

Girl Child Education and Sustainable Development of Different Clans in Ikwerre Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the impact of girl child education in the sustainable development of different clans in Ikwerre Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study collected data from both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaire was used to gather primary data while secondary data includes review of related literature. The target population of the study comprises women and community leaders from one hundred and fifteen (115) communities in Ikwerre Local government areas of Rivers State totaling about 345 persons but the sample was 185 women and community leaders obtained using Taro Yamen's sample size determination formula. A structured questionnaire titled "Role of Girl Child Education in Sustainable Development Questionnaire (RGESDQ) was used to collect data validated by three experts. Data obtained was subjected to Cronbach Alpha for internal consistency reliability calculation. Charts and tables were used for data presentation. Data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics comprising mean, frequency counts and chi-square analytical tool. Guided by a research question and a hypothesis, the study concludes that Girl child education contributes positively to social development of Ikwerre local government area and recommends amongst others that laws towards child rights as regards child marriage should be effectively enforced with penalties attached to enable the girl child in this locality to focus on her education.

KEYWORD: Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

The idea behind sustainable development is to ensure that developmental activities result in social and economic wellbeing of humans and wellness of environmental resources, transcending in time and in space. This is evident from the definitions of sustainable development. According to United Nation (1987), sustainable development deals with ensuring that present development activities cater for the needs and quality of life of the present generation and not hindering the needs and quality of life of future generations. Similarly, Pearce (1993) defines sustainable development as societal development that does not produce an adverse effect on the future or in case of such effect, makes adequate provision for compensation. Other definitions provided by Vander-Merwe and Van-der-Merwe; Vare and Scott; Duran, Gogan, Artene, and Duran (as cited in Klarin, 2018) associate sustainable development with improvement in economic

development, quality of life, protection of environment, technological development, achievement of human needs and longevity of development among others.

Achieving sustainable development goals has implication for education. Education serves as a vehicle for achieving the sustainable development goals. For example, to end poverty (goal one), one needs to be equipped with the skill and knowledge needed to be socially and economically empowered for gainful employment. Again, to attain zero hunger (goal two) in the society, people need to be educated and trained on how to produce food adequately. Education is described as a process that equips individuals with knowledge for self-actualisation and thus become functional members of the society (Ocho, 2005; Offorma, 2009). Apart from the first two sustainable development goals, other sustainable development goals which has implication for education are goal three (ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages), goal four (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and goal 6 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all). To ensure a healthy life requires not only the effort of government and relevant authorities providing good healthcare for citizenry but the citizens also have to conduct themselves in ways that promote healthy living.

This could only be adequately achieved through education. Similarly, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls would be possible if girls who are deprived of education due to cultural values and traditions are given the equal privileges to attend school as the boys. Furthermore, to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, productive employment and decent work for all, education and training need to be provided to equip the citizens with the prerequisite skills and competences required for such development. The above discussion on sustainable development and its link with education shows that education plays significant role in all spheres of sustainable development including: social development, economic development as well as environmental development.

Educating the girl child is particularly key to sustainable development. Access to education is described as a key to successful living particularly for the girl-child. Furthermore, access to education equips the girl child with knowledge, skills and attitude needed to participate meaningfully in the development of the society (Michael, 2011). Equipping the girl child with skills through education and training enables her in adulthood to contribute immensely to development of the society. Education of the girl child provides her the wherewithal for family planning leading to appropriate number of children and less social and economic responsibility on the families and society at large (Kobani, 2014). Educating the girl child enables her during adulthood access to gainful employment to enhance her capacity for contributing to support family income as well as national development.

In situations where husbands die, rendering the woman as a widow, an educated woman could easily cater for her children's welfare. Literacy acquired through education by a girl child enhances her productivity as well as self-employability in the informal sector. Increased productivity in agriculture towards attaining sustainable development goal of food security is linked to the education and training of rural women who are majorly involved in agriculture (Ottaway, 2000). The discussion in the preceding paragraphs shows that women play important role in the development of the society. Consequently, education of the girl child contributes immensely to women in playing their role of support for societal development.

Statement of the Problem

The Ikwerre culture is dominated by men and consequently, women are expected to be subject to the men. The women in Ikwerre cannot take up chieftaincy title. The women in Ikwerre communities cannot take part in decision making process by airing their views. This cultural practice relegate the women to the background and it will seem that the women have no role in the development of Ikwerre local government area of Rivers

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State. In the typical Ikwerre tradition, it is believed that education could delay or even prevent marriage for the girl child. Consequently, girls are often times denied opportunity for education under the cover of ensuring that the girl child fulfills the role of a submissive wife in marriage. Depriving the girl child access to education is capable of limiting her capacity to contribute to the development of Ikwerre local government area. Consequently, the problem of the study is to find out the role of girl child education in the sustainable development of Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the role of girl child education in the sustainable development in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Examine the role of girl child education in the social development across the different clans of Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Question.

1. What is the role of girl child education in the social development across the different clans of Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. H_{01} : The role of girl child education in social development does not significantly vary across the different clans in Ikwerre local government area.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the result of this study will provide information that will give reorientation to community leaders, family members and other stakeholders involved in girl child development and upbringing. With such reorientation, their attitude towards girl child with respect to their education could change in the positive direction. Consequently, the girl child will be the direct beneficiary of such positive change as their educational aspiration could be guaranteed.

Scope of the Study

Geographically, the study will be conducted in Ikwerre local government area. The study will use women and community leaders from communities in Ikwerre Local Government Area as respondents. In terms of content, the study will focus on challenges facing girl child education in the study area; role of girl child education in social, economic and environmental development of Ikwerre as well as strategies for educating the girl child to enhance her capacity for sustainable development.

Operational Definition of Terms

The terms, social development, economic development and environmental development are operationally defined as will be used in this study. But emphasis shall concentrate on social development.

Social Development

In this study, social development is used to describe development of the social life of Ikwerre local government area. It cuts across development in the way they marry, the values they place on health and education, the politics, cultural life of the people amongst others.

Theoretical Framework (Human Capital)

This study adopted the human capital formation and manpower-planning model as its framework of analysis. This theory's main crust states that skills, education and experience are the major factors that establish total development of any nation (Jhingan, 2007). Using this, the human capital formation theory argues that a girl-

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child is a functional and vital member of her society and has a role to play in its development process and should be recognized as an eligible player. The theory further emphasizes on the need for the provision of the various and necessary educational opportunities to help develop her creativity and skills, equipping her with proper knowledge to make enlightened decisions (Deborah, 2016), boost her values and competencies to help her work for the betterment of herself and to the advantage of her society building and enhancing national development. It is to this end that Deborah (2016) posited that various resources a country may possess cannot be compared to the output that will be derived from its human resources if used maximally.

Fagerlind in Mulkah (2015), further described citizens of a nation as active agents that build its social, economic and political systems, which help carry and sustain national development. Education in itself creates opportunities for the growth and development that is desired and if government agencies make educating the girl-child population a major priority, they would make viable policies and ensure its implementation, establishing programmes and incentives that motivates girls to enroll and complete their education and create long term opportunity for sustained development (Psacharopoulos, 1997). According to Jhingan (2007), manpower planning focuses on ensuring long-term developments using a country’s semi-skilled and skilled manpower economic conditions to broaden employment opportunities through proper and adequate investment in human resource development and education.

Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by some concepts that guided the review of literature. These include: girl child education and sustainable development. Challenges facing girl child education, role of girl child education in economic, environmental and social development, strategies for educating the girl child to enhance her capacity for contributing to the sustainable development are framed by the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 2.1 below. In this study, emphasis shall be on Social Development

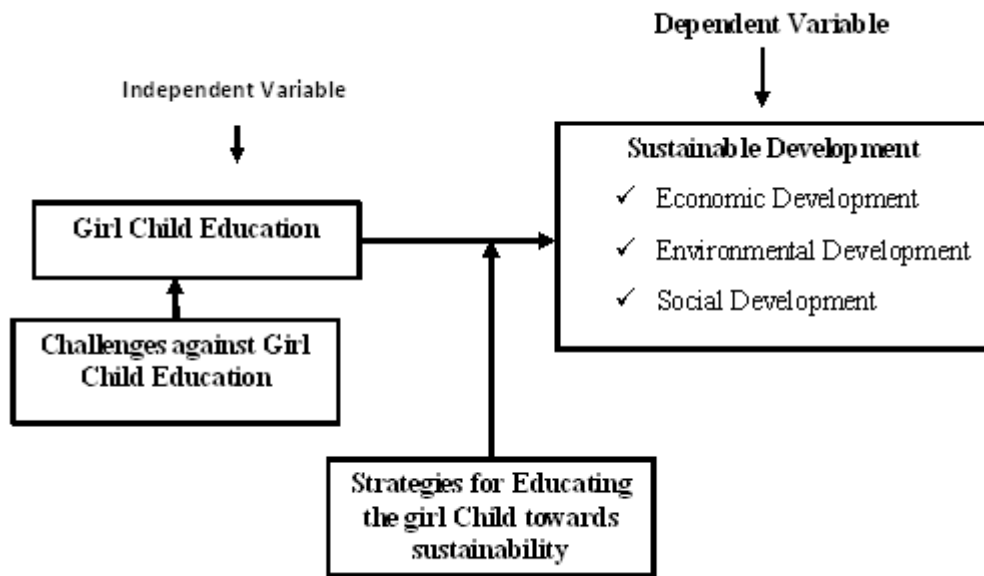


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework for Role of Girl Child Education in Sustainable Development

As indicated in the diagram, the concepts of the study are sustainable development, girl child education, challenges facing girl child education and strategies for educating the girl child towards sustainable development. The conceptual framework depicts the interrelationship among these concepts. Girl child

education plays some significant roles in the three dimension of sustainable development including economic, environmental and social development of Ikwerre local government area. This role could be achieved if the challenges facing girl child education are dealt with. Again, the role played by girl child education in sustainable development could further be enhanced in the presence of favourable educational strategies for the girl child. The review of literature on these concepts is presented in the subsections that follow.

Girl Child Education

The girl-child is a biological female offspring from birth to 18 years of age. During this period, the young girl is totally under the care of the adult who may be parents, guardians or elder siblings (Kobani, 2014). It is also a period when the girl-child is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character. She is very dependent on others on who she models her behaviour, through observation, repetition and imitation. Her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage (Sutherland, 2001).

Children arrive at birth as packaged gifts with great but latent potentials. Training (especially formal education) nurtures, prepares and matures them to unleash these to humanity in service and live a fulfilled life; Education at basic and post primary school is a fundamental right of every child as it unveils their great potentials, an essential for the exercise of all other human rights. It promotes individual freedom, empowerment and yields important development benefits. Education inculcates in the individual, knowledge, skills, character and desirable values that will foster national development and self-actualization (Asiegbu, Okorji & Bosah, 2014). According to Agbakwuru (2002), education equips one with marketable skills thereby lifting the possessor up from the poverty arena. Essentially, Uzoma (2013), mentioned that through education, the individual learns good health habits, principles and practices which promote healthy living and longevity as well as acquire marketable skills that confer economic power on the educated.

Education is implicitly a part of culture as it is a life-long learning process that enables a person, irrespective of age; understand the relationship between the environment and his or her peculiar circumstances. Kobani (2014) posited that education, whether formal, informal or non- formal, helps towards the development of a complete balanced and rational personality. Consequently, the lack of education will have negative influences on the individual, family and society at large.

Girls constitute a larger percentage of the 7.6 billion people across the world; this shows the greater need to focus more attention towards issues affecting their education in relation to national development. Women and girls have strategic roles to play in the growth and development of their nations and once they are not able to meet up their quota it causes a strain to maintaining and sustaining any form of development be it health, economic or political (Mulkah, 2015). According to Ugwu, (2015), the word education originally in the Latin language is “educare” which means to mould or train. Amaele (2011) also explained education to be the overall enhancement of a child’s skills and capabilities to fit into the needs of the society, making the child useful and productive to both himself and his nation leading to significant growth and development. To further buttress on the above point, Sutherland (2001) described a girl-child as one who needs proper guidance by individuals that she can pattern her life after through imitation and proper leadership. This means that a girl child is a functional member of her society, but in order for her to function properly, she needs to be properly trained, developed and built up to actualize and effectively translate her aspirations, potentials and function in the rightful place in her community and society, and this can only be realized through proper education. Okebukola (2014) further defined girl-child education as a major way of ensuring that women and girls are strategically positioned properly to contribute effectively and efficiently towards national development. Education is a vital tool to ensure the development of any country because it brings out and develops hidden potentials making the girl-child a useful contributor to her community and for the sustenance

of national development by developing her attitude, skills and productivity level achieved through the teaching and learning process in Ikwerre Local Government Area.

A number of benefits are associated with educating the girl child. By sending the girl-child to school, she is empowered more and is also placed in a better position of ensuring that her children also receive qualitative education, thus enhancing the chance for national development. The following are important benefits of girl-child education:

1. Reduces gender inequality
2. Reduces poverty
3. Decreases infant mortality
4. Decreases maternal mortality
5. Decreases the incidence of early child marriage
6. Decreases population explosion since such a woman can make use of the appropriate family planning methods
7. Decreases domestic and sexual violence against women and girls
8. Decreases support for militancy and murder
9. Increases involvement of women in politics/political processes
10. Contributes to the democratic process by giving opportunities to Nigerian women and girls
11. Improves the women socio-economic growth as this provides opportunity for entrepreneur and vocations
12. Breaks the yoke of ignorance
13. Helps the women to develop civic sense and learn to respect and love her fellow human being.

The Roles of Girl Child Education in the Social Development

Education of the girl child has been shown to contribute immensely to the development of the family, the societies and the nation. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, (2004) reported that child girl education contributes to the various aspects of their lives such as increased productivity, family health and nutrition, reduced fertility rates and related child mortality rates. Child girl education empowers the girl child to become self-sufficient adult capable of taking decision and controlling her life. Jatau in Esomonu (1999) believed that the burden of nation building rests much on women. She goes on to say, “we need women to create a blissful home, have well-educated and well-behaved children. The important of child girl education cannot be over emphasized. It is a global human right concern demanding legislation across the nations of the world as child girls are discriminated against. They are victims of various traditional and cultural practices, they suffer degradation, they are objects of poverty, their faces are only to be seen but their voices not to be heard, they are seen as being sub-servants to their male counterparts; they are the inferior set, their place is in the kitchen (Ahmad & Najeemah, 2013).

Despite many gains recorded with regards to overall level of education worldwide and more children than ever are now attending primary school (King, 2013), there is still not world-wide gender parity in education. Girl child access to formal education has continued to be low in developing parts of the world especially in Sub—Saharan Africa. Globally, two thirds of all those who have no access to education are girls and women. Sixty-five million girls and women never even started school, and an estimated 100 million do not complete primary education, often because the quality is poor and their opportunities are far from equal to those of boys (Iwalaiye, Abah, Johnson & Giwa & Ali, 2016). In a recent research by World Bank (2012), there exists

sizeable gender gaps for poor women and women in poor places. The report revealed that in education where gaps have narrowed in most countries, girls' enrollment in primary and secondary schools in sub-Saharan African countries and some parts of South Asia have not improved much (Anah, 2013).

In Nigeria, particularly, the northern part of the country, access to basic education among the child girl has remained low as only 20 per cent of women in the North West and North East of the country are literate and have attended school (Unicef, 2007). Considering the vital role played by women in the society and the nation, it is therefore paramount to review the challenging factors militating against girl child education in Nigeria.

There are various ways through which women can contribute to the development of the nation. Based on some of the special qualities possessed by women, a lot can be benefited from them if given the opportunity to be educated. Some of the benefits that can be derived from women education towards a sustainable development are: Quality Leadership: According to the report of Shinaba (2008), abuse of power, violations of human rights, mismanagement of national resources and under development are the order of the day for the past four decades that men have been in power. Similarly, the period in which men have been in power have been characterized by gross inequality and violence. However, as managers of the home, it is expected that if women are given the opportunity, they will be able to implement their managerial skills in the management of the various sectors of the economy. The quality of leadership that will be provided by women will be such that would be characterized with equality, peace, transparency and protection of human right. All of these qualities are very important in building a stable nation. Increase in GDP: The World Bank in White (2013) pointed out that if the gap between male and female employment is closed, it would help to increase GDP in America by 9%, Europe by 13% and Japan by 16%. When women are given the opportunity to be educated, it will help to increase the workforce of the nation. Similarly, the activities of women in the various economic sectors of the economy have the potential of contributing to an increased GDP. This is because their contribution will help to argument the effort of their male counterpart in securing a higher GDP.

Building of a Healthy Nation: The health condition of the citizens is one of the factors that determine the lifespan of the masses. In the same way, the lifespan of the citizens is one of the factors that determine the level of development. Orji (2011) noted that girl education vis-à-vis women education stands as one of the potent tools for reducing girls' vulnerability. A healthy nation has also being linked to a wealthy nation. Similarly, Kingdom (2002) noted that doubling the female secondary school enrolment ratio from 19% to 38% in 1975 helped to reduce infant deaths in 1985 by 64%. The education of women is therefore closely related to raising a healthy generation that would be empowered to contribute significantly to national development. Women in the society are usually known for their cleanliness and have the capacity of building a healthy nation. Reduced Dependency Rate: The education of women is one of the ways of reducing the level of dependency in the nation. The empowerment of women through education will assist in reducing the pressure on economic resources in the country. This will help to sustain the economic resources in the country towards the path of development. Similarly, empowering women through education would also enable them to become self-sufficient individuals. They would be equipped to learn and develop various means by which they can meet up with personal and societal needs. This will help to reduce the pressure on national resources and also reduce dependency level on their sponsors.

Resource Management: Women all over the world are known to be better managers than their male counterpart. The prudent management of resources helps to reduce wastage and increase economic benefit from available resources. When women are properly educated, it helps them to put their managerial skill into use and help manage national economic resources for the benefit of all. It is therefore advisable that women should be empowered through formal education on how they can harness their management abilities for the long term benefit of all citizens in the country.

Ways to Improve the Education of Women in Nigeria: Various educational stakeholders have continued to re-iterate the need to improve on women education in the country as a way of empowering women in the society. The education of women has been linked to have a positive relationship with national development. It is therefore needful that women education be given the needed attention in the society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area.

The area for the study is Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State, located in the South-South part of Nigeria. It is between longitude 5.056690° to 7.138669°E and latitude 6.923640° to 5.137167°N. It shares common boundary with Imo state and the major occupations of people of Ikwerre are farming, cultivation of cassava for the production of garri and other farm produce. The local government area is growing rapidly in population as well as urban physical growth. These activities make the area suitable for the study as women engage in these farming activities towards economic growth in the area.

Study Design

The study employs a cross-sectional design. In cross-sectional design, data is gathered from a large sample at a particular point in time and describes them without manipulation of variables (Thomas, 2020). Specifically, the study adopted a descriptive survey method. In the present study, it was the intention of the researchers to collect data from a sample of women and community leaders in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers state to describe the challenges facing girl child education, role of girl child education in sustainable development as well as strategies for educating the girl child for sustainable development in the study area. To achieve this, survey method was used for collecting data through a questionnaire. The survey research design provides a means of accessing information about a population.

Source of Data

The study collected data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary source of data included data gathered directly from the sampled respondents of the study. Questionnaire was used to gather primary data from women and community leaders in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. Secondary data included literature of empirical studies.

Study Population

The target population for the study comprises women and community leaders from one hundred and fifteen (115) communities in Ikwerre Local government areas of Rivers State. (Source: Brown, Senibo, & Chikagbum, 2015). The population constituted 115 women leaders and 230 community leaders (115 community heads and 115 community development chairmen-CDC) from Ikwerre local government area. This made up a target population of 345 persons.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study was approximately 185 women and community leaders in Ikwerre local government area. This was obtained using Taro Yamen's sample size determination formula given below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size

N = Population (345)

e = level of significance (0.05)

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$$n = \frac{345}{1 + 345(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{345}{1.8625} = 185.$$

This number constituted 61 women leaders and 122 community leaders (62 CDC chairmen and 62 community heads) selected using simple random sampling technique. The sample constituted approximately, 53.62% of the population.

Method of Data Collection/Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire titled “Role of Girl Child Education in Sustainable Development Questionnaire (RGESDQ) was used to collect data. It was designed to collect data to ascertain the role of girl child education in sustainable development in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. It consists of two sections. Section 1 collected demographic data about respondents. Section 2 is divided into five parts (A to E) and collected the main data for the study. Part A gathers data for ascertaining the challenges facing girl child education. Part B collected data about the role of girl child education in economic development in the study area. Part C, collected data about the role of girl child education in environmental development in the study area. Part D collected data about the role of girl child education in social development in the study area and Part E gathered data about the strategies for educating the girl child towards sustainable development in the study area. Questionnaire items on parts A to E were all structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Disagree (SD) with a score of 1 to Strong Agree (SA) with a score of 4 (see Appendix I).

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument for data collection (questionnaire) was face validated by three experts with one of the experts as the research supervisor. Copies of the instruments were distributed to the validators. Corrections were made to comments before the final copy produced for data collection.

Reliability of Research Instrument

The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was achieved by distributing 20 copies to 20 respondents who are not part of the study but within the population frame of the study. Data obtained from this step was subjected to Cronbach Alpha for internal consistency reliability calculation. According to Nwankwo (2011) Cronbach Alpha is used for reliability calculation when the instrument for a study is in form of a likert scale having more than two options for response. The instrument for this study was structured on a four point rating scale requiring 4 response options. Based on this, Cronbach Alpha was considered appropriate for calculating reliability. The Cronbach Alpha Output from SPSS yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.889 (See Table 3.1 and 3.2 in Appendix II)

Administration of Instrument

The instrument was administered to the research participants (respondents) by the researchers with the help of trained research assistants. The essence is to facilitate administration and collection of data. These assistants were drawn from each of the clans. They were educated on the aim of the study and also the statements of items in the questionnaire. This was to help them guide the respondents appropriately on how to answer the questions. A total of 185 copies of the instrument were administered and a total of 176 (constituting 59 from women, 60 from CDC members and 57 from community heads) were completed and used for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Charts and tables were used for data presentation. Data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics of mean, frequency counts and chi-square were used to analyze data. Specifically, mean was used for research questions while frequency counts and Chi-Square Test of independence were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, (Uzoagulu, 2011; Beins & McCarthy, 2012). To execute the calculation, responses of Strongly Agree (SA) with a score of 4, responses of Agree (A) with a score of 3, responses of Disagree (D) with a score of 2 and responses of Strongly Disagree (SD) with a score of 1 was counted for the different clans in Ikwerre to obtain a contingency table. Result of this contingency table was used as input for chi-square test calculation. Calculated value was compared against critical (table value) and also p-value to ascertain significance. A cut off mean of 2.50 was used as decision rule $((4+3+2+1)/4 = 2.50)$.

Consequently, any mean response up to or greater than 2.50 was taken as agreed while any mean response less than 2.50 was taken as disagreed. To calculate chi-square, each respondent’s mean response on all items equal to or greater than 2.50 was taken as agree and counted for women leaders, CDC members and community heads. Similarly, mean responses on all items for each respondents less than 2.50 was considered disagreed and also counted for women leaders, CDC members and community heads. A contingency table was obtained from this exercise which was used to do calculation for chi-square (See Appendix II).

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Research Question: What is the role of girl child education in the social development across the different clans of Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Response on Role of Girl Child Education in Social Development

S/N	Items	Women (n=59)		CDC (n=60)		Community Leaders (n=57)	
		M	RMK	M	RMK	M	RMK
1	Education equips the girl child with capacity to participate in decision making process.	3.49	A	3.38	A	3.46	A
2	Girl child education reduces the chance of forcing girls into early marriage.	3.37	A	3.40	A	3.44	A
3	Girl child education liberates women from unfavourable widowhood practices.	3.34	A	3.45	A	3.49	A
4	Girl child education enables women to take part in peace building.	2.93	A	2.68	A	2.89	A
5	Girl child education hinders peace building.	1.51	D	1.63	D	1.54	D
6	Girl child education could make them proud and thus refuse to be subject to their husbands and thereby hinder social development.	1.41	D	1.30	D	1.37	D
7	Girl child education empowers them to participate actively in political processes.	3.44	A	3.53	A	3.65	A
8	Girl child education gives women self-confidence to desire leadership positions in political parties.	3.41	A	3.55	A	3.51	A
9	Educated women contribute to the provision	2.86	A	3.02	A	2.93	A

	of social amenities (e.g. water healthcare facilities) in the communities.						
10	Educated women contribute to the provision of scholarship for the less privileged in the communities.	3.25	A	3.33	A	3.51	A
	Grand Mean	2.90	A	2.93	A	2.98	A

Field Data, 2021 (RMK=Remark; A=Agree; D=Disagree)

Result from Table 1 shows the mean responses for the role of girl child education in social development in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. As shown, the respondents agreed on all the items except items 5 and 6. This is evident from the respective mean responses greater than 2.50 for these items and less than 2.5 for items 5 and 6, for women leaders CDC members and community heads. Furthermore, grand mean values of 2.90 for women leaders, 2.93 for CDC members and 2.98 for community heads indicate that the roles listed are generally roles that girl child education plays in social development of Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis

The role of girl child education in social development does not significantly vary across the different clans in Ikwerre local government area.

Table 2: Chi-Square for Role of Girl Child Education in Social Development

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E	X ² _{cal}	df	X ² _{crit}	N
54	52.6307	1.36932	1.88	0.04				
51	53.5227	-2.5227	6.36	0.12				
52	50.8466	1.15341	1.33	0.03				
5	6.36932	-1.3693	1.88	0.29	1.674	2	5.991	176
9	6.47727	2.52273	6.36	0.98				
5	6.15341	-1.1534	1.33	0.22				
Total				1.67				

Field Data, 2021 (O=Observed frequencies; E=Expected frequencies)

Table 2 shows the chi-square calculation for role of girl child education in social development across Ikwerre local government area. As shown, calculated value of (X²_{cal}) chi-square is 1.674 while the critical value (X²_{crit}) is 5.991. Since the calculated value is less than the critical value at degree of freedom (df) of 2, the hypothesis was accepted. This shows that the role of girl child education in social development does not vary significantly across the clans in Ikwerre local government area.

Discussion of Findings and conclusion

The research question sought to find out the role of girl child education in social development across Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State. The result shows that the respondents including women leaders, CDC members and community heads generally agreed on the following points: Education equips the girl child with capacity to participate in decision making process; girl child education reduces the chance of forcing girls into early marriage; girl child education liberates women from unfavourable widowhood practices; Girl child education empowers them to participate actively in political processes; girl child education gives women self-confidence to desire leadership positions in political parties; educated women contribute to the provision of social amenities (e.g. water healthcare facilities) in the communities; educated women contribute to the

provision of scholarship for the less privileged in the communities. They however generally disagreed that girl child education enables women to take part in peace building; girl child education hinders peace building; girl child education could make them proud and thus refuse to be subject to their husbands and thereby hinder social development.

This result agrees with the result obtained by Ogakwu and Isife (2016) who carried out a study to find out the contribution of girl child education to peace building in three local government areas (Udi, Enugu North and Nsukka) of Enugu State. They found that girl child education creates opportunity for women to participate in decision making, minimises discrimination against women, reduces rate at which women are forced to early and unwanted marriage, girl child education gives women the will to select their spouse and to escape unfavourable widowhood practices. The result also agrees with the view of Orji (2011) who noted that girl education vis-à-vis women education stands as one of the potent tools for reducing girls' vulnerability.

SUMMARY and recommendation

Girl child education contributes positively to social development of Ikwerre local government area. For instance, girl child education empowers them to participate actively in political processes.

CONCLUSION

Typically, educating the girl child is perceived as a means of enhancing community development, alleviating poverty among women, improving the lives of women to participate meaningfully in decision making processes and political activities for progress in the area. Consequently, girl child education should be structured to enable enhancement in enrolment among female children.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Religious organizations should help in teaching parents and members truth about girl child education.
2. NGOs actively involved in gender activities should help develop programmes that would assist parents and families in educating their daughters.
3. Laws towards child rights as regards child marriage should be effectively enforced with penalties attached for states still reluctant to enforce it effectively should be implemented.

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