

Social-Cultural Impact on Women Education and Employment in Emouha Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of socio cultural factors on women education and employment. It was a descriptive research that made use of 900 respondents as sample. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The statistical tools used for data analysis was simple percentages mean x for research questions and standard deviation and ANOVA for the hypothesis. Findings identified family background pregnancy and family responsibilities as factors influencing education and employment of women in Emouha local Government Area. To address these problems, it is suggested that government should improve on the already existing free education by helping parents to pay some of the fees they are still made to pay and employers of labor are encouraged to respect and allow nursing and expectant mothers.

Keywords: social-cultural impact, women education, employment, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Development is said to be the improvement in the lives of a people, place or thing. It is a phenomenon that people all over the world desire. Oyenoye Igwesi and Benwari (2011:13) defined development as growth and improvement in the standard of living economy and other institutions in the society. More than one variable come to play for development to take place. One of such variable is the population of the place. If the area in question is blessed with an active population, then the people will experience rapid development. A population is active when it has a small or manageable percentage of dependent people, such as aged and the children and a good percentage of active youth that can boast of a good education and skills. When we talk about active population we are referring to both able young men and women. Unfortunately, the later group in this category are being marginalized which has made it almost impossible for them to contribute their quota to the development of their society this marginalization is a result of the women being hindered from getting a good education.

Wehmier (2000) defined education as a process of teaching, training and learning to improve knowledge and develop skills. Ijah (2008: 8) sees education as the key to unlocking the potentials of all individuals, communities and societies. This reveals that education enable people to take care of themselves, their families and control their future. Most importantly, it helps people to lift themselves from the shackles of poverty illiteracy, ignorance and diseases The benefits of education as posited by Oyinloye (2001) cited in Igwesi and Benwerrin (200:113) as:

A weapon for bridge, ignorance, poverty and disease, a bridge, between confusion and comprehensive, a dam for conserving man's store of civilization and for generating the power to move to greater civilization a rocket for transporting man from a state of intellectual subservience to a state of intellectual sovereignty.

At this point let us ask who is a woman?

Definitions coming from internet (<http://www.definition.net>) state the following: an adult female person; a grown up female person, as distinguished from a man or a child, sometimes any female. The female part of the human race woman kind. Ikwuazo (1996) described the girl child as a member of the family and larger societies. She has equal number of bones and other organs, systems, tissues etc, as the boy; the only difference is the sex organ. It is the girl child that grows up to become a woman, a wife and a mother.

The woman chances of contributing her own knowledge to the development of her father's land is affected by her lack of formal education compared to that of the man. In the past the chances of a girl child gaining a formal education was near zero. Although the trend is changing, a lot still has to be done. Education for all (E.F.A) report (2003/2004) revealed education in Sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia was initially available only for males. The report remarked that it entails that women from the onset were disadvantaged in the formal employment sector since jobs in this sectors were mainly negotiable through acquisition of education and skills. The woman's late entrance into education and the tailoring women education to meet domestic needs is

not peculiar to Nigeria. The report went further to buttress this point by citing Avabs (2003) which says that even in Latin America where the expansion of educational system started earlier, women were denied formal education during colonialism but often received instructions to enable them perform domestic tasks and raise their children.

The education of girls is a vital core message of family life/population education program in Nigeria (a programme that emphasizes equal opportunities in education). This concept emphasizes the importance of both genders in all aspects of societal development. Bellany (2003) asserts that there can be no significant or sustainable transformation of societies and no significant reduction in poverty until girls receive equal access to quality basic education. After all, societal development does not start with goods and things. It starts with people; their orientation, organization and self discipline. Researches (Bellany, 2003 UNICEF, 2000, Obanya, 2003) have shown that educating girls offers benefits for the girls themselves, the current and future families, and their communities. Education for girls means that as women they will be capable of exercising their rights to participate in political, economic and development efforts. Moreover, researches such as stated above have demonstrated that educated girls are more effective mothers. In other words, girl's education has a strong impact on health, family, welfare and fertility rate. It is a potent population intervention strategy.

World Bank (1993) showed that one additional year of female education reduces fertility by 5-10 percent. Educated women have also recorded a higher survival rate among their children, because they nourish their children better, observe health practices and thus have healthier children. Ultimately, child mortality is reduced. A woman needs a good education to equip her skills to function effectively and contribute her quota in the society, if she has no good education she ends up as a baby making factory at home or as a cleaner

In the area of employment women are not carried along as compared to men. Collen (2010) reveals that veteran (knowledgeable) women experience higher unemployment rate than veteran men. In January 2010 the unemployment rate for veteran women was 11.2% compared to 9.4% for veteran men. Employers prefer employing a man to a woman in most cases the man is more equipped for the job because he has a formal education while the woman does not. That is due to deprivation she suffered as she was not sent to school. Sadly, in most cases where the woman and the man have the same qualification and both are qualified for the job in question, the man is still preferred. Women have been hindered from securing gainful employment. Omokhua (2006) identified

some of the factors that hinder women education and unemployment as traditional beliefs, family background, early marriages, physical environment and pregnancy.

In this work researchers carried out a purposive research on the impact of socio-cultural factors on women education and employment to see if there are other causes of women unemployment and education.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Over the year women have been devalued in our society. In every facets of our society you find that there is gender inequity. This negative trend is very pronounced in the areas of education and employment. Researches (UNESCO 2002, UNICEF 2000) have indicated that issues of cost, culture, school environment and policy are variables leading to the exclusion of girls from benefiting education.

Gender disparity remains a problem. Male and female children not have given equal education opportunities. Similarly, there is inequality in the participation of women in the labor force and employment prospects compared to their male counterparts. Despite the various national and international declaration on women education and employment, some socio-cultural factors still hinder the furtherance of women education and their right to gainful employment in Nigeria generally and Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State in particular. The problem of this study therefore is to find out those variables that affect the education and employment of women in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify socio-cultural impact on female education and employment, specifically, to examine how family background, marriage institutions and cultural beliefs influence education and employment of women.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent does family background of the girl child influence her education?
- How does marriage institution influence the education of the girl child in Emohua Local Government Area?
- To what extent do cultural beliefs influence the education of the girl-child?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- H₀₁**, There is no significant influence of pregnancy on women employment.
- H₀₂**, There is no significant influence of husband's ego on women employment in Emohua Local Government Area.

H₀₃, There is no significant influence of family responsibility on women employment in Emohua Local Government Area.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises of one hundred and forty parents, sixty elders and two hundred teachers, two hundred workers, one hundred human resources managers, one hundred unemployed wives and one hundred husbands. A purposive sampling method was adopted which consists of nine hundred (900) sampled size. Four hundred cut across parents, elders and teachers plus five hundred respondents interviewed in the area of employment. This cut across human resource managers and their associates, selected workers, unemployed wives and husbands (both literate and illiterate)

INSTRUMENT

The instruments used were:

1. Oral interview
2. Questionnaire
3. Analysis of data carried out using ANOVA, Mean and Standard Deviation

PROCEDURE

Information collected orally and through the questionnaires was based on six variables as the following: variables for marriage institution, family background and cultural beliefs with regards to education. Pregnancy, family responsibility and husband’s ego are variable for employment,

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Question I

To what extent does family background of the girl child influence her education?

Table 1: Student’s response to family background of the girl-child education (FBGCE)

S/N	Item Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD
1.	Parents give out their girl-child in exchange for money, which prevents them from acquiring good education	400	3.51	0.83
2.	The girl-child is given out in marriage to reduce family burden	400	3.40	0.77
3.	Poverty is the major factor hindering girl-child from acquiring formal education	400	3.25	1.01
	Average education	400	3.39	0.89

Table I: Revealed that the mean scores of the items range from 3.25 to 3.51 items 3 and 1 respectively. This means that all the items had a mean score greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. The table also show the overall mean score for the influence of family background of the girl-child on her education

is 3.39. This indicate that the family background of the girl-child influence her education in Emohua Local Government Area

Research Question 2: How does marriage institution influence Girl-Child Education?

Table 2: Mean of the response on the influence of marriage institution on the education of the girl-child.

S/N	Item Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD
1.	Family marry girl-child to their sons prevents the girl from acquiring good education	400	1.56	0.99
2.	Early marriage prevents the girl from acquiring good education	400	1.79	1.11
3.	Girls are given out as house help to train the boys and solve family problems	400	1.61	1.03
	Overall mean	400	1.65	1.06

The result above shows that the mean score of the items ranged from 1.56-1.79 for item 1 and 2 respectively. The overall mean score for the influence of marriage institution on the education of the girl-child 1.65. This which is less than 2.50 indicates that marriage institution does not influence the education of the girl-child.

Research Question 3:

To what extent do cultural beliefs influence the education of the girl-child?

Table 3: Mean response on the influence of the cultural belief on the education of the girl-child.

S/N	Item Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD
1	Education of the girl-child is believed to be a waste to the girl’s family	400	1.67	1.16
2	The boy child is more important than the girl child hence educating the boy is preferred	400	1.48	0.92
3	There is the fear that a girl send to school may become pregnant and would not be properly married	400	1.56	0.91
4	Educated girls stay tool long before getting married and become barren	400	1.47	0.91
5	Educated women do not respect their husband	400	1.42	0.84
	Overall mean	400	1.52	0.79

The table above revealed that the mean score of items addressing the influence of cultural belief on education of the girl-child indicate that the mean score of 1.52 is less than 2.50 the criterion mean, showing that cultural beliefs do not influence the education of the girl-child

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of pregnancy on women employment.

Table 4: Influence of pregnancy on women employment

Sources Of Variation	Sum Of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	Cal. f	Crit f	Alpha Level
Between Groups	412.500	2	206.25	6.82	3.02	0.05
Within Groups	11998	397	30.22			
TOTAL	12411.00	399				

The result above indicates that obtained calculated f-value 6.82 is greater than the critical f-value of 3.02 at 2 and 397 degree of freedom. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant difference is

rejected. In other words pregnancy affects women employment

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of husband's ego on women employment

Table 5: Husbands ego and women employment

Sources Of Variation	Sum Of Square	DF	Mean Square	Cal f	Crit f	Alpha Level
Between group	8.52	2	4.26	0.223	3.02	0.05
Within groups	7886.42	397	19.11			
Total	7594.94	399				

The table above indicates that the calculated f-value of 0.223 is less than the critical valve of 3.02 at the degrees of freedom 2 and 397 at 0.05 level of significant. This null hypothesis of no significant is accepted.

Indicating that the husband ego both literate and illiterate do not influence women employment

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant influence of family responsibility not women employment

Table 6: Families Responsibility and Women Employment

Sources Of Variation	Sum Of Squares	DF	Mean Square	Cal. f	Crit. f	Alpha Level
Between groups	164.75	2	82.38	3.10	3.02	0.05
Within groups	10565.00	397	26.61			
Total	10729.75	399				

The calculated f- value 3.10 is greater than the critical f-value of 3.02 at degrees of freedom 2 and 397 at 0.05 level of significance Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant mean difference among the mean ratings of workers, human resource management and unemployed wives is rejected. This indicates that family responsibility does not influence women employment.

ego and family responsibility have negligible influence on women employment Coser, (1974) and Moses (2007) has contrary view of the influence of husbands ego and family responsibility, they found that husband feel neglected, humiliated having working class wives, the women's place is in the kitchen and many employers of labor prefer employing male even when a female is more qualified.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the data analyzed showed that family background of the girl-child defers her education. This is in support of Emohua (2006) and Dala (2008) who found that uneven socio-economic status of family is a barrier to female education. The investigation also revealed that marriage institution and cultural beliefs have negligible influence on girl-child education. This is contrary to the findings of Jazairy (1992) cited in Woken (2002) that cultural beliefs is a factor in women determination in education in addition, the findings revealed that pregnancy hinder women employment. This is in line with the finding of Nwankwo (1980) who examined the legal provision for employment as it affects women and found that a woman shall not be permitted to work for six weeks and should be allowed half an hour twice a week if she is nursing a baby. The investigation also revealed that husbands

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government should not only make education free but help parents to pay other related expenses in the school.
2. Affirmative action should be given to girls in the area of school admission.
3. Employers of labor should set up nurseries in the establishment to enable nursing mothers come to work with their babies and breast feed them intermittently.
4. Employers should show some understanding and exhibit some level of tolerance to working mothers.

CONCLUSION

The socio-cultural impact of women education carried out in Emohua Local Government Area revealed the issues of gap between boys and girls in terms enrollment is gradually getting smaller as

parents are now grasping the importance of educating both sex. Marriage and cultural beliefs which in the past influence the education of the girl-child has received the important of education and is no longer an issue in girl-child education. Most parents are willing to send their children (including girls) to school but finance has been their only constraint as the free education program of the Government had not really taken off. In the area of employment pregnancy has been the major factor, though employers of labor also see family responsibility as a factor and most of the time prefers employing male. Women generally are hard working and should be given the right to compete with their male counterpart without attaching any preference.

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