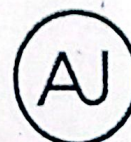


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Full Length Research Paper

Relationship between social challenges and the education of the girl-child as perceived by female academics in the tertiary institutions of Edo State, Nigeria

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The study looked at some social challenges confronting the education of the girl-child as perceived by female academics in the tertiary institutions in Edo State. To guide this study, seven research questions were raised and one hypothesis was formulated. The population was made up of all the female academics in all the tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. Three hundred and fifty females made up the sample of study through the purposive sampling technique. The instrument used to collect data was the questionnaire which was content validated by experts and had a reliability value of 0.72. Three hundred and eleven retrieved questionnaires were analyzed using frequency and percentage for research questions and Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient (r) for the hypothesis. There was a strong positive relationship ($r=0.932$, $p<0.05$) between social challenges and the education of the girl-child in Edo state, Nigeria. Based on these findings, recommendations were made.

Key words: Challenges, girl-child education, female academics perception.

INTRODUCTION

Educational development of a child whether girl or boy is very important. When the educational foundation of a child is solid, it is easy to build on it as the years roll by. 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 (Stronguist, 2000). 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

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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 helps, 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. This kind of practices can never move the nation forward especially when the female population is more in number. Ignoring this problem that has brought underdevelopment to the society is a de-service to the nation. Natural intimidation and oppression from men to the girl-child have not all gone well in the upbringing of the next generation. She is striped of any form of empowerment, and majority of them are mostly in hunger and poverty which is a catalyst for her to be victimized. She is constantly harassed, shut down and fear is her middle name. This is why it was necessary to find the root cause(s) of this problem. In doing this, several factors such as: poverty, parental illiteracy, ignorance, level of understanding, religion beliefs, culture and traditional prejudices were perused. The perception of the female academics in the tertiary institutions in Edo State was sought. These institutions are included in alphabetical order: Ambrose Alli University (Owned by State Government), Auchi Polytechnic (owned by Federal Government), Benson Idahosa University (Private Owner), College of Education, Ekiadolor, (State owned) and University of Benin (Federal Government owned).

The benefits of educating the girl-child are numerous, for a start, she is well informed in areas of education, health, industry, agriculture, technology, communication, reading, writing etc. All these knowledge acquired can make her a better person, home maker, wife, mother, helper and contributor to her society and the larger national and international communities. The males on the other hand are not thinking of these benefits but thinking that when women are educated, they will not be loyal, submissive and obedient to them as if women were created as a sub-standard to them or for their use. This in turn, brings fear and anxiety to them. Some men may not agree with this statement but this conclusion was reached through observations and discussions with men. Girls now go to school, thank God! But there are still obstacles that make sure they drop out of school, making it impossible for them to be empowered in education. There are still some parts of Nigeria that are still hesitant of the idea of a girl-child education; for example, in 2015, over two hundred girls were kidnapped away from their school in the Northern part of Nigeria, although some of the girls have been released, very many of them are still with their captors. From observation and interviews, the idea that girls go to school cannot be comprehended by them, because they believe that girls have no business going to school. Very many of the girls have become

women and mothers without husbands and deprived of seeing their families because of the northern male concept of women and girls, this is pathetic!

Statement of the problem

The problem that is known, is half solved. Relegating women to the background in the 21st century Nigeria is a puzzle that needs unraveling. There are great injustices against the girl-child, such as child bride, discrimination between the upbringing of male and female child, in the home, the preference of male child education by parents etc. These have resulted in several psychological effects of both sexes, such that the males feel superior to the females, therefore, in a home where one child must be educated by parents or through scholarship, the male child is preferred even when the female seems to be more academically inclined. This has tremendous negative impact on the females, such as increased illiteracy, right from birth the females are inculcated with ideas that relegate them to the background, behind the males and this cake is bought, eaten and sold to the next generation because of her illiteracy. Sociologists have often found out that the environment a child grows matters to the development of that child (Eguavoen, 2007). Psychologists have also supported this view from research findings (Osasenaga, 2015). Researches from education also support the argument that environmental factors also affect students' behavior, personality, discipline, learning and understanding (Omoriegie and Aluede, 2008). The females who manage to go to school, from observations, look as if they have been programmed by the society to believe that after school, they may never get husbands, because of the general societal belief that an educated woman cannot make a good home. This is absolutely stupid and far from the truth, but for illiteracy, the women believe, therefore, in their final year in school, very many of them start hooking up to men via pregnancies, there are very many pregnant girls on campus, some even have babies outside marriage, while in school in a bid to get men who may be forced into marriage because of pregnancy. The society pressurizes the females and justify their actions by sayings statements such as "women's education ends in the kitchen", "No husband for you, if you are too educated", "you better bring a man "you are getting old", 'child bearing years are short' etc.

These statements have caused a lot of fear and anxiety in the hearts of the females, to the extent that they preferred not to be educated than to be educated and have no husband to father their children. They are not ambitious to go into manufacturing, production, space science, technology, etc. Their statements reveal their emotional and psychological state, such as "after all am I in competition with my husband", "I want to start having my own babies before I get to my menopause", "after all if

"I go to school, will I not still end up in a man's house", etc. All these statements are borne out of societal pressure on the girl-child to give up education and focus on serving the man and his children. The worry of this research was that, if females that are more than half of the population in the nation, continue to have this mentality about their lives, then the societal problems encountered by the nation, that has stunted the growth and development of the nation, may worsen and get deeper without a solution in sight. This can be grievous to the development of the nation. Nigeria is ambitious to meet up with vision 2020 millennium goals and yet will not educate her girl-child. Let us not deceive ourselves; this will not be a reality, because women are sidelined and virtually cut off from the scheme of things. It is a puzzle that any country that is as ambitious and clamoring for attention at the world stage like Nigeria, will not do all that is within its powers to educate more than half of its population

This study therefore, highlighted seven factors that could be responsible for this challenge against the education of a girl-child. These factors included: level of acceptance of a girl child education, poverty, parental illiteracy, ignorance of benefits, level of understanding, religious practices, cultural and traditional prejudices, so as to find out what may or may not be responsible for the challenges the girl-child education is experiencing in the 21st century, Nigeria. This study, sought after the perceptions of female academics in the tertiary institutions of Edo State, Nigeria.

Purpose of study

The major purpose of the study was to identify the social challenges confronting the education of the girl-child as perceived by female academics in the tertiary institutions in Edo State. The specific purposes were as follows: To

- (1). Examine if level of understanding is a challenge experienced by the girl-child.
- (2). Examine if the societal level of acceptance is a challenge to the full actualization of the girl-child education.
- (3). Determine if poverty is the challenge to achieving the girl child education.
- (4). Identify if parental illiteracy is a hindrance to the successful implementation of the girl- child education.
- (5). Determine if ignorance of benefits constitutes the challenge faced by the girl-child education.
- (6). Examine if religious practice is one of the challenges faced by the girl child education.
- (7). Find out if cultural and traditional prejudices stand as challenges against the girl-child education.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- (i) Is societal level of understanding a crucial factor militating against the girl-child education?
- (ii) Is societal level of acceptance a challenge to the full actualization of the girl child education?
- (iii) Is poverty one of the challenges militating against the full delivery of the girl child education?
- (iv) Is parental illiteracy a factor serving as a hindrance to the successful implementation of the girl-child education?
- (v) Does ignorance of the accrued benefits of the girl-child education constitute one of the challenges faced by the girl-child education?
- (vi) Do religions practices constitute a challenge to the full delivery of the girl-child education?
- (vii) Are cultural and traditional prejudices among factors standing as challenges against the girl-child education?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between social challenges that confront the girl-child and their education.

Scope of study

The geographical location of this study is Edo State. The population was limited to only the female academics in all the tertiary institutions. Out of the ten (10) Tertiary Institutions in Edo State which included: Ambrose Alli University(AAU), Auchi Politechnic (AP). Benson Idohosa University (BIU) College of Education, Igueben (COE), Edo State Polytechnic, Usen (EPU), Light House Polytechnic, Evbuobanosa (LPE), Igbinedion University, Okada (IUO), College of Education, Ekiadolor (C.O.E.E), University of Benin (UNIBEN), Edo University, Iyahmo (E.U.I.) only the data from five of them were used. These include: A.A.U, A.P, B.I.U, C.O.E.E, and UNIBEN, therefore, the findings were based on these five tertiary institutions, which represented 50% of the schools.

Limitation of the study

The findings of this research may not be generalized because only Edo State Tertiary Institutions data were collected and analyzed. This is one of the States in Nigeria that is highly educationally inclined, even though there are still traces of discrimination between the education of the boy and the girl-child found in some communities. It was difficult retrieving questionnaires from the respondents because of busy and tight schedules, which was actually the reason why five schools out of ten were used. Some departments had no female academic staff.

Operational definition of terms

Girl-child education: meaning formal schooling/training

given to the girl-child.

Societal challenges: Problems that can constitute hindrance to the furtherance of the girl-child education, such as already mentioned above.

LITERATURE

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 Uzoma (2013) 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. Ohaji (2005) 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. Attempts were made to review literature on these factors hereunder.

Level of understanding

It is one thing to have a concept but another thing to sell it and actually make the benefactors see reasons they should buy into the concept. Majority of human beings are naturally afraid of the unknown. They think it is better to stay where you know than to delve into territories that may lead to their destruction. To them, testing a new territory is a risk they are not willing to take, after all, it is often said that 'the devil you know is better than the angel you do not know'. Perhaps this concept may have contributed to the reasons why the nation has remained underdeveloped and transferring technology because they are afraid to exploit. There is a level of understanding that a proponent will need to give out in order for the recipients to receive and work with. If the level of understanding is not deep enough or not backed

up by action, it will be difficult to receive and virtually impossible for that concept to work; for example the concept of training/educating every Nigerian child so as to eliminate illiteracy is beautiful, but the actions the proponent takes to implement this concept does not portray seriousness such as inadequate funding to take care of school fees, uniform, books, other instructional and infrastructural facilities, teachers training etc. Even in the 21st century Nigeria, children are still found hawking during school hours; laws were enacted to fight this trends but lack of follow up, accountability, corruption etc. during implementation, the beautiful concept is only beautiful at the dream state while in reality children are still being used during school hours to fetch money for their parents. The point made here is that when a new concept is not deeply understood, by the application of drastic and frequent actions to drive home the message to the recipients, they do not see the need to buy into the vision. Recipients may listen to you to tell your stories, but when your actions do not match your words, they go right back to their comfort zone, you will be standing alone and frustrated, at the end of the day, when concept fails. The girl-child education is a concept which is beneficial in all its ramifications and to all. Nigerian illiterates need to have a deeper understanding of the girl-child education because an educated girl is a better person to dialogue with; acquiring knowledge will make her a better Individual citizen, wife, mother etc (UNESCO, 2011; United Nation Human Development (UNHD) Report, 2010; Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2013); Kpee and Chuu- Uzomah, 2015).

Level of acceptance

Level of acceptance is a big issue to reckon with in the implementation of the girl-child education. Education is an eye opener, enlightenment, voice empowerment and all these ingredients can make an oppressed, slave driven person to see the light and want out of the darkness. For centuries, women have being oppressed, dehumanized, intimidated, relegated, felt less superior than her male counterpart through actions of others and always reminded that she is good for sex and procreation. Her mentality has been so programmed in such a way that even when she sees another woman trying to excel out of the box, she is spat on and called unpalatable names by her fellow women. The society is shaped in such a way that there are roles for male and females and on no account should the boundaries be crossed. Nigeria has operated a patriarchal system of living and still is, perhaps because of the level of acceptance ascribed to the education of their daughters.

Girl-child is treated as before especially in rural areas, with a little difference in the urban areas. The Northern Nigeria simply refuses to accept the concept of a girl-child education. This is perhaps the reason why a group of extremists called the 'Boko Haram' will go into a girls

ostel in school, to kidnap over two hundred girls and got away with it, because girls are seen as part of their properties to use and abuse at will and no one can challenge them. This level of acceptance is the reason why a great grandfather will marry a twelve years old girl without guilt in his conscience and other men around will hail him. The girl-child has been known as house helps, lawkers, sex machine, baby manufacturer, some of the men do not think of her welfare and maturity, when she dies, they feel, there are many more to replace her. This is pathetic and not the way God intended it. Nobody has the opportunity to choose his/her sex; otherwise everybody would have chosen to be the male because of the life of freedom they live. In pregnancy, the boys could have been the girls; the fact that people arrogate males as more superior than females is a sign of illiteracy. The circle of the level of acceptance is difficult to break because Nigerian women have lived in a male dominated environment for centuries and the females are under objection even when the females are more in number (Ejimodu, 2013; Makama, 2013). The males' object to education of the girl-child for obvious reasons which include illiteracy, lack of understanding, unwillingness to change their status quo of the girl-child, because when the light comes, darkness will naturally disappear. Education is the light that when acquired the position of a girl-child will change for the better not only to liberate the girl-child from centuries of oppression but the male folks are afraid that tables will turn and this they think may not be good for them. The myopic mentality of some men will not allow them to see the much greater benefit that lies behind the girl-child education. Nigerians need a greater level of acceptance from men and women before the benefit can be seen and enjoyed.

The process of women empowerment cannot be complete until women themselves become active initiators and participants in decision making (Amaechina et al., 2015). The society at large has much to gain from women and girls education. Women represent two third of the 796 million illiterates recorded by UNESCO throughout the world (UNESCO, 2010a). Yawe and Amaechi (2015) posited that education and gender equality should be fully recognized as mutual reinforcing catalysts of development and they further assert that the millennium development goals(MDG) cannot be realized, unless girls and women have the knowledge and skills that education can provide to better their lives, their families and communities. Transformative potential of girls education has not been realized in many part of the world says (UNICEF 2016); therefore all hand must be on deck to accept this phenomenon and run with it, for a better nation and humanity.

Poverty

Poverty is never a friend to anybody, in any place and at any time. Mbanefo and Okafor (2015) postulated that

women in Nigeria are harder hit than men. This is due to lack of emphasis placed on female education and the prevalence of early marriage which tends to further impoverish women and subject them to statutory discrimination such as preferring to educate a boy-child than a girl-child. In order to supplement the poor socio-economic status of parents, the female children are more accessible to engage in street trading, farming, house-help, commercial activities. Under such poverty-stricken circumstances, if such girl-child is sent to school at all, they do not go beyond primary level of education. Poverty also leads to early marriage of the girl-child. Most children from a low socio-economic status forget about school, because there is no food to eat in the house; therefore, the idea of going to school does not arise. The progression of women through schooling has been low with large dropout rate; only 18.64% of girls who finished primary school proceed to secondary school, with an average drop-out rate of 80.16%. The average dropout rate from secondary school to higher institution was 93.15% (Moda, 1992).

Obayan (2014) indicated that the situation is more pathetic than ever before. Access and equality of educational opportunities is also married by economic system operated in Nigeria. Nigeria is a capitalist state where there is unequal distribution of wealth and excessive individualism. The nation is stratified into upper, middle and lower classes. Children from upper and middle classes have special privileges and unhindered access to the best schools and so irrespective of the claims by government officials that government has invested so much in public education, their children are never found in those schools (Obayan, 2014). There are various schools which represent various classes in society as observed by Zubairu et al. (2003), that most of the universities and other tertiary institutions have special primary and secondary schools called 'demonstration schools' which are entirely different from public schools. Unity schools are dominated by children of highly placed in the society such as the rich, academics and top government personnel. All these schools have helped in widening the gap of equality of educational opportunities. The girl-child from a low socio-economic background may find it difficult to be educated. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was created for the low socio-economic individuals but as observed, this has failed because it has not actualized its purpose which is to give education from primary school to junior secondary school three to all children regardless of the social economic status and, free of charge, to eradicate illiteracy.

Poverty is one of the greatest threats to high equality education for the girl-child from this social class, even where primary education is technically free in UBE, there are additional charges for uniforms, books, transport fare to and from school, create financial burden for their parents (Igbinedion and Maha, 2015). Parental poverty according to Kpee and Chuu-Uzomah (2015) is a

situation where a parent is unable to provide the basic needs for the family even at a minimal level; accessibility of education to children from such homes is difficult. The burden is more on the girl-child who is less likely to be given opportunity for education should there be any. They reiterated that when financial challenges come up in the family, the girl-child is given out as collateral for loan or forced into early marriage. This agrees with the submission of lenshie (2013) that girls in the poorest 20 percent of households have the lowest chance of getting educated.

Parental illiteracy

Home background matters in the life of any child (boy or girl). The education status of the parent can affect the decision to send their children to school or not; more so, to send a girl-child to school. It is illiteracy of parents that will make them to send their boy child to school and leave the girl to hawk on the streets and sell in market stores. It is illiteracy that will make them think that girl child is another man's wife therefore training her is of no benefit to them; it is illiteracy that will make parents to think that their girl child is less superior to their boy child (Orimogunje, 2012). It is only illiterate parents that believe that marrying off their girl-child brings more profits than educating her. Nigeria still has a lot of illiterate mothers through the backlogs of illiterate parents, who did not send their girls to schools, backlogs of illiterate children who are now parents and their mentality about educating their girl child span from decades back. It is a vicious cycle that refuses to stop even in the face of Government Interventions (Watkin, 2013; Ejimodu, 2013; Yawe and Amaechi, 2015).

Ignorance of benefits accrued

When the use of a thing is unknown, abuse is inevitable. Ignorance is a disease that kills individuals and nations more than any terminal disease that one can think of. The lack of knowledge of the benefits accrued to the girl-child education has contributed immensely to the reasons why the society cannot flow with Government efforts to eradicate illiteracy or see it as a worthwhile venture (Abdukadir, 2014; Kpee and Chuu-Uzomah, 2015). The society does not see the need to waste resources, but this has however been proven wrong on many instances like the following examples of educated women who rose to the zenith of their careers: Dora N. Akunyili, Director general, National Agency for food and drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of finance, worked at the world bank, Obiageli Ezekwesili, minister of solid mineral Development, Kofo Adamola, the first lady to obtain a

university degree in Nigeria, Major-general Aderonke Kole, a Medical Doctor, also the highest female officer in Nigerian Army, Grace Alele Williams, Ph.D. Mathematics, the first female vice chancellor, University of Benin, Flora Nwapa, the first African woman to publish a book in English, Ifueko Omoigie-Okao, Director, Federal Inland Revenue Services, Fumilayo Ransome-Kufi, the first female to drive a car in Nigeria, Abimbola Awoniyi, first medical doctor in Nigeria and others too numerous to mention (Ene, 2005; Byohn, 2007; Boomie, 2008 in Hephzibah-Awulor, 2017). Although too few compared to millions of educated women in Nigeria but it has proven that women can get to the top of their careers.

There are so many benefits accrued to the education of the girl-child which this work may not be able to comprehensively cover, nevertheless, the followings are some: UNESCO (2008) confirmed that women with formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure children are immunized, give children nutritional requirement, adopt improved sanitation practices. As a result, their infants and children have higher survival rates and tend to be healthier and better nourished. The education a girl-child receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry and a critical factor reducing the prevalence of child marriage. Educated girls can voice their opinion, stand up for herself monetarily and emotionally; education will reduce sexual violence, insecurity, have higher socio-economic status, better employment prospects, higher standard of living, Life expectancies. Educated women also educate their children. Education will enhance a girl's parental roles in National Development. Education gets rid of intimidation, and eye opener, broadens her reasoning horizon. Ejimodu (2013) asserts that female education is a multidimensional process involving empowerment and transformation of the economic, socio-psychological, political and legal circumstance of the powerless. Educating a girl-child brings about the strengthening of the existing capabilities in the society to enable them perform towards developing themselves, their families and the nation. A nation that is developed has strong words in the committee of Nations. Education of women according to Makama (2013) enables her and the nation to harness the hidden or untapped potentials geared towards National Development. But if a girl-child is deprived access to education and skills for productive employment, it will have far reaching effect in terms of poverty creation and perpetuation in the present as well as in the next generation (Safilios- Rothschild, 1991).

Religious practices

It has been observed that religions in Nigeria, especially some Christian denominations and Islamic practices do not believe in the education of the girl-child. The Northern parts of Nigeria, which practice mainly Islamic religion,

restrict the movement of their girls; they are always indoors and not allowed to go to school outside the home, but if and when they must go to school they do it near their homes called "Makaranta" meaning school, where they are taught how to recite the Holy Koran (their religious book), chant some verses and chapters in Arabic songs, at the end, they go home. The girl-child or any child for that matter, is not given a western education, for the fear that they will deviate from their Islamic faith and follow western pattern of lifestyle which they abhor. Therefore, because they are afraid that their children may go astray, they are deprived of the kind of education that can help them blend with others and have a broader view of life. This practice makes people think and believe that this practice is synonymous to Islamic religion; but on a second thought, when one takes a look at the Arabs and other nations who brought this religion to Africa, their daughters are allowed to go to schools with western education orientation and they do not give out their tender daughters in marriage until matured enough.

This thought raises some questions, such as could this practice in northern Nigeria be as a result of poverty? illiteracy? cultural practice? or are there two types of Islamic religions? These questions certainly need answers. Education of the girl-child is an investment that places power and authority on recipients to wage war against poverty. Educated women are better positioned than her illiterate counterparts to train her children; she is better equipped to contribute effectively towards the development of the nation. One time Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Anan said; "there can be no significant or sustainable transformation in society nor any significant lasting reduction in global poverty, until girls receive basic quality education which will empower them to take their place as equal partners in development; hence, women are the best and most efficient investment made towards economic development" (Ashimole, 2015). A lot of articles for years have apportioned blame to the Islamic religion for not educating their girls (Osindeinde, 2000; Emetarom, 2000; Salami and Uko-Aviomoh, 2000; Wariwei et al., 2015; Obi, 2011; Igbinedion and Maha, 2015; Amaechina et al., 2015).

But in disagreement with this view, scholars have posited that the Quran and the hadith do not discourage girls from education especially in sports. Momodu (2000) asserts that Islam has never opposed or rejected rights of women to engage in physical activities but "they must wear modest sport costumes and do not mix with men during training". Also the lack of knowledge among Muslim women about the importance of sports also seems to be among the main obstacles that prevent women from participating in sports (Alansari, 1999 in Momodu, 2000). From the statements above it is obvious that the Quran and Hadith also have some blame aside cultural practices. How can the holy books state that

women/girls do not mix with men/boys during sports. The understanding is that women should stay away from men and in the education of a girl-child, there must of a necessity be boys around, either as fellow students or as teachers and after, graduation, it is also of a necessity that the girl-child who is now a woman must work with the men folks in their employment, by not mixing with boys/men in school. It is an indirect instruction from the holy books, to stay away from school because they will surely meet boys/men. The question now is: will they continue to stay indoors? and for how long will parents continue to lock up their daughters without education for better living? For how long will the northerners continue to be backward educationally and socially? Ironically, it has also been observed that northerners who dare to go to school are always excellent, polished, both in speech and character, why will any parent not want such attributes for their daughters? Education came to the North in the 1930 and was only operational in the non-Muslim areas (sabongari) (Wariwei et al., 2015). This is the 21st century and the Muslims in the North are still dragging their feet in the education of their girl-child.

Cultural and traditional prejudices

Tied closely to patriarchy in Nigeria is culture (Kpee and Chuu – Uzomah, (2015). Culture is simply a way of life. In Nigeria, it is generally believed that the position of a girl-child is subservient. Culture has placed a lot of demand on her, as the one who should do most of the domestic chores like; fetching water, firewood, farm work, care for her siblings, prepare meals, clean the house, wash dishes etc. Marginalization of women arising from traditional, social cultural, socio-economic and religious constraints denies them full access to political participation. In spite of the overwhelming contributions that women have made, are making and are expected to make to the socio-economic development of the Nation, they are still frustrated with many obstacles that tend to limit their activities. This cannot usher in National Development (Amaechina et al., 2015). Cultural and traditional practices have made it virtually impossible for women to be very active in the patriarchal environment, where men in organizations are much larger in number and domineering.

As Adeniran (2010) rightly pointed out, man is the head of the family, hence his decisions are always right, final and binding on the women, whether right or wrong and whether she likes it or not. Men are the authority in all occasions and situations and the women are mere followers. This dominance, power and authority they enjoy as the head, make them do their best, to ensure that the women under them are kept in ignorance. It is a taboo to train/educate girls, in the culture of some communities as earlier mentioned, because it is seen as waste of money to educate them. It is also the belief that

education of a girl-child will delay her marriage. Olaleye (2008) posits that debates on the status of women and the need to integrate them into development process of any Nation have included both National and International workshops, seminars, fora, conferences, conventions etc. but the problems of women opportunities for education loom large at the turn of twenty-first century in Africa and according to Okojie (2017) and Ejimodu (2013), women represent two-thirds of the world illiterate adults while girls account for a singular proportion of the world's out of school population. The believers of male dominance, the traditional believe that women's place is in the kitchen, to satisfy her husband's sexual urge, have plenty children, go to farm to sow or harvest, manage the home have over the years pushed the women to the degrading, derogatory position, in national affairs and in many ways affected her mentality, ambitions which consequently affect her public life.

Traditionally, another reason for not sending girls to school is that it is believed that in the formal school system, girls are taught about sex and sexuality matters; therefore elders feel that such exposure to the innocent girls will lead to promiscuity which will rob them of their chastity (virginity) which is a highly valued moral quality of the girl-child and her parents in this part of the globe. In fact, a disvirgined bride before marriage is not accepted by the groom and his family, in this situation, the bride prize(s) are requested to be refunded back to the groom's family, even in some rural communities in this time and age. Traditional prejudices against the women according to Amaechina et al. (2015) and Olaleye (2008) is an inhibiting factor to the girl-child education and participation in public life such as politics, education, science, technology, and competing with their male counterpart.

Traditionally, women are to be seen and not heard; consequently, a woman who is seen and heard is considered to be living the life of a man. She is cautioned even by her fellow women and threatened with a divorce, by her husband and in-laws if she refuses to retrace her steps. People will shout her down, to remember her place, embarrass her and call her "prostitute", and other ugly names. Women who dare to go outside the box are cut off by friends and some family members. Some women cut her off because their husbands see her as a bad influence on their wives. This is so, because she dared to cross the line of freedom, she is seen as a deviant because she went against societal cultures and traditions norms, which is: "woman sit down there", "who are you to talk where men are"? "It is a taboo". Women have been known to assume a passive state with its degrading effects and attendant consequences even in the 21st century Nigeria. Cultural and traditional prejudices are still operational with little difference from the past. This has contributed to the reason why the education of a girl-child is at its lowest in Nigeria, especially in the Northern part. It has been realized that

sustainable human development cannot be effective if half of the human race remain ignorant, marginalized and discriminated against (UNESCO, 2010b; Olomukoro and Oyitso, 2014).

Culture plays a vital role in shaping the society. Babawale (2008) asserts that the peculiarity of a given culture is a direct function of its distinctiveness as it relates to its impact on the attitudes, aspirations, motivation, representations, skill and behavior of the people, celebrating some and discarding others. Nigeria is a country with a population of about 170.1 million people according to the last census in 2012; about 49% of these are females. There are 389 ethnic groups with a total of 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. 54% of the population still lives below the poverty line (Population Reference Bureau, 2012; British Council, 2012). The fact that Nigeria is still dealing with same problem of the girl-child education as though new, is a pointer to the unseriousness of the constituted authorities empowered to implement the programme. The Nigeria vision 20:2020 (2009) declared that the importance of gender equality is underscored by its inclusion as one of the eight millennium goals (MDGS). What is needed as a matter of emphasis and urgency is action, not words, so as to meet up with the vision ahead.

METHODOLOGY

There are ten tertiary institutions in Edo State, out of which five were purposively selected for the study. The research design adopted for this study was the survey research design. The population was made up of all female academics in the tertiary institutions of Edo State, in the 2016/2017 session. Stratified sampling technique was used faculty by faculty, department by department from five tertiary institutions which included: A.A.U, A.P, B.I.U, C.O.E.E, and UNIBEN. Simple random sampling was further used to select individual female academic staff from their departments to obtain a sample of 350 female staff which was representative of 30% of the population of 1167. Questionnaire was the instrument of the study used to collect data. The instrument was content validated by experts, Reliability was tested using Cronbach Alpha reliability and value yielded 0.72, the questionnaire consisted of 10 statement items rated on a four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), 4 points, Agree (A), 3 points, Disagree (D), 2 points and strongly Disagree (SD), 1 point. 350 questionnaires were distributed by the researcher and 2 assistants, 311 questionnaires representing 88.9% copies were retrieved (Tables 1 and 2). The methods of data analysis were frequency and percentage for the research questions and Pearson(r) for the hypothesis. SA and A were treated as agree while D and SD were treated as disagree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: Is societal "level of understanding" a crucial factor militating against the education of the girl-child?

From Table 3, 216 respondents which represented 69.45% agreed while 95 respondents which represent 30.55% disagreed. From this statistics it can be deduced

Table 1. Demographic characteristics (Population and sample of participants).

S/N	Institution	Female academics population	Sample 30%	Administered questionnaires	Retrieved questionnaires
1	A.A.U	270	81	81	74
2	A.P	164	49	49	41
3	B.I.U	172	52	52	47
4	C.O.E.E	141	42	42	39
5	UNIBEN	420	126	126	110
	Total	1167	350	350	311

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017)

Table 2. Social challenges in girls education.

S/N	Statements on: Education of a girl-child	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1	Educating a girl-child is still contested today in Nigeria	311	197	63.3	114	36.7	Agree
2	I am satisfied with the level of acceptance of the girl-child education in Nigeria.	311	138	44.2	173	55.8	Disagree
3	The boy-child is still strongly preferred to be educated.	311	191	61.4	120	38.6	Agree
4	Poverty is the causes for choosing from educate a boy over a girl in Nigeria.	311	140	45.0	171	55.0	Disagree
5	Parental illiteracy is the cause for choosing to educate a boy over a girl in Nigeria.	311	193	62.0	118	38.0	Agree
6	Ignorance of the benefits accrued to the girl-child education is the cause for choosing to educate a boy over a girl in Nigeria.	311	256	82.3	55	17.7	Agree
7	Level of understanding is the cause for choosing to educate a boy over a girl in Nigeria.	311	216	69.5	95	30.55	Agree
8	Religions practices are the cause for choosing to educate a boy over a girl in Nigeria.	311	120	38.6	191	61.4	Disagree
9	Cultural and traditional prejudices about educating the girl-child is still a strong hold in the education of a girl-child in Nigeria.	311	199	63.98	112	36.02	Agree
10	I went through school without any harassment from male teachers or students	311	106	34.1	205	65.9	Disagree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

that level of understanding is a factor militating against the education of the girl-child.

Research question 2: Is societal "level of acceptance" a challenge to the full actualization of the girl-child education?

From Table 4, 138(44.2%) agreed while 173(55.8%) disagreed. Level of acceptance was not satisfactory; therefore, it is a challenge to the full actualization of the girl-child education.

Research Question 3: Is poverty one of the challenges

militating against the full delivery of the girl-child education?

From Table 5, 140 (45.0%) respondents agreed while 171 (55.0%) respondents disagreed. It is deduced from this analysis that poverty is not one of the challenges why a boy will be chosen over a girl to be educated.

Research question 4: Is parental illiteracy, a factor serving as a hindrance to the successful implementation of the girl-child education?

From Table 6, It can be seen that 193 (62.0%) responded in agreement, while 118 (38.0%) disagreed with the

Table 3. Frequency and percentage analysis of the perception of female academics regarding education of the girl-child.

S/N	Statement item	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq	%	Freq	%	
7	Level of understanding is the cause for choosing to educate a boy over a girl	311	216	69.5	95	30.5	Agree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

Table 4. Frequency and percentage Analysis of the level of acceptance of the girl-child education.

S/N	Statement Item	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq	%	Freq	%	
2	I am satisfied with the level of acceptance of a girl-child education in Nigeria	311	138	44.2	173	55.8	Disagree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

Table 5. Frequency and percentage Analysis of "poverty" as a challenge against the full delivery of the girl-child education.

S/N	Statement item	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq	%	Freq	%	
4	Poverty is the cause for choosing to educate a boy over a girl in Nigeria	311	140	45.0	171	55.0	Disagree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

Table 6. Frequency and percentage analysis of parental illiteracy as a factors challenging the successful implementation of the girl-child education.

S/N	Statement Item	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq	%	Freq	%	
5	Parental illiteracy is a factor that challenge the successful implementation of the girl-child education.	311	193	62.0	118	38.0	Agree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

Table 7. Frequency and percentage analysis of "ignorance of the accrued benefits" as a challenge faced by the girl-child education.

S/N	Statement item	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq	%	Freq	%	
6	Ignorance of benefits accrued, to the girl child education, is one one of the causes militating against the implementation of a girl-child education.	311	256	82.3	55	17.7	Agree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

statement. It is concluded therefore, that parental illiteracy is a huge challenge in the education of a girl-child.

Research question 5: Is "ignorance of the accrued benefits" constitute one of the challenge faced by the girl-

child education?

From Table 7, 256 (82.3) respondents agreed while 55 (17.7) disagreed with the statement, therefore "ignorance" is a very big factor constituting a challenge against the girl-child education.

Table 8. Frequency and percentage analysis of religious practices as a challenge to the full delivery of the girl-child education.

S/N	Statement Item	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq	%	Freq	%	
8	Religious practices stand against the education of a girl-child	311	120	38.6	191	61.4	Disagree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

Table 9. Frequency and percentage analysis of cultural and traditional prejudices standing as challenge against the girl-child education.

S/N	Statement Item	N	Agree		Disagree		Decision
			Freq	%	Freq	%	
9	Cultural and traditional prejudices about a girl-child is still a strong hold against the education of a girl-child in Nigeria.	311	199	63.98	112	36.02	Agree

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

Table 10. Pearson (r) Analysis of the relationship between societal challenges Confronting the girl-child and their Education (Level of Significance at 0.05).

Variable	N	X	SD	df	Pearson (r) Cal.	P-value	Decision
Societal challenges	311	1.85	0.880	309	0.932	0.000	Null hypothesis rejected
Girl-Child Education		3.22	0.629				

Source: Fieldwork by Osarenren-Osaghae (2017).

Research question 6: Religious practices constituting a challenge to the full delivery of the girl-child education?

From Table 8, 120 (38.6%) agreed, while 191(61.4%) disagreed, meaning that religious practices did not constitute a challenge to the full delivery of the girl-child education.

Research question 7: Are cultural and traditional prejudices factors standing as challenges against the full actualization of the girl-child education?

From Table 9, 199 (63.98%) agreed while 112 (36.02%) disagreed, the conclusion therefore is that cultural and traditional practices are indeed stronghold to the education of a girl-child.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between societal challenges confronting the girl-child and the girl-child education.

From Table 10, it can be seen that Pearson calculated 0.932 was greater than the p-value of 0.000 with a degree of freedom of 309 at 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis of: There is no significant relationship between societal challenges confronting the girl-child and the girl-child education was

rejected; in other words, there is a significant relationship between societal challenges confronting the girl-child and the girl-child education. There is a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.932$, $p < 0.05$) between societal challenges and girl-child education. However, this means that the greater the challenge, the more the challenges to access quality girls education; this is not generally acceptable. Challenges and girls education are expected to have negative relationship with each other.

Summary of findings

The followings were the findings of the study:

- (1) It was found out that "level of understanding" was a factor that is militating against the girl-child education.
- (2) It was found out that "level of acceptance was one of the factors against the full actualization of the girl-child education.
- (3) Poverty was found not to be one of the factors militating against the full delivery of the girl-child education.
- (4). Parental illiteracy was found to be hindrance against the girl-child education.

- (5). Ignorance of accrued benefits was found to be one of the factors constituting a challenge against the girl-child education.
- (6). Religious practice was found not to be one of the factors that constitute a challenge against the girl-child education.
- (7). Cultural and traditional prejudices were found to be factors that are militating against the actualization of the girl-child education.
- (8). There was a significant Relationship between societal challenges confronting the girl-child and the girl-child education.

DISCUSSION

From the findings of the study, it can be deduced that five out of the seven factors looked at, constituted challenges against the education of a girl-child, they include: level of understanding of the girl-child education, level of acceptance of the girl-child education, parental illiteracy, ignorance about the accrued benefits, cultural and traditional practices which collaborated with the studies of Osindeinde (2000), Emetarom (2000), Salami and Uko-Aviomoh (2000), Momodu (2000), UNESCO (2008, 2010), UNICEF (2004, 2011, 2016), Hephzibah-Awulor (2017), Njoke et al. (2017) e.t.c. It is difficult for a concept which in this case is "The girl-child education" to actualize its purpose, when the level of understanding and level of acceptance is low, cultural and traditional prejudices are still in vogue like in the case of Nigeria that has practiced patriarchy and still holding on to that system for selfish and sentimental reasons that are archaic and perpetually keep men claiming superiority. The majority and at the echelon of dominance even when they are 52% of the population according to the last census conducted in 2012, in Nigeria. Africa, with exception of Rwanda has the widest gender gaps in the world with Nigeria being amongst the lowest in ranking (United Nations Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). The consequences of this report are numerous but the major one is the need to address the gender inequality crises. In conclusion, Safilios-Rethoschild (1991) posited that "a society that has a powerful gender stratification system that tends to place men in decision making positions with women relegated to traditional training and economic activities with limited demands that do not provide them with adequate means of livelihood is an endangered society". This statement was made in 1991 and as can be observed, Africa is still underdeveloped, compared to other continents of the world that have given women "close" to a fair chance. Factors such as parental illiteracy and ignorance still thrive because when a girl-child is not educated, she becomes an illiterate mother tomorrow even when her husband is educated. The education from him may not impact much on the children because the children are more than 80% of the time with their mothers, what she does not know, she cannot impact.

She is in a position where she does not see any reason to send her children to school, when they should help her at home, fetch her money through hawking, go to farm with her to bring food etc. because she is ignorant of the benefit of schooling and acquiring knowledge, other than the one already known. Her daughters are not sent to school because she does not see the need to, after all, she had her children without going to school, and she does not know that there is more in life than just having babies. This vicious circle will go on and on, and as long as there are illiterate mothers, there will continue to be illiterate daughters, until it is broken.

The study however found out that woman academics in the Tertiary Institutions of Edo State did not agree that religion and poverty were among the challenges faced by the girl-child education; these findings support the positions of Momodu (2000) in terms of religion. Although the assertions from various authors such as Abdukadir (2014), Hephzibah-Awulor (2017), Wariowei et al. (2015), Adiele (2015), Obi (2011), Alozie and Ohanu (2017), Lenshie (2013), Igbiniedion and Maha (2017), e.t.c tend to counter this findings. It was a shock that the findings of religion and poverty were not part of the challenges the girl-child education faces. The findings probably turned out this way, perhaps the female academics did not believe that poverty could be the reason why a boy-child is preferred over a girl-child for education, because when opportunity for training is available, the boy is picked; secondly, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was put up to handle such poverty cases in Education and yet same poor people prefer their children selling and hawking goods than to send them to school. This is amazing! The reason that can be adduced to the finding about religion could be that the respondents are all from the south and are all Christians; therefore, they may be looking at the "statement" from the Christian point of view.

A lot of positions and assertions have been made regarding Islamic religion as a key challenge to the education of the girl-child especially in the Northern part of Nigeria, but this study did not agree with this assertions perhaps because no religion that profess God as the creator and maker of all men (Man and Woman) were created equally will deliberately put any human being in bondage as they do to women in the North. The northern part of the country is part and parcel of Nigeria. There are laws put in place to ensure the education of the girl-child. The police have been empowered to arrest any child found hawking during school hours. The courts have been empowered to put in prison any parent(s) who failed to register their children in schools. Is the north above law? How many parents have been put in prison to serve as a deterrent to others? The question is: Is the government serious about implementing these laws to favour the girl-child? or is the government as usual playing politics to show the world they are doing something whereas, they are doing nothing. In agreement with Kpee and Chuu-Uzomah (2015) declarations,

policies, conferences, workshops, conventions etc organized in respect of the girl-child education without concrete and progressive actions are simply politics personified. It is not about gathering people from all over the world to discuss any issue that seems to have been over-flogged, yet the action on ground does not reflect the numerous efforts put in place, but it is about matching words with actions, by next decade.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following Recommendations were proffered:

(1) Level of understanding was found to be one of the challenges against the full delivery of girl-child education. Therefore, vigorous awareness campaigns, enlightenment programmes by all stakeholders especially the Government, should be mounted up, using the door to door campaigns, social media, print media etc. so as to get to all the nooks and crannies of the nation, to foster understanding of this wonderful concept behind the girl-child education.

Energy providers will be helpful in this regard, because without light to power the systems, how will the people hear and understand what is being told them, how will information flow to areas it ought to go?. Laws enacted to make a success of the girl-child education should be implemented without fear or favor, to any part of the country especially in the North where girls, women are locked up in total exclusion from education, not knowing what is happening around them. Vigorous measures need to be put in place and pursued to their logical conclusions.

Northern men and women who believe in this concept of girl-child education, as a weapon for better life and National Development must help in this regard to reach their fellow northerners, all hands must be on deck.

(2) Level of acceptance was also found to be one of the challenges stunting the growth of the girl-child education. This is not surprising because human beings generally, are resistant to change and until they understand the concept, it will be difficult for them to accept. Therefore, as recommended above, in addition, benefits of girl-child education must consistently be highlighted in campaigns to drive home the message.

(3) Poverty was not seen as a factor of challenge against the girl-child education; this is probably so, because, of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme already operational in schools, mounted up by the Federal Government to assist poor families. UBE is free tuition, books, uniforms, schools are near the homes of pupils, so they do not need transportation to and fro school. But there have been series of complaints about this programmed. Lunch is supposed to be served to the children in schools but there is no lunch, parents still pay for uniforms, books, and other levies are still collected

from parents this is worrisome to poor parents. Therefore, the Federal Government should revisit the UBE programme with the mind to properly implement their intentions about this programme, follow up the implementation, laws enacted for this purpose should be vigorously pursued and problems emanating should be tackled immediately.

(4) Parental illiteracy was also found out to be one of the challenges faced by girl-child education. This is not surprising because illiteracy does not give room for expansion neither will it understand and accept a new concept. Therefore, interpreters are needed to properly explain and convince illiterate parents of the need for their girl-child to go to school, so that their next generation will be literate.

(5) Ignorance of benefits accrued, was found out to be one of the challenges against the girl-child education. When the purpose of a thing is not known abuse is inevitable, therefore, all stakeholders who have anything to do with the education of girl-child, should mount pressure on parents holding back their daughters from education, should speak out and educate the populace of the need to educate the girl-child.

(6) Religious practice was not also found to be a hindrance to the education of girl-child; perhaps because other parts of the globe where these religions are practiced, do not deprive their daughters from going to school because when girls are kept in the dark, boys will always take advantage of their ignorance, oppress them, claim superiority over them etc. This is not the way God proposed it. Therefore, religion should not be practiced in wickedness but with the fear of God in our hearts. Church and mosque leaders have big roles to play in speaking the truth and enlightening members, on God's intension for creating human beings.

(7) Cultural and Traditional prejudices were found to be one of the major challenges against the education of a girl-child. It is certain that a culture or tradition that has been practiced from generation to generation is hard to break. The preservation of cultures and traditions is good but the cultures and traditions that tend to oppress women/girls and reduce them in value, reduce them to food, puppets, animals, properties etc. should be expunged and done away with. Women should be honored as God ordained it and not humiliated. Cultural and traditional visions should include the education of a girl-child.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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