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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL PRACTICES ON EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AMONG CHILDREN AND WOMEN IN THE NORTH-EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE

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Abstract

This article explores teachers' perceptions of how traditional practices influence educational achievement among children and women in the North-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. The region, characterized by a rich tapestry of cultural traditions, faces unique challenges and opportunities in the educational sector. Through surveys and interviews with teachers across primary and secondary schools in the North-East, this study highlighted the interplay between cultural beliefs, societal expectations, and educational achievement, providing insights for policymakers and educators. Further studies should be undertaken in separate methods- qualitative/quantitative for more outcomes.

Keywords: Traditional Practices, Children, Women, Educational Achievement, Northeast

Introduction

The North-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria encompasses diverse ethnic groups, each with its own traditional practices that affect various aspects of life, including education. This region has experienced significant disruptions due to conflict, economic challenges, and varying levels of educational attainment. Traditional practices often dictate gender roles, access to education, and societal values surrounding schooling. Understanding teachers' perceptions is crucial for addressing these issues and enhancing educational outcomes. Nigeria as the most populous country of the black race of the world is rapidly undergoing socio-politico-economic reforms. The prowess for these reforms is fueled by the nation's commitment to international goals of development such as the Education for All (EFA) initiative and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in recognition of the education sector as a vehicle of empowering the people for the attainment of the nation's developmental plans and targets (Demurin Deborah Anuoluwa, Faniyi Olawale F, Olaloye Omolara Esther, Okpodu Emmanuel Okpodu, & Tayo Bukola Adebola, ND). Many previous

scholars only focused narrowly on conceptualization of educational achievement among under-aged and women, thereby having a dearth of researches studying the more inclusive principle of scientific research. Some of the researchers attempted to intertwine educational achievement of women and under-aged had reported mixed findings. Contradictory to findings of previous scholars in their result of study argued that having been studied four focus groups of high-achieving female under-aged and male under-aged, and on the other hand were the underachieving male under-aged and female under-aged were all studied on the ambience of gender identity (Babayo, Sulaiman Jibril, 2019).

Literature Review

Previous research indicates that traditional practices can both positively and negatively impact educational achievement. On one hand, community support for education can foster academic success; on the other hand, restrictive norms may hinder opportunities for children, particularly girls. Factors such as early marriage, financial constraints, and gender biases often emerge as barriers stemming from traditional cultural beliefs. Teachers, as frontline educators, have unique

insights into the effects of these practices on student engagement and achievement (Babayo, 2019; Demurin, et al.). Andrej Démuth, (2013) noted that perception is the study of the world in relation to images or ideas. He also argued alongside John Locke from epistemological tradition that all statements are related to the authenticity of their authorities that uttered them. Therefore, for one to believe any knowledge, the source and procedures of cognition must be known in terms of its legitimacy, validity, nature and limits. However, knowing where the knowledge comes from, its formation and how it was distributed is very important. In dealing with perception, verification of knowledge is very vital (Oneida, et al., 2017).

Children and Education

Children are those young humans yet to attain the age of 15 years as defined by ILO; while according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child considers 14 years and the United Nations (UN) approved 17 years. Child labour as traditional practice being practiced in the urban areas, truncates the educational achievement of children. Therefore, children are not lawfully allowed to work before their 18th birthday (Hobbs, S., et al, 1999; Babayo, 2019). Some of the elements of tradition distorting the educational achievement of include female circumcision, denial to education through forced early marriage, female child rejection by their parents, hawking, children labour and denial to women to possess the inheritance bequeathed by their husbands. In most parts of Northern Nigeria, parents show less interest in assisting their children at home. They believe that once their children are enrolled in school, they as parents have no role to play in the development of their children education, but only their teachers have the responsibility to assist. That is to say that in societies where parents are committed in assisting their children in the pursuit of their education, children tend to benefit greatly towards their educational achievement (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hess & McDevitt, R.M., 1984).

The issue of traditional practices concerning the development of children attracted the attention of various scholars from all disciplines. Roberts, J.,

Donkin, A. and Marmot, M. (2015), argued that in Britain, young people and children from the poorest background are most likely three times than their more advantaged counterparts to develop mental health challenges (Green et al., 2005). The typology can be observed in different directions, with mentally ill children to be able to contribute to socio-economic among other health challenges (McCulloch and Goldie, 2010, Parckar, 2008). Those countries that are highly developed have high level of inequality and therefore having higher rates of adolescent and children health challenges (Pickett et al., 2006).

Child education is affected by other traditional traits thereby making it impossible for children to achieve their educational goals. In this connection, Aptel, C. (2016) argued that child slavery is highly in existence across the globe in various forms such as children recruitment into hostile groups (child soldier), child trafficking sexual slavery, children in bonded labour, child victims of early forced marriages, among others. Walker (2012) believed that early/forced marriage as a cultural practice is detrimental to the life of the children female child, the family and of course the society and its economy. She also argued that the children is sent into marriage without achieving any educational attainment which is a common practice in northern Nigeria, Niger Republic and Mali. This brings about domestic violence, a great number of births and series of changes in the life of the children wife.

Data also indicated that the more we have high percentage of children wives in countries that are still undeveloped, the least their womenfolk is educated. For example, in the sub-Saharan African societies, children of only 30 per cent of women from the age of 15 to 18 years were found to be educated before getting married. In Mali, Niger and Chad about 70 per cent of the children females were already married without literacy (Walker 2012). The perception of the society of the children female members of the individual communities as weaker-sex makes them more prone to unnecessary exploitation by human traffickers (Aronowitz, 2009). Their being trafficked by the groups of human vendors makes them incapable of acquiring education. Most

parents due to negligence, illiteracy, and lack of time, sometimes because of ill-attitude towards educational achievement of their children fail to contribute sufficiently in such life-long pace-setting as a concrete foundation for the future of their children. The United Nations (1989) argued that the entire responsibility of upbringing and all-round development of all children is basically supposed to be legally shouldered by parents, guardians, not to be left at the mercy of the community. However, since the children have more time of their daily life to stay in company of their parents than in school, parental involvement is expected to aggrandize the educational achievement of their children.

Teachers' Perceptions on Educational Achievement among Children and Women

Perception of teachers is how teachers conceive of their pupils/students' educational participation based on their expectations of their becoming literate and functional adults in the future (Buchmann, 2000). Educational inequalities determined also by the evaluation of profitable educational returns and household unmet needs rather than gender stereotypes or dependence on child labour.

Women and Education

Alibi (2014) noted that Nigeria is affected by issues concerning female children involved in forced/early marriages. Culturally, female child is sent to become a wife in her early teens of 12 years, less or above to their family's associates, strange men, philanthropists and visitors. They are also married to popular men and or clergy men in their communities (Adedayo, O., 2020). The Qur'an vividly defined the concept of marriage as a contract in which the husband and wife engage in the act of life-sharing in society. Apart from continuity of humanity, its objectives also include sexual legitimacy and peaceful spiritual hegemony. Therefore, the foundation of marriage encompasses love and mercy. In the Qur'an and Mabsoot, 2006, there are some virtues stated in certain verses pertaining marriage, one of which is as follows: And among His signs is this: That He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest, peace of mind in them, and He ordained between

you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are signs for people who reflect." (Qur'an chapter 30 verse 21; Sulaiman, J. B., 2022). Babayo, S. J., (2014) noted that the major cultural trait challenging the lives of women and children is poor parental literacy due the tradition of having no value for education. Most parents perceive female children to be weaker sex, whose status is limited to the domestic services. They give them out for marriage at their tender age of 12-15, without any hope of continuing their education pursuit (Emenanjo, E.N., 2001). This gesture truncates their educational achievement. Education of female children and women in society is not preferred to that of male adults and menfolk. Illiteracy causes them falling victim to VVF, HIV/AIDS, and they suffer too being infected with certain health challenges- loss of focus, psychological trauma, lack of confidence and abject poverty (Baker, G., 1973 & Bajah, S. T. (1997). Women are vulnerable to violation of their fundamental human rights by their husbands, members of the extended families of the husbands, their co-wives, among others. The female child is engaged in hawking and beggars' guide at street begging. Babayo, S. J., (2014) believes that women are estimated globally, having the population of not less than 50% and supposed to greatly contribute in human development economically, socially and politically. They are reckoned as mothers, arrangers of the social system, home keepers and defenders of human ecosystem. Unfortunately, they are left uneducated in society (Usman S., Muhammad A. B., Babayo Sule (2021; Demurin, *et al.* ND). Ezeomah, C. (1983).

Traditional Practices

Traditional practices are found inherently existing and being practiced in every human society. The main characteristics of a traditional society include: religious beliefs and practices, marriage and the family, kinship, legal, the economic and political units which constitute the country (Nukunya, 2003). From a traditional point of view, as argued by Akogun and John (2016), parents tend to rely more on their traditional ways of doing things. There are some traditional/cultural traits that are unhealthy to the physique and the well-being of the persons, mostly women, and children. There are those traditional practices that result in extreme pain and those

that cause them humiliation and degradation (Hanzi 2006; Iyanuolu 2008; cited in Wadesango, Rembe & Chabaya 2011). These are called Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs). The study considers the meaning of traditional practices as certain culturally given traits being religiously practiced by those who practice them. Early marriage is similar to child marriage, forced marriage and also known as Child. Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM), and it is a global custom in which children are sent into matrimonial life before attainment of puberty (UNICEF, 2014; cited in Chukwuemeke, (2018).

The definition of early marriage in this study is the kind of marriage undertaken without the consent of the children involved. Early marriage is one of the powerful social malaises that need to be eradicated in order to improve the quality of life of female children in the course of their pursuit of sustainable development (UNFPA, 2012; UNICEF, 2013). Early marriage is a violation of human rights which is seen to have robbed many children of their childhood, and put their health and growth at risk, disrupting their educational development, limits their opportunities for employment and social development. It also increases their risk of exposure to abuse and violence in society (WHO, 2016). Early marriage is also defined as a union between an adolescent female child (girl) and male child (boy); marriage between an adolescent girl and a matured male adult (man) or vice-versa, which takes place at puberty age while the person concerned is in the process of maturing (Anngo, 1991).

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing surveys and interviews with teachers across primary and secondary schools in the North-East. The survey aims to quantify the prevalence of specific traditional practices and their perceived impact on educational outcomes. In-depth interviews provide qualitative insights into experiences and observations on teachers regarding the interplay between culture and education.

Findings

The findings revealed a complex relationship between traditional practices and educational achievement. Gender Roles: Many teachers indicated that traditional gender roles often dictate the level of educational attainment for girls. Parents may prioritize sons' education over daughters', leading to lower enrollment and higher dropout rates for female students. This notion is due to the belief that the male child is perceived as replacer of the father, hence the female child gets married to an outsider from an out group (Jibril, 2022).

Parents withdraw their children from school due to inability to pay school fees. When the female children are ripe for marriage as slated by their culture, they are immediately given out to marry before the completion of their elementary. Many boys also are enrolled in skill acquisition under the local artisans such as tailors, carpenters and roadside mechanics among others before completion of their primary education (Informant R1)

Improvement of Security in North-eastern Nigeria

Security is very important in societal progress and development. It is the life wire of every society and it ushers in peaceful coexistence and tranquility at individual and communal levels.

Therefore, security is the quantum of protection it can offer in repelling losses, damages and dangers (Moreira, Cardoso & Nalla, 2015). The North-east region of Nigerian state has been subjected to a high level of insecurity by the activities insurgents by the terrorist group of Boko Haram and currently the Lakurawa group and bandits in Zamfara state in the Northwest. The region has been under various violent acts, inhuman attacks by the terror groups as mentioned above, using explosives, maiming, abduction, slaughtering and burning houses, public places like motor-parks and markets, among others. All this is in the name of religion, as variously claimed by the perpetrators. Informant R17 blamed poor governance thus,

Successive governments failed to ensure security...that's why insurgency could not be defeated in Nigeria. However, the regulatory principles of Nigerian law, Section 14 (1) clearly noted "the security and welfare of the people shall be a primary purpose of government" (Informant R10)

Cultural Attitudes

Towards Education Teachers reported a general belief in the value of education; however, cultural practices, such as the preference for apprenticeships or labor over formal schooling, were mentioned as impediments to sustained educational engagement, particularly among boys (Babayo, Yusuf, & Hassan, (2017; Agwu, (1998). Community Support In contrast, some traditional practices promote community support for schooling. For instance, communal events that celebrate educational achievements can motivate students and bolster parental involvement (Babayo, et al, 2017). Maduwesi, (1992). Kamkwis, (2012).

Impact of Early Marriage

A significant number of teachers highlighted early marriage as a prevalent issue, particularly for girls from rural backgrounds. This practice often leads to interrupted education and reinforces cycles of poverty and lack of empowerment (Babayo, et al., 2017). Lar, (1991a). Sulaiman, (2012). Fafunwa, (1967) Ahmed, (1995). During the pandemic attack, the splinter factions of Boko Haram such as Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP), persistently launched attacks against civilians alongside military and humanitarian targets. About 365 civilians had been killed between January and September 2021 in Northern Nigeria. In August 2021, the Borno state government returned some of the internally displaced people back to their local communities in Kukawa local government area of the state. After sixteen days of their return, the communities were attacked by the insurgents again. That was when the government was making efforts to return all the displaced people from the neighbouring Cameroon Republic.

There were other security challenges in the northwest and south involving inter-communal clashes which

consumed hundreds of civilians by kidnappers who kidnapped for ransoms, vigilantes, criminal gangs, cattle-raiders and herder-allied armed groups. There was a pervasive sexual violence affecting women and girls where many were also killed (Ibrahim, Samaila, & Sulaiman, (2022). In Nigeria, children's education during Covid-19 period and beyond 2020 was drastically affected due to their inability to go to school during the then lockdown order. Before the pandemic, the World Bank (Udo 2018; & Yusuf, Abubakar, & Jibril, 2022),"Nigerian children could not read, write or do basic mathematics" thereby affecting them in the future of their learning. Therefore, with advent of the pandemic, children were seen playing on the streets and engaging in petty trades (Yusuf, et al., 2022).

Discussion

The findings suggested that while traditional practices can serve as barriers to educational achievement, they can also provide opportunities for engagement and support. Teachers serve as mediators of these cultural influences, and their perceptions are vital for developing strategies to enhance educational outcomes. Addressing the negative impacts of traditional practices requires collaboration between educators, parents, and community leaders to redefine societal values around education, particularly for girls. Programs that educate families about the long-term benefits of schooling may shift perceptions and encourage greater participation. Some educators noted that integrating cultural elements into the curriculum can enhance students' connection to education, making it more relevant and engaging (Babayo, et al, 2017; Maduwesi, (2005). In this respect, an informant argued that:

"The female children must be allowed to compete with their male counterparts for their equal rights to be protected for them to offer the quota of contributing to the nation building. In the perspective of Islamic law, there is no contradiction between its emphatic encouragement on child education and health-care and its position on early marriages. (Cleric)

Conclusion

Teachers in the North-East Geo-Political Zone have a nuanced understanding of how traditional practices affect educational achievement among children and women. By recognizing and addressing the challenges posed by these practices, policymakers and educators can work towards creating a more equitable educational environment. However, the findings indicated that traditional practices are not that significant in the lower educational achievement among children and women in the Northeastern geopolitical zone, rather a combination of insecurity, abject poverty and violence. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics and develop culturally sensitive interventions that promote educational attainment for all.

Recommendations

Community Engagement Initiatives to involve community leaders in dialogue about the importance of education can help shift traditional perceptions. Support for Girls' Education Targeted programs that address the unique challenges faced by female students should be prioritized. Curriculum relevance incorporating cultural beliefs into the educational curriculum can foster greater student engagement. More supportive programmes should be organised toward empowering the women and vulnerable children in their respective communities. Teacher Training Programs Professional development that equips teachers with strategies to navigate cultural sensitivities will enhance their effectiveness in diverse classroom settings by focusing on these recommendations, the North-East Geo-Political

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