PATRIARCHAL EFFECT ON THE EDUCATION OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Girl-child education has been on the front burner of public attention over the last decades. The writer witnessed it growing up. She saw her age mates, young girls of school age, being forced out of school and given out in marriage. Different organizations, individuals, and corporate bodies have given this issue quality attention, as have many authors and media companies. Individual countries and governments have worked hard toward promoting this cause, although specific cultures, traditions, and stereotypes sabotage the effort. Unfortunately, Nigeria is one of those countries where the girl-child's education faces negligence for fundamental reasons like culture, traditions, stereotypes, and male domination (patriarchal culture). This paper examines the challenges of girl-child education in Nigeria today and the negative impacts of the patriarchal culture as it affects the issue under discussion. However, to proffer some solutions to this menace, the research will recommend the classroom as a vital means to nipping this lingering problem in the bud. Moreover, the study will review the effect or impact of this on the economy and the country's political stability. Apart from personal views, opinions, and the writer's experience, other articles and print/online media materials will form part of this research work.

Keywords: Girl-child education, economy, culture, patriarchal/male domination, child marriage, classroom.

Introduction

Girl-child education and its attendant challenges are a global issue. While contemplating this article, the writer had to visit the O'Neil library at Boston College to study relevant materials on worldwide education and child's rights. The first book I picked was "Educating all children, a global perspective", by Cohen et al. The next book that got my attention was "Education denied; costs and remedies" by Tomasevski. The work, "Gender, race, or class in schooling", by Gaine& George was the third publication that captivated my inquiring mind. There was something spectacular in the three books. They all have pictures of school-aged girls on their front covers.

The education of the girl-child is a global and burning issue. Croll (2006) observed that, although the question of girl-child education is a worldwide issue that has drawn the attention of individuals and corporate bodies, only a few interventions have been significantly impactful. On a general note, there is yet to be a radical change toward actualizing this dream, especially in sub-saharan Africa. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that education is the right of every child, irrespective of sex, race, or color. Different countries have taken the need to educate the child as recommended in this universal declaration with all seriousness. According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) report in 2020 on education, over 10 million children in Nigeria

are out of school, and more than 60% are girls. This figure skyrocketed after the pandemic, as more girls entered early marriage and others returned to the farm while schools were on lockdown recess. The Nigerian president, Muhammed Buhari, on 16 January 2020, estimated the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria as 13.2 million, out of which 60% are girls. The most recent report indicates an increase on a global scale. According to the report, there are 244 million out-of-school children. 20.2 million out of the 244 million are Nigerian children. This means Nigeria constitutes almost 10% of the world's out-of-school children and precisely 10% of the Nigerian population of 200 million. The report further indicates that girls and children with disabilities are majorly affected. The estimation indicates that Nigeria, India, and Pakistan record the highest number of out-of-school children worldwide. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022). Although some Nigerians have reacted to this report as being exaggerated, I agree with the report considering the security situation in some parts of the country. As insecurity rises in Northern Nigeria, more children, especially girls, are withdrawn from school. Over the last ten years, there have been incidents of girls being abducted from schools in numbers, like the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014 and the case of Leah Shaibu, a 15 year old girl who was kidnapped alongside others in 2015 and is yet to reconnect with her parents, her future, and her world. Between 2020 and 2022, 1409 students were kidnapped in different schools/States in Nigeria (SMB Intelligence 2021).This insecurity problem has made so many parents withdraw their girls from school.

Furthermore, as poverty rises in Nigeria, more girls of school age are married off and denied the opportunity for formal education. In Northern Nigeria, for instance, young girls of school age (between the ages of 10-18) are given out in marriage to men who can be their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, leading to a high mortality rate during childbearing and exposure to other health risks. According to Ishaku (2020), Northern Nigeria cannot boast a commendable number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools compared to the number of boys in enrolment at the different levels, not to mention the tertiary level. To a considerable extent, development had counted on this ideology in the larger Nigerian society because schools are everywhere, and sensitizations towards girl-child education seemed to be receiving attention before insurgency featured in 2010 till date causing a greater number of girls to drop out of school since they were the primary target for abduction.

To a large extent, the international community and different bodies like United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank are making efforts to promote the education of the girl-child. However, this effort is sabotaged in developing countries and blamed on poverty and many other factors. Among those factors mentioned already, this paper addresses this as a gender problem, a male dominance issue deeply rooted in African soil. In Nigeria, for instance, the education of the girl-child faces a severe bottleneck resulting from the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, which by its philosophy and praxis, supports gender inequality. This social injustice begins right from childhood, as the community prefers male children to female children, and a family with only female children has no stake in traditional Nigerian society. Considering this, one must wonder if girls/women have any place in larger Nigerian society. In Northern Nigeria, for instance, this issue goes beyond preferential treatment to subjugating the female gender. It is an issue that has drastically affected the girl-child's education and jeopardized futures that could have been great.

The Concept of a Girl-child

Although many authors have defined a girl-child differently, it is general knowledge that the girl-child is the female gender before age 18. The controversies surrounding the education and value of the girl-child in Nigeria are enormous. Different authors look at being a girl-child from different perspectives. Alabi et al. (2016) analyze a girl-child in a way that captures every aspect of her being. At the same time, they acknowledge that a girl-child is a female offspring below the age of 18 and before adulthood who needs formal and informal education to develop her mind, character, intellect, and skills. Her nature is vulnerable at that stage, and she depends on those who model her behavior via observation, repetition, and imitation. In other words, she depends on others, especially her parents or family, to make decisions for her. This stage of development is when she is exposed to formal education at different levels: kindergarten, elementary, and secondary school. At this stage, she does not only learn how to read and write but learns morals and skills that will prepare her for adulthood. According to Alabi et al., for the girl-child to become a dynamic adult, she needs formal and informal education to help develop her skills and intellect to contribute massively to society. As a child, her education should be non-negotiable, as article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights gives everyone the right to free education in the elementary stage. The girl-child becomes an asset to the community and nation by accessing education. Ugwu (2001) views a woman's education as a means to explore her environment and acquire competent skills that will enable her to become functional. Acquiring those skills equips women to form a part of the society they belong.

Patriarchy: A major setback to the Education of the Girl-child in Nigeria

Analyzing the problem of girl-child education in Nigeria, people are made to believe that it is a general problem in the system of Education in Nigeria, and many authors have blamed it on poverty, poor governance, poor infrastructure, insecurity, and irresponsibility in the side of parents for not taking the education of their children seriously. However, it is far beyond that. The abovementioned issues cannot be overruled because they are significant setbacks to Nigerian society's education of girls and boys. They are substantial yet worrisome since they do not affect boys and girls equally. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), assessing different countries' possibility of realizing the millennium goal, reported that more than 6 million out of the 10 million out-of-school children in Nigeria are girls (UNESCO, 2020). According to Alabi et al. (2014), the girl-child is at the center of the devastating poverty rate in Africa. If the problem of education in Nigeria is simply poverty, it would have an equal effect on every child, irrespective of sex. Our society has been structured so that the girl-child is the most vulnerable and undervalued. Sometimes, they were offered as sacrificial lambs against their wish to settle family debts or improve the family's economic well-being through early marriage. As a principal of a secondary school back then in Nigeria, it was common for girls in the age brackets of 15 to17 years of age to report that their parents wanted them to get married so that they could raise money to pay house rent, train their younger ones, or clear some hospital bill of a family member. One could always picture frustration, fear, and helplessness on their faces, a dash of hope. Conversely, an educated girl-child can free the family from poverty, not an uneducated girl-child. When her education is truncated for the reasons given above, she will instead become a liability in the days to come. Beyond poverty in the country is a patriarchal and male-dominant structure that has continued to create disparities between genders, projecting one as superior to the other. Gilligan & Snider (2018) view patriarchy as a culture based on gender discrimination that

privileges men. Culturally, it places a set of rules; psychologically, it shapes how we feel, think, and perceive things. The effect of patriarchy, cultural and psychological, rules our society and automatically places men as superior beings and women as inferior to men. Hence, it subjects the women to a low life. Dominance is associated with discrimination, exploitation, or subvention (Folbre, 2021). Therefore, patriarchy is gender inequality playing out culturally and psychologically. It maintains the disparity between both sexes, fueling male privileges right from birth. Offorma (2009) opines that most factors limiting girl-child education are socio-cultural. Our culture/environment has poorly positioned females in education and other sectors.

Patriarchy is grossly rooted in the system to the point that people shy away from discussing it to avoid being labeled feminists. However, the concerns about girl-child education are not simply a feminist agenda. It is for greater than this. It is a cry against a fundamental right denied. Chimamanda's definition of a feminist is a clarion call for everyone to see a problem with gender inequality and work towards equity; a feminist is a man or woman who recognizes a problem with gender and works hard to fix it. (Adichie, 2012). Based on this premise, Tadesse &Abiye (2010) assert that the position of men and women in society is subject to change. Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children, "whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It does not matter where the children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, disabled, rich or poor. No one should maltreat a child on any basis. "Unfortunately, the Nigerian patriarchal structure does not conform to this Universal Declaration that gives equal rights to every child irrespective of sex. Those concerned owe the future generation an explanation.

Patriarchy is simply a display of male dominance characterized by a set of rules that limit women's involvement in issues that concern them. In a patriarchal society, men feel like superheroes over women. The school fees paid for female children are perceived as a waste to the family since the girl-child will get married, move to her husband's house, and even change her name to her husband's name. As a patriarchal society, Nigeria has made girls and women second-class citizens who cannot decide for themselves. Their education ends in the kitchen, even in the 21st century. Ishaku (2020) confirms that Nigerian society views the girl-child as a weak vessel whose place is in the kitchen. That perception that she would take whatever education she gets to her husband's house and train her in school becomes a loss to her family of birth. To a more significant extent, this is the situation in Northern Nigeria, where women do not participate in politics, religion, government, and education. It was a shock to every well-meaning Nigerian when President Muhammed Buhari said on national television that his wife belongs in his kitchen, his living room, and "the other room" simply because she made a public statement on the state of the nation (Reuters, 2016). He was bent on reminding her that she has no voice as far as national issues are concerned. In line with that, Alabi et al. (2014) observed that girls and women face discrimination and bias arising from traditions, customs, and the typical mindset of Nigerian society, which is a stereotype. The Nigerian community is structured so that women only sit to take instructions and serve as caregivers at home. Denying girls a good education means depriving them of participating in the political and economic affairs of the nation. This problem of girl-child education severely affects a nation's development and the world at large.

In the light of social justice, one could say that this discrimination against the female gender is an unjust treatment meted on them. Alabi et al. (2014) again attest that girls and women are denied the opportunity to make decisions about their own lives because the men do that for them without regard to their opinion. Society is structured such that 90% of the girls/women remain victims and, lack the audacity to challenge the status quo. When they do, their opinions do not count. Considering the number of girls that drop out of school and are forced into child marriage, one can easily see why the percentage of out-of-school, school-age girls is far more than their male counterparts. Etongwe (2011) narrated the experience of girls in her village whose fathers asked them to drop out of school and get married to enable the family to educate their brothers. However, she courageously and respectfully approached the man in question and tutored him on the need for girl-child education and the disadvantages of early marriage.

Child marriage and its implications
Growing up in the '90s, I lived in a neighborhood that harbored both Christians and Muslims in Eastern Nigeria. I remember girls my age who were married off and taken to their Muslim husbands in the North. It was always a big ceremony, and we always missed our friends each time they were taken away. I remember vividly that almost all of them eventually returned to their parents before we finished secondary school, together with their children, due to failed marriages. They longed to join us in school again and could not, while a few continued from where they had stopped their education before marriage. I never saw their husbands because, as Christian girls, we were not allowed to be part of the ceremony, but we heard that the men that married them were far older and generally subjected them to ill treatment. Some were married as third wives, fourth wives, etc. In Northern Nigeria today, many school-age girls are still enslaved in marriage. The pictures and videos on the internet prove these awful acts against the girl-child. These are girls whom society has wrecked their futures and their children's future. Wodon (2016) asserts that school girls are underprivileged. They are denied their fundamental rights in a way that affects them and their children. Young mothers and their children can suffer malnutrition and die young for not knowing what to do. I believe that if the girl-child is placed in school, it will reduce the number of early marriages in society.

What can an illiterate mother contribute to the development of her children? Educating the girl-child means educating a whole nation since she is responsible for educating her children. An educated woman knows how to raise a good home and the best manners to instill in her children. She has the proper exposure to help her children grow and change their generation. Besides, early marriage for girls takes a silent toll on the nation's economy since uneducated women have little to contribute to national development. According to the World Bank's report, ending child marriage globally could generate more than US$500 billion in benefits annually. Early marriage promotes illiteracy, and an illiterate young mother has little to offer a child regarding knowledge and exposure. Depriving girls of education limits their achievements in society and fosters poverty. If the woman is educated, she will have the means to make money and support the family financially. Both individuals and countries benefit from girls' education. Better-educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and health care; they have fewer children; they marry of their own volition; they beget children and raise them healthier. (World bank, 2015). Education equips the recipient and prepares her for a more profound future. The constant denial of this only generates

vulnerability in the life of the poor girl-child. This is not simply a disadvantage to the girl-child and her family but a more significant disadvantage to the nation.

On the other hand, child marriage has increased the rate of mortality among young people in Nigeria. Young girls are exposed to early pregnancy without adequate health support; far too often, the mother and baby do not make it up to childbirth. According to Pintu (2019), child marriage adversely impacts the health and well-being of women and children. It leads to early childbearing, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, death, and transmission of diseases like Human Immunodeficiency Virus (H.I.V), Human Papilo Virus (HPV), and sometimes cervical cancer. Over 6 million girls in Nigeria between the age of 10 and 15 are forced into marriage, and this action has consequences, as mentioned earlier. The effects include outrageous illiteracy and mortality rate. According to a Voice of America news report in 2015, Nigeria has one of the world's worst maternal mortality rates. 58,000 Nigerian women die of complications during pregnancy (VOA, 2015). Most are young girls forced into marriage and, due to their age, are not knowledgeable enough to handle the challenges that arise during pregnancy or sufficiently strong to pull through the pain of labor.

The Education of the Girl-child vis-à-vis National Development
Indeed, few nations would embrace their desired development without women. However, Nigeria has relegated women to the background in the various aspects of her nationhood. To eradicate poverty, Nigerian women need to be educated and constitute a more significant part of the governmental structure. The idea of not educating young girls is born out of the belief that women's education ends in the kitchen and that women have no say in the affairs of the nation to which they belong. The men are possibly afraid that when women are given equal opportunity, it would most certainly weaken and upturn male supremacy. I agree with Olonade et al. (2021) that any nation that prioritizes the education of girls and females is on the development path. Probably, the condition of Nigeria would have been better if the women folk were genuinely involved in the nation's politics.

Similarly, any nation that undermines the education of girls and women is not ready to move forward. Unfortunately, the percentage of Nigerian women in leadership is minimal compared to men. Women are deprived of certain positions, both traditionally and politically. Smith (2018) talks about equality of opportunity created for everyone irrespective of his/her status in life. Having this opportunity will ensure equal participation for all citizens. Throughout the history of Nigeria, women have not held critical positions in governance. A few have managed to be Local government chairpersons or deputy governors. No woman has become a governor in Nigeria except in Anambra State, where a woman was a Governor of the State for just a few months. The first five citizens of the country, the president, the vice president, the senate president, the speaker of the House of Assembly, and the Chief Justice of the Federation, have all been men. Women have never been among the key leaders in the three different arms of the government on the federal level. In the world gender equality index of 2022, Nigeria has 4.70% in politics, while some countries like Iceland and Finland have 76% and 66%, respectively. (Statista Research Department,2022). According to Omede &Aghahiu (2016), the effect of this situation has prevented women and girls from maximizing their potential in the development of Nigeria.

Women's direct or active involvement in Nigerian politics is still a mirage. Sometimes, husbands have divorced their wives for publicly declaring their political ambitions. Some women lack the courage to express interest for fear of what could happen to their marriage or how that society will treat them. In light of such, Olusola (2019) encouraged women to ask for what is theirs and not think they are asking for too much. The condition of females in Nigeria and how they are regarded have affected mainly their confidence in themselves to the point that women are not bold enough to support each other or to make their choices confidently; they instead depend on the decision of their husbands. This is what the environment has subjected them to, a belief that they are simply subordinates.

The writer will never forget that courageous woman Sarah Jibril who contested the Nigerian presidency primaries under the platform of the People's Democratic Party -PDP-in 2015. Unfortunately, even her fellow women could not support her. This proves that women do not have confidence in themselves and each other. It is part of the patriarchal effect. Culture has made women accept that they are inferior.

In the academic world, too, women have been made to believe that they are deficient in specific fields, which promotes an imbalance in education among genders. Statista Research department in 2019 report reveals that Nigeria Universities have 11,000 professors in different areas, and only 1748 are females. That report shows that male professors are more than female professors in all fields significantly. In science, 2,008 professors are male, while only 343 are female. In education, where women are perceived to be good and better, only 465 professors are female, while male professors are 1,200 (S.R.D.,2019). These figures may differ in countries where girls can access education, and women are not subjected to marriages as strict housewives.

Nevertheless, there are signs of promise; the number of female professors is far better than the statistics of 1990, when women only constituted 1.8 percent of Nigerian professors. In practice, women have proven to be better leaders and managers than men in the few opportunities they have been given (Olonade, 2021). There is no doubt that women are naturally endowed with organizational skills and do not fail in leadership. They can take their role as mothers into work environments and turn the work site into a well-organized and disciplined environment. The writer was impressed by the move of Aisha Buhari, the wife of the Nigerian president, Muhammed Buhari, before the primaries in preparation for the 2023 general election. In that conference held on 12 April 2022, she encouraged Nigerian women to unite, stating that unity is the key to breaking the barriers to gender inclusiveness in Nigerian politics. She further urged aspirants from the presidency to the smallest office to choose women as their running mates at different levels. Although some women considered that statement derogatory, arguing that women must not always be subordinates, I see it as a means to come close to the corridors of power. Unfortunately, none of the presidential candidates of the three major parties chose women as running mates. Today, women represent only 6.7% of Nigerian politics, far below the global average of 27.5% and the Regional African average of 23.4%. It also falls short of the 15% apportioned to women in Africa. (The Sun Newspaper Nigeria,2019).Aisha Buhari talked about unity among women. Are women folk ready to unite and address this issue? Can the women understand that this is a fight not just for them but for their unborn female children, who may not be allowed to go to school or participate in the affairs of the nation? Gender imbalance has been weighed

and approached in different ways, and other organizations and international bodies have proffered solutions and assisted in different ways, yet the journey remains distant. What options are left for Nigerian society to address this issue and save the Nigerian girl-child from being relegated to the background? Despite various attempts to change the narrative, there is still no significant improvement in the condition of school-aged girls and women in Nigerian politics.

Admittedly, the problem of girl-child education is not the only challenge Nigeria has as a country; there are numerous issues. However, this does not exonerate the government from prioritizing girls' education. Going by developments emerging from the political class, this question may not even be on the government's priority list. UNICEF, UNESCO, and many other local and international bodies have done a lot to promote the education of the girl-child in Africa. However, the major problem is that the decision to move girls to school lies in the hands of the same people who do not believe in women's education and participation in governance. Apart from that, the amount dedicated to education in the yearly budget is not enough to provide free primary education for all children and provide schools with the resources and equipment to meet the learners at their various points of need. Thus, the challenge facing the education of the girl-child in Nigeria stems from the patriarchal culture, coupled with poor policies on the part of those that should tackle it through a properly structured legal system.

Men are traditionally the political decision-makers. So, they find it difficult to oppose a system that favors them. They marry girls of school age for sexual gratification, so they cannot dismantle a tradition that satisfies their sexual desires. It is only a just society where injustice is challenged that will rise against a system that is not favoring everyone, irrespective of whose ox is gored. Unfortunately, Nigeria is yet in that category. It is rather structured so that even women criticize fellow women that see a problem with the structure/culture and raise concerns over the state of women in Nigerian society. Chimamanda's definition of feminism maintains that men and women should all be "feminists" since there is a problem with 'gender' that impacts the entire nation. Unfortunately, most Nigerian men do not believe there is a problem with gender representation because its customs and traditions have placed them as superior and women as subordinates. It is unacceptable and sometimes perceived as taboo to mention the situation of women in Nigeria. To correct this mentality, there has to be a transformation movement that will make people understand that men and women should have equal rights and that boys and girls have equal access to education. Could the classroom be an innovative platform for this transformation? I believe so.

Classroom as a platform for teaching and promoting the value of the Girl-child
The work of a teacher is not just to teach academic content but to teach morals and positively influence the children under their care. According to McIntyre &O'Hair (1996), teachers must learn to encourage positive attitudes and values. It is a known fact that good teachers influence their students and are capable of building trust that will be more than the trust between the students and their parents. However, for some cultural reasons, teachers do not always use the contagious power they have in the classroom. A good classroom is more than a family home. Members understand each other and collaborate in the work they do in the classroom environment. The students are at home with the teacher and can be excited about attending school. The character of the teachers has effects on the students under their care, meaning the

teachers can have a positive influence on their students. The teacher's positive attitude elevates students and could influence them to influence their world. Suppose excellent teaching is an art that transforms the rawest materials, as Levon (2010), suggested. These materials can be likened to the students as products of a patriarchal society that relegates women to the background. The transformation of the raw materials is the teacher's ability to make the students understand that girls deserve the same respect and opportunities as boys. Children come from different family backgrounds with unique beliefs. Some of these families have raised the children to believe that girls are not as important as boys. This is already the notion they bring into the classroom. Therefore, the teacher has much work to do to change this mindset. A transformative teacher can transform these raw materials (students) into advocates of a just society.

It may be difficult in the Nigerian situation since the teacher, and the students come from the same background and struggle with the same mindset. A kind of education that will illumine these mindsets must be holistic, involving the mind, the body, emotions, and feelings. This kind of education requires teachers and students to be whole humans who experience deep learning together. To Tucker (2021), holistic education brings teachers and students a certain level of connectedness and bond. The teacher is challenged to think deeply, embrace the complications surrounding gender for themselves and students, and find a way of uniting their understanding into transformative lessons. The teacher must create avenues and opportunities to change the student's attitude toward the female gender. Both the curriculum and the pedagogies should incorporate social justice. It is vital for teachers to always bear in mind that the situations they create in the classroom environment or atmosphere are the most effective way to teach the students (Craig & Deretchin,2011).

The teacher needs first to learn and understand that there is a problem with gender in the society and use the classroom as a platform to fix this problem through practical examples and holistic teaching. This experience will bring into the classroom an interconnectivity that will get to everyone's heart, bring new experiences, and engender a friendlier environment and mutually respectful dispositions among the pupils or students. Teachers should rise above the societal perception of gender and use education to promote equality. They should become people who will initiate change in society. According to Thornton (2018), teachers willing to foster effective learning are better prepared for the future. They will be able to introduce and implement changes rather than oppose them or stick to what it has been. The nature of society is such that many ignore gender inequality. As a result, people shy away from that, even when uncomfortable with the situation.

Therefore, effective teachers do not need to preach about gender and overly stress the reality and danger of gender inequality through their words. What is required is attitude and dispositions that will teach the younger generation that everyone is to be respected and availed equal opportunity in life. If the teacher wins the students' trust, students can imitate the teacher, value the teacher and build an unbreakable bond. With this level of trust and confidence, the classroom becomes more of a place where everyone feels loved. Thornton (2018) shares that he works towards creating a classroom where students will enter and feel like they are in their family homes where love and care abound. This should primarily be the goal of all teachers. Imagine a classroom that has pictures of girls hanging on the walls with the inscriptions like, "Girls are unique creatures," "A girl-child is an incomparable treasure,"

"Girls' education is essential too," "Train a girl and train a whole nation," "Girls are assets to our world," "Women contribute a lot to national development, say no to child marriage, "Oh, what a significant impact it would have on both boys and girls! This move could change children's mindsets forever and leave indelible impressions that will shape their attitudes in adulthood. The girls in the class would feel loved and valued, and the boys will reflect on it, and gradually, it will sink in. Growing up, we had some cards hanging on the walls of our house. I have never forgotten any of the words, phrases, or poems written there. They occupy, more than anything, the memories of my childhood. There is no definition of a positive environment other than activities that are impactful and produce sweet memories ever after. McIntyre &O'Hair (1996) observes that students' success and motivations are at their best when teachers create positive classroom environments. One good feature of such classrooms is that they are supportive. A supportive classroom goes beyond academic success. It builds the entire person and creates a kind of growth that helps form the students into responsible adults who value themselves and others. Such a classroom will enhance the value of girls and women in society and bring a gradual and lasting change.

Conclusion

The girl-child is a victim of circumstance as far as a patriarchal society is concerned, for no child chooses to be born male or female. Education is a vital part of a human being that helps unlock individual potential. It also unlocks fixed mindsets to growth mindsets. Therefore, accessing education is a fundamental right for all, irrespective of sex, and there should be no discrimination. (Ajayi. 2021, Ishaku, 2020). The child's rights to education did not exclude or include a particular sex or propose different guidelines for children outside Nigerian soil. It is a universal right. Therefore, any child, irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, sex, color, or religion, has the right to education. The patriarchal effect on girls/women gained ground in the olden days, but the world knows better now.

Although, the condition of the girl-child is blamed on other issues like poverty or insecurity. This research has proven that it is a patriarchal or male dominance issue rooted deeply in Africa/ Nigeria. The fact that the condition favors men is why they are not making substantial efforts for a change. Traditionally, religiously, culturally, and politically, men hold decision-making power. This paper recommends that the teachers use the classroom to turn the table around and bring it to the center. Experience has shown that any child denied an education is already denied the essential thing in life and is forever limited in thoughts and intellect. A girl-child denied education has been deprived of her right to the good life and denied active participation in the affairs of her own country. The future of the girl-child is bright; denial of education will not only mar that future but affect national growth and the economy. Teachers should overcome this challenge by implementing methodologies and pedagogies promoting the education of the female gender. The classroom will go a long way to changing the status quo. I recently had a seminar with a group of teachers in Nigeria on how the classroom can change the condition of the girl-child/women in Nigeria. The results were incredible. The passion for using the classroom to change the narrative is overwhelming and the teachers devised lesson plans introducing remedies for this social justice problem. My subsequent publication will reflect the complete reports of this seminar.

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