

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN APA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

BY

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Abstract

this study investigated the impact of socio-cultural factors on economic growth in secondary education within Apa Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. The research focused on socio-cultural factors such as parental attitudes, gender roles, cultural beliefs, and religious practices, examining how these factors influenced student participation, retention, and academic performance—critical components for economic growth in education. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a study population of 2,108 individuals selected from four secondary schools in the area using a random sampling technique. A sample of 200 respondents, including students, teachers, and school administrators, participated in the study. Data were collected using a titled "Socio-cultural Factors and Economic growth in Education Questionnaire" (SFEGQ), a validated instrument with a reliability coefficient of 0.76, as determined by **Cronbach's alpha** coefficient. Analysis established a significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and educational outcomes, revealing that socio-cultural practices significantly impacted school attendance, dropout rates, and academic achievement. The study provided recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to address the adverse effects of socio-cultural factors on education and foster economic growth in Benue State's education sector.

Keywords: Socio-cultural factors, economic growth, secondary education.

Introduction

Education is considered a critical driver of socio-economic development, as it equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for participation in the modern economy (World Bank, 2015). However, in many communities, socio-cultural norms and practices can serve as barriers to achieving educational or economic growth. Issues such as gender inequality, early marriage, and child labour are prevalent in many Nigerian societies and have been known to undermine efforts in providing equitable and quality education for all (UNESCO, 2014). Nigeria's education system faces numerous challenges, ranging from inadequate infrastructure and funding to socio-cultural barriers that hinder educational growth. Economic growth in education refers to the impact of education on economic development and the benefit of investing in education. In Nigeria, socio-cultural factors such as traditional beliefs, gender roles, parental involvement, and community attitudes play a significant role in influencing educational outcomes. These factors often affect students' access to quality education, attendance, and academic performance thereby affecting the economic growth of education in the region. In Apa Local government of area of Benue State, which is primarily an agrarian region, education is often perceived as secondary to economic activities such as farming. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), (2013), the socio-cultural environment in communities significantly impacts student enrolment, attendance, and retention in schools.

In many cases, children are expected to contribute to the family's livelihood, often at the expense of their education. Apa Local Government Area in Benue State is no exception to these trends. Socio-cultural factors such as the prevalence of early marriages, gender-based educational discrimination, and the prioritization of economic activities over schooling have a profound impact on the educational system's sustainability. These socio-cultural factors are

often compounded by limited parental involvement in children's education, which further exacerbates the issues of low retention and academic underachievement (Isah & Olatoye, 2018).

Moreover, the perception of education as a tool for socio-economic mobility is often overshadowed by traditional views that prioritize immediate economic gain over long-term educational investment. This has led to a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment in rural areas, as children who drop out of school due to socio-cultural pressures often find themselves trapped in low-income occupations (UNICEF, 2017). Therefore, addressing the socio-cultural barriers to economic growth in education is critical to fostering long-term development in secondary education in Apa Local Government Area of Benue. The socio-cultural environment in Nigeria plays a significant role in shaping the educational landscape, particularly in regions like Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. Despite the importance of education for socio-economic development, socio-cultural factors such as traditional gender roles, parental attitudes towards education, and the prioritization of economic activities over schooling have continued to hinder students' access to and participation in secondary education (UNESCO, 2014). In particular, the impact of these socio-cultural factors on the economic growth in education has not been adequately addressed, leading to persistent challenges in student retention, academic performance, and overall educational outcomes.

The problem is further highlighted by lack of community awareness regarding the long-term economic benefits of education, particularly for girls. As a result, many children, especially girls, are either withdrawn from school early or are unable to attend regularly due to socio-cultural obligations, such as assisting in household chores, engaging in economic activities, or getting married at an early age (Isah & Olatoye, 2018). This situation has created a significant gap in the sustainable development of education in the region, where the economic viability of the educational system is directly tied to addressing these socio-cultural challenges. This study sought to investigate the socio-cultural factors that impact economic growth in secondary education in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. To understand the impact of these challenges, the study also, aimed to provide insights into how these socio-cultural barriers can be mitigated to ensure that education contributes to the long-term economic development of the region.

Objective of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the impact of Socio-cultural factors on economic growth in secondary education in Apa local Government Area of Benue state. The specific objectives of the study are as follow to:

1. Examine the impact of parental attitudes towards education on the economic sustainability of education in secondary schools in Apa Local Government Area.
2. Analyse the influence of gender roles on student participation and retention in secondary schools.
3. Investigate the effects of cultural beliefs and practices (e.g., early marriage and vocational priorities) on educational outcomes.
4. Assess the role of religious beliefs and practices in determining students' commitment to formal education.
5. Identify the economic challenges faced by families in ensuring sustainable education for their children in the region.
6. Evaluate the effect of socio-cultural factors on school attendance and retention rates in secondary schools.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do parental attitudes towards education affect the economic growth of education in secondary schools in Apa Local Government Area?
2. In what ways do gender roles influence the participation and enrolment of students in secondary Education?

3. What are the effects of cultural beliefs and practices, such as early marriage and vocational preferences, on the educational outcomes of students?
4. How do religious beliefs and practices influence students' commitment to and participation in formal secondary education in Apa Local Government Area?
5. What are the economic challenges faced by families in sustaining the education of their children in secondary schools?
6. How do socio-cultural factors such as parental attitudes, gender roles, and cultural practices affect school attendance and retention rates in the region?

Literature Review

Several studies regarding the impact of Socio-cultural factors impacting on economic growth in secondary Education had been conducted. Isah and Olatoye (2018) conducted a study examining the socio-cultural factors affecting students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study revealed that factors such as early marriages, child labour, gender biases, and parental attitudes towards education significantly hindered students' academic success, particularly in rural areas. These socio-cultural barriers were found to reduce student retention rates and affect long-term economic growth in education. The study concluded that addressing these factors is essential for improving the overall quality and sustainability of education.

Umaru,(2014) investigated the role of parental involvement and cultural practices on education in rural Nigerian communities. The research indicated that low parental involvement and traditional economic practices (such as using children for agricultural labour) negatively impacted the education system's ability to sustain it. Umaru also emphasized that economic sustainability in rural education requires interventions aimed at changing the community's attitudes towards education. Adeyemi and Adebola,(2016) explored the effects of gender biases on educational access and retention in Nigerian secondary schools. Their study found that traditional gender roles and the preference for educating boys over girls created a significant gender gap in educational attainment. This gap, according to the authors, posed a major threat to the economic sustainability of education in rural areas, as fewer girls received the education necessary for long-term economic contributions.

Okafor and Nwafor, (2017) examined how socio-cultural attitudes towards education in rural communities of northern Nigeria impacted student attendance and performance. Their findings indicated that negative community attitudes toward education, combined with economic challenges, led to low enrolment and attendance rates in secondary schools. These challenges also prevented the educational system from achieving sustainability, as students were not completing their education. Ekong, (2015) investigated the relationship between traditional economic activities and educational sustainability in rural Nigeria. The study found that families' reliance on child labour for farming and other economic activities significantly limited the time children spent in school. Ekong suggested that policies promoting education in rural areas must address these socio-cultural economic dependencies to ensure sustainable educational practices.

Ibrahim, (2019) focused on the impact of community values and beliefs on education in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. His research highlighted that in some communities; education was seen as unnecessary for girls, as their traditional roles were centred on domestic work and marriage. These beliefs, according to Ibrahim, hindered the ability of education systems to sustain economic growth by limiting the participation of half the population in formal education. Abdul and Suleiman,(2020) explored how socio-cultural practices, particularly early marriage and childbearing, affect female students' participation and success in secondary schools in rural areas. They found that these practices often forced young girls out of school, thus impacting the overall economic sustainability of the educational system. The study recommended comprehensive community awareness programmes to address these challenges.

Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design and the population of the study was drawn from students of four secondary schools totaling 2,108 while the sample sizes of 200 respondents were randomly selected. The sample comprises of 140 students, 30 teachers and 30 respondents from other educational stakeholders. The instrument for data collection was a **structured questionnaire** designed by the researcher, titled "Socio-cultural Factors and Economic growth in Education Questionnaire" (SFEGQ) was administered to the students, teachers and stakeholders in education as well as community leaders to find out the socio-cultural factors impacting on economic growth in secondary education in the region. The **Cronbach's alpha** coefficient was used to ascertain internal consistency at reliability coefficient of 0.76. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies and simple percentages.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections, section A, B, C and D with each section eliciting information in line with the study objectives. The questionnaire was in form of a **Likert scale with response code of strongly Agreed, (SA) Agreed (A), and strongly Disagreed (SD) Disagreed (DA) having weigh of 4,3,2,1 respectively**. The instrument was **validated** by experts in education from Benue State University, Makurdi. And a **pilot study** was conducted with 20 respondents from a Agatu local government area.

Results

The information obtained were analysis and findings were structured into tables based on research Questions.

Research Question One

How do parental attitudes towards education affect the economic growth of education in secondary schools in Apa Local Government Area?

Table 1: Parental Attitudes towards Education

S/N	Parental Attitude	Number of Agreed (%)	Number Disagreed (%)	of Frequency (N= 200)
1	Positive towards formal education	65(67%)	135 (33%)	200
2	Negative towards formal education	135 (67%)	65 (33%)	200
3	Encouraging male children in school	135 (67%)	65 (33%)	200
4	Encouraging female children	70 (35%)	130 (65%)	200

Interpretation:

- The result in table 1 show that majority of parents 135 (67%) in the area hold negative attitudes towards education.
- Parents are more likely to encourage their male children 135 (67%) to pursue education, while support for female education remains lower 70 (35%). By implication, parental attitude displays apathy towards education.

Research Question two

In what ways do gender roles influence the participation and enrolment of students in secondary Education?

Table 2: Impact of Gender Roles on School Participation

S/N	Gender Role Influence	Number Agreed (%)	Number of Disagreed (%)	Frequency (N = 200)
1	Boys encouraged for education	130 (65%)	70 (35%)	200
2	Girls encouraged for education	65 (33%)	135 (67%)	200
3	Girls involved in domestic work	115 (57%)	85 (43%)	200
4	Boys involved in economic work	110 (55%)	90 (45%)	200

Interpretation:

- The result in Table 2 shows that There is a gender disparity, with 130 (65%) of boys being encouraged to pursue education compared to only 70 (33%) of girls encouragement to pursue education.
- 115 (57%) of the girls are involved in domestic work, while 110 (55%) of boys are involved in economic activities, reducing the time allocated for educational activities. By implication. It increases gender disparities in enrolment/completion rates.

Research Question Three

What are the effects of cultural beliefs and practices, such as early marriage and vocational preferences, on the educational outcomes of students?

Table 3: Cultural Beliefs and Practices Impacting Education

S/N	Cultural Belief	Number of Agreed (%)	Number of Disagreed (%)	Frequency (N = 200)
1	Early marriage for girls	130 (65%)	70 (35%)	200
2	Preference for trade over school (boys)	125 (63%)	75 (37%)	200
3	Attendance at cultural events (during school)	140 (70%)	60 (30%)	200

Interpretation:

- Early marriage practices impact 130 (65%) of girls, causing a significant dropout rate among female students.
- Many boys 125 (63%) prioritize trade-related activities over formal education. By implication, Cultural practices like early marriage can reduce girls' educational opportunities

Research Question 4

What are the effects of cultural beliefs and practices, such as early marriage and vocational preferences, on the educational outcomes of students?

Table 4: Religious Influence on Education

S/N	Religious Factor	Number of Agreed (%)	Number of Disagreed (%)	Frequency (N = 200)
1	Prioritizing religious teachings over formal education	110 (55%)	90(45%)	200

S/N	Religious Factor	Number of Agreed (%)	Number of Disagreed (%)	Frequency (N = 200)
2	Balanced religious and formal education	90 (45%)	110(55%)	200

Interpretation:

- Over half 110 (55%) of the respondents agreed that religious teachings (both in Churches and Mosques) are prioritized over formal education, affecting school attendance and educational outcomes.90 (45%) of the respondents agreed that there is a balance religious and formal Education. By Implication, Religious conservatism can slow adoption of modern educational methods.

Research Question Five

What are the economic challenges faced by families in sustaining the education of their children in secondary schools?

Table 5: Economic Status Impacting Education Access

S/N	Economic Challenge	Number Agreed	of Number Disagreed	of Frequency (N = 200)
1	Inability to pay school fees	155 (77%)	45 (23%)	200
2	Lack of educational materials	120 (60%)	80 (40%)	200
3	Dropout due to economic challenges	140(70%)	60(30%)	200

Interpretation:

- The result in Table 5 show that 155 (77%) of respondents agree that families struggle to pay school fees, and 120 (60%)of the respondents believe that students lack the necessary educational materials
- 140 ((70%) of the respondents indicated that economic challenge leads to a high dropout rate, by implication this challenge limits access to quality education.

Table 6: School Attendance and Retention Rates

S/N	Attendance/Retention Issue	Number of Agreed (%)	Number Disagreed (%)	of Frequency (N = 200)
1	Irregular attendance	120 (60%)	80 (40%)	200
2	Regular attendance	80 (40%)	120 (60%)	200
3	High dropout rates	120 (60%)	80 (40 %)	200

Interpretation:

- The result in Table 6 show that, Irregular school attendance is a significant issue, with 120 (60%) of the respondents agreeing that students attend school irregularly. The dropout rate is also cchallenging at 120 (60%) of the respondents. By implication poor school attendance hinders students' ability to grasp concepts, leading to poor academic performance.

Major Findings:

- Parental Attitudes:
A majority of parents (67%) have a negative attitude towards formal education, especially regarding female education (only 35% of girls are encouraged to attend school).
- Gender Roles and Stereotypes:

Boys are more likely to be encouraged to pursue education (65%), while girls are often relegated to domestic responsibilities, contributing to gender disparities in educational access and participation.

- **Cultural Practices:**
Cultural norms such as early marriage (65%) and a preference for trade or farming over schooling (63% of boys) significantly hinder students' educational progression.
- **Religious Influences:**
Over half (55%) of the population prioritizes religious teachings over formal education, leading to frequent absenteeism and poor educational outcomes.
- **Economic Constraints:**
Many families face severe economic challenges, with 77% unable to afford school fees and 60% lacking essential educational materials, causing high dropout rates (70%).
- **School Attendance:**
Irregular attendance is a major problem, with 60% of students not attending school regularly, and 60% of the student population dropping out due to socio-cultural and economic pressures.

Conclusion

The findings from the tables demonstrated that socio-cultural factors such as parental attitudes, gender roles, cultural and religious beliefs, and economic status significantly impacted on the economic growth of education in Apa Local Government Area. Those issues result in high dropout rates, gender inequality in education, and irregular attendance, which threaten the long-term viability of education in the region.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proposed to address the challenges affecting educational access and participation in secondary education in Apa Local government area of Benue State;

1. Community leaders and Stakeholders should conduct a community-wide awareness's campaign to change parental attitudes towards education ,by emphasizing its benefits, especially for the girls, such campaign should go with establishment of scholarship programme for disadvantaged students , particularly for the less privileged to alleviate economic burdens.
2. Educational materials should be provided and distributed essentially to students, ensuring equal access by good spirited individuals in the community who have the interest of economic sustainability in Education; this can go a long with implementing subsidies or waivers for school fee in the public schools to reduce financial constraints.
3. There is need for policy reform to address gender disparities, early marriage and cultural practices hindering education.

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