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GENDER DISPARITY IN EDUCATION

Parental Perspective on Girl's Education in Kano State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Key: Gender, School, Girl Child, Gender Inequality, Education, Gender Disparity, Gender Equality, Boys and Women

Aim: This single case qualitative study addresses the girl child education, focusing on parents' perceptions of the girl child enrolment into elementary school and factors that might have contributed to gender disparity in education which remains a problem in Kano state Nigeria.

Theory: In order to understand gender disparity in education, the theoretical lens has feminist epistemology as its point of departure, which focuses on understanding the oppression experienced by women to proffer solutions leading to change in all endeavours of life that leads to equal opportunities for all. To be specific, the theoretical lens is viewed from Nancy Fraser's feminist theory of justice which seeks to explain the origin of gender injustice against women, factors that contribute to it and how it can be changed.

Method: This study adopts a single case qualitative approach with a focus group interview and in-depth interviews as data collection methods to enable the researcher to extract valuable information from parents of out-of-school children who form the target population.

Findings: The findings revealed that parental perceptions about the girl child's education are linked to family income, parents' educational background, and socio-cultural norms practices and these factors contribute to gender disparity in education in Kano state, Nigeria.

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Abbreviations

BH Boko Haram

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

EFA Education for All

FGN Federal Government of Nigeria

MDGs Millennium Development Goals

NGOs Non-Governmental Organizations

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Program

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UPE Universal Primary Education

UBE Universal Basic Education

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

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Chapter One

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, with an estimated population of 200 million people. It has 36 states with a federal capital territory in Abuja, which is also the capital city. Kano state lies in the northern part of Nigeria, with an estimated population of 13 million people (Duze & Yar'zever, 2013). According to the United Nations Human Development Reports on Gender Inequality Index, in 2020, Nigeria ranks 152 out of 187 countries (UNDP, 2020).

This paper adopts the feminist theory, which campaigns for and advocates for equality between men and women socially, politically, and economically. Feminist theory also states that society is structured to benefit men in all spheres of life to the detriment of women. Male children have a preference for enrollment in schools—prioritization of boys' enrollment to education dates to colonial administration in Nigeria. The rate of girls' enrolment in schools is lower than boys in most developing countries. Out-of-school children in Nigeria is much and girls form most of the children. According to United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), in 2020, millions of children are out of school in Nigeria, and in the northern part, which includes Kano state, female school attendance is about 47. 3%. The high number of out-of-school girls indicates that more than half of the girls are out of school due to gender marginalization (UNICEF, 2020). Based on these statements, this qualitative study addresses the girl child education, with a focus on parent's perceptions of the girl child enrolment into elementary school and factors that might have contributed to gender disparity in education, which remains a problem in Kano state and Nigeria in general. In Nigeria, gender inequality in education between boys and girls is nothing new. Studies point out that the low rate of female enrollment in schools adversely affects national development (McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman, 2015). The educational challenges in northern Nigeria and Kano specifically are ridiculously huge. Also, Kano state is the most populous state in the north of Nigeria, with about 3. 5 million out-of-school children, making it the highest in Nigeria (Eweniyi & Usman, 2013;

UNICEF, 2020). This study adopts a qualitative method approach based on semi-structured focus group interviews and in-depth interviews to know parental perceptions of the girl child enrolment into elementary school and factors that might have contributed to gender disparity in education in Kano state, to be specific.

The elimination of gender disparity by 2015 in all educational levels is one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the year 2000, the number of out-of-school children declined from 26% to 19%, and it further declined to 16% in 2018 (UN, 2020). The campaign for Education For All (EFA) and the publication of the MDGs succeeded in narrowing the gender disparity gap in education in many countries (Allen-Brown, 2015). Despite the success, gender disparity in education still exists in Kano state and Nigeria in general.

1.2 Relevance of education

Education deals with the impartation of knowledge in people and acquiring social ethos and ideas, which leads to substance and growth of any given society. Such knowledge transfer to persons is done through formal and informal training that leads to social development, workforce, and national growth development. Development becomes difficult for a nation to achieve without education. Education is considered a helpful tool that helps to achieve basic needs and at the same time eliminate poverty. The basic needs of a nation include access and availability to education which is also needed to achieve economic growth. Education and poverty go hand in hand because there will be fewer poor persons when there are many educated people in a nation. After all, it is assumed that education leads to the impartation of skill that supports their wages (Oladapo, Sikiru, & Akanegbu, 2013).

Education correlates with economic development, and as such, the absence of girls' education excludes them from mainstream development. When girls are educated, they tend to live a healthier life, form part of the labor market, earn income, give birth to fewer children, and in turn provide better health care to their children (McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman,

2015). Over the past two decades, there has been a constant debate about uplifting women's status through education by increasing the rate of girls' enrollment into elementary schools because "all over the world, education is recognized as the cornerstone for nation-building" (Onyido & Osigwe, 2019 p.2). It is to the advantage of any nation to educate girls/women due to their high population.

It is also not easy to attain human development when women who form a large part of society are discriminated against by being denied an education. With education, women can contribute to national development, but when girls are not enrolled in schools, the implication is that they become less productive in their society. Education forms the bedrock of nation-building (Onyido, & Osigwe, 2019).

Through education, some Nigerian women and girls have regained their virtues. Investing in female education is beneficial to the labor market and increases a nation's wealth. Educating girls creates a market opportunity for women, and the absence of girls' education creates gender inequality in education and, at the same time, hurts the economic growth of a nation. Educating girls has been linked to human capital creation because if mothers get educated, they will play a decisive role in deciding their children's education and health. (Alabi & Alabi, 2014; Cooray, 2012; Lincoln, 2008).

Apart from being a fundamental human right of an individual, with primary education, one can take advantage of socioeconomic opportunities available in society and at the same time live a socially meaningful life. Girls, in particular, can improve their socioeconomic outcomes (Allen-Brown 2015; Indabawa, 2006; Offorma 2009). It is also an essential tool through which a nation can achieve gender equality, societal growth, and development. A former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, once said, "Educating the girl child is a social development policy that yields an exceptionally high return" (Alabi & Alabi, 2014, p. 011). Educating girls has been linked to human capital creation because if mothers get educated, they will play a decisive role in deciding their children's education and health. In Nigeria's history of education,

only boys initially were enrolled in schools, and girls' education meets domestic needs. The implication of this is that girls were not trained from the beginning, with the end result of being part of the labor market (Alabi & Alabi, 2014).

1.3 Problem statement and aims

The idea that girls' education is the best thing that authorities can do in the developing world has become an exhilarating movement. Gender equality in education occupies a place of prominence in several international treaties and declarations that deal with issues like, for example, human rights, education, and elimination of poverty. Gender disparity in education is a global issue, especially in developing countries.

Nigeria made several attempts to encourage the girl child school situation. For example, Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced in 1976 to rehabilitate and improve the educational system. The introduction of UPE led to the increase of children's enrollment into the primary school from six to twelve million children (Ogunsami & Ibimiluyi, 2014). However, the early 1990s witnessed the decline and decay in the educational sector again, giving birth to Universal Basic Education (UBE). In 1999 UBE was created to improve the standard of education and reduce illiteracy. Both UPE and UBE aimed at providing necessary educational skills (Ogunsami & Ibimiluyi, 2014). The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) also banned parents from withdrawing their daughters from school to give them out in marriage. The admission intake points for girls into secondary schools were reduced to admit more girls, to mention a few (Eweniyi & Usman, 2013).

The girl child is far behind in formal education due to religious, socioeconomic, and cultural reasons—trends of insurgency and killings by Boko Haram (BH), a militant Islamic extremists' sect that has as its agenda the abolition of democracy, Western education, and Islamization of

Nigeria despite the nation's secularity. With about 40,000 members, the sect constantly carries out violent attacks on churches, government, and public establishments in northern Nigeria. BH condemns democracy and Western education. In the Hausa language, the phrase is used as an adjective "Boko Haram," which literally means "Western education is forbidden." BH believes that Nigeria is governed by corrupt and fake Muslims and wants to outer the exiting government to create a "pure" Islamic state governed by sharia laws. This also explains the use of violence to pursue its objectives instead of dialogue (Aghedo, & Osumah, 2012; Walker, 2012). BH sees Western education as a taboo and believes that it should be forbidden; any education linked with Western education and civilization should be avoided. Boko Haram placed an embargo on Western education, wearing skirts and trousers, and murder people who oppose their doctrine (Foluke & Hyacinth, 2017). For example, "In March 2012, some twelve public schools in Maiduguri were burned down during the night, and as many as 10,000 pupils were forced out of education" (Walker, p.2, 2012). Boko Haram kidnapped girls from a government secondary school and destroyed school properties. For example, the Chibok girls were kidnapped in 2014 from a government secondary school. The FGN has not been able to resolve the BH insurgency. These activities of religious insurgency have an adverse effect on the girl child education to the extent that it has kept girls away from schools, consequently widening the gender education gap. The chances of being enrolled in elementary school are higher when the girl child gets support from families, and the government puts in place effective/efficient educational policies that encourage a conducive learning environment (Foluke & Hyacinth, 2017).

1.4 Purpose of the study

Parents have a massive influence on every child's education. It is of particular importance to know the ideas of parents who have decided not to enroll their daughters in elementary schools. This single case qualitative study addresses the girl child education, focusing on understanding parents' perceptions of the girl child enrolment into elementary school and factors that might have contributed to gender disparity in education. Gender inequality in education remains a problem in Kano state Nigeria despite government policies like the establishment of UPE, UBE, EFA, low intake scores for girls, free education for girls; all these measures taken to encourage

girls' education. Several research findings concerning gender disparity in education in Kano state point out that, despite the increasing number of girls' enrollment in schools, there is still difficulty realizing gender equality.

Numerous studies, for example, Csapo, 1981; Klasen, 2002; Onyido, & Osigwe, 2019; Subrahmanian, 2005; to mention a few indicate that girls' enrollment into primary school education contributes to a nation's economic growth. Akinbi, & Akinbi, 2015; Eweniyi, & Usman, 2013; Foluke, & Hyacinth, 2017; McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman, 2015; Ningi, 2012; Yusuf, 2016 to mention a few conducted studies about gender inequality in education but not much is written about parents' perceptions of girls' enrollment in elementary school. The disparity between boys' access to education and girls' enrollment in education cannot be overemphasized. As earlier stated, the girl child is under the tutelage and control of her parents, and the decision concerning the girl child's education lies in the hands of the parents. To a great extent, the parents' perception of education comes into play. Hence this study will focus on parents of out-of-school children.

Map one: A map of Nigeria showing the geographical of Kano state.

Source: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/393230-covid-19-kano-records-two-more-deaths.html>

1.5 Statement of Relevance

Education is a fundamental human right of a child. This to say that every child has the right to be educated. Today's society sees education as a vital tool for achieving society's economic development and educating the girl child to benefit a nation (Alabi, Bahah, & Alabi, 2014). Due to the importance of education, this study will be beneficial to education policymakers in Nigeria to develop strategies and programs that will increase girls' enrollment into elementary schools in Kano state, which will help reduce and eventually close the gender disparity gap in education.

Research on gender disparity in education should focus more on achieving a high level of girls' enrollment into elementary schools because it is the foundation for achieving a higher education level. It is also an effective method of achieving gender equality in education. The decision to enroll a child in school lies in the hands of the parents, and in a scenario where some parents would not want to enroll their female children calls for investigation or creating more awareness because knowing their reasons will help fill the knowledge gap on girls' education.

1.6 Research Question:

What is parents' perception of girl child enrollment into a primary school in Kano state?

Sub questions:

What values do parents have when it comes to gender equality?

How do these values affect their choices when it comes the girl child education?

What is the role of the community in shaping parents' perceptions?

1.7 Methodology

This is a single case qualitative study with emphasis on focus group interviews and in-depth interviews as data collection instruments. Concerning the focus group interview, six mothers were interviewed, followed by another group interview consisting of four fathers though conducted on different days. The in-depth interview with seven parents consisting of four mothers and three fathers was also done on different days. Details of both interviews as data collection methods are discussed in chapter three under the methodological framework.

1.8 Thesis structure

This thesis dissertation comes in six chapters. The first chapter covers the introduction and presents a general overview of the girl child education in Kano state, Nigeria. It also states the historical background of gender disparity in education in Nigeria. The second chapter consists of a literature review and the theoretical concept found appropriate to explain gender disparity in education coupled with the description of key terms used in the study. The third chapter has to do with methodology, which gives insight into collecting data and explains chosen method of data collection. Chapter four presents the research findings, followed by chapter five, which has to do with the discussions based on the study's findings. In contrast, the last chapter (chapter 6) deals with conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two

Literature review and theoretical framework

This section is in two parts and part one deals with reviewed literature on gender disparity in education. Part two talks about theoretical framework that the study is built on.

2.1 Search strategy and Method

In order to make a systematic literature review on gender disparity in education, this study follows Jesson & Lacey, (2006) six critical phases of conducting the systematic review, which includes: scoping review, comprehensive search, quality assessment, data extraction, synthesis, and write up. Phase 1, Scoping review: This involves reading what is known about gender disparity in education and filling the knowledge gap. This also includes finding out material relevant to the issue of interest. This step leads to setting up a review plan after searching for suitable material. Phase 2, Comprehensive search: Having identified the research question, the researcher used the following keywords to do a comprehensive search: gender disparity in education, gender inequality in education, girls' education, the girl child education to search for articles in the electronic database (Arkseley & O' Malley 2005; Jesson & Lacey, 2006).

For example, the reviewed articles were found through several search engines like the Gothenburg University database, Google Scholar, Educational Research Complete, and African Research Review. Phase 3, Quality assessment: In this phase, after finding out relevant articles by reading through the abstract/papers, this study used the "hierarchy of research" to determine what will be included and excluded because each search on the database picked a large number of irrelevant scholarly journals. The inclusion criteria required that only peer-reviewed scholarly scientific journals will be included, publications that examined the focus of the study, the country in focus includes Nigeria and other countries, and publications written in English. In contrast, the exclusion criteria include publications that deal with gender disparity in the

workforce, universities, and adult education.

Furthermore, the health sector was excluded, publications with language restrictions, gray articles, and did not consider the number of citations. Phase 4, Data extraction: The data extraction of selected scholarly journals on the topic of study related to the systematic literature review's scope, aim, and purpose of research, and findings are a crucial element of a systematic literature review. Data extraction allows the researcher to examine the elements of data available in a study report (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). Phase 5, Synthesis: Each article was analyzed in a tabulated format, indicating what is known, what is not yet known, and what has been learned about gender disparity in education. After reading through the selected articles based on the topic in view, a total of twenty scholarly journals formed the corpus of this study. Most of the reviewed publications have Nigeria as its country of origin, while some are from the UK, USA, and only one is from Australia. Phase 6, Write up: This phase consists of analysis, discussion, and conclusion of articles in the corpus. All the articles reviewed state that gender disparity in education exists, which is still a prevalent problem. All the scholarly journals in the corpus stated the advantages of education, the neglect of the girl child education, the factors affecting the girl child education, and the adverse effect of gender disparity on a nation's economy.

2.2 What is known about gender disparity in education in Nigeria?

The vast gender inequality in education is a result of gender bias against girls. According to UNICEF (2020), Northern Nigeria has a high number of out-of-school children. As earlier stated in Nigeria, boys are prioritized when it comes to enrollment in primary schools over girls. In traditional Nigerian society, women have been involved in diverse domestic tasks in agricultural activities. However, they suffer "and are victims of a social order that treat them largely as a second position role player" (Alabi & Alabi, 2014, p. 006).

The girl child education bears the burden of religious insurgency in northern Nigeria. Schools

were burnt, teachers killed, and girls abducted. This explains why the North had the highest number of out-of-school children. Before now, the situation was not encouraging, and insurgency made it worst (Foluke, & Hyacinth, 2017). The low rates of girls' enrollment in schools have been a concern to Nigeria's federal government. At the introduction of Western education in northern Nigeria, the girl child was left behind due to religious, social, economic, and cultural reasons. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education is a fundamental human right, and it is the right of the girl child to be educated. However, in Nigeria, girl child education does not constitute a fundamental right despite the government's commitment to the girl child education. The girl child's "education is a sine qua non for the political and economic freedom of the womanhood" (Foluke, & Hyacinth, 2017, p. 7).

2.3 Historical background of gender disparity in education in Nigeria

Another essential issue that became evident in the reviewed literature is that gender bias against the girl child education has its origin. To understand the wide gap of gender inequality in education in Nigeria, it is essential to look into the historical background of formal education in Nigeria. The root of gender disparity in education can be traced to colonial administration. Girls are marginalized, which led to a restriction on society's social and economic spheres (Akinbi, & Akinbi, 2015; Cooray, 2012; Tibenderana, 1985). There is a more significant gender disparity in education in northern Nigeria than in other British territories in tropical Africa. A contributing factor to the retardation of the advancement of girls' education in northern Nigeria has to do with the establishment of schools. As of 1910, the available schools were meant for only boys. In 1929, nineteen years later, the British administrator established schools for girls in northern Nigeria. Not all girls were opportune to be enrolled in an elementary school because of the social class status method of recruitment (Tibenderana, 1985). Formal education introduced by Christian missionaries was received with suspicion and considered a threat to Islamic religion and culture and the parental attitude towards the girl child education. Parents see education as something "contrary to their faith and way of life" (Niles, 1989. p.14). Parents think that sending their girls to school will lead to endangering traditional society. "Western education would

corrupt girls and lead to the destruction of the stability of home" (Tibenderana, 1985. p. 108).

The introduction of education in Nigeria can be attributed to the Christian missions, for example, the Wesley Methodist Mission, the Roman Catholic, Anglican, to mention a few. The Christian missions' primary purpose of education was to enforce church doctrines and not "in the nation's socio-cultural reality" (Alabi & Alabi 2014, p. 008). The introduction of formal education in southern Nigeria in 1842 by the British administration met with resistance due to parents' perception of Western education. Parents who do not want to enroll their children in primary school considered Western education as something that will destroy their indigenous way of life. On the other hand, parents who realized the benefits of Western education enrolled their children in schools, primarily boys. The colonial missionaries did little to pressure parents to enroll their girls to enjoy the same educational opportunities enjoyed by male children (Mbanefoh, 1994).

Since the root of gender discrimination against girls in education dates to the colonial administration, it is significant to examine the historical and social context that created gender inequality (Cooray, 2012; Allen-Brown, 2015). Nigeria is a patriarchal society, consequently making men have strong dominance over all spheres of women's lives. Consequently, girls face marginalization, which led to a restriction on society's social and economic spheres (Alabi & Alabi, 2014; Cooray, 2012). A patriarchal society breeds men strong dominance over all spheres of women's lives, consequently making women/girls occupy subordinate positions (Cooray, 2012; Para-Mallam, 2010). Due to the existing patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, girls still live in a male-dominated society where males prefer male children to females, contributing to a higher male enrollment level in schools than females (Akinbi, & Akinbi, 2015; Yusuf, 2016). Corroborating this view, Para- Mallam 2010, states that "The Nigerian state's policy orientation towards female education remains undergirded by a patriarchal ideological construct that sees women/girls primarily as wives, mothers, domestic workers/managers, and secondary adjuncts to men" (Para-Mallam, 2010, p. 462).

UNICEF (2020) states its concern about the high number of children between the ages of 5-14

in Nigeria that are out of school despite the free and compulsory education at the elementary school level. Owing to this development, it is apparent that the government, parents, and communities have vital roles to ensure that children are enrolled in schools. Factors like economic challenges and socio-cultural norms, geographical location, health, religion, political/administrative, especially those that discourage girls' access to formal education, caused reduced enrollment in northern Nigeria schools (Alabi & Alabi, 2014; Alabi, Bahah, & Alabi, 2014; McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman, 2015). Gender gaps that favor male education are very glaring in developing countries, and Nigeria is not an exception. According to Ekine (2013), "Nigeria has one of the largest out-of-school population in the world" (Ekine, Samati, & Walker, 2013 p. 43). Owing to this situation, UNICEF pledged to collaborate with the Kano state government to improve and increase children's enrollment in schools (UNICEF, 2020).

2.4 Socio- cultural perception of the girl child

This aspect also brings a better understanding of the girl child situation. The girl child is grossly neglected and marginalized, often left out of decision-making, and hardly given a chance to make her own choices. The majority are married off even before becoming women, thus denying them education (Osita-Oleribe, 2007). In traditional Nigerian society, the girl child is regarded as a second-class citizen, which adversely affects their school enrollment opportunities. Consequently, girls do not receive the same educational priority as boys. This explains why "most people do not favor female education because they consider any investment in girls an economic waste" and, as such, not a wise investment because the girls will eventually get married and not bear their father's name (Csapo, 1981, p. 316).

A common perception of the girl child is that of a biological female child offspring from 0-18 years. The period from 1-18 years consists of infancy, childhood, and adolescence stages of development. The period from 1-18 years is the period that the girl child develops a character. The girl child is dependent on her parents, guardians, or relatives for her sustenance. Parents groom the girl child to take care of her younger ones, the home, and the kitchen. In childhood,

she is regarded as her parent's property and her husband's property when she gets married. This period is when the girl child acquires lifelong assets like knowledge and skills (Ningi, 2012). The situation of the girl child in Kano is in a poor state, and his perception has affected the girl child's education. Parents would instead focus on the education of their male child than the girl child. In Africa, women are regarded as properties owned by men and at the same time "machines" for producing children, which also contributes to the preference of education given to male children (Duze & Yarzever, 2013; Oyido & Osigwe, 2019)

2.5 The importance of girl's education and the problems associated with the girl child education

The girl child education is nothing new, probably because of gender disparity in education. Gender disparity in education has kept women marginalized. Women and girls formed the most significant number of people without access to education (Underhalter, 2005). In West Africa, about 30 million school-age girls are out of school, and over 10 million girls are from northern Nigeria (Ningi, 2012). The multiplier effect of educating girls is that educated girls live a healthier life, provide better health care for their children, participate in the education of their children, become part of the labor market, and have more income when compared to girls who are not educated (McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman, 2015).

Educating both male and female children promote gender equity. Training the girl child is a long-time investment with high yields. Apart from being a fundamental human right, it is through educating the girl child that the goals of equality, peace, and development of a country can be achieved. When a girl child is educated, her family is positively impacted; education develops the girl child's mental ability. The years of educating girls from primary to secondary school and even university give room for physical development and eliminate child marriage chances (Osita-Oleribe, 2007).

Osita-Oleribe (2007) states that "The girl child education is a sine qua non to the realization of the total women empowerment and emancipation across the globe and involves the formal training" (p. 031). Education is linked to societal development, and it is a vital tool for achieving SDGs. Education helps to reduce poverty, inequality, and it is the bedrock of sustainable economic growth. Investing in education facilitates the achievement of other developmental goals. A high rate of children's enrollment into schools tends to improve literacy and, at the same, increase the gross domestic product of a nation (Musa & Bichi, 2019).

Educating the girl child also leads to human development. Through education, people acquire knowledge, which makes it an essential aspect of human development; for example, the FGN effort to increase the enrollment of children in elementary school by introducing UPE in 1976 and the introduction of tuition-free education at the elementary school level was aimed to rehabilitate and improve the educational system which will, in turn, contribute to national development.

Again, most studies on gender disparity in education identified the benefits of literacy/education to society. For example, education plays an essential role in women's empowerment, and it helps stop gender discrimination. Through education, the girl child has the power to choose and make the right choices. Girls' education plays an essential role in the development of a nation. When girls are educated, they become economically strong, thus helping to reduce poverty. An educated mother plays a vital role in shaping her children's future. Through education, some Nigerian women and girls have regained self-confidence and self-esteem.

Regarding problems associated with the girl child education, there was a time when people thought it was unnecessary to educate girls, but now some people have realized that girls' education is essential. Some people oppose girls' education because they think that the proper place for girls is the home, and any money spent on girls' education is a waste. There is the need for governments, society, and parents to work together to close the gender gap in education by

eliminating factors like religion, culture/tradition educational policies that hinder the girl child education.

Despite the numerous advantages of the girl child, there are still problems associated with the girl child education, which includes antagonism towards Western education, early marriage and seclusion of women, insufficient support from political leaders, some parents think schools might encourage loose morals, no value attached to post-primary school education because it is assumed that girls will eventually get married (Csapo, 1981; Duze, & Yar'zever, 2013; Para-Mallam, 2010)). Other problems associated with girls' education are inefficient education policies, poverty, population, environment, access to schools, and culture. These problems, which can be categorized into religious, social, political, and economic factors, make it difficult to achieve gender equality in education. However, these obstacles can lead to attaining national development (McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman, 2015; Yusuf, 2016).

2.6 The importance parents place on the girl child education

Only two journals in my corpus (Duze & Yarzever, 2013; Niles, 1989) addressed parents' perception/attitudes to girl child education. Numerous studies indicate that girls' enrollment into primary school education contributes to a nation's economic growth. Studies conducted about gender inequality in education are countless, but not much is written about the importance parents attach to girls' enrollment in elementary school. The colonial missionaries did little to make parents see the importance of girl child education and enroll their girls in schools to enjoy the same educational opportunities enjoyed by male children (Mbanefoh, 1994).

The little or no importance parents place on the girl child education should not be considered in isolation. Instead, other factors like norms, societal values, economic needs, and women's traditional roles that influence parental negative attitude to the girl child enrollment should be considered. The lack of importance parents attached to girls' education made parents not enroll the girl child into elementary school and thus deny them the right to education. As stated by Duze & Yarzever (2013), such" disparity between the male and female enrollment remains wide in a place like Kano in northern Nigeria (Duze & Yarzever, 2013 p.204). From all the reviewed literature, parents placed more importance on religion and culture than the education of the girl child.

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Theoretical framework

2.7 Global perspective of gender inequality

Though this study is built on the feminist theory, it is necessary to briefly relate how gender inequality has been an ongoing debate and struggle to achieve gender equality by stating a global perspective of gender inequality. Despite the practice of democracy and worldwide technological development, women's subordination is still an ongoing issue. Laws, social relations, cultural traditions, to mention a few, are the avenue used to discriminate against women (Mullins, 2018). As of the 1960s, more people worldwide became aware of the diverse forms of discrimination against women. This awareness led to a rising consciousness and commitment to combat all forms of discrimination against women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 as an international Bill of rights for women, and it came into existence in 1981. This Bill considers the fundamental rights of women as necessary. The UN considers equal rights for both men and women as a core principle. The definition of discrimination defined in the Convention goes like this "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made based on sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition,

enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basic equality of men and women, of human right and fundamental freedoms in the political-economic social, cultural civil or any other field" (Jayawickrama 2002, p.176).

CEDAW offers practical ways that the government of nations can employ to tackle the issues affecting women and at the same time offer solutions. Its principal focus is on women's rights. It is built on the following principles: substantive equality (which ensures that women have opportunities), non-discrimination, and state obligation. By signing or ratifying the treaty, it implies that the government of a country agrees with CEDAW to eliminate discrimination against women, thus improving women's status/condition in society. It also implies that countries are bound to put these principles into practice. Having signed the Convention, nation-states are expected to submit a national report every four years. The report should also include methods used to achieve compliance with the treaty. However, although women's conditions have improved in many nations, the most significant challenge to achieving a global consensus on women's rights, a gender stereotype that has its roots in patriarchy, still exists. Women suffer from gender-based stereotypes perpetrated by individuals' societal structures and institutions, deeply rooted in patriarchy (Mullins, 2018).

The consequence of living in a patriarchal society is that women have limited ability to earn money or realize their potential. They play a significant role in agricultural development; however, in many developing countries, women cannot formally own land, cannot get loans to invest in their farms, thus leading to low agricultural production because agriculture cannot reach its potential, thereby perpetuating poverty and hunger in the developing world. This is to say that women have no control over the use of land or the benefits that accompany land ownership.

Generally, men control the household; these disadvantages are often reinforced by practices that limit women's access to services like training. Cultural beliefs can also restrict women's opportunities, and the social norms that limit women's opportunities need to be understood and then changed (Mullins, 2018). Gender inequality varies according to the economic structure and social organization of a society. Gender inequality is also manifested in girls having less access and enrollment to education, sexual exploitation, violence against women, forced child

marriages, genital mutilation are such examples (Lorber, 2001).

Globally men earn more than women; they prefer education and personal autonomy, to mention a few. In developing countries with low Gross Domestic Product per capita than developed countries, they are subsequently widening the gender disparity gap. The female child becomes a new member of her husband's family when she gets married and no longer a member of her birth family. Parents are willing to invest in a son's education in such a society than that of the girl child because the son will always be part of the family (Jayachandran, 2015).

Gender inequality in education is a culminating effect of gender bias against girls. In traditional Nigerian society, women are involved in diverse domestic tasks and involved in all agricultural activities. Nevertheless, they suffer ".... and are victims of a social order that treat them largely as a second position role player" (Alabi & Alabi, 2014, p. 006). More boys are enrolled in schools in Nigeria than girls, and "in the Northern part of the country, the number of children out of school is particularly high" (UNICEF, 2020).

2.8 Feminist theory

This study is viewed from the lens of feminist theory, which states that society is structured to benefit men in all spheres of life to the detriment of women. Feminism started late in the 18thc and centers on women's rights by depicting how women are regarded culturally and in society. Feminist theories are multifaceted and grounded in struggles for women's empowerment in all parts of the world due to the arbitrariness of gender-based exclusion. Feminist theory illuminates the limitations of beliefs about gender and sheds more insights into different hierarchies' social construct. Feminist theory campaigns and advocates for equality between men and women socially, politically, and economically. Feminist theory also brings to light restrictions, barriers surrounding women's lives, and identifying mechanisms for change. It is deeply involved in the campaign for justice, equality, and justice for women (Disch, & Hawkesworth, 2016; Ferguson, 2017).

In most societies,' girls are denied the right to education, property ownership, and legal status. Feminists argue that the source of conflict is between men and women, and there is the need to study society as a whole image to conclude individual behavior. Society is directly affected by

patriarchy; women are subordinate to men, they are less powerful, and have less influence than men. Feminists argue that the source of conflict between men and women is universal, and it happens in all societies across the globe. The patriarchy system reinforces this subordination of women into inferiority class (Alabi & Alabi, 2014). Feminist paradigms look at other aspects of social life that other paradigms have ignored. The feminist paradigm "focuses on gender differences and how they relate to the rest of social organizations," thus shedding more light on the oppression of women (Babbie, 2017, p.38).

Feminist paradigms point out women's oppression in many societies and the limitation concerning how people understand and examine aspects of social life. For example, feminist paradigms also show concern for the environment. Feminist paradigms challenge already established beliefs and notions in society. According to Nancy Hartsock, "The term feminist standpoint theory refers to the idea that women have knowledge about their status and experience that is not available to men" Babbie, 2017 p. 39). Feminist paradigms bring to light the unequal treatment of women and an epistemological recognition that how both men and women perceive and understand society differs (Babbie, 2007).

Feminist theory is a part of the epistemological perspective of social justice theory. Social justice talks about "fairness" in a "good" society and is at the forefront of educational theory. Social justice theory helps one understand diverse forms of oppression and exploitation, to mention a few that can be attributed to gender, race, or disability. Social justice theory looks at institutional conditions that promote individual development and conditions of achieving a good society. The origin of social justice theory can be linked to historical conditions and epistemological legacies (Blackmore, 2013).

The 1970s witnessed the second wave of the women's movement due to the inability of the social rights movement and male theorists to address gender inequality. Among different feminist theories, I think that the ideas of Nancy Fraser are of particular importance for this study; thus, the chosen example in this study because Fraser's feminist theory about social justice deals with economic redistribution and cultural recognition that analyzes gender inequality. Fraser is also linked to new generation critical theory. According to Fraser, gender inequality is linked to economic injustice, and reducing the gender disparity gap requires a change in the

spheres of politics, economic, and social relations. Fraser suggests that certain gender injustices against women have a socioeconomic and cultural background. For women to achieve justice in terms of gender inequality, there is the need to address the three conditions of recognition, redistribution, and representation. Thus, the feminist theory of Nancy Fraser is built on the following three principles: redistribution/maldistribution, recognition, and association/participation. Fraser also states that there is a difference between economic injustice and cultural injustice (Fraser, 2012).