

Education as a Vaccine Against Girl Child Bullying

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ABSTRACT: *The importance of education in the life of girl child cannot be overemphasized. The bible book of Hosea 4: 6 says, “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”. Knowledge empowers a person against intimidation and other social vices. As a vaccine, education protecting one from harmful social vices in the social which the girl child is the most vulnerable. This is because it opens your eyes and prepares you to defend yourself on any issue. An educated person is vaccinated against different types of abuses because education makes you know your right and privileges. The uneducated persons are the most bullied. Bullying takes place at school, place of work, home, community etc. Education makes you a balanced personality and enables you contribute positively to your home, church, place of work and the society at large. With education you become an asset to your home and society; and you will be given important positions like the above-mentioned women. Everyone should get educated. Parents, government and the society should be interested in the welfare of the girl child and counsellors should be sent to schools to counsel both the bullies and the bullied. It helps you stand out, bold, eloquent etc. With education no one can force you into marriage, you will know the types of things you need/desire in life and go for them. Be patient in getting education. Education is power. It protects and liberates one.*

KEY WORDS: Education, Vaccine, bullying, Girl, Knowledge, Power, Ignorance.

INTRODUCTION

Education can be referred to as a process by which people are provided with the requisite knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to self-development and the development of the society in which they live. It is a process of acculturation as the culture of the people can be transmitted from one generation to another through it. Education is essential in enlightenment and creating awareness in the individuals. It improves independent thinking and capacity for problem-solving. Therefore, it liberates individuals from the shackles of ignorance and diseases. Education

is a sure way to attain self-development and economic prosperity and also a means through which we are made aware of our fundamental human rights, and how to protect them. Hence, through education, we safeguard our fundamental human rights, avoid exploitation and abuse. Without education, the life of an individual is incomplete.

In this paper, effort is made to provide definitions and meaning of the key concepts or terms such as education, vaccine and bullying present in this topic. Some importance of education are highlighted. Consequences of bullying to the perpetrators and victims alike are also highlighted. Finally, how education serves as a veritable tool in preventing bullying among women and girl-children is examined.

Education

Education is a process by which people are provided with the necessary skills for self-development, self-reliance and to contribute positively to economic, social and technological advancement of the society. Education is a conscious and deliberate effort to create an atmosphere of learning and the learning process so that learners are actively developing the potential for him to have the spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by themselves and society (Wonosike, 2018). It refers to the process by which the society transmits its cultural heritage, tradition and rules from one generation to another for the continued survival of the very society. According to Sotonade (2022), education is a cumulative process of development of intellectual abilities, skills and attitudes, all of which form our various general outlooks, dispositions and personalities in life. It is a means to empower children and adults alike to become active participants in the transformation of their societies.

Education is the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the society and for self-enlightenment (Thangeda, Baratiseng, & Mompati, 2016). This is so because education equips one with capability to interpret things rightly and to apply the gathered information in real life scenarios to solve problems. The goal of education is to develop physical, mental, emotional, social, moral and spiritual aspects of life. It is also to empower and impart skills and knowledge in learners, thus it is important that the education one gets has to be of certain quality.

The importance of education for all round development of individuals and society cannot be over-emphasized and it is outlined below;

- i). It liberates the mind from the shackles of ignorance, diseases and poverty.
- ii). It guarantees autonomy in choice of speech, action and behaviors.
- iii). It frees one from fanaticism, dogmatism and indoctrination.
- iv). It bestows liberal thinking on individuals helping them to decipher right from wrong and to separate facts from fantasies.
- v). It enables people to access information faster and with ease

- vi). It helps people to rise above exploitation, captivity and slavery.
- vii). It guarantees awareness of one's rights and obligations in any given situation
- viii). Education enhances economic empowerment, self-development and self-reliance of individuals.
- ix). Education enables people to develop analytical skills and cognitive abilities.

Vaccine

A vaccine is a suspension of weak or inactive microorganisms or toxins or other biological preparations consisting of antibodies, lymphocytes or messenger RNA that are administered to people to confer immunity against diseases in order to prevent the diseases (Brunson, 2023). It is biological suspension prepared to protect people against harmful diseases, before they come in contact with them. Vaccines are usually diseases-specific as one vaccine is effective for only one type of disease. In this paper, vaccine is used metaphorically to refer to as a means of preventing bullying among the girl-children.

Bullying

Bullying was defined by Ezeh (2021) as hostile actions, recurring over time that is deliberately destructive and occurs without provocation. It is a premeditated aggressive behavior directed at a weaker person for a prolonged period of time intended to cause fear, harm, distress, grief or humiliation and to keep the victim under control and domination. In all cases of bullying, there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim in favor of the perpetrator.

Bullying can be physical, verbal and psychological each of which can effectively precipitate fear, grief and distress in the psych of the victim. With ever increasing popularity of internet, cyberbullying has been added as a common type of bullying. Bullying occurs at nearly all levels of educational system, but it tends to peak at secondary level of education (Development Services Group, Inc., 2013). Available data show that the prevalence of bullying among US students in secondary level of education and aged between 12-18 years is in the neighborhood of 27.8%. Factors that can influence bullying behaviors include socioeconomic status, race and disability among others. Development Services Group, Inc. (2013) reported that people of low socioeconomic status, inferior race or disability are victims of bullying behaviors than their counterparts. Students who report low school connectedness tend to report more instances of physical, verbal, and relational forms of peer victimization and peer harassment due to lack of bullying prevention efforts (Owusu, Hart, Oliver, & Kang, 2021). Multi-level studies suggest schools with more positive student-teacher relationships tend to have reduced rates of bullying instances (Owusu, Hart, Oliver, & Kang, 2021).

The consequences of bullying can be devastating if the bullying goes unchecked for a long period of time. Victims and perpetrators of bullying may have low self-esteem, lateness and absenteeism from school, poor academic achievement (Ude, 2020). They usually have negative thought and

anxiety. Victims of bullying may also experience depression and suicidal tendency. Rate of dropout in school is higher among victims of bullying than those who have never been bullied. Perpetrators of bullying behaviors may be violent, and they also develop antisocial personality disorder. They may have problems in interpersonal relationships, or making and keeping friends.

Research suggests that being a bully increases the risk of later violence in life by about two-third (Ttofi, Farrington & Lösel, 2012), significantly raises the likelihood of indulging in criminal activities, and being convicted of criminal offenses such as drug abuse, cultism, arson, robbery, kidnapping, killing, examination and electoral malpractices and of low job status as an adult, compared to noninvolved peers (Ttofi, Farrington & Lösel, 2012). Bullies also tend to be at higher risk for difficulties in romantic relationships and problem of substance abuse (Cook et al. 2010).

The girl child as a victim of bullying and other unfair social treatment

In some culture especially less developed culture, women and the girl children are placed at a disadvantaged position for no fault of theirs. There are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. In such culture, there is this erroneous feeling among some parents that since the girls will be married out to some men in future while the boys will always remain with parents, it is unwise to “waste” the scarce resources in training and development of the girl child. They believe that women’s education ends in the kitchen. Hence, when resources are scarce and a limiting factor, preference is shown to the education of the boys than the girls. The women and the girl children are left with nothing in the will of late parents. They are not entitled to family land, property or businesses in the event of death of parents. Olapade and Gbadamosi (2022) reported that only 7.2% of women in Nigeria own the land they farm, which limits their access to credit facilities and constrains entrepreneurship and business activities and in some northern states about 70% of women are unable to read and write, and only 4% of girls’ complete secondary school level of education. In Nigeria, for instance, women receive low representation in political positions.

A large chunk of domestic chores including washing, cleaning, cooking, are done by the girls leaving them with no time to study if they have opportunity to go to school at all, while the boys have sufficient time to study and relax. The girl child receives more chastisement for any mistake made than the boys. At home, some girl children are subjected to beating by some parents and even their brothers as they possess less strength than the boys. In some developing countries, wife battery is a common occurrence.

In some schools and offices, abuse of sexual type may be common. In high institutions of learning, sexual harassment is of regular occurrence. Some male teachers lure the girls into illicit sex for grade. In the offices, some superior offices threaten the woman (girl) with demotion, sack or suspension of emolument if she does not submit herself.

Even in this modern civilized time, female genital mutilation is still going on in some less developed societies. The girl children are victims of child trafficking and forced prostitution by organized syndicates. Child-labor in form house-help and street hawking is common among the girls. Kidnapped girls are often gang-raped and kept in captivity for extended period of time.

Potentialities of the girl-children

The potentialities of the girl-children cannot be over-emphasized. It is out of place to regard women and girl-children as objects suitable for subjugation, injustice and unfair treatment. This is because the girl-children ably represented by women occupy very important positions the world over. There are women presidents, prime ministers or heads of governments or bodies all over the world. Women professionals can be found in aeronautics, medicine, law, engineering, piloting, actuary, agriculture, defense, law enforcement agencies, etc. In fact, any profession where there are no women actors does not exist. These women professionals are very good in their chosen profession making indelible marks in their chosen profession.

In academic endeavor, the girl-children compete favorably with the boy in mathematics, languages, sciences, engineering, humanities, education, social and management sciences. They obtain good grades in their fields of study and some of them even surpass the achievement of the best boys. Some women have won prizes in their chosen fields of study. Professors of female gender abound imparting knowledge to students and conducting research to solve real life problems facing humanity.

In business, some female proprietresses establish and effectively manage their businesses. They have the Midas touch that can guarantee the survival of their businesses even in the face of stiff competition from their male counterparts and make good profits in the process. Some women are known for their frugality in management of resources than the men. They can be rigid in businesses to ensure prudent management of the resources and to make good profit.

At home, women and girl-children have leading roles. Their capacity for prudent management of resources predispose them to be better home managers than the men and boys. They are more patient, tolerant and understanding than the men and boys. Hence, women can excel human and resource management than the men.

Education as a vaccine against bullying of the girl-child

The girl-child is not less in value than the boy-child. They are not in any way inferior the boy-child. They are comparably valuable. The distinction and the attendant discrimination against the girl-child is artificial and unjustifiable. Discriminating against persons based on gender is an infringement against the fundamental human rights of the persons as enshrined in the constitutions of every nation of the world. The girl-child must be given educational opportunities like their boy-

child counterpart since studies show that when educational backgrounds and other intervening variables are controlled, the girl child is very intelligent and can do better than the boy-child in academic endeavor and other areas of life (Tope, 2019).

Therefore, to arm themselves against bullying, the girl children must attain a good level of education which will discourage people from singling them out for bullying and victimization in the midst of the boy-children. In this sense, education will serve as a vaccine or an antidote against bullying. With good level of education, the girl-children will equally attain financial autonomy sometime in life which will make them less dependent as poverty is a precursor to exploitation, victimization and abuse.

A good level of education guarantees immunity against abuse and bullying of the girl-children. Bullies and perpetrators of violence against women regard them as soft targets. This is because women are known for cries and inaction when calamities befall them. This is not the case with the educated girls and women. This is because this group of women can give as much as they receive. They have the strength of character and wits to match violence for violence using appropriate agencies to prosecute those who try to victimize them. Education is known to remove unnecessary fear and cowardice from those that have it. Hence, experienced bullies keep off educated women and girl-children for all their troubles.

Illiteracy is the worst disease a person can suffer. An illiterate and ignorant girl-child may not know what constitutes abuse and bullying. Even when she is subjected to the worst conditions of abuse, subjugation, exploitation and bullying, she may regard them as normal ways of life. In this way, people may invariably take undue advantage of her. Hence, a good means of avoiding victimization is to acquire a good level of education and become aware of your fundamental human rights, when they are trampled and the best ways to protect them.

A good level of education can make the girl-child less susceptible to abuse and bullying. This is because education can enable the girl-child to access information, imbibe knowledge and put the knowledge into good use to minimize risks to health and person. An educated girl can read newspapers, journals, books or listen to the news on the radio and television about behaviors that constitute risky behaviors with a view to avoiding them. Educated girls will understand the characteristics of bad people such as cultists, kidnappers and armed robbers and avoid them in order not to expose themselves to victimization and harassment.

Educated girls will have the knowledge of appropriate people, quarters, governmental or non-governmental organizations to report cases of exploitation, victimization, abuse and bullying for prosecution and conviction to serve as deterrent to would-be perpetrators of violence against the girl-child. Therefore, they are not made soft targets for victimization and bullying.

Good standing in academic achievement is a sure tool that keeps away sexual harassment and exploitation from the doorsteps of the girl-child. Girls who have good academic records are revered as they do not need assistance from any quarters to excel in their studies. Such girls are highly respected and are never looked upon as objects of exploitation and bullying.

Educated girls are aware of the actions that predispose them to danger. Moving alone on lonely roads predisposes them to kidnapping, robbery, rape and bullying. Again, night movement also predisposes them to kidnapping, robbery, rape and bullying. Unseriousness in life or academic pursuit, poor attitude to work, idleness and laziness predispose girls to begging for one type of favor or the other with the attendant exposure to exploitation and victimization. Educated women or girls are self-reliant and work out their success themselves rather try to achieve unmerited success through back door. Asking for undeserved favor may require some kind of reward which does not augur well for the image or health of the girl-child. Furthermore, indecent dressing predisposes the girl to sexual harassment and exploitation. Educated women and girls are aware of qualities of dressing and the impression dresses can create in arousal of feelings. They therefore dress accordingly. Differentiating the type of clothes meant to be worn at home, in the school, church, offices and other social functions so as to forestall sexual harassment and victimization is a hallmark of educated women (girls).

CONCLUSION

The modern girl-children in the present technological advancement are no longer weaklings. They must brace up and insist on their fundamental human rights which they must protect jealously. They must ensure that they are not exploited, victimized, abused or bullied. The best way to ensure that they protect their fundamental human rights, avoid exploitation, victimization, abuse or bullying is to acquire sufficient education. In this way, perpetrators of exploitation, abuse or bullying will no longer take them as a pushover. This is because trying anything unjust against them may bring a whole load of trouble on them which they may pay dearly for. Until the girl-child acquire some good level of education, bullies will continue to write them off as soft targets who can do nothing but only cry when they are bullied or victimized.

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