ASSESSMENT OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON ATTRITION OF GIRL-CHILD FROM JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UYO SENATORIAL DISTRICT, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors that lead to attrition of the girl-child from secondary schools in Uyo Senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting 100 Junior Secondary School teachers in Uyo Senatorial District. A researcher-made structured questionnaire tagged "Teachers' Perception on Attrition of the Girl-child from school Questionnaire (TPAGSQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument comprised a demographic information section and another section with 23 items using a five-point Likert type scale which sought information on socio-cultural, economic, and school-related factors that cause attrition of girls from school. The questionnaire was validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was established using the Cronbach Alpha procedure. Three research questions were posed and answered using descriptive statistics. The result indicated that socio-cultural, economic and school-related factors cause attrition of girls from junior secondary schools. Prominent among the overall factors were unwanted teenage pregnancy, sickness or death of parent(s), poverty, lack of parental support, sexual harassment, poor performance and class repetition. The study concluded that all other factors are precursors to unwanted pregnancy. Based the findings, it was recommended among others, that girls should be exposed to sexuality education and enlightenment programme organized for parents on relevance of girl-child education in poverty eradication

Keywords: Attrition, Girl-Child, Education, Factors.

Introduction

Education is the foundation to improving lives of the citizenry and achieving sustainable development in any nation that places premium in educating people. Hence, major progress has been made towards increasing access to education and enrollment rates in schools, particularly for girls. Murthy (2017) asserted that of the 17 goals of sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 10 make an attempt to integrate concerns of the girl-child, directly or indirectly as the goals pertain to ending poverty, hunger, ensuring healthy lives, promoting equitable education, gender equality among others.

World Bank (2010) recognizes education as a fundamental human right and a catalyst for economic growth, as well as human development.   In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Right stated that girls' access to education, like that of boys is a human right (United Nations, UN, 2010). International Conferences and declarations emphasize the value of girls' literacy and access to school. The World Education Forum (2005) held in Dakar was aimed at achieving Education for All (EFA). Sequel to this, the third Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) sought to promote gender equality and empower women. Similarly SDGs which is a follow up of MDG(s) in goal 4 aimed at ensuring inclusive and quality education for all (girls inclusive) and promote lifelong learning and Goal 5 aimed at achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2016). Despite the universal declarations of Human Rights of right to quality education and improvements in recent years, female education remains a global area of concern as females are still largely out of school compared to their male counterpart (Fowler, 2016).

Theoretically, the study adopted the Human Capacity approach and Self-System Model of Motivational development (SSMMD). Mosha (2014) viewed human capacity approach as "the substantive freedom of people to lead the lives they have reason to value and enhance the real choices they have". Expounding on this approach, Mosha (2014) contended that the prevention measures for attrition from school is not enough to retain pupils in school if they do not see the benefit of staying in school. He therefore, advocated for policies that are sustainable and enforceable.

Self-System Model of Motivational Development-SSMMD lending credence to human capacity approach

…posits that individuals possess an innate need to connect with others and interact effectively with their environment. It also asserts that the relationship of a given social context (example, family support, teacher support, peer support) and an individual's self-system processes (example, perceived identification with school, perceived control) is influenced by the

extent to which the social context meets or ignores (fulfills or neglects) these basic needs (Skinner, 2009).

This model is applied to attrition of from secondary school. SSMMD assumes that self-system mediates the relation between a social context and school engagement while engagement mediates the relation between self-system process and student outcome. Influence of engagement-related behaviours contributes directly to students' achievement and attrition from school. Primarily, this relationship is understood in terms of student behavior.

Several factors have been identified as determinant of girls' attrition from school. They include socio-cultural, environmental, school-based, personal, economic factor (Maina, 2015; Olasunkanmi & Okaima, 2010; Mosha, 2014, Fowler, 2016).

Socio-cultural Factors

Patriarchal structure, a set of social relations with material base that enables males to dominate females, contributes to attrition of girls from school. This is confirmed by the study of FAWE (2001) which found that girls have low ability compared to boys and educating girls is a waste of resources. UNICEF (2006) noted that the patriarchal culture of boy preference has negative impact on dropping of girls. Boyle et al, (2002) in the report on a six country comparative analysis found that many household prefer boys' education to that of girls, associating it with greater economic rewards. This view collaborates with the finding of FAWE (2001) that girls have ability compared to boys therefore, educating them is a waste of money. These negative attitudes to girls underpinned by son preference have contributed to girls' attrition from school. Most cultures place limit to girls' education because of the sexuality. Once they attain puberty, they are confined with close watch aimed at securing them for marital prospects. These confines underscore the belief that very educated girls will have reduced chances of getting married; this therefore, informs attrition of girls from secondary school due to misguided perceptions of parents that girls are vulnerable and could either get pregnant or get into bad company (Mosha, 2014). According to Wagachira (2015).

Socio-cultural beliefs, custom, pregnancy, insecurity, girls' expectations and other traditions play a significant role in decision to withdraw girls from school and their own decision to drop-out of school. Initiation ceremonies still mark the transition from childhood to adulthood among communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Furthermore, some parents offer daughter, at early age, to marriage to attract dowry hence, the girls see hard work at school as unwarranted and eventually drop-out of school and settle for child-marriage. It can be said,

therefore, that girls are being inhibited from schooling by forced marriage and early pregnancies.

Another social reason for attrition of girls from school is the use of girls as workers in the home. They act as care-givers to their younger siblings, sick parents and in event of lost of parents, they become managers of homes. This collaborated with Mudemb (2013) who found that boys had numerous reasons for dropping out of school compared to females whose reasons were limited to pregnancy and sickness of parents. This traditional use of child for labour at home contributes to a very great extent to girls' attrition from school. In line with this observation, Wagachira (2015) found that home-based factor (family responsibility, sickness of parents, care of siblings, parental illiteracy) and socio-cultural factors (early marriage, pregnancy, son preference and so on) are determinants of attrition of girls from secondary schools in Tanzania.

Economic Factor

Several studies have identified poverty as the major barrier to families enrolling and retaining their children in schools. Poverty implies that parents cannot afford the cost of sending their children to school or unable to dispose with the labour provided by their children at home (Mosha, 2014).

Omoniyi and Oloruntegbe (2014) found that poverty and culture of early marriage as major factors of attrition of girls from school in Northern Nigeria and stated that poverty prevents many families from enrolling some or all of their children in school or forces them to withdraw their children prematurely from school because of the cost of education. When it becomes a matter of choice, the girl-child is the one not to be enrolled or withdrawn to make way for the boy-child.

Similarly, family responsibilities are not met due to poverty as such children; particularly girls are used for menial jobs, child-labour, hawking and the like. (Wagachira, 2015; Fowler, 2016). In another development, (Mayokun, et al, 2016) reported that poverty ranked highest in their study for reasons for dropping out of girls in the government secondary schools. The authors suspected that unemployment, lack of sufficient education, retrenchment of workers, poor remuneration may be contributory factors to the high level of poverty in Nigeria.

School-Related Factors

Several school-related factors play leading roles to attrition of girls from secondary school. Mudemb, (2013) in her study cited school related factors leading to drop-out such as curricular that reinforce traditional gender stereotype, inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of provision of sanitary

materials for girls, sexual harassment by male teachers and classmates, insufficient female teachers to act as role models, use of unsuitable teaching method, corporal punishment among others.

Mayokun, et al. (2016) argued that school environments, at times, are not conducive for effective learning and may lead to poor performance which results in repetition of class and consequently, attrition from school. Whereas Maina (2015) found that school factors that determine girls drop-out are presented as poor learning resources, insecurity, teacher quality, poor performance, distance from school among others, UNICEF (2009) reiterated that child-friendly schools should have fresh potable water within the school. In addition, it was found that in Africa the lack of basic sanitation facilities further decreases the enrolment of girls in various schools. Several studies have particularly linked the attendance of girls to school to the availability of adequate sanitation facilities (UNICEF, 2008). Admittedly, this is the crust of SDG 6 – ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Teacher attitude to students are linked to attrition of girls as they are more positive about participation, interest, and intelligence of boys rather than girls, believing that girls will dropout early (Maima, 2015). Sexual harassment of girls made some parents think that their daughters will not be safe with male teachers and even school boys (UNICEF, 2006) as they are threatened with sexual advances and harassment by couching, pitching and name calling. Some of these cases result in pregnancy and consequent attrition from school (Mosha, 2014). Another issue of insecurity of girls arises from the distance to schools. Long distance between school and home exposes girls to attacks and sexual insecurity. Also trekking long distance, sometimes, without food, exhausts children and is a potential reason for attrition from school particularly the girl child.

- Studies have identified some benefits of girl-child education.   Oladele (2012) stressed that girls' education is associated not only with returns of increasing income and economic growth but also with health benefits, AIDS   prevention, the empowerment of women and prevention of violence against women.

- The Global Campaign for Education (2010) reiterated that the lack of education poses health risks and enrolling girls in school is one of the most effective ways to benefit health.

- Ananga (2011) stated that girls' education contributes to economic productivity, social development, intergenerational education, social equity, and sustainability of development efforts. It also accelerates the progress and human development.

- It will also help achieve the SDGs pertaining to ending poverty, hunger, ensuring healthy lives, promoting equitable education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, decent work, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, peace and justices (Murthy, 2017).

The education of the girl-child stands to bring about positive change and break the cycle of poverty. Despite government policies and declarations of MDGs to ensure equal access to secondary education with follow-up of SDG 4; to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning and SDG5; to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, the reviewed studies showed evidences of non-access and retention of girls in school and consequent attrition. Those done in Nigeria were in the North and West. No study available to the researchers were conducted in either the South or East. Therefore, sought to investigate the South where Akwa Ibom State is located. The purpose of the study therefore, is to investigate the factors that lead to attrition of the girl-child from secondary schools in Uyo Senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically the study explored the extent to which socio-cultural, economic and school-related factors lead to attrition from school.

Research Questions
1. What are the socio-cultural factors influencing attrition of girls from Junior Secondary Schools in Uyo Senatorial District.
2. What are the economic factors influencing attrition of girls from Junior Secondary Schools in Uyo Senatorial District.
3. What are the school-related factors influencing attrition of girls from Junior Secondary Schools in Uyo Senatorial District.

Research Methods
The study adopted the descriptive survey design because information obtained from representative sample of teachers and findings of the study was generalized to the entire population. The population consisted of Junior Secondary School (JSS) teachers from Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The sample for the study was drawn using multi-stage sampling technique. This technique is deemed appropriate because it does not require the listing of all the members of the population before sampling is done rather sampling is done by first determining the primary sampling units in the population (Kpolovie, 2010). To select the sample for the study, first, three senatorial districts in Akwa Ibom State were identified as primary sampling units, and Uyo Senatorial District was randomly selected from the three existing Senatorial Districts. Uyo Senatorial district has nine Local

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Dr. Imoh B. Ekott, Ijeoma J. Chikezie
& Uyanga, Uwanaobong

Government Areas (LGAs) and all were selected. Finally, teachers were randomly selected from schools in the LGAs and a total sample size of 100 teachers were obtained.

The instrument for data collected was a researcher-made structure questionnaire tagged "Teachers' Perception on Attrition of the Girl-child from school Questionnaire (TPAGSQ). It comprised two parts. Part A sought the demographic information on participants' gender and proprietorship of school whereas Part B consisted of 23 – item five – point Likert type scale, eliciting information on teachers' perceptions on some socio-cultural, economic and school related factors that lead to attrition of girls from junior secondary school. The scale adopted five response categories with Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Undecided (U). The instrument was validated by colleagues in measurement and evaluation and sociology of education. Their suggestions and comments were integrated in the final version of the instrument. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability technique and a coefficient of .78 was obtained indicating that the instrument was reliable and therefore, suitable for data collection.

The data collected were analyzed using statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 (SPSS-20) computer software. The data analysis comprised descriptive statistics for answering research questions and independent t-test for testing hypotheses at .05 alpha level. The responses to the items of the instruments were weighted SA(4), A (3), D (2) SD (1) and U (0), with boundaries of each response in the 5 point scale from 0 – 4 calculated by dividing the serial with 4 by number of responses 5 and found to be 0.89. This was obtained following Topkaya (2010) pattern of analysis. This value was used in interpreting the mean values. Thus depending on the calculation, the accepted boundaries for each response are presented below:

$$0 \ = \ 0 + 0.8 \qquad = \ 0.8$$
$$1 \ = \ 0.8 + 0.8 = \ 1.6$$
$$2 \ = \ 1.6 + 0.8 = \ 2.4$$
$$3 \ = \ 2.4 + 0.8 = \ 3.2$$
$$4 \ = \ 3.2 + 0.8 = \ 4.0$$

Therefore, based on the calculations the participants' range of mean scores were assumed and interpreted to be

0.00	-	0.80	Undecided
0.81	-	1.60	Strongly Disagree
1.61	-	2.40	Disagree
2.41	-	3.20	Agree
3.21	-	4.00	Strongly Agree

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Dr. Imoh B. Ekott, Ijeoma J. Chikezie
& Uyanga, Uwanaobong

From the above the decision rule was 2.40. These mean values enough to interpret the results and answer the research questions, however, the standard deviation (SD) scores were also presented to show how the individual raw scores from which the mean was computed were dispersed.

Results

The results of this study were obtained from the research questions answered through the data collected and analyzed. Descriptive statistics was used by computing item bt item mean and standard deviation.

Research Question 1: What are the socio-cultural factors influencing attrition of girls from Junior Secondary Schools in Uyo Senatorial District.

Table 1:   **Mean and standard deviation of socio-cultural factors influencing attrition of girls from JSS in Uyo Senatorial District**.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Some parents regard education of girls as waste of money	100	2.42	1.04	Agree
2	Girls from literate parents are more likely to be retained in school	100	2.46	1.27	Agree
3	Girls from cultures that prefer boys are more likely to drop out of school	100	2.60	1.02	Agree
4	Some girls drop out because they marry off early in order to bring in bride price	100	2.82	1.10	Agree
5	Some girls dropout of school because of sickness/death of parents	100	3.07	1.04	Agree
6	Girls are left at home as care givers to their younger siblings	100	2.98	1.03	Agree
7	Some girls dropout of school due to unwanted teenage pregnancy	100	3.39	.76	Strongly agree
8	Peer group influence can result in girls dropping out of school	100	2.85	.96	Agree
	Overall average		2.82	1.03	Agree

Table 1 revealed that the mean score of socio-cultural factors that cause attrition of girls from school ranged 2.42 (agree) to 3.39 (strongly agree) and the standard deviation .76 – 1.27. The overall mean score was 2.82 indicating that participants agreed that all the issues raised are socio-cultural factors that

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Dr. Imoh B. Ekott, Ijeoma J. Chikezie
& Uyanga, Uwanaobong

cause attrition of girls from schools. However, participants strongly agreed to the fact that unwanted teenage pregnancy, item 7 with mean score of 3.39, is responsible for attrition of girls from schools.

Research Question 2: What are the economic factors influencing attrition of girls from Junior Secondary Schools in Uyo Senatorial District.

Table 2.   Mean scores and standard deviation of economic factors influencing attrition of girls from JSS in Uyo Senatorial District.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
9	Girls of poor parents are most likely to drop out of school	100	2.89	.98	Agree
10	Non-payment of school fees make a girl-child to dropout from school	100	2.66	1.33	Agree
11	Lack of parental support can to a girl-child dropping out of school	100	3.10	.86	Agree
12	Girls are subjected to menial jobs/street vendor thereby cannot be retain	100	2.32	1.29	Agree
13	Lack of fund to provide learning resources for girls can make them dropout of school	100	2.09	1.22	Disagree
14	Hunger leads to dropping out of school by girls	100	2.43	1.21	Agree
15	Some girls dropout of school due to hardship	100	2.72	1.08	Agree
	Overall average		2.60	1.14	Agree

Table 2 indicated that the mean score of economic factors that cause attrition of girls from school ranged 2.09 (disagree) to 3.10 (agree) and the standard deviation .86 – 1.33. The overall mean score was 2.60 indicating that participants agreed that all the issues raised are economic factors that cause attrition of girls from schools. However, participants disagreed to the fact that lack of fund to provide learning resources for girls can cause attrition from school as represented by item 13 with mean score of 2.09.

Research Question 3: What are the school-related factors influencing attrition of girls from Junior Secondary Schools in Uyo Senatorial District.

Table 3. **Mean and standard deviation of school-related factors influencing attrition of girls from JSS in Uyo Senatorial District**.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
16	Some girls living far distance from are likely to dropout from school	100	2.42	1.16	Agree
17	Low academic performance can scare some girls away from school	100	2.58	1.25	Agree
18	Some girls dropout of school whenever they are asked to repeat a class	100	2.57	1.14	Agree
19	Unavailability of necessary teaching/learning resources make difficult for girls to remain in school	100	2.21	1.13	Disagree
20	Some teachers are hostile to female students	100	2.37	1.13	Agree
21	Sexual harassment from fellow male students and teachers brings about dropping	100	2.71	1.06	Agree
22	Students that live very far from school usually dropout of school	100	2.17	1.17	Agree
23	Unsafe learning environment contributes to dropping out of school	100	2.34	1.22	Agree
	Overall average		2.42	1.16	Agree

The result on Table 3 showed that the mean score of school-related factors that cause attrition of girls from school ranged 2.21 (disagree) to 2.57 (agree) and the standard deviation 1.06 – 1.25. The overall mean score was 2.42 indicating that participants agreed that all the issues raised are school-related factors that cause attrition of girls from schools. However, participants disagreed to the fact that unavailability of necessary teaching and learning resources make difficult for girls to remain in school as can be seen in item 13 with mean score of 2.21.

Discussions

The study explored specifically, socio-cultural, economic and school-related factors that are responsible attrition girls from junior secondary schools in Uyo Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It was found that socio-cultural factors contribute to attrition of girls from schools. These factors include some parents regarding education of girls as waste of money, patriarchal culture that prefer boys to girls, giving off girls for early marriage

in order to bring in bride price, dropping out due to sickness of parents or care of siblings, peer group, literacy of parents and dropping out of school due to unwanted teenage pregnancy. The findings supported earlier studies. Wagachira (2015) found that home-based factor like family responsibility, sickness of parents, care of siblings, parental illiteracy and cultural factors such as early marriage, pregnancy, son preference, among others are determinants of attrition of girls from secondary schools. Mudemb (2013) affirmed that the socio-cultural factors that influence girls' attrition from school are limited to pregnancy and sickness of parents. Some of these observations may br attributed to ignorance on the part of the parents and the girls, culture, poverty that will result to giving off the girl to wealthy man to collect bride price.

Economic factors were also found to cause attrition of girls from secondary schools. All the participants agreed that poverty, lack of school fees, lack of parental support, hardship, hunger and subjecting girls to menial jobs and street hawing lead to girls attrition from schools. All these factors can be summarized as poverty. However, the participants disagreed that lack of fund to provide learning resources for girls can make them dropout of school. The findings agreed with those of Wagachira, (2015); Fowler, (2016) who carried out their study in Kenya and with Omoniyi and Oloruntegbe (2014); Mayokun, et al. (2016) who did their in Nigeria. They, in their independent studies found that poverty is the major barrier to parents sending their children to school, girls in particular, as when it come to choice, boys are retained in schools while girls will be subjected to child labour and other menial jobs to get money to care for the family and probably train the boys. The finding on provision of learning resources for girls is surprising since lack of fund to procure those resources entails poverty.

Schools related factors found as influencing attrition of girls from school ware presented as distance school from home, poor academic performance, repetition of class, hostility of some teachers to female students, sexual harassment and unsafe learning environment. Unavailability of necessary teaching and learning resources was not regarded by many, as a factor that could lead to attrition of girls from school. Mudemb, (2013) agreeing with the factors found in this study, also presented other school related factors leading to drop-out such as curricular that reinforce traditional gender stereotype, inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of provision of sanitary materials for girls, insufficient female teachers to act as role models, use of unsuitable teaching method, corporal punishment among others. Maina (2015) and Mayokun, et al (2016) separate studies were also in agreement. The finding on availability of teaching and learning resources is in contrast with Maina (2016), who found that poor learning resources in the school can cause attrition of girls from

school. Evidently, poor academic performance results in class repetition and it lead to attrition in two ways. On one hand, repetition of class impacts negatively on the girl's self-esteem and self-efficacy, on the other hand, parents may not afford additional school fee for class repetition.

Conclusions

This study identified three major factors that cause attrition of girls from school namely socio-cultural, economic and school-related factors. Each category presented prominent emerging factors. From socio-cultural, unwanted teenage pregnancy emerged and sickness or death of parent(s), from economic, poverty and lack of parental support emerged and from school-related factors, sexual harassment, poor performance and class repetition emerged. The most prevalent causes of attrition of girls from the aforementioned are unwanted pregnancy followed by sickness/death of parents and then lack of parental support. Admittedly, other emerging factors predispose the girls to unwanted pregnancy.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Enlightenment programmes should be intensified for parents by the government and Non-Government Organization (NGO) on the relevance of girl-child education in nation development and eradication of poverty.
2. School guidance counselors should expose female students to sexuality education in order to avoid activities that could lead to premarital sex and consequently, unwanted pregnancy.
3. Stakeholders in education and good spirited individuals should give bursary awards and scholarship to indigent and hardworking female student as a motivation for them.
4. Government should to be proactive in implement the policy of inclusive education which is the thrust the SDGs – 4.
5. Government should put every mechanism in place to ensure the Universal Basic Education, which implies free and compulsory education up to first three years in the secondary school, is implemented to the letter.
6. NGOs should participate in promoting the right of the girl-child in matters relating to their education particularly in cultures where patriarchal structure is practiced.
7. Government through the Ministry of Education should develop and implement policies that will re-absorb into the school system, post-attrition girls due to pregnancy.

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Dr. Imoh B. Ekott, Ijeoma J. Chikezie
& Uyanga, Uwanaobong

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Dr. Imoh B. Ekott, Ijeoma J. Chikezie
& Uyanga, Uwanaobong

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