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## The Girl-Child Can Make it: Strengthening the Management of Basic Education Schools through Counseling Strategies – A Case Study of North West Zone of Nigeria

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### Abstract

With the adoption of new Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in September 2015, the need to translate into action its lofty ideals become necessary. This is against the backdrop of increasing low enrolment, retention, progression and completion on one hand and high rate of drop out, withdrawal and gender discrimination which remains a challenge to Girls' education on the other. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey method. A sample of 338 was selected through simple random sampling from a population of 2,800 comprising of educational administrators, teachers, pupils/students, parents/guardians and Non-Governmental Organizations. The instrument of the study was a 55-item questionnaire developed by the researchers and standardized by experts, which was used for data collection. Two research questions were posed and corresponding hypotheses were raised, tested and analyzed by the use of the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistical calculations. The findings of the study revealed that poor planning, instructional supervision and absence of effective guidance and counseling were identified as some of the factors responsible for unsuccessful implementation of Basic Education Schools in Nigeria.

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### Keywords:

Girl-Child, Strengthening, Management, Basic, Education, Counseling, Strategies.

To be able to record success and ensure free, compulsory and universal goal of Universal Basic Education is achieved in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target, efforts should be made to ensure that adequate counselors be recruited and posted to all schools, with a view to ensuring that Counselling services are implemented in accordance with provision of the National Policy on Education.

## I. Introduction

Nigeria is one of the signatories to major conventions that recognize education as a fundamental human right. The reasons were; first because, education has long been considered as an effective instrument of economic, social and political growth, as well as, societal development and principal means of enhancing the welfare of individuals in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (NPE), described education as an instrument *per excellence* for effecting National development of the individuals into sound and effective citizens and equal opportunities for all.

With reference to [5] the Policy further spelt out clearly the provisions made in respect of Basic Education, which is the type of education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Childhood Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Childhood Education however is segmented into 0-4 years, situated in daycare or crèches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. The major goals of Basic Education are to:

1. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurs, wealth generation and educational advancement;
2. Develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities;...etc

In specific terms the policy stated that, the Government shall provide free, compulsory, universal and qualitative Basic Education to its citizens irrespective of sex, social status, religious, or ethnic background.

However, in spite of all the measures taken, UBE is however, being bedeviled by a lot of problems; such as provision of facilities, enrolment, retention, progress and completion on one hand and drop out and provision for out of the school children on the other. Thus, Obanya observed that the major problem with the Nigeria's ambitious UBE programme was and still is that of access [9]. For the purpose of clarity, Access is here defined as 'the number of school-aged children 6-11 who can reach school within thirty (30) minutes, using any means of transport including walking. According to him, there were several dimensions of Access such as:

- a) Economic access: Poverty and poor economic conditions, especially at the household level, create great problem in generalizing access.

- b) Physical access or geographical barriers (to expanding and generalizing access) the problem is usually of long distance between home and school.
- c) Sociological access: Even when educational facilities may be physically ( or geographically) within reach, the potential beneficiary's social conditions could either be a help or a hindrance.
- d) Psychological access: Educational facilities are 'accessible' only when the school is able to respond appropriately to children learning needs and learning styles.
- e) Cultural access: As a barrier to access seemed to have derived mainly from aspect of colonial education.

Based on this clarification therefore, it can be seen that, 'Access' is a very broad term. Even though, basic education was and still is meant to be universal, free and compulsory for everyone, irrespective of culture, ethnicity, religion, environmental, etc, education, always has some overt/hidden, direct/indirect, legal/illegal cost for individual families [9]. These problems therefore, continue to militate against effective realization of not only the objectives of UBE but also that of NPE. This is in consideration of gender roles recognized within the given cultural context understudy. This is because the perception of what it means to be male or female is not exactly the same in all cultures and communities.

Specifically, these multifarious problems further weakened the effective running of the Basic Education schools. It should be pointed out that, the school effectiveness comprises the factors instrumental to enhancing influence of the school on students' academic achievement, personality and inculcation of citizenship values [13]. The importance of schools cannot be overemphasized, because, school is expected to provide experiences and activities that, will promote gender safety, equity and equality, while education is looked upon as one of the main agents in the preparation of young people for full participation in the society [1]. He further opined that, an effective school is the one that promotes the progress of its students in a broad range of intellectual, social, and emotional outcome, where students' progress on the basis of aptitude and attitudes as against overwhelming influence of socio-economic background, particularly in an environment where Government resolved to ensure equity and fairness to all and sundry.

The issue at stake therefore, is the girl-child because; she is the most negatively affected by customs and traditions in African and some of the developing countries. According to [10], girl-child refers to a biological female offspring from birth to 18 years of age. This is the age before she becomes adult. During this period, she is totally under the care of adult who may be her parents or guardians and she is very much dependent on the significant others, those on whom models her behaviour through observations, repetitions and imitations. Her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional development starts and progress to the peak at the young adult stage.

However, Girl-child education which has been described as, the panacea of poverty, family disorganization and societal true development, which according to [6], has suffered several set-backs over the years, due to growing influence of socio-cultural and economic factors. In Nigeria, traditions, customs, sexual stereotyping of social roles and cultural prejudices has militated against the enjoyment of rights and full participation of women on an equal basis with men in national development [3].

Guidance and Counselling, is all about the range of services offered to help individuals to face difficulties and cope effectively. It is a process of establishing a relationship. Importantly, School Counselling remains a growing and special area of the counselling profession that, focuses on the development and educational needs of the students and the schools' personnel in some cases [11].

## II. Problem Statement

Education is a right, but it is still beyond the reach of many children, especially girls. The girl-child is not only deprived of the opportunities of schooling, moral and financial supports, but is also abused, ranging from child labour to other forms of maltreatments. The UBE was introduced as a corrective measure with its stated objectives as free, universal and compulsory irrespective of class race or gender. But, years after its full implementation in Nigeria, review of related literature revealed that, attempts to provide free, qualitative, and universal education at all levels of governance has not been achieved, effective or successful; due to poor planning and implementation, as well as, absence of effective Guidance and Counseling services.

Recent studies on Girl-child education revealed that, less than half of the children of school age were not in school at the time of studies and there was a wide gap between the number of boys and girls, as well as, male and female teachers in higher institutions of learning. The problems are so common in every nook and corner of North West Zone of Nigeria. Girl-child is deprived of the opportunity for education and several factors were advanced as reasons responsible which include poverty, early marriage, poor enrolment, high drop-out rates among others. As a result, Education of the girl-child has become a universal issue especially, for African countries, hence the need to strive for the solutions to some of these problems, in view of their attendant negative implications.

Evidences have shown that, there were alarming disparities between males and females access to schooling in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, the various policies put in place, what obtains on the ground, is far short of the desired goals. In a study conducted by [12] in its Global Monitoring Report on Nigeria, stated that the country has the worst global education indicators. The report further disclosed that, Nigeria can hardly achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) before the global deadline of 2015. Indeed Nigeria was not able to achieve the set goals. Instead, a new Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was set in September 2015 after the expiration of the MDG target. It calls for action by all countries for all people in the next 15 years.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were posed and investigated:

1. What is the impact of administration and management of girl-child and women education units in the North-West Zone of Nigeria?
2. What is the importance of girl-child education for personal and national development in the North-West Zone of Nigeria?

### Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the impact of administration/management of girl-child/women education units and counselling strategies in enhancing girl-child enrolment and retention in schools within the North West Zone of Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between the importance of girl-child education for personal and national development and counselling strategies in enhancing girl-child enrolment and retention in schools within the Zone under study.

### Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design to investigate the impact of administration, management of Basic Education Schools on Girl-child Education for their personal and national development with a focus on North West Zone of Nigeria. The research instrument was a 55-item questionnaire which sought information on Girl-child education generally within the Zone under study whose psychometric properties were documented in a study by [8]. For the purpose of this investigation, sub-sections *F* and *C* which elicit information on administration and management of Girl-child/Women education units and importance of the Girl-child education for personal and national development were respectively used.

The study was restricted to geo-political North-West zone of Nigeria that comprises states of Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara. For easier manageability and with due regards to certain variables, three states were purposely selected as sample because of their uniqueness, (religious beliefs, cultural/traditional identities, economic and social statuses, geographical/physical settings, etc.). The sampled states were Jigawa, Katsina, and Zamfara. From a population of 2,800 and in line with [7] table for determining sample size, a sample of 338 was adopted; with 105 constituting 31% sampled from Jigawa state, 135 constituting 40% sampled from Katsina state and 98 constituting 29% sample from Zamfara state. The gender distribution was 216 male representing 63.9% and 122 female representing 36.1%

### Analysis

The data collected was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics and t-test for the hypotheses

*Q.1. What is the impact of administration and management of girl-child/ women education units in the north-west zone of Nigeria?*

To answer this research question an analysis of responses to section F (*Impact of Administration and Management of Girl-Child/Women Education Units*) of the questionnaire was done. The ten items were analyzed and presented in Table I.

**Table I: Impact of Administration and Management of Girl-Child/ Women Education Units in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.**

Items	Responses				Total
	Agree		Disagree		
	F	%	F	%	
Politicization of education has led to policies that are not gender or environmentally sensitive	55	16.3	283	83.7	338
Continuous drop out from formal education has hampered the girl-child’s education	259	76.6	79	23.4	338
Political influence has negatively influenced education	274	81.1	64	18.9	338
Free and compulsory basic education has not been fully achieved in many communities in Northern Nigeria	269	79.6	69	20.4	338
Poor location of schools has resulted to absenteeism, late-coming and withdrawals	275	81.4	63	18.6	338
Poor monitoring, inspection and evaluation of schools has led to many problems	123	36.4	215	63.6	338
There are no adequate qualified staff in many schools particularly in the rural areas	259	76.6	79	23.4	338
There are no English and Mathematics teachers in many schools	287	84.9	51	15.1	338
There are no basic textbooks in almost all the subjects	258	76.3	80	23.7	338
There are no adequate number of either career masters or trained guidance and Counselling officers	283	83.7	55	16.3	338

From the analysis of table I, it can be easily established that all the ten items that sought to determine the impact of administration and management of girl child and women education units were discredited by the majority of the respondents as reasons that may gain acceptance for girl-child education in the area of study. Analysis of responses to one item indicated otherwise; thus the respondents did not support that, even with the politics involved, educational policies are insensitive to the need for the education of the girl-child. Thus, in the area of study they understand that good educational policies are in place for the education of the girl-child, though, some other factors were involved that may warrant poor patronage of education by the girl-child as has been seen in previous discussions.

**Research Question Two:** *What is the importance of girl child education for personal and national development in the north-west zone of Nigeria?*

To answer this research question an analysis of responses to section C (*Importance of Girl Child Education for Personal and National Development*) of the questionnaire was done. The seven items were analyzed and presented in Table II.

**Table II: Importance of Girl Child Education for Personal and National Development**

Items	Responses				Total
	Agree		Disagree		
	F	%	F	%	
Girls and women education generally equip them to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child	67	19.8	271	80.2	338
Girls education assist them to strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child	22	6.5	316	93.5	338
Educated women serves as role models in the society	40	11.8	298	88.2	338
Educated girls who specialized in medicines and other specialize fields assist women and children more often	29	8.6	309	91.4	338
Educated women are more sympathetic to women and children	30	8.9	308	91.1	338
Educated girls/women assist their mothers in a more skillful manner	28	8.3	310	91.7	338
Educated parents tends to encourage their children to attend schools regularly	32	9.5	306	90.5	338

From the analysis of table II, it can be easily discern that, all the seven items that sought to establish the importance of girl-child education for personal and national development were discredited by the majority of the respondents as reasons that may attract sympathy for girl-child education in the area of study. Thus, it can be concluded that in the area of study they did not see much importance of girl-child education neither for personal nor for national development and this has proven to be a great obstacle to the education of the girl-child.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**A. Hypothesis One**

There is no significant relationship between the impact of administration/management of girl-child/women education units and counselling strategies in enhancing girl-child enrolment and retention in schools within the North West Zone of Nigeria.

This hypothesis was tested by correlating the responses on the impact of administration/management

of girl-child/women education units and counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child enrolment and retention in schools and was presented in table III.

Table III: Relationship between the Impact of Administration/Management of Girl Child/Women Education Units and Counselling Strategies for Enhancing Girl-Child Participation in Education in North-West of Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Impact of Admin./Mngt.	338	31.68	8.015	.941	.000	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Counseling Strategies	338	49.03	10.808			

From table III, it can be seen that the relationship between the impact of administration/management of girl child/women education units and counseling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in education was positively related and significant, Pearson’s  $r(336) = .941, p = .000$ . This indicates that a significant relationship exists between the impact of administration/management of girl child/women education units and counseling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in education. Therefore, H<sub>03</sub> which states that, there is no significant relationship between the impact of administration/management of girl child/women education units and counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in education is rejected. This means that counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child enrolment and retention in schools have an indispensable function on the impact of administration/management of girl child/women education units in North-Western Zone of Nigeria.

**Hypothesis Two**

There is no significant relationship between importance of girl child education for personal/national development and Counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in education.

This hypothesis was tested by correlating the responses on the importance of girl-child education for personal/national development and counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in education and was presented in table IV.

**Table IV: Relationship between Importance of Girl Child Education for Personal/National Development and Counseling Strategies for Enhancing Girl-Child Participation in Education in North-West of Nigeria**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Importance of Girl Child Education	338	24.36	3.401	.791	.000	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Counselling Strategies	338	49.03	10.808			

From table IV, it can be seen that the relationship between importance of girl-child education for personal/national development and Counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in



education was positively related and significant, Pearson's  $r(336) = .791, p = .000$ . This indicates that a significant relationship exists between importance of girl-child education for personal/national development and Counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in education. Therefore,  $H_{03}$  which states that, there is no significant relationship between importance of girl-child education for personal/national development and Counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation in education is rejected. This means that Counselling strategies for enhancing girl-child participation, especially enrolment and retention in schools have vital roles to play in the importance of girl child education for personal/national development in the in North-West Zone of Nigeria.

### Discussion

Reference to [5] the importance of planning and administration of education was stressed. The Policy explained further, the success of any system of education is hinged on the proper planning framework, efficient administration, management and adequate financing. However, it can be deduced from the outcome of this study, especially the responses made by the respondents in respect of the two items on the questionnaire; Planning... This under scored the fact that although appropriate policies were made, but proper implementations were not effective, especially at the Basic Education Schools. The situation has affected the smooth running of schools, because schools are besieged by problems of poor funding inadequate classrooms etc as a result heads of schools face myriads of administrative problems which militates against the effective running of their schools. This finding is in agreement with the studies of [2] who stressed that, instructional supervision, 'as the art of overseeing the instructional activities of teachers and other workers in a school system to ensure that they conform to generally acceptable principles and practices of education' should be implemented in order to bring about effective school administration and management of schools.

Furthermore, counseling strategies can be applied in the school and management level in order to motivate, enhance as well as promote effective teaching and learning process. According to [11] school counseling remains a growing and a special area of the counseling profession that focuses the development and educational needs of the students and the school personnel in some cases.

On the issue of personal and national importance of the Girl-child/women education, which the studies of [14] discovered that in North West Zone of Nigeria a significant number of girls and children, especially from poor families and rural areas were not enrolled, not attending or not completing a cycle of (even) basic education. The implication of this findings is that many parents do not accord the girl-child education the priority it deserves which have been captured in their responses to sub-section of the question that dealt with the importance of Girl-child education for personal and national development. This type of problem can be solved through group counseling, orientation, behavior modification etc ([4], [8]).

## Conclusion

Poor planning, instructional supervision and absence of effective guidance and counseling were identified as some of the factors responsible for unsuccessful implementation of Basic Education Schools in Nigeria. To be able to record success and ensure free, compulsory and universal goal of Universal Basic Education is achieved in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target, adequate efforts need to be put in place so as to counter all the existing problems facing the system through effective counseling strategies.

## Recommendations

Guidance counselors should be recruited and posted to all schools, with a view to ensuring that Counselling services are implemented in accordance with provision of the National Policy on Education. Train and retraining of teachers together with other administrative staff should be encouraged at all levels. Regular instructional supervision, inspection and monitoring of schools, should be intensified by appropriate authorities

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