

The Influence of Girl Child Education on Women Empowerment in Jalingo Educational Zone Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study investigated the Influence of Girl Child Education on Women Empowerment in Jalingo Educational Zone of Taraba State, Nigeria. Research objectives, questions and hypotheses were formulated. A descriptive survey research design was employed with a population of 5,323 participants comprising 4,450 SSS II female students and 873 female teachers from public senior secondary schools. A sample size of 372 respondents (23.3% of the population) was selected. Data collection utilized the "Influence of Girl-child Education and Women Empowerment Questionnaire (GEPWEQ)" with a reliability coefficient of 0.94 using Cronbach's Alpha method. The instrument featured a 4-point likert scale with 45 items across two sections. Chi-square statistical analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. While data was analysed based on the questions and hypotheses raised using SPSS Version 23. The study revealed significant positive influences of girl child education on women empowerment. Both null hypotheses were rejected, establishing that girl child education significantly impacts both income and occupational empowerment dimensions. The study recommends implementing public enlightenment programs on gender equality, establishing motivational counselling systems for female students, organizing professional development workshops for educators, and developing admission criteria that favour girls' education.

Key words: Girl child Education, Women Empowerment, Jalingo Educational Zone, Empowerment, Occupational Empowerment.

Introduction

The relationship between girl child education and women empowerment represents one of the most critical developmental challenges facing contemporary Nigeria, particularly in northern regions like Jalingo educational zone in Taraba State. Girl child education serves as a fundamental catalyst for societal transformation, creating pathways for women to achieve economic independence, social recognition, and political participation within their communities (Centre for African Justice, 2024).

In the Nigerian context, education is recognized as a fundamental human right, yet gender inequality in educational access remains a persistent concern despite various national and international legal frameworks including the Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls Education Programme (2003) and the Child Rights Act (2003). The Jalingo educational zone, as the capital city of Taraba State, presents a unique case study for examining how educational interventions can transform women's social and economic status within the broader Northern Nigeria context.

The Transformative Power of Girl Child Education

Research consistently demonstrates that girl child education has considerable influence on society, resulting in healthier and more empowered communities (Research Gate, 2023). The Girl Child Educational Empowerment Project (G-CEEP) framework emphasizes that education serves as "a sure way of giving them much greater power of enabling them to make genuine choices over the kinds of lives they wish to lead" (Global Giving, 2024). This empowerment extends beyond individual benefits to encompass broader societal transformation. The Nigerian Population Council observed in 2009 that women with higher educational qualifications demonstrate increased agency in decision-making processes, improved health outcomes, and enhanced economic participation⁵. These findings remain relevant in 2024, as educational institutions in Jalingo, including the Federal Government Girls College and Taraba State College of Nursing and Midwifery, continue to receive government investment to advance women's educational opportunities (Public Procurement Nigeria, 2024).

The Jalingo educational zone benefits from significant institutional infrastructure, including Taraba State University Jalingo and specialized colleges focused on women's professional development. The 2025 budget allocations for Jalingo Local Government Council emphasize education as a priority sector, alongside healthcare, youth empowerment, and infrastructural development, indicating continued governmental commitment to educational advancement (Peoples Daily Newspaper, 2025). However, challenges persist in ensuring equitable access to education for girls. Despite institutional frameworks and policy commitments, many girls in Northern Nigeria, including Taraba State, continue to face barriers preventing access to education (Brookings Institution, 2022). These challenges are compounded by cultural, religious, and economic factors that particularly affect rural and marginalized communities within the Jalingo educational zone.

The correlation between girl child education and women empowerment manifests through multiple dimensions: economic empowerment through enhanced employment opportunities, social empowerment through increased participation in community decision-making, and political empowerment through greater civic engagement. Recent research on girl child education for sustainable development goals in Northern Nigeria emphasizes that educating girls develops growth rates, encourages independence, and reduces social disparities (Research Gate, 2023). The Malala Fund's work in Nigeria demonstrates practical approaches to realizing girls' potential to generate solutions and lead change, with at least 20% of grants allocated to organizations led by girls or young women (Malala Fund, 2024). This approach recognizes that empowered women become agents of transformation within their communities, creating multiplier effects that extend educational benefits to future generations.

Contemporary Relevance and Future Directions

As Nigeria works toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality), the Jalingo educational zone represents both the challenges and opportunities inherent in transforming women's lives through education. Traditional leaders in Northern Nigeria are increasingly challenging centuries-old traditions and reshaping attitudes toward education, making strides toward a more inclusive future (World Bank, 2024). The intersection of emergency education policies and gender equity has become particularly relevant, as researchers emphasize the need for policies ensuring that girls and young women are not left behind during times of crisis (Brookings Institution, 2022). This consideration is crucial for the Jalingo educational zone, which must maintain educational continuity while addressing persistent gender disparities.

Finally, gender discrimination and oppression is a serious threat to girl-child education and women empowerment in Jalingo Education Zone. It is a tragedy that plagued human resource development

and economic growth in Nigeria. For many years, the girl-child is believed to be second class citizens even in Jalingo Education Zone. Many Nigerian cultures and traditions see a woman as a man's property and bearer of children and nothing more. Women constitute more than half the entire population of Nigeria, precisely 61% which amount to 96.6 million. Therefore, investment in the education of the girl-child should be a priority. The prosperity of a country does not depend on the abundance of its revenue, nor on the strength of its fortifications but on the education of its citizens – men and women alike. This study is an attempt to investigate the influence of girl-child education on women empowerment.

Research Objectives

The overall objective of this study was to;

1. Find out the influence of girl-child education on income empowerment of students in senior secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.
2. Find out the influence of girl-child education on occupational empowerment of women in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does girl-child education influence student's income empowerment in senior secondary schools of Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does girl-child education influence students' occupation empowerment in senior secondary schools of Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives raised in the study, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested.

HO_1 : There is no significant influence of girl-child education on students' income empowerment in senior secondary schools of Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

HO_2 : There is no significant influence of girl-child education on students' occupational empowerment in senior secondary schools of Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to Okogun (2016), descriptive survey design collects information about a defined situation and condition or environment and the people. Descriptive survey method involves the collection and analysis of data of small number from a large Population. The design will enable the researcher to collect original data from the respondents themselves and describes the present conditions as they exist in their natural family settings. According to Merriam (2015), survey research endeavours to overview, look into, gather facts to determine, and interprets the nature or status of things in wide magnitude. The choice of this design was based on the fact that the entire population would not be reached and a given portion of the population would be issued with questionnaire to elicit responses necessary for this research.

Population

The population for this study comprised of 5,323 comprising of 4,450 SSS II female students and 873 female teachers from public senior secondary schools in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State (Taraba State Post Primary Management Board (TSPMB) School Census, 2018). The choice for SS II female students is that they are matured enough to respond to the instruments and must have made choices of occupation to pursue as career. A total of three hundred and seventy-two (372) respondents as the sample size of the study which represent 23.3% of the entire population.

Instrument

The instruments that were used to collect data for this study were qualitative and quantitative data from the focused group i.e. female students and female teachers. A questionnaire developed by the researcher will be used in collection of data. The questionnaire is titled “Influence of Girl-child Education and Women Empowerment Questionnaire (GEPWEQ). The instrument is divided into two sections. Section ‘A’ solicits for respondent’s bio-data while section ‘B’ consists of 45 items stated in closed ended statements on the research variables. The instrument will use 4 point-Likert scales rating as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with the ratings of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A reliability coefficient of 0.94 was obtained using Cronbach’sAlpha method at 0.05 significance level. Hence, the instrument is considered reliable for the collection of data for this study

Hypotheses Testing

The researchers employed Chi-square test to test the hypotheses raised in the study.

Hypothesis one

There is no significant influence of girl-child education on women income empowerment in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State Nigeria

Table 1. Chi-square test on the influence of girl-child education on women income empowerment in Jalingo education zone

Total scores of girl-child education on women income empowerment	
Chi-square	384.629 ^a
Df	18
Assymp. sig	0.000

From Table 1, chi-square at 18 degree of freedom ($\chi^2 = 384.629$, $p = .000$) signifies that girl-child education has significant influence on women income empowerment in Jalingo. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant influence of girl-child education on women income empowerment in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State Nigeria is not retained.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of girl-child education on women occupational empowerment in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State Nigeria.

Table 2. Chi-square test on girl-child education on women occupation empowerment in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State Nigeria

Total scores on girl-child education on women occupation empowerment	
Chi-square	347.753 ^a
Df	18
Assymp.sig	0.000

From Table 2, chi-square at 18 degree of freedom ($\chi^2 = 347.753$, $p = .000$) signifies that girl-child education has significant influence on women occupational empowerment in Jalingo. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant influence of girl-child education on women occupational empowerment in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State Nigeria is not retained.

Discussion of Finding

In this study, the chi-square statistics was used for the analysis of the hypothesis on the influence of Girl-child education, on women empowerment in senior secondary school of Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State. Discussion of findings are summarized below;

Similarly, chi-square at 18 degree of freedom signifies that girl-child education influence women income empowerment in Jalingo education zone. The result is in agreement with the research of Okoro (2010) who carried out a study in Anambra State to examined women empowerment and participation in economic activities as tools for self-reliance and development of the Nigerian society. The results of the study showed that farming, trading, craft, food processing, hair dressing, poultry and the likes were the major economic activities performed by women. Personal savings, family assistance, philanthropist's assistance, loans and credits, cooperative society assistance, group contributions, were the sources of fund available to the women for their economic activities. Education and health promotion, food supply and distribution, were some of the services rendered by the women that bring about societal development. Provision of sustainable land tenure system, provision of soft loans and credits, training programmes, funding, establishment of cooperative societies, were some of the strategies proffered by the study to enhance women participation in economic activities.

The findings of present study supports the findings of Oleribe (2011) who conducted a study titled Influence of Girl Education in Nigerian Society. The result of the study shows that it is not uncommon to see girls, who ought to be in schools hawking several wares and consumables during school hours along the roads and streets in northern States. Information's obtained through interview shows that on Friday's girls are found in large numbers in the market selling for their parents and guardians. They are also seen in farms during school hours helping their parents' plant, weed or harvest farm produce. At home they act as nurse maids for their mothers taking care of the little ones or preparing meals for the whole family. Also, the findings of this study are in agreement with the work of Effiong (2012) who conducted a study in Akwaibom State on how best to influentially raise the standard of girl education among rural dwellers. The findings of the study (drawn from responses to items contained in the questionnaire instrument and interview of some selected respondents) revealed that 60% of respondents believe that aside from culture and other social obstacles, the major reason behind the reluctance to educate the girl child is the perceived lack of employment opportunities. As a consequence of this, parents and guardians opt to introduce their female children to trade and crafts so as to be able to cope in the absence of white collar jobs.

Also hypothesis tested signifies that girl-child education have significant influence on women occupation empowerment in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State. The findings of this study is in agreement with the findings of the study conducted by Ojobo (2008) who Conducted a study in Delta state, Nigeria on education as a catalyst for women empowerment in Nigeria. The findings of the study which was gotten through primary and secondary sources of data showed that in spite of all the laudable goals and objectives of education, Nigerian women still suffer a lot of constraints and inhibitions which militate against their personal and national development. Notwithstanding the findings of this study is not contrary to the findings of Agbalajobi (2009) in a study examined the influence of women entrepreneurship on poverty reduction in Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria. Results indicate that apart from the contribution of women entrepreneurs to reducing poverty, women also perceive their involvement in entrepreneurship to contribute to employment creation, skills and economic development. The findings of this study does not contradicts the findings of Areola, and Madu (2012) whose took a socio-cultural diagnosis of empowerment of the Nigerian girl-child in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), taboos are some of the socio-cultural factors affecting Nigerian girl-child. The findings of the study also showed that poverty, physiological and psychological, are influences of socio-cultural factors on Nigerian girl child. The findings of the study further revealed that empowering the girl-child in education, vocational skills and establishing of girls' clubs in market places and schools will help the Nigerian girl-child in attaining her full potentials in life.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that socio-economic factors affect participation of girl child in secondary education by causing lack of school uniform, personal effects, school fees and teaching learning materials. It also results to poor payment of school levies and high rate of girl child school dropout. It's also concluded that socio- cultural factors affect girl child participation in secondary education through early marriages, male preference in the family, and community initiation into adulthood, negative attitude of girl child in education, cultural practices and feeling of being adults. Parents level of education affect participation of girl child in secondary education by making them to support their daughters in participation in education by providing what their daughters require for personal effects and other educational requirements. Finally distance from school affects girl child participation by making the girl child fatigued after walking, encounter challenges on the way to school like rape, abduction, early marriages, peer pressure and early pregnancies due to lack of security as they travel to school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommended were made:

- It has been observed that gender differences start from school enrolment. The male students. In this regard, there should be public enlightenment programme to be handled by guidance and counsellor, government and non-governmental organization (NGOS) to address the issue on gender equality and equity in both private and public schools enrolment.
- Guidance Counsellor, government, teachers and other relevant authorities should find a means of motivating and counselling female students on the need to have equal chance to do well as their male counterpart. School authorities should organize workshops for teachers, admission officers and principals so that they could improve in admission criteria to favour girl's education.

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