

An Assessment into Parental Factors that Motivate Female Students to Complete Formal Education

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Abstract: Qualitatively the study adopted a case study research design to examine the parental factors that motivate female students to complete formal education in Tolon District. The population for this study comprised of all females in the Tolon District who have successfully completed formal education. A purposive sampling technique was used to select ten (10) females who have successfully completed formal education and are now working in the Tolon District. The main instrument used for data collection was interview. Data were analysed by the use of the Interpretive Method based on the themes arrived at during the data collection. The themes were related to the research question and interpreted on the number of issues raised by respondents. The study revealed that, financial support of parents was vital to enrolment, sustenance and ultimate completion of the education of females. The study also indicated that parents give support in the form of guidance and counseling as well as moral support through encouragement of the Girl-Child played a key role to their successful education. It is recommended that, parents still need more advocacies on the importance of educating the girl child in order to enhance their interest in sending or motivating the girl child in school. It is also recommended that parents should discouraged early marriages to help girls to fully complete their formal education.

Keywords: Assessment, Parental, Motivation, Formal Education

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1. Introduction

Education is the process of becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner that leads to effective action upon it. An educated man or woman understands his or her world well enough to deal with it effectively. Such men or women if they existed in sufficient numbers would not leave the absurdities of the present world unchanged. However, the prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenue, nor the strength of its fortifications, but on the number of its cultivated citizens, men and women of education, enlightenment and character [1]. Education is a vital entry into all initiatives for the establishment of civilized social systems. It provides the tool for the struggle against poverty, ignorance, diseases and other vices [2].

Education is one of the determinants of economic growth. "Education is the seed and flower of development" Harbison and Myers all agree that "the single most important key to development and poverty alleviation is education". It can be used as a measure or indicator of development in a particular area. Through education, there is increased productivity due to acquired knowledge and skills. The human capital theory stipulates that education is an investment that yields returns for the individual and for the society at large [3]. In fact, the economic benefits of education derived is not just from increases in non-

cognitive abilities as reflected by changes in a person's ideas, perceptions and attitudes [4].

There is a strong belief that once married, girls become part of another family and parental investment is lost once the girl child gets married [5]. In all secondary schools, the proportionate loss of girls in each successive year of schooling is greater than boys [6]. Education could thus be the difference between lives of grinding poverty and the potential for a full and secure one; between a child dying from preventable disease, and families raised in healthy environments; between orphans growing up in isolation, and the community having the means to protect them; between countries ripped apart by poverty and conflict, and access to secure and sustainable development" [7]. It is equally believed that all nations have to educate their citizens, male or female to achieve meaningful sustainable development. Therefore, there is no gain saying the fact that education opens doors to economic and social prosperity to a given nation, spurred by a dynamic workforce and well-informed citizenry able to compete and cooperate in the global arena [7]. A high girl child participation rate in education is crucial in modern society. This is because education is one of the most effective instruments a nation has at its disposal for promoting sustainable social and economic development [8]. It leads to increased productivity of the educated as a means of human resource development for communal benefit [8]. Moreover, her education contributes directly to the general improvement of health and living standards [9].

1.1. Parental factors influencing the academic motivation of girls

The term, gender may be defined as the socially learned pattern of behaviour and psychological or emotional expressions of attitudes, that distinguishes between males and females within the society. Such performance and conduct are learnt through socialization in the society and in school. This socialization has affected the girl child in terms of access to education, achievement and accomplishment. The girls are made to feel less, their position downgraded and they are considered as less important than boys. Girls, end up not being interested and enthusiastic in those things that are believed to be meant for boys. They will not endeavour to outperform the boys in anything including education in case they get ex-communicated within the society because of going against the norms [10]. Girls want equal rights and opportunities; they also possess the aspiration of getting enrolled in educational institutions to enhance their skills and abilities. In present times, most females aspire to achieve empowerment opportunities. There have been practices of child marriage, female feticide, and female infanticide, which prove to be impediments within the course of progression and development of the girl child. In rural areas, people possess this viewpoint that girls are the liabilities, they are meant to learn only the implementation of the household chores. They are mostly trained regarding the performance of the household chores, such as, preparation of meals, cleaning, fetching water, rearing of livestock, sewing, embroidery, child development and looking after the needs and requirements of the elderly and other members of the household. Due to these factors, they are discouraged from acquisition of education [10].

The staying of girls within the house and when they are not encouraged to go out of their homes and communicate with the outside world, have an unfavourable effect upon their mind-sets. These girls are usually derided, ridiculed and laughed at and in some cases, they are abused and mistreated. These types of experiences that they undergo make them feel vulnerable and apprehensive; they experience problems in speaking out for themselves and in enhancing their knowledge, skills and aptitude. Previous research in the field of education has made revelation to the effect that for many years, the girl child has been deprived of her right to appropriate education through gender socialization. The Boys are treated with more self-esteem and momentousness and are given most of the opportunities in education. Family funds will be geared towards education of boys. Where the prevalence of the conditions of poverty leads to scarcity of resources within the

family, younger females are sent home to work, so as to assist the parents in raising funds to educate their brothers. This situation compromises the girl child education [10].

Family structure, the main source of family income and geographical location do not significantly predict outcomes in school performance once other factors are controlled for [11]. The findings support the notion that the 'social and the 'economic' components of the socioeconomic status equation have distinct and separate influences on educational outcomes. While financial assistance to schools and families in need is important, policies and programmes that also assist low-income parents in providing appropriate psychological and educational support for their children should also be promoted. There were indications that boys compared to girls are more affected by poverty.

Recent work in France examined a program that encouraged parents to participate more in their child's school and found very positive results [12]. The program emphasized the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education. It also provided parents with better information on the school system, including information on the roles and responsibilities of various personnel and school offices. While the results were very encouraging, this approach has not been tested in a context where the average education of parents is lower [12].

A study revealed that an increased access to education of the poorest groups in society normally has a negative effect on the average examination and test results [13]. There is also a positive correlation between educational background and income of the parents and test and examination results of the pupils [14]. Comparative studies between Uganda and Zambia show a significant relation between income, education of parents and test and examination results of pupils. In 2005 in Zambia, the examination results for English of the 20% of pupils from the most developed regions were on average 20% higher than the results of the lowest developed regions [15]. Geographically, (in term of location) and families' relative wealth have been discovered to also affect equity. The socio-economic status of parents in one way or the other affects academic achievement [16]. Children with rich parents have certain needs, physical and sociological which when met contribute positively to their academic performance. These needs may include a conducive reading atmosphere, good food, playing ground, provision of books and other material and attendance at the best schools available. All these helps to promote effective learning and good performance in schools [17]. Children whose parents are of high educational scales have a far better statistical chance of participating in secondary Education [18]. Important factors include parental involvement in their children education, how much Television children are allowed to watch and how often students change schools.

This is was further supported by a similar study that in modern society's parents' influence played a very important role in the academic life of a student that promote effective learning which involves a partnership of students, teachers and parents [19, 20]. Parents' involvement determines the emotional and material input that further determined the motivation level in children towards education. A study was conducted on female teachers and girls' access to primary schools in rural areas of Pakistan. They reported that parents were agreed that basic education was important for both boys and girls but they insisted that boy's education must be a priority as they have to shoulder the economic responsibilities of the family [19]. Both fathers and mothers agreed that strong socioeconomic status of the sons brings better old age living for parents [21]. Majority of the parents desires their children attain strong financial position as well as highly regarded and respectable social status. Despite of these, level of education is very low especially with regards to females. Majority of the parents do not encourage their female children to acquire formal education. In addition to these there are many factors like father's educational level, income, social class, family size and occupation that affect their daughter's education.

Parents have different attitudes towards their daughter education. More educated parents have more wish to their daughter's education. Urban people are paying more attention in the education of their daughter than the rural ones [22]. The social status of a family greatly influences the academic performance of girls and involvement in domestic chores which includes; fetching water, firewood, taking care of children and going to the market, also affects the academic achievement of girls in the Tolon District.

The economic status of a family has a greater impact on the Girl Students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Tolon District such that girl students from rich families are adequately catered for and hence higher concentration on learning. Girl Students' from poor families lack basic items and this adversely affects their participation in education. The academic achievement of girl students' is also affected to a greater extent by the family size and birth order in a family such that moderate families of four children and birth orders of one, to four generally have higher academic achievement. Girl Students' academic achievement is also influenced by the number of siblings who are either working or studying marketable courses at the college level [19].

A document on socioeconomic status and achievement argued that for the US, out-of-school variables such as family background and neighborhood and progression influence higher levels of learning. There is reliance on scores and transition rates as core measures of achievement [23]. In Ghana, examinations are generally accepted as valid measures of achievement [25]. Secondary school placement, and to some extent admission, depending on the performance of students in West African Examination Council (W.A.E.C) exams [26].

1.2. Parent Attitude and Perception

Family involvement is the strongest predictor of child educational outcomes. This dimension associated significantly with children's motivation to learn, attention, task persistence, receptive vocabulary skills, and low conduct problems. Family involvement in education has been identified as a beneficial factor in young children's learning [27, 28]. Mainly, family has responsibility to socialize children for making them productive members of society. The more the parents involve in the process of imparting education to their children, the more the children might excel in their academic career and to become the productive and responsible members of society.

Parental involvement is not only necessary but it is also one of the most cost-effective means of improving quality in education [29, 30]. Higher levels of parent involvement in their children's educational experiences at home (e.g., supervision and monitoring, daily conversations about school) have been associated with children's higher achievement scores in reading and writing, as well as higher report card grades [31, 32-33]. Parental attitude and support have a great deal of influence on girls' participation and level of success attained in education. Parents and community attitudes are mainly influenced by traditional beliefs regarding the ideal roles of women and girls in society. Traditionally, the only roles available to women were those of wives and mothers. Women were thus seen as nurturers and mainly as providing support for men who worked to provide for the family. Being physically weaker, women were therefore also perceived as being less capable and requiring the protection and guidance of men. These attitudes have prevailed even in current times when socio-economic changes have resulted in changes to roles women are now expected to undertake [31-33].

Socio-economic changes have made education necessary, not just for the purposes of providing income earning opportunities, but also for the potential to contribute to the improvement in the standards of living of individuals, families and communities. The attitude of the parents signifies that the supporting nature of family in their children's education. The parental attitude can be negative or positive. The negative attitude of the parents regarding education and schooling can prevent their children from getting education. With less parental support in school work, low level of motivation and poor self-esteem

of children can result positive attitude of the parents can be beneficial to their children in many cases and can be reflected in improvement in class performance, creating interest among children to learn, and higher achievement scores in reading and writing [34]. Parents may have poor knowledge of the benefits of educating their daughters. Parents who are not aware of the benefit of education are intergenerational, and in fact accumulate over time. Or families may not appreciate the benefits of education. A country where the “suitableness” of more highly educated women to be good wives is held in doubt. The same study found that highly educated women’s possibilities for marriage become limited. Parents find it hard to understand the benefits of education when curricula are irrelevant to the mother-wife role or contradict the value they want to teach their children [35].

These cultural considerations vary widely among and within countries and it differ in parental education level and hence affect females' school enrollment. Parental education and cultural factors may also cause families to differ in the priority they place on schooling children and their perceptions of the appropriateness of child labor [36]. Parents' education has an important influence on gender differences in education. Studies indicate that the more education parents have, the more they value formal education for their daughters. Parents’ education measures the degree to which parents are open to influences other than tradition.

Also, parents' education servers as a limited measure of family income or wealth when more direct measures are not available [37]. Even though many scholars agree on the opinion that parents' literacy affect females’ schooling, the educational background of parents especially mothers have a bearing on the academic achievement and participation of female students [38]. African women bear large part of the burden of educating their children. Their own level of education and command of resources are important factors in their ability to keep their children in school. The studies showed that households headed by educated females are more likely to send girls as well as boys to school and to keep them there longer than households headed by uneducated females or by males. This suggests that mother’s education has key influence on the participation of daughters in schooling. Perhaps, the mothers also serve as role models to their daughter [37, 39].

Somalia has a number of examples of cultural practices that compromise girls’ access to education and therefore their participation in complete cycle of education especially in Puntland. These practices underline the fact that in such cultures and indeed in many areas in Africa, girls like in traditional times continue to be considered the property of their families, with little or no say in their future. Culture describes domestic roles for girls. Domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning the house which take up a lot of time are assigned to girls. Girls therefore have little time for study or home work. Basically, households’ chores affect school work more particularly the education of girls who are overwhelmed by a burden of work at home and at school [40].

In other areas of Puntland, girls and women cross over into neighboring towns and villages to carry out trading which is often a lucrative activity. Their success has been found to lure other school girls to try this business, leading to school dropout. Several studies carried out focused on socio cultural aspect of obstructive to education for girls and two neighboring countries are selected in order to compare the culture. Pakistan is one of the countries which still have gender disparity in education even seems to have been increasing since EFA declaration. Iran has almost achieved to certain point and has less gender disparities in education. Both countries have similar culture for girls and women that they must not appear carelessly in the public sphere. Survey was conducted in Pakistan and Iran for parents who has school aged children in order to find out education vector in line with basic culture [41]. The parents' attitude against girls were basically same in both countries but attitude to value of education was different even parents themselves didn't have educational background. female students need self determination to rise above the socio-cultural limitations encountered in formal education [42]. This implies that parental involvement in their children education can never be underestimated. There

is therefore the need to conduct a study into parental factors motivate female students to complete formal education in the Tolon District. The sought to answer the research question - What parental factors motivate female students to complete formal education in the Tolon District?

2. Materials and Methods

The study used qualitative research approach and a case study research design to explore the factors that motivate females to complete formal education in Tolon District. The population for this study comprised all females in the Tolon District who have successfully completed formal education. A purposive sampling technique was to select ten (10) females who have successfully completed formal education and are now working in the Tolon District. The main instrument used for data collection was interview with a guide. Data were analysed using the Interpretive Method based on the themes arrived at in the data collection. The themes were related to the research questions and interpreted on the number of issues raised by participants.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the themes that emerged from the interviews with the ten participants who responded to the questions. The themes that form the parental factors that influence the academic motivation of females in the Tolon District in the Northern Region of Ghana are as follows; Financial support, guidance and counselling, Encouragement, buying of books and uniforms for me, spiritual and moral support, paying of fees, provision of basic needs such as books and all the necessary materials.

Information gathered from the respondents revealed that all 10 respondents representing 100% said their parents supported them financially in order to enable them to complete their education. They mentioned that their parents had to toil by working harder to get money to settle their school needs. Furthermore, 9 out of the 10 respondents representing 90% said their parents advised them to take their studies serious, respect their teachers and also use their time judiciously. Also, 8 out of the 10 respondents which represent 80% of the respondents said motivation on the part of their parents whenever they emerge as best students at the end of term exams or class exercises played a major role in their education. This finding is in congruence with earlier study that special attention should be paid to women and girls in other goals; for example, goal two stipulates that by 2015, all children, especially girls in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities will have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality [43]. The finding however is in contrast to previous study that when girls are enrolled in schools, there is seemingly never-ending tasks for girls compared to boys had negative implications for their education. The girls never seem to have adequate time to concentrate on their studies as they are bogged down by domestic chores most of the time [44].

To encourage participation of girls in education, parents are required to provide them adequate teaching and learning facilities, protect them against societal problems, prohibit child marriage, practices of female foeticide, female infanticide, and provide financial assistance clothing and proper nutrition. The individuals need to formulate this viewpoint that girls should be sent to schools and acquire education. They should create a pleasant environment within the house to promote education and learning. Education is regarded as an investment, whose returns are valued throughout the lives of the individuals. Through education, people acquire information, awareness, skills and attitudes essential for sustainable economic growth and general development. In the academic field, whatever they learn, they make use of it throughout their lives.

A respondent responded that: *“Because my father was not doing anything by then but my mother was selling food which she used to take care of me especially when it comes to issues with*

my education.” Another respondent said that: “My father had to take me to the library to study during holidays and bring me back.” Also, a respondent said that: “Encouraging me and pointing out to someone and said I want to be like them.” It could be deduced from these responses that parental factors influence the academic motivation of females. Parent’s ability to encourage, provide financial support and point out role models impacted positively in the life of their female students. The finding of this study is in line with a previous study that effective learning involves a partnership of students, teachers and parents [20]. Parents’ involvement determines the emotional and material input that further determined the motivation level in children towards education [19].

Research indicates that the importance household members place on education is an important factor in whether children gain access to schooling and for how long, but there is less research on how this may attribute to denial of accessibility and dropping out. Research also indicates that the educational level of parent is particularly influential in determining whether and for how long children access schooling and which age to start. Most of Muslim countries like Somalia parents prefer to send both their sons and daughter to Madaras equally before the age of 7 years, while this is compulsory according to Islam religion. A similar study supported the current research that parental education is the most consistent determinant of child education and employment decisions [45].

Higher parental/household head level of education is associated with increased access to education, higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates [46]. A number of reasons are put forward for the link between parental education and retention in school. Some researchers indicate that non-educated parents cannot provide the support or often do not appreciate the benefits of schooling [47]. They posit that parents’ level of education instills passion for education in the parents which in turn assists in retaining the female. Children with rich parents have certain needs, physical and sociological which when met contribute positively to their academic performance. These needs may include a conducive reading atmosphere, good food, playing ground, provision of books and other material and attendance at the best schools available [48]. All this help to promote effective learning and good performance in schools.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that, financial support of parents was vital to enrolment, sustenance and ultimate completion of the education of females. The study also indicated that parents can give support in the form of guidance and counseling as well as moral support through encouragement of the Girl-Child played a key role to their successful education. It is recommended that, Parents still need more advocacies on the importance of educating the girl child, in order to enhance their interest in sending or motivating the girl child in school. It is also recommended that parents should discouraged early marriages in the communities to allow the Girl-Child make good use of the opportunities available to them, to fully complete formal education.

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