
Girl-Child Education as a Tool for National Transformation: A Study of Parental Attitudes in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu, Jigawa State

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ABSTRACT

Girl-child education is widely recognized as a fundamental driver of national transformation through its contributions to gender equality, human capital development, poverty reduction, and sustainable socio-economic progress. Despite increasing awareness of its importance, disparities in access to and acceptance of girl-child education persist in many rural communities in Northern Nigeria due to entrenched socio-cultural and economic barriers. This study assessed parental attitudes toward and acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State, Nigeria. A community-based descriptive cross-sectional design was employed among 260 parents selected using a systematic random sampling technique from an estimated population of 600 eligible parents. Data were collected using a structured interviewer-administered questionnaire developed from an extensive review of the literature. The instrument underwent face and content validation by experts, while its internal consistency reliability was established through a pilot study using Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.79$) and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. The findings revealed that 60.0% of respondents demonstrated positive attitudes toward girl-child education, with an overall mean attitude score of 2.74 ± 0.95 . However, acceptance remained relatively low, as only 57.7% supported girl-child education, 50.8% had female children currently enrolled in school, and only 40.0% were willing to allow their daughters to pursue tertiary education. Poverty (76.2%), cultural beliefs (67.7%), early marriage (62.3%), religious beliefs (47.7%), inadequate educational facilities (45.4%), and safety concerns (39.2%) were identified as the major factors influencing parental acceptance. The study concludes that although parental attitudes toward girl-child education are generally favourable, socio-economic and cultural barriers continue to limit full acceptance and educational progression of girls. The study recommends strengthening community sensitization programmes, expanding economic support for vulnerable households, promoting gender-responsive educational policies, and engaging traditional and religious leaders to foster positive attitudes and improve girls' educational participation in rural communities.

Keywords: Girl-child education; parental attitudes; parental acceptance; gender inequality; rural education; national transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Girl-child education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable development. Educating girls is associated with improved health outcomes, increased economic productivity, and reduced poverty. However, gender disparities in education persist globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. According to UNESCO (2023), approximately 122 million girls worldwide are out of school, highlighting the magnitude of the problem.

Sub-Saharan Africa bears a disproportionate share of this burden, accounting for over one-third of the global out-of-school population, with girls more affected due to socio-cultural and economic barriers (UNESCO, 2024). Factors such as poverty, early marriage, and gender norms continue to limit girls' access to education (UNICEF, 2023).

Nigeria remains one of the most affected countries, with about 20 million out-of-school children, the highest globally, and girls constituting a significant proportion (UNICEF, 2024; World Bank, 2023). In Northern Nigeria, disparities are more pronounced, as cultural practices and economic constraints restrict female educational participation. It is estimated that only about 44% of girls complete primary education in the region (UNICEF, 2024).

Empirical studies have identified parental attitudes and socio-cultural beliefs as critical determinants of girl-child education. Studies in Nigeria show that parental perceptions, cultural expectations, and economic factors significantly influence enrolment and retention of girls in school (Oriola & Owoseni, 2024; Doofan & Tyoakaa, 2023; Raji et al., 2025). In rural communities, these factors are further reinforced by poverty and limited educational

infrastructure (Balagbogbo et al., 2025; Tsoho & Bala, 2025).

Although awareness of the importance of girl-child education has improved, this has not consistently translated into acceptance and practice. Many parents express positive attitudes toward female education but are constrained by financial limitations and socio-cultural expectations, resulting in low enrolment and progression rates (Ekas, 2025; Adebayo & Yusuf, 2024).

In Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State, girl-child education continues to face significant challenges arising from socio-economic hardship, limited access to educational facilities, and entrenched socio-cultural norms. The community is predominantly rural, with most households relying on subsistence farming and petty trading, making it difficult for many families to meet educational costs. Consequently, preference is often given to educating male children, while girls are expected to engage in domestic responsibilities or are withdrawn from school for early marriage. Although government and non-governmental interventions have sought to improve girls' access to education in Jigawa State, the extent to which these initiatives have influenced parental attitudes and acceptance of girl-child education in Rumbu-Wiya Village remains largely undocumented. This paucity of community-specific evidence necessitated the present study to assess parental attitudes and acceptance of girl-child education and identify factors influencing educational decisions within the study area.

Therefore, understanding parental attitudes and acceptance is essential for designing context-specific interventions aimed at

improving girl-child education and promoting gender equality.

Statement of Problem

Education is widely acknowledged as one of the most effective instruments for promoting individual well-being, social progress, and national development. Despite global efforts to achieve equitable access to education, millions of children remain excluded from formal schooling, with girls disproportionately affected. According to UNESCO (2024), over 122 million girls worldwide remain out of school, particularly in low and middle-income countries where gender inequalities continue to hinder educational access and attainment. The exclusion of girls from education has significant implications for economic growth, health outcomes, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.

Nigeria faces one of the most severe educational exclusion crises globally. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 20 million Nigerian children are out of school, representing the highest number worldwide (UNICEF, 2024). A substantial proportion of these children are girls residing in Northern Nigeria, where socio-cultural norms, poverty, early marriage, and gender-based discrimination continue to restrict educational opportunities. Evidence suggests that girls in Northern Nigeria are less likely to enroll in school, complete primary education, or transition to higher levels of education compared to their male counterparts (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

The consequences of low female educational attainment extend beyond the individual girl. Studies have consistently shown that educating girls contributes to improve maternal and child health outcomes, increased household income, reduced

fertility rates, enhanced participation in decision-making, and accelerated national development (UNESCO, 2024; United Nations, 2023). Conversely, limited access to education perpetuates cycles of poverty, gender inequality, poor health outcomes, and social exclusion. As a result, promoting girl-child education has become a central strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality) (United Nations, 2023).

Although governments, international organizations, and non-governmental agencies have implemented various interventions aimed at improving girls' educational participation, disparities persist, especially in rural communities. Research suggests that parental attitudes and acceptance play a critical role in determining whether girls are enrolled in school, retained in the educational system, and supported to attain higher levels of education (Doofan & Tyoakaa, 2023; Oriola & Owoseni, 2024). While some parents recognize the importance of educating girls, prevailing cultural beliefs, economic constraints, and social expectations often influence educational decisions in ways that disadvantage female children.

In Jigawa State, particularly in rural communities such as Rumbu-Wiya Village in Birnin Kudu Local Government Area, anecdotal evidence suggests that inequalities in educational participation between boys and girls remain prevalent. Despite increased awareness campaigns promoting female education, many girls continue to experience limited access to schooling due to poverty, household responsibilities, early marriage, and traditional perceptions regarding the role of women in society. However, there is limited empirical evidence documenting the attitudes and acceptance of

parents toward girl-child education in this specific community.

Most existing studies on girl-child education in Nigeria have focused on urban populations, broad regional analyses, or educational outcomes without adequately examining community-level parental perspectives that influence educational decisions. Consequently, there is a paucity of data regarding the extent to which parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village understand, accept, and support girl-child education and the factors that shape their decisions.

It is against this background that this study, assessed the attitudes and acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The paper is guided by the following objectives:

1. To determine parental attitudes toward girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State.
2. To assess the level of acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State.
3. To identify factors influencing parental acceptance among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the parental attitudes toward girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State?
2. What is the level of acceptance of girl-child education among parents in

Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State?

3. What factors influence parental acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State?

Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design to assess the attitudes, acceptance and factors influencing parental acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State. The cross-sectional approach was considered appropriate because it allows for the collection of data at a single point in time and facilitates the examination of relationships between variables such as socio-demographic characteristics and acceptance of girl-child education.

The study population comprised all parents and guardians residing in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State, who had at least one school-age child (5–18 years) at the time of the study. These individuals were considered appropriate respondents because they are the primary decision-makers regarding children's education, including school enrolment, retention, and progression. According to the household listing and community records maintained by the Village Head in collaboration with the Ward Development Committee, the estimated number of eligible parents and guardians in the community was approximately 600, which constituted the target population for this study.

The sample size for the study was determined using the finite population Taro Yamane formula 1967

$n = N/1 + N(e)^2$ Using an estimated population size of 600 eligible parents and a margin of error of 5%, a minimum sample size of 240 was obtained. This was adjusted for a 10% non-response rate, resulting in a final sample size of 260 respondents.

A systematic random sampling technique was employed to select participants. A sampling interval was calculated based on the estimated number of households in the community, and eligible households were selected at regular intervals. In each selected household, one eligible respondent was interviewed. This approach ensured fairness in selection and minimized sampling bias.

Data were collected using a structured interviewer-administered questionnaire titled "Parental Attitudes and Acceptance of Girl-Child Education Questionnaire (PAAGEQ)." The instrument was developed by the researcher based on the study objectives and an extensive review of relevant literature. It consisted of four sections containing a total of 25 items.

Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics (8 items)

Section B: Parental attitudes toward girl-child education (6 items) measured

respondents' attitudes using a 4-point Likert scale

Section C: Acceptance of girl-child education (5 items)

Section D: Factors influencing parental acceptance (6 items)

The questionnaire was designed in English and, where necessary, translated into the local language to enhance understanding among respondents. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in educational research and achieved a Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.79 after pilot testing.

Data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize categorical variables. Attitude items measured on a Likert scale were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained and permission was sought from community leaders prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences.

RESULTS

Table 1: Section A: Socio-Demographic Characteristics (n = 260)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–29	52	20.0
	30–39	94	36.2
	40–49	68	26.2
	≥50	46	17.7
Sex	Male	162	62.3
	Female	98	37.7
Marital Status	Married	198	76.2
	Single	18	6.9
	Divorced	16	6.2
	Widowed	28	10.8

Religion	Islam	228	87.7
	Christianity	24	9.2
	Others	8	3.1
Education	None	104	40.0
	Primary	78	30.0
	Secondary	56	21.5
	Tertiary	22	8.5
Occupation	Farming	146	56.2
	Trading	62	23.8
	Civil servant	18	6.9
	Others	34	13.1
No. of Children	1–2	38	14.6
	3–4	86	33.1
	≥5	136	52.3
Female Children	None	22	8.5
	1–2	124	47.7
	3–4	72	27.7
	≥5	42	16.2

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 260 respondents who participated in the study. The age distribution revealed that the largest proportion of the respondents, 94 (36.2%), were aged 30–39 years, followed by 68 (26.2%) who were 40–49 years, 52 (20.0%) who were 18–29 years, while 46 (17.7%) were 50 years and above. Regarding sex, 162 (62.3%) of the respondents were male, whereas 98 (37.7%) were female, suggesting that fathers constituted the majority of the respondents and were more represented in decisions relating to girl-child education within the study community. With respect to marital status, 198 (76.2%) of the respondents were married, while 28 (10.8%) were widowed, 18 (6.9%) were single, and 16 (6.2%) were divorced. The educational status of the respondents revealed that 104 (40.0%) had no formal education, 78 (30.0%) had primary education, 56 (21.5%) had secondary education, while only 22 (8.5%) had attained tertiary education. These findings indicate that a substantial proportion of parents had low levels of formal education, which may influence their

perceptions and decisions regarding girl-child education. Regarding occupation, 146 (56.2%) of the respondents were farmers, making farming the predominant occupation in the study area. This was followed by 62 (23.8%) who were traders, 34 (13.1%) engaged in other occupations, and only 18 (6.9%) who were civil servants. Analysis of household size showed that more than half of the respondents, 136 (52.3%), had five or more children, while 86 (33.1%) had three to four children, and only 38 (14.6%) had one to two children. Similarly, the distribution of female children among respondents indicated that 124 (47.7%) had one to two female children, 72 (27.7%) had three to four female children, 42 (16.2%) had five or more female children, while 22 (8.5%) reported having no female child.

This distribution demonstrates that the majority of respondents had at least one female child and were therefore directly relevant to the assessment of parental attitudes and acceptance of girl-child education.

Research Question One: What are the parental attitudes toward girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State?

Table 2: Section B: Attitude toward Girl-Child Education

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean $\pm$ SD	Decision
Girls should be educated to highest level	84	100	47	29	2.91 $\pm$ 0.95	Positive
Educating girls is a waste (R)	48	68	90	54	2.35 $\pm$ 1.02	Negative
Boys' education more important (R)	75	96	58	31	2.67 $\pm$ 0.98	Positive
Educated girls benefit society	92	104	40	24	3.04 $\pm$ 0.89	Positive
Girls should marry early (R)	88	94	52	26	2.38 $\pm$ 1.01	Negative
Education makes girls independent	96	102	38	24	3.08 $\pm$ 0.87	Positive

Table 2 shows respondents' attitudes toward girl-child education. Most respondents agreed that girls should be educated to the highest level (184; 70.8%), that educating girls benefits society (196; 75.4%), and that education makes girls independent (198; 76.2%), with mean scores of 2.91 $\pm$ 0.95, 3.04 $\pm$ 0.89, and 3.08 $\pm$ 0.87, respectively. However, 171 (65.8%) still believed that

boys' education is more important than girls' education, while 180 (69.2%) supported early marriage for girls. Overall, the attitude scale yielded four positive and two negative decisions, indicating generally favourable attitudes toward girl-child education despite the persistence of some traditional gender norms.

Research question Two: What is the level of acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State?

Table 3: Section C: Acceptance of Girl-Child Education

Item	Yes f (%)	No f (%)
Support girl-child education	150 (57.7)	110 (42.3)
Female children in school	132 (50.8)	128 (49.2)
Allow tertiary education	104 (40.0)	156 (60.0)
Allow science/tech courses	118 (45.4)	142 (54.6)
Continue despite financial challenges	96 (36.9)	164 (63.1)

Table 3 presents the level of parental acceptance of girl-child education. More than half of the respondents 150 (57.7%) supported girl-child education, and 132 (50.8%) had female children currently

enrolled in school. However, acceptance declined for higher educational aspirations, with only 104 (40.0%) willing to support tertiary education, 118 (45.4%) willing to allow science and technology courses, and

96 (36.9%) willing to continue supporting their daughters despite financial challenges. These findings indicate moderate acceptance

but limited long-term commitment to girls' education.

Table 4: Section D: Factors Influencing Acceptance (Multiple Response)

Research question Three: What factors influence parental acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State?

Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poverty	198	76.2
Cultural beliefs	176	67.7
Early marriage	162	62.3
Religious beliefs	124	47.7
Lack of schools	118	45.4
Safety concerns	102	39.2

Table 4 shows that poverty was the most commonly reported factor influencing parental acceptance of girl-child education (198; 76.2%), followed by cultural beliefs (176; 67.7%) and early marriage (162; 62.3%). Other factors included religious beliefs (124; 47.7%), lack of schools (118; 45.4%), and safety concerns (102; 39.2%). Overall, the findings indicate that parental acceptance of girl-child education is largely influenced by socio-economic hardship and socio-cultural practices.

DISCUSSION

The present study assessed parental attitudes toward and acceptance of girl-child education among parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village, Birnin Kudu Local Government Area of Jigawa State, and identified the factors influencing parental acceptance. The findings revealed that parents generally exhibited positive attitudes toward girl-child education, as reflected by the overall grand mean of 2.74 ± 0.95 . Most respondents acknowledged that girls should be educated to the highest level, that educating girls benefits society, and that education promotes girls' independence. However, a

considerable proportion still believed that boys' education should be prioritized and supported early marriage for girls, indicating that traditional gender norms continue to influence parental perceptions. This finding is consistent with Ojala and Oyesanmi (2024), who reported that parents in rural Nigerian communities increasingly recognize the educational and socio-economic benefits of educating girls. Similarly, UNICEF (2023) and UNESCO (2024) observed that sustained advocacy and educational interventions have improved public awareness and parental support for girls' education in many low- and middle-income countries. However, the finding differs from Abubakar et al. (2022), who reported predominantly negative parental attitudes toward girl-child education in rural North-West Nigeria, where entrenched cultural beliefs continued to favour boys' education over that of girls. The relatively positive attitudes observed in the present study may reflect the gradual impact of government policies, Universal Basic Education programmes, and community-based awareness campaigns, although some socio-cultural beliefs remain deeply rooted.

The study further found that while 57.7% of respondents generally accepted girl-child education and 50.8% reported having female children currently enrolled in school, acceptance declined considerably regarding support for tertiary education (40.0%), science and technology-related courses (45.4%), and continued education during financial hardship (36.9%). These findings suggest that although parents appreciate the value of educating girls, financial limitations and competing household priorities reduce their willingness to sustain girls' education beyond the basic level. This finding agrees with UNESCO (2024), which reported that household poverty remains a major obstacle to girls' progression beyond primary education in many developing countries. Likewise, Okeke and Ibrahim (2023) found that economic hardship significantly limits parents' willingness to finance higher education for their daughters, while UNICEF (2023) reported lower transition rates of girls from primary to secondary and tertiary education in economically disadvantaged communities. In contrast, Aina and Yusuf (2021) reported high parental acceptance of girl-child education in South-West Nigeria, where most parents expressed willingness to support their daughters through tertiary education despite financial challenges. These differences may be attributed to variations in socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities, and prevailing cultural practices between the study settings.

The study also identified poverty (76.2%), cultural beliefs (67.7%), and early marriage (62.3%) as the major factors influencing parental acceptance of girl-child education, while religious beliefs, inadequate educational facilities, and safety concerns were also reported as important barriers. These findings underscore the multifaceted challenges affecting girls' educational

participation in rural communities. The findings are consistent with UNICEF (2022), which identified poverty, harmful gender norms, and early marriage as major barriers to girls' education in Northern Nigeria. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) reported that financial hardship, socio-cultural practices, and inadequate educational infrastructure continue to impede girls' educational participation in many developing countries. Edeh et al. (2023) also found that household poverty and early marriage significantly reduce school enrolment and retention among girls in Northern Nigeria. However, the findings differ from those of Musa et al. (2022), who reported that parental educational attainment, rather than household income, was the strongest predictor of girls' educational participation. The disparity may be explained by differences in the socio-economic characteristics of the study populations and the availability of educational opportunities across regions. In Rumbu-Wiya Village, where farming is the predominant occupation and household incomes are generally low, economic constraints are likely to exert a greater influence on parental educational decisions than in relatively more advantaged communities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that parents in Rumbu-Wiya Village generally have a positive attitude toward girl-child education and recognize its importance for individual, family, and societal development. However, positive attitudes did not consistently translate into a high level of acceptance, particularly regarding girls' progression to tertiary education, participation in science-related disciplines, and continued schooling during periods of financial hardship. The study further established that poverty, cultural beliefs, and early marriage remain

the predominant barriers influencing parental acceptance of girl-child education, while religious beliefs, inadequate educational facilities, and safety concerns also contribute to the challenge. These findings suggest that although awareness of the value of educating girls has improved, socio-economic constraints and entrenched socio-cultural practices continue to limit girls' educational opportunities in the study area. Therefore, improving girl-child education in rural communities requires integrated interventions that address both economic barriers and harmful cultural norms while strengthening community support for girls' education.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen community sensitization through culturally appropriate programs involving traditional and religious leaders.
2. Expand adult education initiatives to improve parental awareness and attitudes toward girl-child education.
3. Provide financial support such as scholarships and incentives to reduce economic barriers.
4. Address early marriage and harmful cultural practices through policy enforcement and community engagement.
5. Improve access to education in rural areas by investing in infrastructure and safe learning environments.
6. Promote gender-sensitive policies that support enrolment, retention, and progression of girls in school.

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