



Received: 05-09-2025
Accepted: 15-10-2025

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Parental Influence on the Education of the Girl Child

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Abstract

Education remains one of the most powerful tools for personal and societal development, yet its accessibility and utilization are often influenced by social and cultural factors. In many African societies, the education of the girl child continues to face unique challenges, particularly in rural and semi-urban settings. This study investigates the influence of parents on the education of the girl child. The focus is on understanding the extent to which parents' educational level, income level, location are influencing the achievement of the Girl child education. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, the population for the study was 4690 female students of secondary school across the Afikpo Education Zone. Stratified sampling was used to get the study sample. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire on the influence of parents on their

daughter's education, as discussed. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. These were the scores realized from the various variables used in the study. ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Findings reveal that parental influence is a decisive factor in determining the level of access, retention, and performance of the girl child in education. The study concludes with the following recommendations; Parents should be oriented on the importance of seeing that both male and female children, benefit from education. The Government should provide schools in developing areas. This is to completely enable the girl child to attend school in environment they feel safe and close to their homes. If the girl child is educated, she will also educate her children, which will increase the educational level of the society.

Keywords: Girl Child, Education, Parental Influence

Introduction

A girl child refers to a baby born biologically as a female offspring between age zero to 18 years. This period in human development is made up of infancy, childhood, early adolescent and late adolescent stages. The girl child at a certain period in life grows into maturity and marry thereby becoming a wife and a mother in future. The discriminatory attitude between the girl child and the boy or male child by the society puts the girl child in a disadvantaged position. According to Tyoakaa, Ifeanyichukwu and Apine (2021) ^[8], this leads to the suppressing of the potentials of the girl child and therefore leads to her inability to achieve self-realization.

The girl child education has always been an issue among developing nations including Nigeria. Nigeria is a multi-cultural state that grew from three regions to thirty six states. These states have several ethnic groups that are culturally diversified, yet seem to have similar cultures and traditional sanctions imposed on women. It is a true fact that it is these women that gave birth to these men who disregard and relegate them to the background including the girl child.

Education is a process through which an individual is helped to attain human development which at the long run yields good potentials in an individual's life. Education is universally acknowledged to benefit individuals, promote and aid national development. Besides, it expands the opportunities and life choices of the beneficiaries. Through education one acquires life skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to survive in an environment (Akuma & Oteh, 2022) ^[2].

Education should not be seen as a privilege but a right every member of a state should enjoy, regardless of such factors as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, physical limitation and one's nature of disability as in special needs children. Education

is very crucial for human development for its emphasis on knowledge acquisition, development of useful skills, values, character and attitudes (Nwachukwu, 2024) ^[5]. Offor *et al* (2021) ^[7], opine that Education is highly valued in democratic societies because it is believed to bring about positive change and contributes to political, economic, and technological development.

The girl child has a right to education. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) conveys the right to education on the child especially the girl child. The Convention recognizes the fundamental human dignity of all children. A basic quality of life should be the right of all children not a privilege offered to some. Education should be one of the important rights. Nigeria domesticated the CRC in 2003, but the rights of millions of children in many areas of Nigeria are still being denied. Adaora (2024) ^[1] noted that children are increasingly confronted with child marriage, child labour, hunger, malnutrition, lack of adequate health care and lack of access to education. Alabi (2022) ^[3] noted that Nigeria now has about 20 million out of school children shown in the data of our-of-school-children compiled by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). More details show that Nigeria and Pakistan have the highest figures in the data collected globally. The recent cases of kidnapping and displacement of school children in many parts of Nigeria would have significantly increased the problem of access to education.

The girl child education will empower them to be able to acquire knowledge and develop life skills. Educating the girl gives her the capacity to actualize her full potentials, take her own well-informed decisions, questions and judges issues independently without sentiments, develops her sense of responsibility instead of depending on a man's love. For the sake of the girl child, several organizations have launched programmes to curb this social maladjustment in gender equality. UNICEF, UNESCO and other organizations have sponsored researches and conferences within and outside Nigeria, yet the issue of the girl child education has not been actualized. Adolescents (10-19 years old) constitute 23% of Nigeria's population (World Bank, 2023) ^[9] and 50% of girls are not attending school at Basic Education Level.

The education of girls extends beyond mere enrolment in school. It encompasses the provision of high quality education within a safe and protected setting, enabling them to successfully complete all educational levels and gain the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in the workforce. Moreover, World Bank (2023) ^[9] maintains that it is crucial for girls to develop socio-emotional and life skills that empower them to navigate a dynamic world, make out enormous decisions and actively contribute to their communities and the global society. Nwachukwu (2024) ^[5] maintains that girls' education is very advantageous for both people and nations. This is because higher educated women often have fewer children, are more knowledgeable about health and nutrition and frequently marry later. If they decide to have children, their offspring are typically healthier. He goes on to maintain that women who complete their school are more likely to work formally and earn more money.

It is stated by FRN (2014) ^[4] in its fourth philosophy and goals of education, that her education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective

citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels. The researcher observes that some girls from rural areas finish or drop out from the primary schools only to take up hawking some food items on the streets. Some who managed to get up to the secondary school end up in computer centres from where they graduate as typists or sales girls. These things are not done without the knowledge of parents. It is the parents that decide whether their children will go to school or not. Some parents allow fate to decide their children's education, that is by allowing those who they serve as house helps to give them make shift education. Walking round any city in Nigeria one notices that hawking is done more by the girl child in addition to household chores in most homes.

The problem of this study is focused on the parental influence on the girl child education. The main purpose of the study therefore was to identify parent related constraints to the girl child education but specifically the study sought to determine how:

- (a) Parents' educational level influences the education of the girl child
- (b) Parents' income influences the girl child education.
- (c) Parents' location affects the girl child education.

Research Questions

1. How does the educational level of parents influence the education of the girl child?
2. How does the income level of parents influence the education of the girl child?
3. How does location affect the girl child's education?

Hypothesis

HO1: There is no significant difference in the educational level of parents on girl child education.

HO2: There is no significant difference in the income level of parents on the education of the girl child.

HO3: There is no significant difference in the location of parents on the education of the girl child.

Method

The study employed a descriptive survey design that involves collection of data on the opinions of students. Nworgu (2005) ^[6] explains survey research as one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from a few people or items considered to be a representative of the entire group. The population comprised 4690 students in junior and senior secondary schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Out of this number a sample of 354 female secondary school students were used. The instrument for data collection was a 23 item questionnaire titled: "Parents' Influence in the girl child education in Ebonyi State" (PIGCE). The instrument was designed to collect information that covered the three research questions arranged in three clusters. The instrument was administered to the students and collected on the spot with the aid of two research assistants. A four point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used to analyse the information that came from the respondents. The response format helped in the interpretation of the data collected. The questionnaire was subjected to face validation by three experts from the faculty of education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Their suggestions on the items in the questionnaire were

reflected on the final copy of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was also done. The internal consistency of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. The research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the null hypotheses were analysed using ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for conclusion was reached with this format:

Strongly Agree	3.50 – 4.00
Agree	2.50 – 3.49
Disagree	1.50 – 2.49
Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.49

Results

The results of the study are presented on the tables below according to the research questions.

The result of data analysis presented in Table 1 revealed that there is a strong agreement that the educational level of a parent influences the girl child education. The decision values obtained in all the items are greater than 2.50.

The result of data analysis presented in Table 2 revealed that parental level of income also influences girl child education in Ebonyi state. This is because, in all items, mean ($\bar{X}$) values are above 2.50 bench mark.

The result of data analysis presented in Table 3 revealed that parental location also has high influence on the girl child education. All items have mean scores quite above the decision score.

The result of data presented on Table 4 reveals that there is

no significant difference in the mean responses of students on the influence of parents on the girl child education based on their educational level. This is because in all items the alpha values is (0.000). Based on this, the researcher upholds the null hypothesis and concludes that there is no significant different in the mean responses of parents on their influence on the girl child education based on parental level of education. This goes to give more support to the result of the findings on Table 1.

The result of data analysis presented in Table 5 revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of students on the influence of parents on the education of the girl child based on the parental level of income. This is because in all the items, the alpha values of (0.05) are greater than F-Values obtained in the items. Based on this, the researcher upholds the null hypothesis and concludes that there is no significant difference in their responses. The result obtained is in line with the result from data on Table 2.

The result of data analysis presented in Table 6 revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of students on the influence of parents' location about the education of the girl child. This is because alpha value (0.05) obtained in all items are greater than P-Values of (0.000). Based on this, the researcher upholds the null hypothesis and concludes that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of parents on the influence of location in the education of the girl child.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents on the Influence of Parental Educational Status on the Education of the Girl Child. ($N = 354$)

S. No	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1.	Parents with no formal education send their girl child to school	3.59	0.72	SA
2.	Parents that have primary school education are very willing to enroll their girls in school	3.04	1.18	SA
3.	Parents with secondary school education value the education of the girl child	3.18	1.06	SA
4.	Parents that benefited from tertiary education willingly encourage the education of the girl child	3.11	0.92	SA
5.	Illiterate parents do not care about their girl child education	3.14	0.76	SA
6.	Uneducated parents view sending their children to school as abuse of girl child human right.	3.12	0.69	SA
7.	Uneducated parents feel that the girl child should be incharge of child bearing and the kitchen.	2.94	0.82	SA
8.	Some parents who drop out of school send their girl child to school	2.94	0.82	SA

Table 2: Responses on the influence of parental income level on the Girl Child Education. ($N = 354$)

S. No	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
9.	Parents with very high income send their girl child to school	3.06	0.89	SA
10.	Petty traders manage to train their girl children in school	3.16	0.85	SA
11.	Parents who earn meager salaries send their girl child to school	2.83	1.05	SA
12.	parents who depend on daily labour train their girl child to school	3.10	0.81	SA
13.	Parents with low income prefer to send their male child to school instead of the female	2.90	1.01	SA
14.	Parents with no steady income manage to send their girl children to school	2.90	0.91	SA
15.	Parents with low income limit their girl child to a certain level	2.97	0.80	SA
16.	Parents with low income limit their girl child to a certain level of education.	3.05	0.78	SA

Table 3: Responses on the influence of parents location on the Girl Child Education. ($N = 354$)

S. No	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
17.	Parents in rural areas may not have access to good education for the girl child because of cost.	3.200	0.86	SA
18.	Cost of education in the urban areas may affect the education of the girl child.	3.290	0.78	SA
19.	Parents in the rural location do not send their girls to good schools because of distance	3.140	0.98	SA
20.	Parents' location determines the type of school the girl child attends	3.230	0.85	SA
21.	Parents' location influences the quality of education the girl child receives	3.110	0.01	SA
22.	Parents who live in a location where good schools are far, prefer to send the boys to school instead of the girls.	3.290	0.97	SA
23.	Girl children that live closer to school are often used for trading and other household activities other than studying.	3.520	0.74	SA
	Grand Mean	3.210	0.89	SA

Table 4: Analysis of no significant difference in the mean responses about the education of the girl child based on parents' level of education

S. No	Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Square	Mean Sum of Square	F- Value	Sig. Value	Alpha- Value
1	Between Groups	7	34.627	4.947	11.517	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	148.607	0.430			
	Total	353	183.234				
2	Between Groups	7	339.674	48.525	107.901	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	155.603	0.450			
	Total	353	495.277				
3	Between Groups	7	175.920	25.131	38.514	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	225.775	0.653			
	Total	353	401.695				
4	Between Groups	7	103.422	14.775	26.074	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	196.058	0.567			
	Total	353	299.480				
5	Between Groups	7	47.767	6.824	14.887	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	158.594	0.458			
	Total	353	206.362				
6	Between Groups	7	14.590	2.084	4.685	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	153.941	0.446			
	Total	353	168.531				
7	Between Groups	7	70.849	10.121	19.545	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	179.174	0.518			
	Total	353	250.023				
8	Between Groups	7	46.308	6.615	11.698	0.000	0.05
	Within Groups	346	195.672	0.566			
	Total	353	241.980				

Table 5: Significance Differences of Parents Level of Income

S. No	Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Square	Mean Sum of Square	F-Value	Sig. Value	Alpha-Value
9	Between Groups	7	38.982	16.674	23.395	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	250.158	0.626			
	Total	353	283.506				
30	Between Groups	7	38.832	19.416	51.024	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	219.665	0.626			
	Total	353	258.497				
11	Between Groups	7	143.525	71.763	102.266	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	246.305	0.702			
	Total	353	389.831				
12	Between Groups	7	28.865	14.432	24.466	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	207.056	0.590			
	Total	353	235.921				
13	Between Groups	7	67.812	33.906	40.031	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	297.295	0.847			
	Total	353	365.107				
14	Between Groups	7	8.978	4.489	.5.529	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	284.946	0.812			
	Total	353	293.924				
15	Between Groups	7	14.180	7.090	11.541	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	215.639	0.614			
	Total	353	229.819				
16	Between Groups	7	8.146	4.073	6.778	0.000	0.05
	Within Group	346	210.938	0.601			
	Total	353	219.085				

Table 6: Significance of Urban and Rural Location

S. No	Location	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	P-Value	Alpha Decision
17	Urban	195	3.44	0.81	352	0.000	0.05
	Rural	159	3.78	0.52			
18	Urban	195	2.44	1.23	352	0.000	0.05
	Rural	159	3.77	0.53			
19	Urban	195	2.74	1.17	352	0.000	0.05
	Rural	159	3.72	0.56			
20	Urban	195	2.73	0.93	352	0.000	0.05
	Rural	159	3.57	0.66			
21	Urban	195	2.88	0.75	352	0.000	0.05
	Rural	159	3.46	0.64			
22	Urban	195	3.03	0.69	352	0.000	0.05
	Rural	159	3.23	0.67			
23	Urban	195	2.56	0.89	352	0.000	0.05
	Rural	159	3.24	0.58			

Discussion

The result of the study showed that the educational status of parents has a very strong effect or influence on the education of their children. Parents who are exposed to western education will not easily conclude that the girl child does not need education, she should be given out to marriage or that the special needs children are not to be given education. Having been properly empowered by education, the tendency is to support education for categories of children especially the girls who are always vulnerable.

The result also showed a strong correlation between income level of parents and their determination to educate the girl child. Income level is an important factor in family affairs especially in funding education. Some parents may prefer their male children to go to school while the females stay back or learn crafts or petty trade after which they will marry. This is the effect of low family income. The general awareness now about education is improving matters positively for the girl child and the special needs children. In many of the educational institutions, girls out number boys. Parents are getting more informed that training girls in school is very advantageous. They even borrow or appeal to philanthropists to help them fund their girl child education. Boys prefer to leave school and go for apprentice trades or learn entrepreneurial skills to survive.

On location and the education of the girl child, the findings revealed that to an extent location is a factor that influences the education of the girl child. Most parents especially in the rural areas would prefer their girls to attend community schools nearby than attending ones far from the neighborhood or in the urban areas. The security of the girl child is important in choosing the school to attend. Some parents like to keep their girls at close-by schools under their watch, especially to check the girls' involvements in social vices. Besides it is wise to avoid their use of distant and lonely roads to run away from kidnappers and activities of unknown gun men.

Conclusion

The three important variables used in this study are very influential in the education of the girl child. These are educational status, income level and location of parents especially in Afikpo Education Zone which is the area of study.

Recommendation

1. Parents are advised to see the need for the education of the girl child. Gone are the days when the girl child is denied education and asked to be a home maker only. Education is an empowerment and a key to development.
2. The government and communities should build schools in nearby communities so that commuting to such schools will not be far and difficult.
3. The schools should be equipped with human and material resources to keep the students in place.

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