

## Perception of Rural Dwellers on Girl - Child Education in Saki East Local Government Area of Oyo State

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### Abstract

*This study examined perception of rural dwellers on girl-child education in Saki East local government area of Oyo state. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents, resulting in a total number of 120 household heads used for this study. Primary data on the perception of rural dwellers on girl-child education was collected using interview schedule and were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results reveal that majority (75.8%) of the respondents were male, within 41-50 years of age and were aware of girl-child education through the use of the radio (81.7%). Further results show that majority (85.0%) of the respondents had favorable perception of girl-child education. Chi-square analysis of the result shows that there was a significant relationship between the level of education of the respondents ( $\chi^2 = 4.379$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), awareness on girl-child education ( $\chi^2 = 5.441$ ,  $p = 0.020$ ) and their perception of girl-child education. Further results of correlation analysis revealed that there existed a correlation between income ( $r = -0.592$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), the constraints facing rural dwellers on girls' education ( $r = -0.465$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and their perception on girl-child education. Based on these findings, the study recommended that adult literacy should be encouraged and the cost of acquiring formal education should be subsidized.*

**Keywords:** Perception, rural dwellers, Girl-child education.

### INTRODUCTION

Within the context of the Nigerian environment, several definitions of the girl-child exist. The national child welfare (1989) as cited by Ada (2007) defines the girl-child as a person below 14 years of age. Oxford advanced learner's dictionary defines the girl-child as a female child of 6-8 years of age which is the age before one can become a young adult and the period covers the crèche, nursery and early childhood. Offorma (2009) defines the girl-child as a biological female offspring from birth to 18 years of age. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescent stage of development. The girl-child is seen as a young female person who would eventually grow into a woman and marry. An adolescent girl stands at the doorway of adulthood (Catherine, 2012). In that moment much is decided. If she stays in school, remains healthy and gains real skills, she will marry later, have fewer and healthier children and earn an

income she will invest back into her family (Catherine, 2012). She is conditioned to look after the young ones, the home and the elderly. (Catherine, 2012). She is taught to be obedient and internalize the notion that she is someone's property and responsibility. She is her parents' property at childhood and her husband's in adulthood. The gender apartheid places her in a disadvantaged position. Her potential is suppressed and self-actualization is not realized (Goodluck and Osayande, 2011).

Education has been described as the most important aspect of human development and a key to successful living. According to Ocho (2005), education is the process through which individuals are made functional members of the society; it is the process of acquiring knowledge and realizing potentials for self-actualization. Rural adolescent girls are the backbone of virtually every rural family, making economic and social contribution to the family. Denying the

girl child access to education implies making her a dysfunctional member of the society. Girl education is a vital tool for empowerment that allows for meaningful contributions to the society. According to UNICEF (2007), girls' education does not only bring the immediate benefit of empowering girls, but is seen as the best investment in a country's development. This is further stressed by a popular adage, train a boy and train a person, but train a girl and build a nation. Furthermore, the role of girls' education cannot be over-emphasized due to its contribution in helping girls to develop life-changing skills including self-confidence, ability to participate effectively in the society and protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other self-exploitation.

UNICEF (2007) further asserted that girls education helps in cutting children and maternal mortality rates, contributing to national wealth, controlling diseases and improving health status. In most African traditional societies, experience shows that women and girls have been abused, marginalized, discriminated against and denied their rights in most spheres of human endeavor (Eniola *et al.*, 2010). Women and girls living in the rural areas of the developing world play a vital, yet unrecognized role as agricultural producers and hold the potentials to be agents of food and nutritional security and economic growth (Catherine, 2012). It is evident that without educating the girl-child, sustainable development cannot be achieved especially now that the world is clamoring for rural development. Education is a tool with which girls can attain sustainability, development and be made functional members of the society.

The best way to break the vicious cycle of poverty is to keep the rural girl off the part of school dropout, early marriage, early child birth and vulnerability to sexual violence. An extra year of primary school boosts girls' eventual wage by 10% to 20% (Catherine, 2012)

Despite the crucial importance of girl-child education to the nutritional security and economic growth, illiteracy among rural girls is still very high. UNICEF (2007) estimated the global figure for out-of-school children at 121million, 65million are girls with over 80 percent of these girls living in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive. Okeke, *et al* (2008) identify child labour, poverty, lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, bereavement, truancy and broken homes as factors inhibiting girls access to education in Nigeria. Although there is a policy of free primary and secondary education in Nigeria, data suggests that there are still significant disparities

between girls and boys education in Nigeria. British Broadcasting Corporation (2006) reported that the African societal viewpoint favors boys over girls because boys maintain the family lineage. That their mothers were not educated is another reason that makes them feel that their daughters do not need education. Despite the benefits which girls' education is capable of rendering to the society, it is observed that the girl child's enrollment in schools in this is still very low study area is still low which justified the need for this research work.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study was to explore rural dwellers perception of girl child education in Saki east local government area of Oyo State.

Specific objectives of the study were to:

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers.
2. ascertain the awareness rural dwellers have on girl-child education.
3. assess the rural dwellers perception of girl-child education.
4. identify the constraints rural dwellers are facing to give girl-child education.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out in Saki east local government area of Oyo state. The local government was created on December, 1996. It has a land area of 1,569km<sup>2</sup> and population of 110,223 as at 2006 census. The study population consist of the rural household heads in Saki east local government area. Multistage sampling was used for this study. The first stage involved the selection of twenty villages out of the thirty – three villages in Saki east local government using simple random technique. In the second stage, six households from each village were systematically selected. From each household, one household head was interviewed to give a total sample size of 120 respondents.

### **Measurement of variables**

The independent variables for this study include rural dwellers socio-economic characteristics (age, sex, marital status, educational level, occupation etc.), awareness of girl-child education which was elicited by asking respondents to state if they are aware of girl child education or not by giving a yes or no response option, they were also asked to state their source of information from a list of sources listed and constraints faced by the respondents in a bid to

offer girl-child education with the following response options not a constraint, minor constraint and major constraint which was scored and ranked, while the dependent variable of the study was the perception of rural dwellers on girl child education, this was captured by asking the opinion of respondents from a set of perception statements which was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondents' socio-economic characteristics

Age distribution as shown in Table 1 reveals that 5.0% of the respondents were between the ages of 21 to 30 years, 15.0% were between 31 and 40 years, 31.7% were within 41-50 years. From the analysis, it could be deduced that, the respondents are still in their productive years hence they will not be able to seek for viable information on girl-child education and will not be able to take risk in that regard. Also most of the respondents (75.8%) were male while only few (24.2%) were female. This reveals that the major decision about girl child education still emanates from the males. As shown in Table 1, 86.7% were married, 3.3% divorced while 10.0% of the respondents were widowed. This means that majority of the respondents were married and therefore had families to cater for. It should be noted the wide disparity between the married respondents and other categories may largely be attributed to the respect for family as a social institution in Africa. Available data in Table 1 further shows that 41.7% had between 5 and 8 persons in their families, while 19.2% of the respondents had above 12 persons in their families. This shows that the rural household heads have rather large families to cater for. Household size has a great role to play in family labour provision in the agricultural sector (Sule, Ogunwale and Atala 2002). Findings also show that 53.3% of the respondents had no formal education, 22.5% had primary education, 7.5% had secondary education and 16.7% had tertiary education. This means that majority of the respondents have no formal education and as such will affect their decision on girl education. This is supported by (Ocho, 2005) that majority of the rural dwellers are illiterate and as such do not see the need for educating their children because they are not educated themselves.

**Table 1 Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics ( n= 120)**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age (Years) (Mean = 51 Years)</b>		
21 – 30	6	5.0
31 – 40	18	15.0
41 – 50	38	31.7
51 – 60	28	23.3
61 – 70	17	14.2
Above 70	13	10.8
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	91	75.8
Female	29	24.2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	104	86.7
Divorced	4	3.3
Widowed	12	10.0
<b>Religion</b>		
Islam	56	46.7
Christianity	57	47.5
Traditional	7	5.8
<b>Household Size (Mean = 9 Persons)</b>		
1 – 4	10	8.3
5 – 8	50	41.7
9 – 12	37	30.8
Above 12	23	19.2
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
No formal education	64	53.3
Primary education	27	22.5
Secondary education	9	7.5
Tertiary education	16.7	16.7

### Respondents' awareness of girl-child education

Table 2 shows that majority (95.8%) of the respondents were aware of girl- child education while only 4.2% said they were not aware. This means that most of the respondents at least know what girl-child education is about. Furthermore, on means of awareness, 81.7% had radio as their source of awareness on girl-child education, 33.3% prompted television as means of awareness. This corroborates the findings of Eniola *et al* (2010) that radio is the rural dwellers' main source of getting informed as there is no electricity to operate television. Only 20.0% of the respondents had newspaper as their means of awareness. Majority, (48.3%) of the respondents had been aware of girls' education for over 16 years, 33.3% had been aware between 6 and 10years, 9.2% had been aware for 11-15 years. The trend observe in this report could be attributed to the mass sensitization going on for quite a while about the benefits of girl-child education.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to their Awareness on girl-child education (n = 120 )**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness	115	95.8
<b>Means of awareness</b>		
Radio	98	81.7
Television	40	33.3
Newspaper	24	20.0
Family	96	80.0
Friends	94	78.3
NGOs	14	11.7
Extension agents	18	15.0
Campaign bill boards	14	11.7
<b>Duration Of Awareness (Mean = 11 Years)</b>		
Not aware	5	4.2
1 – 5 years	6	5.0
6 – 10 years	40	33.3
11 – 15 years	11	9.2
16 years and above	58	48.3

**Respondents' perception of girl-child education**

Majority of the respondents (62.5%) affirmed that girls education improves family health, 75% are also of the opinion that it reduces poverty. This is in line with the findings of Ocho (2005) that for every additional year of education a girl receives, it boosts her income by 20%. Also evident is that over 85% of the respondents agreed that girls' education delays age of marriage, 79.2% are of the opinion that it delays the onset of child bearing, it is viewed that the girl will be engrossed with her study and rarely think of marriage until she is through with school which is considered by them as late age for marriage.

Majority (76.7%) also agreed that girl-child education leads to reduction in tradition and culture in the sense that with more civilization comes increased decadence in moral, cultural and traditional belief.

**Table 4 Perception of the Respondents on Girl Child-Education**

STATEMENTS	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
Lowers rate of child mortality	35(29.2)	45(37.5)	13(10.8)	21(17.5)	6(5.0)	3.68
Girls education improves family health	45(37.5)	30(25.0)	20(16.7)	22(18.3)	3(2.5)	3.77
It helps the girls to manage their marital life	48(40.0)	39(32.5)	7(5.8)	22(18.3)	4(3.7)	3.88
Girl-child education improves the worth and self-esteem of the girl child	51(42.5)	33(27.5)	14(11.7)	18(15.0)	4(3.3)	3.91
It reduces poverty	47(39.2)	43(35.8)	10(8.3)	18(15.0)	2(1.7)	3.96
Prevents sickness and diseases	38(31.7)	50(41.7)	13(10.8)	17(14.2)	2(1.7)	3.88
Girl – child education helps them to make decision and influence community change in key areas	48(40.0)	36(30.0)	14(11.7)	20(16.7)	2(1.7)	3.90
Girl education lowers rate of malnutrition	38(31.7)	46(38.3)	15(12.5)	16(13.3)	5(4.2)	3.80
Girls education delays age of marriage	70(58.3)	33(27.5)	9(7.5)	4(3.3)	4(3.3)	1.66
It delays onset of child bearing	60(50.0)	35(29.2)	12(10.0)	10(8.3)	3(2.5)	1.84
Girl – child education reduces my income	56(46.7)	29(24.2)	7(5.8)	16(13.3)	12(10.0)	2.16
Girls educations leads to early sexual desire	59(49.2)	19(15.8)	13(10.8)	19(15.8)	10(8.3)	2.18
It also leads early exposure to reproductive risk	38(31.7)	26(21.7)	19(15.8)	31(25.8)	6(5.0)	2.51
Girls educations leads to reduction in tradition and culture	60(50.0)	32(26.7)	12(10.0)	12(10.0)	4(3.3)	1.90
Leads to early and unwanted pregnancy	33(27.5)	23(19.2)	23(19.2)	33(27.5)	8(6.7)	2.67
Girl – child education prevents the girls from being submissive to their husbands therefore leads to divorce and broken homes	49(40.8)	25(20.8)	12(10.0)	22(18.3)	12(10.0)	2.36

**Constraints of rural dwellers on girl child education**

Table 5 shows that, majority of the respondents (84.2%) were constrained by

insufficient fund to send their girl-child to school. This is in line with Sheldon (2010) who asserts that majority of the rural dwellers are poor and therefore, cannot afford the associated cost of

school fees, school uniforms, notebooks, textbooks, school shoes, stationeries and other bills associated with acquiring formal education.

Surprisingly, the rural dwellers too were concerned with the high level of unemployment in the country as 80.8% of the respondents chose national unemployment as a major constraint. About 74.0% of the respondents opined that government policy and implementation was a major constraint. Lack of a precise demographic rural definition frustrates those who work in setting education policy (Hobart 2005). It is a

common knowledge that the Nigeria government is all promises and no action by not implementing most of the policies formulated on education.

Findings further reveal that 58.3% of the respondents prompted large families as a result of many wives and children as a major constraint to them while 66.7% had limited resources to cater for many wives and children. This implies that the rural dwellers have large families to aid them on the farm and as a result find it difficult to cater for them with the high level of poverty in the country.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to constraints facing rural dwellers on girl-child education**

Constraints	Major Constraints (%)	Minor Constraints (%)	Not a Constraints (%)	Weighted Score (%)	Mean	Rank
High cost of education	79(65.8)	39(32.5)	2(1.7)	317	2.64	4 <sup>th</sup>
Insufficient fund	101(84.2)	16(13.3)	3(2.5)	338	2.82	1 <sup>st</sup>
National unemployment	97(80.8)	12(10.0)	11(9.2)	326	2.72	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Religious bias on girl child	45(37.5)	16(13.3)	59(49.2)	226	1.88	9 <sup>th</sup>
Gender bias on girl child	56(46.7)	25(20.8)	39(32.5)	257	2.14	8 <sup>th</sup>
Cultural bias on girl child	32(26.7)	34(28.3)	54(45.0)	184	1.53	11 <sup>th</sup>
Sexual molestation and harassment	57(47.5)	39(32.5)	24(20.0)	218	1.82	10 <sup>th</sup>
Long distance of school from home	67(55.8)	28(23.3)	25(20.8)	282	2.35	7 <sup>th</sup>
Government policy and implementation	89(74.2)	21(17.5)	10(8.3)	319	2.66	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Large families as a result of many wives and children	70(58.3)	26(21.7)	24(20.0)	286	2.38	6 <sup>th</sup>
Limited resources to cater for many wives and children	80(66.7)	22(18.3)	18(16.0)	302	2.52	5 <sup>th</sup>

**Relationship between respondents' socioeconomic characteristics and perception of girl-child education**

The result of correlation analysis as revealed by table 6 shows that income ( $r = -0.592$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) was significant to rural dwellers' perception of girl child education. This implies

that the level of income will determine whether they will have a favourable or unfavourable perception of girl child education. It is tenable to conclude that the extent of education rural dwellers will give their girls is measured in terms of income level.

**Table 6: Chi-square result of socio economic characteristics and perception of the respondents on girl-child education.**

Variables	$\chi^2$	Df	P	Decision
Sex	1.061	1	0.303	NS
Marital status	3.048	2	0.218	NS
Religion	2.657	2	0.265	NS
Level of education	4.379	3	0.022	S
Awareness of girls education	5.441	1	0.020	S

Similarly in table 7, the level of education ( $\chi^2= 4.379$ ,  $p= 0.002$ ) and awareness of the respondents on girl's education ( $\chi^2= 5.441$ ,  $p= 0.020$ ) were significant to rural dwellers perception on girl-child education. This means that level of education and awareness on girl child education of the respondents affected their decision on girl's education. If they are educated

and aware of girl child education, they would have a favourable perception of girl child education and of course will be ready to educate their girls. This view is supported by Yahaya (2003) who posited that people with better education take advantage of education than those that are less educated.

**Table 7: Result of correlation analysis of the relationship between the socio economic characteristics and perception of respondents on girl child education.**

Variables	r – value	p – value	Decision
Age	0.112	0.222	NS
Household size	0.066	0.474	NS
Income	0.592	0.000	S

Result in Table 8 indicates that there was a positive correlation between constraints facing rural dwellers on girl child education and their perception on girl child education ( $r= -0.465$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). This means that, constraints on girl

child education has effect on rural dwellers' perception of girl child education. The constraints faced in a bid to educate girl child determine to a great extent their perception on girl child education.

**Table 8: Result of correlation analysis of constraints and perception of the respondents on girl-child education.**

VARIABLES	r – VALUE	p – VALUE	DECISION
Constraints index	- 0.465	0.000	S

### CONCLUSION

This study attempted an examination on the perception of rural dwellers on girl-child education in Saki east local government and it was revealed that majority of the respondents are male, are not in their productive years, had no formal education, are aware of girl – child education and agree that girl – child education improves health and reduce poverty. Insufficient funds and the present high level of unemployment was revealed as the major constraints to girl – child education. Significant relationship exist between income, educational attainment, awareness of girl education, constraints and perception of rural dwellers on girl child education.

### Recommendations

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

- Adult literacy should be encouraged in the rural areas as these will guide parents to make informed choices as regard girl – child education
- Government should subsidize the cost of getting formal education in rural areas and can also provide scholarship and bursary awards to students as these will help parents with associated costs of textbooks, notebooks, school uniforms, sandals etc in the bid to acquire formal education.
- Government should try and implement the educational policies formulated.

- Government should create more job opportunities as this will encourage others to acquire formal education.
- Enlightenment programmes on the need for girl – child education by government and non-governmental organizations should be intensified.

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