

An Investigation into Parents Gender Biases in a Child's Educational and Socioeconomic Development in Ilesa West Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigates parental gender biases and their influence on the educational and socioeconomic development of children, with a focus on the girl child in Ilesa West Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. The research aims to assess how parental attitudes, particularly favouritism towards male children, affect access to education and future opportunities for the female gender. It also explores the extent of marginalisation faced by girls and the strategies that can be adopted to empower them as active contributors to national development. A descriptive research design was employed, and data was gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire, which was administered to 150 randomly selected parents and guardians in the study area. The instrument had a high reliability coefficient of 0.893. The questionnaire addressed parental attitudes, marginalisation of the female gender, and possible empowerment strategies. Findings revealed that poverty, parental occupation, religious beliefs, and cultural backgrounds significantly influence gender-based discrimination in education. Respondents acknowledged the existence of discriminatory practices that prioritise male education while neglecting the girl child. However, many showed reluctance in accepting the empowerment of the girl child as a viable societal contributor. Despite this, there was support for mentoring young girls through exposure to successful female role models. The study concludes that deeply rooted cultural and social biases continue to impede gender equality. It recommends stronger legal enforcement against educational neglect, merit-based opportunities irrespective of gender, advocacy by successful women, and broader sensitisation through religious and community-based platforms to promote equal treatment and opportunities for all children.*

Keywords: gender, educational, biases, socioeconomic, development

INTRODUCTION

The concept of parenting extends beyond the biological role of giving birth to or fathering a child; it encompasses the broader responsibility of nurturing, guiding, and supporting the development of a child into adulthood. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary (2022), a parent is defined as either a father or mother who gives birth to or raises a child, highlighting both biological and social dimensions. Amos (2013) expands this view by describing parenting as a lifelong educational and supportive process aimed at helping a child attain his or her full human potential. This process is holistic, encompassing emotional, intellectual, physical, and social dimensions of child development. In executing these responsibilities, parents must be mindful of the individuality of each child, recognising variations in personality and gender, and avoiding any form of discrimination. Parents, therefore, play a critical role not only in the basic upbringing of their children but also in shaping their perceptions about self-worth, equity, and their future societal roles. Effective parenting ensures that no child is marginalised or neglected due to their gender, thereby setting a foundation for inclusive development and equality.

Understanding gender and its implications is essential in the discourse on parenting. Hornby (2015) defines gender as the state of being male or female, particularly when viewed in terms of social and cultural roles. If parents recognise and appreciate the unique roles and needs of both genders without prejudice, they contribute significantly to raising balanced and competent future adults. This gender-sensitive parenting does not only foster a generation of educated and emotionally intelligent individuals but also supports national development through improved socio-economic outcomes. Nakpodia and Urien (2012) stress the importance of eliminating gender discrimination by ensuring equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. Lexicom (2022) and the Cambridge Dictionary describe gender bias as favouritism towards one gender over the other, often manifesting in subtle ways that are challenging to prove. Masiero and Aleksi (2020) further explain that gender bias is systematic behaviour that favours men and disadvantages women in various settings, including academic and social environments. These ingrained biases often influence how parents allocate resources and support to their children based on gender, inadvertently stifling the potential of girls.

The educational and socioeconomic development of a child should be holistic and inclusive, providing all children with equal opportunities regardless of gender. This includes access to quality education, moral and financial support, and the freedom to pursue their ambitions. Parents, as the primary caregivers, have a responsibility to nurture their children equitably, ensuring that neither boys nor girls are disadvantaged. In many African societies, however, gender bias is still prevalent, often resulting in girls receiving less encouragement and support in educational and economic pursuits. This bias has long-term implications, limiting the girl child's opportunities to contribute meaningfully to society. The focus of this study, therefore, is to examine how parental gender biases impact the educational and socioeconomic development of children in Ilesa West Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. It aims to shed light on the extent of discrimination against the girl child and to offer insights into how such practices can be addressed for a more inclusive and equitable society.

The issue of gender preference, particularly the prioritisation of male children over females, is deeply rooted in cultural and societal beliefs across Nigeria. The perception that male children are more valuable because they carry on the family name has led to the systematic neglect of the girl child. This bias begins at birth and affects the attention, resources, and opportunities

provided to the child. Nakpodia and Urien (2012) note that many parents display marked enthusiasm when a male child is born, while the birth of a female may be met with disappointment or indifference. Such attitudes have a lasting impact on the girl child's educational and economic prospects. Akinrinade (2020) highlights that the girl child, despite being influential, is one of the most marginalised groups in Nigerian society. She is often denied opportunities due to cultural stereotypes and societal expectations. These biases are not only unjust but counterproductive, as they hinder national development by suppressing the potential contributions of a significant portion of the population. The often-quoted axiom, "educate a man and you educate an individual, educate a woman and you educate a nation," underscores the far-reaching impact of female education on community and national development. This research is thus timely and necessary in addressing the disparities and advocating for change.

The overarching goal of this study is to explore the attitudes of parents toward gender and how these attitudes influence the development of their children, particularly the girl child. Specifically, the research seeks to investigate the extent to which parental bias affects a child's education and socioeconomic prospects based on gender in Ilesa West Local Government Area. It also aims to uncover the degree to which the female gender is marginalised and to explore strategies for empowering the girl child to achieve her full potential. The study acknowledges the urgency of redressing these imbalances and hopes to contribute to a shift in societal and parental mindsets. Recognising the value of the girl child, not just in the family but in broader society, is crucial for equitable development. By examining these issues at the grassroots level, the research intends to provide data-driven insights that can inform policy and community-based interventions. Ultimately, the study aims to advocate for a more just and inclusive society where all children, regardless of gender, are given equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Research Hypotheses

- H01:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of parents as it affects the education and socioeconomic development of a child based on gender.
- H02:** There is no significant difference to the extent the female gender is being marginalized in attaining educational and socioeconomic development in the area of study.
- H03:** There is no significant difference in the ways and means of helping the female gender to be seen as a powerful being who is capable of contributing her quota to the development of any nation.

RESEARCH METHODS

Only the Primary source of data collection was used for this study with the aid of a questionnaire developed by the researchers. No secondary data source was involved. The research design adopted for the purpose of this study was descriptive. The only questionnaire developed by the researchers was administered to randomly selected respondents of Ilesa West Local Government Area of Osun State. The population of the study comprised of parents and guardians of Ilesa West Local government Area of Osun State. A total number of 150 respondents were randomly selected for this study from the population. The respondents comprised of fathers and mothers as well as guardians. A questionnaire on parent's gender biases in a child's educational and socioeconomic development was developed by the researchers and used for data collection from respondents. The instrument has an overall reliability coefficient of 0.893 (Cronbach's Alpha). The questionnaire comprised three sections. The Section "A" of the questionnaire contains items

which were designed to investigate the attitude of parents as it affects the education and socioeconomic development of a child based on gender. Other section of the questionnaire contain items on the extent to which the female gender has been marginalized in attaining educational and socio economic development in the area of study (Section B). While Section “C” comprised ways and means of helping the female gender to be seen as a powerful being capable of contributing her quota to the development of any nation. The data from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data collected were analyzed by scoring responses to the questionnaire.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of parents’ attitude towards education and socioeconomic development of a child based on gender

S/N	Statement	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed
1.	The poverty level of parents affect the education of the gender of a child	22 (14.7%)	57 (38%)	49 (32.7%)	22 (14.7%)
2.	Large family size of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child	20 (13.3%)	49 (32.7%)	50 (33.3%)	31 (20.7%)
3.	the occupation of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child	30 (20%)	49 (32.7%)	49 (32.7%)	22 (14.7%)
4.	the level of education of the parents affects that of a child	23 (15.3%)	52 (34.7%)	53 (35.7%)	22 (14.7%)
5.	the religions belief of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child	28 (18.7%)	57 (38%)	52 (34.7%)	13 (8.7%)
6.	the cultural background of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child	37 (24.7%)	49 (32.7%)	40 (26.7%)	24 (16%)
7.	the income of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child.	19 (12.7%)	42 (28%)	60 (40%)	29 (19.3%)
8.	parents should give equal opportunities of education and social economic development to both male and female	21 (14%)	48 (32%)	60 (40%)	21 (14%)
9.	Parents who are not educated do not contribute to their children educational and social economic development in any way	12 (8%)	47 (31.3%)	59 (39.3%)	32 (21.3%)
10.	Parents separation affect the education of the gender of a child	13 (8.7%)	32 (21.3%)	63 (42%)	42 (28%)

Table 1 above shows that majority, that is 57 (38%) of the respondents agreed that poverty level of parents affect the education of the gender of a child, while 49 (32.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Majority 50 (33.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that large family size of the parents do not affect the education of the gender of a child while 49 (32.7%) of the respondents agreed that Large family size of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child. Majority 30 (20%) of the respondents strongly agreed that occupation of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child, while 22 (14.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 23 (15.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that level of education of the parents affects that of a child while few 22 (14.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Majority 57 (38%) of the respondents agreed that religious belief of the

parents affects the education of the gender of a child while few 13 (8.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Majority 49 (32.7%) of the respondents agreed that cultural background of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child, while 24 (16%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Majority 60 (40%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that income of the parents do not affect the education of the gender of a child, while 42 (28%) of the respondents agreed that income of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child. Majority 60 (40%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that parents should give equal opportunities of education and social economic development to both male and female, while 48 (32%) of the respondents agreed that parents should give equal opportunities of education and social economic development to both male and female. 47 (31.3%) of the respondents agreed that parents who are not educated do not contribute to their children educational and social economic development, 59 (39.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. 32 (21.3%) of the respondents agreed that parents separation affect the education of the gender of a child while 63 (42%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of marginalization of female gender in attaining educational and socio economic development in the area of study

S/ N	Statement	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed
1.	Discriminatory practices of parents affect the education of the gender of a child	19 (12.7%)	42 (28%)	48 (32%)	41 (27.3%)
2.	The erroneous belief of the parents that the male shall be given more educational opportunities affects that of the female child	10 (6.7%)	53 (35.3%)	64 (42.7%)	23 (15.3%)
3.	The environment parents reside affect the educational socioeconomic development of the gender of child	5 (3.3%)	43 (28.7%)	62 (41.3%)	40 (26.7%)
4.	The female gender is not meant to contribute to the socio-economy of the parents and not to be sent to school	21 (14%)	73 (48.7%)	46 (30.7%)	10 (6.7%)
5.	The female gender can contribute greatly to the national development but is not given the opportunities to explore her talent	29 (19.3%)	47 (31.3%)	52 (34.7%)	22 (14.7%)
6.	The female gender should only be seen and not heard.	26 (17.3%)	64 (42.7%)	45(30%)	15 (10%)
7.	The female gender is been deprived of equal opportunities given to the male gender	8 (5.3%)	44 (29.3%)	64 (42.7%)	34 (22.7%)
8.	The female gender is forced into early marriages	9 (6%)	36 (24%)	63 (42%)	42 (28%)
9.	Special privileges and concessions should be given to female genders in both higher and lower levels of educations.	15 (10%)	45 (30%)	66 (44%)	24 (16%)
10.	The female gender should not be discriminated against in the field of work	20 (13.3%)	59 (39.3%)	54 (36%)	17 (11.3%)

Table 2 above shows that Majority with are 42 (28%) of the respondents agreed that discriminatory practices of parents affect the education of the gender of a child, while 41 (27.3%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 53 (35.3%) of the respondents agreed

that erroneous belief of the parents that the male child should be given more educational opportunities which affects that of the female child while 23 (15.3%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 43 (28.7%) of the respondents agreed the environment parents reside affect the educational socioeconomic development of the gender of child, while 62 (41.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Majority 73 (48.7%) of the respondents agreed that female gender is not meant to contribute to the socio-economic status of the parents and not to be sent to school while 46 (30.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. 29 (19.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that female gender can contribute greatly to the national development if given the opportunities to explore her talent while 22 (14.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Majority 64 (42.7%) of the respondents agreed that female gender should only be seen and not heard while 45(30%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. 44 (29.3%) of the respondents agreed that female gender is been deprived of equal opportunities given to the male gender while majority 64 (42.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 36 (24%) of the respondents agreed that female gender is forced into early marriages while 63 (42%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. 45 (30%) of the respondents agreed that special privileges and concessions should be given to female genders in both higher and lower levels of education, while 66 (44%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 59 (39.3%) of the respondents agreed that female gender should not be discriminated against in the field of work while 54 (36%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of ways and means of helping the female gender to be seen as a powerful being who is capable of contributing her quota to the development of any nation

S/ N	Statement	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed
1.	The female gender can contribute greatly to the national development if given the opportunity	12(8%)	42 (28%)	54 (36%)	42(28%)
2.	Parents should encourage their female child to strive to attain a higher level of educational and socio-economic development	5 (3.3%)	51 (34%)	68 (45.3%)	26 (17.3%)
3.	Household chores should not be lopsided at the home front to the female gender alone	6 (4%)	35 (23.3%)	56 (37.3%)	53 (35.3%)
4.	Responsibilities at home and in the school should be evenly distributed between both gender	21 (14%)	83 (55.3%)	42 (28%)	4 (.7%)
5.	No aspects of the school subjects should be ear marked or tagged for male or female gender	25 (16.7%)	46 (30.7%)	57 (38%)	22 (14.7%)
6.	The younger female gender should be given access to know those older female genders who have made it in their various field of endeavors /land mark in life	25 (16.7%)	82 (54.7%)	39 (26%)	4 (2.7%)
7.	Seminar organized by the female genders who have made it in their various fields of endeavors in the society would serve as incentives to the young female gender	42 (28%)	68 (45.3%)	38 (25.3%)	2 (1.3%)
8.	Female gender should be encouraged and counsellid to aim high	53 (35.3%)	66 (44%)	21 (14%)	10 (6.7%)
9.	Field trips to organizations where female genders are the heads would inspire the younger female genders	16 (10.7%)	59 (39.3%)	59 (39.3%)	16 (10.7%)
10.	Both families and guardians help to do home work in a number of subjects.	18 (12%)	63 (42%)	56 (37.3%)	13 (8.7%)

Table 3 above revealed that 42 (28%) of the respondents agreed that female gender can contribute greatly to the national development if given the opportunity while 54 (36%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. 51 (34%) of the respondents agreed that parent should encourage their female child to strive to attain a higher level of educational and socio-economic development while 68 (45.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. 35 (23.3%) of the respondents agreed that household chores should be lopsided at the home front to the female gender alone while 53 (35.3%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Majority 83 (55.3%) of the respondents agreed that responsibilities at home and in the school should be evenly distributed between both genders while 42 (28%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. 46 (30.7%) of the respondents agreed that no aspects of the school subjects should be earmarked or tagged for male or female gender while 57 (38%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. Majority 82 (54.7%) of respondents strongly agreed that younger female gender should be given access to know those older female genders who have made it in their various field of endeavors /land mark in life, while 39 (26%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 68 (45.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that seminar organized by the female genders who have made it in their various fields of endeavors in the society would serve as incentives to the young female genders while 38 (25.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. 66 (35.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that female gender should be encouraged and counselled to aim high while, 10 (6.7%) of the respondents disagreed. 16 (10.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Field trips to organizations where female gender are the heads would inspire the younger female genders while 16 (10.7%) of the respondents also disagreed. 63 (42%) of the respondents agreed that both families and guardians help to do homework in a number of subjects while 56 (37.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho 1: There is no significant different between female gender toward contributing to the socio-economy of the parents and poverty of parents affect the education of gender of child

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing 1

Poverty level of parents affect the education of the gender of a child		female gender toward contributing to the socio-economy of the parents				Total	Df	X ²	P-value
		Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed				
	Strongly Agreed	0	8	12	2	22	9	23.25	0.006
	Agreed	1	15	24	9	49			
	Strongly Disagreed	3	16	32	6	57			
	Disagreed	6	7	5	4	22			
	Total	10	46	73	21	150			

The finding in the table above shows that the Chi-square value ($X^2 = 23.25$, $P = 0.006$) at 0.05 level of significant. It implies that there is no significant difference between the attitude female gender toward contributing to the socio-economy of the parents and Poverty level of parents

affect the education of the gender of a child. It means that there is low level of female gender toward contributing to the socio-economy of the parents which is due to Poverty level of parents in Nigeria system.

Ho 2: There is no significant between erroneous belief of the parents that the male shall be given more educational opportunities and Occupation of the parents toward education of gender of a child

Table 5: Hypothesis testing 2

Occupation of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child		Erroneous belief of the parents that the male shall be given more educational opportunities				Total	Df	X ²	P-value
		Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed				
	Strongly Agreed	7	9	4	2	22	9	16.019	0.066
	Agreed	10	16	21	2	49			
	Strongly Disagreed	4	27	14	4	49			
	Disagreed	2	12	14	2	30			
	Total	23	64	53	10	150			

The finding in the table above shows that the Chi-square value ($X^2 = 16.019$, $P = 0.066$) at 0.05 level of significant. It implies that there is significant relationship between erroneous belief of the parents that the male shall be given more educational opportunities and Occupation of the parents toward education of gender of a child. It means that there is little level of high opportunity for male child to be given education which is due to level of occupation of parent in Nigeria system.

Ho 3: There is no significant different between special privileges for female genders of both higher and lower level of education and Large family size of the parents affect the education of the gender of child

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing 3

Large family size of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child		Special privileges for female genders of both higher and lower level of education				Total	Df	X ²	P-value
		Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed				
	Strongly Agreed	3	21	7	0	31	9	14.833	0.096
	Agreed	10	21	15	4	50			
	Strongly Disagreed	9	18	15	7	49			
	Disagreed	2	6	8	4	20			
	Total	24	66	45	15	150			

The finding in the table above shows that the Chi-square value ($X^2 = 14.833$, $P = 0.096$) at 0.05 level of significant. It implies that there is significant relationship between special privileges for female genders of both higher and lower level of education and large family size of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child. It means that there is little level of high opportunity for female genders of both higher and lower level of education which is due to large family size in Nigeria system

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Findings in Table 1 showed that majority of the respondents agreed that the poverty level of parents affect the education of the gender of a child. This is in line with Ayodeji (2017) assertion that, it is not enough to father a child, but must learn to groom, train, nurture and provide for the children until they become fully independent. Likewise, majority strongly agreed that, the occupation of the parents affects the education of the gender of a child, as well as the religious belief and cultural background. All these are in corroboration with Ayodeji (2017) Nakpodia & Urien (2012) and Akinrinade (2020) submissions. Conversely, majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that large family size of the parents do not affect the education of the gender of a child.

Majority of the respondents agreed that discriminatory practices of parents affect the education of a child. Their erroneous belief that the male child should be given more educational opportunities which affects the female child also has a higher rating. These are in line with the submissions and opinions of Olayiwola & Olowonmi (2013), Masiero & Aleksy (2020) and Ewherido (2020).

The last objective centred on the way forward to helping the female gender to be seen as a powerful being who is capable of contributing her quota to the development of any nation. Unfortunately, here, majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. This is a pointer to the reason why the female gender even in this 21st century is still greatly being biased against and marginalized. This is in line with Akinrinade (2020) assertion that, the girl-child is no doubt the most influential but often neglected group in most of the Nigerian societies. Nevertheless, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the younger female gender should

be given access to know the older female genders who have made it in their various field of endeavours/landmark in life to serve as role models.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that the idea and practices of making consideration for admission, given employment etc based on gender should be discouraged as it often times affect the female gender. These research finding clearly show that there is great favouritism for the male gender while there is great bias and prejudice against the female gender which is very rampant in the Nigerian societies. It has equally been discovered from the hypotheses tested that educational acquisition is believed to be significant in eradicating gender bias while the culture encourages gender discrimination.

Recommendations

This research work recommends amongst others that:

1. Parents of School age girls found hawking or engaging in street trading during school hours should be prosecuted by the government.
2. Admission, employment and so on should be given based on merit and not gender.
3. Consideration and incentives be given to more female genders to enroll in schools especially in the areas known to be educationally disadvantaged.
4. There should be more advocacy programmes by women and ladies who have made it in their various fields of endeavour to encourage more parents of the female gender to send them to school.
5. Parents and guardians should be discouraged from seeing their female children/wards as articles for trading and means of generating daily income.
6. Attempts should be made by all religious bodies to sensitize and encourage parents to send all their children to school and even preach against discriminating against female gender.

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