

Multidimensional Factors Affecting Girls Child Educational Development in Nigeria Geo-Political Zones

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Abstract: There are abundant benefits of providing educational support to all in contrast to a scenario where a restricted segment of human population in a society are favoured with education. To educate simply means providing individuals with preparation for good character and the potential capabilities to sustain development. From modern perspectives, education is a fundamental human right of every citizen regardless of ethnic nationality, gender, age, skin colour or geographical constituency. Presently, there are multifaceted instruments for making education a fundamental right for all. Supporting a selection of children, even when it is strictly accomplished on academic yardsticks, betrays the principle of education for all. It is a no doubt fact that an academic performance gauge is to some degree an impressive mechanism but the approach would cast-off millions of children their right to education and more assertively would proliferate the disproportion in the educational system of many developing countries which has been very obvious for very many years ago. Education is the greatest investment in a society, especially, girl's child education which is one of the core internationally recognized developmental priority. In sub-Saharan Africa region, especially in Nigeria, girl's child education is embedded in a serious threat of poor enrollment into schools and colleges due to varieties of factors. In Nigeria, women are often deprived of the fundamental human right to education due to some religious, cultural, social or economic reasons. Thus, this study quantitatively examines some multifaceted factors affecting girl's child education in Nigeria. The study chooses respondents from schools located in different geopolitical zones in the country. Field surveys were conducted to support the analysis herein the framework. Some pockets of factors affecting girl child education were observed in the geopolitical zones. The results indicate that all the factors investigated in the study

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have significant effects on the selected female student respondents but the schools in the Southern geopolitical zones largely exhibited negative responses to some of the

factors considered. Conclusively, the study also makes some recommendations on decision-making with respect to enrolment strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Gender issues have been subjected to diversity of judgements all through, the history of humankind. In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Nigeria gender issues profoundly infringe into the prospect for educational development. Obviously, Nigeria is still trapped in low quality learning due to poor enrolment of children in schools especially the girl's child. High quality learning is a major element in the moral circle of socioeconomic achievements. As a matter of fact, girl's education should be held with utmost responsibilities if women are to be involved in productive and profitable economic activities with potential to eradicate poverty. Education is a process of mental development of a human with the core objective of enhancing capability to contribute to the development of human society. The United Nation's World Conferences for Women held in recent times strongly put emphasis on the importance of girl's child education. Girl's education has occupied noticeable point of agenda in many international conferences focusing on human development, sustainable development, economic development, women's empowerment and population growth. In Africa, involvement of women in some important developmental activities is exceedingly constrained due to poor level of technical education and widespread child abuse. Child abuse in Africa is a major threat to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the continent and has become increasingly topical with a dramatic increase in recognition of the long term harmful effects on the affected population^[1]. For example, women are also poorly represented in non-agricultural and technical employment in sub-Saharan Africa. About 64% of women's employment is in agriculture and women's overall representation in the labour force is relatively high: 55% of working-age women in the region are employed, although, mostly in vulnerable jobs^[2,3]. This is due to poor enrolment in high quality education and gender discrimination. Girl-child education is one of the strategic means of creating positive impact in human society but there are lots of undesirable factors affecting female children in Africa in the early stage of their development^[4] and they must be confronted to achieve reasonable human development in the region.

Nigeria is one of the hotspots in the world where millions of girls are not exposed to quality education but recently government has started working to improve girl's

education. The challenge of poor girl-child education in Nigeria is a major factor hindering the country from meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with regards to educational development. The struggle to enrol all girls and boys in schools especially at primary and secondary level in order to close the gender gaps is still a difficult task in Nigeria due to some multidimensional challenges. In MDGs educational prospect, girl's child education requires distinctive attention to bridge the gap created by the inequality of gender discrimination. In the 90s, some international agencies like World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and UN Development Programme launched the idea of Education for All (EFA) through a conference of international standard for education. Subsequently, the UN officially ratified the rights of children to free education and advocated gender equality, through universal primary education. Access to education starts with children enrolment in early care or primary education. Children enrolment in Early Care and Education (ECE)^[5] is one of the factors that translates to better educational attainment in adulthood^[6]. In general, education improves children's quality of life as well as social adjustment and development^[7]. Consequently, this study focuses on the investigation of more noticeable issues of social, religious, economic and parental barriers that keep girls out of school in different geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Therefore, this study is useful for analytical purpose and indispensable policy actions. Additionally, this study brings together different conceptual factors inhibiting the aspirations of girl's child enrolment in schools based on differential measures through a gender lens.

Literature review: Development of an individual through education is a major approach to human socioeconomic empowerment and capacity building. About 65% of nearly 1 billion illiterate's adults worldwide are women^[8]. The problem of child labor is one of the perilous challenges affecting girl's child enrolment into schools and is it is a widespread phenomenon in Nigeria. There is a wide gap in gender equality in the educational sectors of many developing countries which Nigeria is not an exemption. Female children are usually placed at unfavorable edges in some socioeconomic gains whereas they are critical actors in the development of many sectors including education. In Nigeria, inadequate strategic plans often compel female children to face multiple barriers in the enrollment processes into

schools. The productivity of a global society largely depends on the roles of young female children in educational development. Fundamentally, female children educational achievements help to eliminate gender inequality and provide support for sustainable socioeconomic development. In many parts of the world, some progress has been made towards elimination of socioeconomic incongruences between men and women. Many literature research published in recent times unveiled some empirical evidences on declining female children enrolment in schools and colleges. Study conducted by Hamenoo *et al.*^[9] indicated that children engagement in child labor due to poverty and absence of parental care are some of the critical factors affecting the enrolment of young girls into schools. It was stated in the framework that poor implementation of educational and child labor laws are the major causes of decline in the level of enrolment into schools and colleagues in Ghana. Clark *et al.*^[10] presented a study on assets-based approach to promoting girl's financial literacy, savings and education. Finding revealed a correlation between establishment of micro-savings accounts for children and educational development. By Efevbera *et al.*^[11], the effect of girl child marriage on educational development among other socioeconomic development of children in sub-Saharan Africa is presented. Kafle *et al.*^[12] presented an evidence from Tanzanian on how different types of assets have differential effects on child education. It was found that household activities and housing quality have positive effects on children's academic performances in sharp contrast to the adverse effects of agricultural assets. By Cin and Walker^[13] a study on girl's education based on capabilities and feminist perspective was conducted. The study focus on policies, legislation, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and government led promotions for increasing girl's enrolment into schools and colleges. The researchers established their findings on capabilities and feminist perspective to analyze enrolment scenarios for girl's schooling and educational opportunities in Eastern Turkey. Many other studies^[14, -19] discussed access and empowerment towards girl's education in developing countries. The relationship between education and religion was also reported by Kuenzi^[20]. Okorie^[21] carried out a review on the assessment of factors militating against girl child education in Nigeria.

Okorie, however, noted that some negative parental attitudes influence the enrolment of female children into schools. In addition, social societal stereotype and stigmatization could as well influence children to drop out-of-school which in most cases affect more of female children than their male counterparts. In the last few decades, the number of girls out of school each year in the



Fig. 1: Young female Nigerians hawking food items on the street

sub-Saharan African region among other developing nations are in millions due to socioeconomic challenges, religious factors, cultural influences and parental discrimination against women. In major cities, young female Nigerians are usually engaged in street hawking of food items as shown in Fig. 1. In consequence, this study concentrates on quantitative situational analysis of multidimensional social, economic, religious and parental factors affecting a girl child educational enrolment perceptions in the geopolitical zones of the country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Geographical description of the study areas: Nigeria has (6) geopolitical zones namely, North-West, North-East, North-central, South-East, South-West and South-South. North-West geopolitical zone comprises the states of Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara. In the North-Eastern zone are the states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger and Plateau are in the North-central geopolitical zone. The South-South geopolitical region has Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-river, Delta, Edo and rivers. South-East has the combined state of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo while the states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo are the integrated states of the South-West zone. There is education dispersion in the geopolitical regions in Nigeria due to varieties of socioeconomic, religious, cultural and parental factors. There are conspicuous divides in the educational accomplishment between the north and southern region and to some extent in different geopolitical zones. A report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) reveals that Nigeria is among the countries with high number of out of school children. However, the conditions leading to dropout of schools or girl's child

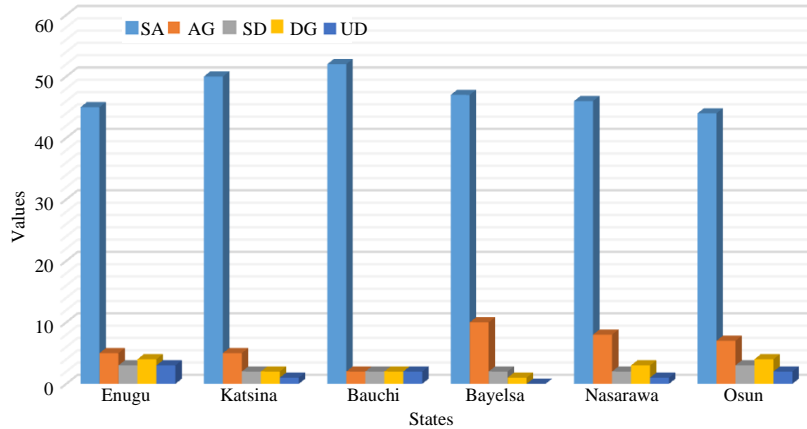


Fig. 2: Economic factor (results of financial constrictions in payment of school fees)

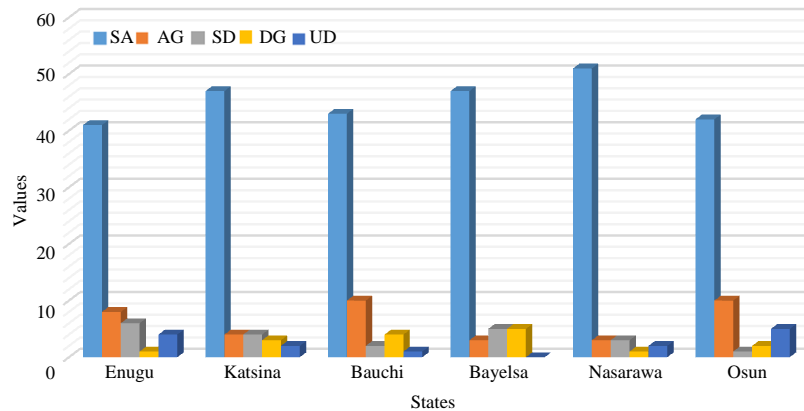


Fig. 3: Economic factor (results of lack of provision of basic needs for learning activities)

poor enrolment varies significantly with different factors and the consequential dynamics of educational opportunities in the geopolitical zones. At tertiary education level, there is divergent absorptive capacity of admission seekers due to variation in the number of institution of higher learnings in addition to entry requirements across different geopolitical zones. As a result, a large proportion of female students are left without admission into tertiary institutions thereby compelling parents to seek for alternative admission abroad based on availability of resources or recourse to the option of early marriage (Fig. 2-13).

Design of study questionnaire: A study questionnaire was designed and distributed to the targeted respondents (female secondary school students) for the purpose of establishing comparative analysis on the outcomes of the elements under consideration. The questionnaires focus on economic, socio-parental and religious issues as the

core elements. In the structure of the questionnaire, each of the three elements under consideration provides four different questions. The respondents (focus group) are rural female secondary school students from some selected schools across the geopolitical zones. A school is selected from Bayelsa state (South-South), Katsina state (North-West), Bauchi state (North-East), Nasarawa state (North-Central), Ekiti state (South-West) and Enugu state (South-East). The structured questionnaire contains 12 questions which were distributed to 60 respondents in each of the selected secondary schools. The field survey was conducted in April, 2018. The 60 respondents were selected 10 per class level covering Junior Secondary 1 (JS1), Junior Secondary 2 (JS2), Junior Secondary 3 (JS3), Senior Secondary 1 (SS1), Senior Secondary 2 (SS2) and Senior Secondary 3 (SS3). The respondents are within the age of 10-17. Five scale values were used for the analysis: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (AG), Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (DA) and

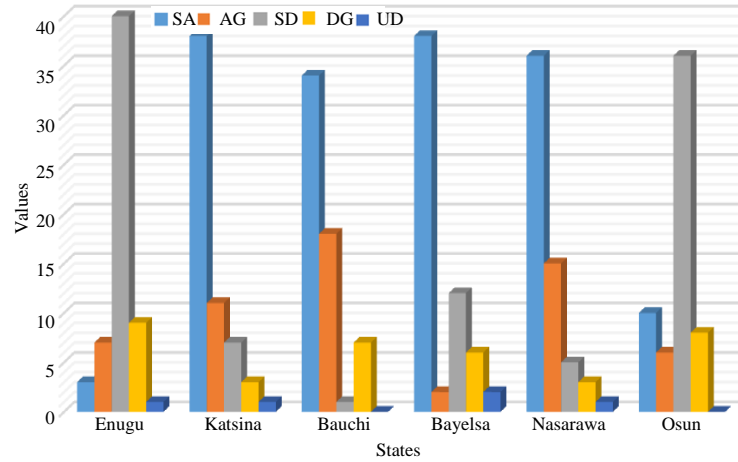


Fig. 4: Economic factor (results of pursuit of business activities before school hours)

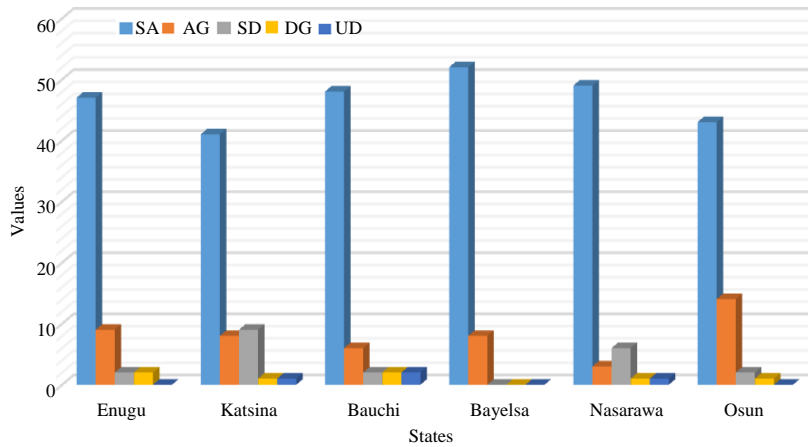


Fig. 5: Economic factor (results of expensive nature of qualitative education)

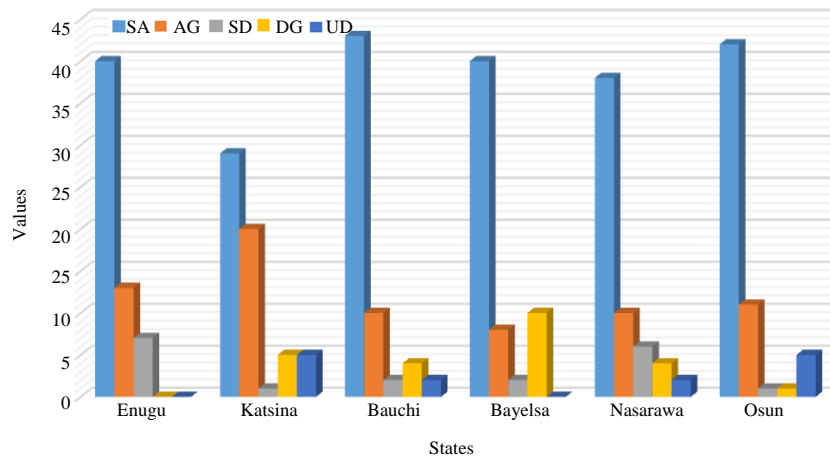


Fig. 6: Social factor (results of motivation by pair social influence)

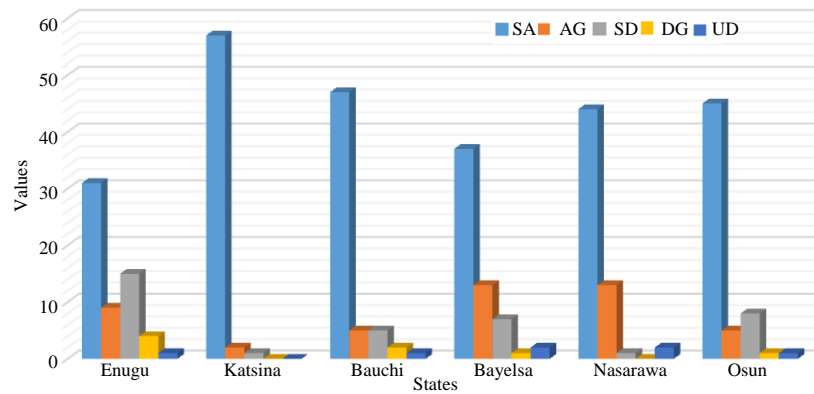


Fig. 7: Parental factor (results of parental influence based on their educational status)

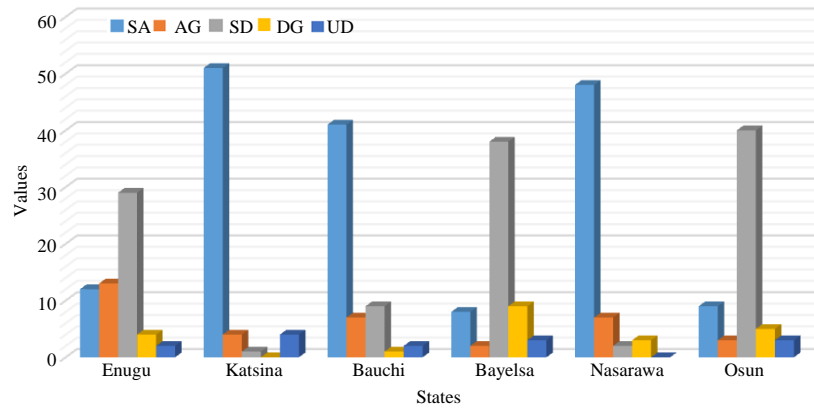


Fig. 8: Parental factor (results of parental positive attitude towards boy child education only)

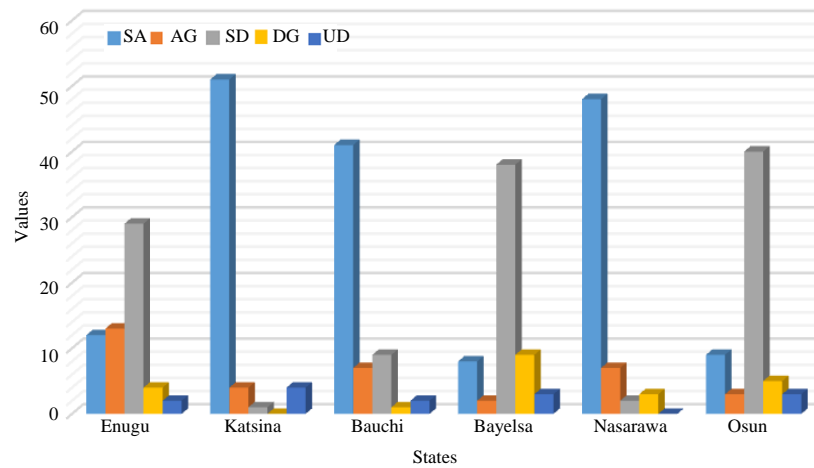


Fig. 9: Parental factor (results of poor parental adherence to social law on girls' right to education)

Undecided (UD) and results were evaluated on quantitative situational analysis using Microsoft Excel.

The perspectives of the respondents were presented in Fig. 2-13 as discussed in the result section.

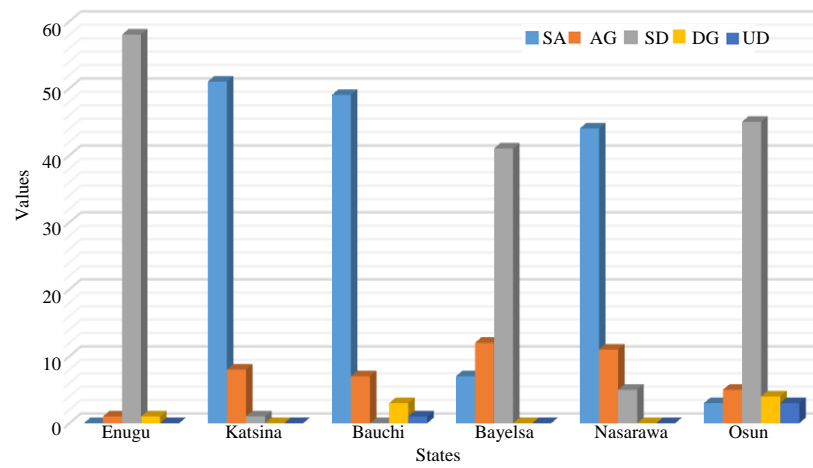


Fig. 10: Religious factor (results of religious condemnation of free mixing of opposite sexes)

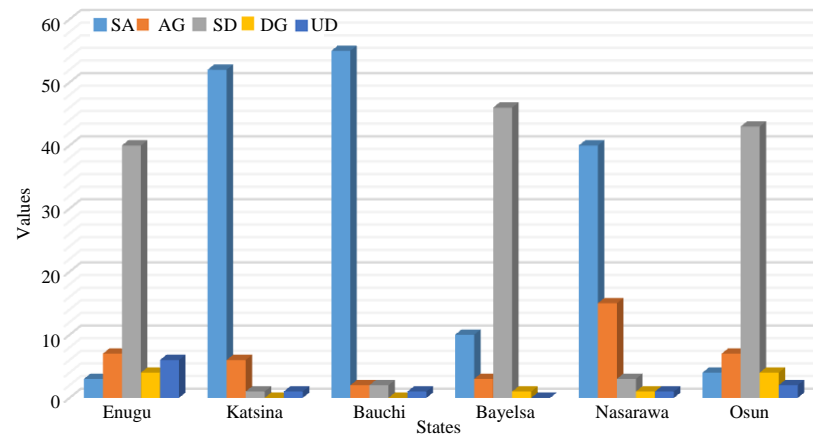


Fig. 11: Religious factor (results of restriction of female children to household activities)

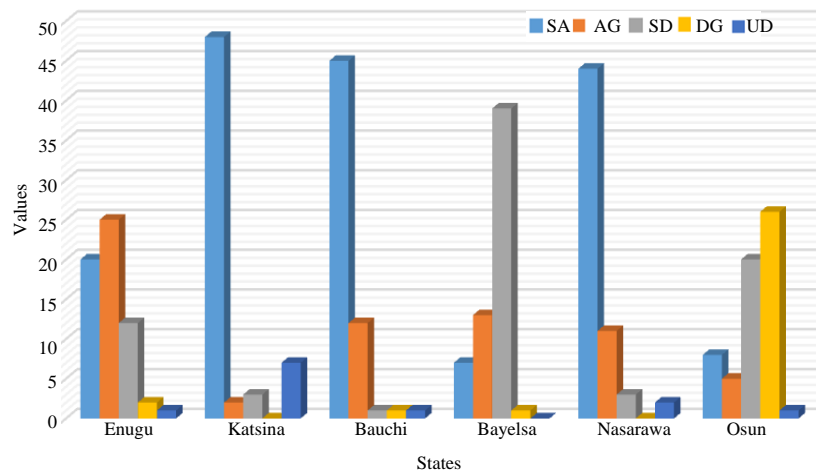


Fig. 12: Religious factor (results of fear of unwanted pregnancy as against religious ethics)

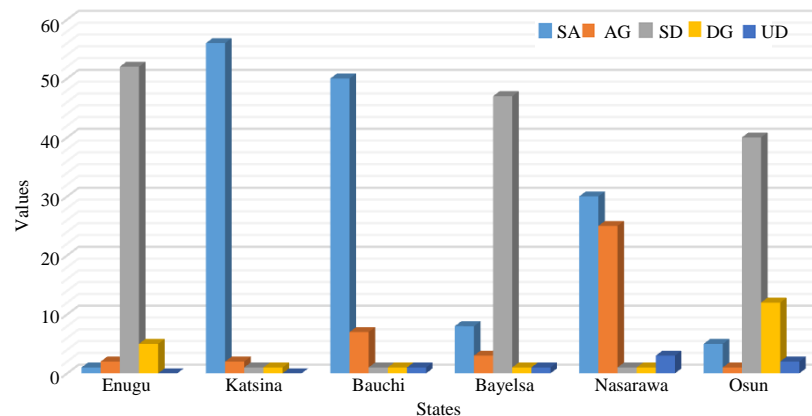


Fig. 13: Religious factor (results of pursuant of religious knowledge in contrast to Western education)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Economic factors: Our data analysis divulges the following. Firstly, quite a high number of respondents mostly above the average strongly agree that financial constrictions in payment of school fees is a factor affecting their education as shown in Fig. 2. Bauchi in North-East geopolitical zone recorded the highest respondents of 52 for SA followed by Katsina (50) while Osun came with the lowest value of 44. In the results of the second question presented in Fig. 3, lack of provision of basic needs for learning activities unveil a similar trend but with Nasarawa showing the highest value of 51 respondents for SA followed by Bayelsa and Katsina with equal value of 47 for SA which is also a pointer that basic needs for learning are not adequately provided. Most pupils in public schools are from economically challenged background. Hence, this could be the foremost reason behind the high values of SA for financial constrictions in payment of school fees and lack of provision of basic needs for learning activities. In Fig. 4, pursuit of business activities before school hours exhibited a different scenario. Divergent views were presented by the respondents across different states. In Enugu state (SE), a low value of 3 respondents was observed for SA while 40 respondents Strongly Disagree (SD). In the states of Katsina (SA = 38), Bauchi (SA = 34), Bayelsa (SA = 38) and Nasarawa (SA= 36) which indicated that more than 50% of the respondents Strongly Agree (SA) that pursuit of business activities before school hours has impact on their studies. However, the majority of rural dwellers in Nigeria are economically disadvantage people such that in most cases they tend to engage their children into farming and commercial activities to support the livelihood of the family. Financial fortunes generated from the activities could be used for solving other domestic problems rather than investment in payment of school fees.

Figure 5 pinpoints on the expensive nature of qualitative education. More than 60% Strongly Agree (SA) that there are difficulties to access qualitative educational systems due to high cost of tuition fee. The situation in the country's secondary educational system is such that quality learnings are basically provided by private schools. In such a circumstance, private secondary schools are expensive compare to their public counterparts. Privileged children from rich and average homes are usually enrolled into private secondary schools while children from downtrodden family are predominantly enrolled into public schools irrespective of the geopolitical zones.

Socio-parental factors: This section presents the analysis of the combination of social and parental factors. Some social and parental impediments usually stand in some ways threatening the progress of girls-child education. In some parts of the country, parents are fond of discriminating against their female children towards acquiring education such that they gave them out for early marriage. This could deny the young girls the capabilities for communal development. Therefore, this segment of the result analysis presented questions relative to social and parental factors. Figure 6 shows the results of motivation by pair social influence. The results indicated that more than 60% of the respondents in all the states in the geopolitical zones Strongly Agree (SA) with the exception of Katsina where 29 respondents stand for SA and 20 for AG. The percentage of those respondent who Disagree (DG) is somewhat inconsequential compare to the total value analysed.

Figure 7 unveils the reaction of respondents to parental influence based on their educational status. Results reveal a strong correlation between education and parental influence. The results obtained in all the states exhibited values above the average number of the respondents which signified that they Strongly Agree

(SA) that their education is influenced by the level of education of their parents. Parental level of education could also account for their level of income. In this case, high income parents have potential to enrol and give necessary support to their female children. In Nigeria, some parents reason in a way that rather than enrolling their female children into schools, it is more preferable to enrol their male children because they have greater chances of becoming future leaders and successful professionals while the female children will end up in their matrimonial homes. Parental positive attitude towards boy child education only was also investigated in the study as shown in Fig. 8. Katsina, Bauchi and Nasarawa displayed high values of SA responses from the respondents. About 60% of respondents Strongly Disagree (SD) that parent exhibits positive attitude towards boy child education alone in the case of Enugu. In another scenario, Osun case is quite different pointing to the fact that equal number of respondents (27) Strongly Agree (SA) and (AG) that positive attitude towards boy child education is one of the factors with potential effect on their education.

Nigeria is one of the countries that subscribe to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which captures the right of children to education. The most wide-ranging obligation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) which was adopted in 1989 by the UN General Assembly but it was domesticated in Nigeria in 2003. CRC applies to children under the age of 18. In some countries, children's educational development is subject to legal obligation not a substance of generous endeavour. The Child Rights Act of 2003 protect the child against negative influences and strongly advocate the right to education regardless of sex, colour, creed, parents, legal guardian or other status. Therefore, this validates the objective to investigate poor parental adherence to social law on the right of female children to education and the results are presented in Fig. 9. The result shown that 51 respondents append to SA for Katsina, SA = 41 for Bauchi and SA = 48 for Nasarawa substantiating that more than 60% of the respondents in the entire northern geo-political zones are affected negatively by poor parental adherence to social law on the right of female children to education. In the southern geopolitical zones, high values of SD are obtained with 38 for Bayelsa and 40 for Osun. A low value of SD = 29 was observed in the state of Enugu^[8].

Religious Factors: Finally, in many literature work, religion has been viewed as one of the critical factors affecting girl's child education. In Northern part of Nigeria, the teaching of Islam which advocates that once a girl has her first menstrual flow in her parent's house, the next stream should be observed in her husband's house is still very much in exercise. Families who

supported this religious idea give out their female children into early marriage, thereby making it difficult for some of the young girls to acquire Western education. Fig. 10 shows the results of the factor: religious condemnation of free mixing of opposite sexes. In Enugu, 51 respondents which represent 85% of the total respondents Strongly Disagree (SD) that free mixing of opposite sexes is a factor affecting their enrolment into schools while the same 85% Strongly Disagree (SD) in case the case of Katsina. Furthermore in Bauchi 49 respondents and Nasarawa 44 respondents Strongly Agree (SA), pointing to the fact that free mixing has an impact on their pursuit for education. Results on the restriction of female children to household activities is presented in Fig. 11. The statistical results reveal that Katsina and Bauchi took the lead of SA = 55 and SA = 51, respectively while Nasarawa showed a value of 40 for SA respondents. Contrarily, a value of approximately 67% from Enugu respondents, 77% from Bayelsa and 72% from Nasarawa Strongly Disagree (SD) on restriction of female children to household activities.

Figure 12 captures the results for the fear of unwanted pregnancy as against religious ethics. It is not new to the knowledge of all that Islam and Christianity among other religions prohibit pregnancy outside the fold of wedlock. Teenage pregnancy is a major concern in both developed and developing world. There are lots of negative impacts of unintended pregnancies. Unintended pregnancies have some associated risks with potentials to destroy human societies regardless of the level of education and socioeconomic development. The results unveil in Fig. 12 shows Strongly Agree (SA) values of 20, 48, 45, 07, 44 and 08 for Enugu, Katsina, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Nasarawa and Osun, respectively. In Enugu where the lowest value of SA was recorded, 25 respondents also agreed that unwanted pregnancy in line with prohibitive religious condition is a problem. Just 26 of the 60 respondents Disagree (DG) in Osun state. Summarily, it can be established that the incidence of early and unplanned pregnancies has detrimental effects on girl's child education in Nigeria at large.

Results obtained from the pursuant of religious knowledge in contrast to western education is presented in Fig. 12. Bauchi (SA = 56) and Katsina (SA = 50) which are both located in the North-East geopolitical zone exhibited high response values from the respondents. Nasarawa shows 30 respondents for SA and 25 respondents for AG. In real sense, the values of SA and AG shown by Nasarawa put together still make a positive impact. In a divergence viewpoint, 52 respondents from Enugu, 47 from Bayelsa and 40 from Osun Strongly Disagree (SD) that pursuant of religious knowledge in contrast to western education is a negative factor affecting their education. The results on this segment of the

questionnaire reveal that Islam which is widely practiced in Northern Nigeria has high influence on girl's child education in that part of the country.

CONCLUSION

Africa is a place embroiled in the belief that a woman's life is exclusively in her marital home and her leading role centres predominantly for sexual, domestic and commercial labours. This credence has insulated lots of young girls from securing modern education. In a factual sense, the prominence of education in the development of an individual is incontestably imperative by virtue of its physical and mental influence on the life of the person. Therefore, this article presents a synthesis of the empirical field work on girl child education. This study has found multiple barriers affecting girl's child education in different geopolitical zones of the case study country and a few enablers to enrolment in school. Convincingly, a female child has the same right to education like her male counterpart for self-actualization. Hence, the following recommendations are made based on the findings:

For the reason that, parents have trust in religious leaders, therefore the leaders should help teach parents the positive impact of girl's child education. Going by the findings, we recommend that government should implement effective stringent measure to discourage child labour to mitigate the challenge of pursuit of business activities before school hours. There should be increase in attention by the government to end the destructive practice of discrimination against girl's child enrolment into schools in any part of the country. Government should drive mechanisms capable of eliminating gender inequality with regards to efforts towards seeking for knowledge which is more rampant in rural areas, especially by making provision for scholarship and creation of female child educational rights based advocacy.

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