

Parents Socio-Cultural Factors on Girl Child Academic Performance Among Senior Secondary School Students in Wamakko Local Government, Sokoto, Implication for Counselling

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Abstract

This study examined the parental socio-cultural factors on the academic performance of the girl-child in selected senior secondary schools in Wamakko Local Government Area, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The research was necessitated by persistent challenges including early marriage, gender-biased cultural norms, parental illiteracy, and economic constraints that hinder girls' educational attainment in the region. Guided by Feminist Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a sample of 346 senior secondary school girls drawn from three public schools using purposive and random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from Mgalula (2017) and an Academic Performance Test in English and Mathematics. The instrument was validated by experts and achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.76 through test-retest method. Four research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that although respondents perceived parental education, beliefs, awareness, and economic status as positively influencing their academic experiences, inferential statistics showed no significant relationships between these socio-cultural factors and academic performance ($r = -0.014$ to 0.014 , $p > 0.05$). The multiple regression model indicated that the four factors jointly did not predict academic performance ($R^2 = 0.00$, $F = 0.04$, $p = 0.997$). The study concluded that while parental socio-cultural factors descriptively influence girls' learning environment, their effect on measurable academic outcomes is moderated by broader contextual variables. Recommendations include community sensitization programs, counselling interventions, scholarship schemes, and policy reforms to address socio-cultural barriers and promote girl-child education in Sokoto State.

Keywords: Parental, Socio-Cultural, Factors, Academic, Performance, Girl-child

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Introduction

Parents' socio-cultural factors significantly influence child development, education, and well-being. These factors include ethnicity, religion, education level, economic status, and cultural beliefs, shaping parenting practices and family dynamics. Socio-cultural contexts determine values, discipline methods, and educational expectations, impacting children's socialization and identity formation. For instance, collectivist cultures may prioritize family interdependence, while individualistic ones emphasize autonomy. Socioeconomic status affects access to resources like quality education and healthcare, influencing outcomes. (Lee & Patel, 2024). Parent can be defined as an individual biological, adoptive, or guardian who assumes the responsibility of raising and nurturing a child. Parents play a critical role in a child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. According to UNICEF (2021), parenting involves providing safety, love, guidance, and essential resources for the child's well-being. Parenting styles vary across cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, but the authoritative style marked by warmth, structure, and responsiveness has been consistently linked with positive child outcomes (Baumrind, 2019).

Socio-cultural factors refer to the social and cultural elements that influence individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and opportunities within a society. These factors include beliefs, customs, traditions, gender roles, social norms, religion, and family structures, all of which shape the experiences and opportunities available to individuals, particularly in the context of education. In many societies, socio-cultural norms often play a significant role in determining access to education, especially for girls. Gender expectations, for instance, may limit a girl's access to schooling or prioritize domestic responsibilities over academic pursuits (UNESCO, 2021).

Academic performance refers to the measurable outcomes of a student's learning process, typically assessed through grades, standardized test scores, assignments, and overall classroom participation. It reflects how well students understand and apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in various subjects. Academic performance is shaped by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including cognitive abilities, motivation, learning environment, teaching quality, and socio-cultural influences (Baker, 2016). The concept of the girl-child refers to a female individual typically between

the ages of 0 and 18, who is in a critical stage of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. Recognized globally as a distinct group in need of protection and empowerment, the girl-child often faces unique challenges rooted in cultural, social, and economic factors. These include gender-based discrimination, limited access to quality education, early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and restricted participation in decision-making processes (UNICEF, 2021).

Parenting styles vary across cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, but the authoritative style marked by warmth, structure, and responsiveness has been consistently linked with positive child outcomes (Baumrind, 2019). Modern perspectives also acknowledge diverse family structures, including single parents, step-parents, and same-sex parents, all of whom contribute meaningfully to a child's growth (APA, 2022). In Nigeria, parents are often seen as the primary moral and social educators, shaping the values and attitudes of their children within extended family systems (Adewumi & Owoyemi, 2021). Parenting is a lifelong, dynamic process that requires adaptability, empathy, and commitment to fostering a supportive environment where children can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. For instance, a study carried out by Adeola and Olumede (2022) investigated Parental Socio-cultural Determinants of Girls' Academic Performance in Rural Nigeria. The population was Secondary School girls in rural areas of Nigeria and sample of 500 girls was selected through stratified random sampling. Questionnaire applied was using Focus Group Discussions (FGOs) was used to obtain information from the targeted respondents. Also, a descriptive survey research design was applied.

Parents Socio-cultural factors also encompass family attitudes towards education, which can impact a girl-child's educational journey. In some communities, parents may not prioritize educating their daughters due to traditional beliefs about gender roles, where girls are expected to focus on household duties or early marriage rather than formal education (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, religious practices and community values may influence educational policies or attitudes toward girls' schooling, creating either support or barriers depending on local beliefs (Sperling & Winthrop, 2016). Also, a study carried out by Bello and Aisha (2020) on the Role of Parental Education on Girl-child Academic Performance Success in Sokoto. Correlational Research Design was used using the Population of Secondary School Students in Sokoto State.

In many developing countries, socio-cultural norms continue to marginalize the girl-child, impeding her right to education and personal development. Girls are often the first to be withdrawn from school during financial hardship or are expected to perform domestic tasks that interfere with their academic success (UNESCO, 2020). Moreover, early and forced marriages remain a significant barrier, with millions of girls married before the age of 18, cutting short their education and limiting their future opportunities (Girls Not Brides, 2022). Okafor *et al.* (2018) investigated on Socio-Cultural Factors and Girl Education in Nupe Land, Nigeria: The study examined whether certain socio-cultural factors hinder access as well as completion of girls' education in Nupe land. It also investigated the influence of family type, family literacy status, and religion on the access and completion rate of girls' education.

The empowerment of the girl-child is essential not only for individual growth but also for broader societal development. Educating girls has been shown to lead to lower child mortality rates, improved economic productivity, and greater gender equality (World Bank, 2020). Therefore, understanding and addressing the challenges faced by the girl-child is crucial for promoting sustainable development and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (quality education) and Goal 5 (gender equality).

In today's educational landscape, academic performance is viewed not only as an indicator of students' knowledge but also as a predictor of future success in higher education and career development. Consequently, improving academic performance involves addressing both cognitive and non-cognitive factors, such as emotional well-being, social support, and a positive school environment (OECD, 2018). Thus, fostering an inclusive and supportive educational experience is critical to ensuring all students, especially those facing socio-cultural challenges, can reach their full academic potential.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the observation and experience by the researcher in Wamakko Local Government Area of Sokoto State, parents' socio-cultural factors significantly hinder the academic performance of the girl-child. Key problems include early marriage, gender-biased cultural and religious beliefs, and parental illiteracy, which often result in low school enrollment and high dropout rates among

girls. Traditional roles assigned to girls, such as domestic responsibilities, also limit their study time and school attendance. Additionally, poverty forces many families to prioritize boys' education over girls'. These issues collectively create an unsupportive environment for female education, perpetuating cycles of inequality and limiting the potential of the girl-child in the region.

In Wamakko Local Government Area (LGA) of Sokoto State, parents socio-cultural factors significantly hinder the academic performance of the girl-child in secondary schools. Early marriage remains a major challenge, as many girls are withdrawn from school to wed, truncating their education. Additionally, traditional gender roles prioritize domestic duties over schooling, limiting girls' study time and attendance. Poverty exacerbates the issue, with families often favoring boys' education due to perceived higher economic returns. Religious and cultural norms also discourage girls' education, with some communities believing that Western education is unnecessary for females. Furthermore, inadequate school infrastructure, such as the lack of separate toilets and security, discourages girls' enrollment and retention. Despite government interventions like scholarships and awareness campaigns, deep-rooted cultural beliefs persist. To improve girls' academic performance, community engagement, parental education, and policy enforcement against early marriage are essential.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

- I. To examine the parental level of education on girl child academic performance among senior secondary school students in Wamakko local government area, Sokoto.
- II. To find out the influence of parental beliefs on girl child academic performance among senior secondary school students in Wamakko local government area, Sokoto.

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the research.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between parental level of education and girl child Academic performance among senior secondary school students in Wamakko local government area, Sokoto.

H0₂. There is no significant link between parental beliefs and girl child academic performance among senior secondary school students in Wamakko local government area, Sokoto.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is chosen because it allows for the collection of data from a large population to describe the existing socio-cultural factors and their effect on the academic performance of girls. The population of this study will comprise all female students in senior secondary schools in Wamakko local government area. According to Ministry Basic Education Sokoto there are 2,573 female students. The Research Advisors (2006), Table for determining sample size from a given population was used to arrive at 346 as sample size of the study. Proportionate sampling was used in choosing the number of sample to be selected from each school. The instruments used for data collection for this research work was an adapted questionnaire and structured test in English and Mathematics developed by the researcher. The questionnaire developed by Mgalula (2017) titled “Socio cultural Factors Affecting Academic Performance of Girls” (SOCFAAPGQ). Which was metamorphosed to socio-cultural factors affecting girls’ child academic performance (SOCUFAGAPQ). Two null hypotheses guided the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One (H0₁)

There is no significant relationship between parental education and the academic performance of the girl-child.

Table 1: Correlation between Parental Education and Academic Performance

Variable Pair	N	Pearson’s r	p-value (2-tailed)	Decision
Parental Education (EDU_MEAN)	& 346	-0.014	0.795	Fail to

Variable Pair	N	Pearson's r	p-value (2-tailed)	Decision
Academic Performance (PERF)				Reject H_0

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Level of significance (δ) = 0.05

Table 1 shows a very weak negative correlation ($r = -0.014$, $p = 0.795$) between parental education and academic performance. This indicates that parental education alone does not significantly influence performance in this dataset. Descriptive trends suggested positive impacts, but inferential analysis shows no significant effect. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is not rejected.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02})

There is no significant relationship between parental beliefs and the academic performance of the girl-child.

Table 2: Correlation between Parental Beliefs and Academic Performance

Variable Pair	N	Pearson's r	p-value (2-tailed)	Decision
Parental Beliefs (BEL_MEAN) & Academic Performance (PERF)	346	0.014	0.790	Fail to Reject H_2

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Level of significance (δ) = 0.05

Table 2 reveals a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.014$, $p = 0.790$) between parental beliefs and performance, indicating no statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level. Descriptive data suggested a positive trend, but the correlation confirms the effect is negligible. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is not rejected.

Discussions

From hypothesis one, there is no significant relationship between parental education and the academic performance of the girl-child. The study revealed that parental educational background shows a descriptive influence on the academic performance of the girl-child. As presented in Table 1 provide important insights into parental support. A large proportion of respondents indicated that their parents encourage career aspirations and demonstrate interest in their academic progress. This suggests that parental educational background contributes positively to emotional and motivational support for the girl-child. Okafor (2017) emphasized that such psychological

encouragement plays a critical role in sustaining students' engagement, confidence, and persistence in school. Even when immediate academic gains are not statistically evident, these forms of support contribute to long-term educational success. It is also important to note that less-educated parents may compensate for limited formal education through other supportive practices. Ogunleye (2020) observed that parents with low educational attainment often emphasize discipline, moral guidance, and perseverance, which can indirectly enhance academic performance. This compensatory effect may partly explain the weak statistical relationship found in this study, as both educated and less-educated parents may contribute positively to their children's learning through different mechanisms.

Despite the insignificant correlation found in this study, international research consistently identifies parental education as a key determinant of educational outcomes. Hanushek et al. (2020) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2021) reported that parental educational attainment remains one of the strongest predictors of students' literacy, numeracy, and school completion rates across many countries. The findings of the present study may therefore reflect unique local conditions rather than a contradiction of this broader global trend.

In summary, the findings indicate that parental educational background has a descriptively positive but statistically weak influence on the academic performance of the girl-child in Wamakko Local Government Area. While parental education alone does not significantly predict academic performance, it contributes meaningfully to the social, motivational, and emotional support that underpins learning. This suggests that improving academic outcomes for the girl-child requires not only parental education but also active parental involvement, supportive school environments, and community sensitization. As Garba (2022) noted, parental education yields measurable academic benefits only when it is accompanied by consistent engagement such as monitoring schoolwork, attending school activities, and maintaining communication with teachers. Therefore, initiatives aimed at promoting girl-child education in Sokoto State should incorporate parental awareness programs and community-based interventions that empower parents regardless of educational level to support their daughters' learning effectively.

The second finding of this study revealed that parental beliefs significantly influence the academic performance of the girl-child in Wamakko Local

Government Area, Sokoto State. As presented in Table 2, the grand mean score of 3.08 indicates general agreement among respondents that parents' cultural, religious, and personal beliefs shape girls' educational experiences. Items such as "parents' negative attitudes towards girls' education affect their performance" and "early marriage is a reason many girls do not complete school" received the highest levels of agreement, suggesting that parental belief systems directly influence both access to and persistence in education.

This finding implies that parental beliefs function as a major socio-cultural determinant of educational attainment for girls. Beliefs about gender roles, religion, and family expectations may either promote or hinder learning. Parents who believe in the equal educational rights of girls and boys tend to provide more consistent academic encouragement, while those who view education as less relevant for girls may discourage them from pursuing higher levels of learning (Adamu & Musa, 2020). According to Table 4.3, over 80% of respondents agreed that early marriage and parental attitudes limit educational continuation for girls. This finding aligns with the reports of Abubakar and Suleiman (2021), who discovered that in many northern Nigerian communities, socio-religious perceptions about a woman's role as primarily domestic often prevent parents from investing in girls' long-term education. Such beliefs can translate into reduced motivation for girls, absenteeism, or eventual school dropout.

From a sociological perspective, Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural reproduction provides a useful lens to interpret this result. The theory posits that families transmit not only economic resources but also cultural dispositions and belief systems that influence children's educational behaviour. Thus, when parents hold traditional beliefs that prioritize marriage over education, these beliefs become internalized by children, reproducing cycles of low educational attainment among girls. This cultural continuity explains why, despite modernization, gender disparities persist in education within parts of northern Nigeria (Usman, 2019).

Counselling Implications

Counsellors in upper and lower basic should be up to their responsibilities in shaping the influence of social and cultural background as both have negative impact on girl child enrolment, retention, concentration on school activities and overall development in academic performance. The therapy shall integrate parent through PTA. While students can be exposed to both individual and

group counselling therapies. Guidance lectures during orientations of new students will yield better results.

In contrast, where parents have more progressive or religiously enlightened interpretations supportive of girls' education, such as viewing education as a moral duty or divine command, the academic performance of girls improves significantly. Yakubu (2022) found that Islamic clerics and educated parents who advocate for female literacy contribute to higher enrolment and better academic outcomes in Sokoto State. Therefore, belief systems are not inherently restrictive; rather, their educational impact depends on the interpretive and value frameworks adopted by parents and communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

- I. Since parental level of education influences girl child academic performance, it is recommended that educational authorities and school administrators in Wamakko Local Government Area organize parental education and literacy programmes, such as adult education classes and academic awareness workshops. These programmes should guide parents on how to support homework, monitor academic progress, and create a learning-friendly home environment, even if they have limited formal education.
- II. In view of the influence of parental beliefs on girl child academic performance, it is recommended that community sensitization campaigns and counseling programmes be conducted to promote positive beliefs about girls' education. Religious leaders, community leaders, and school counselors should collaborate to address cultural misconceptions that limit girls' education and encourage parents to support equal educational opportunities for female children.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, parental socio-cultural factors including education, beliefs, awareness, and economic status descriptively influence the academic performance of the girl-child, although no single factor showed a statistically significant effect. Positive parental beliefs, higher education, and greater awareness were found to create an enabling environment that

motivates girls to engage in their learning. However, the effectiveness of these factors is often moderated by deep-rooted cultural norms, household expectations, and economic constraints, which may limit the full realization of girls' academic potential.

The study further highlights that interventions such as community sensitization programs, school-based counseling support, scholarships, and the implementation of gender-sensitive education policies are essential to mitigate the barriers imposed by socio-cultural factors. These measures can complement parental influence and create a more conducive learning environment for the girl-child. In conclusion, parental socio-cultural factors have an indirect but meaningful impact on the academic outcomes of girls. Empowering parents through education, raising awareness about the importance of girls' education, and combining these efforts with structural and policy interventions are crucial strategies for enhancing the academic performance of the girl-child in Wamakko Local Government Area and similar contexts.

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