

Original Research Article

Dynamics of Parental Perception on Gender Disparities and Girl-Child Participation in Post-Primary Education: The Case of Secondary Schools in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon

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Abstract

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Gender disparity in post-primary education is a global issue in developing countries and particularly, it is a cause for concern in Cameroon. Promoting girl-child participation in post-primary education largely depend on parental perception on gender disparities. There is compelling evidence that parental perception on gender disparity significantly impact girls' participation in post-primary education. The purpose of present study was to analyse and identify the impact of parental perception on gender disparity and girl-child participation in post-primary education in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. A conceptual framework which encompasses the major variables and their influence on girl-child education was developed. In order to dwell on this, the study reviewed literature based on six specific objectives namely; parenting practices towards girl-child education, parenting styles on girl-child education, parents' skeptical behaviour on girl-child education, parents' stereotype socio-cultural beliefs, as well as parents' educational background and parents socio-economic/professional status which significantly impact girls' participation in post-primary education. In respect to this study, we examined Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Abraham Maslow's theory of hierarchical needs, Ruth Pearson's gender relation theory, Thomas Aquinas' natural law theory and John Rawl's social justice theory. These theories do bring out ideas and opinions on how to organize, predict and explain facts on human behavior, human growth and personal development. Descriptive research design was used for the study. The population for the study was public secondary schools in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. The target population for the study was only for girl-students and their parents. Systematic random sampling technique was used to sample the schools and the respondents for the study. A total of 64 schools were sampled for the study in nineteen divisions found in these Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. A total of 625 respondents were targeted and 50 parents interviewed. Questionnaires and interview guide were used as instruments for data collection. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics while content analysis technique was used to analyse the interview guides. Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative data. In this case, The Simple Linear Regression was employed to explore whether there was a significant relationship between parental perception on gender disparity and girls' participation in post-primary education. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to describe the data. The results obtained from the findings revealed that parental perception on gender disparity significantly affects girls' participation in post-primary education. Based on the discussions, conclusion drawn and suggestions made on ways of bringing education to the doorstep of the girl-child in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. It is hoped that the findings of this present study will provide a body of literature that will help parents, teachers, policy makers and other educational stakeholder in education sector to mitigate parental misconception towards girls' education. It was also recommended that parents should be sensitise and learn about how they could overcome the barriers that hinder girls' education. Girls should be given legal support which will enable them have equal access as boys to education.

Keywords: Girls' education, Parenting, Parental perception, Parenting practices, Parenting styles, Post-primary education

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Education is the process through which an individual acquires adequate and appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour necessary to function optimally as a citizen (Boonprasert, 2010). It is also the belief that no nation can develop without proper formal education of its citizenry since education is considered the bedrock of all facets of development of any nation (Anho, 2011). Hence, no country can afford to toy with the education of its citizenry, especially that of the girl-child. According to the popular adage, “educate a man, and you educate an individual, but educate a woman and you educate a nation”. This buttresses the fact that education of the girl-child is a key factor in the development of the country, communities and the individuals with regard to their families, employment opportunities, economic empowerment and social accomplishment (Wood, 2001).

Education in its general sense is a form of learning which the knowledge, skills, values, benefits and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training or research. Education has been described as the most important aspect of human development, a key to a successful living, especially girl-child education (Micheal, 2011). This can be explained to the fact that Education is both the foundation and unifying force of a democratic way of life, the motivational force economic and social development. It is also the most effective investment that a society can make and the richest reward it can offer. Because education helps men and women realize their potential in economic, political and social arena; it is the single most powerful way to get people out of poverty.

Education is a fundamental human right, as enshrined in numerous international human rights instruments, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1976 International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. These instruments specify that gender inequalities in education should be eliminated, wherever they exist. The Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) obliges States to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education, and in particular to ensure on the basis of equality of men and women” (CEDAW, 1979).

Unique among the World Conventions that have taken place so far, is the World Education Forum that was held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, where different stakeholders such as the Teachers, Academic Policy

Makers, NGOs, Prime Ministers and Heads of International Organizations from 164 countries convened. This meeting saw the adoption of the Education for All (EFA)’s Framework for Action. The Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Declaration both established time bound gender equality goals to which all member States are committed in ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. In the same vein, eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full equal access to achievement in basic education of good quality. “Education for all” means what it says. Apart from the commitment by the international community, in Dakar Framework for Action, to have all eligible children attending fee-free primary schooling by 2015, adult illiteracy was to be halved, early childhood education and programmes for out-of-school youth were to be increased, and the quality of education was to be greatly improved. The phrase “All Children” implied, of course, boys and girls. However, greater emphasis was put on elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling, as indicated in Goal Number 5. A careful analysis of this emphasis shows that gender equality is given major prominence in the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Despite all these goals and declarations of the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals to improve education, the organizations could not meet up the set goals in 2015. In the meantime, in order to ameliorate the shortcomings of these conventions, in 2015, 195 nations agreed with the United Nations that they can change the world for the better. It is in this light that world leaders from 195 countries created a plan called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This set of 17 goals imagines a future just 15 years off (2030) that would be rid of poverty, hunger and illiteracy. One of these goals, goal Number 5 was that of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The SDGs aim to build on these achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere. In this regards, by 2030, all girls and boys, women and men, should have equal opportunity to enjoy education of high quality, achieve at equal levels and enjoy equal benefits from education. Adolescent girls and young women, who may be subject to gender-based violence, child marriage, early pregnancy and a heavy load of household chores, as well as those living in poor and remote rural areas, require special attention. In contexts in which boys are disadvantaged, targeted action should be taken for them. Policies aimed at

overcoming gender inequality are more effective when they are part of an overall package that also promotes health, justice, good governance and freedom from child labour

In recognition of the importance of addressing gender inequalities in national development, the Cameroon Government included “gender equity and equality” in the vision of the Draft Document of the sector wide approach / education (2015). There has been an integration of efforts from different stakeholders to address gender disparities in Cameroon amongst other challenges yet to be tackled.

When Cameroon gained independence in 1960, there was the growing awareness about the importance of quality education not only for individual development but for the development and progress of the national economy. Reform endeavours in Cameroon assumed different strategies. The essence of these various reforms was to restructure primary, secondary, and tertiary education, in a bid to redefine educational policies so as to meet the challenges of independent nation (Tchombe, 1997). In this light, the Ministry of Secondary Education in Cameroon has initiated policy measures to facilitate enrolment, participation and retention of children in secondary education. As indicated earlier, one of the most important measures taken so far has been what is commonly referred to as the reentry or re-admission policy. This policy came into being in September, 1997. It allows a school girl who becomes pregnant to come back to school after she has given birth. This is aimed at enhancing retention of the girl child in both basic and secondary education.

The inception of the Universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) in Cameroon following a decision of the Cameroonian President in the year 2000, where access to education was made free for children in public primary schools, and with the main goal of attaining education for all by the year 2015, is in recognition of the need to educate as well as develop its citizenry. Again, the roadmap for the Cameroonian education sector which was flagged off in 1995 during the National Education Forum held on May 22nd to 27th, which include, among others, access and equity: standards and quality assurance. These were steps in the right direction as gains were made in form of marginal increase in enrolment; however, there are still some challenges in terms of access, equity, achievement in school subjects and retention/dropout, especially among girls.

The major concern in secondary education is ensuring that female students stay in school until they complete their education, because dropping out denies individual students their fundamental human right to education. Internationally, the individual right to education has been repeatedly affirmed in many treaties and conventions such as The 1948 Convention on the Rights of the Child in which our country is a signatory, Act 26 of that declaration stipulates that “Every child has the right to

education”. Education shall be free at least at the elementary level and fundamental stages. Also it stipulates that there should be an encouragement in the development of different forms of secondary educations including general and vocational education making them available and accessible to every child and taking appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance. At least in the elementary stages education should be free and compulsory (UNESCO, 2001). Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for girls. Education is central to development and improvement of the nation’s welfare. It is a powerful ‘equalizer’, opening doors to all to lift themselves out of poverty.

The term ‘girl-child’ refers to a female between the ages of 6-18 years (Mukhtar, 2011). The National Child Welfare Policy (1989) as cited by Ada (2001) defines the girl-child as a female below 14 years of age. Offorma (2009) defines it as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages of development. The girl-child is seen as a young female person who would eventually grow into a woman and marry. The gender apartheid places the girl-child in a disadvantaged position as education is concerned, where her potentials are suppressed and self-actualization is not achieved. She therefore, becomes a victim of a pre-existing socio-cultural male chauvinism. Furthermore, on the account of gender, girl-children are subjected to all multiple forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination.

Girl-child education is a catch-all term for a complexity of issues and debates surrounding education (primary, secondary, tertiary and health education) for females as cited by Okernmor, Ndit and Filshak, (2012). Girl-child education also includes areas of gender equality, access to education and its connection to the alleviation of poverty, good governance, which are major ingredients in averting crime against women. Today’s girl-child education is for her tomorrow’s living. Afebendeugne in Ugwu (2001) defines 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. When maternal care is adequately provided for the girl-child the aims and objectives of education will be achieved.

Girl-child education has then become a major issue of concern in most developing countries of the world today, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where a large number of young girls do not attend school. According to UNICEF (2007), as cited by Grace (2010), the global figure for out-of-school children is estimated to be 121 million, out of which 65 million (approximately 53.8%) were girls and over 80 percent of these girls live in sub-Saharan Africa. Patience Fielding (2014) illustrates that in Cameroon the neglect of the female segment of the population in

schooling and education has resulted in gender gaps in education access and achievement, produced unskilled labour and given rise to an environment of poverty and marginalized segments of the population (World Bank, 2002). Sub-Saharan African nations, as in the case of Cameroon in particular; are yet to catch up with the advances in Maths, Science and Technology education. One third of countries are among the poorest countries that continue to show a significant level of gender disparity in basic education (UNESCO, 2007/2008; World Bank, 2002, Population Reference Bureau, 2006).

Cameroon is one of such countries plagued with issues in disparity in education and lack of educational opportunities for girls and women who make up about 51 percent of the Cameroon population (Population Reference Bureau, 2006). According to the World Bank's 2012, World Development Report, gender equality is an integral tool for development. Framing technology progress as an even greater instrument for equality and development, the Bank calls for mainstreaming women in development projects and programs using appropriate technologies. Referring to gender equality as smart economics, the report also frames reduction in gender gaps as a sure means of enhancing economic efficiency and improving other development outcomes. Similarly, it constructs education as an engine of growth that fuels national economies and develops skill sets of the citizenry to enable its participation in the global work force.

Furthermore, Patience Fielding (2014), stresses the need to provide equitable education and economic access and opportunities as well as representative, inclusive, policy choices to enable men and women participate in economic and national development initiatives. In contrast, education as conceived and practiced in Cameroon is grossly unsuitable for stemming gender inequality. Schooling opportunities for women continue to lag behind those of their male counterparts while the content and subject matter does little to reflect the social and economic realities of women who tend to cluster in job sectors and occupations with low rates of return such as petty trading and subsistence farming. Yet the Cameroon government, which works in collaboration with funding institutions such as the World Bank, has been slow to institute schooling initiatives for women beyond policy.

It is a well-known fact that the schooling of the girl-child has crucial value for both the girl-child and the nation's development. The rate of girls' participation in formal schooling, is one of the indicators of the nation's development level. Independent of the quality and content of academic programs, the benefits of girls' education increase with each level of education (Rugh, 2000). Education enables girls to participate in the development of the community and the household because educated women exercise their personal rights to take part in political and economic decision-making

both in the community and in the household (UNESCO, 2000). The educational participation of girls improves the main national development indicators such as lowered infant and maternal mortality, longer life expectancy, lower fertility rates and improvements in health, nutrition, literacy and economic growth (Rugh, 2000).

Girl's education is not only important as a social indicator or an engine for economic development leading to a greater level of health, economy, security, liberty and participation in social and political activity, but can possibly yield higher rate of return than any other investment available in developing world (World Bank, 2002). UNICEF (2004) report indicates that girls' education leads to more equitable development, stronger families, better services, better child health and effective participation in governance. Despite the obvious benefits of education to national development, research findings indicate that girls' participation in education is adversely lower than that of boys, especially in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon.

According to Plowden (1967) as cited in Collins Dictionary of Sociology (2000), Priority Education Zones (PEZ) are geographical locations, usually in an inner-city area, designated for the receipt of special educational resources, based on the principle of Positive Discrimination in order to compensate for poor environmental conditions. Such areas were first established in United States of America after the publication of the Plowden. The report was based on extensive sociological research and argued for the importance of good primary education, especially for socially-deprived children. It argued that the major factor in a child's educational performance is the attitude of its parents to education. As regards this study, Priority Education Zones of Cameroon, comprise of the Adamawa, East, Extreme North and North regions of Cameroon.

These are locations of social, cultural and environmental deprivation, parental attitudes are indifferent and children are identified as suffering from educational handicaps. These zones need additional resources that should be committed to improve the quality of educational experience and so as to compensate for the other disadvantages. For the past decades, Cameroon government and the World Bank have made resources available, including rebuilding programmes, support for curriculum initiatives and special payments to teachers in schools. The government put forth these zones to create a set of new measures intended to promote greater equal opportunity through subsidized projects and reforms of the education system. The operating principle of the PEZ program is to provide additional resources to schools in the most disadvantaged zones and allow them to develop specific initiatives and educational methods tailored to their students' needs. The PEZ status is associated with extra resources for selected schools, mostly in the form of

additional hours of instruction and bonuses for teachers and other personnel. Here again, considerable discretion is given to education administration with respect to the amount and nature of the resources allocated to ZEP schools.

The report of UNICEF (2004) indicated that about 7.3 million children do not go to school, of which 62% are girls. Sometimes even when the educational possibilities are present the girl-child may not be able to access them. Access to education has been defined by Offorma (2009) to include availability, convenience, ability and the opportunity to be educated and according to her, despite concerted efforts to push their cause forward, millions of girls still cannot access education or drop out of school because of their peculiar circumstances. Cameroon is among the 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa reported to have more than one million girls out of school (UNICEF, 2003). Discrimination of girls in education furthermore persists in many African societies due to customary attitude; gender biased and prioritized child education systems (Kabira, 1992). Lack of education affects other aspects of the life of a woman and that of children in Africa. It was estimated that every additional education a girl receives after primary education, child's survival rates increases by about 5%. In Africa, about 18 million girls are without education and more than 2/3 of Africa's 200 million illiterate adults are women. To enable girls participate in education, parents are expected to provide adequate teaching and learning facilities, protection against early pregnancy and marriages, provision of personal effects like pads for personal hygiene, less housework to enable them have humble time for school homework, prompt school fees payment, clothing and nutrition, positive motivation to change attitude, good accommodation at home and above all be role models in all actions and talks that parents portray (GCN, 2004).

The participation of girls in secondary education had lagged behind compared to that of the boys in rural areas of Cameroon in terms of their participation in secondary education as enrolment percentage rates. In the context of this study, school participation is seen as means of offering children a say in their education, listening to them and involving them as much as possible in school life. It means valuing their opinions and ideas and giving them control of their learning. It is to this effect that it became a great concern to encourage girls in the secondary institutions to work hard to prepare them for adulthood responsibilities and enable them to fit well and compete favorably in the job market. The WHO (2001), in the ICF, defines participation as involvement in life situations, which occurs across many locations, including environments of work, school, play, sport, entertainment, learning, civic life and religious practice. This definition is broad because it includes children's participation in school environments as well as in more voluntary, extra-curricular activities, such as recreation and leisure. The participation of girls in secondary education is of great

importance to the nation's socio-economic development, social-cultural growth and for women empowerment. It shapes the whole destiny of a person hence a lot of values are added to life style. This calls for the participatory involvement of parents, teachers, government and other stake holders in enhancing girl-child participation in secondary education through provision of basic requirements which to a greater extent should come from the parents. After her education,

Mbu Walters, (2007) asserts that Feminists all over the world have theorized on the "women's question" in the educational field. One of these feminists in Europe is Mary Wollstonecraft born in 1759 in Spitabields. After her education, Wollstonecraft moved to London and began earning a living by writing about educating girls and stories for children; but through her publisher, she began to move in intellectual and radical circles and to grow into insight and awareness. In 1792, she published the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In the works of the above mentioned feminist essays, she tries to prove that education brings out natural gender professions based on innate propensities. Nevertheless, these propensities as she say must be developed and brightened through education which influences one's life and type of work, determines our economic values, shapes who we are or might be in future and what significant role we play in nation building. However, women who form the majority of the population in Africa and the world at large are refused this important and instrumental weapon and thus they cannot actively take part in nation building. This may be one of the reasons why the development of Africa is lagging behind because about 50% of the population of the continent is excluded from nation building due to the failure to develop these innate propensities through the education of the girl child. As the liberal feminist rightly said, because of this attitude, the true potentialities of women go undeveloped and unfulfilled.

Joy C. Kwesiga in Mbu Walter (2007), asserts in her book entitled "Women's Access to Higher Education" she points out that Sub-Saharan Africa the primary enrollment of males is 73% compared to 27% for females. Secondary enrollment is 20% for girls and 24% for boys. All these gaps caused by boundaries of unnecessary prohibitions such as family structures and because of the false social-cultural belief that women are naturally, physically and intellectually less capable compared to men thereby excluding women from spheres such as the Academia and public forums. However, through some influential women in Africa and particularly in Cameroon such as Prof. Rose Leke, Dr. Dorothy Njeuma, one time Vice Chancellor and Rector of the both universities of Buea and Yaounde 1 respectively and Mme Yao Issatou, former Minister of Women and Social Affairs who served the government of Cameroon for close to two decades, one can see an effect of their access to intelligence and talent development for they contribute directly and indirectly to nation-building. They believe that one

essence of education also includes the transmission of learnt cultures and skills. Furthermore, even Indira Ghandi, the first female Prime Minister of India is an example of the fact that women can effectively rule nation like the men for she enhanced free education in India thus enabling girls to have access to education and match up with boys so as to enable a joint participation nation-building

Despite these contributions to nation building, girls' education has always been marginalized due to cultural practices and political decision. The effect of this situation has led to certain deprivations that have hindered women and girl-child in particular from maximizing their capacities in the development process of their communities. In Cameroon, as in other African countries, women are not held in high-esteem, consequently female education is seen as a wasteful venture as people think that the role of women is for procreation and confinement to the kitchen. This is the challenge of girl-child education today.

In this context we think that parents' poor perception on girl children's education can be to a larger extent indexed with the girls' low attendance in post primary education in the East and Sudano-Sahelian regions of Cameroon. This increased occurrence of gender disparities at post-primary education is largely explained by the fact that parents are disinterested in their girls' education. This further explains the fact that the right of girl children to education is not fully protected in Cameroon. Cameroon has a good primary and secondary education system which has provided significant improvements in educational opportunities for children such as the opportunity to be learned. The huge sum of money budgeted each year allocated for education testifies the interest the government gives to education of its citizens. However, the Cameroonian education system still faces challenges in providing quality education to all children. Gender disparities take a toll on girl children and put these vulnerable groups at risk for not attending school, and being further disadvantaged in life opportunities. Living in rural areas like case of the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon doubles the risk of not attending school and poor girl children are five times more likely to be out of school than children from rich households. This is because some parents are inclined to cultural and traditional beliefs, coupled with ignorance of the girl child education and they better still remain adamant to change, while others advance unacceptable reasons of having financial difficulties in affording school materials for their children and prefer to labour the girl-child to hawk or sell for their educational wellbeing. These education challenges pose a threat to the economic future and viability of Cameroon and deprive girl-children of their right to a quality education.

This study therefore sought to find out the perceived parental perception impacting low participation of girls in

post-primary education in rural areas, especially in the case of the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of Studies have been carried out to assess the gender equity in education in Africa as well as the case of Cameroon noted poverty, cultural practices, poor school infrastructure, low quality, natural disaster, and conflict as barriers to girls' education (Herz and Sperling, 2004; Hyde, 1993). In their study, Brock and Cammish (1997) examined seven developing countries and came up with a number of factors influencing female participation in education. Their study revealed that several interrelated social, economic and religious factors affected girls' education in particular. According to Clarke & Stewart (2006) 'parenting' may be defined as purposive activities aimed at ensuring the survival and development of children. It derives from the Latin verb 'parere'- 'to bring forth, develop or educate'. The word 'parenting', from its root, is more concerned with the activity of developing and educating than who does it. The connotation of the word is, the parenting is a positive, nurturing activity. Thus, parenting is an activity that normally involves the children, parents and other family members in lifelong interaction.

The Girl-child education in Africa and in Cameroon has for a long time been plagued by pedagogy of differences, by way of education, that stresses on the differences and not the similarities between boys and girls. This type of education places the boy on a superior platform to that of the girl. The problems of the girl-child education start right at home. It is at this level in the community that girls are educated differently from boys. The parents, siblings, relatives and even the neighbours perceive girls to be radically different from boys. They wrongly believe that, boys are more intelligent, more capable, more responsible and therefore more important to the society than girls. Although both girls and boys are brought up together at home and in the community the girls are forced to grow up differently through this oppressive socialization. They are not given the same opportunities as boys to prove their potentials. As a result, the girls grow up believing that they are grossly inferior to boys just because they are girls. As gender bias prevails in the society girl-child education will continue to suffer social discrimination. Davison (1993) indicates that parental decisions to educate boys are also influenced by patrilineal inheritance systems where boys are prime beneficiaries. According to him, there is a strong belief among families that, once married, girls become a part of another family and the parental investment is lost. The view that other educational agencies are more efficient than formal education systems at preparing girls for life is another.

According to Mahmood (2012) parent's beliefs, pract-

ices and procedures in the form of family patterns of parents have influence on parenting styles. Relatively or parenting style has different purposes including mental and moral education, recognition, growth and development of their talents, skills training, familiar with the laws of social norms. Parenting style is the way that parents exert over their children and the formation, growth and development in children and characteristics of their behaviour and the effect is profound. Various aspects of relationships with parents and children are not only uniform changes. Parents may love their children and they have rejected them, but love them or you can establish strict discipline. A child is merely one aspect of parent's behaviour or personality it does not connect, it is the combination of different factors. In recent years, some researchers have sought relationships between dimensions of parents' behavior and its relationship to get together. This research has two important dimensions to consider, these include: (affection - rejection) and (control - freedom). Affection the affection - rejection, love is a positive response to the reinsurance behavior, lack of discipline is encouraged. Next in control - freedom of speech and behavior control means limiting a child, paying attention to cleanliness, precision and care of furniture, silence and obedience. In this case, parents may want their children to calm indifference impose or adopt violent methods. Many studies show that parent's hostility, lead to aggression and defiance in children. Restrict cause isolation behavior in the children (Dolati, 2010).

Additionally, Mwanza (2015) argues that female domestic labour is a major factor that hinders girls' achievement at school and also an opportunity cost for parents when they make a choice about whether to send a child to school. Actually, the need for female domestic labour influences decisions about whether to send a girl child to school in the first place and, once at school, how long she should stay. Generally, parents in Africa including Zambia attach a much higher value to female domestic labour than that of males as females due to patriarchal practices perform major domestic chores such as cooking, fetching for water and firewood, caring for the siblings, sick and old, and all house work to sustain households. As a result, girls especially in rural areas attend school more irregularly and less intensively than the boys. Subsequently, gender inequities with regards to school participation and attendance, retention and completion rates continue in Zambia.

Yindol (2015) postulates that the long traditional and conservative belief that a woman's role lies in the kitchen or home has tipped the balance in favour of male children in education in many countries. Lichter's study into high school drop-outs in some developing countries indicated that while 47 percent of boys indicated that their fathers earnestly desired college education for them only 17 percent of girls reported same. Similarly, 40 percent of boys and 32.5 percent of girls respectively indicated that

their mothers wanted college education for them (Lichter1962). Progress has somehow been made into improving educational equality for males and females: the ratio of girls to boys is about 86 and 75 percents for primary and secondary schools respectively (World Bank, 2001; Lewis and Lockheed, 2006 cited in Yindol, 2015). The ratios above show that irrespective of the improvement through global campaign, girls are not yet still near boys and therefore have higher school dropout rates.

The attitude of the parents demonstrates the supporting nature and involvement of parents in their children's education. As regards this study, attitude signifies a complex mental state involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways towards people (Feldman, 2000). The parental attitude can be negative or positive. The negative attitude of the parents regarding education can prevent their girl children from getting education. With less parental support in school work, low level of motivation and poor self-esteem of girl children can result to low attendance and participation in post-primary education. Positive attitude of the parents can be beneficial to their children in many cases and can be reflected in improvement in class performance, creating interest among children to learn, and higher achievement scores in reading and writing. The parents' decision to educate boys and not girls show a high level of discrimination at the household level. The girls are denied educational opportunities for being seen as unproductive in their ability to support the family financially in the future. Such parental attitudes further perpetuate stereotypes. These kinds of stereotypes limit opportunities and choices for women, both in the present and the future.

In most African societies, like the case in Cameroon, the role of the girl as a wife and mother is conceived as the utmost priority not only by her parents, but also by the girl child herself. However, in the Cameroon context, gender discrepancy in education is sustained by cultural factors. The wrong notion that her place is in the kitchen, to be seen and not to be heard have had very serious implications on the girl-child's ability at self-actualization. Obinaju (2014) asserts that out of the 130 million children in Africa without access to education, 81 million are girls. Also certain cultural and traditional practices like female circumcision, early marriages etc are to say the least unprogressive because they lead not only to absenteeism distraction, but also to eventual dropout of girls. More so, the ethnic and values of some religions do not help matters, as they are often perceived with tremendous suspicions.

Theoretical frame work of the study

In respect to this study, we examined Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Abraham Maslow's theory of

hierarchical needs, Ruth Pearson's gender relation theory, natural law theory and the social justice theory. These theories in this study bring out ideas and opinions suggested by these psychologists and philosophers to organize, predict and explain facts about human behavior, human growth and personal development

According to Bronfenbrenner, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex for a child when he develops. The arising of this complexity depends on the growing and maturation of child's physical and cognitive structures. So, given that nature continues on a given path, how does the world that surrounds the child help or hinder continued development?" The ecological model of Bronfenbrenner's theory attempts to explain the differences in individual's knowledge, development and competencies through the support, guidance and structure of the society in which they live. In this regard therefore, girls' education depends largely on the support, guidance and structure of the society which has to do with cultural traditions and practices of their parents. In many cases the education of children is linked with the cultural tradition and practice of their parents who are said to be the microsystem according to ecological theory. Many at times cultural traditions and practice of the parents used to contradict the Western system of education as a result they may serve as barriers to its effectiveness

Maslow's theory also is therefore relevant in this study because its emphasis and considerations are on the provisions of the basic needs for one to achieve the higher needs. The theory is concerned with achievement of self –actualization at the top of the pyramid which can only be attained through education. Unfortunately, the girl-child is not always motivated at home and at school. They are often deprived of these basic needs by the society. The schools and the entire environment settings should endeavour to provide all the learners with these physiological needs or else the individual may end up in disillusionment. In school setting, teachers should be careful to guide girls to divert their sexual libido at adolescence to some vigorous school activities and games like soccer, handball or basketball rather than the in-door games and stereotype daily routines that the girl child is permanently engage in at home; such vigorous activities should be extended also at home. This could be reducing the problem of early pregnancy which happens to be one of the causes of school dropout for girls.

Pearson's gender relations theory is appropriate for this study because it emphasizes the various social, cultural and economic norms and standards which must be considered for women to take the opportunities to participate in social activities such as education. These cultural and economic norms emphasized in the theory are the factors that affect girl Students' participation and their academic achievement in school. This theory is relevant for this study because it captures the variables.

The right to children education is based on the theory of natural rights and universalism. Children, whether belonging to one or both parents have a right to enjoy all their fundamental rights. The parents of such a child whether they are the natural parents or otherwise have an obligation to safeguard all the rights of the child. These theories are found relevant to the proposed study because it explains facts about human behavior, human growth and personal development and illustrates how social discrimination, economic status and gender bias impact negatively to girl-child attendance in secondary education. The existing literature has indicated that the concept of girl children education has borrowed heavily from the concept of human rights.

Statement of the problem

In Cameroon successive governments have initiated several education reforms since independence, such as the National Development Plan on education (1976-61) which states that "education is an instrument for economic, social, political and cultural development of the country. Furthermore, Law N° 98/004 of fourteen April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon and some of the international treaties signed and ratified by Cameroon, specifying the need to provide educational standards on human rights in order to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005.

There is a good number of enforcement mechanisms of children's rights at the international and national level. This is evident in various international Conventions and Declarations such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC), and the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990 (The African Children's Charter). Cameroon to this effect has ratified the CRC and the African Children's Charter. Cameroon has a good legal framework of children's rights to education.

Although, Cameroon government for the past decades has tremendous efforts in providing significant improvements in educational opportunities for girl children such as the opportunity to be learned in order to overcome gender disparities and its gradual disappearing in accordance with the framework of the National Gender Policy of Cameroon (NGPC) . Moreover, inspite the huge sums of money budgeted each academic year by the Cameroon government on education, and subsidies, grants and loans donated by the World Bank and its cooperated bodies to support and improve secondary education in Priority education (PEZ) of Cameroon. We also acknowledge the fact that these Priority education Zones for over the past years have been battling with crises (Boko Haram attacks in the Far North, Conflicts in Central African Republic, and the socio-political unrest in the North West and South West Regions) that have impacted greatly on education in PEZ. The inflow of refugees from neighbouring countries and the internally

displaced population have numerous spill-overs on the host areas. Beyond these, human, material and financial resources and education issues are not posed with acuteness. Taking a close look at this situation, responses have been made by the Cameroon government and foreign partners in bringing some financial support to schools in affected areas and especially pupils and students in schools hosting refugees in the four (4) regions of PEZ of Cameroon namely; Adamawa, East, Extreme North and North regions.

This notwithstanding, the provision of equal access to quality and inclusive education to all children, and to narrow the regional and zonal disparities in educational outcomes, the World Bank and Cameroon government through its Education Reform Programmes have opted each academic year to ameliorate equal access to quality and equitable education with focus on targeted disadvantaged zones of PEZ, but we continue to experience low rate of girls' participation in secondary education, especially at the level of the middle classes (forms 3 to upper sixth) where majority of girls are denied access to quality education. Despite all these efforts made by the state on education, it could be noted here, it is not cause of the state to denied girls access to education but the low interest and misconception parents have on girls' education in these zones.

Despite all these considerable progress, measures and efforts made, gender disparity in education still continues to exist in Cameroon and in this context, a lot still has to be done to remedy this gender disparity that exists between the boy and girl child in terms of access to education. However, the innovations introduced and the improved facilities, many children especially the girl-child who avail themselves of educational opportunities hardly complete their schooling before the first terminal point. Nevertheless, in developing countries 75 million secondary school age students remain not enrolled in school and 41 million of them are girls-approximately 55%. For that reason, it is absolute clear that there are still many things to do in order to reach the target of gender equality in education, namely fair treatment of all girls and boys in the education system (UNICEF,2005).

A close look at the statistics shown in the National gender policy document 2011-2020, elementary education is characterized by a higher number of educated boys as compared to girls', with differences varying from 8 to 16 percentage points between 1989 and 2009. The net enrolment ratio at the national level is 83.1%, being 88.6% for boys and 69.2% for girls. Nationally, the rate of elementary school completion is 72.6% with 78.8% for boys against 66.4% for girls, a difference of 12 percentage points in favour of boys.

In general, these have resulted in an increase in retention and completion rates, this analysis of the completion rate, gives a considerable indicator of progress towards Universal Primary Education (UPE),

showing improvement in the overall rate (by 21 %) from 59.1% to 71.5% in the period from 2001 to 2007, including girls (16%) of which the rate rose from 49.8 to 65.3% between 2003 and 2008. However, the attrition rate remains higher for girls than boys (Gender profile report of Cameroon, 2015). Although some improvements have been observed in the schooling of girls thanks to the introduction in 2001 of free government primary education, as well as to the positive effects of awareness campaigns and advocacy for girls' education, it remains true that access to and retention of girls in school fall short of targets.

The gender disparity between girls and boys in education has declined in general, but the gender gap is wider in the higher levels of education especially in secondary and higher education in Cameroon. According to the World Bank data, the primary net enrolment was 97% for boys and 86% for girls (2012); primary completion rate was 76% for boys and 68% for girls (2014); lower-secondary gross completion rate was 41% for boys and 38% for girls (2013); and tertiary gross enrolment rate was 14% for boys and 10% for girls (2011). There is a gender gap in literacy rate (adult men 81%, adult women 69%, young men 87%, and young women 80%: data in 2015).

National Gender Policy Document (2011-2020), explains the reasons for the gender gaps: some families do not value girls' education as women's roles and jobs would not create much income; poor families might prioritize boys' education to girls' (the primary education is free of charge since 2001, but the cost for clothes and learning materials still incur); parents allocate domestic and agricultural work to girls; some girls do not go to school due to socio-cultural practices, parents skeptical behaviours, early marriage and pregnancy; some families are reluctant to send girls to school fearing violence at school or on the way between home and school; and the toilets for girls are not appropriate at school.

As a result, the low participation of the girl-child in secondary education in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon has become a marked feature of the educational system especially at the secondary school level where these factors are absolutely a burden to the girl-child education. This triggered us to explain the fact that it is not because the girls are not intelligent or not hard working in school but it is largely due to the fact that parental perceptions on gender disparities influencing the education of the girl child results in their low participation in secondary education. From our critical field survey and investigations carried out, it has been observed that the low participation of girls in secondary schools in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon is largely due to predominant factor of parenting stereotype practices, socio-cultural beliefs and parents' ignorance of girls' education, where the majority of the parents have got a very poor parental perception or attitude towards girls' education which eventually culminates into girl-

children low participation in post-primary education.

With regards to the paradox of patrilineal and matrilineal succession in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon where sons are the naturally the successors of their parents, it is commonly observed and understood that the men pay more attention to their tradition and custom. Generally, where culture and tradition claim an unbroken line of succession since its heritage, the men give priorities to the education of their sons and where they are the rightful successors and owners of property after the deaths of their fathers. There is a common belief that the sons will profit from the father in terms of education and in return the earnings will therefore support the father financially after getting a good job whereas they do not see their own female children working and bringing home any income as they leave home. We observed that, parents think especially the girl children may marry off and they are only seen as the responsibility of their husbands.

These parents in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon are not aware of the importance of girls' education and therefore see no use of taking their girl-children to further secondary education, for they believe that it is just a waste of resources and time. Furthermore, they do not care whether the girl-child has gone to school or not. The parents do not have anything good to talk about girls' education, because they personally do not seem to see any advantage from it, so you find that they also discourage their girl-children from going to school because they see no use, their girl-children had to better stayed at home and made quick money other than going for secondary education which is for the future that they cannot wait.

In the meantime, The National Institute of Statistics conducted the fourth Cameroon household survey (Enquête Camerounaise Auprès des Ménages: ECAM 4) in 2014, it has been observed and with reliable statistics and information gathered from the Ministry of Women Empowerment that 70% of house helpers and baby sitters working in big cities like Yaounde, Douala, Bamenda and other cities in Cameroon are mostly girls from different tribes in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon who are both primary and secondary school dropouts. This further explains the fact that these girls are forcefully given up to other families in cities by their parents to work in homes to make quick cash for their parents back home. Some of these girl children are taken from rural areas in these regions of Cameroon to urban areas, by foster parents with promises of care and education, whereas, they are turned into labourers and victims of domestic violence. Some are converted into public vendors in streets aged 10 to 16 years.

Others are found in bars, off licenses and night clubs selling alcoholic drinks and food to clients. The worsening situation is the fact that these girls who are still at the teenage ages are forcefully pushed out at night by their patrons or matrons for prostitution and they are also

given out in return for cash to indecent men to have sex intercourses with them, paradoxically, these men having the same ages like those of their parents. Despite all these odds, these girls have become active sex hawkers at night in most of the popular corners of the cities today. Some of them in this dubious practice have contracted and affected by the HIV-AIDS and other deadly transmitted diseases leading to deaths. This situation largely has contributed to the high prevailing rate of child trafficking, child abduction and sexual harassment.

Nonetheless, the impact of parental perception on gender disparities affecting girl children participation in post-primary education has not been given prominence by most studies especially, its effect on girl children's rights to education and, in particular their attendance and participation in post-primary education in Cameroon. However, the Cameroonian education system still faces challenges in providing equal access and quality education to all children, especially the girl-children and moreover, gender disparities still take a toll on girl children in rural areas in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. This is a cause for concern and portrays the fact that girl children's right to education is still in disarray.

It is in this regard that the present study sought to find out the impact of parental perception on gender disparities affecting the low participation rate of the girl-child in post-primary education in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon, in order to confirm or refute the claim of gender disparity in post-primary education in favour of boys and to find out why girls are still unable to stay in school after primary education.

It is hoped that the study will take a global look at this problem especially in the entire PEZ of Cameroon where the problem is seriously pronounce.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether parental perception on gender disparities violates or not and the extent to which it infringes on the educational rights of the girl-child in post primary education, specifically, in post primary education in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon.

Objectives of the study

Based on the problem and the variables of the study, the general objectives was to examine out whether parental perception on gender disparities impact girl-child's participation in post-primary education.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To find out how does parental skeptical behaviour on the female education influence girl-child's participation in post-primary education
2. To examine whether parenting practices on gender disparities impact girl-child's participation in post-primary education.
3. To verify to what extent does parenting styles on gender disparities impact girl-child's participation in post-primary education.
4. To understand the influence of parents socio-cultural beliefs on gender disparities and girl-child's participation in post-primary education.
5. To determine influence of parents' socio-economic and professional status on girl-child's participation in post-primary education.
6. To find out whether parents' educational background influence girl-child's participation in post-primary education.

General Research Question

The general research question of the study was formulated as follow: "To what extent does parental perception on gender disparities impact girl-child's participation in post-primary education?"

Specific Research Questions

The five specific research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Does parental skeptical behaviour on the female education influence girl-child's participation in post-primary education?
2. To what extent does parenting practices on gender bias influence girl-child's participation in post-primary education?
3. How does parenting styles on gender disparities impact girl-child's participation in post-primary education?
4. Do parents' socio-cultural beliefs on gender inequalities influence girl-child's participation in post-primary education?
5. To what extent does parents' socio-economic and professional status and educational status impact girl-child's participation in post-primary education?
6. How does parents' educational status impact girl-child's participation in post-primary education?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The survey design was adopted for this study. Survey research design was applicable in order to determine whether girls' opinions on the parental perception on

gender disparities has a significant impact on girls' participation in post primary education. In this procedure, survey researchers collect quantitative, numbered data using questionnaires or interviews and statistically analyze the data to describe trends about responses to questions and to test research questions or hypotheses. They also interpret the meaning of the data by relating results of the statistical test back to past research studies. This investigation being non-experimental in nature, a survey was conducted to gather information from a sample of secondary school girls by means of structured questionnaires

This study was conducted in 64 selected secondary schools in the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. The Priority Education Zones of Cameroon in this study constitute the East, Adamawa, North and Far North regions of the Cameroon. These four regions (East, Adamawa, North and Far North) of Cameroon were targeted for this present study and they are presently, benefiting most at the ongoing educational programmes and funding.

Respondents for this study were comprised of 704 female students in selected secondary schools and 50 parents of the Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. As for the main purpose of this study, the population of study was made up of all the girls of forms three, four, five, lower sixth and upper sixth in secondary schools and parents of these four regions. Therefore, the population of this study was consisted of only girls schooling in 64 secondary schools of the 19 divisions of the East and Sudano-Sahelian regions according to gender experience and school types. These schools were selected on the bases of accessibility, concentration and logistical factors such as distance. All of these factors and consideration helped to have a representative sample for the study. To do this effectively, the researcher resorted to the use of sampling, a method by which a small but sufficiently representative group from a large population is selected for study and sample results approximated to the entire population.

The instruments used during the research were questionnaires and the interview guide. The qualitative methods involved the use of interview guide while the quantitative paradigm involved questionnaire. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis were used for this present study. The total number of 704 questionnaires were distributed to female students in sixty-four (64) secondary schools of the Adamawa, East, Extreme-North and North regions. After one month field work for the time-frame for data collection, a total of 625 completed questionnaires was received by the researcher from the research team of volunteers recruited for field work. There was an actual response rate of 88,77% (625 out of 704).

Data analysis played a major part in the completion of this present study. Data was reviewed after the collection of filled questionnaires and compilation of data from the

Table 1. For the factor of parental sceptical behaviour on female education

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
My parents are discouraged to educate me because they fear of pre-marital pregnancy	625	1,00	4,00	2,4672	0,91950
My parents have the assumption that when I am allow to acquired too much education, there is the fear of my sexual harassment in school	625	1,00	4,00	2,2784	0,92988
My parents have the feeling that when they allow me acquire too much western education, there is the likelihood of the losing my virginity in school	625	1,00	4,00	2,2256	0,92611
My parents believe that when I acquired higher education, it will empower me to disagree with their decisions	625	1,00	4,00	2,2480	0,90632
My parents have the fear of my educational superiority complex over my future husband which will lead to domestic violence and divorce	625	1,00	4,00	2,2688	0,92060
My parents fear that when I acquire too much education I will not contract a formal marriage in future	625	1,00	4,00	2,2272	1,01253
My parents have the believe that allowing me to acquire too much education, I will have difficulties to find an educated husband in future	625	1,00	4,00	2,2720	0,92660
My parents view girl-child education as poor investment relative to boys	625	1,00	4,00	2,2816	1,03345
My parents feel that allowing to acquire too much western education is waste of resources and time	625	1,00	4,00	2,2304	0,97962
My parents have the fear that allowing me to have too much education will lead to loss of bargaining power of my bride price	625	1,00	4,00	2,3248	0,94823
Parental skeptical behaviour on female education	625	1,00	4,00	2,2824	0,78189
N valide (listwise)	625				

Source: Field survey, 2021

structured interviews were also performed. Some of these tests used in this present study included: Correlation Coefficient used to measure strength and magnitude of the relationship between two variables, ANOVA to know whether or not there are significant differences between the means of independent variables. This was to understand how each independent variable's mean is different from the others and the simple linear regression analysis model was to measure ability of one or more variables to predict another variable (Field, 2014)

FINDINGS

The data generated from questionnaires and interview guide were collected and analysed to determine whether it collaborate with the earlier held view or not as contain this study.

Interview was also conducted with parents of the area of study. A total of fifty (50) parents were interviewed. From the responses given by respondents, data was empirically arranged below using simple tables,

frequencies and percentages.

This constitutes the presentation of results, analyses, verification of hypotheses and the interpretation of hypotheses of research. Table 1

Looking at the table above, based on the factor-parental sceptical behaviour on female towards girls' education constitutes ten (10) indicators, with a total number of 625 girl-students questioned with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 4. Through this table, we observed that parental sceptical behaviour on female education has an average (mean) of 2, 2824 and a standard deviation of 0, 78189. When comparing these references to the mean and multiplying by 100 ($0, 78189/2,2824 \times 100$) = 34, 25; we notice that the value of the coefficient variation is 34, 25%, this signifies that the standard variation represents only 34, 25%, of the mean sample. Thus, this explains that the modalities of indicators are dispersed because the individuals interviewed have varied views which are more or less contrary as seen with their standard deviation and different means.

According to the significant test of F Fisher, the statistical hypotheses are formulated as follows:

Table 2. Model summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Standard Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R-Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	0,345 ^a	0,119	0,118	0,44895	0,119	84,245	1	623	0,000

a. Predictors Values : (constant), IV

Table 3. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	16,980	1	16,980	84,245	0,000 ^b
1 Residual	125,571	623	0,202		
Total	142,551	624			

a. Dependent Variable: DV: girl-participation in post primary education

b. Predictors Values : (constant), IV : parental skepticism

HR: There is a significant relationship between parental sceptical behaviour on gender disparity and girl-child participation in post primary education

Ha: there exist a significant relation between parental sceptical behaviour on gender disparity and girl-child participation in post primary education.

Ho: there exist no significant relation between parental sceptical behaviour on gender disparity and girl-child participation in post primary education.

For these hypotheses, it convenient to recall that

- It was tested by $\alpha = 0,05$ (degree of significance)
- And that the rules of decision warrant that:
 - if $\text{Sig} < 0,05$ then H_0 is rejected and H_a accepted ;
 - if $\text{Sig} > 0,05$ then H_0 is accepted et H_a rejected ;
 - if F read is superior to F Calculated, H_0 is accepted meanwhile H_a is rejected.
 - if F read is inferior to F calculated, H_0 is rejected meanwhile H_a is accepted.

The table 2 above summarizes the model of simple linear regression. It result from this table that the correlation coefficient (R) is at the order 0.345 which shows a link of positive correlation little average but little significance because its far a great deal from the number 1 and the coefficient of determination (R^2) is at the order 0.119= 11,9% this show that the IV: « parental sceptical behaviour on gender disparity » explain the DV « girl-child participation in post primary education » at 11,9% and the rest is predicted by factors out of the model. This signifies that the relation between the IV and the DV is significant.

At the level of changes in statistics, we observed a verification of all the values of the simple linear regression test for the research hypothesis (RH). It resolved of this changes in statistics that the variation of

R^2 which is of the order 0.119= 11,9% which signifies that the determinant coefficient shows that IV does varied the DV at 11,9%. The variation of F calculated which is at the order 84,245 which is superior at the degree of freedom 1.623 (df1 either 1 and df2 623) which is the F read according to the rules $F_{cal} > F_{read}$, we observe equally the significance (P) of the variation of F which is in the of 0.014 inferior to alpha (0.05). This provisionally predict that the alternative hypothesis is confirmed.

This table 3, which is that of ANOVA shows F of Fisher-snedecor. In this table we observe F (1.623) = 84,245 with the significance P = 0.000. The rules of ANOVA warrant that:

- if F read is superior to F Calculated, H_0 is accepted meanwhile H_a is rejected.
- if F read is inferior to F calculated, H_0 is rejected meanwhile H_a is accepted.

However, is F read (1.623) inferior to F calculated (84,245), therefore (1.623 < 84,245) and with $p = 0.000$. H_0 is rejected then H_a is confirmed. There exist a significant relation between parental skepticism on gender disparity and girl-child participation in post primary education. In conclusion, with the margin of error of 5%, RH3 is confirmed. As a consequence, parental skepticism on gender disparity impact girl-child participation in post primary education

The table 4 of coefficients explain the variation on the DV from the model estimate equation; $Y = b_0 + b_1x$ ($Y = 3,035 + (-0,211)(VI)$).

- Y = dependent variable.
- b_0 = variation estimated on the DV when the IV is zero (3,035)
- b_1 = variation on the DV which is associated to a variation on the predictor variable (IV). (-0,211)
- X = Independent variable (IV).

The equation of simple linear regression is read at the

Table 5. Frequency distribution of parents' opinions on Parents' skeptical behaviour on girls' education

Items	Components					
	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
	Freq	Pct	Freq	Pct	Freq	Pct
Do you prefer the girl to get marry at an early age than going to school?	32	64	10	20	8	16
Do you have the feeling that educating the girl-child is waste of resources?	26	52	20	40	4	8
Do you believe that when girls acquired higher education, it will empower them to disagree with your decisions?	27	54	15	30	8	16
Are you of the opinion that allowing your daughter to acquire too much education, she will have difficulties to find an educated husband in future?	30	60	12	24	8	16
Do you believe that when your daughter acquire too much education she will have educational superiority complex over husband?	28	56	8	16	14	28

Statement	Components							
	Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Total (%)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Parents' skeptical behaviour on gender disparity influence girl-child participation in post-primary education	29	58	13	26	8	16	50	100

column 'A' of the unstandardised coefficients des coefficients. This equation indicates a unit of variability positively or negative on the IV3, is also a unit of changes (positively or negatively) on the DV. The variation here is (-0,211) which result of a variation on the IV3. But this have a significant of $0.000 < 0.05$ with $t(-9,178)$ different from $p(0.000)$. As a consequence H_0 is rejected and H_a accepted (see the rules of decision). In conclusion, with a margin of error 5%, RH3 is confirmed. By consequence, there exist a significant relation between parental sceptical behaviour on gender disparity and girl-child participation in post primary education.

Distribution of parents interviewed according to their personal characteristics

The personal characteristic of parents interviewed in the course of this research, shows the participation to the study of 29 female parents making a percentage of 58.00%, against 21 male parents making up 42.00% each of the sample population.

Looking at the ages of parents, the results revealed that the majority of parents were between 36 and 40 years old with the total number of 26 parents, making up 52.00% of the total sampled population, it can be seen that another important proportion (22.00%) of the respondents are parents of age ranges between 41 and 45 years, that is, 11 parents.

Distribution of parents' opinions on Parents' skeptical behaviour on girls' education

Table 5 above presents the distribution of the opinions of

the respondents on parents' skeptical behaviour towards girl-child participation in post-primary education. From the results in the table, we observe that parents prefer the girl to get marry at an early age than going to school indicating that 64% parents agree that they parents prefer the girl to get marry at an early age, while 16% of the parents interviewed disagree the fact and 20% of them were not sure of the above opinion of view.

In regards to parents' opinion that they have the feeling that educating the girl-child is waste of resources, 52% of parents agree on the fact that they are skeptical of the fear that when they educated the girl-children they risk losing them when they get marry, they are no longer part of the family but are considered properties that belong to their husband families, but 8% of them disagree on the above opinion, meanwhile 40% of them were not sure of the two alternatives.

Furthermore, the respondents were requested to indicated whether they believe that when girls acquired higher education, it will empower them to disagree with parents' decisions, 54% of the parents agree, indicating that educating the girl-children is waste for the family, but 30% of them were not sure on this point of view, while 12% of the parents disagree on the above fact.

On the question of whether parents are of the opinion that allowing their daughters to acquire too much education, they will have difficulties to find educated husband in future, 60% of the parents agree on the above opinion. They advanced that they fear of losing the bride price when they stay longer and acquired too much education. Meanwhile 24% of them were not sure of the two alternatives, but 16% of the parents disagree on the above point of view.

The respondents were requested to indicated whether parents do you believe that when their daughters acquire

too much western education they will have educational superiority complex over husband, indicating this views, 56% of the parents agree on the above point of view, reason being that when the acquire too much western education, they to respect their husbands, and others tend to have authoritative behaviour over their husbands. On the other hand, 28% of them disagree the above opinion, but 16% of the parent were not sure, meaning that they do not have interest in girls' education in relation to parent types of behaviours towards girls

This interest of the parents for the education of the girl child overall the fact that they still have stereotype and skeptical behaviour towards the education of the. They also see the girls' education as a waste of resources. From the results obtained majority of parents prefer the girl-children to get marry at an early age than going to school. From these sceptical behaviours of parents, it is observed that many families view their daughters as a source of income, marrying them off at early age and receiving significant amounts of money for their bride price.

Also, an absolute majority of parents fear that when girls are educated, once they are married, they are no longer considered as part of the family but commodities to that belonging to their husbands.

Therefore, from the results obtained, it is seen that there is a significant relation between parents' skeptical behaviour on gender disparity and girls' participation in post-primary education.

This section presents a summary of the study, conclusion drawn from the findings of the study; recommendation as well as suggestions for further research in the discipline of education. It is worth to note that, the findings of the study are discussed after which conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

For clarity and chronology, it is arranged by the content and then by the research questions that the study sought to answer. Thus, the section is divided into three subsections namely, discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The current study sets out to find out the impact of parental perception on gender disparities and girl-child participation in post-primary education in Education Priority Zones of Cameroon and to explore whether their perceptions show significant differences with respect to certain background variables.

The following research question guided our investigation: "To what extent does parental perception on gender disparities impact girl-child participation in post-primary education. The tentative answer to our research question produced our main research hypothesis: *"parental perception on gender disparity has an impact as regards to the girl child participation in*

post-primary education"

Field survey was conducted through the use of questionnaires and interview to girl-students and parents. The data collected were analysed, and the following findings of the results were obtained:

Parental skeptical behaviour on the female education has an impact on girl-child's participation in post-primary education.

Generally, from the result gotten and after the verification of the hypothesis, we can summarily affirm that there is a significant correlation between parental perception on gender disparities and girl-child participation in secondary schools in priority education zones of Cameroon.

The results of the present study indicated that there exist a relationship between parents' skeptical behaviour on girls' education and their participation in post-primary education Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. It should be noted that the present study, the statistical tests (simple linear regression analyses) used to the test the research question assess the relationship between the two variables and not the causal direction of the relationship.

The following discussion regarding the relationship between parents' skeptical behaviour on girls' education and participation in post-primary education is guided partly by previous research and theory. This is important to note here that these results implicate parents' skeptical discriminatory actions to female education in the education Priority Zones of Cameroon.

This finding is confirmed to the literature reviewed of Gitonga (2009), she advances that the problems of the girl-child education start right at home where parents have misconception on girls' education. It is at this level in the community that girls are educated differently from boys. The parents, siblings, relatives and even the neighbours perceive girls to be radically different from boys. They wrongly believe that, boys are more intelligent, more capable, more responsible and therefore more important to the society than girls. Although both girls and boys are brought up together at home and in the community the girls are forced to grow up differently through this oppressive socialization. They are not given the same opportunities as boys to prove their potentials. As a result the girls grow up believing that they are grossly inferior to boys just because they are girls. As gender bias prevails in the society, girl-child education will continue to suffer social discrimination.

Previous research of Iqbal et al. (2013), illustrated that majority of the parents discontinued schooling of girls at the initial level due to misconception about religious teaching and perceptions of the special treatment towards females in their grooming. Rural communities believe that a college or university education can empower women to disagree with the decisions of the elders of the family.

Aside from these, in many developing countries like the case of Cameroon in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon, daughters are withdrawn from schools at puberty, for fear of unwanted pregnancies, and are married off early to husbands they do not necessarily want (Muller, 2000). From the interview conducted with parent, a number of reasons account for the preference for the education of boys relative to girls. They believe that, their sons typically are responsible for supporting them in their old age. This, therefore, makes the education of sons more attractive to parents. As such the costs of education, both direct costs (e.g. school fees, books, uniforms, etc.) and opportunity costs (e.g. loss of household help and in some cases, wages) are more readily absorbed for sons than daughters (Hadden and London, 1996). It is noted from the results that majority of the girl-students advanced that, their parents have the misconception that upon marriage, they will join their husband's family and take with them the benefits of education, making their parents to have little incentives to bear the costs of educating them. These constraints to female education operate almost exclusively at the household level (Hadden and London, 1996).

The findings related to the majority of parents interviewed, revealed that they have greater confidence in boys to take decisions on important life matters as compared to girls. On the contrary, some parents have the conception and feeling that young people have the right to make decisions as concern education. Several studies on enrolment or attainment disparities in developing countries observed that parents make decisions about schooling of children based on the expectation of future returns to the household (Mahmud and Amin, 2006). For most families in developing societies, sons are the primary source of old-age support of parents while girls typically become a member of another household after marriage. Consequently, parents face strong incentives to invest in sons as long-term insurance (Greenhalgh, 1994). Hence, if a person bears these sort of discriminatory beliefs or attitudes, then he/she might invest less in girls' education apart from the consideration of the direct benefit from their investment.

It is worth to note that girls are socialised to perpetuate socially and culturally sanctioned gender rules made and imposed by men. Girls are born into discrimination and it follows them throughout their lives, depriving them of their basic rights as full citizens. Even their citizenship is questioned: if girls are not full members of their family how can they be full citizens of their country? Being usually cloistered in the private sphere of life, their self-development is severely hampered as they lack access to information on their different rights. They therefore grow into womanhood nourishing an inferiority complex and being unaware of what goes on in the public domain. In addition, they are prevented from participating fully in the developmental

processes of their countries because they can hardly bring themselves out as main actors in the public sphere. Formal education could perhaps be a way out for girls to move from the private to the public sphere of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it is evident that the girl child suffers discrimination from parents in their participation in secondary education. The following recommendations were derived from the analysis. These recommendations have been segmented to target key stakeholders as presented below.

It is therefore recommended that the parents should stop discriminating against the girl child. Parent should give equal schooling opportunities to both the sons and daughters.

Parents, especially those with low academic qualification should be sensitised on need to educate their girl-children beyond the secondary school level as well as develop keen interest on the education of their girl-children. In this case, efforts should be made to sensitize the parents on the importance of education to all their children without discrimination

For parents, in order to alleviate poverty and socio-economic hardship, they should apply and request for financial assistance from government, NGOs, local decentralised governments and foreign financial partners. This will enable them to create some agricultural and artisanal Common Initiative Groups in their different localities. This will enable them to generate income through the sales of farm produces and local manufactured goods and services. Whenever these sales are done, funds are raised, then, they can safeguard these funds in some of the Micro Cooperative Finance trusted banks existing in their localities. In this vein, these funds can help them to educate their children and also ameliorate their living standards.

The girls should seek advice from teachers on how to succeed in their academic work despite authoritative parenting styles. This means that they should at least have personal ambitions and objectives that transcend the traits of their parents or guardians. They should try and exploit their full academic potentials having other positive role model that will act as inspiration to succeed in education whenever they are given the chance to participate.

The girls should make hard work and discipline requisite determinants of academic success and strive to live by them despite parenting styles. This will give them the much needed impetus to prosper in intellectual work and help them improve their academic performances even in the face of poor parenting attitudes and styles

The girls should denounce all forms of sexual harassment by teachers and parents and when thoroughly investigated and the truth prevail, judicial

action should be taken against defaulters and should be severely punished under the penal code. In this case, the victim is to be well protected for any further intimidation.

Teacher counsellors should continually assess girls' participation and academic performance against their backgrounds to establish the type of parenting they receive at home. They can then involve the parents in improving participation in school and academic performance of the girls by counselling them (parents). To carry out this effectively, their counselling modules should be structured to include parents/guardians parenting assessments. This will help the parents to change their parenting styles and attitudes towards their girl-children in order to improve their school participation and academic performances.

For the government to instil the respect children's rights to education and fair treatment, they should enable table the existing draft of the elaborated Family Code in the National Assembly and the Senate, so that parliamentarians should debate and adopt the laws guiding the family code. This notwithstanding, the adoption and promulgation of the Family Code by the Head of State, will go a long way for parents to faithfully respect gender issues with much emphasis applied to women and girl-children education, women liberation, emancipation, empowerment, as well as protection of women and girl-children rights, and their participation in education and politics among others.

The government through the Ministries in charge of Education, alongside with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family should develop and enhance firm policies against rooted negative socio-cultural practices that affect the rate of girls participation and retention in secondary schools which include: early marriages, genital mutilation, teenage pregnancy, preference for boy child and excessive household chores. In order to implement these policies effectively, gender balance curriculum and education policies should be established. Such curriculum must consider the interest of the girl-child so that she is motivated to learn.

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and philanthropists should provide an enabling environment to parents by providing financial and material support for the parents to educate the girl-children by giving them every academic year, adequate grants, payment of school fees, scholarships and school uniforms, free provision of text and exercise books to encourage girls to have interest in education and schooling.

Local governments should offer grants, subsidies and sponsorship to ease the education of girls in the different localities of the municipality. In the meantime, they should establish every academic year educational schemes and funds to support and promote girls' education at all levels of education.

CONCLUSION

From the findings it is noted that the girl child loves education and would wish to pursue it to secondary level and beyond for purposes of self-development. Education is a human right and is central to development, social progress and human freedom. Denial of access to basic education to girls and women is not only a matter of gender discrimination, but it is bad economics and bad social policy (Sabina, 2003). Therefore, the study however concludes that parental perception on gender disparity negatively influence girl- child participation in post-primary education in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon. Several variables such as parenting practices, parenting styles, parents' skeptical behaviour or attitudes, parents' educational background, as well as socio-economic and cultural factors have led to the girl child not to participate in secondary school education.

It is worth to note that congenial home environment and healthy parenting practices and styles are crucial for proper development of girl-children. Unfortunately, the present study shows that it does not happen in case of majority of girls in Priority Education Zones of Cameroon affected adversely by over-regimented attitudes of parents in form of strict parental disciplinary measures against the girl-children, contrarily to this opinion, the strongest factor in moulding a girl-children's personalities is the relationship with their parents. If parents love them with generous, even flowing, non-possessive affection and if they treat girls as persons who like themselves, having both rights and responsibilities in the family setting, then their chances of developing normally are good. But if they diverge from this desired behavioural pattern, the girl-children development may be distorted.

Moreover, this present study revealed culturally that majority of girls are discriminated against by the parents' ignorance who prefer to educate boys denying the girl children the family support which they really need. Faced with all these problems and predicament, they cannot do so much as far as development of their communities and the nation is concerned. This situation therefore calls for a decision by the society to take adequate steps to eliminate these parental practices which affect girl-child participation in secondary education in order to achieve a gender fair and gender friendly society which will make it possible for girls to be integrated in the development process through their participation in education. To improve girl child participation in secondary education, it is important that she gets support and encouragement from both the family and the school. This is very necessary because an educated girl is not only an asset to herself but also to the society and nation at large.

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.

Non-discriminatory education benefits both boys and girls and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationship between boys and girls, and promoting gender equity in education systems creates a healthy, educated and productive human resource base. It is time therefore to begin to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right place and for the right persons, by educating both boys and girls in all the levels of education. It is time to stop the insult of poverty and dependence, and minimize the culture of begging by maximizing the great resource GOD gave us in women. It is time to train and re-train the girl child. If something is not done urgently, the Sustainable Development goals will suffer a major setback as that of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the words of Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General, "No development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players.

It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health and savings and reinvestments at the family, community and ultimately, country level. Educating the girl child is a social development policy that works and a long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return". Although the Cameroon Government has promulgated a number of edicts and legislations on Universal Basic Education, it is time to make these legislations effective by making our primary and secondary schools centres of learning for boys and girls, equipped with the right kind of resources and manpower for effective learning. All barriers must be eliminated to enable all girls to develop their full potential through equal access and participation in education. In order to affirm the government commitment on girls' education, the Fourth World Conference on Women pointed out that, government should promote a policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policy programmes in order to generate awareness of the disadvantaged situation of girl children.

Also, parents must be made to understand the benefits of education through community-based information dissemination techniques and sensitisation. The use of mass media like televisions and community radios which most people do not have access to should be reduced and town criers, village-based crusades and enlightenment programmes, use of religious centres and market awareness activities carried out and on regular basis. If education must serve the society, it must produce people who carry much more than certificates. It must produce people, both normal and exceptional ones, with the right types of knowledge, ability and attitude to put them to work for the good of the society. It is therefore imperative that in order to improve the educational base of the typical Cameroonian girl and by extension her socio-political and economic status, government, community leaders, parents, professional guidance counsellors and other stakeholders should take cognizance of the importance of girls' education.

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