Cultural and Socio-economic Status Factors Affecting Female Education in Sokoto State, Northern Nigeria: Implication for Counselling

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Abstract Despite Nigerian government’s initiatives such as Northern Education Initiative (NEI), Girl Education Project (GEP) and Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in bridging the massive educational gap between males and females in Sokoto state it remains one of the states with high illiteracy level due to cultural and socio-economic status factors affecting female education. The study investigated the attitudes of parents towards female education and cultural and socio-economic factors responsible for low enrolment and recurrent withdrawal from school. Simple survey design was used, population of 800 students from Women centre for continuing education (WCCE). A sample of 260 students was drawn using Krejcie and Morgan table. Attitudes of parents towards female education questionnaire (APTFEQ) with a reliability of 0.76 and effect of socio-cultural and socio-economic factors on female education questionnaire (ESCSEFFEQ) with 0.84 reliability were the instruments used in collection of data. The study found out that parents have negative attitude towards female education and poverty is the major reason for low enrolment of female students and recurrent withdrawal. Early marriage, gender inequality, religion, child labour and uneducated parents also contributed to such situations. Recommendations were that government should provide free education to females, provision of job opportunities to reduce poverty rate and public awareness campaign on the importance of female education. Female counsellors are required to counsel female students to be successful Academicians in their society. Counsellors should organize conferences and use such forums in conversing with parents about the importance of female education as the major implications for counselling.

Keywords Parent’s Attitudes, Female Education, Culture, Socio-economic Status, Counselling

1. Introduction

Education is the process of impacting knowledge through teaching and learning. It is every child’s right to be educated whether male or female. With these the significance of education is paramount; this is the reason why it necessitates that every Nigerian child is entitled to equal right of been educated irrespective of gender. Nigeria is operating on 9-3-4 system of education. That is 6 years in primary school and 3 years in junior secondary school, 3 years of senior secondary school and 4 years in the university. Nigeria has 30 million students however, this does not tally with the attitudes of parents in northern Nigeria especially in Sokoto state, towards the enrolment of their female child into schools. Nevertheless, People
usually accept that it is dreadful to foresee the future with precision. Thus, it is certainly possible to predict possible results given past and current situations which are significant to build on the achievements and avoid the hindrances recognized in the past to advance the future.

Cultural and socio-economic factors were found to be the major factors affecting female education. Cultural factors are; cultural practices such as (early marriage, child labour, gender inequality) religion and fragility. Based on previous study, child brides are much more likely to drop out of school and complete fewer years of education than their peers who marry later. This affects the education and health of their children and their ability to earn a living. Female children especially in the rural areas are sent to the cities to work as house maids or hawk goods on the streets. These keep them away from school either not enrolled or withdrawn to do such labour. Researcher added that some females are allowed to start school but will later be withdrawn due to socio-economic or socio-cultural factors. Researcher reported that there are nearly double as several males graduating from schools as related to females. The major and critical problem of the state for decades is poor female enrolment and recurrent withdrawal. Female child is seen to belong to another family, because of marriage. Some parents send the female child on early marriage so that they can use the dowry to train the boy. Misinterpretation of religious belief is used to deny the right of female children to get education. The general slogan is that “women’s education ends in the kitchen”. Gender inequality; females are not given equal rights with males and religion. That is why there are overburdened with house chores to give the males the opportunity to go to school. Their religious belief is that the females shouldn’t be taught by a male and be a classmate of males. That is why the dressing due to absence of hijab in uniform structure. Poverty, uneducated parents, low socio-economic status parents, unemployment are the socio-economic factors. According to poverty remains the most significant factor determining whether a girl can have access to education. Example, in the state, only 4% of poor young women can read, compared with 99% of rich young women in the South Eastern Nigeria. Researcher asserted that high rate of poverty has heightened the situation, because with little resources males are educated and the females are left out of school. According to researcher about 79.9% of the parents in the state are illiterates, making them to be ignorant of the importance of female education. It is preferred that the medical personnel that attend to female patients should be females and the parents are being made aware. "The government is creating awareness that unless you allow a girl-child to go to school, you may not have the doctors, nurses and teachers you need to assist the community." Female children from high socio-economic status parents tends to be educated over there counter parts. Researchers reported that every day, girls face barriers to education because of poverty, cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, violence and fragility.

Educating females reduced poverty. It brings health awareness which in turn prevents HIV/AIDS, STDS, unwanted pregnancies, nation building and reduce infant mortality death. In general, educating female is just like educating the whole nation. Because there are the home builders where charity begins, a nation will never grow without better foundation. Government brought up necessary interventions and initiatives to tackle such menace. These include; formulation of government education policy. Sokoto State is one of the northern states with highest illiteracy rate especially for females, with just one female professor in the whole state. They are Hausa/Fulani by tribe and are predominantly Muslims with about 99.9%.

Poverty, uneducated parents, low socio-economic status parents, unemployment are the socio-economic factors. Poverty remains the most significant factor determining whether a girl can have access to education. The wide gap between male and female enrolment rate is quite alarming. The female is seen as a burden and she belongs to another house. Some females are sent to child labour just to get money for the education of the male sibling. Some will start schooling but will later be withdrawn for some reasons, while others are given the access to Quranic schools but no formal education. These produce lesser number of female professionals. So, this

2. Statement of the Problem

The wide gap between male and female enrolment rate is quite alarming. The female is seen as a burden and she belongs to another house. Some females are sent to child labour just to get money for the education of the male sibling. Some will start schooling but will later be withdrawn for some reasons, while others are given the access to Quranic schools but no formal education. These produce lesser number of female professionals. So, this
study tends to investigate the factors affecting female’s enrolment rate and withdrawal and what attitude parents hold that affects female education in Sokoto state.

3. Objectives
1. To find attitudes of parents towards female’s education.
2. To find the cultural and socio-economic factors causing low female enrolment into schools and recurrent withdrawal of female students from schools.

4. Questions
1. What are the attitudes of parent towards female’s education?
2. What are the cultural and SES factors causing female’s low enrolment rate and recurrent withdrawal from school?

5. Materials and Methods
The study applied simple survey method. According to descriptive simple survey allows a researcher to select sample from the population for the purpose of generalization. Cluster sampling and purposive sampling were applied in selecting Sokoto state (core- northern state). The total population of the study is 800 students in WCCE. Using table, sample size of 260 female students was drawn. Simple random and proportionate sampling were used to get the sample from each class.

Two questionnaires were adapted as the instruments namely:

i) Attitudes of parents towards Female child education questionnaire (APTFCEQ)
   It contained 11 items based on Yes and No. The instrument opted coefficient of 0.76 as the reliability with content validity.

ii) Socio-cultural and socio-economic factors effect on female child education questionnaire (SCSEFFCEQ)
   It contained 11 items. The reliability coefficient was 0.84, using Pearson moment correlation coefficient and was found to be valid.

6. Findings
Research Question 1: what is the attitude of parents towards female education.

| S/N | Items                                                                 | Yes | No  | % of Yes | % of No | Decision |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----------|---------|----------|
| 1   | Female education ends-up in the kitchen                              | 190 | 70  | 73       | 27      | Agreed   |
| 2   | Female should not be educated; it would stop her from marrying early | 155 | 105 | 59.6     | 40.4    | Agreed   |
| 3   | Educated females are not responsible                                 | 100 | 160 | 38.5     | 61.5    | Disagreed|
| 4   | Based on religious beliefs, female-child does not need formal education. | 200 | 60  | 76.9     | 23.1    | Agreed   |
| 5   | The female-child only needs Quranic education as a future mother     | 229 | 31  | 88.1     | 11.9    | Agreed   |
| 6   | Female marriage dowry should be used to educate male-child           | 235 | 25  | 90.4     | 9.6     | Agreed   |
| 7   | Educated females are disobedient                                     | 99  | 161 | 38.1     | 61.9    | Disagreed|
| 8   | Educated female controls her husband                                 | 160 | 100 | 61.5     | 38.5    | Agreed   |
| 9   | Female education is good if only it is free                          | 120 | 140 | 46.2     | 53.8    | Disagreed|
| 10  | High rate of pregnancy during female-child formal education deppresses the parents | 210 | 50  | 80.8     | 19.2    | Agreed   |
| 11  | Females contributes less towards nation building                      | 175 | 85  | 67.3     | 32.7    | Agreed   |
Research Question 2: What are the factors causing female low school enrolment rate and recurrent female student’s withdrawal from school.

To know the factors responsible for recurrent female students’ withdrawal, first is to know the recurrent withdrawals at each level of education (primary-secondary school).

Table 2. Recurrent female student’ s withdrawal from each school level

| Responses              | Frequencies | Percentages |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Primary School         | 21          | 8.1%        |
| After Primary School   | 65          | 25%         |
| Junior Secondary School| 80          | 30.8%       |
| Senior Secondary School| 94          | 36.1%       |
| Total                  | 260         | 100%        |

Table 3. Factors Responsible for female Student’s low Enrolment and Recurrent Withdrawal

| Responses          | Frequencies | Percentages |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Early marriage     | 50          | 19.2%       |
| Poverty            | 60          | 23.1%       |
| Religion           | 49          | 18.8%       |
| Gender inequality  | 42          | 16.2%       |
| Uneducated parents | 39          | 15%         |
| Gender role        | 20          | 7.7%        |
| Total              | 260         | 100%        |

7. Discussion

Table 1 findings indicated that parents in Sokoto state have negative attitude towards female child education, because the agreed has the highest percentage. This finding was supported by previous researchers 19,25,16 which reported that parents have negative attitudes towards their female children’s education in Sokoto. Researcher 26 had dissimilarity with present finding, where they found positive attitude of parents towards female-child education in Edo state. Table 2 shows that 8.1% of the respondents are dropouts at primary level, 25% dropout at primary (not furthering to secondary school level), also 30.8% are withdrawn at junior secondary and 36.1% at senior secondary school; all these dropouts are due to either early marriage, unwanted pregnancies, misinterpretation of religion, poverty and, uneducated parents, gender inequality or child labour. Table 3 revealed that 19.2% early marriage is the because of low female enrolment rate, 23.1% was poverty, 18.8% reported religion, gender inequality had 16.2%, 15% from uneducated parents and 7.7% from child labour.

Findings were supported by previous researchers21,24,20,27,28 who stated that early marriage, gender inequality, religion and poverty are the leading factors in denying females of basic formal education in Sokoto State, but it is a misinterpretation of Islamic beliefs. while20,30 reported bad governance, poor infrastructure and funding of the educational sector as the factors responsible.

8. Conclusion

Conclusion was reached based on the findings, that parents have negative attitudes towards female education in Sokoto State. Cultural and socio-economic status such as early marriage, poverty, religion, uneducated parents, gender inequality and child labour are the causes of low enrolment and recurrent withdrawal of females, with poverty as the major factor.

Based on the findings and conclusion; the following recommendations were reached that parents should adopt positive attitudes towards female education, and government should provide job opportunities so as to reduce poverty rate, provide free education for females and improve public awareness campaign on the importance of female education to parents and parents should not show male child preference over the female child.

9. Counselling Implication

There are following counselling implications:
1. Female counsellors are required in schools so as to counsel female students in order to be a successful academician in their society by beating all the societal odds and having better self-concept and self-esteem.
2. School and multi-cultural counsellors should organize conferences and use such forums in conversing with parents and community members on the importance of female education and effect of gender equality.
3. Counsellors should counsel female students on consequences of unwanted pregnancies and STDs.

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