



COVID-19 AND THE FUTURE OF GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN PANKSHIN AND ENVIRONS

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ABSTRACT

The study examined COVID -19 and the future of girl child Education in Pankshin and Environs. The study employed descriptive research design of a survey type. The population comprised the entire girl child in communities in Pankshin and environs. The sample sizes of 150 respondents were randomly selected using clustered random sampling techniques. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was constructed on 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA)-4, Agree (A)-3, Disagree (D)-2 and Strongly Disagree (SD)-1. The instrument was validated by experts from test and measurement in Psychology at the Federal college of Education Pankshin. The reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach's alpha after the instrument had been administered on 20 girl child outside the sample for the study, which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.71. The research questions raised were answered using the means scores. The study revealed that the pandemic have shattered education of the girl child through teenage pregnancies, taking parental responsibilities among others. The study revealed that many risk associated with sexual exploitation, gender base violence. It was concluded that COVID-19 affect the girl child education in communities in Pankshin and environs in Plateau State. Therefore, the study recommended that among others that; government should ensure the right of the girl child is protected, government and parents should ensure that the girl child should return to school.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, Students, Parents, challenges, Education

INTRODUCTION

The spread of the coronavirus through the globe from China initially spared Nigeria, like many other Africa countries, with zero recorded case as at January 2020. By 28 February 2020, however, Nigeria reported their first case, a Nigerian UK returnee. According to UNESCO monitoring, over 130 countries have implemented nationwide closures, affecting over

80 percent of world's students' population. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the situation, as many girls will never see the walls of a school let alone a schoolyard, their brilliant futures have been forever altered. Being a girl results in a marked proportion of children falling victim to human trafficking, child labour, child marriage and all manner of indescribable forms of exploitation at a disproportionately higher



level than their male counterparts these problems served as great obstacles to their education. Being a girl is more than a footnote on a calendar, because it requires a mindset shift, which eliminates all forms of discrimination, violence, exploitation, harassment and negative cultural and religious practices.

Coronavirus is also known as COVID-19, is a family of viruses that can cause respiratory illnesses such as the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). In 2019, a new coronavirus was identified as the cause of a disease outbreak that originated in china. The virus is known as the Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) a pandemic Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak, World health organization, (2019). COVID-19 is an infectious disease that causes respiratory illness with symptoms of cough, fever and in more severe cases, difficulty in breathing. This disease spread primarily through contact when an infected person either coughs or sneezes openly, when a person touches a surface or object and then touches the eyes, nose, or mouth. In addition, Arnold (2020) revealed that there is currently no standard vaccine cure for COVID-19, hence, the preventive measures against this virus includes frequent hand-washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and running water, or using alcohol based hand sanitizer, covering the nose and mouth with disposable tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing. Others were avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth if hands are not clean and avoiding close physical contact (meter or 3 feet) also known as social distancing. The sick were encouraged to self-isolation to avoid infecting others.

Within the context of education, many scholars have defined girl child education in various ways. Offorma, (2009) defined girl-child as a biological female off rings from birth to 18 years of age. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescent state of development. The girl child is seen as a young female person, who would eventually grow into women and marry. She is conditional to look after the young ones the home and kitchen. In addition, Girl child education is a catch all term for a complexity of issues and debases surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and health education for females (Okernmor, 2012). Girl child education also includes areas of gender equality, access to education and its connections to the alleviation of poverty, good governance, which are major ingredients in averting crime against women. Today's girl child education is

for tomorrows living. Silvia (2020) defined women education as the education that would make a woman become aware of herself and her capacity to exploit her environment, and involves training in literacy and vocational skills to enable her become functional in the society. From the foregoing definitions, it could be inferred that Girl child education is very important.

Education is the key to personal development and the future of any society. It unlocks opportunities and narrow inequalities. It is the bedrock of informed, tolerant societies, and a primary driver of sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the largest disruptions of academic activities ever in Nigeria. Huisman and Smits (2020) in Emma gender crisis could exacerbate levels of girl child, early marriage, and forced marriage, as well as early pregnancy, which is already one of the top causes for girls dropping out of school in most developing countries after COVID-19. In addition, as was observed by Elston, (2017) in cases of Ebola outbreak the major issues with girl child were sexual and reproductive health aspects, where teenage girls dropped out of school due to an increased risk of gender related issues such as sexual exploitation, pregnancy, and (forced) marriage.

However, the outbreak of COVID-19 with schools closed throughout Nigeria, teenage pregnancies prevails, with increased in dropout rates girls become pregnant or married. Hall, et al. (2020) stress girls from the poorest communities where learning facilities were lacking the burden of care of the households often falls on most of the girls". One of the results was early marriages being fast-tracked. "Young girls were entering marriage to reduce the financial burden on their parents." In the study of Toyin, (2020) observed that gender equality could be reversed as the pandemic threatened to further entrench existing gender gaps in education. However, some parent and caregivers viewed educating a girl child is a waste of resources couple with the challenges of COVID-19, some parent even openly told their female children that, it is better for them to go and look for work to do or they should go and marry. Marginalized girls in poor homes are at a higher risk of dropping out of school compared to boys, which became a threat to their future education. In addition, Agnes (2020) observed that girls face a higher risk of violence and harmful practices during lock down. With schools closed, there were increased sexual and gender-based violence, early pregnancies, unsafe abortions and child marriages. In the study of Natalia, (2020) affirmed that girls were the first to be pulled out



of school because of the difficulties faced at homes such as the girls were put to work and care for younger siblings when families face economic hardship.

In view of Arnold, (2020), the loss of some family incomes could keep children out of school indefinitely, they have worked so many years to get kids in school, get them enrolled, and get them to stay in school. Parents who were already on the edge about sending their kids to school would not continue. They are literally starving and need monies a girl child can bring. In addition, many girls were at a high risk of never going back to schools, which is a huge concern for the future education of girl child. In the study of Dedeji, (2020) inequity in access to education, concentration in the informal labor market, inequitable burden of unpaid housework and care work lower women's economic productivity may drop out or may not have access to school next year due to the pandemic economic impact alone. These make girls more vulnerable to child marriage, and gender based violence all of which decrease their likelihood of continuing their education.

From another perspective, Frederickson (2020) indicated socio- economic aspects, where girls might spend less time studying or might drop out of school because of a disproportionate increase in unpaid household work. Girls between the ages of 5-14 years already spend forty percent more time doing household work than boys. As girls stay at home because of school closures, their household work burdens increased, resulting in girls spending more time helping at home instead of studying. This encouraged parents, particularly those between girls and boys.

Furthermore, Hal, et al. (2020) revealed that in the developing country most households put low value on the girl child education, they do that by keeping their daughters at home even after schools reopen at the post COVID-19 era. Moreover, girls risk dropping out of school when caregivers are missing from the households because they typically have to replace the work done by the missing caregivers, who might be away due to COVID-19 related challenge. Therefore, with the current COVID-19 pandemic, girls were require to render more work at home than boys it makes lagging behind with their studies, and some eventually dropped out of schools. In addition, Emma, (2020) posited that months of hard work convincing parents to send their girls to school can go to waste because of an economic shock that puts them back into extreme poverty. Following a crisis, girls' education is one of the first areas to suffer, in large part because of

the rise in poverty. For many households, lockdowns have seen incomes and savings disappear, meaning they will simply not be able to pay school fees.

The aftermath of the coronavirus on the girl child education in Pankshin and environs as early marriages have increase among vulnerable families, also some parents sees "bride price" received could help support the rest of the household and they will use part of the monies to settle the males' student school fees. That means most of the households from a disadvantage background have no alternative than taking girls out of the education system permanently. However, since the beginning of the lockdown, there have been an "alarming number of stories" of girls being sent early to their marital homes and "straight into domestic servitude and sexual abuse. COVID-19 has also altered brilliant future of many girls in Pankshin and environs making them become victims to violence, child marriage, child labour human trafficking and conflicts. Because of the long period of over stayed at home some girls got pregnant during lock down and most of these girls were from ages 19 - 22 especially parts of Bwarak, Tambes and some places like Kangvel and Kururuwa among others. They will no longer further their education because of pregnancies related cases, and becoming unexpected mothers.

The effects of COVID-19 on the Girl Child Education in pathetic in some of the areas there are risks of sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse and violence – both on the way to and at homes. Most of young girls looked at the period of the crises as means for them to be attending parties and clubbing, they do go to most of the clubs and joins examples every Sundays they were organizing parties at Catherine's Hotel at Nbot Tambes coming in numbers. Some of the consequences were early marriages because of unwanted pregnancies, some parents deliberately did not want to pay the girl child fees because moral values of most of the girls have were eroded to pathetic situations. In addition, many young girls who were trapped in their homes with partners that abuse them on all fronts were exposed to unwanted sex, adolescent pregnancy and sexual related activities that might not make them resume school when they reopen.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine COVID-19 and the future girl child education in Pankshin and Environs. Specifically, the study examined;



1. ways in which COVID-19 affects education of the girl child
2. the extent to which hash economic condition of families occasioned by COVID-19 affects the future of the girl child education
3. measures to minimised the effects of COVID-19 on the girl child education

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are the ways in which COVID-19 affects education of the girl child in Pankshin?
2. To what extend does families hash economic condition occasioned by COVID -19 affects the future of the girl child education?
3. What are the measures to minimise effects of the COVID-19 on the girl child education?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research design of a survey type. The population of the study consists of the girl child in four communities within Pankshin and environs. The communities comprised of Tambes, Bwarak Kururuwa and Kangwel. Each of the

community was grouped as clustered. The sample sizes of 150 respondents were randomly selected using clustered random sampling techniques. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire consists of two sections; section “A” and section “B”. Section “A” obtained demographic data of the respondents such as gender, qualification, working experience etc. Section “B” sought information on COVID-19 and its effects on the education of Girl Child in Pankshin and environs. The questionnaire was constructed on 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) - 4, Agree (A)-3, Disagree (D)-2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) -1. The instrument was validated by two experts from test and measurement in Psychology at the Federal college of Education Pankshin. The reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach’s alpha after the instrument had been administered on 20 girl child outside the sample for the study, which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.71. The research questions raised were answered using mean scores. Any item with a mean score greater than or equal to 2.50 suggests Accepted, item with mean score below 2.50 suggests Rejected.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Research question 1: What are the ways in which COVID-19 affects education of the girl child?

Table 1: Mean Scores on ways in which COVID-19 affects education of the girl child

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Premarital sexual relationships due to COVID-19	47	55	28	20	2.86	Accepted
2	Death tolls as a result of complication from abortions during COVID-19	60	43	24	23	2.93	Accepted
3	Increase in teenage pregnancies	55	35	30	30	2.77	Accepted
4	Domestic violence/traumatic experiences during corona pandemic	47	58	27	18	2.89	Accepted
Weighted mean						2.86	Accepted

The result in Table 1 revealed ways in which COVID-19 affects education of the girl child. The result showed that the mean values in the table are greater than 2.50 which indicated that majority of the respondents accepted with all statements in item 1-4. It showed that respondents accepted that; premarital sexual relationships due to COVID-19 affects education of a girl child 2.86, death tolls from of complications from abortions during to COVID-19 also affects education of a girl child 2.93, COVID-19

increase in teenage pregnancies 2.77, COVID-19 caused domestic violence/traumatic experience which affects education of the girl child 2.89. The weighted mean of 2.86 further justify the claim that all the items are ways in which COVID-19 affects education of the girl child

Research question 2: To what extend does families hash economic condition occasioned by COVID -19 affects the future of the girl child education



Table 2: Mean Scores on extend does families hash economic condition occasioned by COVID -19 affect the future of the girl child education

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	The experience lost of family income	41	55	29	20	2.71	Accepted
2	Face with burdens of caring for the younger ones	57	46	25	22	2.92	Accepted
3	Doing extra work to place food on the tables and to pay other bills	45	70	20	15	2.97	Accepted
4	Parent look at sending the girl child to schools as waste	48	57	28	17	2.91	Accepted
Weighted Mean						2.88	Accepted

The result in Table 2 showed the responses on extent to which families hash economic condition occasioned by COVID -19 affects the future of the girl child education. The result showed that the mean values in the table are greater than 2.50 which showed that majority of the respondents accepted with all statements in item 1-4. The result revealed that hash economic condition lead to; lost of family income 2.71, face with burdens of caring for the younger ones 2.92, doing extra work to place food on the tables and to pay

other bills 2.97, and parent look at sending the girl child to schools as waste 2.91. The weighted mean of 2.88 further justify the claim that families hash economic condition occasioned by COVID -19 affects the future of the girl child education in a high extent.

Research Question 3: What are the measures to minimize effects of the COVID-19 on the girl child education?

Table 3: Mean scores on measures to minimize effects of the COVID-19 on the girl child education

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Governments must ensure education response plans are gender and age responsive and reflect the lived realities of girls	59	73	10	06	3.20	Accepted
2	The COVID 19 pandemic must not be used as an excuse to restrict or rollback girls and women’s access to essential sexual and reproductive health rights	80	45	15	10	3.30	Accepted
3	Governments should develop measures to identify and assist those who have not returned, for example by providing financial assistance programs	96	35	09	10	3.45	Accepted
4	Education planners should be aware of the particular threat that the corona virus - school closures pose on girls, and ensure that plans for learning should be a continuous process	91	40	13	06	3.44	Accepted
Weighted Mean						3.34	Accepted

The result in Table 3 showed the responses on measures to minimize the effect of COVID-19 on the girl child education. The result showed that the mean values in the table are greater than 2.50 which showed that majority of the respondents accepted with all statements in item 1-4. The part of the measures revealed includes; Governments must ensure education response plans are gender and age responsive and reflect the lived realities of girls 3.20, the COVID 19 pandemic must not be used as an excuse to restrict or rollback girls and women’s access to essential sexual and reproductive health rights 3.30, Governments

should develop measures to identify and assist those who have not returned, for example by providing financial assistance programs 3.45, and Education planners should be aware of the particular threat that the coronavirus and school closures pose on girls, and ensure that plans for learning should be a continuous process 3.44. The weighted mean of 3.34 further justify the claim that families hash economic condition occasioned by COVID -19 affects the future of the girl child education



DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed that some ways in which COVID-19 affects future of child education is through; achievement made towards the girl child education might be lost, vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse both by their peers and by older men, transactional sex as vulnerable girls and their families struggled to meet basic needs. It also affects their education because most parent will revert to early marriage for the girl child because gender inequality which is anchored in the work of Agnes (2020), as girls face a higher risk of violence and harmful practices. With schools closed, member organizations report increased sexual and gender-based violence, early pregnancies, unsafe abortions and child marriages. This comes just as support services including sexual and reproductive health and child protection programs – are reduced or under strain, limiting girls' ability to report what is happening to them. In addition, Huisman & Smits (2009) in Emma agrees that gender crisis could exacerbate levels of child, early, and forced marriage, as well as early pregnancy, which is already one of the top causes for girls dropping out of school in most developing countries after COVID-19. In addition, other reasons of COVID-19 affecting future education of girl child were: domestic violence were on the rise as girl child have no safe havens to return to, the girl child are particularly vulnerable, gender base violence can lead to injuries and serious physical, mental challenge and Sexual reproductive health challenge examples, STDs HIV, AIDs, and unplanned pregnancies.

The finding of the study also revealed that families hash economic condition occasioned by COVID-19 affects the future of the girl child education to include; the experience lost of family income, they were faced with burdens of caring for the younger ones. In addition, the girl child do extra work to place food on the table for the family and to pay other bills and Parent look at sending the girl child to schools as waste. The findings is related to the work of Frederickson (2020) which indicates socio- economic aspects, where girls might spend less time studying or might drop out of school at higher rates because of a disproportionate increase in unpaid household work. Girls already spend more time doing household work. As girls stay at home because of school closures, their household work burdens might increase, resulting in girls spending more time helping at home instead of studying. It was also supported by the work of Hall, et al. (2020) most households putting a lower value on

girls' education, to keep their daughters at home even after schools reopen. Moreover, the finding showed that girls risk dropping out of school when caregivers are missing from the household because they typically have to partly replace the work done by the missing caregiver, who might be away due to COVID-19-related work, illness, or death. Therefore, with the current COVID-19 pandemic, we might see more girls than boys helping at home, lagging behind with studying, and dropping out of school.

Furthermore, Emma (2020) also agreed that months of hard work convincing village elders and parents to send their girls to school can go to waste if an economic shock thrusts them back into extreme poverty. Girls' benefits entire societies, by losing all the gains the impact will be immeasurable. Following a crisis, girls' education is one of the first areas to suffer, in large part because of the rise in poverty. For many households, lockdowns have seen incomes and savings disappear, meaning they will simply not be able to pay school fees. Toyin, (2020) observes There are now fears that progress made concerning gender equality could be reversed as the pandemic threatens to further entrench existing gender gaps in education. However, some sees educating a girl child is a waste of resources couple with the challenges on ground as result of the COVID - 19, some of the parent even openly told their female children that better for them to go and look for work to do or they should go and marry. Marginalized girls in poor homes are at a higher risk of dropping out of school compared to boys which because a threat to their future education.

Finally, the finding of the study revealed the measures to minimize the effects COVID-19 on girl child education. These include: governments must ensure education response plans are gender and age responsive and it should reflect the lived realities of girls. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic must not be used as an excuse to restrict or rollback girls and women's access to essential sexual and reproductive health rights. Governments should develop measures to identify and assist those who have not returned, for example by providing financial assistance programs and education planners should be aware of the particular threat that the coronavirus - school closures pose on girls, and ensure that plans for learning should be a continuous process. This finding corroborates the finding of Silvia, (2020) who discovered that solutions Natalia, (2020).



CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of this study, it was concluded that COVID-19 affects girl child education in communities in Pankshin and environs. The COVID-19 crisis and which resulting to closure of schools increase the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria most especially the girl child. Most of them did not return to schools after the crisis because achievement made towards the girl child education might be lost, vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse both by their peers and by older men, transactional sex as vulnerable girls and their families struggled to cover basic needs among others. It also concluded that COVID-19 pushed some girl child to do extra work to place food on the table for the family and to pay other bills as well as it made some parents look at sending girl child to schools as waste.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

- ✓ Governments must ensure education response plans are gender and age responsive and reflect the lived realities of girls, children throughout the life cycle of education.
- ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic must not be used as an excuse to restrict or rollback girls and women's access to essential sexual and reproductive health rights, which must continue to be prioritized, funded and recognized as lifesaving.
- ✓ The community should push and maintain essential services for adolescent girls and young women, such as sexual and productive health services.
- ✓ Girls' child should be encouraged to continue learning during and after the crisis and to support their peers.
- ✓ Government and development partners need to continue sharing experiences and best practices during and post the COVID-19 pandemic and reinforce the importance of girls and education nation building
- ✓ Government should identify and implement emergency financing measures to soften the impact of the economic downturn on education, health, and other vital public services.
- ✓ The girl-child should have it in mind from an early age that she can grow to become a respected person occupying a high position in the society and should learn to speak up and voice out right from an early age.

- ✓ Public awareness messages should always include specific information on risks that girls face as well as how to report abuse and seek help.

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