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## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ENHANCING EFFECTIVE GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE.

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### ABSTRACT

The study found out how effective girl child education can be enhanced through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Three research questions were formulated in line with the objectives of the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of 7,820 parents in 20 communities in Port Harcourt Metropolis. From the population, a sample of 800 parents, 410 of which were teachers constituted the sample. The sample was obtained through the stratified random sample technique. The instrument for the study was a 19-item researcher-designed questionnaire addressing the research questions and eliciting “Yes” or “No” responses. Simple percentages and tables were used in analyzing the data obtained from the field. The findings of the study revealed among others that provision of adequate funds, education support services, educational relief facilities, scholarship, and maintenance of school physical facilities for girl children education are strategies for enhancing effective girl child education through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study concluded that the need for the enhancement of girl child education cannot be overemphasized. Giving girl child adequate opportunities to quality basic education is a way of making them relevant in the society. Some of the recommendations were that government should take appropriate legislative and budgetary measures to ensure full realization of the right of every girl child to free and quality education in order to make girl children relevant in the society.

**KEYWORDS:** Community Participation, Girl Child, Effective Girl Child Education, Enhancing.

### INTRODUCTION

In different countries and societies across the globe, education has been adjudged as the key to national development and emancipation. It is through education that a nation can free itself from the obscurantism of poverty, ignorance and superstition which are enemies of progress (Oluwuo & Nnaemego, 2013). Across the world, education holds the light to illuminate human life for better living and interactions with the environment. Interactions, because it creates a social system that most often brings people of different climes together to pursue one goal, and that is, transformation of character and competence for the growth of the society. Character represents the human capacity to view others

with rational considerations and survival of the fittest competence is the total honing in skills and techniques that brings about creativity, leadership and achievements of goal in society (White, 2011). It was against this backdrop that the Federal Republic of Nigeria's national policy on education (FRN, 2014) described education as an effective instrument for effecting national development.

Wami (2018) asserted that education is an instrument for developing the nation and hidden talents in an individual. It is the only means of eliminating illiteracy and ignorance in any society. The importance of education to the development of the individual and the nation as a whole cannot be over emphasized. Through education, appropriate values, attitudes, skills and knowledge are inculcated (Ayeni, 2009). Oko-rosaye-Orubite in Abali (2018) posited that education is the induction of the ones into the social heredity of a given society for the sustenance and continuity of that society. It is the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge skills in its well-being of mankind and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable (Nwogwu in Adiele,2010). Education is the bedrock through which development acquires its meaning (Chidi, 2011). Thus, no nation can toy with the education of her citizens, if it wants to move forward in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In Nigeria, education is regarded as a fundamental human right that everyone should enjoy as a member of the society regardless of sex, religion, tribe, and ethnicity. This buttresses the fact that education provisions are for everyone and that it is compulsory that everyone should go to school to receive education which should be provided free of charge. But the National Teachers Institute in Ogundele, Mugu and Yarwal (2015) submitted that not everyone wants to receive western education and some that want to attend are denied admission while those given admission have poor parental socio-economic background. Consequently, White (2011) stated that in the midst of the fundamental goals of education, which are necessary alibi for the provision of access to different shades of children, society seems not prepared to confront the seeming challenges of educating the bulk of its future leaders appropriately. several school-aged children may have got the zeal to go to school, but certain circumstances, especially those associated to the girl child, continued to plague their efforts in society. Girl child education involves all necessary training, attitude, behaviours and cultural values that are inculcated into the girl children to enable them become useful and responsible members of the society. Thus, when girl children are denied access to education, it makes them socially, morally and personally excluded. The girl child therefor becomes illiterate and irrelevant to society and the country at large due to the exclusion. It is important to expose girl children to education so that they become socially and culturally relevant in the society. Thus, the need to provide education for the girl child cannot be overemphasized in the present circumstance. The following therefore calls for the need for girl child education.

**Relevance to the society**

UNICEF in Ogundele et al (2015) advocated that giving girl children adequate opportunities to quality basic education is a way of making them relevant to the economic, productive, and leadership life of the society.

**Gender Equality**

Various scholars have presented diverse opinions on the issue between the education of the male and female child in the society. The seeming gap has been embedded in what is described as gender inequality or gender inequity. The issue of inequality arises whereby the roles of women are not equally valued like those of their male counterpart (White, 2011). According to Ogundele et al. (2015), the issue of gender discrimination at different socio-economic and socio-political sectors of Nigeria demands for the call for girl child education. The women are socially, politically and economically discriminated because of the low educational levels. However, with the global campaign for gender equality, women are beginning to greatly involved in the socio-economic and political sectors of the global level.

**Building Effective Family Life**

Introducing girl children to education will give them adequate training on the method of developing happy family life in future when they are adults. Thus, the peaceful co-existence of the family has to start from the girl child educational pursuit (Ogundele et al., 2015).

**Socio Economic Crises**

Girl child education is needed to train the girls against the perpetration of socio-economic vices such as bombing, kidnapping, prostitution, teenage pregnancy, killings, slavery, raping, laziness, illiteracy among others bedeviling our society (Ogundele et al., 2015). Okpoko and Duobrapade (2014) opined that the girl child educational endeavours can be truncated by teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy is pregnancy that occurs among young girls of schooling age, usually from twelve to nineteen years of age. Several factors like poverty, peer group pressure, school dropout, mass media influence, incorrect and inconsistent use of contraceptive can predispose the teenager to early pregnancy. The integration of the girl child education will eradicate all forms of social evils in the society (Ogundele et al., 2015).

**Inflationary Trends**

The economic recession and inflationary trends at the global level demands the commitment of households. The commitment however, becomes a shared responsibility between husbands and wives. Thus, it is important to expose the girl child to education before they grow up to become a liability to the family. through girl child education, girl children are exposed to the skills and technical abilities that will enable them contribute their quota to their families and national development without depending solely on their male counterparts (Ogundele et al., 2015). Thus, community participation in girl child education becomes imperative.

Community participation is an essential element in the enhancement of the girl child education. Ogundele et al., (2015) posited that community participation is the total involvement of the stakeholders in the society like parents, industries, religious institutions, philanthropists, teachers and well-meaning Nigerians in the programmes that will aid effective implementation of girl child education. Wami (2020) averred that community participation implies the ability of the community to organize themselves and improve their living standards. This is expressed in communal execution of such projects as building of village squares, town halls, roads, markets, clearing of bush paths, etc. Onyeozu in Onyeozu, Okorie and Agorua (2016) opined that community participation is mainly concerned with:

1. The involvement of the people in co-operative projects for the improvement of their living conditions.
  2. Involvement of people in activities for acquisition of skills that enable them adjust to changing realities.
  3. Involvement of the people in public issues which grew out of individual or local interest
- Community participation in the enhancement of girl child education in Nigeria is fed with numerous challenges. Amongst the challenges are:

### **Traditional/Cultural Beliefs**

The belief that women are to be seen, not to be heard as well as the idea that women's education ends in the kitchen continues to complicate the effort to encourage the girl child in the pursuit of education (White, 2011). In many societies, girl child are seen as inferior to the male children as the girl children will desert their parental family and go to develop other families. With this perception, most parents do not invest huge number of resources on the girl child education.

### **Parental Poverty Level**

The high rate of poverty of in the country militates against community participation in enhancing the girl child education. It is on this premise that girl children are exposed to child labour and child abuse like prostitution, domestic house help, street hawkers and other criminal activities (Ogundele et al, 2015). Nwafor in Maduagwu (as cited in White, 2011) opined that many school age children in the country today are involved in hawking one item or the other in a desperate attempt to augment the incomes of their impoverished families. Many girl children became easy prey to social immorality that pervades society of today just to survive the next day or provide money for their family up-keep. Parents no longer question their girl children on how they got items that wasn't provided for by them, they usher in the girl's male counterparts without question, sometimes married men as old as their father or older, the girl children become the bread winner of the family true immoral activities. Parents no longer see anything wrong with such immorality due to poverty. Ezika in Ogundele et al (2015) also noted that some parents have their girl children out as house maids to the elite family for pay. This situation encouraged low enrolment rate of girl children and lead to gender disparity between male and female children in the country.

**Religious Belief**

Ogundele, Sambo and Bivoi (2014) asserted that apart from the poor supervisory styles on the girl child, religious factors also militate against children education in Nigeria. Moslem parents view western education as unreligious. This notion therefore militates against the girl child education. In recent times the Islamic sect called Boko Haram, oppose western education. They kidnapped and killed school children. Chibok girls were kidnapped and some are nowhere to be found because of the belief that girls should not be educated.

**Single Parent Syndrome**

Many of the young women who were maltreated and severed relationships with their husbands could hardly meet the needs of their abandoned children such that rather than educating both female and male equally, they would allow the male children to continue with education to the detriment of the girl children who work to provide the means. In most cases, because of the inability to have coordinated training and control, the girl children end up with teenage pregnancy or are given out early in marriage to reduce the burden of bringing them up (Jada, 2011).

**Lack of Role Models**

The level of depravity that pervades the society has left the youths no role models to look up to in communities. Parents who were supposed to be role models have abandoned their responsibilities to pursue vanities, in the same manner, most people celebrated in the communities are those with high moral questions and the youths struggle to replicate their records so as to be reckoned with also in the society. The issue of mentoring was not available to the girl child to see themselves as equals to their male counterparts in struggling for chances and opportunities available in education (White, 2011). Kojah in Ogundele et al (2015) posited that for the enhancement of the girl child education in Nigeria, everyone is a stakeholder. Thus, the following are areas of community participation towards enhancing effective girl child education.

**Funding**

Funding is money which an individual, a government or an organization provides for a particular purpose (Abali & Nwapi, 2017). Nzeputeme (2011) averred that money is a very important resource needed in the educational system and requires adequate provision because through it, all other vital elements in the school can be obtained. Ebong (2013) stated that money is the lubricant which propels any business or social organization or activity to be financed. Thus, enhancing girl child education through community participation requires funding. Agbasiere (2015) noted that governmental budgetary allocation is inadequate, as such, the community members, philanthropists, industrialists, elites, politicians and well-meaning Nigerians should donate funds or other materials that are needed for effective implementation of girl child education.

**Provision of Adequate Girl Child Education Support Services**

Learner support services should be provided in the school system to reduce the high rate of drop out and wastage rate among girl children. Such support services include recreational welfare, counseling, vocational and technical services, communication and information services can be provided by the community (Ogundele & James, 2014).

**Provision of Scholarship for Girl Children**

Community members are called upon to provide scholarship for girl children who wish to be educated. This effort will aid high enrolment rate of girl children in the schools (Ogundele et al., 2015).

**Provision of Educational Relief Facilities**

Community members should provide girl children with educational relief facilities such as clothing, feeding, textbooks, writing materials, library and laboratory equipment. This effort will enhance effective implementation of girl child education (Ogundele et al., 2015).

**Maintenance of School Physical Facilities**

Oluwuo and Aloba in Oluwuo and Nnaemego (2013) researched on the strategies of financing maintenance cost of physical facilities and appealed that philanthropists, old students, and professional associates should be involved. Charges for the use of school facilities, monies realized from interhouse sports, levies from other sources should be channeled to maintenance of physical facilities in schools for girl children education. Furthermore, the community should endeavour to watch over the facilities and prevent them from vandalization.

**Statement of the Problem**

Public awareness and criticism on the rate at which girl children drop out of schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis is on the increase in recent times. Offorma in Okpako and Doubrapade (2014) affirmed that in sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria, the number of teenage girls out of school each year has risen tremendously for the past few years. The researcher has observed that a lot of girl children hawk in the streets of Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor during school hours while some have met their untimely death. An ancient worthy of note in Port Harcourt was the killing of a teenage girl by a serial killer in a hotel in 2021 which made the Rivers State government to order hotels and clubs to install CCTV cameras in their premises. This ugly incident could have been averted if the teenage girl was in school, and this study is worried about this trend.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to find out how effective girl child education can be enhanced through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the reasons for effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.



2. Determine the factors militating against community participation in enhancing effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.
3. Highlight the strategies for enhancing effective girl child education through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the reasons for effective girl child education in Port Metropolis, Rivers State.
2. What are the factors militating against community participation in enhancing girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.
3. What are the strategies for enhancing effective girl child education through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 7,800 parents in 20 communities in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. From the population a sample of 800 parents, 410 of which were teachers constituted the sample. The sample was obtained through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a 19-item researcher-designed questionnaire tagged “Enhancing Effective Girl Child Education Questionnaire”. It consisted of two sections, A and B. section A was designed to generate demographic information of the respondents while section B had questionnaire items addressing the research questions and eliciting: Yes or No” responses. The instrument was validated and its reliability established at 0.86 using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). Simple percentages and tables were used to provide answers to the research questions. A criterion percentage of 50% guided the decision.

### RESULTS

The results obtained in this study after data analysis were presented and analyzed as follows:

**Research Question 1:** what are the reasons for effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

**Table 1: Percentage Scores of Respondents on the Reasons for Effective Girl Child Education Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Parents (N =390)		Teachers (N =41)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	To make the child relevant to the economic productive and leadership of the society.	346 (88.7)	44 (11.3)	388 (94.6)	22(5.4)
2	To promote gender equality in the society.	384 (98.5)	6 (1.5)	404 (98.5)	6 (1.5)
3	To women greatly involved in the through discovery method.	388 (99.5)	2 (0.5)	407 (99.3)	3 (0.7)
4	To build a happy and peaceful family life in the society.	364 (93.3)	26 (6.7)	406 (99.0)	4 (1.0)
5	To guide against the perpetration of Socio-economic vices in the society.	382 (97.9)	8 (2.1)	408 (99.5)	2 (0.5)
6.	To expose girl children to the skill that enable them contribute their quota	389 (99.7)	1(0.3)	408 (99.5)	2
<b>Aggregate % Score</b>		<b>96.3%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>98.1 %</b>	<b>1.9 %</b>

Source: Field Survey Data, 2023

The data on table 1 revealed that the respondents in their responses agreed that items 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 listed on the table were reasons for effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, hence the percentage scores above the criterion percentage score of 50%. The aggregate percentage scores of 93.6% for parents and 98.1% teachers attested to this finding.

**Research Question 2:** What are the factors militating against community participation in enhancing effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?



**Table 2: Percentage Scores of Respondents on Factors Militating Against Community Participation in Enhancing Girl Child Education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Parents (N =390)		Teachers (N =410)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
7.	Harmful traditional or cultural beliefs.	382 (97.9)	8 (2.1)	400 (97.6) (2.4)	10
8.	High poverty rate in the country.	388 (98.5)	2 (0.5)	406 (99.0) (1.0)	4
9.	Poor parental supervision and control on girl children.	386 (99.0)	4 (1.0)	404 (93.5) (1.5)	6
10.	Religious belief that girls should not be educated.	377 (96.7)	13 (3.3)	401 (97.8) (2.2)	9
11.	Single parent syndrome.	380 (97.4)	10 (2.6)	405 (98.8) (1.2)	5
12.	Lack of role models.	374 (99.7)	16 (4.1)	389 (94.9)	21
<b>Aggregate % Score</b>		<b>97.7%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>97.8 %</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

Source: Field Survey Data, 2023

The data on table 2 revealed that the respondents in their responses agreed that items 7,8,9,10,11, 12 and 13 listed on the table were factors militating against community participation in enhancing effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, hence the percentage scores above the criterion percentage score of 50%. The aggregate percentage scores of 97.7% for parents and 97.8% teachers attested to this finding.

**Research question 3:** What are the strategies for enhancing effective girl child education through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State

**Table 2: Percentage Scores of Respondents on Strategies for Enhancing Effective Girl Child Education Through Community Participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Parents (N =390)		Teachers (N =410)	
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
14.	Provision of adequate funds for Implementation of girl child education.	388 (99.5)	2 (0.5)	406 (97.0)	4 (1.0)
15.	Provision of adequate girl child education support services such as counselling, recreational and welfare services	381 (97.7)	9 (2.3)	399 (97.3)	11 (2.7)
16.	Provision of scholarship for girl children.	376 (94.6)	14 (3.6)	402 (98.0)	8 (2.0)
17.	Provision of educational relief facilities such as writing material, etc.	369 (94.6)	21 (5.4)	387 (94.4)	23 (5.6)
18.	Maintenance of school physical facilities for girl child education	372 (95.4)	18 (4.6)	401 (97.8)	9 (2.2)
19.	Perpetration of harmful cultural practices in communities	0 (0)	390 (100)		
<b>Aggregate % Score</b>		<b>80.6%</b>	<b>19.4%</b>	<b>81.1 %</b>	<b>18.9%</b>

Source: Field Survey Data, 2023

The data on table 3 revealed that the respondents in their responses agreed that items 14,15,16,17, and18 listed on the table were strategies for enhancing effective girl child education through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, hence the percentage scores above the criterion percentage score of 50%. The aggregate percentage scores of 80.6% for parents and 81.1% teachers attested to this finding. However, parents and teachers in Port Harcourt Metropolis maintained that perpetration of harmful cultural practices in communities does not enhance effective girl child education, hence the percentage score of 0% in item 19.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study revealed that to make the girl child relevant to the economic, productive and leadership life of the society; to promote gender equality in the society; to make women greatly involved in the socio-economic and political sectors of the economy; and to build a happy and peaceful family life in the society are reasons for effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. In collaboration with these findings UNICEF in Ogundele et al (2015) stated that the issue of gender discrimination at different socio-economic and socio-political sectors of Nigeria

demands for the call for girl child education, and in introducing girl children to education will give them adequate training on the method of developing happy family life in the future when they are adults.

The findings of the study further revealed that to guide against the perpetration of socio-economic vices in the society; and to expose girl children to the skills that will enable them contribute their quota to national development are reason for girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis. In agreement with these findings Ogundele et al (2015) averred that girl child education is needed to train the girls against the perpetration of socio-economic vices such as bombing, kidnapping, prostitution, teenage pregnancy, killings, slavery, raping, laziness, illiteracy among other bedevilling our society. The integration of the girl child education will eradicate all forms of social evils in the society; and through girl child education, girl children are exposed to the skills and technical abilities that will enable them contribute their quota to their families and national development without depending solely on the male counterparts.

The findings of this study revealed that harmful traditional or cultural beliefs; poor parental supervision and control on girl children; religious belief that girls should not be educated; single parent syndrome; lack of role models; and early marriages are factors militating against community participation in enhancing effective girl child education in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. In line with the above findings White (2011) asserted that the belief that women are to be seen, not be heard as well as the idea that women's education ends in the kitchen continues to complicate the effort to encourage the girl child in the pursuit of education. Ogundele et al (2015) reiterated that in many societies, girl children are seen as inferior to the male children as the girl children will desert their parental family and go to develop other families. With this perception, most parents do not invest huge number of resources on the girl child education. Nwafor in Maduagwu (as cited in White, 2011) opined that many school age children are involved in hawking one item or the other in a desperate attempt to augment the incomes of their impoverished families. Some parents hire their girl children out as house maids to the elite families for pay (Ezika in Ogundele et al., 2015). Ogundele, Sambo and Bivoi (2014) submitted that apart from the poor supervisory styles on the girl child, religious factors also militate against girl children education in Nigeria.

The findings revealed that provision of adequate funds for implementation of girl child education programmes; provision of adequate girl child education support services such as counselling, recreational and welfare services; and provision of scholarship for girl children are strategies for enhancing effective girl education through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. These findings agree with the assertion of Nzequeme (2011) that money is a very important resource needed in the education system and requires adequate provision because through it, all other vital elements in the school can be obtained Ogundele and James (2014) stated that learner support services should be provided in the school system to reduce high rate of drop out and wastage rate among girl children. Ogundele et al (2015) opined that community members should provide

scholarship for girl children who wish to be educated.

The findings of the study also revealed that provision of educational relief facilities for girl children are strategies for enhancing effective girl child education through community participation in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. In collaboration with these findings, Ogundele et al (2015) averred that community members should provide girl children with educational relief facilities such as clothing, feeding, textbooks, writing materials, library and laboratory equipment. Oluwuo and Aloba in Oluwuo and Nnaemego (2013) asserted that charges for the use of school facilities and monies realized from interhouse sports should be channelled to maintenance of physical facilities in schools for girl children education. The community should endeavour to watch over the facilities and prevent them from vandalization.

### **CONCLUSION**

The need for the enhancement of girl child education cannot be overemphasized. Giving girl children adequate opportunities to quality basic education is a way of making them relevant in the society. The impediments to the enhancement of effective girl child education are harmful cultural practices, religious beliefs, parental poverty level, and lack of role models among others. It therefore, becomes necessary for community participation in enhancing effective girl child education by providing adequate funding, scholarship, educational relief facilities, education support services, and maintenance of school physical facilities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to enhance effective girl child education through community participation, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should take appropriate legislative and budgetary measures to ensure full realization of the right of every girl child to free and quality education in order to make girl children relevant in the society.
2. Community members should be adequately involved in the provision of educational relief facilities such as textbooks, writing materials, libraries and laboratory equipment for the enhancement of girl child education
3. Parents should ensure the effective supervision and control of their girl child to guide against the perpetration of socio-economic vices bedeviling the society.
4. The government and non-governmental organizations should establish counseling centres in order to provide effective counselling services to parents and girl children on the need for girl child educational pursuit in the society.
5. School administrators should ensure the maintenance and security of school physical facilities for the enhancement of the education of the girl child
6. The community should desist from perpetrating all forms of harmful cultural and religious beliefs and practices militating against the enhancement of the effective girl child education in the country.

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