

## The Perception of Parents towards Girl-Child Education in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The perception of parents towards girl-child education in Adamawa State Nigeria was examined. The specific objectives of the study were to examine the reason for non participation of girl-children in western education; participation of parents whose girl-children are in secondary schools towards the benefit of the girl-child education; and the causes of girl-child dropout from secondary schools. Data were collected from 210 households in seven local government areas and 21 villages were selected through multi stage random sampling techniques. Sample comprises 60 households whose girl-children are dropout from secondary schools, 100 households who did not send their girl-children to secondary schools and 50 households whose girl-children were in secondary schools. Structured questionnaire and oral interview were used to collect data from heads of the households. The results indicates that fear of sexual harassment and unwanted pregnancy, traditional and religion prejudice and save money for boys education were the major parents' reason for non participation of girl-children in secondary school education as indicated by 41.67, 24.00, 22.00 and 26.00 percent of the respondents respectively. Improvement in social and economic status and early marriage were also reasons for participation of parents and dropout from schools respectively, it is recommended that a very strong campaign on the benefit of girl-education should be mounted, age limit of marriage should be provided and penalty should be provided to punish those enforcing girl children with sexual harassment.

**Keywords:** *Dropout, Education, Girl-child, Parents, Perception.*

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### **Background to the Study**

Girl child education is the investment with the highest social and economic returns and the means to increase the impact of other investments in health, nutrition, family planning, agriculture, industry and infrastructure (Bello, 2014). Northern Nigeria has persistently been on the front page of paper on the effect of girl-child education. A recent statistic shows that out of 32 million children who are out of school in Nigeria, 2.6 million of them are girl – children. This alarming statistic supply highlights the problems hindering the girl-child across Africa, Nigeria and Adamawa in particular.

Hasley (2012) said the main objective of parents to bring up their daughter to be sufficiently attractive to gain a suitable husband. This has been sort of view that have been widely held about women. Women have been as kitchen clerks, the common African word's says the woman education ends in the kitchen, some even use the saying like a “girls like a tree in a person's home but the shades is usually in some one's compound to buttress their lack of investment in girl-child education. (World Bank 1997) Distribution of women in the various sectors of the economy shows that women are involved in Agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity, gas, commerce, transport and communication and services.

The greatest problems of girl-child education in Northern Nigeria and Adamawa in particular are mostly based on their home background, religion and social community sanctions. Children are brought up right from the beginning with some feelings against modern education, and in this respect they are unwillingly forced to go to school for which they have already cultivated a traditional prejudice and the experiences they have occurred (Abubakar, 2013). Most people in Adamawa State prefer to marry illiterate or semi educated women. This is because they cost less to maintain and are more obedient to their husbands and their relatives. The higher educated woman would be unruly, disrespectful and disobedient, to her husband, in laws, and relatives of the husbands (Sa'ad 2009).

In most part of Northern Nigerians and Adamawa State in particular, it is believed the place of a woman is in the kitchen or at home and she is socialized into accepting her traditional role of bearing and rearing children as well as maintaining the welfare of the family. Educating the woman therefore needs not to go beyond preparing her for such traditional roles of mother and wife (Adamu, 1996).

Women opportunities for education and scholastic performance are negatively affected by domestic responsibilities, family financial difficulties, peer influence, early marriage, fear of sexual harassment and unwanted pregnancy (Iheanacho, 2002). The consequences behind this is the high rate of dropout , more especially during the insurgency period that is from 2010 – 2015 where the dropout rate increases more than 70 percent when compared with the previous years (Sa'ad, 2015). So this paper is set to assess or evaluate or analyze the perception of parents towards girl-child education in Adamawa State North East, Nigeria.

### Objectives of the Study

Three objectives were set to lead the study. This includes:

1. To examine the reason for non participation of girl-children in western education
2. To examine the perception of parents whose girl-children are in secondary school to word the benefit of the girl-child education
3. To examine the causes of girl-child dropout from secondary school

### Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the research

1. What are reasons for non participation of girl-child in western education?
2. What are the perceptions of parents toward the benefits of girl-child education in households where girls participates in education?
3. What are the causes of girl-child dropout from school?

### Methodology

The study was conducted in Adamawa State North East of Nigeria. A multistage random sampling technique was used to select seven (7) local government areas. 21 villages and 210 households were selected. Out of the 210 households, 100 households did not sent their girl-children to secondary schools 50 household have their girl-children in secondary school while 60 households had their girl-children dropped out from secondary schools as at the time of the study.

Data were collected from the households structured questionnaire and oral interview. Variables on which data were collected include the respondents' reason for participation, non participation as well as dropout of girl-children from secondary schools. The data was analyzed through using descriptive statistics which includes frequency distribution percentage and ranking.

### Findings and Discussion

#### Reasons for non Participation of Girl-Children in Secondary School Education

Family heads for not sending their girl-children to secondary schools gave a number of reasons. Among those reasons were Domestic work pressures in the house, Fear of sexual harassment and unwanted pregnancy, lack of finance and saving of money for boys education; Traditional and religion prejudice, the absents of girl-children schools around etc. the reasons are presented in table below:

**Table I: Parents reason for Non-participation of Girl-children in Secondary Education**

Reasons	Percentage of Respondents (100 Respondent)	Rank Order
Domestic work pressure	09	5
fear of sexual harassment and unwanted pregnancy.	26	1
Far distance of school from home	03	6
Lack of finance	15	4
Traditional/religion prejudice	24	2
Save money for boys education	23	3

The results of the study revealed that out of 100 respondents whose their girl-children did not participate in secondary education 26% indicated that fear of sexual harassment is the reason for girl non-participation in secondary school, this attributed to the fact that the majority of them were Muslims and they belief that whenever a girl have an unwanted pregnancy that girl will not be married within that zone unless somebody who does not know the incidence. This is in consonance with the finding of Harsley and Abubakar (2012) that in the Fulani community when a girl was found with unwanted pregnancy ,they said girl will not marry a responsible person.

Traditional and Islamic prejudice was indicated by 24% which ranked second to the unwanted pregnancy and sexual harassment. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents were Muslims. Because of the fear that their daughters could be converted to Christianity, they fell reluctant to send their girl-children to western schools. This is in consonance with the findings of Umar (1996) that is the worth especially North east and North west where Islam had been accepted as religion its view suspicious due to its connections with Christianity. This is followed by save money for boys' education as indicated by 22% of the respondents. This finding agreed with that of Harsley (2012) funding girls education is a waste of money because it will help the parents. It is always going to somebody else, instead of wasting the money, it is better to save them for boy education. The result of the study also shows that 15% agreed that lack of finance led to the non participation of their girl-children in secondary schools. Domestic work pressure and far distance of schools from home also shows 9% and 3% of the respondents respectively as a reason for participation of their girl-children to secondary schools.

### **Perception of Parents towards the Benefits of Girl-child Education**

Families whose girl-children were in schools had different reasons for deciding to educate their girls. These may includes, social, economic, religion and cultural reasons among others. The results are presented in table 2 below:

**Table 2: Parents Reason for Girl-child participation in Secondary Education**

<b>Parents' Reasons</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (50 Respondent)</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Improvement of social and economic status	46	1
Improve their status and respondent in the society	24	2
Good wife and mother	14	3
Because others are educating their daughter	2	6
To know how to read and write	10	4
Because it is compulsory	4	5

The result revealed that the major reasons for the families educating their girl-children were to improve the social and economic status, The expected economic benefit, improving their status and respect in the society, to become good wife and mother and to know how to read and write among others.

Improving girls social and economic status ranked first as the most important reason as indicated by 46% of the 50 families whose girls participated in secondary education. It is obvious due to the extended family system practiced in Nigeria and Adamawa State in particular. Parents feel responsible for their children even after marriage as a result the girl-child always runs to her parents for help each time she has a financial problem, to alleviate themselves of this economic status in their husband's families. Improvement of their status and respect in the society was indicated by 24% of the respondents and ranked second as reason for educating their girl-children. This could be attributed to the fact that the background is seen as a liability in Nigeria and Adamawa State in particular. So therefore parents educate their girl-children to improve their status and respect in the society. To be good wife and mother also ranked third and indicated as 14% of the respondents gave reasons for participating their girl-children in western education, because in Nigeria and Adamawa in particular a woman's conduct in her marital home reflects back to her parents they see it as a challenge and believe that educating their daughters will provide them with the knowledge of handling their marital responsibilities as housewife and mothers. To know how to read and write, because educating girl-child is compulsory and because other people are educating their girl-children holds 10%, 4% and 2% respectively and ranked fourth, fifth and sixth in the above table presented.

### **Causes of Girl-Child Dropout from Secondary School**

**The table 3 indicates the Reason given by Respondents whose Girl-child dropout from Secondary Education.**

**Table 3: Reason for Girl-Child Dropout from Secondary Education**

<b>Parents' Reasons</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (50 Respondent)</b>	<b>Rank Order</b>
III Health	10	4
Unwanted pregnancy/sexual harassment	41.67	1
Early marriage	25	2
Financial problem	16.67	3
Academic performance	4.66	5

The analyses of the results revealed that out of the 60 respondents whose girl-children dropped out from secondary schools, 41.67% indicated that unwanted pregnancy and sexual harassment as reasons for dropout from secondary school, 25% early marriage and 16.67 as financial problem. Unwanted pregnancy and sexual harassment ranked first followed by early marriage and financial problem as second and third to ranking the reason for dropout rate in secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria. In this context, the girl-children in secondary schools were forced to be sexually obedient by the peer students and the teachers as opined by some of the respondents during the conduction of the research. As a result of that must of the girl-children dropped out of school or fear of unwanted pregnancy. Girl-children were also married at the early age of 14 – 18 years which may affect their continuity of secondary education. And in respect of financial problem probably because of the differences in parental perception of opportunity and direct lost of boys and girls education, the girls education would be discontinued. Subsequently, the ill health indicated 10% of the respondents holds it as reasons for dropout in secondary education while 4.66% of the respondents are of the opinion that Academic performance are reasons for secondary school dropout in Adamawa State

secondary schools. This is so because the pressure of withdraw and expulsion takes a higher concern in secondary schools system.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The present programmes in the media house and campaigns to promote girl-child education in the state have not produced significant positive attitudinal change and perceptions towards girl-child education. This is evident in the number of households whose girl-children are not participating in the western education (secondary school) vis-à-vis the dropout and the participation of girl-child in secondary school education as those in the system will have upper hand in social and economic improvement, improvement of status and respect, to know how to read and write etc.

It is therefore recommended to have a very strong campaign for girl-child education in the state through the religions readers as religion contributes to the non participation of girl-children in secondary schools. Such campaign should include the emphasis on the social and economic benefit of girl-child education, additionally the law and penalty would be provided to every secondary school for teachers and students in respect of sexual harassment. The minimum age limit should be fixed for marriage by the state government and enforced through the assistance of religion leaders. The attainments of education for all will be mirage without the full participation of girl-children who form more than 30% of the population.

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