

GENDER AND COMMUNITY INFLUENCE AS DETERMINANTS OF CHILDREN ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract. Every child, irrespective of gender, geographical location and family background has the right to be educated, so as to contribute to national sustainable development. This study investigated the extent at which gender and community determine children access to Basic Education in Kaduna State. Descriptive survey research design of an ex-post-facto was adopted. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from one hundred and thirty (130) parents and one hundred and twenty (120) teachers; also, records of pupils' admission for a period of three years were obtained from State Education Districts and State Universal Basic Education Board. Six (06) hypotheses were drawn and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data generated were analyzed using simple percentage, t-test, analysis of variance and regression analyses. The results among others show that community has significant influence on children access to education in Kaduna State. Based on the findings, recommendations were made, one of which is that the state government should intensify more on creating social

awareness on the recent Universal Basic Education Bill and ensure strict compliance through edits and bye-laws.

Keywords: gender, community, children, access, basic education

Introduction

A nation's sustainable development is a function of quality education. The millenium Development Goals (MDGs) encapsulate seven development objectives. Beyond objectives, the goals encompass universally accepted human values and rights; such as freedom from hunger, right to health, and right to basic education. Beginning from year 2000, the world hopes to achieve the goals by year 2015. One of the goals, particularly goal 2, is to achieve universal primary education, with the target that by 2015, children (boys and girls) all over the world will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Goal three aims at promoting gender equality and women empowerment with the aim of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015. To this effect, the Federal Government of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) states that "education will continue to be highly rated in the National Development Plans because it is the most important instrument of change". It further emphasises that any fundamental change in the intellectual social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution.

In September 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme. This scheme which was welcomed in many quarters in Nigeria was abandoned unceremoniously. In 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo launched the Unversal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. The launching of a similar programme to UPE indicates that there is something desirable in which the school is expected to achieve. Universal in this context, means the whole people without exception while

basic means foundation, and education being the act of bringing up or training up a child through instruction which will strengthen the pupil's powers of body and mind and be able to understand culture (Aluede, 2006). UBE is designed to cater for a child's education from primary school which lasts six years to the end of Junior Secondary School that requires school attendance for three years. It is also expected to be free and compulsory.

Discussing the trend of education in a developing country like Nigeria, gender and community influence/socio-cultural factors cannot be underestimated. Gender, in the words of Hannan¹⁾ refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female and the relationships between women and men as well as between girls and boys. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes.

In traditional Nigerian families, the birth of a boy elicits unreserved joy, because, it guarantees the continuation of the family name while on the other hand, the birth of a girl is considered a mix-blessing because once married, she will belong to another household.²⁾ The pendulum of gender equality in access to education has always been against the female child. Even though the girl-child suffers from sex-engendered discrimination in certain aspects of life, it has been observed that "of all the discrimination and denial of opportunities that girl-child suffered, perhaps the most damaging is the denial of the right and opportunity to education."³⁾ This is corroborated by the United Nations,⁴⁾ when it laments that female children still make up a disproportionate share of those missing out on education in many developing regions.

Also important is the issue of community influence with its foundation on socio-economic /cultural factors that have seriously hindered equality of access to quality education in Nigeria. The issue of equality of access to quality education seems to exist in theory rather than in reality. The influence of the community in which one lives may also be considered as one of the

major constraining factors to children's access to education. It has been observed that socio-cultural value, economic constraints, poor leadership ability, inadequate provision of schools and school facilities, poor funding, lack of efficient planning and literacy level of the community have led to discrimination in relation to exploration of education opportunities in Nigeria^{5,6)} (Aluko, 2005; Nwangwu, 2002).

The world Education forum in Dakar, Senegal, 2003, gave Nigeria a low score card when it noted that in the country, the percentage of girls who did not complete elementary education in the rural area was 32.1%, in the urban centres, it was 14.6% as compared to boys with 20.1% in rural and 7.4% in the urban centres. The forum also reported that the number of girls who completed elementary school in the rural areas was 57.5% and the urban 79.1% as compared to boys in rural areas with completion rate of 70.3% and 87.8% in the urban centres⁷⁾ (Ojobo, 2008). This picture depicts gender imbalance in Nigeria basic education system. It is also clear that with the effort of the government to make education an indispensable machinery for national development, some communities are still lagging behind in this regard. Many parents refuse to send their children/ward to school while community involvement in children's access to education is with little attention. The questions then arise: (i) what are the factors militating against access to UBE in Kaduna State; (ii) how do Nigerian parents in Kaduna State percieve gender issues in relation to accesss to basic education; (iii) what is the community's involvement in children's access to basic education; (iv) to what extent do socio-cultural factors determine children's access to basic education.

In order to direct this study the following research hypotheses were formulated: (1) community influence has no significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State; (2) gender compositions has no significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State; (3) socio-economic background of parents/guardian have no significant influence

on children access to basic education; (4) customs and culture have no significant influence on children access to basic education; (5) there is no significant difference in parents' perception of factors militating against children access to basic education based on qualification; (6) there will be no significant difference between male and female parents in their perception of factors militating against children access to basic education.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design of ex-post facto was adopted for this study. The population comprised of all primary and secondary schools teachers and parents, spreading all over the twenty three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state. Simple random sampling technique was used to select five LGAs from each LGA, four schools (two primary and two Junior Secondary Schools) were randomly selected. In all, twenty schools were selected, while six teachers were also randomly selected from each of the chosen schools, making a total of one hundred and twenty teachers. Also, six parents were randomly selected from each of these schools during the termly Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) meeting, making a total of one hundred and twenty parents.

To collect data from both parents and teachers, a questionnaire tagged "Gender and Community influence on Children Access to Basic Education" was developed; while records of pupils' admission for three years (2008-2010), were obtained from the State Education District and State Universal Basic Education Board. The records of Pupils' admission was used to study enrolments at a glance and disparity there in. The instrument has three major sections- A, B & C. Section A is made up of the personal data of the respondents which comprises of gender, age, religion, educational status, locality and socio economic status. Section B of the instrument is made up of fourteen items on factors that can determine children access to education.

Section C contains thirty items of a 4-point Likert types, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The instruments were initially critiqued by experts, thereby eliminating inadequate and invalid items which helped to establish content validity. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability. The questionnaire was administered to twenty-five teachers and twenty-five parents outside the LGAs chosen for the pilot study in Kaduna State. Pearson Product Coefficient (r) showed a correlation coefficient of 0.78.

To collect the data, two bi-lingual (Hausa & English) research assistants were engaged. The researchers and research assistants visited the chosen LGAs, namely : Giwa, Sabon-gari, Zaria, Kaduna North and Kaduna South.

Results

Hypothesis One: Community influence will not have a significant influence on children access to education in Kaduna State.

Table 1. Regression analysis of community influence on children access to education

Regression Analysis	Analysis of Variance					
	Source	SS	MS	DF	Beta	F
R=0.448	Regression	3081.379	3081.379	1		
R ² =0.200	Residual	12287.263	54.854	224	0.448	56.174
SE=7.406	Total	15368.642		225		

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Results presented in Table 1 show that community influence has a significant effect on children access to education in Kaduna State. Children access to education taken against the criterion variable (Community influence) gave a coefficient of multiple regression R of 0.448 and R² of 0.200, the

standard error (SE) was 7.406. The total variance accounted for by community influence on children access to education is 20% ($R^2= 0.200$). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant ($F=56.174$, $P<0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that “community influence will not have a significant effect on children access to education in Kaduna State”cannot be sustained by the outcome of this finding.

Hypothesis Two: Gender composition has no significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State.

Table 2. Analysis of variance showing the influence of gender composition on children access to education

Regression Analysis	Source	Analysis of Variance			Beta	F
		SS	MS	DF		
R=0.751	Regression	8672.953	8672.953	1		
R ² =0.564	Residual	6695.689	29.891	224	0.751	290.152
SE=5.467	Total	15368.642		225		

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Results presented in Table 2 show that gender composition has a significant effect on children access to education in Kaduna State. Children access to education taken against the criterion variable (Gender composition) gave a coefficient of multiple regression R of 0.751 and R^2 of 0.564, the standard error (SE) was 5.467. The total variance accounted for by gender composition on children access to education is 56.4% ($R^2= 0.564$). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant ($F= 290.152$; $P<0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that “gender composition has no significant influence on children access to education in Kaduna State”cannot be sustained by the outcome of this finding.

Hypothesis Three: Socio-economic background of parents/ guardians have no significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State.

Results presented in Table 3 indicated that socio-economic background of parents/ guardians have significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State. Children access to education taken against the criterion variable (Socio-economic background of parents/ guardians) gave a coefficient of multiple regression R of 0.572 and R² of 0.327, the standard error (SE) was 6.794. The total variance accounted for by socio-economic background as factors militating against children access to basic education is 32.7% (R²=0.327). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant (F=108.987; P<.05). It could then be deduced that about 32.7% of children access to basic education in Kaduna State is accounted for by socio-economic background of the people. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that “Socio-economic background of parents/ guardians have no significant influence on children access to education in Kaduna State” cannot be sustained by the outcome of this finding.

Table 3. Analysis of variance showing the influence of socio-economic background on children access to education

Regression Analysis	Analysis of Variance					
	Source	SS	MS	DF	Beta	F
R=0.572	Regression	5030.163	5030.163	1		
R ² =0.327	Residual	10338.479	46.154	224	0.572	108.986
SE=6.794	Total	15368.642		225		

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Hypothesis Four: Customs and Culture have no significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State.

Table 4. Analysis of variance showing the effect of customs and culture children access to basic education

Regression		Analysis of Variance				
Analysis	Source	SS	MS	DF	Beta	F
R=0.656	Regression	6614.967	6614.967	1		
R ² =0.430	Residual	8753.674	39.079	224	0.656	169.272
SE=6.251	Total	15368.642		225		

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Result presented in Table 4 indicates that culture and customs are significant factors militating against children access to basic education in Kaduna State. Children access to education taken against the criterion variable (culture and customs) gave a coefficient of multiple regression R of 0.656 and R² of 0.430, the standard error (SE) was 6.251. The total variance accounted for by culture and customs as factors militating against children access to basic education in Kaduna State is 43% (R²=0.430). Analysis of variance shows this value is significant (F=169.272, P< .05). It could then be deduced that about 43% of children access to basic education in Kaduna State is accounted for by culture and customs. Therefore, the null hypotheses which state that “Customs and Culture have no significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State ”by this finding cannot be sustained.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference in parents’ perception of factors militating against children access to basic education based on qualification.

Table 5. Summary of analysis of variance in parents’ perception of factors militating against children access to basic education based on qualification

ANOVA					
Source of Variation	SS	DF	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3341.464	5	668.293	12.224	.000
Within group	12027.178	220	54.669		
Total	15368.642	225			

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

The calculated value of $f = 12.224$ which is greater than the critical value of $f = 2.23$ indicates that there is a significant difference in parents' perception of factors militating against children access to basic education based on qualification.. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in parents' perception of factors militating against children access to basic education based on qualification is rejected.

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant difference between male and female parents in their perception of factors militating against children access to basic education.

Table 6. Difference between male and female parents in their perception of factors militating against children access to basic education

Male	Female	Mean dif- ference	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
N=154 X= 87.942 SD=8.669	N=72 X=88.000 SD=7.381	0.058	224	-0.049	1.960	NS

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

From Table 6, it can be observed that the obtained value of $t = -.049$ is less than the critical value of 1.96 at 224 degree of freedom and .05 level of significance. This implies that a gender difference does not exist in the perception of male and female parents. Therefore, the null hypotheses which state that there is no significant difference between male and female parents in their perception of factors militating against children access to basic education by this finding is sustained.

Discussion

The findings of the first hypothesis (community influence will not have significant influence on children access to education) revealed that community influence has a significant effect on children access to education in Kaduna State. The total variance accounted for by community influence on children access to education is 20% ($R^2=0.200$). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant ($F=56.174$, $P<0.05$). It could then be deduced that the community in which the individual lives as a social environment to a large extent determines accessibility and social support given to female education. This result is supported by UBEC,⁸⁾ World Bank⁹⁾ and Okeke et al.¹⁰⁾ that communal factors like child labour, poverty and lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, bereavement, truancy, broken home, engagement of children as house helps, as factors or the clog in the wheel of children's access to education.

The second hypothesis that 'Gender composition has no significant influence on children access to basic education in Kaduna State could not be sustained by the outcome of this study. The result shows that children access to education taken against the criterion variable (gender composition) gave a coefficient of multiple regression (R^2) of 0.564. It could then be said that about 56.4% of the total variability in the children access to basic education in Kaduna State is accounted for by gender composition. Therefore, this study corroborates the findings that gender composition in tropical Africa generally and in Nigeria in particular has direct implications for female children access to education (Euler-Ajayi, 2002; Olaoye-Williams, 1996; Ocho, 2005; Offorma¹¹⁾). It also lends support to some previous findings¹²⁾ who confirmed that disparity is more in the Northern part of the country in favour of the boy-child.

The third hypothesis which states that socio-economic background of parents/guardians have no significant influence on children access to basic education was rejected. The result indicated that socio-economic background

of parents/guardians had significant influence on children access to basic education. The total variance accounted for by socio-economic background of parents/guardians militating against children access to basic education is about 32.7% ($R^2=0.327$). It could then be deduced that about 32.7% of children access to basic education in Kaduna State is accounted for by socio-economic background of the people. The outcome of this hypothesis confirms the findings of Abubakar & Bennell (2007) that among the poorest 20 percent of households in their study, nearly one half (1/2) of females and one-fifth (1/5) of males have never been to school due to socio-economic background of their parents.

The fourth hypothesis states that customs and culture have no significant influence on children access to basic education. The outcome of this hypothesis revealed that culture and customs significantly militate against children access to basic education in Kaduna State. The total variance accounted for by culture and customs as factors militating against children access to basic education in Kaduna State is 43% ($R^2=0.430$). It could then be deduced that about 42.8% of children access to basic education in Kaduna State is accounted for by culture and customs. This study corroborates the findings of Mwangi¹³⁾ that a combination of poverty, disease and backward cultural practice continued to deny the girl-child her right to education.

The fifth hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in parents' perception of factors militating against children access to basic education based on qualification. The finding revealed a significant difference in parents' perception of factors militating against children access to basic education based on qualification. Therefore, education is the process of becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner that leads to effective action upon it. An educated man/ woman understands his/her world well enough to deal with it effectively. Such men/women if they existed in sufficient numbers would not leave the absurdities of the present world

unchanged. Thus, this study lends credence from Sun et al.¹⁴⁾ who reported that parent involvement in children education was higher among literate parents compared to their illiterate counterparts.

The sixth hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between male and female parents in their perception of factors militating against children access to basic education. The earlier stated null hypothesis was sustained. The outcome of this hypothesis is not surprising based on the influence of traditions, culture and customs on children access to education. The outcome of this hypothesis confirms the findings of Odiba¹⁵⁾ who reported that the education of the girl-child has not been fully appreciated by some northern Nigerian parents.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study revealed that gender disparity (with girls and women as the disadvantaged) is still a known feature of Kaduna State's educational landscape. This has often been compounded by geographical and social disparities. The circumstances of gender have strongly interacted with culture to produce sex role, stereotypes and demands which have enormously influenced the attitudes of males and females to many issues. In specific words, this study has empirically established the impact of community influence, gender composition, socio-economic factors, custom and culture, as well as educational background on children access to education in Kaduna State. The study also revealed significant effect of educational background of parents and dimensions of children access to education in Kaduna State. Consequently, the recommendations stated here should be taken into consideration: (1) There is need for the creation of more social awareness on the recent UBE Bill to ensure compliance. The various States and Local Governments should also back this up with edicts and bye-laws where necessary. They should also formulate clear policies on enrolment of pupils, funding, and provision of

facilities as well as quality assurance; (2) To be able to take sound decisions on the management of basic education in Nigeria, there is the need to ensure availability of accurate data on the system. The present effort of the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with both the UNESCO and UNDP on the creation of an Education Data Bank is highly commendable. The government should give the data bank the entire enabling environment required to generate and analyze the data. The institutional managers and teachers should be constantly trained and retrained in the modern data management techniques. The school managers should be mandated to attend training workshops and conferences to improve their managerial skills. Organizations like the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, which have been set up for capacity building in educational management, should intensify effort in annual training programs towards this end; (3) Concerted efforts should be made to educate parents on the importance of creating a balance by not inhibiting the girl-child from having access to basic education. This can be achieved through community leaders, religious and cultural organizations. Efforts should also be made to promote gender balance in schools through gender sensitivity of the teachers, curriculum and teaching materials.

NOTES

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