

## **An Assessment of Parental Attitude Towards Girl Child Education in Gashua Metropolis, Yobe State, Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated the relationship between parent's socio-economic status, educational background, and their attitudes towards girl child education in Gashua Local Government Area of Yobe state. Participants were made up of 245 parents with 182 (74.3%) males and 63(25.0%) females. Data were collected using a standardized questionnaire designed in accordance with likert type for measuring attitude. Results showed a positive relationship between parent's socio-economic status and their attitude towards girl child education  $r(235df) = .16; p<.05$ ). Also a positive relationship was found between parent's educational background and their attitude towards girl child education  $r(236df) = .13; p<.05$ , the implications of findings were discussed. It was recommended that government should set up programmes to sensitize parents through traditional rulers about the harmful effects of certain traditional practices on girl child education. Again counselling centres should be established to counsel parents on the need to send their girls to school and also make them realize that most of these government schools are cost friendly. Government should also sustain free schooling and scholarship grants to attract parents/girls.

**Keywords:** Girl child, Gashua Metropolis, Education, Parental attitude and Yobe State

### **Introduction**

Education is important for every child irrespective of their sex of being a male or female. It is rather sad that some communities still discriminate against girl child education even though, there has been an accelerated interest in the girl child education in recent years. According to Chingtham and Guite (2017), women and girls in the developing counties are often denied opportunities for education which in turn limits prospects, decrease family income, limit economic advancement, puts girls at risk of human trafficking and exploitation. Recently, there has been an increased campaign for children education generally and part of efforts to support this has been UNICEF global initiative for "education for all" which allows for an all-inclusive system of education for children regardless of who they are, where they live and what their parents earn. This is in addition to her earlier efforts in 2012 when the out of school children initiative was launched with the aim to reduce the number of out-of-school children. This means all children have the right to education.

The importance of education cannot be overemphasized as it paves way for development in almost all the areas in life. Education brings improvement in health, economy, agriculture and the likes. Omede and Otumabo (2016) affirm that, when a girl-child is educated, there is an increase in family earnings; improvement in good health and nutrition; reduction in poverty effects as well as increase in fertility levels. The linkage between education and development is so obvious that the international community and government at all levels have made commitments for her citizens to have access to education. The FNG in collaboration with UNICEF has also made concerted efforts towards making sure that her citizens have access to quality and affordable education. In addition, efforts have been made to improve the participation of the girl-child in education at all levels to address the gender gap in enrolment in schools. Some of these efforts include the establishment of Universal Basic Education programme since 1999 which is still ongoing for primary to junior secondary school levels. In order to reciprocate the federal government's gesture, many states in Nigeria including Borno have made free education to her citizens to certain levels.

Despite efforts been made, girl child education appears to be marginalized greatly in some places. Croll (2006) in Abdulkadir *et al* (2018) maintains that, in the Northern part of Nigeria parents prefer to give out their daughters for marriage earlier than girls from other part of the country. According to UNICEF (2018) global annual results report, there are indications that, one out of five are out of school due to gender, ethnicity, poverty and displacement. It further confirms that, girls face multiple barriers to education which include in most cases early marriage, early pregnancy and unsafe learning environment amongst others. Though, the number of girls out of school worldwide has dropped by 79 million, regional variations still exist. Attitudes, been the lasting patterns of feelings, belief and behaviour tendencies expressed towards other people, ideas or objects may be influential in taking decisions and expressing a preference toward something.

## **Conceptualisation**

### **Girl Child**

Many scholars have defined girl child in varying opinions. To Offorma (2009) a girl child is a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen years of age. In a similar vein, Agusuibo (2018) sees her as a female human being of under 18 years. In the context of this study, a girl child is referred to as a human being who is biologically predisposed to be female from birth to eighteen years of age and is either enrolled in a school or not.

### **Education**

Education is defined by Schultze and Avital (2011) in Abdulkadir *et al* (2018) as knowledge, values, skills, habits and benefits of a group of people that is transferred from society to another and from one generation to the next generation though discussion, storytelling, teaching, training or research. To Ocho (2005), as cited in Abdulkadir *et al* (2018), it is a channel of transmitting, preserving and improving the culture of any given society. In this context with regard to the above, education can be referred to the transfer and preservation of knowledge, skills and values in the school environment.

Combining girl child and education, Atama in Abdulkadir *et al* (2018) defines girl child education as a process of tactically producing wonderful women who will contribute in a positive way to the development of society and be motivated to become aware of themselves and their immediate family. Girl child education, therefore, is a sure way of equipping the female child with knowledge, skills and values that will serve as the basics for transforming herself, family and the society.

### **Theoretical Review**

The theory adopted here is the Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Festinger (1975). According to this theory, individuals seek to maintain a level of consistency in their beliefs, values, and opinion at all times. Whenever there is an inconsistency between attitude and behaviour, there is a dissonance and something has to be changed to get rid of the dissonance. This is to avoid engaging in a behaviour that is against one's attitude. When such happens it is likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behaviour. This can be achieved by reducing the importance attached to the dissonant beliefs, adding more consonant beliefs and completely changing those beliefs so that there will be no inconsistency. In girl child education, some parents may view it negatively but when they realize that others have sent their female child to school, they will be compared to do so and the dissonance will be reduced and their attitude will be favourable to girl child education. This applies to many situations and it is helpful in problem solving and decision making. A large body of literature has shown parental attitude to be implicated in education of a child especially the girl child with regard to educational background and socio-economic status of the parents contributing to the degree of expressing favourable or unfavourable dispositions towards educating the girl-child. Akpede *et al* (2018) investigated parental attitude and practice towards the girl child education and found a statistically significant positive association between the level of education of parents and their attitude towards educating their girl child. By this, it implied that the higher the level of education a parent attained, the higher his degree of positive attitude towards sending their girl child to school. This disposition was observed mostly in female parents who were married and attained a tertiary level of education.

Relatedly, Kamaldeen *et al* (2012) found that, parents who have acquired a high level of education have a positive attitude towards education of the girl child. In a study of perceptions and attitudes of parents toward girl child education that comprised 370 parents, 98% of them were educated and affirmed that education is a child's right regardless of the gender. While parents with low or no educational background showed a negative attitude towards education of the female child. This shows a high level of awareness on education generally, as it was in a rural area but most parents acquired formal education.

In the same vein, Ordu *et al* (2019) found that significant differences exist in the attitude of parents towards their girl child education based on parent's level of education. This showed the important role played by parental level of education in sending their female child to school. It further implied that the higher the level of a parent's education, the more positive attitude towards girl child education. According to the study the belief that educated women are disrespectful may have influenced their formation of negative attitudes towards girl child education. Again the research

revealed that parent's attitude towards girl child education does not differ significantly base on socio-economic status.

Furthermore, Mohammed *et al* (2019) investigated factors influencing parental attitude towards girl child education and noted that low socio-economic status played a major role. The study used regression analyses to determine whether religious belief, cultural practices and socio-economic status of parents influenced their attitudes to girl child education. Findings revealed that poverty is the highest socio-economic factor which negatively influences parent's attitude to girl child education as they lack the income to do so. It was also observed that other factors such as religious and cultural beliefs also significantly affected parent's attitude though in a lesser form.

Al-matalaka (2014) reported in a study carried out to determine the influence of parental socio-economic status and parental involvement in the education of their children that parents with high income had a positive attitude towards female child education that determines the extent to which their children can acquire a formal education. Other factors that positively influenced parent's involvement in their child's education include educational level and occupation of parents which makes them to encourage their children to be educated to live a better life. Among all the factors parental educational level seems to have a very high relationship with the education of a child.

From the above, socioeconomic status and educational level seems to play a role in the attitude of parents towards the education of a child especially the female child. This can be in a positive or negative way. In Nigeria, Northeast and Yobe state in particular education has suffered setbacks due to activities of the insurgents which have negatively impacted on the economic activities of the people. Their incessant attacks on schools are also capable of instilling fear in people and making them form a negative impression of school and education in general. Notably of this is the kidnap of Chibok school girls in Borno state and Dapchi school girls in Yobe state to mention a few. Relatedly, there are indications that in Northern Nigeria, 13 out of 19 states fall below the national average requirement in female primary enrolment and female enrolment in some states are as low as 16 per cent according to UNICEF evaluation assessment report of 2016. In Gashua metropolis, many children especially the females of school age are seen hawking during school hours. It is not clear, whether attitudes of parents in Gashua have been compounded by many of these factors. It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to investigate whether parental level of education and their socio-economic status has a relationship with their attitude to girl child education. It was hypothesized that;

- i. There will be a significant relationship between educational background of parents and their attitude towards girl child education.
- ii. Socio-economic status of parents will have a statistically significant relationship on their attitude towards girl child education.

## **Materials and Method**

### **Design**

This was a cross-sectional survey. The overall aim was to establish the attitude parents hold towards girl child education. The independent variables (I.V) are educational background and

socio-economic status while the dependent variable (D.V) is attitude of parents. Participants for the study were 245 parents drawn from Gashua metropolis, Bade local government area of Yobe state. Out of this number, males were 182(74.3%) while females were 63(25.7%); marital status showed 218(89%) were married, 15(6%) single, 12(5%) were divorced; about 92(37.55%) were from low socio-economic background, 144 (58.78%) medium and 9 (3.67% ) with high socio-economic status; for level of education, 211(86.12%) acquired higher education, 20 (8.16%) had lower and 14(5.71%) had non-formal education.

### Instruments

Instrument for the study was a 40 item questionnaire designed in accordance with likert type guidelines for attitude measurement which contains three sections A, B, C which took care of demographic variables, attitude evaluation and community perception respectively. A response of Strongly Agree was coded 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2 and Strongly Disagree 1 for all the positive statements. For the negative statements, the reverse was the case. Strongly Agree 1, Agree 2, Disagree 3, Strongly Disagree 4. The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument yielded an alpha level of .73.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used for demographic variables while Pearson's correlation was used to analyze hypothesis one and two respectively.

### Result of the Findings

Hypothesis 1. There will be a statistically significant relationship between educational background of parents and their attitude towards girl-child education.

**Table 1: Educational Background and attitude**

Variable	R	Df	A	remarks
Educational background and attitude	.13	236	.051	sig

Table one shows that at alpha level of .05,  $r(236df) = 0.13$ ;  $p < .05$  was significant, two tailed. This implies there is a positive correlation between the educational background of a parent and their attitude towards girl child education. This hypothesis has been accepted. By this, there are indications that parents who acquire higher education will likely have a favourable attitude towards the education of a girl child than those with less or no education.

**Hypothesis 2.** There will be a statistically significant relationship between the socio-economic background of parents and their attitude towards girl child education.

**Table 2: Socio-economic background and attitude**

Variable	R	Df	A	Remarks
Educational background and attitude	.16	235	.012	Sig

Table 2 shows that at alpha level of .05  $r(235df) = .16$ ;  $p < .05$  was significant, two tailed. This shows that there is a positive correlation between parent’s socio-economic background and their attitude towards girl child education. This hypothesis has been accepted. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that parents from a higher socio-economic status will have a positive attitude towards girl child education than parents from a low socio-economic background.

### Discussion of Results

The first hypothesis stated that, there will be a significant relationship between the educational level of parents and their attitude towards girl child education. In Table 1 the result shows there is a significant relationship between parent’s education background and their attitude towards girl child education. The relationship is a positive one. This implies that parents who acquire higher education will definitely tend to have a favourable or positive attitude towards the education of their female child than those who have acquired a lesser level of education. This hypothesis was supported and is found to be in line with Akpede *et al* (2018) who established that, the higher level of education attained by parents, the higher their degree of positive attitude towards sending their children to school especially the female child. Similarly, these findings conform to that of Kamaldeen *et al* (2012) who found that parents who have acquired a higher level of education have a positive attitude towards education of their girl child which proves that for parents who are already educated and know the value of education, there is a high level of awareness. Relatedly, Ordu *et al* (2019) affirms that significant differences exists in parents’ perceptions towards girl child education base on their educational levels with parents who has higher level of education having a more positive attitude.

Hypothesis two stated that, there will be a significant relationship between socio-economic background of parents and their attitude towards girl child education. Result in Table 2 shows a positive relationship exists between parents’ socio-economic background and their attitude towards girl child education. This finding is consistent with Mohammed *et al* (2019) who investigated factors that influences the attitude of parents towards their female child education and found socio-economic status to have a positive relationship with the parents’ attitude. The study stressed that, poverty is a major socio-economic factor that influences negative attitude of parents towards female child education. In another study, Al-matalaka (2014) established that socio-economic status and parental attitudes towards education of girl child is significantly related as socio-economic status influences the extent to which children whose parents are highly educated can acquire education.

## **Implications of the Study**

There are clear indications that the higher the level of education a parent acquires, the positive their attitude will be towards the education of their female child. By implication, female children whose parents have none or less education will highly likely not acquire a formal education and the trend will continue.

In another development, parents with a low socio-economic status will highly likely develop a negative attitude towards education of the female child as they lack the income to sponsor their children in school.

This study implies that, a high level of campaign for the girl child education should be intensified. This can be a house to house or ward to ward sensitization programme and counselling to enlighten the less educated parents on the need for a change of attitude towards education of their girl child as some of the less or none educated parents may have the resources to train their girl child but the awareness may not be there. More so, government at all levels should make and sustain free education from primary to tertiary and for all courses to make it attractive and affordable for the low income parents.

## **Conclusion**

This study has examined parental attitude towards girl child education in Gashua town, Yobe State, Nigeria. From the findings, it is so glaring that educational background and socio-economic status of parents have a significant relationship with education of the girl child. Hence the girl child will continue to be educationally disadvantaged if parents educational and socio-economic status remains poor due to negative attitude formation as a result of these factors.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made;

- i. Awareness and sensitization programmes for parents should be included in educational material to inform parents on the need to educate the girl child.
- ii. Non-governmental and community based programmes should be encouraged by government in their efforts to promote a change in negative attitudes and cultural practices towards the girl child.
- iii. Government at all levels should reduce poverty rate of parents and girls through job creation, free schooling and special grants.

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