



## International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476  
IJHS 2019; 5(3): 268-273  
© 2019 IJHS  
www.homesciencejournal.com  
Received: 11-07-2019  
Accepted: 13-08-2019

**Wachukwu-Chikodi Happiness I**  
Department of Food Science and  
Technology, Faculty of  
Agriculture, Rivers State  
University, Nkpolu-  
Oroworukwo, P.M.B 5080, Port  
Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria,  
Nigeria

**Salomi Odehwoho Onoriode**  
Department of Home  
Economics, Hospitality and  
Tourism, Faculty of Vocational  
and Technical Education  
Ignatius Ajuru University of  
Education, Rumuolumeni, Port  
Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria,  
Nigeria

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Wachukwu-Chikodi Happiness I**  
Department of Food Science and  
Technology, Faculty of  
Agriculture, Rivers State  
University, Nkpolu-  
Oroworukwo, P.M.B 5080, Port  
Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria,  
Nigeria

### **Girl-child education and its cultural implications in Emohua local government area of rivers state, Nigeria**

**Wachukwu-Chikodi Happiness I and Salomi Odehwoho Onoriode**

#### **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the girl-child education and its cultural implication in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State. The objectives were to investigate cultural beliefs that impede the girl-child education, examine the factors that hinders girl-child education and determine the importance of girl-child education. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was made up of adult male and females from 10 communities in the area. A total of 200 males and 300 females were drawn from the population through multistage sampling technique. A well structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean, and standard deviation. Results reveals that Education violates the culture that celebrates virginity (owa- ochi) which rated highest with a mean of 3.4, the factor that hinders Girl Child Education, as Poverty, had a mean score of 3.8, while, the importance of girl child education, as a way to eradicate poverty had a mean score of 3.5. The study concluded that girl child education is a global necessity for societal growth. Therefore recommended that equal opportunity be given to girls as the boys.

**Keywords:** Girl-child, Education, Cultural Implication

#### **Introduction**

Women all over the world are disadvantaged in educational opportunities. Nigerians views basic education as that which aims at equipping every individual child, youth and adult with such knowledge and skills that enable him to develop to his fullest capacity and get maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from his membership of society and fulfill his civic responsibilities.

Education is inalienable right of all irrespective of the person's circumstance. Obinaju (2014)<sup>[12]</sup> Education in its general sense is a form of learning which the knowledge, skills, values, benefits and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training or research. Education has been described as the most important aspect of human development, a key to a successful living, especially girl-child education (Micheal, 2011)<sup>[10]</sup>.

The term 'girl-child' refers to a female between the ages of 6-18 years. The National Child Welfare Policy (1989) as cited by Ada (2001) defines the girl-child as a female below 14 years of age. Offorma (2009)<sup>[13]</sup> defines it as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages of development. The girl-child is seen as a young female person who would eventually grow into a woman and marry. The gender apartheid places the girl-child in a disadvantaged position, where her potentials are suppressed and self-actualization is not achieved. She therefore, becomes a victim of a pre-existing socio-cultural male chauvinism. Furthermore, on the account of gender, girl-children are subjected to all multiple forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination.

Girl-child education is a catch-all term for a complexity of issues and debates surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and health education for females. Girl-child education also includes areas of gender equality, access to education and it's connection to the alleviation of poverty, good governance, which are major ingredients in averting crime against women. Today's girl-child education is for her tomorrow's living. Afebendeugne in Ugwu (2001) defines women education as the education that would make a

woman become aware of her-self and her capacity to exploit her environment, and involves training in literacy and vocational skills to enable her become functional in the society. When maternal care is adequately provided for the girl-child the aims and objective soft education will be achieved.

It has been observed that sex discrimination in terms of cultural belief imposes unequal freedom of education in the traditional Nigerian society. There exists the degenerated believe that women are second class citizens and considered as a man's property or pleasure object. They are also considered as machine meant for producing children.

The United Nations General Assembly (2001), adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stipulates that everyone has the right to education which shall be free at least in elementary or primary stages.

The girl-child appears to be the most vulnerable and most undervalued members of the world. In the past, women education was a major problem in Nigeria. In spite of the great potentials of women, a lot of factors militates against their effective performance in education and towards national progress generally. Such factors ranges from natural, societal, economical, religious, to cultural factors. A woman was expected to stay at home as a "house wife", look after her husband and the children.

As a girl, she was not expected to go to school, parents would rather have their boys in school than their girls. Even where they permitted them to go to school, they were not given adequate moral and financial support because of belief that girls would eventually end up in managing and settling down to domestic work where-as was claimed, education was not needed. We had women reading courses like nursing, education, home economics etc, because of the traditional and religious belief that they could not cope with courses like engineering, medicine, etc.

The girl-child must be educated in terms of their role in the society, whether as producers or reproducers; they are mainly responsible for the care and wellbeing of their families, they play an important role as educators of future generations. They perform economic and social functions.

As more and more women are educated, the health of the nation improves (Nkechi, 1999) <sup>[11]</sup>. With rising education among the girl-child, there will be also a rise of women in the labour force. Women education aids in the protection of the environment and also improves agricultural practices (Nkechi,P.M, 1999) <sup>[11]</sup>.

### Cultural Influence on Girl-Child Education

In Nigeria, the girl-child is discouraged from the fervent pursuit of formal education because of the belief that education makes women to look down on men and that it discourages many rural men from getting married to educated women. Other beliefs in Emohua in particular, is that Girl-Child education will violate the celebration of virginity (owa-ochi). Uchendu F.N (1996) <sup>[17]</sup>

Similarly, several researchers in Nigeria (Idabawa, 2004; and Ayodele, *et al.*, 2006) <sup>[4]</sup> have also shown that girls are not encouraged to stay longer in education as that may culminate in the person turning into the popular "old. Layer (very old single lady) while still in the parents' home. It is a common belief especially amongst low income families that staying longer in school might cause a girl not to get married as she would graduate out of school as "old layer".

Bunyi's assertion is consistent with Ekwukoma's (2014) opinion that amongst some cultural groups in Nigeria, it is

believed that investing in girl-child education is a deliberate waste of resources as it will only benefit the family, into which she later get married.

In addition some rural-dwellers in Nigeria hold a cultural belief that domestic chores are the basic responsibilities of female children, it is believed that is it what God has created them to do and so they have a special ability to do it. To such parents, domestic activities are the vocations of female children. This impression is premised on the traditional philosophy of girls as prototype mothers whose major responsibilities in life are to take care of their children and husbands. This reactionary philosophy of the responsibilities of the girl-child has heavily impacted negatively on female education.

Onochie (2010) <sup>[15]</sup> stated that to most rural dwelling Nigeria parents, education of female children has no value for education to the extent that it can assist them, to become responsible housekeepers; such responsibilities does not require any form of higher education. Within some households, female children are engulfed in a sort of routine domestic lifestyle that is fed advertently or inadvertently by some sort of patriar dynamics. The female children are consequently pictured as objects of dominance whose education must end in the household domestic affairs. As a result of this belief, a majority of the girl-children are given little or no opportunity for homework and private studies. They are constrained by domestic duties most of which are stereotyped. The female children are hardly given adequate time in homes to engage in serious academic work.

There is yet a belief among some parents, especially poverty — stricken parents, that it is wrong for a girl-child that has attained the age of puberty to be making financial request on the parents. That is, they believe that she should be able to use her "natural gift" to meet her needs. Consequently, girl-children from homes where such a primitive belief subsists do pick up the career of going after men in order to get money to buy cosmetics, jewelry, dresses and meet other financial needs. On most occasions, such female children end up contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or becoming pregnant at a very early age which eventually shatters their educational aspirations.

There is also a belief among some cultural groups in Nigeria that an intimate discussion between parents and their children on human sexuality is a taboo. This belief prevents parents from given their female children thorough sexual education and consequently make the female children ignorant of the possibility of becoming pregnant once menstruation has commenced. This usually results in early pregnancy which inhibits the girl-child's educational aspiration.

### Factors that Hinders Girl-Child Education

The factors responsible for lack of girl-child education in Nigeria as identified by Mohammed in Maduagwu and Mohammed (2006) <sup>[9]</sup> are;

- **Economic Factors:** Nigeria as an independent entity is undoubtedly characterized by very harsh economic conditions. Due to scarce resources, choice has to be made between whom to send to school. Most often, it is the girl-child that remains at home, due to poverty, girls get withdrawn from schools so as to help supplement family income through hawking, trading or even working on farm so as to support the family. In some cases, the girls are given out as house helps or even sent into early marriage because of huge bride price. Thus, poverty

remains one of the largest barriers to accessing education by the girl-child. Paying school fees is impossibility for many families struggling to make ends meet, especially in light of the ongoing food crisis.

- **Sexual violence and abuse:** This also hampers the girls from going to school. Due to this fear of sexual violence, most parents deny their girl-children access to school.
- **Socio-cultural and religious factors:** In most African societies, especially in Nigeria the role of the girl as a wife and mother is conceived as the utmost priority not only by her parents, but also by the girl-child herself. However, in the Nigeria context, gender discrepancy in education is sustained by cultural factors. This wrong notion that her place is in the kitchen, to be seen and not to be heard has had very serious implication on the girl-child's ability at self-actualization. Umar (1997) noted that out of the 130 million children in Nigeria without access to education, 81 million are girls. Also, certain cultural and traditional practices like female circumcision, early marriage, etc are to say the least unprogressive because they lead not only to absenteeism, distraction, but also to eventual dropout of girls. More so, the ethics and values of some religions do not help matters, as they are often perceived with tremendous suspicion.
- **Poverty:** The right to education, which is a fundamental human right is frequently denied to girls in most African countries. The former United Nation Secretary General, Kofi Annan, stated that in Africa, where 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.
- **Self as an impediment:** This focuses on the girl herself as the first major problem. A lot to be done by the girl to free herself to fulfill her aspiration and impact in the society positively. Women who have made it in education are those who believed in themselves, therefore beating the odds to be where they are. Self image is the foundation for the development of the individual woman.
- **Marriage:** Cole (1988) noted that early marriage is a depressing phenomenon for women education in science disciplines. Girls who go into marriage easily deny themselves of the opportunity of education.

### Importance of Girl-Child Education

Girl's education is one of the most effective ways for ending poverty in developing nations. The benefit of the education are seen by individuals, their families and throughout society as follows:

- Reducing the number of babies women have
- Lowering infant and child mortality rates
- Lowering maternal mortality rate
- Protecting against HIV/AIDS infection
- Increased number of women with jobs and higher earnings
- Great role in the socialization of the children.
- They are also backbone in food production. Therefore, educating them will bring the following benefits to the society:

Improve the family care, health and nutrition, be a powerful

factor in achieving significant rates of child survival, growth and development, give mothers higher aspiration for their children which will lead the children to higher careers with higher rewards, increase income earning avenues and opportunities for girls and women, open opportunities that will have been closed to women and it increases their chance of advancement in employment, Lead to increased yield and self-sufficiency in the agricultural sector where women constitute the majority, Lead to higher per-capita income for the country, raise the standard of living generally. Increase wealth meant for the production of further wealth (capital), Provide positive values and skills for personal and national development.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem that gave rise to this study is the age long cultural beliefs in some segments of the Nigerian society which impede the girl-child's access to quality formal education. These beliefs have had very serious implications on how many families especially in rural areas perceive the education of their female children.

Suffice to say that most of these beliefs are grounded on misconceptions and prejudice. It is in that light that this paper hopes to address the problem of girl child Education and its cultural implications in Emohua Local Government area of Rivers State.

### Purpose of the Study: The Study specifically seeks to:

- Investigate some cultural beliefs that impedes girl-child Education
- Examine some factors that hinders the girl-child education
- Determine the importance of Girl – Child Education.

### Research Questions

- What are some cultural belief that impede girl child education
- What are the factors that hinders girl child education
- What are the importance of girl child-education.

### Design

An opinion survey research design was adopted for this study. This design was adopted because data's were collected and analyzed from only ten communities out of eighteen in Emohua Local government Area.

### Study Area

Emohua Local Government Area is one of the twenty-three Local Government Areas in Rivers State. The Local Government Area was created in 1991 and has its headquarters in Emohua; a town which has attained a semi-urban status in recent time. Emohua Local Government Area is one of the four local government areas which makes up the Ikwerre ethnic nationality in the State. The principal clans in the Local Government are Odegu clan; (Eveku, Ovogo, Rumuodogo, Rumuji and Rumuewhor); Ishimbam clan (Elele Alimini, Omudioga, Egbeda, Akpabu, Itu and Ubimini); REO group (Rumuji, Emohua and Ogbakiri), Rishimini clan: Ibaa Uvuawhu and Obele); and Runderle clan. Other Local Government Areas bordering Emohua LGA are Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Degema, Abua and Ahoada East.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises all the parents in Emohua Local Government Area, 300 females 200 males

were randomly selected from the ten communities in Emouhia Local Government Area.

**Sampling Techniques**

A sample of Five hundred parents were randomly selected from ten villages each, from the eighteen communities in Emohua Local Government Area: Egbeda, Ibaa, Ogbakiri, Odegu, Omudioga, Rumuekpe. Fifty parents were drawn from each of the ten communities stratified random sampling techniques.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire entitled “Girl Child Education Assessment Questionnaire (GCEAQ). The questionnaire was designed along likert’s 4-

point scale rating. The respondents were requested to rate each item on a four- point scale of strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and strongly disagreed.

**Data Collection/Analysis**

Five hundred (500) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents by the researcher and the research assistant and retrieval were done immediately to ensure hundred percent return rate.

The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation results where presented in tables.

**Results**

The result of the study shows the following Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

**Table:** Socio-economic Characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	21	21.0
Female	79	79.0
Total	100	100
Age	18	18
25 or less	18	18
26 – 40	64	64.0
41 – 50	18	18.0
Total	100	100
<b>Level of Education</b>		
ND		
HND		
B.Sc		
M.Sc		
Others		
Total	100	100.0
Martial Status		
Married		
Single		
Divorced		
Total	100	100.0

The result above shows that 21.0% are males, while 79.0% are female, data on the age showed that range between 26 – 40 had the highest percentage of 64.0%. Furthermore

respondent with M.Sc has the highest percentage of 42.0% while the other (Cohabited) had 58%.

**Table 1:** Mean Response of some cultural belief that impede Girl-Child Education

Item Some Cultural Beliefs	Mean	Remarks
Believe that the girl will be marry to another family	2.6	Agreed
Believe education is a means of corruption to a girl child.	2.7	Agreed
Girls are second class citizens	2.6	Agreed
They believe that girls are not always brilliant	2.4	Disagreed
The girl child core responsibility is the house chores.	2.83	Agreed
Education violates the culture that celebrates virginity (Owaochi)	3.4	Agreed
Womenhas unequal freedom of education like men, in the traditional Nigerian society.	2.7	Agreed
Culture accept girl-child as a good resources in the farm	3.0	Agreed
Culture belief that the girl-child will be married out and the family will not benefit from her.	2.8	Agreed
Girl-child education is an unwise financial investments.	1.7	Disagreed

Table 1 reveals that out of ten items, the only one item was disagreed.then one out of the other nine items shows that education violates the culture that celebrates virginity in girls

(owa-ochi) which is one of the proud culture of the Emohua people, while unwise financial investment had a mean score of 1.7 as the lowest.

**Table 2:** Mean response of some factors that hinders Girl-Child education

S/No	Items (Factors that hinders Girl-Child Education)	Mean	Remarkd
1	Lean resource (poverty hinders Girls-Child Education)	3.6	Agreed
2	Girls are abused sexually at school	2.4	Disagreed
3	The distance of school environment from home	2.3	Disagreed
4	The Girl-Child place is supposed to be in the kitchen	3.1	Agreed
5	The Girl-Child must marry early enough to avoid been an old layer	3.2	Agreed
6	Self-degradation by girls, who see themselves as deformed category of humans	2.3	Disagreed
7	Religious misinterpretation as a barrier	2.5	Agreed
8	Illiteracy in the family	3.0	Agreed
9	Girls used for supplementation for family income as house helps to other well to do families	2.5	Agreed
10	Girls as baby Nurses	2.4	Disagreed

Table 2: reveals the factor that hinders girl-child education to be lean resources as a result of poverty. This contributes greatly to hinder girl-child education in Emohua, with the mean score of 3.6 as the highest score while the lowest mean of 2.3 raveled self-degradation, by girls themselves, who sees themselves as deformed category of human.

**Table 3:** Mean response of the importance of Girl-Child education

S/No	Items (Importance Girl-Child Education)	Mean	Remarkd
1	Girl-Child education ends poverty	3.5	Agreed
2	Reduced material mortality rat	3.0	Agreed
3	Protection against infection	3.1	Agreed
4	Lowering infant mortality	2.9	Agreed
5	Increased Job opportunities and higher earnings	3.0	Agreed
6	Raise the standard of living	3.4	Agreed
7	Improve family care and health nutrition	3.0	Agreed
8	Improve child development	2.7	Agreed
9	Backbone to food production	2.5	Agreed
10	Higher aspiration for family life/survival	3.2	Agreed

Table 3: clearly revealed the importance of girl-child education to be 3.5 as the highest mean which indicates that Girl-Child education will contribute greatly to eradicate poverty in our land.

### Discussions

The findings obtained from table 1 showed that a greater number of respondent indicated that Girl-Child Education violates one of the proudly celebrated culture of the Emohua people which is virginity (owa-ochi) which rated highest with a mean score of 3.4, the girl-child been a good resource in farm, had mean score of 3.0, Girl-child core responsibilities as house chores with a mean score of 2.9, lack of benefit from biological parents after she had married had a mean score of 2.8, education corrupt Girl-child had a mean score of 2.7. This result brings the average mean score to 3.0, and the only disagreed mean score rated only 1.7 respectively, which shows a high level of cultural influence to the Girl-Child education. These finding are in line with the earlier findings of the several Nigerian researchers (Idabawa, 2004 and Ayodele, *et al.*, 2006) [8, 4] which states that Girls are not allowed to stay in school or education as this may culminate in the person turning to popular "old layer" (very old single lady).

Table 2 also revealed that lean resource which is poverty amongst families had the highest mean score of 3.6, and a lowest mean score of 2.3 which is self-degradation by the girl-child herself. Showing that poverty, illiteracy are the major hindrance to the girl-child education. This is in line with the earlier findings of (Mohamed and maduagwu 2006) scarce resources due to poverty, illiteracy which they stated that they are the higher barrier to a girl-child education.

### Conclusion

This study has clearly shown how cultural belief negatively impacts on girl-child education in Nigeria. Most of the belief identified in the study are grounded on misconception that stem from the people culturally conservation conceptualization of girl-child education as a mere means of acquiring knowledge for domestic relevance. The study therefore concludes that girl-child education is a necessity for societal growth and it should be highly encouraged.

### Recommendations

To correct these misconceptions, the following recommendation were made.

1. The media including the television print-media and radio should help to design enlightenment programme in Local language as familiar as possible that will not only help to capture parent's interest in educating their children but also help to disabuse them of the constricting misconceptions and belief that are inhibition to girl-child education.
2. The various religious groups should help to teach parents the true position of their religion on girl's education.
3. The associations should help develop programmes that would assist parents and families in educating their daughters.
4. Girls should be given equal opportunity as boys for academic pursuits and early marriage for girls should be further discouraged both in states where such steps have already been taken and in other where nothing has been done in that regard. Girls should be left to pursue whatever career they wish and to choose the husbands they would want to marry.

### References

1. Ada NA. Gender power and politics in Nigeria. Markurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007, 314.
2. Ada, N.A. The Paradox of Equality of Education Opportunities for All Citizens in Nigeria and Challenges of Rural Transformation. Journal of the Arts and Humanities, 1992; (2)48-56.
3. Aremu AO, Oluwole DA. "Gender and Birth Order as predictors of Normal Pupil's Anxiety pattern in Examination". Ibadan Journal of Educational Studies. 2001; 1(1):1-7.
4. Ayodele JB. "Gender analysis of students enrollment and academic staff in the University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria: Implication for women emancipation". The African Symposium. 2006; 6(384):47-55.
5. Bunyi GW. "Gender disparities in higher education in Kenya: Nature extent and the way forward". The African Symposium. 2004; 4(1):43-62.

6. Ekwukoma V. "Effects of family characteristics on the education of girl-child". A Ph.D. Seminar paper presented in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin. 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2014.
7. Federal Office of Statistics. The Nigerian Statistical Fact Sheet on Economic and Social Development. National Bureau of Statistics, 2004; ISBN978-34144-0-2.
8. Idabawa SA. "On some socio-cultural determinant of girls involvement in Education in Nigeria". The African Symposium. 2004; 4(1):4-9.
9. Maduagwu, Mohammed. The factor responsible for lack of girl – child education in Nigeria, 2006.
10. Michael I. Emir Harps on Girl-child Education. Nigerian Tribune, 2011; 15(107):31.
11. Nkechi VI. Women education for active participation in the next millennium: Mardat education Research and Publishers. Awaka, Nigeria, 1999.
12. Obinaju QI. Gender Issues in teaching as profession, in E.N. Okpara (EN) Gender Issues in Education and Development. A Book of Reading, Enugu. University Trust Publishers, 2014; 8:204-212
13. Offorma GC. Girl-child Education in Africa. Keynote Address Presented at the Conference of the University Women of Africa Held in Lagos, Nigeria, 16th-19<sup>th</sup> July, 2009.
14. Okojie CEE. "Gender gap in access to education in Nigeria focus group discussion with adult men and women". Kenya Academy Science. Journal of Education and Social Research, MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, 1996, 5(2).
15. Onochie CIO. Guilty or not guilty? How Nigeria families impede the aspiration of Nigeria girls for higher education". Us-China Education Review. 2010; 7(6):16-31.
16. Osagie RO. "Investment in girl-child and women education". Benin, Journal of Gender Studies. 2008; 1(1):55-65.
17. Uchendu FN. *Female Education: An essential factor for meaningful sustainable development*. The Counselor. 1996; 14(2):15-20.