferiority complex among the female gender is generally overlooked because of the society we find ourselves in. The mindset of most females is that they are to stay behind, to be onlookers, never to dream, just to support men's dreams, and to be in their shadow. There is more to life for both genders, and one should not suffer "more" at the expense of the other's progress or opportunity grabbing. Girls' education goes beyond a girl standing toe to toe with a boy; it involves propagating and producing a well-civilized and productive woman, mother, and citizen. A girl child needs to understand what lies ahead of her beyond her immediate sphere, beyond what she sees in her immediate environment, and far beyond the commons. She needs to see the world and understand it; she needs to be a confident, composed, well-read mother, wife, and citizen. There is a need for them to be considered for the same opportunities afforded to men. This study therefore highlighted the numerous challenges faced by females due to their lack of education, the opportunities they are missing, and the hope that lies ahead, among others.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's main goal was to convey the positivity that education brings into the life of a female child as perceived by the staff of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro in Ogun State. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To determine if education can remove an inferiority complex from a girl's child
2. To ascertain the benefits of education towards girl's child societal outlook
3. To weigh the level of recognition afforded to educated women in the society
4. To investigate the obstacles to the realization of a girl child's education
5. To determine the possible solutions to the aforementioned challenges

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will bring to light the benefits that education can afford to girl's child. That being a good woman is not sufficient, being a good woman and knowledgably inclined is the best attribute every woman deserves. Every girl child deserves that privilege and opportunity. To be educated and be

confident about herself anywhere and anytime. This study will further promote the existing related literatures and solidify the need for a girl's child to be educated, for self-belief and to quench the thought of inferiority.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State community will serve as the sole source of data for this study, which will also include information gathered from the chosen institution.

1.5 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Murtala & Nasiru (2021) stated that non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys, and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men in terms of developing the country. Equality of access and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important tool to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and empowers women in building, molding and sustaining future generations of skills and educated labour force in the society. Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for women, has an exceptional high social and economic return, and has proved to be one of the best means of achieving economic growth and sustainable development. Girl-child education is that type of education which equips the women with all the necessary tools needed for the effective discharge of their own peculiar roles in the service of the nation building and sustainable development. Therefore, this study examines the importance of girl-child education as a tool for sustainable development in Nigeria. The study found out that girl-child education is bedevilled with several problems ranging from cultural gender bias and preference, poverty, ignorance, religious misconceptions, teenage pregnancy and early marriage amongst others as factors militating against the girl-child education. Finally, the paper recommends that massive public enlightenment campaigns on the importance of girl-child education, including relaxation of cultural taboos and constraints, social and medical complications that may accompany early marriages, teenage pregnancy should be mounted.

According to Benedicta (2018), international instruments, declarations and local laws set the pace for appropriate human development, peace and harmony. 10.5 million children in Nigeria are out of school; approximately 60 percent are girls (UNICEF, 2014). They are dropouts due to various factors: socio-cultural, economic, governance etc. vulnerable to forms of abuses, harms- female genital mutilation, insurgency effects and other negative influences which deny her rights and dignity are discussed. Assessments of education statistics at basic education level over (1990-2010) revealed imbalances in enrolments and gender disparity in favour of males and the education statistics from 2014 to 2016, revealed increases in enrolments and a gender parity index ranging from 0.80 to 1.0. Various government efforts and interventions by international development partners to bridge the gender gap and heal the harms are enumerated. Benefits of educating the girl child which are critical for the development of a just, peaceful, harmonious society for sustainable development are highlighted. Recommendations included: ensuring the rights of the girl child, (development, participation protection and survival), sustaining gender equity, government's strong political will, more funding for education, international aid, empowering girls/women with various life skills, ensuring girls retention and completion in school, effective implementation of the National policy on gender in basic education etc.

The girl-child education has suffered abuse and neglect over the years despite efforts put in by government. Some of these efforts as enumerated by Osarenren-Osaghae et al. (2019) are programmes and organizations which include: Blueprint on woman's Education, National Commission for mass

Literacy and Non-Formal Education, Family support Basic Education program, Universal basic Education Program, Education for all (EFA), Fast track initiatives, Strategy for acceleration of girls education in Nigeria (SAGEN), National Economic Empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS), Universal Basic Education act, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) (2015) etc. In addition, the Federal Government has also worked closely and actively in collaboration with international bodies such as International Development partners (I.D.P.), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), IDP include Organizations such as UNICEF, DFID, UNESCO, USAID, WORLD BANK etc. Osarenren-Osaghae et al. (2019) also reported that Nigeria is a signatory to major international initiatives and conventions which include: Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United Nation Girls Education Initiatives (UNGEI), World Conference on Education for all (EFA), Jomtien, Girls Education project (GEP) in joint collaboration with Department for international Development (DFID) and UNICEF to boost girls international in Northern Nigeria. Despite these efforts, the country does not seem to have significant results on the girl-child education in Nigeria.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey as its research strategy. The information data were primary (from the administration of a questionnaire). From among the approximately 2000 employees at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, 250 female staff were chosen to represent the study's sample with a well-structured questionnaire titled "Girls' education as a weapon against society's female gender inferiority complex." A total of 212 (84.8%) respondents responded to the questionnaire items. The questionnaires were administered and collected by research assistants. The results of the findings were analyzed using a frequency table and percentages. The questionnaire was based on three factors: "agree," "disagree," and "undecided"—ADU. The output of the aforementioned parameters is used to perform the result analysis.

3.0 RESULTS

Table 1: Education can remove an inferiority complex from a girl's child

S/N	Items of the Questionnaire	Alternative Responses		
		A	D	U
1	Being educated gave me a sense of belonging in society	184 – 86.8%	15 – 7.1%	13 – 6.1%
2	I don't feel insecure, incomplete, or unworthy	182 – 85.8%	11 – 5.2%	19 – 9%
3	Being educated gave me the knowledge of my individual rights and freedom of choice and the will to exercise them	195 – 92%	5 – 2.3%	12 – 5.7%
4	I can perform my official tasks and duties efficiently	186 – 87.8%	13 – 6.1%	13 – 6.1%
5	I feel confident and believe I can achieve whatever I set my mind to	200 – 94.3%	4 – 1.9%	8 – 3.8%

Table 2: The benefits of education towards girl's child societal outlook

S/N	Items of the Questionnaire	Alternative Responses		
		A	D	U
1	Girl's child education improves health	201 – 94.8%	8 – 3.8%	3 – 1.4%
2	Girl's child education increases gender equality	200 – 94.3%	12 – 5.7%	-

3	It lowers rates of child marriage	202 – 95.3%	3 – 1.4%	7 – 3.3%
4	It increases a positive cycle	200 – 94.3%	4 – 1.9%	8 – 3.8%
5	It lowers poverty rate in the society	195 – 92%	5 – 2.3%	12 – 5.7%

Table 3: The level of recognition afforded to educated women in the society

S/N	Items of the Questionnaire	Alternative Responses		
		A	D	U
1	A well-educated girl is more likely to speak up, get involved in politics and the economy, and encourage other women to get involved.	189 – 89.2%	8 – 3.8%	15 – 7.1%
2	A well-educated girl is more likely to enter the workforce, which will help her family and community maintain their financial security.	208 – 98.1%	4 – 1.9%	-
3	An educated girl is given the same consideration for opportunities as an educated man.	180 – 84.9%	8 – 3.8%	24 – 11.3%

Table 4: The obstacles to the realization of a girl child's education

S/N	Items of the Questionnaire	Alternative Responses		
		A	D	U
1	Insecurity	200 – 94.3%	8 – 3.8%	4 – 1.9%
2	Early marriage	202 – 95.3%	8 – 3.8%	2 – 0.9%
3	Illiteracy of parents	209 – 98.6%	-	3 – 1.4%
4	High cost of education	188 – 88.7%	10 – 4.7%	14 – 6.6%
5	Culture and tradition	199 – 93.9%	4 – 1.9%	9 – 4.2%
6	Religious and ethnic beliefs	201 – 94.8%	7 – 3.3%	4 – 1.9%
7	Street hawking	205 – 96.7%	6 – 2.8%	1 – 0.5%
8	Conflict and crisis	191 – 90.1%	9 – 4.2%	12 – 5.7%
9	Household chores	200 – 94.3%	4 – 1.9%	8 – 3.8%

4.0 DISCUSSION

The data from **Table 1** above indicates that 86.8% of the respondents opined that being educated gave women a sense of belonging in society, while 7.1% disagreed and 6.1% were undecided. Also, 85.8% of the respondents agreed that they don't feel insecure, incomplete, or unworthy, while 5.2% disagreed and 9% were undecided. 92% of the respondents stated that being educated gave them knowledge of their individual rights and freedom of choice, as well as the will to exercise those rights. 2.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 5.7% were undecided. 87.8% of the respondents indicated that they can perform their official tasks and duties efficiently, while 6.1% disagreed. 94.3% of the respondents felt confident and believed they could achieve whatever they set their minds to, while 1.9% and 3.8% of the respondents disagreed and were undecided, respectively.

From **Table 2** above, the frequency rates that the benefits of education towards a girl's child social outlook could be: "girl's child education improves health; girl's child education increases gender equality; it lowers rates of child marriage; it increases a positive cycle; and it lowers the poverty rate

in the society," with 94.8%, 94.3%, 95.3%, 94.3%, and 92% of the respondents agreeing to the statement, respectively, while 3.8%, 5.7%, 1.4%, 1.9%, and 2.3% of the respondents disagreed. Showing a high level of acknowledgement from the respondents. With the belief that the statements are in line with the gains that education will breed and bring into the lives of female children.

Table 3 above shows that the level of recognition afforded to educated women in society could be: "a well-educated girl is more likely to speak up, get involved in politics and the economy, and encourage other women to get involved; a well-educated girl is more likely to enter the workforce, which will help her family and community maintain their financial security; and an educated girl is given the same consideration for opportunities as an educated man," with the statement amassing agreed responses such as 89.2%, 98.1%, and 84.9%, respectively. With 3.8%, 1.9%, and 3.8% of the respondents disagreeing, respectively. Which indicates the fact that education bears more fruit when acquired than when not. Making it even more important to encourage female education in order to bring those who are not in the light of civilization into the light. Promoting, encouraging, and developing the means for a long-term educational system for them.

The data from **Table 4** above indicates the numerous obstacles to the realization of a girl child's education, which could be: "insecurity; early marriage; illiteracy of parents; high cost of education; culture and tradition; religious and ethnic beliefs; street hawking; conflict and crisis; and house chores," with the statement amassing agreed responses such as 94.3%, 95.3%, 98.6%, 88.7%, 93.9%, 94.8%, 96.7%, 90.1%, and 94.3%, respectively. 3.8%, 3.8%, -, 4.7%, 1.9%, 3.3%, 2.8%, 4.2%, and 1.9% of the respondents disagreeing, respectively. However, 1.9%, 0.9%, 1.4%, 6.6%, 4.2%, 1.9%, 0.5%, 5.7%, and 3.8% of the respondents were undecided, respectively. Indicating that the challenges are very high and serious. Calling for drastic measures and procedures to avert the precarious situation of the low level of girls' education in Nigeria. To this effect, this study came up with tangible remedies for these problems.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

It is impossible to overstate the value of females' education. Because both sexes can contribute equally to society's growth and advancement, every child, regardless of gender, should have the chance to go to school. "If you teach a boy, you educate one person," says an African adage, "but if you educate a girl, you educate a family and a nation." A woman who has achieved her full potential, strength, courage, and wisdom is an inspiration to the rest of society. People will become more independent as a result, increasing societal output. It will also promote the participation of women in politics because well-educated women are better able to participate in politics and make valuable contributions to societal governance. Women are better equipped to comprehend issues that affect women and intelligently contribute to such concerns when they are educated. Similar to this, an educated woman can speak up and be heard, especially when it comes to requesting equality and fairness on matters that affect them and their family. The frequency of domestic and sexual violence decreased as a result of being heard. Women who receive an education for girls are more likely to engage in safe sex, which lowers the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases. They are also more aware of how to prevent other diseases. Supporting a campaign to raise awareness of the value of girl education is one way to address the high rate of school dropouts among girls. Simply communicating the message to others and doing so repeatedly until every child is given the chance to attend school will accomplish a lot.

5.2 Recommendations

This study thus recommends that:

- The government should raise public awareness and implement policies that forbid discrimination against girls in education in order to raise the standard of education for girls.
- Religious leaders can help by emphasizing the importance of girl education to their followers and discouraging them from harbouring unfavourable opinions about it.
- By enhancing infrastructure, enhancing teacher professional development, and raising awareness to encourage people to prioritize girl-child education, the government should support girl-child education while the populace should fill in the gaps where more needs to be done.
- It was also recommended that the government create a grassroots program to fight poverty, that girls should have access to a safe, nurturing, and abuse-free learning environment, that early marriage should be prohibited until girls have reached a certain level of education, and that the government make a concerted effort to work with development partners to ensure community-based sensitization and human capacity development.

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