

## CONSTRAINTS TO GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN EBONYI STATE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM: IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY MAKERS

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### **Abstract.**

*The study dealt on the constraints to Girl-child education in Ebonyi State secondary education system, and their implications for educational policy makers. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the conduct of the study. 179males and 246 females, totalling a sample of 425secondary school teachers were randomly selected as participants for the study. Mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics were used in the analysing of data. The analysis of the data obtained showed that the girl-child education in secondary schools is on the decline as a result of the acute desire for early marriage, no job after school, poor value system, lack of access to the tertiary education and poverty. Based on the above findings, the study recommended among others that both the education policy makers, government, parents, stakeholders, should discourage such cultural practices that stimulate girl child early marriage, ban hawking and street trading, and that through free education, girls should be encouraged to go back to school because of its advantages to individuals and society.*

Key Words: Education, Girl Child Education, and Ebonyi State Secondary Education.

### **Introduction**

Education involves the process of transmission of knowledge from one person (teacher) to another (learner). Education is the systematic development and cultivation of the natural power or the act or process of imparting knowledge or skills. In the view of Okoye (2009), education is a process of self-discovery by which an individual discovers his or her inner lying talents, capabilities and potentialities for the benefit of the individual in his or her immediate environment, the society and or the world at large. For Fafunwa, as cited in Obikeze(2008), education is the aggregate of all the processes by which an individual develops abilities, and attitudes and acquires forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the individual and the society.

Girl-child education is the educational process geared towards the development of the inherent potentials in the female gender in any society. Such education stimulates the development of the whole nature of woman: physically, intellectually, socially, morally and politically and make her active participating member of economic and social development. According to Obikeze (2008), girl-child education is that forms of education that provides the female child with sufficient and necessary skills, aptitude and knowledge which will enable her cope with the challenges of life. Education generally is a sine-que-non for the overall development of human potentialities which are in turn being translated into societal development. The girl-child requires education as a necessity in view of the roles assigned to women in the society. Women as the home maker and manager of the family, as well as the peace maker of the society need to be adequately equipped with education to enable them confront the challenges of life. Gone are the days people believe that women education ends in kitchen, hence a popular say that when you education a woman, you have educated a nation. It is in view of this that Ebonyi State government in 2008, instituted an educational policy on Girl-Child Education in order to curb the bottle neck which led poor enrolment figure of female students in secondary schools in the state.

According to the data from the Education and Management information System (EMIS) in 2021, the total enrolment of students in 221 public secondary schools in Ebonyi State was 32,682. Out of this figure, females constitute 10,824, while the remain 21,858 are male students . What this means is that females students in Ebonyi state secondary education system are less in number than male counterpart. This figure does not reflect the students' enrolment figure in private secondary schools. Igwe,(2008) reported that in Ebonyi State, children aged between 0-5 years are increasingly being sent to early child care centres (ECC) for early stimulation and preparation for schooling. The net result of this is that at the primary school level, majority of the school age children transit into primary one at the appropriate time. He further stated that a closer look at the enrolment figure at this stage shows that there are more girls in school, but as these children progress in the primary school we begin to notice a decline in the enrolment of the girl-child as a result of drop out syndrome which may be caused by early marriage system, poverty and low interest on female education by parents. Onyekwelu (2008) observed that the boys outnumbered the girls in secondary schools. He asserted that a lot of girls at the right age and ripe period of secondary school age are lost to different types of apprenticeship business like sewing of cloth, hair dressing, farm work, all in readiness for early marriage, or as a result of poverty. The effect is that there are more boys in Ebonyi State secondary schools and colleges today than girls.

The situation in Ebonyi state does not reflect the condition in some other states in the South East where more girls are reported to be in school. This discrimination and lop-sidedness in enrolment figure/pattern between boys and girls have been a source of worry to the government, individuals and organizations in Ebonyi State, hence this study.

Gender desperate in secondary school enrolment in the South East of Nigeria ,has led to the introduction of girl –child education policy in Ebonyi State and boy-child education policy in Anambra State. Ejiofor (1998) and Okafor (2008) reported that there is a horrifying, frightening and continuous decline in enrolment of male children of Anambra State origin in secondary and tertiary educational institution in Nigeria, this is contrary to what is obtainable in Ebonyi State. For instance in Ebonyi State in 2006 and 2007, females consisted only 35% of total enrolment of senior secondary school (SSS III) students. That was the number of female students who sat for West Africa School Certificate Examination. School statistics over the years consistently showed that there were more girls than boys in primary schools in Ebonyi State but this position used to change drastically in secondary and tertiary institutions.

In view of the expected unpleasant consequences of the unprecedented monstrous phenomenon, efforts should be geared towards, determining the causative factors and how to eradicate them. Obikeze (2008) noted that the situation is so bad that many secondary schools and tertiary institutions which were initially established for the girls by either the government or communities have since been converted to co-educational institutions in order to increase their enrolment figures. In some instances such girls' schools have been converted to other uses or even closed down completely. The scenario has continued to disturb the minds of many scholars and students and therefore need to be investigated to find out the constraints

militating against girl-child education in Ebonyi State. This unhealthy situation in our educational development has necessitated this study.

### Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the major constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the views of male teachers towards the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi state?
3. What are the views of female teachers towards the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State?

### Hypothesis

The study was also guided by one hypothesis which was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO: There is no statistical significant difference between the male and female teachers view on the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State.

### Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey design aimed at determining the constraints on girl-child education in Ebonyi State Secondary Education System as perceived by secondary school teachers. The population of the study comprised all secondary school teachers in the three Education zones of Ebonyi state. This sample consisted of 425 teachers (male = 179, female = 246) randomly selected from twenty five schools per education zone out of 221 public secondary schools in the state. Stratified random sampling techniques were employed to select the sample for the study. The proportionate stratified random sampling techniques were employed to select the sample for the study. The stratification was done on the basis of school location only. A total of 17 teachers were randomly selected from each of the sampled secondary schools. This gave a total sample of 425 teachers.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher titled “constraints to Girl-child Education Questionnaire” (CTGCEQ). The instrument was validated by three experts, two from Social Science Education while one was from Measurements and Evaluation. The three experts were requested to validate the adequacy and suitability of the items in terms of face and content. They pointed out some errors which were corrected before the final production was made. The instrument was trial tested in schools in Enugu State and the reliability estimate was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of test-retest method. The analysis yielded a coefficient of 0.85 which was considered high enough to be a reliable instrument. The study used a four-point scale questionnaire with responses options as strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree, rated 4,3,2 and 1 Respectively.

Data for the study were collected through personal direct approach with the help of nine trained research assistants. This was to enable the research offer necessary explanations to respondents. The researchers visited the sampled schools and administered the questionnaire to respondents which was collected on the spot after completion to ensure hundred percent recovery. Data collected were analysed using statistical mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics.

The acceptance benchmark of each item was 2.50. hence, any item with mean score less than 2.50 was viewed as not constituting constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State.

### Results

*The results of the study were based on three research questions and one null hypothesis that guided that study. The results were presented in tables below.*

#### **Research Question One**

What are the major constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State Secondary Education System ?

**Table 1:** Mean responses of teachers on constraints to boy-child education

S/N	Items	- X	SD	Decision
1.	Unbridled quest to respect culture by parents	2.86	1.26	Accept
2.	Tendency to get married quick Syndrome	2.62	1.38	Accept
3.	Misplacement of values	3.15	1.13	Accept
4.	According recognition to value system by the society	2.94	1.18	Accept
5.	High rate of unemployment after graduation	3.35	0.89	Accept
6.	Problem of securing admission into higher institutions	3.19	0.98	Accept
7.	Poverty prevalent in the society	3.06	0.87	Accept
8.	Domination of teaching profession by the men	1.96	1.01	Reject
9.	Poor teaching environment	3.06	1.18	Accept
10.	Inappropriate curriculum	3.08	0.95	Accept
11.	Total ownership of schools by the government	2.92	1.22	Accept
12.	Inordinate ambition by the girls to acquire wealth on their own.	2.62	1.14	Accept
13.	Poor condition of service in civil service	2.86	0.95	Accept
14.	Desire to get married early in life	2.45	1.21	Reject
15.	Setting of high goals or targets for the female child by the parent	2.65	1.24	Accept
16.	Influence of the peers on the girl-child	2.67	1.22	Accept
17.	Negative government policies on the education of the girl-child	2.98	1.07	Accept
18.	Parents attitude to education of the girl-child	2.09	0.98	Reject
19.	Desire to become independent	2.13	0.89	Reject
20.	Lack of parental encouragement to the girl-child	3.36	0.82	Accept

Table 1 presents the constraints which hamper the education of the girl child in Ebonyi State secondary education system. The respondents considered items 1-7, 9,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,18 and 20 as the major constraints facing girl-child education. These items had means ranging from 2.58 to 3.34 which are above 2.50, bench mark score. Also the respondents did not agree with items 8, 14 and 19 as factor militating against girl child education in Ebonyi state secondary education system. These items had mean scores below 2.50.

**Research Question 2**

What are the views of male teachers towards the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi state secondary education system?

Table 2: Mean responses of male teachers on the constraints of girl- child education

S/N	Items	Male		Dec.
		$\bar{X}$	SD	
1.	Unbridled quest to respect culture by parents	2.82	1.10	Agree
2.	Tendency to get married quick Syndrome	2.87	0.92	Agree
3.	Misplacement of values	3.00	0.91	Agree
4	According recognition to value system by the society	3.21	0.80	Agree
5.	High rate of unemployment after graduation	3.28	0.81	Agree
6.	Problem of securing admission into higher institutions	3.04	0.82	Agree
7.	Poverty prevalent in the society	3.15	0.89	Agree
8.	Domination of teaching profession by the men	3.42	0.73	Agree
9.	Poor teaching environment	3.27	0.79	Agree
10.	Inappropriate curriculum	2.89	1.03	Agree
11.	Total ownership of schools by the government	2.94	0.96	Agree
12.	Poor condition of service in civil service	2.95	0.85	Agree
13.	Desire to get married early in life	2.38	1.05	Agree
14.	Setting of high goals or targets for the female child by the parent	2.78	0.75	Agree
15.	Influence of the peers on the girl-child	3.01	0.94	Agree
16.	Negative government policies on the education of the girl-child	3.36	0.83	Agree
17.	Parents attitude to education of the girl-child	3.03	1.04	Agree
18.	Desire to become independent	2.98	1.08	Agree
29.	Lack of parental encouragement to the girl-child	3.27	0.84	Agree
	<b>Grand X</b>	<b>58.54</b>	<b>21.92</b>	
	<b>Xx</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>1.03</b>	

Dec. = Decision

Table 2 highlights the view of male teachers on the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State secondary education. The male teachers viewed all the 20 items as constraints to girl child education. These items had mean scores ranging from 2.82 to 3.42 which are above 2.50 bench mark score and a grand mean of 58.54.

Research Question Three: What are the views of female teachers towards the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State Secondary Education.?

Table: 3 mean response of female teachers on the constraints of girl child education in Ebonyi State secondary education.

S/N	Items	Female		Dec.
		$\bar{X}$	SD	
1.	Unbridled quest to respect culture by parents	2.61	1.26	Accept
2.	Tendency to get married quick Syndrome	2.70	1.03	Accept
3.	Misplacement of values	2.82	0.95	Accept
4	According recognition to value system by the society	2.83	0.88	Accept
5.	High rate of unemployment after graduation	3.13	0.86	Accept
6.	Problem of securing admission into higher institutions	2.94	1.14	Accept
7.	Poverty prevalent in the society	3.07	0.78	Accept
8.	Domination of teaching profession by the men	2.01	0.85	Accept
9.	Poor teaching environment	3.05	0.99	Accept
10.	Inappropriate curriculum	2.87	0.93	Accept
11.	Total ownership of schools by the government	2.71	1.17	Accept
12.	Poor condition of service in civil service	2.94	0.83	Accept
13.	Desire to get married early in life	2.66	0.93	Accept
14.	Setting of high goals or targets for the female child by the parent	2.85	1.16	Accept
15.	Influence of the peers on the girl-child	2.72	1.08	Accept
16.	Negative government policies on the education of the girl-child	2.79	1.05	Accept
17.	Parents attitude to education of the girl-child	2.86	1.06	Accept
18.	Desire to become independent	3.21	0.91	Accept
29.	Lack of parental encouragement to the girl-child	2.76	1.11	Accept
	<b>Grand X</b>	<b>55.17</b>	<b>13.26</b>	
	<b>Xx</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>0.96</b>	

Dec. = Decision

In table 3 above, females teachers perceived all the items as constraints to girl child education in Ebonyi State secondary education. The respondent recorded mean scores ranging from 2.61 to 3.21 which are above the bench mark score of 2.5 and the grand mean of 55.17.

### Testing of hypothesis

HO:1 there is no statistical difference between the views of male and female teachers on the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi state.

**Table 4:** T-test statistic, on the constraints to girl-child education based on teachers gender differences.

Sources of Variation	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
<b>Male</b>	179	58.54	22.93	423	0.72	1.960	Accept
<b>Female</b>	246	55.17	20.28				

In table 4 above, the calculated t-value of 0.72 is less than the critical t-value of 1.960 at 423 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance; the null hypothesis stated in the study is accepted whereas the alternative is rejected. This implies that there is no statistical significance difference between the opinion of male teachers from those of the female teachers on the constraints to girl-child education in Ebonyi State secondary education system.

### Discussion of Results

The results of data analysis are discussed in line with the research questions and the null hypothesis that guided the study. The first research question was asked to find out the major constraints which in the opinion of the respondents seriously affected the education of the girl-child in Ebonyi State secondary education. The result of the study showed that respect for culture, unemployment, poverty, misplacement of values, inappropriate curriculum, tendency to get married quick, lack of parental encouragement among others were the factors that militate against girl child education. The findings of this study were supported by that of Okafor (2008), Haddad (2005) and Ejiofor (1998) who contended that girl child education in Nigeria is

constrained by poverty, unemployment, misplacement of the value system, desire by the youths to acquire wealth by all means, desire for quick marriage and respect for culture

The second research question ascertained the opinion of male teachers on the constraints confronting the attainment of education by the girl-child in Ebonyi State. The outcome of the study showed that male teachers agreed that all the items listed in the instrument constitute constraints to girl child education in Ebonyi State. This implies that the research items as responded to by the respondents hamper the progress of girl child education beyond primary education level in Ebonyi State. The result of the study agreed with Onyekwelu (2008) and Eze(2007), who were of the opinion that the gender of a person is a factor to be considered when determining girl child education issues in Nigeria. It was also supported by the works of Okoye (2009) who argued that there is neglect on the education of the girl child in Anambra state due to some cultural beliefs and that educating women is a waste of resources. This lays credence to the views by researchers that respect to culture is one of the major constraints to girl child education in Nigeria.

The third research question probed into the opinion of female teachers on constraints confronting the attainment of girl child education in Ebonyi State secondary education. The result of this study showed that respect for culture, unemployment, quest to get married quick and early, poverty, misplacement of values, inappropriate curriculum, and so on are factors affecting the attainment of girl child education in Ebonyi State. This result was supported by Okafor (2008), Eze (2008), who were of the view that most of the parents pay more attention to their boy child education at levels above primary more than their female counterpart(girl child) . Contrary to this result, Okoye (2009) and Onyekwelu (2008) maintained that most parents spend more resources in the training of their female children as a equipping them for better marriage. Most of the men prefer to marry literate girls, especially with the trends of development in the society.

The hypothesis of the study was tested to ascertain if significant difference exist between the views of the male and female teachers on the constraints to girl child education in Ebonyi State secondary education. The result of the study showed that there is no significant difference between the male and female teachers in their views on the constraints to girl-child education. The findings of this study agreed with Obi (2008), Eze (2008) and Charles and Iheme (2002) who asserted that opinion do not differ significantly among individuals (male or female) on the constraints to girl child education. They however contended that in some states in South-East of Nigeria parents give preference to the education of the girl-child more than that of boy child. This development is beginning to be noticed in teaching and nursing professions where greater percentages are women (Onyekwelu, 2008).

### **Implications for Educational Policy Makers**

The constraints on girl child education portray lot of assignment to the education policy makers. There is need for policy makers to organize special sessions for parents, teachers and general public on the importance of girl-child education. Policies and programmes that will confront these constraints need to be formulated and implemented. Sensitization programmes for parents, female pupils at primary schools and other stakeholders in education on the importance of girl child education is necessary. This could come in form of workshops and seminars specifically meant for these groups.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study has probed into the constraints of the girl child education as perceived by teachers in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The study showed that there is a decline in the enrolment of girl child in secondary schools in Ebonyi State due to respect for culture, unemployment, poverty, poor value system, quest for quick and early marriage and so.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should encourage their female children morally and financially to remain in school and complete their education at least up to secondary school level before going into business or marriage.
2. The governments at all levels in Nigeria should provide free and compulsory education for the female children up to secondary school level.
3. The government should also put up laws to ban hawking and street trading by the school children particularly during school hours.
4. The town unions, churches and the government should help to abolish cultural and traditional practices that encourage girl child early marriage.
5. Church, schools and human right organisations should encourage the girl children to go back to school in view of its benefits to them and the society, because when you educate a woman, you have educated a nation.

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