

Girl Child Education: A Means of Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) In Nigeria

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04958>

Published November 02, 2025

Citation: Ringim N.Y. (2025) Girl Child Education: A Means of Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) In Nigeria, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*,6(6),31-38

Abstract: *This study examined the extent to which girl child-education can facilitate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample of the study comprised of 245 senior secondary school girls respondents randomly selected from three states in Nigeria. The instrument which was validated by three experts in measurement and evaluation was used to elicit information from the participants. Having tested the reliability of the instrument, a coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. Data collected were analysed using means ratings and cumulative mean scores. Results revealed that forced marriage, sexual harassment, unwanted pregnancy, poverty, and negative self-concept are possible factors that militate against effective girl-child education in Nigeria. The study also revealed that girl-child education could to a very large extent promote women empowerment in Nigeria and that educating the girl child could be a strong factor that can facilitate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. It was, therefore, recommended among others, that the three tiers of government should ensure that policies meant to foster equal access to formal education for both genders are not only formulated but politically backed up.*

Keywords: Girl Child, Education, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

All through the years, the education of the women has been an issue of concern to the government, the society, organizations like the labour union, untied nation organization (UNO), world Health Organization (WHO) just to mention a few. Education refers to the transmission of knowledge, skills and values necessary for the achievement of progress and development in all spheres of life. It is the prerequisite for any nation to attain development and lack of education breeds poor intellectual capabilities, low productivity rate, poor health condition and low quality of human

resource (chibuzor, 2006). Girl Child education is the the training geared towards the development of the total personality of the female gender in any society. Such education, according, according to Bukoye (2007), should aim at promoting the development of the whole nature of women physically, intellectually, morally, socially, and politically, to make them participate actively in the nation's economic development. With adoption of the sustainable development in the nation's 2015, particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality), the community reaffirmed its commitment to empowering girls through education. When girls are educated, the ripple effects are seen in reduced poverty, improved health outcomes and enhanced economic growth (UNESCO, 2016). Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a critical element in achieving sustainable development. In the context of Nigeria, the education of the girl child remains a significant challenge due to socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers. Despite progress since the millennium development Goals (MDGs), which emphasized gender parity education, disparities persist. It is against this background that the present study tries to explore the role of girl child education in achieving the SDGs in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The problem that necessitated this study is that despite all measures taken by the government to make sure SDGs are achieved by 2030, there still exists gender inequality. Girl children are still suffering from poverty, lack of educational opportunity, lack of security, street hawking, and cultural norms that that still threatening the lives of the female folks in the country {Anene,2011}. These challenges hinder Nigeria's overall progress towards meeting the SDGs. Therefore, it become crucial to evaluate how girl child education can be used implemented more effectively as a mean for achieving these global development goals.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the contribution of girl child education to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria.
2. To analyze the impact of girl child education on specific SDGs such as quality education and gender equality.
3. To identify the major barriers to girls' child education in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following three research questions guided the study

1. What are the possible factors that militate against girl-child education in Nigeria?
2. To what extent can girl-child education promote women empowerments in Nigeria?
3. To what extent can girl-child education facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (equality education) and SDG5 (gender equality) underline the importance of inclusive and equality education for all. In Nigeria,

the education of the girl child is critical in achieving these goals, as it has far-reaching implication for national development, poverty reduction, and societal well-being (Rachel, 2020). The girl child is the female gender in any society. The main goal of girl child education is to promote the development of the whole nature of a woman, physically, intellectually, morally, socially, and politically, so that she will be actively involved in the nation's economic development (Bukoye, 2007) dasheen and dasheen (2004) asserted that girl child education is a necessity, not a luxury, when compared to the role played by women in the home, society and nation as wives, mothers, caretakers and in cases as bread winners. This assertion complements the popular axiom which says "educate a woman you educate a nation and next generation of men and woman, but educate a man you educate an individual" (FRN, 2004).

In addition, educating girls yields numerous benefits, including improved health outcomes, economic growth, and the promotion of gender equality. Educated women are more likely to participate in the labour force make informed health decisions, and contribute to the education of their by circle of poverty (Atoma, 2012).

The major challenges to girl child education include society-culture and religious ignorance, economic constraints, insecurity and conflict. Deep-rooted cultural norms and mistaken religious beliefs often prioritize male education over female, leading to forced marriages and reduced educational opportunities for girls. In Kano state, for example, these factors significantly hinder girls' access to education (Nasidi and Wali, 2019).

Poverty remains a significant barrier, with many families unable to afford school fees, uniforms, transportation. Saka-Olukungboye et al, (2022) report that in Akoko, Ondo State, Economic hardship has been identified as primary impediment to girls' education. To enhance girl child education in Nigeria, Government especially at the grass root level should step up enforcing laws that mandate compulsory education for all. There is a need for raising awareness about the importance of girls' education through community programmes and religious retention in schools (Udoh and Ekanem, 2023). Girl child education is not only a fundamental human right but also a catalyst for achieving the SDGs in Nigeria. Addressing the multifaceted challenges require a concerted effort from government, communities and international partners to create enabling environment for girls to thrive educationally.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A Descriptive survey design was used to gather data from a range of respondents.

Population of the study

The population for the study covered school aged girls, parent, teachers, education officers, and local government officials.

Sample and sampling Techniques

The study employed a multi-staged sampling technique to ensure representativeness across Nigeria's diverse regions. Three states were purposively selected – one each from the Northern, Southern, and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria. The sample for the study will comprise 150 senior secondary school Girls, 40 teachers, 40 parents, and 15 education officers. This means a total of 245 respondents were selected.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for the data collection was questionnaire.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data that was obtained for the research.

Question 1: What are the possible factors that militate against girl-child education in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean ratings on the factors that militate against girls child education in Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	REMARK
1	Early marriage is one of the factors that can kick against girl child educating in Nigeria.	120 480	73 219	28 56	19 19	240 759	3.22	Accepted
2	Negative attitude of the society towards female children militates against their education in Nigeria	97 388	91 273	31 62	21 21	240 744	3.1	Accepted
3	Anti-social vice such as sexual harassments, rape teenage pregnancy are possible factors that militate against girls child education in Nigeria.	100 400	98 194	22 44	20 20	240 748	3.1	Accepted
4	Poverty level among Nigerian families could militate against girl child education	98 396	91 273	30 60	20 20	240 749	3.1	Accepted
5	Poor self-concept and low self-esteem by girls themselves could militate against their going to school.	112 448	85 255	25 50	18 18	240	3.2	Accepted
	Cumulative mean						3.14	

Source: Field Survey

Result in Table 1 show that items outline in the table are possible factors that militate against girl-child education in Nigeria. This is justified because a cumulative mean of 3.14 which was greater than the decision Point of 2.5 was obtained.

Research Question 2

To what extent can girl-child education promote women empowerment in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating on the extent to which girl-child education can promote women empowerment in Nigeria

S/N	Items	VLE	LAE	LOE		VLE	X	REMARK
1	Educating the child will help empower women politically	115 460	80 240	30 60	15 15	240	3.2	Accepted
2	Educating the girl child will help empower women to contribute in the decision making on matters concerning them	110 440	92 276	28 56	10 10	240	3.14	Accepted
3	It will help to empower women by making them skillful and good entrepreneurs	101 404	90 270	39 78	10 10	240	3.2	Accepted
4	Educating the girl child will empower her to become medical doctors, doctors in academics, engineers professors and other related viable professions	109 436	91 273	30 60	10 10	240	3.2	Accepted
5	Educating women will make them to be less dependent on their husbands and to assist them in building up the homes Cumulative mean	100 400	109 327	20 40	11 11	240	3.2	Accepted

Source: Field survey

Results in table 2 show, a cumulative mean of 3.2 which is greater than the decision point of 2.5 it, therefore, shows that girl-child education can promote women empowerment to a very large extent.

Question 3: To what extent can girl-child education facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean rating on the extent to which girl-child education can facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	REMARK
1	Educating the girl child will help reduce the rate of maternal and child mortality in Nigeria	90 360	105 315	25 50	20 20	240	3.1	Accepted
2	Educating the girl child will help reduce diseases and poverty level in Nigeria	100 400	88 264	32 64	20 20	240	3.11	Accepted
3	Educating the girl child will help improve their health condition and personal hygiene	112 448	85 225	30 60	13 13	240	3.23	Accepted
4	Educating the girl child will reduce illiteracy rate and promote women empowerment	105 420	88 264	28 56	19 19	240	3.6	Accepted
5	Educating the girl children will help reduce poverty level in Nigeria Cumulative mean	100 400	98 294	22 44	20 20	240	3.15 3.5	Accepted

Source: field survey

Results in Table 3 show that educating the girl-children in Nigeria would to a large extent facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. This was justified because a cumulative mean of 3.5 which was greater than the decision point of 2.5 was obtained.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study reveal that force and early marriage, poor self-concept, poverty, street hawking, sexual harassment, and teenage unwanted pregnancy are among the possible factors that militate against girl-child education in Nigeria. Plausible reasons for this could be as a result of high poverty level among Nigerian families coupled with much anti-social behaviours such as kidnapping, rape, and sexual harassment. The story of the Chibok girls is a typical example. Many parents may use that as an excuse for not sending their girl-children to school. This is in line with Akunyili (2006) and Maduagwu (2010) who stated that poverty has personified itself, as it wears the face of a woman in this country, noting that women form more than half of the total population of this country and about 60% of them are illiterates. The findings of the study also revealed that girl child education can, to a large extent, promote women empowerment in Nigeria. This is in line with Aliyu (2001) who posits that education is a peaceful tool for empowering women socially, politically, and economically. Dasheen and Dasheen (2004) point out that when a woman is

educated, the whole nation is educated. And when women are educated, they contribute significantly to the economic life of the nation.

The study also found that educating the girl child could be a strong weapon for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. This is because when women are educated, they shaer in the labour force, contribute to the rise of the economy, become more involved in micro, small, and mega enterprises and their income increasingly necessary to all household (Denga and Okoja, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the role of female education in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. The study revealed that force marriage, unwanted pregnancy, raping, girl- hawking, economic hardship, and poor self-concept are possible factors that militate against girl child education in Nigeria. The study also revealed girl-child education can, to a very large extent, promote women empowerment in Nigeria. The study also found that educating the girl-child could be a strong weapon for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. It was, therefore, concluded that education of girl children could be a valuable instrument if the SDGs must be achieved in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. To achieve the SDGs, government should subsidise female education by giving scholarship to girls from poor families and lowering the fees paid by girls in secondary schools as well as recruiting qualified teachers.
2. Given the fact that girls' involvement in household chores reduces time spent at school, policies are required which should reduce the time on household chores and release girls to attend schools.
3. Parents should be encouraged through enlightenment campaigns, seminars or workshops to have positive perception towards girl-child education with emphasis on the benefit derivable from parenting educated daughters.
4. The three tiers of government should ensure that policies meant to foster equal access to formal education for both genders are not only formulated but politically backed up to ensure its success.
5. Government should also enforce legislations already enacted to combat those practices and customs that tend to undermined girl-child participation in formal education.

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