

# Promoting Girl-Child Education for National Development

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**Abstract**—The paper examined girl-child education in Nigeria and its promotion for national development. The paper was guided by three research questions. It adopted descriptive research design. A total of 147 out of 150 parents randomly selected from five public secondary schools in Akinyele Local Government, Oyo state at 30 per school participated in the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed 25- item questionnaire titled: Girl-Child Education and its Promotion for National Development (GCEPND). It has a test-retest cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.71. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, mean and standard deviation. The result showed that the respondents perceived female education as crucial to national development, having some challenges in Nigeria and enhanced by many factors. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Governments, parents and stake holders in education should work together to ensure that girls in the society are not deprived of education, rather be well educated so that they can be adequately informed, reformed and able to contribute meaningfully to the development of the country.

**Keywords:** Girl-Child, Education, National development.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The right to education is a fundamental human right that is binding on every individual irrespective of sex, age, religion or tribe. Hence, the right of the girl-child to qualitative education in Nigeria (FRN1999). To achieve this, the Nigerian government offers free education at the primary and junior secondary school known as basic education. The objective of universal basic education (UBE) according to FRN (2013) are stated as:

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
2. The provision of compulsory, free and Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age;
3. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
4. Catering through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling;
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. The UBE objectives were thus critiqued in Nigeria because they have not been totally realized.

Education is an important tool for growth and development in the State. The exposure of man to formal and informal form of education will lead to acquisition of literacy values, skills and attitudes that is capable of making individuals behave well, responsible and as well contribute meaningfully to the progress and development of the State (Olusegun, Omoniyi and Amosun 2024). Offor, Anadi, Nwaru and Offiah (2021) opines that education is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realizes his/her potentialities and uses them for actualization to be useful to his or herself and others. The policy statement through the National policy on education (NPE) stipulates that Nigeria philosophy of education is based on the integration of individuals into sound and effective citizen FRN, 2004. To Offor, Anadi and Orisa (2017) Education is the acquisition of something good and worthwhile. It is a form of learning through which the knowledge, skills, values, benefits and habits of a

group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, politically and otherwise. Also, Offor *et al* (2020) observed that female child is treated with contempt and indifference. African patriarchal society favour boys over girls because boys maintain the family lineage, seen as intelligent and active while girls as passive docile and unimportant in keeping family name. Often times, male education takes precedence over female education. In situations where parents are economically poor, girls get withdrawn from schools in order to supplement family income through hawking, trading or farming activities (Omodewu and Agahiu 2016).

According to Offor, Anadi, Nwaru and Offiah (2021) in a democratic society, education is a catalyst for change and instrument for political, economic and technological development. Thus, for any nation to make significant progress in every facet of their well-being, the people should be educated in various relevant field of knowledge (Jacob 2020).

The girl-child is the feminine gender of human being. She is a girl right from birth till adolescent or young adult. Offorma (2009) sees girl-child as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. The period is made up of infancy, childhood, early childhood and late adolescence state of development. At this period, girls totally depend on the care of the adult usually the parents, older siblings and guardians.

The African traditional society place less value on girl-child education. People hold on to the idea that the girl-child education is a wasting of time and resources. This is based on the wrong notion that no matter the level of education of the girl-child, she retires to the kitchen, becomes human production machine and man's property (Omodewu and Agahiu 2016). This hinders the success of girl-child education in Nigeria and some Africa countries. The society relegates girls and women to second-rated citizens. They receive unfair treatment when compared to their male counterparts. In support of this, Jacob (2022) note that Nigeria fall short of the desired result of giving males and females equal opportunities and equal access to opportunities to advance socially, economically, nurturing and proper training.

The girl-child education refers to all forms of training that is capable of transforming the life of a female child and making her a responsible citizen that can contribute meaningfully to the development of the State. Offor *et al* (2020) note that girl-child education is a process through which the female children who will later become women are equipped with the skills, knowledge, habit and expectations that will make them to be functional to themselves, and members of the society. The girl-child education comes to the knowledge of what her society cherishes through formal or informal education and prepared to take part in perpetuation and further development of the knowledge and ideals (Jacob, 2022). Even though provisions were made by the government for the education of their citizens. In many occasions the provisions do not take cognizance of the peculiarities of the girl child (Offorma 2010) in Offor et-al (2021).

The UNICEF report of 2020 revealed the figure of out of school children in Nigeria in 2020 as 10.5million aged between five(5) and fourteen(14) years of which majority are girls. Another report from Edu Caleb (2020) in Jacob (2022) shows that out of 10.19 million children who did not go to school in 2019, 38% were girls. The details according to the states with highest and lowest rates are given below:

S/N	States	Number of out of School Girls
1	Akwa Ibom	298, 161
2	Sokoto	270, 586
3	Katsina	267, 132
4	Niger	257, 165
5	Taraba	246, 123
6	Kaduna	242, 100

7	Kano	240, 766
8	Oyo	170, 800
9	Zamfara	165, 245
10	Kebbi	144, 000
11	Adamawa	143, 166
12	Imo	32, 457
13	Gombe	31,500
14	Bayesla	28, 735
15	Cross River	26, 279
16	Enugu	20, 378
17	Ekiti	15, 955
18	Ebonyi	15, 454
19	Ondo	8,700
20	FCT	4,678
21	Delta	3,668

The above figure of out of school girls in Nigeria is so disturbing. This calls for urgent attention to salvage the situation and ensure meaningful development in the State. Abbagan (2013) opines that adequate information should be made available for female-child to make her know that education is empowerment and when empowered, can fight for her rights and exercise it.) He further mention that the content of education should be made more relevant to the female child in order to encourage her to learn.

National development according to Blessing, E.N. Thom-Otuya and Dorathy. C. (2016), is the ability of a country to mobilize resources to improve the social welfare of the poor by providing social amenities like education, portable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care etc. Therefore, any country that is able to provide all these to her citizens will experience growth and positive changes (Olusegun, 2018). National development can be referred to as the positive changes that occurs in the state through the cooperative effort of the government and the citizens. Nigeria at her 62<sup>nd</sup> year Independence can still be classified as an underdeveloped country. A country can be regarded as a developed one when is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry and vice-versa for the under developed country. Education is one of the major factors of development. If any state places less value on education such a state might not experience any reasonable development. The girl-child education brings about enlightenment, transformation and national development. This is because the education of girls promote entrepreneurial skill acquisition, increase productivity, reduce poverty and improve healthy living. It also reduces child-mother mortality rate, enhances women political participation, promotes family planning, prevents child marriage in the society strikes gender balance and lot more. (Jacob, 2022).

The success of the girl-child education can be hindered if it suffers inadequate funding, sexual harassment and abuse in-conducive school and home environment gender discrimination, shortage of school counsellors, teenage pregnancies, emotional immaturity

and some others which affect national development. Some issues are recognized as hindrance to girl's education. Offor et-al (2021) identifies impediments to girl-child education as sexual violence, human trafficking, forced labour, health issues and unforeseen events such as earthquakes, floods and diseases. According to Jacob (2020), educating the girl child is beneficial to a nation, however, the high figure of out of school girls undermines the effort of the government and other organisations. Hence, a call to give qualitative education to girls and boys in the state to experience development in Nigeria.

## I.I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education is very crucial to national development. Literature revealed that many girls of school age in Nigeria had dropped out of school and some never wished to return back to school. The reason for dropping out and losing interest in studying for the girls are enormous. This include poverty, religion beliefs, cultural beliefs, insecurity, ignorance, gender disparity among others. All these hinder girls' education and as well have serious negative implications on the development of the State, this calls for urgent attention to salvage the situation. Therefore, this study is out to investigate the girl-child education in Nigeria and its promotion for national development.

## I.II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the effects of girl-child education on the development of Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges militating against the success of girl-child education in Nigeria?
3. What factors promote girl-child education in Nigeria?

## II. METHODOLOGY

The design for this study is the descriptive research design. This is preferred because variables were not manipulated rather, careful observation of data was done to find out the impact of girl-child education on the development of Nigeria. The population for this study comprised male and female parents of students in the Senior Secondary Class two (SS II) who offer government in public Secondary Schools located in Akinyele local government area of Oyo State. A total of 150 parents randomly selected from five schools at 30 per school were involved in the study. A self-constructed titled "Girl-child Education and its' Promotion for National Development (GCEPND) questionnaire having a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.71 by Cronbach Alpha method was used to collect data. The instrument consists of 25 items with 4point Likert options: Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed. The data was summarized using frequency counts of responses, mean and standard deviation.

Analysis of Result

**Research Question 1:** What are the effects of Girl-Child Education on the development of Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Showing the Frequency count, Mean and Standard Deviation of the effects of girl-child education on National Development.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	Std
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1	Girl-child education embraces literacy and reduces illiteracy in Nigeria	54	73	07	13	3.143	0.868
2	Girl-child education embraces and promotes entrepreneurial skills acquisition	63	39	30	15	3.020	1.024
3	Girl-child education increases productivity						
	Girl-child education reduces poverty in Nigeria	54	50	37	06	3.034	0.887
4	Girl-child education improves healthy living	57	53	06	31	2.925	1.129
	Girl-child education reduces child-mother mortality rate						
5		44	48	53	02	2.912	0.843
6	Girl-child education enhances women participation in politics	54	37	50	06	2.952	0.939
	Girl-child education promotes family planning and reduces over population.						
7	Girl-child education prevents inequality and injustice among women	50	63	15	19	2.980	0.983
8	Girl-child education prevents underage marriage among teenagers	50	41	51	05	2.925	0.907
9		39	63	30	15	2.857	0.929
10		64	54	13	16	3.129	0.974
	Weighted Mean					2.988	

In the table1, it was revealed that the mean score of the respondents are 3.143, 3.020, 3.034, 2.925, 2.912, 2.952, 2.980, 2.925, 2.857 and 3.129 with respective standard deviation of 0.868, 1.024, 0.887, 1.130, 0.843, 0.939, 0.983, 0.907, 0.929 and 0.974. From table 1 above, items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, with the mean scores (2.925, 2.921, 2.952, 2.980, 2.925 and 2.857) < weighted mean of (2.988). Items 1, 2, 3 and 10 with the mean scores (3.143, 3.020, 3.034 and 3.129) > weighted mean of (2.988). The table indicates the weighted mean of 2.99 out of the maximum obtainable score of 4.00 which is higher than the standard mean of 2.50. This reveals that girl- child education has high effects on National Development.

**Research Question 2:** What are the challenges militating against the success of girl-child education in Nigeria?

**Table 2:** Frequency count, Mean and Standard Deviation of the challenges militating against the success of girl-child education in Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	STD
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1	Girl-child education in Nigeria suffers inadequate funding	P	58	20	05	3.231	0.812
2	Sexual harassment and abuse affects girl child education in Nigeria		27	45	21	2.776	1.097
3	Ignorance of the parents and girl-child can hinder the success of girl child education in Nigeria		59	23	01	3.265	0.743
4	Girl-child education is negatively affected by gender discrimination, religion, cultural beliefs and poverty in Nigeria		56	16	12	3.156	0.919
5	Lack of school counselors can affect girl-child education in Nigeria		69	10	08	3.286	0.672
6	Parents' educational background can affect girl-child education in Nigeria		65	11	05	3.306	0.755
7	Parents' socio-economic status can affect girl-child education in Nigeria		60	11	07	3.299	0.806
8	Early marriage and teenage pregnancy can affect girl-child education in Nigeria		44	42	01	3.109	0.845
9	Girl-child education suffers because females are treated with contempt and indifference		51	26	10	3.095	0.924
	Weighted mean					3.179	

In table 2, the mean score of the respondents are 3.231, 2.776, 3.265, 3.156, 3.286, 3.306, 3.299, 3.109 and 3.095 with respective standard deviation of 0.811, 1.097, 0.743, 0.919, 0.672, 0.755, 0.806, 0.786 and 0.878. The table reveals that items 2, 4, 8 and 9, with the mean scores (2.776, 3.156, 3.109 and 3.095) < weighted mean of (3.179). Items 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7, with the mean scores (3.231, 3.265, 3.286, 3.306 and 3.299) > weighted mean of (3.179) The table indicates the weighted mean of 3.18 out of the maximum obtainable score of 4.00 which is higher than the standard mean of 2.50. This shows that there are some challenges militating against girl-child education in Nigeria.

**Research Question 3:** What factors promote girl-child education in Nigeria?

**Table 3:** Frequency count, Mean and Deviation Standard on the factors that promote girl-child education Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	STDS
1	Public awareness and campaigns in both urban and rural areas will promote girl-child education in Nigeria	63	56	17	11	3.163	0.907
2	Given opportunities for women participation in public functions can promote girl-child education in Nigeria	64	63	13	07	3.252	0.810
3	Prosecution of human-traffickers and child labour will promote girl child education in Nigeria.	58	69	10	10	3.184	0.836
4	Proper funding and award of scholarship to school girls will promote girl child education in Nigeria	54	64	19	10	3.102	0.874
5	Conducive teaching and learning environment promote girl-child education in Nigeria	64	57	15	11	3.185	0.899
6	Parents-care promotes girl-child education in Nigeria	60	68	11	08	3.225	0.809
	Weighted Mean					3.185	

In the table3 above, the mean score of the respondents are 3.163, 3.252, 3.184, 3.102, 3.184, and 3.185 with respective standard deviation of 0.907, 0.810, 0.836, 0.874, 0.899 and 0.809. The table indicated the weighted mean of 3.185 out of maximum obtainable score of 4.00 which is higher than the standard score of 2.50. This implies that generally, the items in table 3 promote girl-child education in Nigeria.

### III. DISCUSSION OF RESULT

This study indicated that parents support the fact that the girl-child education have effect on the development of Nigeria. The finding reveals that girl-child education in Nigeria embraces literacy and reduces illiteracy, promotes entrepreneurial skills acquisition, increases productivity, reduces poverty, improves healthy living, reduces child mortality rate, enhances women participation in politics, promotes family planning, prevents inequality and injustice among women, and prevents underage marriage among teenagers. In agreement with this finding, Offor *et-al* (2021) assert that in any democratic society, education is

a catalyst for change and instrument for political, economic and technological advancement. Also, Jacob (2020) agrees with the findings where he argues that for any nation to make significant progress in every facet of their well-being, people should be educated in various relevant field of knowledge.

Research question two (2), revealed that there were some issues/challenges militating against girl-child education in Nigeria. The issues /challenges include inadequate funding, sexual harassment and abuse, ignorance of the parents and the girl-child, gender discrimination, religion, cultural beliefs and poverty, lack of school counsellor for proper guidance, parents' educational background, parents' socio-economic status, teenage pregnancy and early marriage, and treating females with contempt and indifference. The Nigeria philosophy of education place emphasis on the integration of individuals into a sound and effective citizens (FRN 2004). Hence taking care of the issues and challenges in education. The finding agrees with the observations by Offor *et-al* (2021) and Omodewu and Agaliu (2016) that female children are treated with contempt and indifference and the African patriarchal society favours boys over girls. The society sees boys maintaining the family lineage, intelligent and active while girls are seen as passive and docile. Again, the study agrees with the observation of Enejere (1991) who observes that religion and culture hinder girl-child education in Nigeria.

Research question three (3), reveals some factors that promote girl-child education in Nigeria. The factors are public awareness and campaigns both in urban and rural areas, women participation in public functions, prosecution of human-traffickers and child labour since ladies are the most vulnerable, proper funding and award of scholarship to school girls, conducive teaching and learning environment, and parental care. This is corroborated by the view of Abbagana (2013). He cautioned that the female child should be made to know that education is empowerment and when empowered she can fight for her rights and exercise it. He also mentioned that the content of education should be made more relevant to the female child so that she will be motivated to learn.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The education of the girl-children becomes necessary, in any nation that decides to develop. This is because educating a girl is tantamount to educating a nation. The result of this research clearly indicates that girl-child education faces some challenges. This has resulted into having many school age girls as drop out. This places a serious negative effect on the development of the state. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to ensure that sound education is given not only to girls but boys too in order to enable them become well informed, reformed and empowered to contribute meaningfully to the development of the country.

#### **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the followings were recommended:

- Nigerian government should provide more funding in order to ensure total implementation of and adherence to the policy statements on education.
- Educationists and governments should create awareness on the necessity of girl-child education and effects on national development through social media, religious organisations and societies and ensure increase in the enrolment of school age girls and boys.
- Parents should encourage their wards by supporting them in all areas to ensure they become educated, responsible and able to contribute to the development of the state.

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