

Stereotype Parental Factors and Girl-Child's Participation in Post-Primary Education: The Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Boyo Division, North-West Region of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

There is compelling evidence that parental factors significantly impact girls' attendance in post-primary education. The purpose of the present study was to identify the parental factors that affect girls' attendance in post-primary education in Boyo division and to explore the relationship between our study variables. The study reviewed literature based on four specific objectives; parents' attitudes towards girl-child education, parents' level of education as well as socio-cultural and socio-economic factors on girls' attendance in post-primary education. The ecological systems, needs of the hierarchy and gender relation theories were used not only to substantially explain the position of parental participation in girls' education but also to generate strategies to promote parents' participation in their girl-children's education. This qualitative study sought to explore secondary sources of data and to establish how parents in Boyo division were involved in their girl-children's education. The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Semi-structured interviews (for parents) and the open-ended questionnaire (for girls) were used in this qualitative study covering four (4) post-primary schools. Respondents were selected through the use of chain reference sampling and sampling by case. A total of three hundred and thirty-eight (338) participants were selected. The sample consisted of 50 parents and 338 girls who attended both the public and private secondary schools in Boyo division. Data were gathered from the participants via valid and reliable questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the background information of the participants. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to explore whether there was a significant relationship between parental factors and girls' attendance in post-primary education. The results revealed that parental factors affect girls' attendance in post-primary education. Based on the discussions, conclusion is drawn and suggestions made on ways of bringing education to the doorstep of the girl-child in Cameroon. Girls' attendance in education is influenced by parental factors. Parents actually indicated and revealed that parents' related factors hindered girls' attendance. It was recommended that parents should be willing to learn about how they could overcome the barriers in the participation of their girl-children's education. Girls should be given equal access as boys to education; there should be a legal support for girl-child education and government should empower parents to understand the importance of educating the girl-child.

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KEYWORDS: *Girl-child, girl-child education, parenting, parental attitude, post-primary education, school attendance*

INTRODUCTION

There is compelling evidence that parental factors significantly impact girls' attendance in post-primary education. The purpose of the present study was to identify the parental factors that affect girls' attendance in post-primary education in Boyo division and to explore the relationship between our study variables. The study reviewed literature based on four specific objectives; parents' attitudes towards girl-child education, parents' level of education as well as socio-cultural and socio-economic factors on girls' attendance in post-primary education. Education is the process through which an individual acquires adequate and appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour necessary to function optimally as a citizen (Boonprasert, 2010). It is also the belief that no nation can develop without proper formal education of its citizenry since education is considered the bedrock of all facets of development of any nation (Anho, 2011). Hence, no country can afford to toy with the education of its citizenry, especially that of the girl-child. According to the popular adage, "educate a man, and you educate an individual, but educate a woman and you educate a nation". This buttresses the fact that education of the girl-child is a key factor in the development of the country, communities and the individuals with regard to their families, employment opportunities, economic empowerment and social accomplishment (Wood, 2001).

Conceptualizing Issues and Trends of The Girl-Child's Education

In today's world, education is regarded as one of the essential means for achieving long term development goals and improving both social and economic standards of living (Subrahmanian, 2007). In other words, education is a crucial and fundamental instrument directing many aspects of economic, political and social life (Mendy, 2008). It plays a vital role to eliminate social and economic injustices inherent in many communities. At the present day, as a result of the changes and developments in information technology and communication system, education has become even more important. The welfare and happiness of a country depend on equipping the citizens with continuous and quality education. The knowledge and the skills gained through education process have accretion value for any country's development. For this reason, the education level of the society and the quality of human resources are the impulsive forces of socio-economic development. The countries advancing their level of education will experience the positive consequences of it in various fields.

Education in essence, has two main objectives; to instill broad based knowledge, including professional skills, which enables a person to deal with the material demands of his/her life and secondly, to make him or her a particular kind of person - a person who can live at peace with himself and his fellow human beings and in harmony with animate and inanimate nature. Education becomes a very powerful instrument for protection and promotion of human rights if the right type of education is provided to all right from the beginning. Education helps a person grow cognitively, intellectually and emotionally and enables a person to take right decisions on the basis of logic and reason. It is my firm belief that if women are to be empowered and their human rights protected and promoted in Cameroon, we will have to concentrate on educating the girl child who is often discriminated against and whose rights are relegated to background, in comparison to those of the male child and the irony of all this is that she is not even aware of the prevailing situation which undermines her worth as an individual and makes her a second-grade citizen. Girls' education is one of the most effective ways for ending poverty in developing nations. The benefits of their education are seen by individuals, their families, and throughout society.

Education being a very powerful instrument for protection and promotion of human rights is strongly affirmed in the 1996 constitution of Cameroon which provides a large number of rights and freedom to the people of Cameroon. This constitution declares that the human person, without distinction as to race, religion, sex or belief, possesses inalienable and sacred rights. This affirms our attachment to the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and all duly ratified international conventions relating thereto, in particular, to the principles:

These rights in other words, if denied or neglected, cannot be procured by the citizen through the courts. Thus, the classification of the rights of the citizen into these two categories could be interpreted as placing mechanical values on these rights relative to each other. Political will determines the manner in which laws are enforced. In fact, the very act of placing education in either category of rights can well be perceived to be the primary expression of such a political will. Right to education could not be made a fundamental right (as had been discussed with the Constituent Assembly of Cameroon due to various reasons) and was only accepted as part of directive principles of state policy. This could be taken, on

reflective considerations, as a lack of political will (Amended Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 1996).

The right to education, which is a fundamental human right, is frequently denied to girls in some African countries. The then United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, stated that in Africa, when families have to make a choice, due to limited resources, of educating either a girl or a boy child, it is always the boy that is chosen to attend school. In Africa, many girls are prevented from getting the education entitled to them because families often send their daughters out to work at a young age, so that they can get the additional income they may need to exist beyond subsistence level, and finance the education of sons.

Education is an important tool in liberating and correcting the societal and institutional injustice and discrimination against girl-children. In enhancing girl child education, a wholesome approach must be taken, starting from parents' attitudes. As in the case of study the government needs to change the curriculum to be responsive to the demands of girl-child education, the value and education system must change to suit the educational need of a girl-child (UNESCO, 2008). The Cameroon government has promulgated laws and decrees so as to improve access to education of the girl-child especially Law N° 98/008 of fourteen April 1998 laying down guidelines for education in Cameroon and Decree N° 2001/O41 of nineteen February 2001 instituting the principle of free education in Cameroon.

It is widely accepted that formal schooling between 6-11 years of age is vital for proper development of the child, when supplemented by mother at home. Hence, education by formal or informal means can become a major tool for removing the bias against the girl child. It will usher in a new era for her and for her country. She will become an asset and not a burden, if a girl child is educated. To repeat the words of Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, "To awake the people, it is the woman who must be awakened, once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves (Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995).

Odaga and Heneveld (1995) argue that the largest hurdle that needs to be overcome before all African girls can get the education is the prevailing social thought that discourages or minimizes the importance of education for girls. To stop this, countries in Africa and Cameroon in particular, the government need to pass laws banning the early marriage practices that keep girls out of school. Finally, African governments must pass legislation that makes the education of girls

mandatory for primary school, and then enforce these laws stringently, especially in the rural communities.

The inception of the universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) in Cameroon following a decision of the Cameroonian President in the year 2000, where access to education was made free for children in public primary schools, and with the main goal of attaining education for all by the year 2015, is in recognition of the need to educate as well as develop its citizenry. Again, the roadmap for the Cameroonian education sector which was flagged off in 1995 during the National Education Forum held on May 22nd to 27th, which include, among others, access and equity: standards and quality assurance. These were steps in the right direction as gains were made in form of marginal increase in enrolment; however, there are still some challenges in terms of access, equity, achievement in school subjects and retention/dropout, especially among girls.

Over the past decade, Cameroon has made significant steps in making education more accessible to its children and in driving up its school enrolment rates. According to figures from UNICEF, the country's net primary school enrolment rate is now at around 84%, making it one of the highest ranking nations in West and Central Africa. However, simple statistics rarely tell the whole story. While enrolment rates are rising, many are concerned that girls continue to lag significantly behind their male counterparts.

A study by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family published in 2012 found that for every 100 boys in education in Cameroon in 2009/2010, there were only 85 girls. Despite some efforts to correct this inequality, this ratio has remained stubbornly consistent since 2002/2003, and notably this gender disparity widens as you travel from the urban centres to the further-flung and more poverty-stricken hinterlands. While enhancing access to education is important, ensuring that gender disparities are also addressed in the process will be crucial if education is to help raise all communities out of poverty and develop. Like many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Cameroon has run up against a number of barriers that mean it is more difficult to ensure girls attend school and do not drop out than boys. And often the source of continuing gender discrimination lies in a complex mix of traditional attitudes and economic calculation.

"Some parents prefer to give priority to boys' education because they believe girl will soon get married so they see less need to invest in her," explains Jaïre Moutcheu, Plan International's Cameroon Communications Adviser. "Some do

not have enough resources and prefer to focus the little they have on the education of the boy.”

UNICEF (2009) report asserted that there are an almost unequal number of boys and girls attending primary education in sub-Sahara African countries. But girls' participation in secondary education is far less than that of boys; only 33 per cent of students are girls. Girls are yet to use their secondary education to find further learning avenues that are linked directly to livelihoods, economic opportunities, and social and political empowerment. This has contributed to continuing the traditional gender roles in which women are confined to multiple household tasks and remain deprived of a decision-making role.

Over the years, the government has made efforts—often with the help of NGOs such as UNICEF and Plan International—to boost the school attendance of girls. There have been sensitization campaigns targeting parents and communities, some schools have been made more girl-friendly such as by fitting enclosed toilet facilities, programs have been created to help provide books and scholarships to girls, and schemes to help those who have dropped out of school return have been established. Meanwhile, a new effort backed by the government of Japan and UNICEF could see the construction of “girl-child friendly” primary schools especially in areas with lowest enrolment for girls; enhanced incentives for girls attending schools such as food handouts; and strengthened support for women's advocacy groups promoting girls' education.

If the most basic value is of survival and everything comes after that the first right is the right to be born and not to be aborted purely because one is a girl. This right of survival is being snatched away (female feticide) with the help of modern science and technology in contravention to existing laws that forbid any such activities. Women, due to their ignorance of such laws and help unavailable at hand in adverse circumstances suffer unspeakably because they are not educated and hence are unable to defend their unborn and fend for themselves in such circumstances. If a girl is born, despite all efforts to the contrary, the question comes of their right to remain alive and live, live with dignity, and as an individual a term not understood well in connection with female species. Here we are concerned, directly with the right to education. This also implies the right to information about law, health care and opportunities in different fields of activity including the right to a career. Only when this right is protected one can expect to have a congenial atmosphere for the protection and promotion of human rights of women.

Despite the introduction of free primary education in the country which accounted for an increase in enrolment, a sizeable number of children, especially girls, still find themselves out of school due to a number of reasons. These reasons include: demands for their labour in the homes such as assisting in looking after their young siblings; child marriage, doing house chores and looking after the sick member of the family (Aderinto 2000; Togunde & Carter 2008). Some of the girls are given to marriage against their wish and when they refuse, they are threatened with death. This study therefore, examined the general problem facing girl-children and the implications on the education opportunities available to them.

The major concern in secondary education is ensuring that students stay in school until they complete their education, because dropping out denies individual students their fundamental human right to education. Internationally, the individual right to education has been repeatedly affirmed in many treaties and conventions such as The 1948 Convention on the Rights of the Child in which our country is a signatory, Act 26 of that declaration stipulates that “Every child has the right to education” Education shall be free at least at the elementary level and fundamental stages. Also, it stipulates that there should be an encouragement in the development of different forms of secondary educations including general and vocational education making them available and accessible to every child and taking appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance. At least in the elementary stages education should be free and compulsory (UNESCO, 2001)

It is a well-known fact that the schooling of the girl-child has crucial value for both the girl-child and the nation's development. The rate of girls' participation in formal schooling is one of the indicators of the nation's development level. Independent of the quality and content of academic programs, the benefits of girls' education increase with each level of education (Rugh, 2000). Education enables girls to participate in the development of the community and the household because educated women exercise their personal rights to take part in political and economic decision-making both in the community and in the household (UNESCO, 2000).

The educational participation of girls improve the main national development indicators such as lowered infant and maternal mortality, longer life expectancy, lower fertility rates and improvements in health, nutrition, literacy and economic growth (Rugh, 2000). Girl's education is not only important as a social

indicator or an engine for economic development leading to a greater level of health, economy, security, liberty and participation in social and political activity, but can possibly yield higher rate of return than any other investment available in developing world (World Bank, 2002). UNICEF (2004) report indicates that girls' education leads to more equitable development, stronger families, better services, better child health and effective participation in governance.

Despite the obvious benefits of education to national development, research findings indicate that girls' participation in education is adversely lower than that of boys. Some children enroll in school but do not remain until graduation. A dropout is any student, who for one reason or the other, leaves school prematurely before graduation, without transferring to another school. School Dropout in this study, therefore, refers to someone aged 7 to 15 years who at one time attended school but currently is not in school, irrespective of the length he/she was in school. This is most common in rural areas where there is abject poverty, ignorance and children form a recognizable part of the family labour force (Kamla-Ra, 2007). It has been strongly observed that the girl-child has not had a fair chance to qualitative education as a result of socio-economic, school related and other societal factors (Alika & Egbochukwu, 2010).

Research has shown that millions of girls do not have access to school despite the concerted efforts to push the cause forward. Okeke, et al (2008) and Alabi & Alabi (2012) identified child labour, poverty and lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, bereavement, broken home, engagement of children as house helps, as factors or the clog in the wheel of children's access to education. According to World Bank (2003), More than 350 million people, over half of Africa's population, live below the poverty line of one dollar a day. This implies that poverty excludes children, including the girl-child, from school.

Parental attitude is a measure or an index of parental involvement. A child, brought up with affection and care in the least restrictive environment would be able to cope up better with the sighted world. Therefore, the family shapes the social integration of the child more than a formal school. Turnbull (1983) has identified four basic parental roles- parents as educational decision makers; parents as parents; parents as teachers and parents as advocates. Since the parent's attitude is so important, it is essential that the home and school work closely together, especially for children with disabilities.

The socio-cultural context of Cameroon is such that is multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious based. Such diversity and value system must be the focus of education to ensure that quality education is given to the children. All round girl child empowerment from the grass root level is another way out of girl child education in Cameroon. Feasible and pragmatic programs directed at increasing girl child rights, privileges, and opportunities should be aggressively pursued by individuals, organizations and government agencies. Such programs may include free and compulsory education for girl children, organizing girls' movement, girls' forum, and gender sensitive activities that tend toward promoting the rights and privileges of girl children. The government should strengthen the power of her relevant agencies in protecting child rights and enhancing their opportunities. Such agencies should be empowered to deal with the protection of children's right where children's courts can be set up to provide speedy trial of offences against children or of violation of child rights. They should also be actively involved in addressing problems associated with trafficking of children for labour and prostitution, discrimination in education, physical and sexual abuse and other age-long cultural practices that are against the health and social wellbeing of girl children. Government should also ensure the parents from rural areas are enlightened on the need to educate and reduce the bias toward the girl child.

Education can become a very powerful instrument for protection and promotion of human rights, if right type of education is provided to all right from the beginning. For this, first of all, gender disparities will have to be reduced and finally removed, not an easy task of any means. This can be achieved only when girls are helped to value their own worth and usefulness to the society and this can be done only by educating them. To provide universal elementary education to all first of all, all gender disparities will have to be removed, especially in a country like India whose religious and socio-cultural traditions favor the male child.

The Jomtien Declaration (1990) was quite specific on this point; "The most urgent policy is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women". The report presents a severe point agenda for accelerating girl's education and for eliminating gender disparities. Some of the suggestions that every person –child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. For basic education to be equitable, all children (boys and girls) must be given the opportunities to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.

Compulsory primary education laws' must be enacted and penalties for non-enrollment of girls should be severe. (It is the primary duty of parents to enroll and keep their children in schools and should be made so by law of the land).

The World Health Organization (2001), in the *International classification of functioning, disability and health*, defines participation as involvement in life situations, which occurs across many locations, including environments of work, school, play, sport, entertainment, learning, civic life and religious practice. This definition is broad because it includes children's participation in school environments as well as in more voluntary, extracurricular activities, such as recreation and leisure. From this definition, participation in school means offering children a say in their education, listening to them and involving them as much as possible in school life. It means valuing their opinions and ideas and giving them control of their learning.

The participation of girls in secondary education had lagged behind compared to that of the boys in rural areas of Cameroon in terms of their participation in secondary education as enrolment percentage rates. In the context of this study, school participation is seen as means of offering children a say in their education, listening to them and involving them as much as possible in school life. It means valuing their opinions and ideas and giving them control of their learning. It is to this effect that it became a great concern to encourage girls in the secondary institutions to work hard to prepare them for adulthood responsibilities and enable them to fit well and compete favorably in the job market.

The WHO (2001), in the ICF, defines participation as involvement in life situations, which occurs across many locations, including environments of work, school, play, sport, entertainment, learning, civic life and religious practice. This definition is broad because it includes children's participation in school environments as well as in more voluntary, extracurricular activities, such as recreation and leisure. The participation of girls in secondary education is of great importance to the nation's socio-economic development, social-cultural growth and for women empowerment. It shapes the whole destiny of a person hence a lot of values are added to life style. This calls for the participatory involvement of parents, teachers, government and other stake holders in enhancing girl-child participation in secondary education through provision of basic requirements which to a greater extent should come from the parents.

The Girl-child education in Cameroon has for a long time been plagued by pedagogy of differences, by way of education, that stresses on the differences and not the similarities between boys and girls. This type of education places the boy on a superior platform to that of the girl. The problems of the girl-child education start right at home. It is at this level in the community that girls are educated differently from boys. The parents, siblings, relatives and even the neighbors perceive girls to be radically different from boys. They wrongly believe that, boys are more intelligent, more capable, more responsible and therefore more important to the society than girls. Although both girls and boys are brought up together at home and in the community the girls are forced to grow up differently through this oppressive socialization. They are not given the same opportunities as boys to prove their potentials. As a result, the girls grow up believing that they are grossly inferior to boys just because they are girls. As gender bias prevails in the society, girl-child education will continue to suffer social discrimination. Davison (1993) indicates that parental decisions to educate boys are also influenced by patrilineal inheritance systems where boys are prime beneficiaries. According to him, there is a strong belief among families that, once married, girls become a part of another family and the parental investment is lost.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the parental related factors toward girls' education are important in determining school attendance and academic achievement of the girl-child. From the preceding literature review, an important gap in knowledge emerges that the present study attempts to fill. Most of the studies investigating on the factors influencing girl-child education have put emphasis on the social, economic, cultural factors. These leaves out a major aspect that contributes to girl-child education: such as parental related factors impacting girl-child education-The role of the girl-child in promoting her own education. The girl-child knowledge on education, its importance to her life and that of her family

Statement of the Problem

In spite the modernization of the educational system in Cameroon since independence through the initiation of several education reforms, such as the National Development Plan on education (1976-61) which states that "education is an instrument for economic, social, political and cultural development of the country. Furthermore, Law N° 98/004 of fourteen April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon and some of the international

treaties signed and ratified by Cameroon, specifying the need to provide educational standards on human rights in order to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. In the meantime, the achieving of gender equality in education by 2015 where the focus is on ensuring girls full and equal access to basic education of good quality. Moreover, the inception of the universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) in Cameroon following a decision of the Cameroonian President in the year 2000, where access to education was made free for children in public primary schools, and with the main goal of attaining education for all by the year 2015, is in recognition of the need to educate as well as develop its citizenry.

Despite all these measures and efforts made and taking into account the huge budget allocated for the educational sector each financial year, gender disparity in education still continue to exist especially in secondary education. In this light, a lot still has to be done to remedy this educational disparity in education that exists between the boy and girl child in terms of access and quality to education at the secondary level. However, the innovations introduced and the improved facilities, many children especially the girl-child who avail themselves of educational opportunities hardly complete their schooling before the first terminal point. Nevertheless, it is noted that 75 million secondary school age students remain not enrolled in school and 41 million of them are girls-approximately 55%. For that reason, it is absolute clear that there are still many things to do in order to reach the target of gender equality in education, namely fair treatment of all girls and boys in the education system (UNICEF,2005).

This unpleasant state of affairs can be attributed to predominantly matrilineal traditional and cultural beliefs of the area. With regards to the paradox of matrilineal succession in Boyo Division of the North West region of Cameroon, it is common evidence in this area that the parents pay more attention to boys' education than the girl-child. The researcher observed that parents' socio-cultural practices and societal negative attitudes may be the more reasons to cause the low participation of the girl-child in secondary education in this division. This has become a nightmare to the educational system especially at the secondary school level where these stereotype parental factors are absolutely a burden to the girl-child education in this area of study.

Undermining the level of academic achievement of girls in secondary schools, it is fundamentally a clear fact that it is not because the girls are not intelligent and hard working in school but it is largely due to

stereotype parental related factors that impact the education of the girl-child. This has actually triggered the low attendance of girls in secondary education. However, the present study is interested in investigating the stereotype parental factors affecting the attendance of the girl-child in post-primary education in Boyo Division of the North West Region of Cameroon in order to confirm or refute the claim of gender disparity in post-primary education in favour of boys and to find out why girls are still unable to stay in school. It is hoped that the study would take a global look at this problem especially in the entire area where the problem is seriously pronounced.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out whether parents' attitudes towards girls' education have significant impact on girls' attendance in post-primary education
2. To find out whether parents stereotype socio-cultural beliefs have significant impact on girls' attendance in post-primary education.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. The parents' attitudes towards girls' education have significant impact on girls' attendance in post-primary education,
2. The parents' socio-cultural beliefs have significant impact on girls' attendance in post-primary education

Theoretical Framework of the Study

In respect to this study, we examined Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Abraham Maslow's theory of hierarchical needs and Ruth Pearson's gender relation theory. These theories are related to this study in terms of human growth and personal development.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), this theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex 'layers' of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. This theory has recently been renamed 'bioecological systems theory' to emphasize that a child's own biology is a primary environment fueling her development. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his development. Changes or conflicts in any one layer will check throughout other layers. To study a child's development then, we must look not only at the child and her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well. Bronfenbrenner in his theory structures it into five ecological systems:

Bronfenbrenner's theory therefore is relevant in this study in the sense that unlike various development theories that place emphasis on the nature and nurture interaction in the development of children, Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory looks at the child's environment in terms of its quality and context. According to Bronfenbrenner, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex for a child when he develops. The arising of this complexity depends on the growing and maturation of child's physical and cognitive structures. So, given that nature continues on a given path, how does the world that surrounds the child help or hinder continued development? The ecological model of Bronfenbrenner's theory attempts to explain the differences in individual's knowledge, development and competencies through the support, guidance and structure of the society in which they live. In this regard therefore, girls' education depends largely on the support, guidance and structure of the society which has to do with cultural traditions and practices of their parents. In many cases, the education of children is linked with the cultural tradition and practice of their parents who are said to be the microsystem according to ecological theory. Many at times cultural traditions and practice of the parents used to contradict the Western system of education as a result they may serve as barriers to its effectiveness. Bronfenbrenner, (1989) emphasizes that the informal education that takes place in the family is not merely a pleasant prelude but more of a powerful prerequisite for success in formal education from primary level onward. It may be profitable and may provide long term effect if parents are encouraged to send their daughters to school, even though with attendance at primary education, most of our young girls do not still have basic knowledge and skills that are products of initial formal education, and that are necessary for effective participation in our society. Besides, the essential basic skills of 3Rs are now hardly sufficient for the growing specific competence required by our changing and evolving society today.

From the above theory, it is evident that the parents' positive attitude towards child's education is important in determining the participation of the children in schools. Favourable attitude towards education enhances parental involvement. Unfortunately, Parent's attitude towards their children's education is affected adversely by lack of support and guidance in their children's participation in schools. However, the theory aims to explain that the parents should exhibit a positive and favourable attitude towards their children's education as a result of increasing awareness of values of education through their support and guidance.

Feldman (2000) points out that one of the most widely mentioned theories of motivation is the hierarchy of needs theory put forth by psychologist Abraham Maslow. Maslow saw human needs in the form of a hierarchy, ascending from the lowest to the highest, and he concluded that when one set of needs is satisfied, this kind of need ceases to be a motivator. As for his theory these needs are: **Physiological needs, Security or Safety needs, Social needs, Esteem needs and Need for self-actualization.**

According to humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow, our actions are motivated in order to achieve certain needs. Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" and his subsequent book *Motivation and Personality*. This hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other more advanced needs (Maslow, 1987). While some of the existing schools of thought at the time (such as psychoanalysis and behaviorism) tended to focus on problematic behaviors, Maslow was much more interested in learning more about what makes people happy and the things that they do to achieve that aim. As a humanist, Maslow believed that people have an inborn desire to be self-actualized, to be all they can be. In order to achieve this ultimate goal, however, a number of more basic needs must be met first such as the need for food, safety, love, and self-esteem.

This hierarchy is most often displayed as a pyramid. The lowest levels of the pyramid are made up of the most basic needs, while the more complex needs are located at the top of the pyramid. Needs at the bottom of the pyramid are basic physical requirements including the need for food, water, sleep, and warmth. Once these lower-level needs have been met, people can move on to the next level of needs, which are for safety and security.

Maslow believed that these needs are similar to instincts and play a major role in motivating behaviour. Physiological, security, social, and esteem needs are **deficiency needs** (also known as *D-needs*), meaning that these needs arise due to deprivation. Satisfying these lower-level needs is important in order to avoid unpleasant feelings or consequences. Maslow termed the highest-level of the pyramid as **growth needs** (also known as *being needs* or *B-needs*). Growth needs do not stem from a lack of something, but rather from a desire to grow as a person.

Maslow's theory is therefore relevant in this study because its emphasis and considerations are on the provisions of the basic needs for one to achieve the higher needs. The theory is concerned with

achievement of self –actualization at the top of the pyramid which can only be attained through education.

Unfortunately, the girl-child is not always motivated at home and at school. They are often deprived of these basic needs by the society. The schools and the entire environment settings should endeavour to provide all the learners with these physiological needs or else the individual may end up in disillusionment.

In school setting, teachers should be careful to guide girls to divert their sexual libido at adolescence to some vigorous school activities and games like soccer, handball or basketball rather than the in-door games and stereotype daily routines that the girl child is permanently engaged in at home; such vigorous activities should be extended also at home. This could be reducing the problem of early pregnancy which happens to be one of the causes of school dropout for girls.

When girls feel that they are not secure at school, home proper learning may not take place. The buildings, toilets and other physical structures and even the distance to school should be secure and adequate. According to Maslow safety needs come, after hunger has been satisfied and clothing provided (Feldman, 2000). Another level of needs that the girl-child seems to lack is the love and affiliation need. The girl-child is often given names and made to feel that she is worthless. They are often grouped separately from boys and made to compete with them in activities that are likely to favour boys to win making the girls a laughing stalk. Teachers and parents should therefore facilitate and encourage fair groupings and group activities that favour on the learners and award the good effort made by them towards their education. Such negative comments common at home that sound negative to girls' motivation should be avoided in order to encourage the girls to work hard in academics for attainment of self-actualization. The teachers and parents should show acceptance to the girl child so that she can feel recognized, have a sense of self-worth and belongingness (Jones & Crandall, 1991).

The overall implication of Maslow's Theory is that education may be considered to be the key to self-actualization. If the girls are denied the basic needs and opportunity of participation in secondary education then their self-actualization is consequently hampered. It further advocates that the physiological, security and social needs to be met in the first place in order for the girl-child to transcend self-esteem and self-actualization.

According to Ruth Pearson's Gender relations theory (1992), society views all activities that are carried out to be based on social roles and interactions of men and women. The assumption is that gender roles are dictated by society. The society seems to have the ultimate authority on the precise nature of what women and men actually do, and their real contribution to the production and reproduction which turns out to be biased against women.

The theory asserts that gender roles are dictated by society through its norms and values. Rono (1999) posits that the notion of gender roles and activities have a strong ideological content based on the values and norms persistent in a society which are reflected in the gender division of labour. Based on such ideologies, society seems to have an ultimate authority on the precise nature of what women and men actually do, and their real contribution to production and reproduction which turns out to be biased against women (Pearson, 1992:12). Existential social structures with regard to division of labour determine the duty spheres of women and men in the society. Because of such bias, the performance of men and women in nearly all spheres of life such as education, business, environmental conservation, development projects and the like are bound to vary.

This theory is relevant for this study because it captures the variables. In the traditional set up the family is headed by a house head, a position held by the male parent. The patriarchal ideology is thus dominant. The roles assigned to women are narrowly defined. They are expected to be good wives and mothers, girls and women are seen as subordinates and education for them is less important. Studies on the situation of girl's education shows that, disadvantage and discrimination starts even before birth with parental and societal negative attitudes which stress the value of sons against daughters (Wamahu, 1995; Heneveld, 1995). The benefits of education for girls can be explained by the effect that education has on girls' achievement. Educated girls acquire and use new personal, social and economic behaviours that in turn affect societal change (Moulton, 1997).

As such gender becomes a crucial factor in deciding who goes to school and for how long (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1985) before parents make the decision, considerations are taken concerning family priorities. In most cases, girls are more disadvantaged by cultural factors operating within the home and school than boys. They also include socio-cultural and economic considerations for example, parental level of education, occupation, family size, traditional division of labour, early

marriages and negative perception by parents regarding girls' education, and hence this hampers Girl Students' academic achievement. From the studies and the literature, various factors either independently or dependently influence pupils learning.

Girls and women are seen as subordinates hence education to them is not important. Since the distribution of resources is done by a man as dictated by patriarchy, the woman has always been in a disadvantaged position as compared to men. The situation of girls' education shows that the disadvantage and discrimination of girls start before birth with parental and societal negative attitudes.

This ideology is the root cause of gender discrimination in education. Since education is an investment which are profitable, parents choose to educate boys over girls. Before parents make decisions on who is to go to school and for how long, gender becomes an important factor.

Research Methodology

The survey design was adopted to this study. The researcher selected this design because it allows the drawing of inferences (Hart, 1969). Survey research design was adopted in order to determine girls' opinions about attitudes of their parents towards girl-child education and to inquire if it has an impact on girls' attendance in school. In this procedure, a survey was conducted to gather information from a sample of secondary school girls by means of structured questionnaires. This design was appropriate for the study because it captured students' opinions, beliefs and attitudes about the parents related factors affecting the girl child participation in secondary education.

Population of the study

In this study, the target population for the study was girls and parents of the selected secondary schools: The selected schools were GBHS Fundong, CCHS Fundong, GSS Muloin, and Saint Maria Goretti Vocational College (SMAC) Njinikom, in Boyo division, Northwest Region of Cameroon. Therefore, the target population of this study was consisted of 2800 girls. Out of four sub divisions in the Boyo division, only two sub divisions were selected. The two sub divisions involved in this study were Fundong and Njinikom sub divisions. This category was selected because they comprise of the major composition of parental indicators in girls' attendance and the school as a community its operations were affected by the attendance of girls.

The accessible population is the one from which the researcher draws the sample of his study. In the case of this study, the accessible population was comprised the following schools: GBHS Fundong, CCHS Fundong, GSS Muloin, and SMAC Njinikom. The four schools were randomly selected from each of the public and private secondary schools' categories for equal representation of girl students in the sample frame of girls of this study. The population was selected keeping in view the specific nature of the study in the sense, that the researcher wanted such a population where the students might have some orientations to be able to understand the questions asked by the researcher and relatively wider understanding about the parental factors that impact the attendance of the girl-child in secondary education

Table 3.1: Distribution of accessible population

Schools	Number of girl-students	Number of parents	Total
Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Fundong	118	18	136
Government Secondary School (GSS) Muloin	76	12	88
Christ the King Comprehensive High School (CCHS) Fundong	76	12	88
Saint Maria Goretti Vocational College (SMAC)	68	08	76
TOTAL	338	50	388

Source: Primary data

The researcher used the purposive sampling technique to choose the area to work with, i.e., Boyo division. This researcher found this technique appropriate because it is an area, he grew up in. Furthermore, since there are both private and public schools in Boyo division, the researcher through the purposive technique, selected one lay private school, one mission school and two public schools. The researcher selected the above-mentioned schools because they were found to be experiencing some parental factors problems on girls' attendance in post-primary education. Thus, the researcher selected the above-mentioned schools because they were representative of the number of secondary schools in Boyo division.

Amongst the government and lay private schools in Boyo division, the sample population was drawn from the following schools;

- Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Fundong
- Government Secondary School (GSS) Muloin
- Christ the King Comprehensive High School (CCHS) Fundong
- Saint Maria Goretti Vocational College (SMAC) Njinikom

The sample was made up of forms three, four and five, lower sixth and upper sixth girl- students and parents of the same classes. A total of three hundred and eighty eight (388) girl-students and fifty (50) parents were randomly selected from the above mentioned schools and a total number of 319 girls and 33 parents were sampled.

Table 3.2: Summary of the sampled population

N/S	School	Population of girls	Girls sampled	Population of parents	Parents sampled
1	GBHS Fundong	118	110	18	14
2	GSS Muloin	76	74	12	09
3	CCHS Fundong	76	72	12	10
4	SMAC Njinikom	68	63	08	06
5	Total	338	319	50	33

Table 3.3: Justification of reliability: To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, we used the Cronbach's coefficient alpha based on all the indicators

Hypotheses	Cronbach's coefficient alpha	Decision
Parents' attitudes	0.715	Acceptable
Parents socio-cultural beliefs	0.877	Acceptable
Attendance of girls	0.781	Acceptable

From the above table it showed from the values of Cronbach's coefficient alpha that the questionnaire was reliable and ready for administration.

Table 3.4: the administration and return of questionnaire

Schools	No of questionnaires given out for students	No of questionnaires received from students
GBHS Fundong	118	110
GSS Muloin	76	74
CCHS Fundong	76	72
SMAC Njinikom	68	63
Total	338	319
Percentage	100%	94.37%

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it showed that the researcher gave a total of 338 questionnaires to students which gave a percentage of 100% and received 319 with a percentage of 94.37%.

Table 3.5: the administration and return of interview guide

Schools	No of interview programmed for parents	No of parents interviewed
GBHS Fundong	18	14
GSS Muloin	12	09
CCHS Fundong	12	10
SMAC Njinikom	08	06
Total	50	33
Percentage	100%	78, 7%

From the above table, it showed that the researcher programmed a total of 50 interviews to parents which gave a percentage of 100% and 33 parents were interviewed with a percentage of 78,7%.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the responses and verify the hypotheses. For qualitative data, responses were coded, summarized and reported in relation to the specific research questions as provided by the different groups of respondents. Tables, percentages, charts, mean, standard deviations were used to analyze the data. Also, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used for data analysis. In this particular study, data analysis consisted of a combined statistical tool to analyze the data

obtained from the experiment and the survey. To organise and give meaning to our data, we used various statistical tools: descriptive statistics, mean, standard deviation, the univariate analysis of variances (ANOVA), the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the Stepwise multiple regression analysis. To describe our data analysis techniques, we followed the steps by explaining what we did and the statistical tools involved. Quantitative data analysis of this study involved two major steps:

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of verification of hypotheses, each of the hypotheses of the study was restated and the variables were identified. The statistic needed to test each hypothesis was stated and the results of the data analysis were presented and interpreted. The hypothesis was verified through cross tabulation of the independent variable and dependent variable. Each of the indicators for the independent variable were matched with the dependent variable to find out the extent to which teachers' evaluation procedure influences the students' learning outcomes. Each hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance with the use of Pearson correlation coefficient.

Parents' attitudes towards the girl child education and girls' attendance in post-primary education (RH1)

Parental attitude is a measure or an index of parental involvement. A child, brought up with affection and care in the least restrictive environment would be able to cope up better with the sighted world. That is why the first research hypothesis (RH1) claims that the parents' attitudes towards girls' education influence their participation in secondary education. The shape of scatter plot in figure 4.11 displays the direction of the relationship showing the relationship between parents' attitudes towards girls' education and the girls' attendance in post-primary education.

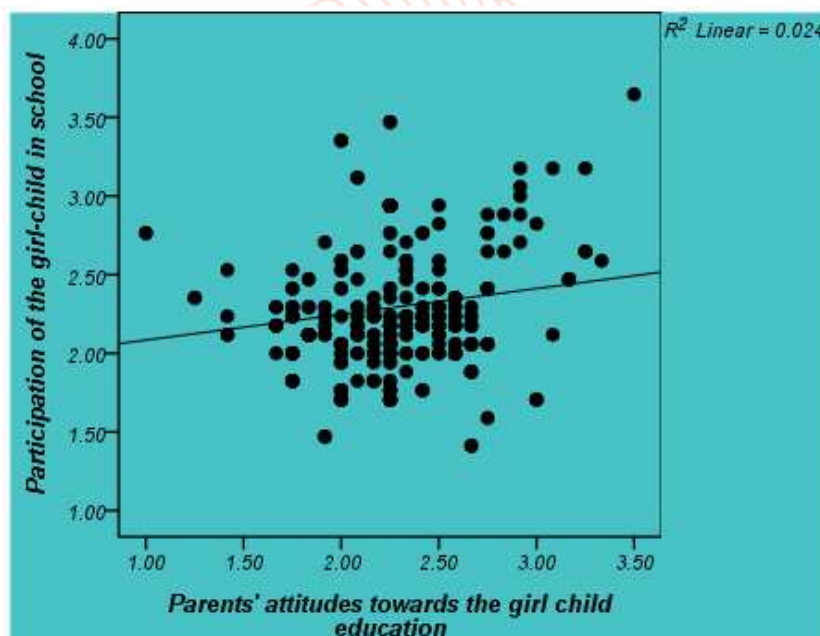


Figure 4.11: Scatter plot showing the correlation between parents' attitudes towards the girl child education and girls' attendance in post-primary education

The results have shown that there was a significant positive correlation between parents' attitudes towards girls' education and the girls' attendance in post-primary education, $r(336) = .154$, ($p < .01$). From this result we can conclude that parents' attitudes towards girls' education significantly influences the girls' attendance in post-primary education. This test-value gives a coefficient of determination of 0.024, meaning that 2.4% of the variability of the girls' attendance in post-primary education is explained by parents' attitudes towards girls' education.

Parents' socio-cultural beliefs and girls' attendance in post-primary education (RH2)

Socio-cultural factors are things that affect lifestyle, such as religion, family or wealth. These can change over time. These are the factors that affect our thoughts and behaviour in social situations. Social factors affect how we behave in social situations. That is why the third research hypothesis (RH2) claims that the parents' socio-cultural beliefs influence their participation in secondary education. The shape of scatter plot in figure 4.13 displays the direction of the relationship showing the relationship between parents' socio-cultural beliefs and the girls' attendance in post-primary education.

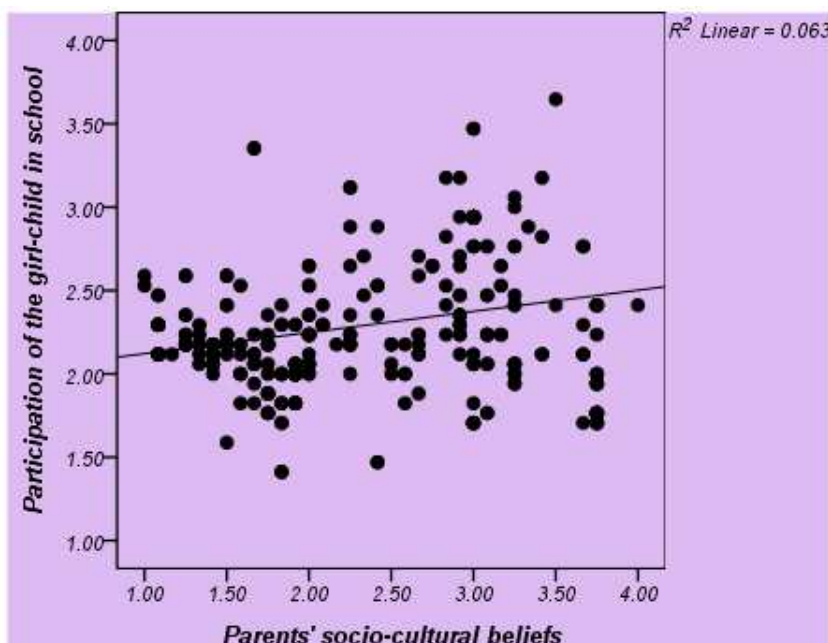


Figure 4.13: Scatter plot showing the correlation between parents' socio-cultural beliefs and girls' attendance in post-primary education

The results have shown that there was a significant positive correlation between parents' socio-cultural beliefs and the girls' attendance in post-primary education, $r(336) = .252, (p < .001)$. From this result we can conclude that parents' socio-cultural beliefs significantly influence the girls' attendance in post-primary education. This test-value gives a coefficient of determination of 0.063, meaning that 6.30% of the variability of the girls' attendance in post-primary education is explained by parents' socio-cultural beliefs.

Prediction of girls' attendance in post-primary education

Several authors have emphasized the importance of the participation of the girl-child in school and have provided prescriptions for improving their participation. In that line, much research has been carried out to predict the girls' attendance in post-primary education. After a multiple hierarchical regression analysis, we consider now the parameters of the model for the girls' attendance in post-primary education.

In the first model, $R^2 = .125$. This implies that the predictor variable (parents' educational level) accounts for 12.50% of the variability of the girls' attendance in post-primary education. But the second model is a better one, because $\Delta R^2 = .228$. This implies that the predictor variable (parents' educational level and parents' socio-cultural beliefs) account for 22.80% of the variability of the girls' attendance in post-primary education. Thus, the second model is a better predictor of the girls' attendance in post-primary education.

Table 4.20: Coefficients of the regression model for girls' attendance in post-primary education

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	R ²	ΔR ²
1	(Constant)	1.749	.082		21.418***	.125	.228
	Parents' attitudes	.219	.032	.350***	6.853***		
2	(Constant)	1.263	.105		12.015***	.228	.105
	Parents' socio-cultural beliefs	.167	.025	.331***	6.765***		

Note : N = 338, *** = $p < .001$

a. Dependent Variable: Girls' attendance in post-primary education

The table 4.20 below presents b-value estimates. These values indicate the individual contribution of each predictor to the model. Parents' educational level significantly predicts the girls' attendance in post-primary education, $\beta = .413, t(336) = 8.455, p < .001$, and parents' socio-cultural beliefs significantly predict the participation of the girl-child in school, $\beta = .331, t(336) = 6.765, p < .001$. Parents' educational level and parents' socio-cultural beliefs emerge as the best predictors of the girls' attendance in post-primary education. It means that to improve the girls' attendance in post-primary education in this area, intervention should be on parents' educational level and parents' socio-cultural beliefs.

Table 4.21: Summary table of the verification of research hypotheses of our study

Null Hypotheses	r_{cal}	df	α	r_{crit}	$(r_{cal})^2$	Decisions	Observations
H ₀₁	0,154	336	0,05	0,113	0,024	$r_{XYcal} > r_{XYcrit}$ H ₀ is rejected and H _a is confirmed. There was a significant positive correlation between parents' attitudes towards girls' education and the girls' attendance in post-primary education	$r^2 = 0,1436 < 0,3$ There is a weak correlation between parents' attitudes towards girls' education and the girls' attendance in post-primary education
H ₀₂	0,252	336	0,05	0,113	0,063	$r_{XYcal} > r_{XYcrit}$ H ₀ is rejected and H _a is confirmed. There was a significant positive correlation between parents' socio-cultural beliefs and the girls' attendance in post-primary education	$r^2 = 0,063 < 0,3$ There is a weak between parents' socio-cultural beliefs and the girls' attendance in post-primary education

A survey was conducted through the use of questionnaires and interview. The data collected were analysed, and the following findings of the results were obtained:

The parents' attitudes towards girls' education influences their participation in secondary education, $r(336) = .154, (p < .001)$.

The parents' socio-cultural beliefs influence the participation of the girl child in secondary education, $r(336) = .252, (p < .001)$.

Generally, from the result gotten and after the verification of the four hypotheses, one can summarily say that there is a significant correlation between parents' related factors and the attendance of the girl-child in school in the Boyo division. The discussion was arranged according to the four objectives of the study. Therefore, the section was subdivided into the following subsections: parents' attitudes towards girls' education parents' educational background, parents' socio-cultural beliefs and parents' socio-economic practices influence the participation of the girl child in secondary education. In the first place we could deal with the discussions of findings based on results got from questionnaire administered to the female students and secondly the findings of results got from the parents' interviews.

Hypothesis One

There is a significant relationship between parents' attitudes towards girls' education and girls' attendance in post-primary education

The study was to establish the extent to which parents' attitudes towards girls' education influence their participation in secondary education. Majority of respondents accepted that parents' involvement has an impact on girls' participation in secondary education. From the overall finding, the attitude of the respondents was found to be extremely favorable on parents' attitudes towards the education of their children. The finding of results on the attitude of parents refutes the earlier findings that parental attitude and involvement is generally negative.

The study throws light on the fact that parents' involvement is the strongest predictor of girls' educational outcomes. This dimension associated

significantly with girls' motivation to learn. Parents' involvement in education has been identified as a beneficial factor in learning. Many of the research studies on parent involvement, as it relates to girls' outcomes in education, has emphasized the relationship between specific parent involvement behaviors and children's achievement. Parental involvement at school (e.g., with school activities, direct communication with teachers and administrators) is associated with greater achievement. Higher levels of parent involvement in their daughters' educational experiences at home (e.g., supervision and monitoring, daily conversations about school) have been associated with children's higher achievement.

In the meantime, parents' positive attitude towards girls' education is important in determining school attendance and academic achievement of the girl-

child. Favorable attitude towards education enhances parental involvement in girl-child's present and future studies. Parents' attitude towards their girls' education is affected adversely by low socio-economic status and since the girls constitute the disadvantaged population, it is expected that the attitude of parents of girls will be unfavorable towards education. However, the present finding aims to examine whether the parents, today, exhibit a positive and favorable attitude towards their girl-child education as a result of increasing awareness of values of education through Government Endeavour's and initiatives.

From the results, there a relative negative attitude of the parents towards girls' education signifies the supporting nature of parents in their children's education. The negative attitude of the parents regarding education can prevent their girl-child from getting education. With less parental support in school work, low level of motivation and poor self-esteem of a girl-child can result Positive attitude of the parents can be beneficial to their girl-children in many cases and can be reflected in improvement in class performance, creating interest among children to learn, and higher achievement.

The growing awareness regarding girl-child education makes many parents value their girl-children's education and act favorably towards education of their girl- children. They become a part of the decision-making process of school, and decide their girl- children's future regarding higher education. Therefore, it is imperative to assess the degree of favorableness of parents' attitude in girls, so as to estimate the success of awareness programs and endeavors with regard to universal elementary education.

Hypothesis Two

There is a significant relationship between parents' stereotype socio-cultural beliefs and girls' attendance in post-primary education

The study was to establish the level to which parents' socio-cultural beliefs affect the participation of girls in secondary education. The study revealed that religious and cultural beliefs, early marriages, bride price and initiation to womanhood are the dominant factors that have an adverse impact on girls' participation in secondary education. The deep-rooted socio-cultural and traditional practices of parents have contributed in perpetuating of gender bias, which adversely impact on girls' education. At home parents' negative attitude towards education prevents them from going to school. But those who reach school are likely to face a non-supportive environment in the classroom and in school.

The findings of this study have revealed a very slow progress in girl-child participation in secondary education over the years due to socio-cultural and tradition practices of parents. The enrolment has been in favour of boys, which is a clear expression of male dominance in academic activities and a rift in gender issue. Moreover, findings have indicated that cultural practices serve as hindrance to girl-child education and that inaccessibility of the girl-child to education makes her vulnerable to early marriage, denial of rights and child-labour.

The finding of this study on the parents' socio-cultural beliefs affecting the girl-child participation in secondary education showed that participants rated all the socio-cultural items high. Hence, fear of public criticism of sending girls to school, cultural condemnation, females being culturally meant for domestic works, lack of girls' rights were considered as the socio-cultural factors influencing the girl-child education in the division. However, among these factors, females being culturally meant for domestic works and positive attitude towards boys' education were rated higher than the others. The above findings support the conclusion, UNESCO (2001) that there is a lot of disinterest and ignorance concerning the education of girls. They observed that many girls suffer the society's neglect of their education; such children have become vulnerable to various ills in the society.

Also, the study found out that some religious factors like lack of religious obligation to western education, parental commitment to the girl-child marital life, moral condemnation of girl-child education, lack of religious legal action for girl-child education, fear of early pregnancy on-recognition of western education, fear of conversion to other religion, and undue exposure of girls to western education were rated high by participants. These were the religious factors revealed by the participants. These findings support the earlier conclusions of literature reviews that many parents do fear that the involvement of girls in education might bring moral decadence. Such may include female promiscuity, exposure of female bodies, inducement by opposite sex, pre-marital pregnancy, and abortion or illegitimate children. They also observed that girl-child education will threaten girl-child chances of legitimate, cultural and religious marriage which the parents believe would deprive girls' moral training and orientation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it is evident that the girl child suffers discrimination from parents in their participation in secondary education. It is therefore recommended that:

Parents' attitudes towards girls' education should be positive for the fact that education enables girls to participate in development of the community and household because educated girls exercise their personal rights. Therefore, parents need not only to send the girl children to school but they must also provide them with basic school facilities in order to promote their effective stay in school

Irrespective of the influence of parents' low educational levels and occupations, parents should fully demonstrate positive attitudes towards the education of their daughters. Parents on their part have to care and follow up girls' education and this will help to equally reduce the low attendance of girls in post-primary education.

Parents' permanent efforts should be able to improve socio-cultural and traditional beliefs that affect girls' education. This will help to eliminate harmful socio-cultural practices which affect girls and finally the elimination could play an influential role to the parents to send their daughters to school

Parents' socio-economic background should not be considered as a yard stick to measure the income level of the parents but they should adopt a poverty alleviation strategy to provide basic schools to both boys and girls. In short, it is required that providing girls with the basic financial support to buy their school needs will help to solve some of the barriers to stay in schools

Parents should be educated on the values of modern education to the girl-child, so that they should take advantage of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes and educate their girl-children. Furthermore, efforts should be made to sensitize the parents on the importance of education to all their children without discrimination.

Government and other stakeholders in women affairs should strive to create conducive enabling socio-political and economic conditions which will discourage societal preference for male children and the traditional belief that the position of a woman is in the kitchen.

All the stakeholders in women affairs and development should focus on the provision of formal education to women as well as improving their working conditions while at the same time facilitate their access to resources like land, credit and technology as a way of enhancing their relevance in the society.

The government should establish policies to enhance girl child education in secondary education and to

enforce parents to take all children to school without discrimination.

The government at all levels should legislate the rights of the girl-child education. The government should make sure that all laws prohibiting malpractices against the girl-child and women are rigorously implemented and anybody who goes against such laws be sanctioned irrespective of their positions and society.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the presentation and discussion of research findings. Our four (4) specific research hypotheses were all confirmed based on the results of our statistical analysis, where the calculated value of the Pearson correlation coefficient in all cases were more than the critical value of the Pearson correlation coefficient. It was therefore confirmed that a significant association really exist between parental related factors and girls' attendance in post-primary education. This means that if education stake holders in the domains of education want to promote girls' education the need to sensitize parents on the values of modern education to the girl-child, so that they should take advantage of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes and educate their girl-children. Finally, recommendations were made to the government, the parents and other educational partners.

The main objective was to assess the extent to which parental factors impact girls' attendance in post-primary education. The use of questionnaire and the interview guide helped us to triangulate the information methodologically wise. Data analysis proved that there is a significant relationship existing between parental factors and girls' attendance in post-primary education. Therefore, from the findings it was noted that the girl child loves education and would wish to pursue it to secondary level and beyond for purposes of self-development. The study however concludes that parental related factors negatively influence girl-child participation in secondary education. Several factors such as parents' attitudes, educational background, socio-economic and cultural factors have led to the girl child not to participate in secondary school education.

Culturally, girls are discriminated against by the parents who prefer to educate boys denying the girl child that family support she really needs. Faced with all these problems and predicament, they cannot do so much as far as development of their communities and the nation is concerned. This situation therefore calls for a decision by the society to take adequate steps to eliminate these practices which affect girl-child participation in secondary education in order to

achieve a gender fair and gender friendly society which will make it possible for girls to be integrated in to the development process through their participation in education. To improve girl child participation in secondary education, it is important that she gets support and encouragement from both the family and the school. This is very necessary because an educated girl is not only an asset to herself but also to the society and nation at large.

Conclusively, Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both boys and girls and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationship between men and women, and promoting gender equity in education systems creates a healthy, educated and productive human resource base. It is time therefore to begin to do the right thing to train and educate our girls. It is time to stop the insult of poverty and dependence and minimize the culture of begging by maximizing the great resource God gave us in women. It is time to train and re-train the girl child. If something is not done urgently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will suffer a major setback.

In the words of Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General, "No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health and savings and reinvestments at the family, community and ultimately, country level. Educating the girl child is a social development policy that works and a long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return". Although the Cameroon Government has promulgated a number of edits and legislations on Universal Basic Education, it is time to make these legislations effective by making our primary and secondary schools centres of learning, equipped with the right kind of resources and manpower for effective learning. All barriers must be eliminated to enable all girls to develop their full potential through equal access to education. The Fourth World Conference on Women pointed out that, government should promote a policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policy programmes in order to generate awareness of the disadvantaged situation of girl children.

Also, parents must be made to understand the benefits of education through community-based information dissemination techniques. The use of mass media like televisions and radios which most people do not have access to, should be reduced and town criers, village-based crusades and enlightenment programmes, use

of religious centres and market awareness activities carried out and on regular basis.

If education must serve the society, it must produce people who carry much more than certificates. It must produce people, both normal and exceptional ones, with the right types of knowledge, ability and attitude to put them to work for the good of the society. It is therefore imperative that in order to improve the educational base of the typical Cameroonian woman and by extending her socio-political and economic status, government, community leaders, parents, professional guidance counsellors and other stakeholders should take cognizance of the importance of girls' education.

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