

**GENDER EQUALITY: AN ASSESSMENT OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES
TOWARDS FORMAL EDUCATION IN SOKOTO**

By

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Abstract

This paper investigates parental attitudes towards gender equality in formal education in Sokoto. Ninety six (96) parents drawn from the parents of students of Government Girls College (G.G.C.) Sokoto constituted the subjects of the study. The study discovers that parents placed great importance to the education of their children and generally had high educational aspirations for them without gender disparity. At the end suggestions are made among which include, the encouragement and support for the education of girls and women in Sokoto.

Introduction

The family has an important influence on the child's academic performance and achievement. What the child learns at home and how his family motivates him towards education contribute to the child's success or failure in school. The parents occupation and social status as well as their life-style have considerable influence on the child's schooling.

The attitude and aspirations that parents have concerning their children's schooling and success, is likely to influence the way they behave towards their children and the support they give to them, while in school. For example, Onyabe (1977) has shown in a study among the people of Funtua in Nigeria, a significant correlation of positive parents attitude and high achievement for their children.

Female education has, lagged behind that of their male counterparts. Traditionally, women roles were seen as innate rather than cultural. Culturally, they are seen as unproductive and who cannot perform, thereby education of the women-folk was considered as a wasteful venture. However, the low level of education among girls and women may not be unconnected with the cultural interpretations of the role of women in society, which of course tend to give way to the relegation of women education.

Parents have great influence on their children's educational life changes. This influence may be encouraging or discouraging and as a result therefore, may affect the child's socialisation and in their social, cultural, political, economic frameworks and institutions. These factors tend to determine whether or not women and men could derive equitable benefits from education and other social programmes in the context of society. It could also be added that socio-cultural customs and beliefs influence decisions to a great extent on the enrollment of girls in school, decisions to withdraw them from school, their own decisions to drop-out of school, their academic performance and of course grade level attainment.

The Problem

The major concern of this study was to find out.
The parents educational aspirations for their children (girls and boys)
The parents views on gender equality in education.
The parents preference, if any, in relation to boys and girls education.

The Sample

The sample for this study was composed of the parents of 1000 primary school children selected from the parents of students of Government Girls College (G.G.C.) Sokoto. However, only ninety-six (96) parents completed and returned questionnaire and thus participated in this study.

Instrument

Data was collected by means of questionnaire administered by the researcher. The questionnaire touched on aspects of parents educational aspirations for their children (boys and girls). The face and content validity of the instrument was validated by experts in Sociology and Sociology of Education. A pilot study was also conducted using parents of students of Nana Girls Secondary School Sokoto after which questions found unsuitable were either dropped or restructured respectively.

Data Analysis and Results of the Findings

Parents were required to indicate whether or not they liked their children to attend school. Analysis of their responses revealed that majority of the parents (96%) attached great importance to their children's education and had high educational aspirations for them. Only 2.1% of the parents wished their children to leave school as soon as possible without any educational qualifications. Over Eighty Seven percent (87.5%) wanted their children to go on full-time college and University (see table 1 below).

Table 1 : The Percentage of Parents who wanted their children to leave education at various stages

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Only Primary School	2	2.1
Only Secondary School	10	10.4
Up to >A= Level	16	16.7
Up to University Level	68	70.8
Total	96	100%

It is interesting to note that this high educational aspirations for their children may be explained by the growing awareness among parents that education is an

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instrument for rapid socio-economic and technological development.

Furthermore, analysis was done to find out interest and aspirations for various social groupings for their children's education. Generally speaking, the study revealed an overwhelming support for children's education among both the middle class and the working class. Although, it was found that working class parents showed lesser interest than parents in the middle class. Table 2 below depicts the picture.

Table 2 :The Percentage of Parents who wanted their children to leave education at various stages by social groupings.

Level of Education	Middle class N = 61		Working Class N = 35	
	F	%	F	%
Primary	-	0.0	2	5.7
Secondary	-	0.0	10	28.6
>A= Level	8	13.1	8	22.9
University	53	86.9	15	42.8
Total	61	100%	35	100%

The results of the study showed that the middle class parents put a higher premium on education than the working class parents possibly because the middle class parents had been exposed to many years of formal education.

In another development, the data was further analysed to examine the levels at which members of the social groupings wanted their sons and daughters to pursue education. The reason here was to find out whether or not there were differences in aspirations of parents for their male and female counterparts. Here, the investigation revealed much higher educational aspirations for boys than for girls, particularly among the working class group. (See Table 3 for details).

Table 3 :The Percentage of Parents who wanted their children to leave education at various stages by sex and social groupings.

Level of Education	Middle class N = 61		Working class N = 35	
	Girls %	Boys %	Girls %	Boys %
Primary	0.0	0.0	5.7	0.0
Secondary	0.0	0.0	28.6	0.0
>A= Level	13.1	0.0	14.3	8.6
University	37.7	49.2	14.3	28.6

As clearly indicated by the above table, none of the middle class parents wanted

their children either male or female to leave education at the Primary or secondary levels.. Majority of Parents in this group wanted both their sons (49.2%) and their daughters (37.7%) to attain University education. Only very few of them (13.1%) wanted their daughters to leave schooling at >A level qualifications.

Discussions:

The universal declaration of Human Rights which states that every human being irrespective of sex has the right to education, has been confirmed by the findings of the research. This was clearly manifested by the way parents attached great importance to their children's education and also the high educational aspirations shown by parents for their children. On the other hand, Junaid (1993) observed that the prejudice and beliefs of parents and husbands affects the educational and occupational life chances of girls and women in Sokoto state. This postulation tend to be at variance with the findings of the present study, i.e. the great importance attached to education by parents. However, this is not to refute earlier works, but the reason for the variance can be explained by the nature of the school used for the study (being elitist). Majority of the parents involved in the study (61) are middle class parents who have been exposed to many years of formal education.

It was further discovered that most parents were committed to some form of sexual equality. They wanted their daughters and sons to study the same subjects at school and they generally rejected the idea that boys education was more important than that of girls. This could be attributed to the fact that parents have realised the importance of education and the acquisition of knowledge for boys and girls as a means of meeting the challenges of life and social mobility.

Furthermore, the study indicated that the working class parents differ from the middle class parents in the importance they attached to their children's education. The middle class placed greater importance on education as well as had higher educational aspirations for their children than the working class parents. This confirms the postulation by Ezewu (1977) that social class background affects children's enrollment and performance in school. Lastly, only few parents among the working class group had preference for boys education especially at college and university levels.

Suggestions

From the finding of this study, the following suggestions are made:-

Mass literacy campaigns should be mounted by state and local governments with a view of educating and mobilizing parents generally on the importance of educating girls and women. This will go along way in changing the old-fashioned views of some parents about the education of girls and women in the state.

Parents should be encouraged by way of proper orientation to send their daughters to school. On the other hand the government should continue to provide free education in the state. This is a step towards reducing the burden experienced by the working class parents.

School teachers should make conscious efforts to help girls and women to realize

their abilities, interests, aptitudes and potentialities so that they can plan for the challenges ahead of them (development of society).

The school and home should co-operate for the socialisation and indeed the education of the child. The co-operation between the two powerful agents of education and socialisation may to a large extent influence access, retention and completion of schooling by young girls.

Both teachers and parents should work as an education team, because each of them could have a unique contribution towards the removal of all barriers to the active participation of girls and women in education.

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