



ABSTRACT

This research investigates the attitudes of Muslim parents towards their daughters' Western education in Southern Kaduna State. Despite global recognition of education as a fundamental human right and its crucial role in societal advancement, various socio-cultural and religious factors influence parental attitudes, particularly regarding female education. This study explores

A N APPRAISAL OF THE ATTITUDE OF MUSLIM PARENTS TOWARDS GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN KADUNA, KADUNA STATE.

**MU'AWIYYAH ZAKARIYA'U IBRAHIM; &
MUSA ABDULLAHI BADEMBO**

Department of Islamic Studies, Kaduna State College of
Education, Gidan Waya

Corresponding Author: muzaks67@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

The challenges faced by girl-children in Northern Nigeria, particularly in relation to education, are multifaceted and deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors. The issues of early marriage, teenage pregnancies, and poverty significantly hinder their access to education and opportunities for personal and professional development.

The 1990 Jomtien Declaration of Education For All (EFA) aimed to address these inequalities by promoting child, adult, and family education as a means to eradicate poverty and create new opportunities. Despite various initiatives, including the National Policy on Women Education in 2010, the enrollment rates for girls remain lower than those for boys. This disparity is exacerbated by cultural practices, religious misinterpretations, and socio-economic barriers that affect parental attitudes towards education.



the intersection of Islamic teachings, cultural practices, economic challenges, and security concerns that shape these attitudes. Five research questions were established to examine the significance of girls' education for Muslim parents, the existing and expected roles of Muslim parents, and contributions from government and community for girls' education. The sample comprises sixty Muslim parents and five teachers/educational workers. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using a content analysis approach. Findings highlight the importance of nuanced understandings of Islamic perspectives on education and suggest strategies for policymakers, religious leaders, and community stakeholders to promote inclusive educational practices. The research reveals parents' positive perceptions towards their daughters' Western education, while also presenting the severe scarcity of human and physical infrastructure for girl-child education in the area. Recommendations include financial aid for poor students, provision of new school locations, ensuring the availability of school buildings, and supporting infrastructure and teachers for existing schools.

Keywords: Attitudes, Muslim Parents, Girl-Child, Girl-Child Education, Southern Kaduna

Parental involvement is crucial for the educational success of children, particularly girls. Parents' educational levels, socio-economic status, and cultural beliefs significantly influence their attitudes towards their children's education. For instance, parents with lower educational attainment may feel inadequate in supporting their children's academic needs, leading to reduced involvement in their education. Additionally, family circumstances, such as single parenthood or financial constraints, can further limit parental engagement.

The societal perception of girl-child education often reflects a bias that prioritizes the education of boys over girls, based on traditional views of gender roles. This is particularly evident in regions like Kaduna State, where early marriage and confinement practices are prevalent. Despite the Islamic teachings that advocate for the pursuit of knowledge for all, some families use religious justifications to deny girls access to education.



To address these challenges, it is essential for families and society to recognize the importance of girl-child education not only for individual empowerment but also for broader socio-economic development. Educating girls has been shown to have a significant impact on poverty reduction, family well-being, and sustainable development. Therefore, stakeholders must work collaboratively to create an environment that supports and encourages the education of girls, ensuring that their rights to education are upheld and that they can realize their full potential.

The path to improving girl-child education in Northern Nigeria requires a concerted effort to change societal attitudes, enhance parental involvement, and provide the necessary resources and support systems. By prioritizing girl-child education, communities can foster a more equitable and prosperous future for all. This study aims to explore the mindset of Muslim parents towards their daughters' education to identify barriers and areas for improvement.

Statement of the Research Problem

This research on Muslim parents' attitudes towards girl-child education in Southern Kaduna is essential because education is the foundation of every society and should be accessible to all, regardless of gender. The issue of girl-child education is not confined to a specific region or country; it is a global concern. Education is a vital tool for individuals to navigate their environments and shape their destinies. In Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, girl-child education remains a significant challenge (World Bank, 2022).

Factors contributing to this problem include the exploitation of girls for hawking goods, early marriages due to poverty, and the perception that educating girls is a waste of resources. Discrimination against girl-child education must be addressed to ensure equal access to education, as outlined in the National Policy on Education. Muslim parents in Southern Kaduna need to be educated on the importance of girl-child education and discouraged from engaging their daughters in early marriages and hawking. Teachers should also be sensitive to the needs of girl-children to enhance enrollment and retention, thereby achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015).

Research Questions

The research formulated the following questions to achieve its objectives:



- i. What are the attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in Southern Kaduna?
- ii. What factors contribute to the negative attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in Southern Kaduna?
- iii. Does the status of Muslim parents affect their girl-child education in the study area?
- iv. What are the implications of the negative attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in Southern Kaduna?
- v. What measures and solutions can be implemented to enhance positive attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in the study area?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- i. Examine the attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in Southern Kaduna.
- ii. Identify the contributing factors for the negative attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in Southern Kaduna.
- iii. Evaluate how the status of Muslim parents affects their girl-child education in the study area.
- iv. Assess the implications of the negative attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in Southern Kaduna.
- v. Propose possible measures and solutions to enhance positive attitudes of Muslim parents towards their girl-child education in the study area.

Significance of the Research

This research is of utmost importance as it aims to provide educational planners, school administrators, teachers, policymakers, parents, and all stakeholders with a clear understanding of fundamental issues related to daughters' Western education in Southern Kaduna. The findings and recommendations are expected to enlighten Muslim parents about their responsibilities towards their daughters' education, ultimately enhancing girls' education and enabling them to contribute to the development of their communities and the nation. The benefits of girls' education are numerous and far-reaching (Malala Fund, 2021).



Literature Review

The education of the girl-child is a critical issue in many developing countries, including Nigeria. In particular, the attitudes of parents, especially in Muslim communities, play a significant role in shaping educational opportunities for girls. This literature review examines the socio-cultural, economic, and religious factors influencing the attitudes of Muslim parents towards girl-child education in Southern Kaduna, synthesizing recent empirical studies and reports to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape.

- i. **Socio-Cultural Factors:** Socio-cultural beliefs and practices significantly influence parental attitudes towards girl-child education. According to Adamu et al. (2021), traditional gender roles often dictate that girls should prioritize domestic responsibilities over academic pursuits. This perspective is deeply rooted in cultural norms that view education for girls as unnecessary, as their primary roles are seen as wives and mothers. Odukoya (2020) supports this view, noting that many Muslim parents perceive investing in their daughters' education as a waste of resources, particularly when economic constraints are present.

Furthermore, the influence of patriarchal structures cannot be overlooked. A study by Nwankwo et al. (2022) highlights that in many Muslim families, fathers often make educational decisions, and their preferences typically favor boys over girls. This gender bias is reinforced by societal expectations that prioritize male education as a means of securing family lineage and economic stability. The implications of these socio-cultural factors are profound, as they contribute to the systemic underrepresentation of girls in educational institutions.

- ii. **Economic Factors:** Economic constraints are a significant barrier to girl-child education in Southern Kaduna. The World Bank (2022) reports that poverty remains a critical issue, with many families unable to afford school fees, uniforms, and other educational expenses for their daughters. This economic strain often leads families to prioritize boys' education, as they are perceived to have better prospects for future income generation.

A recent report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021) emphasizes that economic empowerment of women is essential for improving educational outcomes for girls. The report suggests that when families experience financial stability, they are more likely to invest in their daughters'



education. However, in regions where poverty is prevalent, such as Southern Kaduna, the cycle of poverty perpetuates gender disparities in education.

- iii. **Religious Influences:** Religious beliefs and interpretations also play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards girl-child education. While Islamic teachings advocate for the pursuit of knowledge for all, including women, cultural interpretations often overshadow these teachings. According to a study by Aliyu and Ibrahim (2021), many Muslim parents in Northern Nigeria hold misconceptions about Islamic teachings, believing that educating girls contradicts traditional values.

Moreover, the intersection of religion and culture can lead to conflicting attitudes towards education. For instance, while some parents may support the idea of education for girls, they may simultaneously adhere to cultural practices that limit their educational opportunities, such as early marriage. This duality creates a complex environment where religious beliefs can both support and hinder girl-child education (Amina et al, 2021).

- iv. **Security Concerns:** In recent years, security concerns have emerged as a significant barrier to girl-child education in Northern Nigeria. The rise of insurgency and violence, particularly from groups like Boko Haram, has led to increased parental anxiety regarding the safety of their daughters in schools. A study by Nwankwo et al. (2022) found that many parents are reluctant to send their daughters to school due to fears of abduction and violence, further exacerbating the gender disparity in education.

The impact of insecurity on educational access is profound. According to UNICEF (2021), the ongoing violence has resulted in the closure of many schools, disproportionately affecting girls. The report emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to ensure the safety of girls in educational settings, highlighting that without addressing security concerns, efforts to promote girl-child education will be significantly undermined.

- v. **The Impact of COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified existing inequalities in education, particularly for girls. A report by UNICEF (2021) indicates that school closures disproportionately affected girls, leading to increased dropout rates and early marriages. The pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for targeted interventions to support girl-child education and ensure that girls are not left behind in the recovery process.



The economic fallout from the pandemic has also exacerbated financial constraints for many families, making it even more challenging to prioritize education for girls. As families struggle to recover economically, the risk of girls being pulled out of school for domestic labor or early marriage increases (Malala Fund, 2021).

The literature indicates that the attitudes of Muslim parents towards girl-child education in Southern Kaduna are shaped by a complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, religious, and security factors. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of girls' education, deeply entrenched beliefs and practices continue to hinder progress. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that includes community engagement, economic support, and enhanced security measures to create a safe and conducive learning environment for girls.

Recent studies emphasize the need for educational policies that are sensitive to the cultural and religious contexts of Muslim communities. Programs that engage parents and community leaders in discussions about the benefits of girl-child education can help shift attitudes and promote greater investment in girls' schooling. Additionally, economic empowerment initiatives that provide financial support for families can alleviate some of the economic pressures that contribute to gender disparities in education.

The literatures reviewed indicate that the attitudes of Muslim parents towards girl-child education in Southern Kaduna are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and security factors. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of girls' education, deeply entrenched beliefs and practices continue to hinder progress. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that includes community engagement, economic support, and enhanced security measures to create a safe and conducive learning environment for girls.

Methodology

This research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, as recommended by Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D (2022) and Flick, U (2013). The population for this study consists of Muslim parents in Southern Kaduna, specifically in the local governments of Jaba, Jama'a, Sanga, Kaura, Kachia, and Zangon Kataf. Data was collected in three stages:

- i. Gathering data on the number of girls' schools in each local government area from Cluster Education Officers.



- ii. Reviewing previous studies on parents' attitudes towards their daughters' education.
- iii. Conducting semi-structured interviews with participants, with consent obtained for audio recording. Each interview lasted 20-30 minutes.

The data collected was transcribed and analyzed using relational analysis, a type of content analysis approach. This method focuses on both explicit and implicit concepts within the data. Findings were discussed with local educationists to ensure reliability and contextual relevance.

Findings

The research identified several factors affecting girl-child education in Southern Kaduna, including parental cultural beliefs and place of residence, which contribute to negative attitudes towards girl-child education. The findings of the study regarding the relationship between various parental backgrounds and girl-child education present a complex picture.

The results indicate that there is no significant relationship between the economic background of students' parents and girl-child education. This finding contradicts the conclusions of Edinyang et al. (2020), who suggested that families with better economic standing tend to encourage girl-child education. This discrepancy may suggest that other factors, such as cultural or social influences, could play a more critical role in determining educational outcomes for girls, regardless of economic status.

The results concerning the relationship between parents' cultural background and girl-child education align with the findings of Ifeoma (2020), which also indicated no significant relationship. This supports Charles (2019), who argued that issues surrounding girl-child education are a global phenomenon that transcends cultural boundaries. This suggests that cultural attitudes may not be as influential in shaping educational opportunities for girls as previously thought.

The findings related to parents' religious background and girl-child education contradict the findings of Abdigafar, Hellen, and Willy (2019), who posited that the dominant religious group in a society influences girl-child education. However, the results are consistent with Igbolo and Ejue (2019), who found that the religious practices of parents do affect their attitudes toward girl-child education. This indicates that while the overarching religious context may not directly impact



educational outcomes, individual religious practices and beliefs can still play a significant role.

Finally, the study's findings on the relationship between government policies and girl-child education corroborate the results of Ma et al. (2019), which indicated that government policies actively promote girl-child education at all levels. This suggests that effective governmental initiatives can positively influence educational access and opportunities for girls, reinforcing the importance of policy support in addressing educational disparities.

Also, the study found that Muslim parents often do not provide equal access to education for their daughters compared to their sons, with many girls' education terminating at the primary level. Punctuality and enrollment of girl-children in school are crucial for their educational progression. Cultural and traditional practices hinder girls' education, with many being engaged in early marriages, despite religious teachings encouraging knowledge acquisition for all (UNESCO, 2021).

Conclusion

The study highlights a prevalent preference among Muslim parents in Southern Kaduna for male children over female children when it comes to education. This preference poses significant challenges to the educational opportunities available to girls in the region. The research identifies social exclusion and gender discrimination as common issues affecting female children, particularly within the Hausa and Fulani communities. These factors hinder the effective participation of girls in formal education.

There is an observed unfair distribution of educational resources and opportunities, which further limits the participation of Muslim women in various sectors of the economy. The study points out that early marriage significantly obstructs girls' rights to education, as it often leads to the termination of their educational pursuits. Additionally, the use of girls as domestic labor and for street hawking instead of attending school is prevalent. The informants interviewed provided insights and recommendations on how to improve girl-child education in the area, indicating a community awareness of the issues at hand.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following:



- i. Encouragement for Education: Muslim parents in Southern Kaduna should be actively encouraged to send their daughters to school. Awareness campaigns can help shift cultural perceptions regarding the value of female education.
- ii. Government Support for Schools: The government should establish more primary and secondary schools specifically for girls to motivate and facilitate their education. This includes ensuring that schools are accessible and adequately equipped.
- iii. Financial Assistance: Scholarships and subsidies should be provided by the government for female students attending public schools. This financial support can alleviate the economic burden on families and encourage them to prioritize education for their daughters.
- iv. Recruitment of Female Teachers: More female teachers should be recruited to serve as role models for girl-children. Having female educators can inspire girls and create a more supportive learning environment.
- v. Quality Education Mechanisms: The government should implement mechanisms to ensure quality and easily accessible education for girls in the region. This includes training for teachers, improving school infrastructure, and ensuring that educational materials are available.

These recommendations aim to address the barriers to girl-child education in Southern Kaduna and promote a more equitable educational landscape for all children, regardless of gender.

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