

Assessment Of Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting The Promotion Girl-Child Education In Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Despite growing global awareness, evidence continues to show lower female enrollment in schools. The issue of girl-child education remains a pressing global concern. This study investigated socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. A sample of 1,100 female senior secondary school students from 44 senior secondary schools participated in the study. Data were collected using the Socio-Cultural Factors Questionnaire (SCFQ) and the Attitude of Female Students Towards Education Questionnaire (AFSEQ). The greatest challenge faced by the girl-child was financial constraint, influenced by their socio-cultural environment (rank 1), followed by poverty (rank 2), and family roles (rank 3). The least significant challenges identified were sexual violence (rank 21), early marriage (rank 20), and gender-insensitive textbooks (rank 19). Sixty-eight students (6.1 percent) strongly agreed that society does not value girl-child education, 91 (8.2 percent) agreed, while 552 (49.7 percent) disagreed and 399 (35.9 percent) strongly disagreed. A significant negative relationship was found between socio-cultural factors and students' attitudes, indicating that the more a girl is affected by socio-cultural constraints, the lower her attitude toward education. Provision of financial assistance and scholarships for girls from low-income families, and the creation of safe, supportive learning environments—including mentorship and role models—will significantly aid in promoting girl-child education.

Keywords: Educational assessment, beliefs, culture, female students, gender equality, girl-child education, socio-cultural factors, tradition.

Introduction

No society can fully develop without providing all its citizens with equal opportunities to cultivate attitudes that foster civic responsibility. Education is fundamental to personal development, social progress, and economic prosperity. It empowers individuals to break the cycle of poverty, promotes health, fosters lifelong learning, raises awareness, and prepares citizens for active participation in democratic societies. The multifaceted role of education underscores its significance in shaping individual lives and driving positive societal change. Education should not be viewed solely as a path to white-collar employment, but rather as a tool for comprehensive individual and societal development. It is essential that all citizens, including girls, have equal access to quality education.

Girl-child education has gained increasing global attention in recent years. Ensuring equitable access to quality education for girls is not only a fundamental human right but also critical for promoting sustainable development and gender equality. In Nigeria, girl-child education is influenced by various socio-cultural factors. Historically, girls in many parts of the world—especially in Africa—have faced significant barriers to education due to entrenched cultural norms and practices. These socio-cultural challenges have perpetuated gender disparities, limiting the full potential and empowerment of girls.

According to the Global Partnership to End Child Marriage (2017), approximately 15 million girls are married before the age of 18 each year, severely limiting their opportunities for education and personal development. This practice often stems from cultural beliefs and economic hardship, with families viewing early marriage as a means to reduce financial burdens.

Despite increased global advocacy, female enrollment in schools remains low (Ayeni, 2023). The United Nations, in its 2023 publication for International Day of Education, emphasized that girls' education is essential for the "well-being and prosperity of all" (United Nations, 2023). However, the gender gap in education persists, especially in Northern Nigeria (Eboyem, 2024).

According to UNICEF (2024), around 10.5 million Nigerian children are out of school, despite primary education being officially free and compulsory. Only 61% of children aged 6–11 attend primary school regularly. In Northern Nigeria, the situation is more alarming, with a net attendance rate of just 53%. Female attendance is even lower: 47.7% in the North-East and 47.3% in the North-West. This means more than half of the girls in these regions are not in school.

Girl-child education is crucial to bridging gender disparities in school enrollment. According to Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, any individual under 18 years is considered a child; hence, a female within this age group is a girl-child. UNESCO (2022) defines girl-child education as the formal education provided to female children to support their physical, mental, social, and economic well-

being. Despite their critical role in society, girl-children often experience marginalization, facing early marriage, gender discrimination, poverty, limited access to education, and violence.

Research highlights several contributing factors to the low promotion of girl-child education. Eyong (2024) found that religious and cultural beliefs of parents play a significant role. Eboyem (2024) emphasized culture as a fundamental factor, while Azeez, Oseisi, and Aribamika (2024) identified cultural, economic, environmental, and personal factors as key reasons for the exclusion of girls from primary education in Northern Nigeria. Their study was based on female learners' perceptions and experiences.

Other researchers have identified the specific impact of various socio-cultural challenges. Oyeyipo (2024) reported that socio-economic status and parental education significantly affect female school enrollment and participation. Wali (2024), in analyzing girl-child education challenges, identified early marriage, gender discrimination, limited government support, and negative perceptions of co-educational systems as significant barriers. Korin, Naylor, and Page (2021) reported that in Northern Nigeria, a girl has a 35.6% chance of being married by age 15 and a 45% chance of becoming pregnant by age 18. Without prioritizing girl-child education, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) will remain difficult.

UNICEF (2024) further noted that education deprivation among girls is caused by economic barriers, socio-cultural norms, and practices that discourage formal education. Olutola, Adamu, and Aguh (2024) identified psychosocial factors such as poverty, mental health, financial constraints, religious beliefs, cultural practices, parental education level, early marriage, and sexual violence. Security concerns and inadequate sanitation also play a role. They recommended free education and incentives to encourage girl-child enrollment.

Virtually every aspect of girl-child education is influenced by socio-cultural factors. For example, Helanri (2024) found that socio-cultural elements significantly affect English language learning, which is often the means of instruction delivery. Kim and Lee (2024) discovered significant difference in middle school students' attitudes toward Artificial Intelligence (AI) based on socio-cultural background. Their study also indicated that attitudes toward AI varied by gender, demonstrating that socio-cultural factors not only influence learning outcomes but are also gender-sensitive. Nausher, Iqar, and Islam (2024) argued that the level of gender equality in a country is a vital indicator of its overall prosperity. They found that family structure, economic status, and parental education levels play a significant role in shaping girls' access to education. This study sought to investigate socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study objectives were to:

1. Investigate socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State, Nigeria.
2. Find out the rank order of each of the identified socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State, Nigeria.
3. Describe the attitude of female students to education in Kogi State, Nigeria.
4. Compare relationship between socio-cultural factors and female students' attitude to education in Kogi State, Nigeria.
5. Find out relationship between socio-cultural factors and female students' attitude to education in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the socio-cultural affecting the promotion of girl child education in Kogi State?
2. What is the rank order of the identified socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State, Nigeria?
3. What is the attitude of female students to education in Kogi State?
4. What is the relationship between socio-cultural factors and female students' attitude to education in Kogi State, Nigeria?
5. Do socio-cultural factors significantly influence the attitude of female students to education Kogi State, Nigeria?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design allows for gathering of data from large participants in order to describe the variables. There is no manipulation of variables. It is a non-experimental design. This research study aims to evaluate the socio-cultural factors affecting girl-child education in Kogi State. To achieve this, the study focused on variables relating to socio-cultural factors such as cultural practices, poverty, early marriage, religious beliefs, which were investigated through the descriptive survey research design.

Target Population, Sample and Sampling technique

The target population of the study are all the female Senior Secondary School (SS 2) students in Kogi State, Kogi State. Eleven out of 23 Local Government Areas in Kogi State were randomly selected for the study. This sampling method ensured that schools from all the three geopolitical zones are represented adequately in the study. In each Local Government Area (LGA), four schools were randomly selected. Thus, a total of 44 schools (4 schools x 11 LGAs) participated in the study. A sample of 25 female students was randomly selected from each school. Thus the sample size for the study was 1,100 senior secondary school students (44 schools x 25 students).

Instrumentation

The instruments used to collect data are:

1. Socio-Cultural Factors Questionnaire (SCFQ)
2. Attitude of Female Students to Education Questionnaire (AFSEQ)

Each questionnaire has Section A which elicited demographic information such school name and class of the female students. The questionnaires were given to experts in measurement and evaluation to peruse in order to ascertain the relevance of each item. Suggestions from experts were used in order to make the items better. Some items were modified, some were dropped while many sailed through experts' scrutiny. This ensured content validity of the instruments.

Reliability of Instruments

Cronbach alpha reliability method was used to ascertain the internal consistency of questionnaire items. The two questionnaires; the socio-cultural factors questionnaire and attitude of female students to education questionnaire have the reliability co-efficients of 0.71 and 0.69 respectively. Cronbach's alpha is popularly used to measure of internal consistency of items in a questionnaire. This assesses the extent to which items within a scale or questionnaire measures the same construct. Cronbach's alpha is an important measure of reliability because it allows researchers to assess the consistency and accuracy of the instrument.

Procedure for Data Collection

The questionnaires were only administered to female students in Senior Secondary School II. The teachers in the schools assisted in administering the questionnaires to the female students. The questionnaires were completed within an average of 30 minutes in each school. The students were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0. Research Questions 1 and 3 were answered using percentages and frequency counts. Research Question 2 was answered using Mean and rank. Research Questions 4 and 5 were respectively answered using Pearson product-moment correlation and linear regression.

Results

Research Question One: What are the socio-cultural affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State?

Table 1: Socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
1	My family has not made any plans for my further education, so they won't support me going further.	89 (8.0%)	170 (15.3%)	510 (45.9%)	341 (30.7%)

2	Because my community doesn't value educating girls, I feel discouraged from attending school.	68 (6.1%)	91 (8.2%)	552 (49.7%)	399 (35.9%)
3	I can't continue school past secondary level due to my parents' financial struggles.	78 (7.0%)	224 (20.2%)	512 (46.1%)	296 (26.7%)
4	I find it hard to understand what my teacher explains in class.	43 (3.9%)	113 (10.2%)	614 (55.3%)	340 (30.6%)
5	I lack the financial means to pursue university education.	107 (9.6%)	277 (25.0%)	513 (46.2%)	213 (19.2%)
6	My religious beliefs place more emphasis on educating boys than girls.	50 (4.5%)	116 (10.5%)	523 (47.1%)	420 (37.8%)
7	Cultural norms in my community prioritize boys' education over that of girls.	37 (3.3%)	181 (16.3%)	545 (49.1%)	346 (31.2%)
8	My parents' lack of education prevents them from encouraging me to study further.	51 (4.6%)	77 (6.9%)	565 (50.9%)	416 (37.5%)
9	I plan to marry young, so I don't see the need to study beyond secondary school.	45 (4.1%)	73 (6.6%)	538 (48.5%)	454 (40.9%)
10	Fear of sexual assault keeps me from wanting to continue school after secondary level.	26 (2.3%)	56 (5.0%)	561 (50.5%)	467 (42.1%)
11	I'm unaware of the benefits of getting an education as a girl.	77 (6.9%)	97 (8.7%)	550 (49.5%)	386 (34.8%)
12	Even if given the chance, I wouldn't want to attend university.	68 (6.1%)	112 (10.1%)	519 (46.8%)	411 (37.0%)
13	I attend school mainly because other girls in my age group are also going.	66 (5.9%)	127 (11.4%)	558 (50.3%)	359 (32.3%)
14	I'm not interested in going to school at all.	70 (6.3%)	72 (6.5%)	540 (48.6%)	428 (38.6%)
15	I fear being abducted by bandits if I go beyond secondary education.	52 (4.7%)	122 (11.0%)	577 (52.0%)	359 (32.3%)
16	The lack of proper toilet facilities discourages me from pursuing more education.	43 (3.9%)	113 (10.2%)	572 (51.5%)	382 (34.4%)
17	Not having access to sanitary pads makes me not want to continue my studies.	39 (3.5%)	112 (10.1%)	581 (52.3%)	378 (34.1%)
18	The fact that women are rarely seen in leadership roles discourages me from advancing in school.	54 (4.9%)	89 (8.0%)	618 (55.7%)	348 (31.4%)
19	The absence of all-girls' schools discourages me from studying beyond secondary school.	56 (5.6%)	99 (8.9%)	630 (56.8%)	325 (29.3%)

20	Having mostly male teachers makes me uncomfortable about continuing my education.	63 (5.7)	98 (8.8)	598 (53.9)	351 (31.6)
21	Textbooks mostly show male characters, making me feel excluded from learning.	48 (4.3%)	71 (6.4%)	584 (52.6%)	406 (36.6%)

N = 1,100

In table 1 above, item 1, 89 (8.0 %) of students said that their families cannot send them for further education because they do not have plans for it. One hundred and seventy (170 or 15.3%) agreed, 510 (45.9%) disagreed while 341 (30.7%) strongly disagreed. In item 2, 68 (6.1%) of students strongly agreed that society do not value girl child education, 91 (8.2%) students agreed while 552 (49.7%) disagreed and finally 399 (35.9%) of students strongly disagreed. Furthermore, in item 9, 45 (4.1%) of students strongly agreed that they cannot study beyond secondary school because of early marriage, 73 (6.6%) of students agreed, 538 (48.5%) of students disagreed and 454 (40.9%) of students strongly disagreed. Lastly in item 10, 26 (2.3%) of students strongly agreed that they cannot study beyond secondary school because of sexual violence, 56 students (5.0%) agreed, 561 (50.5) of the students disagreed and 454 (40.9) of the students strongly disagreed.

Research Question Two: What is the rank order of the identified socio-cultural factors affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State?

Table 2 The rank order of identified socio-cultural factors affecting girl child education

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
I lack the funds required to attend a university.	1100	1.00	4.00	2.2505	0.87464	1st
My parents' financial condition prevents me from continuing beyond secondary school.	1100	1.00	4.00	2.0757	0.86284	2nd
My family has made no provisions for supporting my education further.	1100	1.00	4.00	2.0063	0.88416	3rd
Cultural traditions in my community give more priority to boys' education than to girls'.	1100	1.00	5.00	1.9207	0.78133	4th
I'm motivated to attend school because many other girls my age are doing so.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.9099	0.81741	5th
I'm hesitant to continue schooling because there aren't separate schools for girls.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8973	0.75746	6th
The predominance of male teachers in schools makes me less willing to continue my education.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8856	0.78676	7th
I fear being kidnapped, which discourages me from pursuing more education.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8802	0.77904	8th
I don't understand the importance or benefits of education for girls.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8784	0.83573	9th
I find it difficult to grasp what my teachers teach me.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8730	0.73988	10th

Seeing few women in leadership roles discourages me from aiming higher in school.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8638	0.75551	11th
Even if given a chance, I would choose not to continue my education at the university level.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8532	0.83383	12th
Society does not value girls' education, which demotivates me from schooling.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8450	0.81429	13th
The absence of clean toilet facilities deters me from pursuing more education.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8351	0.75778	14th
A lack of menstrual hygiene products discourages me from staying in school.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8306	0.75778	15th
My religion supports boys' education more than that of girls.	1100	1.00	11.00	1.8243	0.84012	16th
I simply don't enjoy going to school.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.8054	0.81574	17th
Because my parents lack formal education, they don't encourage me to pursue further learning.	1100	1.00	5.00	1.7892	0.76950	18th
Educational materials mostly feature male characters, which makes me feel excluded.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.7829	0.74811	19th
I plan to marry early, so I don't see the need for continuing education.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.7378	0.75414	20th
Fear of sexual violence discourages me from advancing beyond secondary school.	1100	1.00	4.00	1.6766	0.67873	21st

In table 2 above, the greatest challenge faced by the girl child is finance constraint which is the first statement (rank order 1). The second challenge is poverty (rank 2), follow by family role (rank 3). The least challenge in this region is sexual violence (rank 21), early marriage (rank 20) and lastly textbooks not sensitive to gender (rank 19).

Research Question Three: What is the attitude of female students to education in Kogi State?

Table 3 Attitude of female students to education in Kogi State

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agreed (%)	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Strongly Disagreed (%)
1	I know in my mind that I can perform very well in school	421 (37.9)	240 (21.6)	305 (27.5)	144 (13.0)
2	I believe that I can make it through education	413 (37.2)	226 (24.0)	299 (26.9)	132 (11.9)
3	I am not afraid to ask questions from my teachers in the classroom	400 (36.0)	430 (38.7)	190 (17.1)	90 (8.1)

4	I am always active when in school	422 (38.0)	419 (37.7)	179 (16.1)	89 (8.0)
5	I do have interest in formal education	333 (30.0)	357 (32.2)	258 (23.2)	162 (14.6)
6	I think I am wasting my time attending school	171 (15.4)	149 (13.4)	337 (30.4)	452 (40.7)
7	I do pay attention to my teachers during lessons	408 (36.8)	345 (31.1)	226 (20.4)	131 (11.8)
8	I do not feel inferior to the other gender in the class	374 (33.7)	413 (37.2)	205 (18.5)	118 (10.6)
9	I like formal education	452 (40.7)	412 (37.1)	173 (15.6)	73 (6.6)
10	I will further my education to any level	515 (46.4)	356 (32.1)	170 (15.3)	69 (6.2)
11	There is no educational achievement by boys that cannot be attained or even surpassed by girls	556 (50.1)	426 (38.4)	96 (8.6)	32 (2.9)
12	I like women who are well educated	631 (56.8)	409 (36.8)	47 (4.2)	23 (2.1.)

N = 1,100

In table 3 above, item 1, 421 (37.9%) students strongly agreed that they can perform well in school. Two hundred and forty students 240 (21.6%) agreed that they cannot perform well in school, 305 (27.5%) students disagreed that they cannot perform well in school while 144 (13.0%) strongly disagreed to the statement. In item 2, 413 (37.2%) of students strongly agreed that they can make it through education, 266 (24.0%) students agreed to the statement. Two hundred and ninety-nine 299 (26.9%) of students disagreed that they cannot make it through education while 132 (11.9%) strongly disagreed that they cannot make it through education. Furthermore, in item 9, 452 (40.7%) of students strongly agreed that they like formal education, 412 (37.1%) students agreed they like formal education. One hundred and seventy-three students 173 (15.6%) disagreed that they like formal education while 73 (6.6%) students strongly disagreed to the statement. Lastly, in statement 10, 515 (46.4%) of students strongly agreed to further their education to any level, 356 (32.1%) students agreed to further their education to any level. One hundred and seventy (170 or 15.3%) of students disagreed to further their education to any level while 69 (6.2%) students strongly disagreed to further their education to any level.

Research Question Four: What is the relationship between socio-cultural factors and female students' attitude to education in Kogi State?

Table 4: The relationship between socio-cultural factors and female students' attitude to education in Kogi State

		Socio-cultural factors	Attitude of female students
Socio-cultural factors	Correlation	1	149
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	1109	1109
Attitude of female students	Correlation	-.149	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	1109	1110

In table 4 above, there is a significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and students' attitude. The correlation co-efficient is negative ($r = -0.49$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the higher a girl is engrossed with socio-cultural factors, the lower the attitude to education. A girl-child that is not affected by socio-cultural factors is likely to have positive attitude to education.

Research Question Five: Do socio-cultural factors significantly influence the attitude of female students to education in Kogi State?

Table 5: Influence of socio-cultural factors on female attitude to education

	R = 0.149	R-square = 0.022	Adjusted R-square = 0.021			
	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Remark
Regression	1152.746	1	1152.746	25.277	.000	Significant
Residual	50484.741	1107	45.605			P < 0.05
Total	51637.487	1108				

In table 5 above, socio-cultural significantly influenced female students' attitude to education. Though socio-cultural factors contributed only 2.2% of the total variance in students' attitude, this percentage is significant (R Square = 0.022, $p < 0.05$). In order to raise female students' attitude to education, socio-cultural factors should be given attention.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the data collected, the findings revealed that most respondents were unable to attend school due to financial constraints, poverty, and family responsibilities. These challenges often lead families with limited resources to prioritize boys' education over girls'. Lack of finance, poverty, family roles, cultural practices, and peer influence were identified—by rank order—as the most significant socio-cultural barriers affecting the promotion of girl-child education in Kogi State.

These findings align with previous research, such as Oluwole (2015), who examined socio-cultural factors affecting girl-child education. Similarly, studies by Ibekwe (2016) and Adeyemi, Ojo, and Isah (2023) also identified poverty and cultural practices as major obstacles. This convergence of evidence reinforces the powerful role of poverty and family expectations in shaping girls' access to education.

Despite these challenges, the study also found that a majority of female students remain actively engaged in academic activities, demonstrating strong commitment and resilience. This supports Ude (2022), who argues that, although faced with adversity, many girls are highly motivated and active participants in their education. This underscores the importance of creating supportive and equitable educational environments that foster continued engagement and academic success among girls.

Additionally, the study revealed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.49$, $p < 0.05$) between socio-cultural factors and students' attitudes toward education. This indicates that as socio-cultural pressures—such as poverty, traditional gender roles, and patriarchal norms—increase, students' attitudes toward education become less favorable. Such negative attitudes can adversely affect their educational experiences and outcomes. The correlation underscores the critical need to address these socio-cultural constraints in order to enhance girls' educational engagement, performance, and long-term development.

Overall, the findings show that socio-cultural factors—including family roles, lack of financial resources, poverty, and societal expectations—have a profound impact on girls' academic performance, aspirations, and achievement in Kogi State. To foster educational equity and improve outcomes for female students, it is imperative to confront and mitigate these socio-cultural challenges.

Conclusion

Many parents tend to favor boys' education, viewing sons as a form of long-term financial security, while daughters are often relied upon for domestic labor. Addressing these deeply rooted socio-cultural norms is essential to promoting gender equity in education. Furthermore, it is critical to consider how gender, culture, and poverty intersect to shape the educational experiences of girls, especially those from marginalized communities or living with disabilities.

Disability, gender discrimination, and poverty often combine to significantly restrict educational opportunities for these vulnerable groups. Therefore, it is essential that policies and programs aimed at promoting educational equality also target these overlapping barriers. Ensuring that girls from all backgrounds can realize their full academic potential requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings reported in this study:

1. Provision of financial assistance and scholarships for girls from low-income families to reduce economic barriers to education.
2. Engagement of community leaders, parents, and other stakeholders in advocacy campaigns to promote girl-child education and challenge harmful cultural norms.
3. Creation of safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments, with access to mentorship programs and positive female role models.
4. Establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks for policies and programs supporting girl-child education, ensuring accountability and effectiveness.
5. Implementation of awareness campaigns to combat child marriage and teenage pregnancy, emphasizing the value of continued education for girls.

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