

## **Poverty: As an Impediment to Girl-Child Education in Akoko Ondo State**

**Nurudeen Saka-Olokungboye<sup>1</sup>; F. M. Ilugbami<sup>1</sup>; Joseph Olanrenwaju Ilugbami<sup>2</sup>,  
Olaleke Olateru-Olagbegi<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Sciences, <sup>2</sup>Department of Social Development,

<sup>3</sup>Department of Public Administration.

1, 2, 3 Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, P.M.B 1019, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

tesdada77@gmail.com

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**ABSTRACT:** *In recent times, attention has been focused on girl-child education globally and particularly in developing countries. Female-child education is very crucial for the development of any society such that any deliberate neglect of their education could cause danger for the entire society. This is so because female education has been found to have a more significant impact on poverty reduction, reduction of HIV/AIDs and provision of sustainable development. Unfortunately, many factors have been impeding girl-child education in Nigeria. The paper, therefore examined poverty as an impediment to girl-child education in Akoko, Ondo State. The paper was qualitative research. Data were obtained from 200 respondents who are mostly parents using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was duly validated and inferential method was used to analyze the data collected. Results from the study revealed indices of poverty such as low earning of some parents, poor parental educational attainment, some parents being poor and having too many children as issues impeding girl-child education in Akoko, Ondo State that need to be addressed. It was concluded that children, respective of their gender be given equal access and opportunities of qualitative education to enable them reach their full potentials and contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government should make education compulsory, free and affordable to all children especially the girl-child, provision of employment opportunities to citizens to empower them to be financially stable to cater for their family need, sensitization of members of public on the number of children they could have and provision of interest free student loans especially to the girl children.*

**KEYWORDS:** Akoko, Girl-child education, impediment, poverty.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of girl-child education has continued to generate a lot of concerns in developing countries of the world, most especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of girls-child

do not attend school (Ishaku, 2020). Education is one of the fundamental human rights that should be provided to all citizens regardless of age, status and sex (Offor et al., 2021). The fundamental strategy for development lies in the education of women as an important foundation to improve their status (Nmadu et al., 2010). Similarly, World Bank (1994) suggested that the most effective investment for achieving development goals lies in educating of a girl-child. Many reasons had been advanced to the importance of girl-child education such as a platform for accessing a variety of opportunities in life, less-susceptibility to HIV/AIDs, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. According to Nmadu et al. (2020), access to basic education especially of a girl- child is an antidote to mortality and fertility. Education is a pivot for change in a democratic society and a tool for political, economic, and technological development (Offor et al., 2021). According to World Bank (1994) education is an important means through which the society reproduces itself, passes its culture from one generation to another as a dynamic instrument of social change and development. Education goes beyond to get jobs but for the individual and social development (Abbagana, 2013). The girl-child education is key to the overall development of any country, as educated girls are equipped with the skills, knowledge, habit which enable them to be an economically productive member of the society. As a future mother and homemaker, Abbagana (2013) asserts that for the social, cultural and developmental values of the society to be maintained, girl-child needs to be educated at least to secondary school to have the ability to make a modern home, stable family, maintain higher standard of cleanliness and attractive environment.

According to UNESCO report cited in Ishaku (2020), 132 million girls globally are out of school, including 34.4 million within the primary school age, 30 million of lower – secondary school age, and 67.4 million of upper – secondary school age. This estimate is a pointer to the fact that a huge numbers of girl-child around the world do not access education which is a fundamental human right (Offorma, 2010). Similarly, UNICEF (2007) reported that the worldwide figure for out-of-school children is estimated around 121 million, out of which 65 million were girls, approximately 53.8% of the estimate figure, out of which over 80% of these girls live in Sub-Saharan Africa (Grace, 2010; Ishaku, 2020). Girl-child education in Africa has continued to suffer series of setbacks as the continent recorded lowest in the world in term of primary school completion rates and also has the largest concentration of the world's out-of- school children. Ibrahim (2012) cited in Ishaku (2020) noted that in 15 countries prevalent with out-of-school children, eight are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Offorma (2009) cited in Ishaku (2020) observed that the number of girls out of school in Sub-Saharan Africa each year has risen from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2002. Though, the problem of lack of access to education of a girl-child is a global challenge but more pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise in parts of the world where women are strongly undervalued, young girls may not be given the same access to education as boys-child as they are treated differently from boys. According to Ishaku (2020), Muhammed Buhari, the Nigeria President as quoted on January 16, 2020 said Nigeria has 13.2 million out-of-school children, out of which the girl-child accounts for 60% of this figure. Nevertheless, the Northern part of Nigeria accounts for high prevalence of lack of access to education by girl-child, the menace is a national issue as other parts of the country have a significant number of girl-child who do not go to school.

In Nigeria, Africa and beyond, crucial issues in girl-child education have been impeded by social-cultural factors such as traditional beliefs, preference for male child, early marriage, illiteracy, poverty and other hosts of cultural reasons. Cultural beliefs that educated female girls do not make a submissive wife, pride and promiscuity have been attributed to neglect of girl-child education (Rufai, 1996). These cultural beliefs are unfounded and have not been empirically proven but sadly they have continued to impede girl-child education especially in Sub-Saharan Africa countries.

The 1990 World Declaration on Education for all has not been achieved in Nigeria especially female education despite series of strategies, policies and programme conceived and implemented by successive governments. Gender disparity in education continues to exist in Nigeria with National literacy rate for females reported to be at 48% compared to 73% males, with some northern states having even far lower rates of female literacy and school enrolment (Nmadu et al., 2010). Pincus (2008) adduced that unequal treatment of women especially girl-child continues to pervade social life and often the discrimination are built into social structure of the society as institutionalized discrimination.

In Nigeria, girl-child education has continued to nose-dive with difference encumbrance peculiar to different regions. In the northern Nigeria, girl-child education has been hindered by cultural belief that women education ends in kitchen and home, thereby encouraging a lukewarm attitude of parents towards, exposing girl-child to western education and early marriage (Umar, 1996). Female child only plays a subordinate role to male child in Eastern Nigeria. According to Offor (2021) when schools was established in Anambra state, the enrolment of male-child were higher than female-child because of cultural reasons. Most girl-child between the age of 6-17 who are expected to be in school are found roaming about the streets engaging in hawking to support the financial status of their families. The attitude of the Yorubas towards education especially girl-child has never been in doubt because the free primary education policy of the government of Western Region of Nigeria in 1955 was universal and compulsory for all child respective of gender. However, other factors such as early marriage, teen pregnancy, poverty etc. have impeded girl-child education is Southwestern, Nigeria despite the gains of the 1955 Western Region of Nigeria universal and compulsory education policy for all child.

Akoko, a sub-group in Northern eastern part of the Yoruba has had its share in impediments affecting girl-child education. One of such factors identify as impediment to girl-child education in the area is poverty. According to Danaan (2018) poverty has been suggested to be the major obstacle to Nigeria's social-economic development. It is has become a national problem despite several interventions aimed at alleviating it by successive governments. A new World Bank Report "A Better Future for All Nigerian: Nigeria Poverty Assessment, 2022" which draws mainly on the 2018/19 Nigeria Living Standards Survey (NLSS) indicates that as many as 4 in 10 Nigerians now live below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2022). It has been further projected by World Bank that the number of poor people in Nigeria will reach 95 million in 2022 (Olawoyin, 2022). This will make the country the world capital of poverty.

The contributing factors to poverty such as unemployment, income inequality and poor education system have continued to be an impediment to education of girl-child in Nigeria. Akoko, being one of the averagely developed areas in Ondo State (Morenikeji, 1995) with limited resources for educating either a girl or a boy child, has resulted in the unfair treatment of women, especially with regards to education of the male-child than the female-child.

Data obtained from the Ondo State Ministry of Education, Akure by the Department of Research and Statistics, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, revealed that the Ondo North Senatorial District which comprised of the four Akoko Local governments, Owo and Ose has the lowest ratio of girl-child enrolment in public secondary schools in the state (Facts & Figures on Ondo State, 2010). The figure was put as thus; Ondo North Senatorial District 32,720, Ondo Central Senatorial District 43,892 and Ondo South Senatorial District 38,124 respectively. These figures implied that enrolment of girl-child into secondary school which has been considered as the least, for educational attainment of a female child (Abbagana, 2013), has been very poor in Ondo North Senatorial district and in particular, Akoko areas.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to examine poverty as an impediment to girl-child education in Akoko areas and recommend solutions to effectively tackle the problem as an end can only come to poverty through educating the girl-child.

### **Research Questions**

What are the impediments of girl-child education in Akoko areas, Ondo State?

What are the measures to be taken to ensure that the girl child are encouraged to go to School?

### **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

#### **Girl-Child**

Biologically, a girl-child is a female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This is the age of young adult that covers periods such as crèche, nursery, primary and secondary school. During this period, the young girl is totally under the care of an adult who is either her parents or guardians and older siblings. In developmental psychological perspective, it is a period made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages. The girl-child, during this period, builds and develops her personality and character through observation, repetition and imitation. The developmental stages of her physical, social, spiritual and emotional progress to the peak at the young adult stage (Offorma, 2009).

#### **Education**

Education is derived from two Latin words, educare, which translate 'to lead out' or educere', which means to nourish that which had been led-out (Chukwu et al., 2020). Longman dictionary of contemporary English (5th ed.) defines education as a process of teaching and learning. A process through which young adults are equipped to lead productive lives according to their talents and interest (Akaraga & Ongong, 2013; Onyide et al., 2015). Similarly, it is the systematic development and the cultivation of the mind and other natural power (Chukwusa, 2011). Education be it formal or informal, helps members of society to acquire suitable

appreciation of their cultural heritage and to live a fully more satisfying live (Okere, 1990; Saka- Olokungboye, et al., 2022). Through education, learners are taught, trained and adequately guide to acquire relevant skills and knowledge on how to adapt to live and contribute meaningfully to their society.

### **Akoko, Ondo State**

Akoko are large cultural sub-group in the North eastern part of the Yoruba in the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The area spans from Ondo State in Southwest to Edo State in South South Nigeria. Akoko, as a sub group make up 20.3% of the population of Ondo State (Census, 2006). They constitute four (4) Local Government Councils out of the 18 Local Government Areas in Ondo State namely; Akoko North East, Akoko North-West, Akoko South-East and Akoko South-West, as well as the Akoko Edo Local Government Council in Edo State. The Akoko occupy a frontier zone of Yorubaland and are bound to the north by the Owe Okun Yorubas of Kogi State, and the Ebira ethnic group in Kogi State, to the West by the Ekitis, to the South by the Owos and the Owan/Ora, and to the east by the Afemai groups. Akoko comprise about 45 towns and villages with no distinctive local dialect. Major settlements in Akoko include; Ikare, Oka, Oba, Ikun, Arigidi, Irun, Ogbagi, Okeagbe, Ikaram, Ibaram, Akungba, Ajowa, Oyin, Supare, Erusu, Epinmi, Isua, Iboropa and other autonomous communities of varying sizes.

### **Poverty**

The state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. Poverty is said to exist when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. It is also a lack of wealth or income such that individuals and households do not have the means to subsist or acquire the necessities for a flourishing life. This means being so poor as to struggle to obtain food, clothing, shelter and medicines. Baratz and Grigsby (1971) defined poverty as a severe lack of physical and mental well-being, closely associated with inadequate economic resources and consumption. Similarly, the United Nations (1995) defined poverty as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. Poverty depends not only on income but also on access to services. Poverty according to the World Bank (1990) is the inability to attain a minimal standard of living

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The past decades have witnessed the emergence of a new term to describe world's female population from birth to the age of 14. The new term for this population; "the girl child". This term was introduced in growing recognition of the way girls-child face discrimination and oppression by feminist scholars in early 1980s (Heidemann & Ferguson, 2009). Since then, a considerable attention has been paid to the girl-child in the literature both in academic and non-academic highlighting the plight of the girl-child especially in the arena of education. According to Agaba (2007) in his work attempting to explore the relationships among poverty, gender, gendered perceptions, and power relations and their impact on girl's education, found out that poverty in poor families and hardships such as orphanhood negatively affect girl-child

education in Uganda. This is consistent with Mercy (2017) who found out in her work “an assessment of factor militating against girl child education in Enugu state, Nigeria” that poverty necessitates girl-child to engage in street hawking to support their poor families, and, it’s one of the factors affecting girl-child education in Enugu State. She recommended outright banning of street hawking as one of the actions that could be taken to address these challenges.

Similarly, Mohanty (2003) in ‘Investigating the influence of the home environment on the education of the child studying at primary level, parents’ attitudes toward educating the girl child, and the problems faced by the parents in educating the girl child, the study which sought to investigate families in the Chhotta Bhusna village of West Bengal, India. The author found out that support for girl’s education was non supportive by some families in the study area due to financial constraint. Tyokaa, et al., (2014) in their work ‘problems and challenges of girl-child education in Nigeria’ with focus on Kalgo Local Government in Kebbi State, found out that problems such as cultural and religious misconceptions and also, poverty have continued to hinder parents’ ability to provide basic education for girl-child in the study area. The authors believed that alleviation of poverty should be embarked on by the Kebbi State Government as one of the ways to tackle the problems and challenges of girl-child education.

In the work of Adam (2016) ‘Correlate of poverty and culture on girl-child out of schools in Bauchi State, Nigeria’, the study found out that there is a relationship between poverty and girl-child out of school. The author observed that this relationship has continued to encourage girl-child out of schools in the state and therefore recommended that government should introduce and maintain a school feeding program as one of the ways to ensure increase enrolment of girl-child in school in Bauchi state, Nigeria. The findings of Adam (2016) that poverty is a strong factor in girl-child out of school is consistent with the work of Amadi (2013) “Socio-cultural factors on the girl-child education in secondary schools in Ihiala local government area of Anambra State, Nigeria”. The study found out that finance played a significant effect on the girl-child education. While rich parents can afford to send their children to school, poor parents cannot. In most instance, because of poverty, they will prefer to, send only male-child to school while girl-child hawks around to support the family. Also, in the work of Nmadu et al., (2010) ‘Girl-child Education: Rising to the challenge’ observed that poor families tend to invest their limited resources into things they feel are useful to their family’s economic well-being instead of sending their female child to school. The study therefore called to action, national leaders, local government bodies, religious leaders and concerned citizens to mobilize resources to provide Nigerian children with education they deserve. Other studies such as, Offor et al., (2020), Abbagana (2013), Maji & Maji (2016) have all researched into Issues in Girl-child Education Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Development, Female-child education: A Critical Issues for National Development in Nigeria, and Encouraging Girl-child education for better reproductive health in Nigeria respectively.

Majority of the studies on girl-child Education have established social-cultural factors as an impediment to girl-child education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most importantly, poverty has been highlighted in most of these studies as a factor that needs to be addressed in tackling prevalence of girl-child education.

### **Theoretical Framework: Conflict Theory in Gender**

Conflict theory posits a struggle between dominant group which has the tool of production and worker class which is exploited by dominant one (Baligar, 2018). The theory locates the origin of all inequality more specifically in the private ownership of the means of production by one class. Karl Marx, the father of conflict theory and his colleague, Friedrich Engel applied the idea of conflict theory to the family structure. Marxism, as the ideal of Karl Marx is known and called posited that in a family, exists a relationship of exploiter and exploited (Baligar, 2018). Differentiating the roles of men and women in modern and pre-modern societies, Marxism established that there is private property right and such right is transmitted by patriarchy.

The right of men to private property and high income, makes men a bread winner (Lindsey, 2011) while women became the consumer part of the society whose domestic work are unpaid for. According to Engel, capitalism makes male dominance and more powerful. By dividing men and women in working way, it puts men to factory where he gets pay and women to house where it does not pay for women's working in the house (Macionis, 2010). Summing up conflict theory, it claims that gender is one of the dimensions of social inequality and conflict. While gender inequality provides a profit for men, it damaged women (Baliger, 2018). Marxism therefore sees marriage as a protection for both sexes for women, it is a protection for their sexuality and men; it is a protection for their private property.

Applied to the purpose of the study, it is to be observed that girl-child education has been at the low level in sub-Sahara Africa because of the patrilineal structure of the society. Family is traditionally headed by a male which confers prestige and power to him. This explained the reason for the preference for a male child than female. The preferences for a male child therefore put girls-child at a disadvantage and are consider inferior in the society. This further explains why most families prefer to educate male child who they believe would uphold the family name, prestige, property, and a future breadwinner than a female child who they erroneously thought her education would eventually ends in a kitchen. In the case of, Akoko area, Ondo state, socio- cultural factors such as religious beliefs, early marriage, male child preference etc. impeding the education of a girl-child are not too prevalent like that of the northern part of the country. However, poverty has been observed as an impediment to girl-child education, as poor family find it difficult to send their children, especially girl-child to school.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Setting**

This is a descriptive survey carried out in Akoko Areas, Ondo State. Akoko comprised of four (4) Local Government vis; Akoko North East with headquarter in Ikare-Akoko, Akoko North West with headquarter in Oke-Agbe Akoko, Akoko South West with headquarter in Oka-Akoko and Akoko South East with council headquarter in Isua-Akoko.

Akoko has an estimated population of 711,113 inhabitants (Census, 2006). The people of Akoko are sub-group of the Yoruba of the Southwest, Nigeria and they are mostly farmers and

traders. According to Facts and Figures on Ondo State (2010), Akoko has 171 Primary Schools, 61 Junior Secondary Schools, 59 Senior Secondary School and One University (Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko). Almost all the communities that made up Akoko has either a primary or Secondary School for children to attend.

The population of the study, therefore comprised all the parents in Public Junior and Secondary Schools in Akoko. For a female-child to be a custodian of social, cultural and developmental values of the society, she needs to be educated at least to Secondary School Level (Abbagana,2013).

### **Sample Size**

The sample size was 200 correspondents who are mostly parents. To compose the sample size, multi-stage sampling was used. Simple random sampling was used to select 10 communities out of 45 communities that made up Akoko. In term of population, Akoko South-west LGA has the highest population of 239,486 according to 2006 National Population Census. This is followed by Akoko North West (213,792), Akoko North East (175,409) and South East (82,426) respectively. Therefore, 3 communities namely Oka, Akungba and Oba Akoko were picked in Akoko South West. 3 communities were also picked in Akoko North West namely Oke-agbe, Arigidi and Irun Akoko respectively. Also 2 communities were picked each in Akoko North East and Akoko South East namely Ikare, Iboropa, Isua and Ifira Akoko. Furthermore, simple random sampling was used to select one secondary school in each of the selected communities. In secondary schools selected, 20 parents were randomly selected and were issued questionnaires and interviewed on the subject matter. In all, 200 respondents (parents) were interviewed and administered questionnaires which form the sample size for the study.

### **Data Collection and Instruments**

The objective of the survey was to measure impediments to girl-child education in the study area. The research instruments used were questionnaires and oral interview. The Questionnaires was distributed to correspondents (parents) to collect data from them on the subject matter. It's comprised of 10 indices of poverty that were designed to elicit response from respondents on impediments to girl-child education in Akoko, areas Ondo State. The questionnaire used for the study was reviewed and adjudged adequate and valid by experts in gender studies. To make the study original and devoid of researcher's bias, oral interview was conducted on respondents (parents) to elicit information from them, on measures that are to be taken to encourage girl-child to go to school. The data collected was processed using both descriptive and inferential statistic methods.



## RESULTS

**Table 1: Impediments to girl-child education in Akoko areas, Ondo State**

S/N	Items	Percentage (%)					Statistics		Significant difference Test	
		SD	D	N	A	SA	$\bar{X}$	$\sigma$	$\chi^2$	P-value
1.	Low Earning of Some Parent	14	30	5	21	30	3.23	1.493	46.200 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
2.	Lack of Good Job	16	33	9	25	17	2.94	1.381	34.000 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
3.	Bereavement of Parent	8	19	19	36	18	3.37	1.208	40.600 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
4.	Broken Home	9	13	16	34	28	3.59	1.269	44.600 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
5.	Inadequate Fund	5	16	25	32	22	3.50	1.147	41.400 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
6.	Some Parents are Poor	5	14	15	41	25	3.67	1.144	75.200 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
7.	Poor Parental Education Attainment	14	16	9	42	19	3.36	1.334	65.800 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
8.	Too Many Children	14	16	9	42	19	3.58	1.229	58.600 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
9.	Some Parents are Unemployment	11	16	5	31	37	3.48	1.363	73.200 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
10.	Illiteracy	16	33	9	25	17	3.67	1.397	43.600 <sup>a</sup>	0.000

Results in table 1, shows that ten (10) items were reacted to by respondents. On item one (1), majority (51%) of the respondents agree that low earning of some parents was a barrier to a girl-child education in the study area while 44% strongly disagree. On item two (2), 33% of the respondents disagree that lack of good job was a barrier to low girl-child education in Akoko areas, 25% agree to that while only 9% stay neutral. 36% of the respondents agree to the fact that bereavement of parent was a barrier to girl-child education in Akoko areas, 19% disagree on that while 19% respondents stay neutral. Also, the study sample show that broken home was a major factor responsible (34%) to girl-child education in the study area. Only 9% of the respondents disagree on that claim. On item five (5), majority of the respondents 54% agree that inadequate funding was a factor to low girl-child education in Akoko areas while only 5% disagree about that. Majority of the respondents 66% agree that being poor contributed to low girl-child education in the study as against 30% respondents who think otherwise. On item seven (7), majority of the respondents 61% agree that poor parental educational attainment contributed to low girl-child education in Akoko areas as against 30% of the respondents who did not support such claim.

30% of the respondents refused the claim that too many children by some parents contributed to low girl-child education in the study area as against majority (61%) who supported that. Majority of the respondents (68%) agree that unemployment of some parents was an impediment to girl-child education in Akoko areas of Ondo State. However, 27% respondents disagree on that while 5% stay neutral. On item ten (10), majority (49%) of the respondents do not believe that illiteracy on the part of parents can be an impediment to a girl-child education in Akoko areas unlike 42% of respondents who believe that.

## DISCUSSION

The results as presented in table 1 showed that majority of respondents agreed that low earning of some parents as occasioned by lack of good jobs contributed to gender disparity in education in Akoko land. This view is substantiated when a respondent in his possible measure to encourage girl-child education said:

*Akoko land is the least industrialized part of Ondo State. The absence of industries that can provide employment for the people have made our people to engage mostly in subsistence farming activities with little rewards. This has reduced their financial capacity to send their children to school. Government should therefore create more companies in Akoko land to provide jobs for the people (IDI/Personal Communication/ September 19, 2022).*

Also, some of the findings on poverty as an impediment to girl-child education showed that bereavement of parents and broken home contributes to low/poor girl-child education in Akoko areas. In case of bereavement or broken home, female-child is mostly affected in such situation. Succinctly, the view of a respondent in the study area was summarized thus;

*The loss of my husband in a fatal car accident affected the education of my children. As a single mother with four children, I find it difficult to train all my children at once because of lack of financial support from my late husband family. As a result, the education of my children especially the girls were most affected. Therefore, the Ministry of Women Affairs both at the state and federal levels should help the widows and widowers in their fight to survive and take care of the education of their children (IDI/Personal Communication/September 21, 2002).*

In a similar thought, another respondent said;

*In broken homes, it is the children that bear the brunt of forced separation of parents. The men can easily support themselves financially but it is not always easy for women. When a woman becomes a breadwinner to her children, she may not be able to carry out all the responsibilities. Hence, the children lack most things and their education can suffer, especially the girl-child. Therefore, parents should always resolve their differences for the sake of their children. (IDI/Personal Communication/September, 21, 2022).*

The results as presented in table 1 also showed that being poor by some parents contribute to persistent increase in low girl-child education in Akoko areas. Poverty has been identified as one of the major factors acting as impediment to a girl-child education in Nigeria. This fact has been supported by the findings of Odebode (2018), Ikekeonmwu (2010) and Akudolu (2005). This was clearly understood in the words of a respondent during his possible measures to encourage girl-child education when he declared;

*The economy situation of our country has affected many homes. Many parents are poor who could barely feed their families talk less of sending their children to school. Also, most government schools are in bad shape while private schools are too expensive for the children*

*of the poor to attend. Therefore, government should try and alleviate poverty so that the finances of families can improve for them to cater for the education needs of their children (IDI/Personal Communication/September, 23, 2022).*

Majority of the respondents presented in the table 1 indicated poor parental educational attainment as reasons why girl-child education is low in Akoko area of Ondo State and this was in support of the findings of Ezeliora and Ezeokara (2010). An extraction of text of discussion throws more lights to this position. A respondent in his possible solution to girl-child education in the study area said;

*My parents are illiterate who do not value western education during their own time. So they did not bother to send me and my siblings to school. This affected my life because I would have gone far if I were to be educated. Therefore, government should make education compulsory for all children by making it free so that poor parents can send their children to school. Also, government should sensitize parents through media to know the importance of education (IDI/Personal Communication/September, 23, 2022).*

The findings of the respondents showed that majority of them indicated that having too many children was an impediment to girl-child education. An extraction of text from one of the respondents on possible measures to tackle the problem of low girl-child education in Akoko area revealed;

*I don't know why people still give birth to too many children that they cannot cater for. With the high cost of living in Nigeria today, especially food and education, it is advisable for people to have a limited numbers of children they can take proper care of. Most criminals in the society today are from homes with many children without proper care and education. Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) should embark on aggressive campaign on moderate family system (IDI/Personal Communication/September, 29, 2022).*

However, the study revealed that most respondents do not ascribe illiteracy as a reason why the girl-child is not sent to school.

## **CONCLUSION**

Recent literatures have all highlighted the importance of girl-child education to the society. As an active participant in the society, the benefits of educating the girl-child can never be overemphasized. Therefore, it is the duties of the governments, parents and the society that every child be given equal access to qualitative education respective of their gender. Girl-child should be given a qualitative education that will enhance their knowledge, skills and potentials to effectively contribute meaningfully to their communities and society at large. Any forms of impediment that could prevent girl-child from reaching their full potentials in order to participate in the political, social and economic development of their communities must be tackled through education. Uneducated girls/women remain at higher risk of poverty, maternal mortality, sexual exploitation, uninformed mothers and other forms of violence against women.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To provide answer to research question on measures that could be taken to ensure that girl-child are encouraged to go to school, an interview was conducted with respondents who are mostly parents. Their responses formed the basis for the following recommendations.

That government should as a matter of urgency make education totally compulsory and free to every child especially girl-child from primary to senior secondary school. For girls/women to reach her full potentials, she must be trained, at least to secondary school level.

That conscientious effort is made by government at all levels and relevant agencies at alleviating poverty in the society. If poverty is reduced, parents and guardians will be financial stable to send their children to school respective of their gender.

That parent is encouraged to give birth to number of children they can afford to take care of and educate. This can be achieved through persuasive, media sensitization and public enlightenment.

That poor parents/widows/widowers be financially assisted by government through the provision of interest free student loans to enable them educate their children especially the girl-child.

That the Akoko areas be industrialized by Government so as to create employment opportunities for parents/guardians for them to earn a living that can help them cater for the needs of their children including their education.

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