
CHAPTER THREE

MASS MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTION OF GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN ZARIA METROPOLIS, KADUNA STATE

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Abstract

The study assesses the role of the media in the promotion of girl-child in Zaria metropolis. The survey research method was adopted, using questionnaires as an instrument to elicit information from the respondents. Findings from the analysis of the data gathered show that several factors act as hindrances to girl-child education in Zaria metropolis. Such factors among others include: poverty, sexual violence, sexual abuse, culture and religion. Findings further Revealed that girl-child education is poor in Zaria Metropolitan Local Government Areas. Moreso, findings show that the media have been used to promote girl-child education in Zaria metropolis, but the extent to which they are used is minimal. Based on the above findings, the paper concludes that girl-child education is not given due recognition in Zaria Metropolitan Local Government Area and that the media, which are the agents of social change, have not fared well in creating awareness about girl-child education and that the extent to which girl-child education is embraced in Zaria Metropolitan Local Government Area is poor.

Introduction

Education is a human right that should be given to all human beings. There are lots of international human right instruments that provide for education as a fundamental human right, which include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1960), etc. Research has also shown that schooling improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life, such as child labour. This is why there has been a lot of emphasis, particularly in recent times, for all citizens to have access to basic education. It has however been established by researchers that improving female education is crucial for national development. Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such, since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, numerous human rights treaties have reaffirmed these rights and have supported entitlement to free compulsory primary education for all children. In 1990 for example, the Education For All (EFA), communication was launched to ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. According to UNESCO report, about 90 million children are not in school and majority of them are girls. Most girls do not have access to education despite the fact that it is their rights. The girl-child is often saddled with responsibilities, which may make her not to have access to quality education. It is true that many governments make provision for the education of their citizens, but the provisions, most of the time, do not take into cognizance the peculiarities of the girls. In that case, the girl-child may not have access to education, which is a fundamental human right. Research has shown that millions of girls do not have access to schools despite the concerted efforts to push the cause forward. Okeke, Nzewi and Njoku (2008) identify child labour, poverty and lack of sponsorship, quest for wealth, bereavement, truancy, broken home, engagement of children and house helps, as the clog in the wheel of girl's access to education. The right to education,

which is a fundamental human right, is frequently denied to girls in some African countries. In Africa, many girls are prevented from getting the education entitled to them because families often send their daughters out to work at a young age so that they can get the additional income they may need to exist beyond subsistence level and finance the education of sons. Abdullahi in Maduagwu and Mohammed (2006) notes that the importance of education in the life of an individual cannot be over emphasized. Central to the most basic problems facing the girl-child is her access to qualitative education. This is because without education, the realization of all other rights socio-economic and political rights become impossible. In the typical Nigerian setting, education of the girl-child has not received serious attention. The general apathy in this regard, especially among unlettered parents has to do with the materialistic concept of education, that is, the belief that the girl-child will eventually marry and leave the family with whatever material benefits derivable from her education to her husband's home. They would rather prefer to invest in the education of the male child who is expected to marry in the family name. Traditionally, the role of women has been that of home maintenance and rearing of children. Right from childhood, the girl-child is prepared and trained with the ability of cooking, learning and all kinds of chores in the home, all directed towards a better house wife. The gender role type thus, poses a bias against the girls by the society. By and large, the predicament of the Nigerian girl-child is enormous. Education as a concept has refused to yield itself to a generally acceptable definition. This is because people use education to mean different things at different times. Generally, education is perceived as a continuous process of learning from the birth of an individual till his death. In some cases, people use education as a process, a product, an enterprise and as a discipline. This explains why Adomeh (2004) notes that defining education may not be as easy, as people think. The reason, according to Adomeh is that, everyone who puts forth a definition is viewing the concept from a particular perspective. Thus, the result is that different persons have put many definitions forward. But by and large, education is any attempt made to impart knowledge on another person. It could also mean the transmission of knowledge from one person to another or from the society to its members or from one culture to another. Whether one is conscious of it or not whenever he experiences a novelty or learns a new thing, he is being educated. Thus, whenever men and women interact with one another, they are influencing each other. This is why education is considered a continuous process as long as one lives. Ojih, in Ojiafor and Unachukwu (1996) identifies three major forms of education; namely:

- a. **Informal Education:** The informal education is carried out in a relaxed environment usually within the home setting. Learners acquire skills through continuous practice, hence it is said that the process of transmitting skills is based on imitation, recitation, practice and trial and error. There is absence of a format examination procedure unlike the kind that we do have within the school system. Those charged with the business of instruction are usually family members and or close relations.
- b. **Formal Education:** Formal education is that kind of education in which the system of instruction is done in a formal environment, specifically designated for it. This system of education involves reading, writing, examination, promotion and withdrawal. In addition, there are teachers specifically hired to carry out the process of instruction. There exists learners who have been recruited based on certain criteria and there exists also a hierarchical system of instruction in formal schools. Formal education emphasizes certification as the end product of the learning process.

- c. **Non-formal Education:** The non-formal system of education combines the features of both the formal and informal systems. Examples of these are seminars, conferences, symposia, workshops, to mention a few. Although the process of instruction takes place, but most of the time, those who are in attendance are contemporaries. Ideas are mainly shared and individual experiences enriched. Examinations are not taken at the end of instructions. In some cases, certificate of participation may be awarded. The environment from which this kind of education takes place is usually relaxed.

The Child Right's Act 2003, passed into law in the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), defines a child as a person who has attained the age of eighteen years. The Webster's Dictionary defines a child as a boy or girl at any age between infancy and adolescence or a new born infant. The Black's Law Dictionary on the other hand, defines a child as a person who has reached the age of 14 years. The term refers to a female or a male who is below the age of 18. The girl child is a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. It is the age before one becomes young adult. This period covers the crèche, nursery or early childhood (0-5 years), primary (6-12). During this period, the young child is totally under the care of the adult who may be her parents or guardians and older siblings. It is made up of infancy, childhood, early and adolescent stages of development. During this period, the girl child is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character. She is very dependent on the significant others, those on whom she models her behaviour through observation, repetition and imitation. Her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage.

The girl-child simply refers to the female child that has not reached the age of Adult. Going by these definitions, it implies that a child in the face of the law is meek and innocent and needs the protection of the parents and the law in order to survive and grow properly into a complete being. Thus, in Nigeria, the girl-child is faced with a lot of problems and constraints, which act as serious impediments towards her self-realisation. It is therefore in line with the foregoing that the researcher want to ascertain the challenges the girl-child faces in terms of education in Zaria metropolis and how the media can be used to promote the rights of the girl-child, especially as it has to do with quality education. The girl-child is the dawn, the bedrock and the future of any nation or society aspiring for sustainable development. However, the girl-child has continued to be the subject of rejection, marginalization and deprivation. In Nigeria, the predicaments of the girl-child are better imagined; they are short-changed in the area of denial of access to quality education, good health, survival and incidence of child labour, child trafficking, prostitution and ritual sacrifices. Although, there were varieties of laws regulating the rights of children before the 2003 Child Act, such laws were; The 1999 Constitution, Chapter IV; The Children and Young Persons Law; the Criminal Code Laws in the South and the Penal Code in the North; Adoption of Children Laws in some Southern States and Abuja; Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement Administration Act 2003; just to mention a few. The lists of such laws cannot be exhausted as some states have also put in place different laws that regulate the rights of children. More so, there are some International Treaties affecting the rights of children. Since 1959, several international documents had sought to achieve the aim of protecting the right of children. Since 1959, several international documents had sought to achieve the aim of protecting the right of children, such laws were; League of Nations Declaration of the Right of the Child, 1924; United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959; Declaration of

the Rights and Welfare of the African Child, 1979 and The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One sad thing is that despite all these laws, children, especially the girls, are still deprived from enjoying the full benefit of their basic rights; especially the right to quality education. Against this backdrop, it becomes pertinent to ask: what is the role of the media in promoting girl-child education in Zaria metropolis. Thus, the problem this study seeks to investigate is the impact of the media in promoting girl-child education.

Research Questions

Based on the problem and the purpose of the study stated above, the following research questions have been drawn to guide the study:

- a. What are the factors that hinder the effective education of the girl-child in Zaria metropolis?
- b. To what extent is girl-child education embraced in Zaria metropolis?
- c. To what extent does the girl-child have access to education in Zaria metropolis?
- d. To what extent are the media used to promote girl-child education in Zaria metropolis?

The Concept of Education

Education as a concept has refused to yield itself to a generally acceptable definition. This is because people use education to mean different things at different times. Generally, education is perceived as a continuous process of learning from the birth of an individual till his death. In some cases, people use education as a process, a product, an enterprise and as a discipline. This explains why Adomeh (2004:268) notes that defining education may not be as easy, as people think. The reason, according to Adomeh is that, everyone who puts forth a definition is viewing the concept from a particular perspective. Thus, the result is that different persons have put many definitions forward. But by and large, education is any attempt made to impart knowledge on another person. It could also mean the transmission of knowledge from one person to another or from the society to its members or from one culture to another. Whether one is conscious of it or not whenever he experiences a novelty or learns a new thing, he is being educated. Thus, whenever men and women interact with one another, they are influencing each other. This is why education is considered a continuous process as long as one lives. Ojih, in Ojiafor and Unachukwu (1996: 159) identifies three major forms of education; namely;

- a. **Informal Education:** The informal education is carried out in a relaxed environment usually within the home setting. Learners acquire skills through continuous practice, hence it is said that the process of transmitting skills is based on imitation, recitation, practice and trial and error. There is absence of a formal examination procedure unlike the kind that we do have within the school system. Those charged with the business of instruction are usually family members and or close relations.
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seminars, conferences, symposia, workshops, to mention a few. Although, the process of instruction takes place, but most of the time, those who are in attendance are contemporaries. Ideas are mainly shared and individual experiences enriched. Examinations are not taken at the end of instructions. In some cases, certificate of participation may be awarded. The environment from which this kind of education takes place is usually relaxed. The Concept of a Child and a Girl-Child; the Child Right's Act 2003, passed into law in the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years. The Webster's Dictionary defines a child as a boy or girl at any age between infancy and adolescence or a new born infant. The Black's Law Dictionary on the other hand, defines a child as a person who has reached the age of 14 years. But in this paper, the term refers to a female or a male who is below the age of 18. The girl-child is a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. It is the age before one becomes young adult. This period covers the crèche, nursery or early childhood (0-5 years) primary (6 -12). During this period, the young child is totally under the care of the adult who may be her parents or guardians and older siblings. It is made up of infancy, childhood, early and adolescent stages of development. During this period, the girl child is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character. She is very dependent on the significant others, those on whom she models her behaviour through observation, repetition and imitation. Her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage. The girl-child simply refers to the female child that has not reached the age of Adult. Going by these definitions, it implies that a child in the face of the law is meek and innocent and needs the protection of the parents and the law in order to survive and grow properly into a complete being.

The Media and Girl-Child Education

The media have a very crucial role to play in the promotion of girl child education in any country. The media according to Asemah (2011) are agents of social change that can bring about positive attitudinal change in the audience. They set agenda for the people to follow in any society. The media are crucial to opinion formulation and eventual outcomes of events. The media are champions of human rights. They act as the eyes, ears and voices of the public, drawing attention to abuses of power and human rights, often at considerable personal risk. Through their work, they can encourage governments and civil society organizations to effect changes that will improve the quality of people's lives. Journalists, photographers and programme-makers frequently expose the plight of children caught up in circumstances beyond their control or abused or exploited by adults. However, it is equally important to consider the children's angle in more conventional news coverage. A good way of testing the value of changes in the law or fiscal policy, for example, is to consider the extent to which children will benefit or suffer as a consequence. The way in which the media represent or even ignore children can influence decisions taken on their behalf and how the rest of society regards them. The media often depict children merely as silent victims or "charming innocents". By providing children and young people with opportunities to speak for themselves—about their hopes and fears, their achievements and the impact of adult behaviour on their lives, media professionals can remind the public that children deserve to be respected as individual human beings. Media professionals have an obligation to respect children's human rights, in how they operate and how they represent them. International Federation of Journalists (2005) notes that all journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain

the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism. Media organizations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigation and public debate. Children have an absolute right to education, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines. Journalistic activity, which touches on the lives and welfare of children, should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children. Journalists and media organizations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conducts in reporting children's affairs and in particular, they shall:

- strive for standard of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children;
- avoid programming and publication of images, which intrude upon the media space of children with information, which is damaging to them;
- avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;
- consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimize harm to children;
- guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless, it is demonstrably in the public interest;
- give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind;
- ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
- avoid the use of sexualized images of children;
- use fair, open and straightforward methods for obtaining pictures and where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or a responsible adult, guardian or career;
- verify the credentials of any organization purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children;
- not make payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children, unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.

Media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events, but should continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events. The media, therefore, have a crucial role to play to:

- raise awareness of children's rights and responsibilities;
- ensure children's rights are promoted and protected;
- report on failures and neglect;
- highlight successes;
- hold government and society accountable to the commitments made and goals set to promote and protect children's rights.

Furthermore, by providing children with opportunities to speak for themselves about their hopes and fears, their achievements and the impact of adult behaviour and decisions on their lives, media professionals can improve the representation of children's issues. The challenge is to cover these issues within the context of journalist independence and in a manner which respects the ethical issues involved. All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry,

the widest possible dissemination of information about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism.

Discussion

Findings from the study show that there are several factors that hinder the access of the girl-child to education in Zaria metropolis and by extension, the entire Nigeria. Research question 1 was answered to the effect that several factors serve as hindrances to the education of the girl-child in Zaria metropolis. This is evident in the acceptance of the four items out of the five items which sought to know the factors that hinder the education of the girl-child education in Zaria metropolis. Particularly, items 6, 8, 9 and 10 provided answers to the posed questions. The result shows that poverty, culture, religion, sexual violence and many others, are among the factors that serve as hindrances to girl-child education. Apart from the findings from the questionnaire, the literature review also shows that economic factors, which implies poverty, sexual violence and abuse, socio-cultural and religious factors, act as hindrances to girl-child education. Thus, Cole (1998) posits that some cultures define women as after thoughts inferior to men, good only for domestic work. As a result of poverty, fewer boys than girls are withdrawn from school for early marriage and for the fact that the often assist in housework more than boys, they may not have time to study when they come from school. As a result of poverty or economic challenges, the girl-child in most cases has to remain at home for the male child to go to school. Thus, when parents are left with the choice of who to send to school when there is financial predicament, the girls are always at a disadvantaged position. Findings also show that girl-child education in Zaria metropolis is embraced to a certain extent. This is evident in the rejection of two (2) items and acceptance of three (3) items. This is evident in items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. The implication of this is that women education in Zaria metropolis is embraced, but the extent to which it is embraced is minimal. Based on the findings, the female children in Zaria metropolis do not have access to education like their male counterparts. This perhaps, is because, as earlier stated, when parents are left with the choice of who to send to school, they prefer to send their male counterparts. This finding is evident in item 16 Table 4. More so, the data shows that the girl-child from rich homes has more access to education than those from poor homes. This is evident in item 17. The girl-child from the rich home can afford to pay school fees. The parents have the money and so, they can afford to send, both their male and female children to the school. Findings further show that the media have a very crucial role to play in the promotion of girl-child education.

The media are agents of social change; they can go a long way in making people to develop positive attitude towards any issue, since they set agenda for the public to follow. People tend to think along the lines of issues that are raised and treated by the media; as most of the issues and things that people think and worry about are based on what they watch on television, listen to on radio and read in newspapers and magazines. As noted in the literature review, the media have a crucial role to play to: raise awareness of children's rights and responsibilities, to ensure children's rights are promoted and protected, to report on failures and neglect, to highlight successes and to hold government and society accountable to the commitments made and goals set to promote and protect children's rights, especially the girl-child. Mass media programmes and contents can make people to have positive attitudes towards girl-child education. It is also evident from the findings that the mass media in Zaria metropolis use the media to promote girl-child education, but the extent to which this is done is minimal. This will certainly not augur well because attitude change about girl-child education can only take

place when the media constantly carry out programmes that are aimed at promoting girl-child education. The media must be used to introduce the acceptance of girl-child education and also reinforce this attitudinal change towards girl-child education in Zaria metropolis and by extension, the entire country.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The study presents the summary of the study, summary of findings and conclusion. Also recommendations were proffered.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted to investigate the media as a tool promotion of girl-child education in Zaria metropolis. To achieve this, four research questions were formulated and answered. Review of relevant literatures were also carried out. Survey research method was adopted for this study. Total number 400 respondents were used as sample for this study in Zaria metropolis. Out of 400 respondents, 365 (91%) were duly completed and returned. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection and the researcher with the aid of research assistants administered the copies of the questionnaire. The data collected for this study were presented and analysed using frequency distribution table, percentages.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were made.

1. Factors that hinder the access of the girl-child education include poverty, culture, religion, sexual violence etc.
2. Girl-child education in Zaria metropolis is embraced to a certain extent. As girls are withdrawn from school for early marriage and for the fact that they often assist in housework more than boys so they may not have time to study when they come from school.
3. Female children in Zaria metropolis do not have access to education like their male counterparts. When parents are left with the choice of who to send to school, they prefer to send their male counterparts. This finding is evident in item 16, table 4. More so, the data shows that the girl-child from rich homes has more access to education than those from poor homes.
4. Findings further show that the media have a very crucial role to play in the promotion of girl-child education. The media are agents of social change; they can go a long way in making people to develop positive attitude towards any issue, since they set agenda for the public to follow.

Conclusion

Education is the right of every girl-child everywhere and key to transforming her life and the life of her community. Without education, girls are denied the opportunity to develop their full potentials and to play a productive and equal role in their families, societies, countries and their world. Therefore, based on the findings arrived at in this study, the researcher concludes that there are certain challenges that confront the girl-child in terms of education; they are poverty, early marriage, sexual abuse, sexual violence, religion, culture, illiteracy, among others. The media have a crucial role play in the promotion of girl-child education, but the extent to which the media are used in doing this is to a very minimal extent. Based on the conclusion that there are certain factors that affect girl-child education in Zaria metropolis and that the extent to which the media promote girl-child education in Zaria metropolis is minimal.

Recommendations

- i. There is the need to pass laws banning the early marriage practices that normally keep girls out of schools. When a girl marries at a very tender age, it affects her chances of getting a quality education.
- ii. Government should provide free education to its citizenry, so that the children from poor homes will have access to education. When there is free education, the girl-child will be sent to school by her parents. Most girls drop out of school because of lack of money. The government should at least, provide free education up to secondary school level so that more people will have access to education. Poverty remains one of the largest barriers to access. Paying school fees is impossibility for many families struggling to make ends meet.
- iii. The society generally should create avenue to empower parents to enable them send their children to school and also empower the children to sue their parents against any infringement on their fundamental human rights, especially the girl-child.
- iv. The media of mass communication, whether print or electronic, should be massively used to promote girl-child education, not only in Zaria metropolis, but in the entire country.

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