

## **The Impact of Girl-Child Education on Community Development: A Study of Ika Local Government Area of Akwaibom State**

**Kobani, Doreen**

*Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo.  
Faculty of Technical and Science Education  
Department of Educational Foundations (Adult and Community Education)*

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**Abstract:** *This research work investigated the impact of Girl-Child Education on Community Development with focus on Ika Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives of the study are to identify the role of Girl-Child Education in Community Development, to determine the factors impeding against girl-child education in the aforementioned area and to examine how social, economic and political development affects Girl-Child Education in Ika Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The total population for this study is 39,500 and the sample size of three hundred and ninety five (395) persons from the selected communities i.e. Ikot Inyang Udo, Ikot Akata, Urua Inyang, Ikot Oyo and Ikot Okon were drawn. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and data were analysed using the chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistic at 0.05 level of significance. It was found among other things that Girl-Child Education helps in Community Development and the factors militating against girl-child education were culture and poverty level of the people. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made; the society should stop the discrimination of the girl-child in the provision of education, also that government should make policy statements that will make the education of the girl child legal and compulsory.*

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### **I. Introduction**

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. 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).

The development of any society would be grossly lopsided if the girl child is not given quality education. Education in any normal society is accepted as an instrument to power, prestige, survival, greatness and advancement for men and women. The United Nations General Assembly (2001) adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stipulates that everyone has the right to education which shall be free at least in elementary and primary stages. Similarly, the National Policy on Education emphasizes among other things that there will be equal opportunities for all citizens. However, Osinulu (1994) lamented that the girl-child is discriminated against in terms of education and given out to marriage early thereby denying the girl-child the require competences for community development.

According to Osinulu (1994) and Akinpelu (2000) education is the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help the individual develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, politically and economically.

Education is the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society (Ocho, 2005). It is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realizes her potentials and uses them for self-actualization. It enables her to be useful to herself and others. It is a means of preserving, transmitting and improving the culture of the society. In every society education connotes acquisition of something good, something worthwhile.

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. 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.

According to Ferguson and Dickens (2003) Community Development (CD) seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities. They stressed further that CD involves changing the relationships between ordinary people in

positions of power so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the fact that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge, experience and creativity which can be harnessed and channeled into collective action to achieve the community's desired goals. Thus, education can rightly be said to be the key to effective participation in CD.

Marshal (2003) states that women make up more than half of the Nigerian population, and they have been known to have contributed in many ways to the development of the society. Hence, for the girl-child to face the challenges of our time, full participation requires they have access to the benefits of formal and informal education to the same level, and of the same quality as that given to the men. He stressed that it is the only way the girl-child can contribute maximally to the socio-economic development of their communities and Nigeria at large.

In support of this, Schacter (2010) argued that children's intelligence could be significantly influenced by environmental changes and that early childhood was a key to improving later performances in various aspects of the individual's life. It is in the light of the above that Stronquist (2000) stressed that Girl-child education involves equipping girls who later grow up to women with the knowledge, abilities and mental powers with which they will be useful to themselves, the family and the society.

However, Bolaji (2007) noted that there is still gender inequality in terms of accessibility to education in many parts of Nigeria particularly the Northern States like Katsina, Kano, Bauchi, and Jigawa, Akwa Ibom etc. In these places, many girls are not sent to school and among those sent to school, many drop out early.

Secondly, there is the issue of early marriage which conflicts with educational programmes. Bolaji (2007) noted that early marriage has been institutionalized in many parts of Nigeria especially in Kano, Kastina, Sokoto, Bauchi and Kaduna. It also used to be the case among the Ibos, Ibibios and Urhobos, but with Western education, the practice has abated but not completely eradicated. Girls are given out in marriage for many reasons. It is obvious from the above study that most girls married off, were still physically immature for pregnancy.

In some parts of Nigeria, it is a known fact that the input of the girl child into the family income is so high that it becomes economically unwise to allow such a child to go to school. Examples of such inputs include generating income by way of hawking food items. The girl child also helps with the household chores and look after the younger ones which relieves the parents of employing paid house helps. This therefore reduces the financial burden on the family (Ballara, 2002).

In addition, poverty compels many parents to marry off their daughters to wealthy men instead of sending them to school. This is because education is so expensive that parents do not consider the returns for girls' education. Instead, parents would rather prefer the returns of marriage in terms of bride prize. Many parents believe that when girls are educated, the benefits go to their family of procreation instead of the family of orientation.

To Ballara (2002), the importance of the girl child education cannot be over-emphasized in any society, since they (girl-child), constitute more than half of the population in most societies; their education is vital to any sustainable development. With the acquisition of skills, the girl child in adulthood contributes a lot to societal development. A woman's education affords her the opportunity to take advantage of family planning facilities which results in fewer births of children and less social and economic burdens on families and society in general.

According to Ottaway (2000), the girl-child's education also has bearing on the economic well-being of a country. With education, in adulthood, the girl child could easily gain employment in the formal labour force and therefore contribute not only to her family income but the National GNP. Higher education enables girls to provide financial support to their families especially now that the economic recession has made it impossible for a man to provide adequately for his family with his meager income. Thus, an educated woman with a good earning power can help reduce the financial problems of the family and thus avert frustration and other financial problems. Also, should the inevitable occur e.g. death or divorce; the educated widow can easily cater for her children's welfare.

A woman's literacy also increases productivity and self-employment in the informal sector for example; the educational level of rural women is linked to increased productivity in agricultural sector in many developing countries. Literacy assists people to acquire skills and knowledge that help to facilitate better use of natural resources and other agricultural inputs and thereby increasing their productivity. Thus, girl-child being active participants in all stages of the productive chain, i.e. hoeing, weeding, fertilizing, harvesting and threshing of grains, storage and distribution of goods need to be educated to increase productivity and their incomes.

According to Stronquist (2000), politically, the girl-child is relegated to the background in the society. They are in most cases under-represented in the decision making process because of the notion that, a woman's place is in the kitchen. The problems also compounded by the girl-child's deficiency in educational qualification.

Therefore, should more girls be educated, they would be empowered in adulthood to participate in politics not only as voters but as contestants which would give them the opportunity to partake in vital decisions that affect their lives.

### **The Problem**

No community will remain undeveloped if it has the required human capital and the best instrument for developing any society is to invest in human capital (Richardson, 2009). This is because the acquired knowledge and skills will guarantee the economic and social liberation of the individual and by implication enhance their contributions to community and national development (Efe, 2001).

Essentially, the Girl-child must be educated in terms of their role in the society, whether as Producers or Reproducers; they are mainly responsible for the care and well-being of their families, they play an important role as educators of future generations, they perform economic functions and social functions (Ballara, 2002). As more and more women are educated, the health of the nation improves. With rising education among the girl-child (women), there will be also a rise of women in the labour force; women education aids in the protection of the environment and also improves agricultural practices (Balara, 2002). Thus, for society to be developed, the Girl-child must be allowed access to good and qualitative education (Ballara, 2002). Hence, this study examined the Impact of Girl-Child Education on Community Development with focus on Ika Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, it sought to:

- Identify the role of girl-child education in community development.
- Determine the factors impeding against girl-child education in Ika Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State
- Examine how social, economic and political development affects girl-child education in Ika Local Government Area.

Thus, the need to ascertain the impact of girl- child education of community development as a first step towards eliminating all hindrances on the way of effective education of the girl child to enable them contribute effectively to community development is the problem of this study.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the role of girl-child education in Community Development?
- ii. What are the factors impeding against girl-child education in Ika Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. Does social, economic and political development affects girl-child education in Ika Local Government Area?

## **II. Methodology**

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised the 39,500 adult members of Ika Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State spread among the five major communities of Ikot Inyang Udo, Ikot Akata; Urua Inyang, Ikot Okon and Ikot Oyo. A 10% random sampling was applied in each of the communities to realize a sample size of 395. A questionnaire titled: Girl-Child Education on Community Development Assessment Questionnaire (GCECDAQ) was used for data collection. The reliability coefficient is 0.84. The data collected were analyzed using the chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical tool.

## **III. Results**

### **Research Question 1**

What is the role of girl-child education in community development?

**Table 1:** Responses on the role of Girl-child education in community development.

Girl child Education Community Development	Ikot Inyang Udo	Ikot Akata	Urua Inyang	Ikot Okon	Ikot Oyo	Total
Girl-child development	30 (29.76)	24 (23.97)	31(28.52)	22 (23.56)	17(18.19)	124
Community development	42(42.24)	34 (34.03)	38 (40.48)	38(40.44)	27(25.81)	176
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>300</b>

Item	Girl-child Development	Community Development			
	$f_o$	$f_e$	$f_o - f_e$	$(f_o - f_e)^2$	$\frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$
1	30	29.76	0.24	0.0576	0.00194
2	24	23.97	0.03	0.0009	0.00004
3	31	28.52	2.48	6.1504	0.21565
4	22	23.56	-1.56	2.4336	0.10329
5	17	18.19	-1.19	1.4161	0.07785
6	42	42.24	-0.24	0.0576	0.00136
7	34	34.03	-0.03	0.0009	0.00003
8	38	40.48	-2.48	6.1504	0.15194
9	35	33.44	1.56	6.4336	0.07278
10	27	25.81	1.19	1.4161	0.05487
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 0.68</b>

Source: Survey data 2011

The result from the table 4.1 shows that value of chi-square  $X^2 = 0.68$ , with degree of freedom 3 is less than the critical value of  $X^2$  at 9.488 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that communities must ensure efforts are put in place to educate the girl-child to enhance development.

**Research Question 2:**

What are the factors impeding against girl child education?

**Table 2:** Responses on the factors impeding against girl child education.

Impeding factors	Ikot Inyang Udo	Ikot Akata	Urua Inyang	Ikot Okon	Ikot Oyo	Total
Culture	29 (29.21)	23 (25.4)	30 (25.4)	24(25.4)	21(21.59)	127
Poverty	40(39.79)	37 (34.6)	30(34.6)	36(34.6)	30(29.41)	173
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>300</b>

Item	Culture	Poverty			
	$f_o$	$f_e$	$f_o - f_e$	$(f_o - f_e)^2$	$\frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$
1	29	29.21	0.21	0.0441	0.00151
2	23	25.4	-2.4	5.76	0.22677
3	30	25.4	4.6	21.16	0.83307
4	24	25.4	-1.4	1.96	0.07717
5	21	21.59	-0.59	0.3481	0.01612
6	40	39.79	0.21	0.0441	0.00111
7	37	34.6	2.4	5.76	0.16647
8	30	34.6	-4.6	21.16	0.61156
9	36	34.6	1.4	1.96	0.05665
10	30	29.41	0.59	0.3481	0.1184
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 2.0</b>

Source: Survey data 2011

Considering the result from table 4.2 as shown above, the value chi-square  $X^2 = 2.0$  with degree of freedom 4 is less than the critical  $X^2$  value of 9.488 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that cultural factors and poverty are some of the impeding factors militating against girl-child education.

**Research Question 3:**

What are the influence of girl-child education in community development?

**Table 3:** Responses on the influence of girl child education in community development.

Girl child Education	Ikot Inyang Udo	Ikot Inyang	Urua Inyang	Ikot Okon	Ikot Oyo	Total
Political emancipation	34 (42.3)	36 (25.2)	38 (27.9)	20(27.8)	27(28.35)	125
Economic empowerment	60(51.7)	20(30.8)	24(34.1)	44(35.2)	36(34.65)	165
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>300</b>

Item	Political emancipation	Economic empowerment	$fo - fe$	$(fo - fe)^2$	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$
	$fo$	$fe$			
1	34	42.3	-8.3	68.89	1.6286
2	36	25.3	10.7	114.49	4.5253
3	38	27.9	10.1	102.01	3.6563
4	20	28.8	-8.8	77.44	26889
5	27	28.35	-1.35	1.8225	0.0643
6	60	31.7	28.3	800.89	25.2646
7	20	30.8	-10.8	116.64	3.7870
8	24	34.1	-10.1	102.01	2.9915
9	44	35.2	8.8	77.44	2.2000
10	36	34.65	1.35	1.8225	0.0526
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 247</b>

Source: Survey data 2011

The result in table 4.3 above shows that the value chi-square  $X^2 = 47$  with degree of freedom 4 is more than the critical  $X^2$  value of 9.488 at 0.05 level of significance. This indicated that girl child education is essential for community development, and the education of the girl-child will improve political emancipation and economic empowerment for girls in the society.

#### IV. Discussions

The discussion is based on the effect of girl-child education on community development. The analysis of the findings on the research question one reveals that girl-child education is important, and communities must ensure efforts are put in place to educate the girl child for the enhancement of development. The chi-square  $X^2$  was  $(0.68 > p.0.05)$ . This view supports the findings of Ocho (2005), when it was observed that education is the process through which the girl-child is made to be a functional member of the society for transformation and development. The findings also show that culture of the people and the rate of poverty impedes the girl-child education. The chi-square  $X^2$  value was  $(2.00, P > 0.05)$ . This view supports the findings observed by Ocho (2005) when it was stated that in most societies, the girl-child have lower status than men. The disadvantages of the girl-child begin at childhood from the cultural expectations of the sexes and the fact that the girl-child is faced with limited access to education. Again, most people are poor and they spend the available resources on the male children thereby neglecting girl-child education.

Similarly, the findings on the third research question shows that girl-child education can be influenced by the need for political emancipation and economic empowerment. The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value was  $(47, P > 0.05)$ . This view supports the view of Ballara (2002) when he observed the importance of the girl-child education in social development, as the education of the girl child has bearing on the economic well-being of a community, and when the girl child is academically qualified and grows into a woman, she will contribute to the political development of her community.

#### Recommendations

In the light of our findings, the following suggestions were recommended:

1. The society should stop the discrimination of the girl-child in the provision of education.
2. Parents and guidance should give their female children education and stop the imposition of early marriage on them.
3. The government should make policy statements that will make the education of the girl-child to be mandatory.
4. The society should encourage girl-child education by awarding scholarships to them.

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