

RURAL DWELLERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD FEMALE EDUCATION IN TARABA STATE

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Abstract

This work investigated rural dwellers' attitude toward female education in Taraba State. The research work adopted a descriptive survey design. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sample of the study consisted of 450 rural dwellers drawn from the three education zones, A, B and C of Taraba State using multiple-stage sampling technique. A Demographic Analysis of Rural Dwellers Attitude towards Female Education Questionnaire (DARDATFEQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation and one in Curriculum and Instruction. The instrument was trial-tested and data collected yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88 when subjected to Cronbach alpha's reliability statistics. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study revealed that literate rural dweller have more positive attitudes towards female education than those that are illiterate, male rural dwellers have more positive attitudes towards female education than those that are illiterate, male rural dweller have more positive attitudes toward female education than female, rural dwellers with high socio-economic status and cultural practical have more positive attitudes towards female education than those with lower socio-economic status and cultural practices of the rural dwellers have no significant impact on female education in Taraba State. Based on the findings from the study it is recommended that rural dwellers, irrespective of their educational background, gender and socio-economic status, should endeavour to send their female children to school in order to meet the modern trends in the larger society.

Key Words: Rural Dwellers, Attitude, Female Education and Taraba State.

Introduction

Education is the process of bringing up individuals for the benefit of the society. This is the more reason that the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) stated that the Nigerian philosophy of education should be based on the development of an individual into the sound

and effective citizen. It is also stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) that Nigeria desires to build through education, a free and democratic society where every citizen can participate fully. This means that education is recognized as a vital indispensable tool used for national development. Each society desires that her citizens are knowledgeable and possess appropriate educational skills for both the society and the citizens. The education the people perceive is expected to help them develop acceptable attitudes that would make them useful members of the society they live in (Fasehun (2011 P.7).

In as much as education is meant for every citizen across the world, in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas of Taraba State, female children have limited access to western education as compared to their male counterparts (Aboho, 2000). Before the introduction of western education, female was regarded as chattels, that is, things that would be bought or sold. They were treated any how; they were bought or sold. But today the reverse is the case as many females are found or seen as bread winners in their family (Kosemani, 2006).

The Phrase "rural dwellers" simply means rural inhabitants. It also refers to the people living in rural areas. To properly rationalize the phrase, "rural dwellers", it is pertinent to define rural areas. Wikipedia (2019) defines rural areas as a geographical area that is located outside the town or city. Other words for rural areas include agrarian community among others. Furthermore, rural areas encompass all population, housing and territory not located within the urban areas. This means whatever that is not urban is considered rural. The road network cannot in anyway be compared with that of the urban areas in terms of motoreableness and other qualities. Both inter and intra-networks in the rural areas are bad.

Drawing attention to the situation of female education in the early years of Nigerian education, Maduewesi (2005) noted that the Nigerian woman was seen as a passive sexual object who was both a devoted wife and a mother for whom the society had carved out defined roles, manners and acceptable characteristics. This study further maintains that in Nigeria cultures, women were hardly heard, but in few cases could occasionally be seen with absolute permission of their husbands. The Nigerian woman was therefore relegated to the background, ignored, dehumanized and generally confined to lower status in the society. Females were seen to only feature when allowed and in activities such as serving, dancing and entertainment (Maduewesi, 2010; Agogo, 2010). This was why when western education was introduced in Nigeria; women were shield from its influence. Educational development of a place is measured in part from the number of school age pupils/students that are actually attending the schools, school facilities, and conducive learning atmosphere.

Culture, according to Agogo (2010), is an organized body of conventional understanding manifest in art and artificial work, which persist through tradition and characteristics of a human group. This means that culture is the sum total of man's efforts to adjust himself to his environment and to improve his modes of living. The acquired cultural behaviours are shared and transmitted among the members of the society. Generally, culture influences the way and how people think, feel, relate and learn. This is why each society has its distinct cultural practices that are peculiar to it, including some attitudinal practices of the rural dwellers that may affect the education of women. The educational status of female in rural areas has been so worrisome as the culture of most societies do not encourage education of females.

The girl-child is expected to do all domestic chores before going to school, farm, market or work. This routine has influence on the attitude of all rural dwellers and has

become a norm. Therefore, any deviation from the norm is resisted by elders and parents. According to Utulu (2001), the girl-child is seen as subservient to the male child in Nigeria. Therefore, female education in spite of the modern trends is still not valued as the education of a male child. The census of 2006 puts the population of women in Nigeria as 68,293,683. In Taraba State, according to National Population Commission (NPC) (2006), there are 1,982,374 million women. If education of the female is thwarted, the home, the children and the public will be negatively affected, since the education of the female child invariably influences the education of her children, their health, world outlook, social and psychological behaviour as well as their personality characteristics (Okwori, 2011).

The socio-economic status of parents may affect the attitudes of rural dwellers to female education. This in turn may have impact on the educational development of the people (Alao, 2010). Educational parents naturally encourage female education because they are aware of its benefits. Economically well-to-do families can afford to train both boys and girls in school. This may not be the case for poor families who may want to ration money for more essential things than to pay for a girl's school fees, who may soon be married out to another family.

Though the Nigerian constitution does not discriminate against female, there are aspects of traditional practices and unwritten norms of our society in Taraba State that tend to put female in a disadvantaged position. In support of this, Utulu (2001) agreed that some impediments of women education are girl's self-low self-esteem, men's prejudices against women folk and women's perceived roles in the family. There is the need therefore to embark on the demographic analysis of rural dwellers attitudes toward female education in Taraba State.

Statement of the Problem

Before the western education was introduced in Nigeria, the general public had expressed concern about the marginalization of women in virtually all aspects of human endeavour. This is why informal groups and non-governmental organizations have been making frantic efforts to establish special schools for female education through the Ministry of Education in many states of Nigeria. Despite all these efforts, women still lack considerably behind men in the aspect of educational attainment. Despite the tremendous effort made by NGOs, Government and Missionary Schools to provide equal educational opportunities for females, the situation has not improved. The problem keeps increasing to the point that Nigerian female children are still being discriminated against as they suffer from inadequate access to education. It appears that many rural dwellers that are predominantly farmers and craft men do not realize that times have changed and society is not static by dynamic.

The role of females keeps changing and incorporating other functions with the traditional roles of home keeping. These cultural fixed ideas might have influenced the attitude of rural dwellers towards female education. Even the demographic data to reveal the dearth of information on rural dwellers' attitudes towards female education particularly in Taraba State are not available. It is thus difficult to plan meaningfully to improve access of female rural dwellers to education. This paper is designed to tackle this problem and serve, perhaps, as data base to stimulate further research in this vital area of education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to demographically analyse attitude of rural dwellers towards female education in Taraba State, the study specifically sought to find out:

1. The attitude of rural dwellers with high socio-economic status and those with low socio-economic status towards female education.
2. The impact of cultural practices on rural dwellers' attitudes towards female education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the attitudes of rural dwellers with high socio-economic status and those with low socio-economic status towards female education?
2. What impact has cultural practice on the attitudes of rural dwellers toward female education?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of rural dwellers with high socio-economic background and those with low socio-economic background in their attitudes towards female education.
2. Cultural practices have not significant impact in the attitudes of rural dwellers towards female education.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 3,128,102 people in Taraba State, Nigeria. The sample size for the study was 150 adult rural dwellers from each of the three zones, bringing the total sample to 450. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select sample for this study. According to Emaikwu (2011), at each stage of selection of representative group, sampling may take place. First, the researcher broke the study area in three clusters (Zone A, B and C). This was done to break up the population into workable segments in order to reduce cost in terms of time and money. The main purpose of cluster sampling according to Iortimah and Aligba (2011) is to obtain a sample that best represents the respective homogenous subgroups within a defined population. Secondly, the research purposively used adults from rural areas only. This is because adults are the ones responsible for the education of their female children and they could therefore provide more valid responses for this study. A self-structured questionnaire titled: Demographic Analysis of Rural Dwellers' Attitude towards Female Education Questionnaire (DARDATFEQ) was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument is a 28 - item questionnaire structured on the modified four - point rating scale with the response mode of Strongly Agreed (SA) - 4, Agreed (A) - 3, Disagreed (D) - 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) - 1. This scale was chosen because the flexibility of the scale renders it appropriate for measuring the items of the variable of the study. The researcher engaged nine research assistants that assisted in the management and collection of the copies of the questionnaire in the sampled places. A total of 450 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents and were retrieved after completion. The respondents were given four days to complete and return copies of the questionnaire. This was to avoid loss of the questionnaire. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were

used to answer the research questions. The decision was based on the real limit of numbers. Hence a mean response score of 3.50-4.00 was considered Strongly Agreed (SA), 2.50-3.49 Agreed (A), 1.50-2.49 Disagreed (D), while 0.50-1.49 was considered as Strongly Disagreed (SD). To answer the research questions, the study adopted a cut-off mean was arrived at after taking the average of the weighted responses of the respondents and ranking their responses by 5,4,3,2,1 points per responses. Responses with points up to the cut-off mean of 3.00 was considered to have positively responded to the items while responses with points less than the mean bench mark of 3.00 have disagreed with the items. An inferential statistics of t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One: What are the attitudes of rural dwellers with high socio-economic status and those with low socio-economic status towards female education?

Table 1:

Factor	Socio-Economic Status	N	Mean	Std. dev.
Attitude of rural dwellers towards women education	High Socio-Economic Status	84	3.30	
	Low Socio-Economic Status	343	2.74	
	Mean Difference		0.56	

Table 1 shows the mean rating of rural dwellers' attitudes towards female education based on socio-economic statuses. Respondents that earn an annual income less than ₦500,000.00 were considered to be of low socio-economic status while those that earn above ₦500,000.00 were considered to be high socio-economic status. Results from the table shows that respondents with high socio-economic status had a mean rating of 3.30 while those with low status had 2.74. The difference in the mean socio-economic rating was 0.56. This therefore shows that rural dwellers with high socio-economic status have more positive attitudes towards female education than those with low socio-economic status.

Research Question Two: What impact has cultural practices on the attitudes of rural dwellers towards female education?

Table 2:

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Std. dev	Remarks
1.	In my culture, women education is encouraged because it is seen as exposing women unwanted social life.	427	3.52	1.30	Agreed
2.	When exposed to western education, female children can fight for their rights.	427	3.63	1.21	Agreed

3.	Educated women oppose cultural practices like female genital mutilation	426	3.18	1.34	Agreed
4.	Early marriage is a major setback to female education.	424	2.71	1.40	Disagreed
5.	Cultural practices in my community do not open discussion of sex education.	427	2.82	1.17	Disagreed
6.	Cultural practices that prevent female children from playing impede women education.	427	2.60	1.14	Disagreed
7.	Cultural practices that emphasize sharing of inheritance among male children after the death of their parents bring hardship on the female ones.	427	2.13	1.07	Disagreed
8.	Rural dwellers' attitude towards women education do not impede their educational opportunities.	427	2.48	1.0	Disagreed
9.	Poverty in the rural areas does not affect female education	426	2.63	1.31	Disagreed
10.	Rural dwellers' attitudes towards women affect civilization of Taraba State.	427	2.49	1.17	Disagreed
11.	Rural dwellers attitude towards women education has decreased female students' enrolment in schools.	427	1.98	1.01	Disagreed
12.	Rural dwellers' attitude towards women education reduce health hazards.	426	2.10	1.06	Disagreed
13.	Rural dwellers' in Taraba State do not expect women to remain at home therefore do not impede educational development of women.	427	2.41	1.26	Disagreed
14.	Limited access of rural women to education limits the number of women professionals.	427	2.88	1.28	Disagreed
15.	The training female children receive in the village enhances their skills in domestic chores but not in academic performance.	426	2.77	1.24	Disagreed
16.	The training female children in their village maximizes their skills in	427	2.66	1.37	Disagreed

	educational development of Taraba State.				
17.	Education of women creates opportunities of bringing development to Taraba State	427	2.25	1.16	Disagreed
18.	Low level of education among rural dwellers encourages their economic exploitation.	427	2.48	1.25	Disagreed
19.	Restrictions movement placed [on rural women impede their chances of attending school.	427	2.48	1.25	Disagreed
20.	Cultural practices of male superiority affects female education in Taraba State.	426	2.73	1.42	Disagreed
21.	Cultural practice of women's low self-concept and esteem in Tiv land affects female education.	427	2.43	1.25	Disagreed
22.	Tiv cultural practice as it involves elopement does not affect women's right to education.	427	2.41	1.20	Disagreed
23.	Early marriage as a traditional practice does not affect women's right to education.	427	2.65	1.19	Disagreed
24.	Forced marriage among the various tribes in Taraba State does not affect the right of women to education.	427	2.64	1.24	Disagreed
25.	My mother's insistence for me to help her in trading on market days does not interfere with my education.	427	2.64	1.24	Disagreed
26.	Frequent absence from school as a result of girls household chores does not affect their education.	427	2.73	1.26	Disagreed
27.	Overall Mean		2.62		

Table 2 presents the mean rating on impact of rural dwellers cultural practices on female education. The table reveals that out of the 36 items, respondents agreed with only the first 3 and disagreed with 33 of the items. The overall mean was shown as 2.62 which was less than the benchmark mean which is indicative of negative responses to the items. This implies that cultural practices of the rural dwellers have no significant impact on female education in Taraba State.

Hypothesis 1: Socio-economic background have no significantly impact on the attitudes of rural dwellers towards female education.

Table 3: Independent sample t-test on the attitudes of rural dwellers with high socio-economic background and those with low socio-economic background towards female education.

Factor	Literacy	Mean	t	dt	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitudes of Rural Dwellers towards Women Education	High Socio-economic status	3.30	-	425	0.00
	Low Socio-economic Status	2.74	6.05		

Table 3 presents an independent sampled t-test on impact rural dwellers' socio-economic status on female education in Taraba State. Results from the table shows that $t(425) = -6.05$ and $p = 0.0$. This results indicates that $p < 0.05$ therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean attitude ratings of rural dwellers due to socio-economic background of parents towards female education was rejected. The study concludes that rural dwellers with high socio-economic status exhibit more positive attitudes towards female education than those with lower socio-economic status.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural practices have no significantly impact on the attitudes of rural dwellers towards female education.

Table 4: One sampled t-test on impact of rural dwellers' cultural practices towards female education.

Factor	Items Mean	Test value	t	dt	Sig. (2-tailed)
Rural Dwellers Cultural Practices and Women Education	2.62	3.00	-12.95	426	0.00

Table 4 presents one sampled t-test on impact of cultural practices on female education in Taraba State. Results from the table shows that $t(426) = -12.95$ and $p = 0.00$. This results shows a significant impact of cultural practices on female education since $p < 0.05$ therefore, the null hypothesis which states that cultural practices of rural dwellers do not significantly affect female education was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding reveals that rural dwellers with high socio-economic status exhibit more positive attitudes towards female education than those with lower socio-economic status. This study is in line with Lifanda (2005) who found that poverty at the household level discourages parents from enrolling their children in school or withdrawing them once the demand for fees becomes impossible to meet. Lifanda (2008) observed that household poverty is one of the major factors that prevent women/girls from having access to education.

The second finding of this study reviewed that cultural practices of rural dwellers have significant impact on female education. Thus the finding contradicts that of the study of Obasi (2008) who found out that girl's major cultural roles are seen in child bearing and care, household tasks, work on the farm or garden, fetching of water or firewood and assisting in trading or food processing activities. These family roles played by females are very peculiar to rural dwellers who cannot afford the services of house maids. The result also disagree with Osagiobare, Oronsaye and Ekwukoma (2015) who found that religious and cultural beliefs negatively impact on girl-child education in Nigeria. Most of the beliefs are grounded on misconceptions that stem from people's culturally conservative conceptualization of girl-child education as a mere means of acquiring knowledge for domestic relevance.

Conclusion

The following conclusion were made based on the findings of this study. Findings from the study revealed that rural dwellers with high socio-economic status have more positive attitudes towards female education than those with lower socio-economic status and cultural practices of the rural dwellers has no significant impact on female education in Taraba State.

The study therefore concluded that both the government and parents in rural areas should provide equal educational opportunities for male and female children irrespective of their gender, socio-economic backgrounds as well as cultural affiliations.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The rural dwellers, irrespective of their educational background should endeavour to send their female children to schools in order to meet the modern trends in the larger society.
2. The government should subsidize tuition fees at all levels of education. This will enable rural dwellers with low socio-economic background to equally send their female children to school.

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