African Journal of
Medicine, Surgery and Public Health Research

ISSN: 1595-8000

Index: Harvard, Boston, Sydney University, Dimensions, Lens, ResearchGet Scilit, Semantic, Google Scholar, Base etc

https://doi.org/10.58578/AJMSPHR.v2i2.5817

The Impact of Girl Child Education

Wando Musa Daniel
Federal University of Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria
Wando.musa@yahoo.com

Article Info:

Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Apr 6, 2025	Apr 27, 2025	May 12, 2025	May 17, 2025

Abstract

Educating girls is a fundamental catalyst for societal development, with strong evidence linking gender equality in education to improved economic and social outcomes. However, entrenched religious, cultural, and traditional norms continue to marginalize girls in various regions, denying them the opportunity to act as heirs or active contributors to family and community life. Despite global efforts to bridge gender disparities, significant barriers remain, particularly in under-resourced areas. Gender inequities often influence household decisions regarding time and resource allocation, with studies indicating that women who have greater control over resources tend to prioritize essential needs such as nutrition, healthcare, and education. Investing in girls' education yields substantial long-term benefits—not only for the individual but also for their families and broader society. These investments enhance physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual development, contributing to improved family well-being and poverty reduction. Crucially, education empowers women, fosters human capabilities, and drives inclusive economic growth. This article examines global and local commitments to gender equality through education, highlighting the persistent challenges facing girl-child education in Wukari Local Government, particularly within the Tsokundi district, where school attendance among girls remains critically low.

AJMSPHR Journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

The paper underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to remove socio-cultural and economic barriers that hinder girls' access to education. As more governments and organizations recognize the transformative impact of female education, focused efforts on policy reform, awareness campaigns, and community engagement are essential for advancing gender equity and sustainable development.

Keywords: Girls' education; Gender equality; Human capabilities; Awareness; Societal impact; Tsokundi.

Introduction

The term 'girl-child refers to a female between the ages of 6-18 years (Adeniran and Adebusuyi 2007). The National Child Welfare Policy as cited by Ada (2001) defines the girl-child as a female below 14 years of age. Offorma (2009) defines it as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. During this period, the young girl is totally under the care of the adult who may be parents, guidance, or elder siblings. It is also a period when the girl-child is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character. She is very depended on others on who she models her behaviour, through observation, repetition, and imitation. Her physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional development start and progress to get to the peak young adult stage (Garba 2014). Again, the gender apartheid places the girl-child in a disadvantaged position, where her potential is suppressed, and self-actualization is not achieved. She, therefore, becomes a victim of a pre-existing social-cultural male chauvinism. Furthermore, on the account of gender, girl-child are subjected to all multiple forms of operations exploitation and discrimination.

For any society to developed and is not lopsided, the girl-child should be given quality education. Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and healthcare, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and their children are usually healthier, should they choose to become mothers. They are more likely to participate in the formal labor market and earn higher incomes. All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty. According to UNESCO estimates, around the world, 132 million girls are out of school, including 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age, and 67.4 million of upper-secondary school age. In countries affected by conflict (for instance

Northeast Nigeria), girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected countries. And in many countries, among girls who do enter primary school, only a small portion will reach and far fewer will complete secondary school.

Especially in wukari wukari local government particularly Tsokundi district, girl child education has a lot of challenges because most girls don't go to school on the market days just because she will go to the river side to help the market men and women in carrying their goods from one river side to the other as well as rendering little helps all with the name of getting money for the parents who virtually in some way depends on with the intent that a girl child education is a waste of time and as such resources will not stop her from doing the job but rather see's it as help and contributions to the family, not knowing that they are eating their tomorrow today as well as destroying the girl future. secondly must people in wukari see's a girl child education as a no source of income to the family and as such they prefer the girl child to go out and marry so that her husband will give them money which can be used to take care of the remaining children most especially the male child. Also female children are regarded as less important in the family since they are not heir to the family, sending them (Girls) to school is like waste of time. However , from experience most of the girls send to eventually most of them got pregnant and was thrown out of school, this made most of the parents were afraid of sending their girl child to school.

Therefore, girl-child education in wukari (Tsokundi) and the world at large become a major issue of concern especially in most developing countries of the world today, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where many young girls do not attend school. According to UNICEF (2007), as cited by Grace (2010), the global figure for out-of-school children is estimated to be 121 million, out of which 65 million (approximately 53.8%) were girls and over 80 percent of these girls live in sub-Saharan Africa. Primary school completion rates in Africa have been the lowest in the world and this remains a concern as half of the world's out-of-school children (OOSC) are concentrated in 15 countries, eight of which are in sub-Saharan Africa (Ukeje 2000). In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of girls out of school each year has risen from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2002 (Offorma, 2009). According to Nigerian President Muhammed Buhari as quoted on January 16, 2020 Nigeria has 13.2 million out-of-school children. The girl-child accounts for 60% of this figure. In the Northern part of Nigeria, which comprises three geo-political zones: The North East, North Central and North West. The north Central shows an improvement over others,

these zones cannot boast of appreciable number of girls' enrolment at primary and secondary schools' level, not to talk of tertiary level of education, as compared to boys' enrolment. This indicates the level of backwardness of women compared to the men in the region.

Educating girls has a profound impact, empowering them to achieve their full potential, improve their lives, and contribute to societal and economic development, ultimately leading to a more equitable and prosperous future. Girl child education refers to the education and empowerment of girls recognizing it as a fundamental human right and crucial for achieving gender equality and sustainable development. Girl child education strengthens economies and reduces inequality. It contribute to more stable , resilient societies that give all individuals including boys and men the opportunity to fulfil their potentials but education for girls is about more than going to school. Its also about girls feeling safe in classrooms and supported in the subjects and careers they choose to pursue, including those in which they are often under-represented.

When we invest in a girl's secondary education, the lifetime earnings of girls dramatically increases, national growth rates rise, child marriage rate decline, child mortality rate fail, maternal mortality rates fails and child stunting drops.

Girls' education goes beyond sending girls to school but it involves girls' learning, feeling comfortable in school, the chance to finish all level of education, acquiring knowledge and skills to face the challenges in life, learn socio-emotional and life skills to become adapted to the modern world. Also, it comprises of the capacity to take decision in life and to contribute to the communities and the world. Countries affected by conflict the percentage of girls being dropped out of school is higher than the countries who are enjoying peace.

A lot of countries girls who are in primary schools only a few of them are able to complete Secondary School. Millions of girls are not attending school due to poverty and culture. These girls have the same vision as boys and want to learn, fulfill their vision, work and assist their families and communities. They are regarded as second class and look down upon by other people (their world)

However, the impact of girl child education cannot be fully understood with out considering the reason behind why girls do not attend school, the risk of not educating a girl child, the ancient mindset towards girls' child, the importance of girl education, the history of female education in Nigeria as well as girls drop out from school.

Early marriage: The society often values marriage more than education. Girls' education is not much regarded because there are other things that favored them in life. It is estimated that every year 15 million girls marry while they have not reached 18 years. After marriage, they stop going to school. Child marriage is happening in all over the world including Europe and North America. The high percentages of child marriage are found in the following countries: Niger-76 percent, Central African Republic and Chad - 68 percent.

Pregnancy: It is accepted that girls Who are pregnant will be dropped out of school. A lot of them do not continue their education after giving birth. Due to rules, stigma, fees and rigid school programs. Every year 16 million girls who are 15-19 years give birth. And 1 million girls who are under 15 years give birth every year. This is occurring in low and middle- income countries according world health organization.

Violence: This is one of the causes for girls to be dropped out of school. About 18 million girls under 15-19 years are usually found to be victims of sexual violence which leads to school dropout and compels girls to marry early.

Lack of Funding: Most countries do not include girls' education in the nation's budget. Girls' education is not regarded more as boys and boys are giving the opportunity to go to school.

Child Labor: Girls are allowed to take care of their younger siblings and focus on household activities. Boys' education is considered as good investment. Sometimes girls' education is seen as a waste of time and resources. Because of this, a lot of girls begin to work early at the age of 5 years. They engage in agriculture or work as a domestic servant. Child labor creates sexual violence, trafficking, force labor and health problems. About 168 million child laborers and 11 percent are working instead of learning. There are more girls working in industries than boys.

Dangerous Journey: When there is violent conflict, girls are the target of armed groups and government forces. Through this, they face problems such as sexual violence, intimidation and harassment. A study conducted in India proves that half of the girls in India were sexually harassed on the way to school in 2016.

Poor Sanitation: Throughout the world, it is not common for someone to wash his or her hands after attending the nature's call. Adolescents girls who are menstruating do not go to school because of lack of privacy, sanitary disposal facilities and water shortages. In sub-

Saharan Africa and other regions girls refuse to go school due to lack of access to water and hygiene facilities; no separate toilet for girls.

Female Teachers: Many countries lack female teachers which discourages girls from attending school. The presence of more female teachers promotes girl-friendly environment that enables to feel comfortable at school. In the United States three-quarters of school teachers are females. African countries like Liberia and the Central African Republic only 1 in five primary schools are women.

War zones: According UNICEF about 485 million Children are dropped out of school because of wars. About 90 percent of girls are living in countries affected by war and they do not go to school.

Disabilities: Girls who are not able feel being discriminated and belittled themselves. According to World Health Survey from 2002-2004 shows that 41.7 percent of girls with disabilities finish primary school. These, inability of girl child being educated created a lot of mischiefs; It promotes child marriage which results in hardship and poverty, Not two-thirds of girls in low income countries finish primary education except one out of three girls complete lower secondary education. About 250 million girls will marry and procreate children by 2030, More than 1 out of 4 people staying at low income countries could be living in extreme poverty by 2050.

The economic output per person in low income countries would be 70 percent lower by 2050 than it would happen if all children were in school it was observed during the old days of African people, most especially the kwararafa Kingdom, when a man married the woman was regarded as a property and not a copartner. In this case the man expect her to produce children and manage home. He did not regard his children's education as investment. Basic education was valued as a chance and not a right(medium,2020).

Tradition and the teachings of the Holy Quran support that a girl is born in her father's house and next step is to move to her husband's house. Families that believe this concept never allow their female children to go to school but advise them to marry early. In Northern part of Nigeria sending a girl child to school is not part of their culture. Because of this, many girls are not encouraged to go to school. They believe the best place for girls is their husbands' house. Some cultural beliefs make girls to marry at the age of 8 years especially the northerners. Other parents think that a girl child will marry and use the knowledge and skills she has acquired from school to help her husband forgetting her own

biological parents. Some parents believe that it is better to educate a male child than to educate a female child. Because male child have chances to become a medical doctor, an engineer, a pilot and a banker (vanguard,2012).

Thus, the impact of Girl child education create an important apex in the society, the role of women in the society cannot be overlooked. Especially impact is their role as the traditional primary caregiver to the children. When the women are given opportunity to have a voice in charting their own destinies, they can improve their lives and the lives of their children who are the future of a country.

Future Educated Generations: An African proverb says, "If we educate a boy, we educate one person. If we educate a girl, we educate a family – and a whole nation." By sending a girl to school, she is far more likely to ensure that her children also receive an education. As many claims, investing in a girl's education is investing in a nation.

Decrease Infant Mortality: Children of educated women are less likely to die before their first birthday. Girls who receive an education are less likely to contract HIV & AIDS, and thus, less likely to pass it onto their children. Primary education alone helps reduce infant mortality significantly, and secondary education helps even more. Awareness about diseases leads to healthy population and prevention of diseases.In India, for example, the infant mortality rate of babies whose mothers have received primary education is half that of children whose mothers are illiterate.

Decrease Maternal Mortality: Educated women (with greater knowledge of health care and fewer pregnancies) are less likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth, or during the postpartum period. Increased education of girls also leads to more female health care providers to assist with prenatal medical care, labour and delivery, delivery complications and emergencies, and follow-up care.

Poverty: Girls education reduces high rate of poverty. Girls who have acquired high qualifications in education get better jobs to do and received good salary. Through this, they are able to help their younger siblings to rise up in life. Educated women are more likely to earn higher incomes, which can lift their families and communities out of poverty.

Decrease Population Explosion: Educated women tend to have fewer (and healthier) babies. According to a UNESCO, literate women had an average of 2.5 children while illiterate women had an average of six children.

Increase Involvement In Political Process: Educated women are more likely to participate in political discussions, meetings, and decision-making, which in turn promote a more representative and effective government.

Justice: Educated girl know her left from right so she will not allow herself to be deceived. As well Reduced Vulnerability to Exploitation, helps girls resist harmful practices like child marriage and sexual exploitation.

Honor and Dignity: Many men under esteem women due to illiteracy. An educated woman is highly respected as educated man. An educated woman serves as a source of inspiration for the young girls which develop their interest in education.

Decrease Domestic & Sexual Violence: Educated girls and women are less likely to be victims of domestic and sexual violence or to tolerate it in their families.

Decrease Support for Militancy: As women become more educated, they are less likely to support militancy and terrorism than similarly educated men.

Improve Socioeconomic Growth: Educated women have a greater chance of escaping poverty, leading healthier and more productive lives, and raising the standard of living for their children, families, and communities. They can share the burden of men in the different walk of life. They can serve the society as teachers, lawyers, doctors and administrators. They can work at banks, hospitals, government offices and large businesses. They can play an important role during war.

Economic Empowerment: Girls who are not educated depend much on men and fail to develop their potential. Economic independence and empowerment are achieved through education. Education opens doors to better employment and earning potential, contributing to their financial independence and overall well-being.

Economic Development: A nation's progress is dependent on the hard work of its citizens. Through education, girls can contribute towards the progress of a nation. Education empowers women to participate in the workforce and contribute to economic growth and innovation.

Life : Education is the key to portray identity and educating a girl will to improve upon her life and she would be able to read and learn about her rights and duties.

Health: Uneducated people are not aware of the importance of health and hygiene. Educating girls help them to lead healthy life. Educated mothers are more likely to make

informed decisions about their children's health and nutrition, leading to healthier communities.

Choice: Educating girls assist them to make decisions and choose to do the right thing in life. If a girl's education is good, she will aim high. Increased Self-Confidence and Agency, equipping girls with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their lives, careers, and futures.

Future Generation: Educating girls is the means to develop future generation of healthy, scholars; empowering girls. Women who are scholars will become future leaders and build the society.

Reduced Fertility Rates:

Educated women tend to have fewer children, contributing to sustainable population growth and resource management.

Improved Education for Future Generations:

Educated mothers are more likely to prioritize and support their children's education, creating a positive cycle of learning and development, as well as reduced Crime and Violence by providing alternative opportunities and promoting positive social norms.

Conclusion

The persistent influence of gender ideologies and entrenched socio-cultural norms continues to undermine the educational prospects of the girl-child in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. Deeply held beliefs about gender roles, compounded by economic deprivation, early marriage, and the prioritization of male education, systematically restrict girls' access to formal education. These barriers are further intensified by family structures, parental literacy levels, and the economic reliance on girls' domestic and income-generating contributions. The resulting educational marginalization not only impedes the personal development of girls but also perpetuates intergenerational cycles of poverty and socio-economic stagnation. Addressing these disparities requires a concerted effort to dismantle discriminatory cultural practices and implement inclusive educational policies that recognize the intrinsic value of educating all children. Empowering the girl-child through education is not merely a social imperative but a strategic pathway to sustainable development and community resilience in Wukari and beyond.

References

Ada, N. A. (1992). The Paradox of Equality of Education Opportunities for All Citizens in Nigeria and Challenges of Rural Transformation. *Journal of the Arts and Humanities, 2*, 48–56.

Adeniran, A., & Adebusuyi, I. (2007). Educational Inequalities and Women's Disempowerment in Nigeria. Department of Sociology. University of Lagos.

Agun, O. (1996). Social Differentiation in Access to Educational Opportunities: A Brake on Development of Women. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of Educational Studies Association. University of Ilorin.

Devapriya Vadhera. (2015). Importance of Girl Child Education Preface. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), 20*(12, Ver. V), 21–34. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-201252134

Garba, J. A. (2014). *Factors Militating Against the Enrolment and Retention of Girl-Child Students in Junior Secondary Schools in Kaduna State* [Master's thesis, Ahmadu Bello University]. Department of Educational Foundation and Curriculum.

Grace, E. T. (2010). Girls Child Education: Rising to Challenge. *African Journal of Reproductive Health, 14*(3), 107.

Nigeria UNICEF Country Office. (2007). *Girls Education*. https://www.unicef.org/wcaro-nigeria-factsheets-girlseducation.pdf

Offorma, G. C. (2009). Girl-Child Education in Africa. Keynote address presented at the Conference of the University Women of Africa, Lagos, Nigeria, July 16–19.

Ukeje, B. O. (2000). *Teacher Education in Nigeria: Current Status, 21st Century Challenges and Strategies for Improvement.*