

Influence of Demographic Variables and Socio-Economic Status on the Attainment of Girl-Child Education in Kwande Local Government Area

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>The study investigated influence of demographic variables and socio-economic status on attainment of girl- child education in Kwande local government area of Benue state. Simple random sampling method was used for selection of one hundred and fifty participants, (71 male, 79 female). Their age range was 25-60 years, with a mean of 7.68 (SD=.68). Standardized instrument named; the girl - child educational attainment scale developed by Wakiru, (2012) was used. Also, parametric statistics (independent t-test and one way ANOVA) were used to test the difference between groups. The results from the four hypotheses show that; hypothesis one which states that there will be significant influence of parental income and the girl- child's educational attainment in Kwande local government area of Benue state was significant [$t(148)=2.042, p<.01$]. Parents with high income ($N=100$; mean=7.7300, $SD=.50960$) scored higher than parents with low income ($N=50$; mean=7.5200, $SD=.7512$) on educational attainment of girl- child, Parents with higher educational qualification ($N=110$; mean=7.6750, $SD=.65584$) were almost the same on mean score with that of parents with lower educational attainment of girl-child. There was significant negative influence of place of residence on girl- child's educational attainment in Kwande local government area of Benue state. [$R=.048, R=.002, F(1,148) = .335, p<0.01$]. Age, gender and educational qualification of parents had a joint negative influence on the girl- child's educational attainment in Kwande local government area of Benue state. [$F(2,148df) = .176; p<.05; 1=.051 \& R=.003$]. It was recommended that federal and state government should enhance educational levels of parents to have a positive influence on the level of participation in preschool education of their girl child.</i> Keywords: fieldwork discourse analysis, functional transformability, translatability, retardation, historical paradox.
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Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited. Citation: Orume Ibrahim Joseph PhD, Ungwa Emmanuel Vandekan PhD, Sedoo Magdalene Ungwa. (2025). Influence of Demographic Variables and Socio-Economic Status on the Attainment of Girl-Child Education in Kwande Local Government Area. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHSS), Volume 1(9), 1-9.	

Introduction

Education for girls is not only a fundamental human right but also a shared societal responsibility. Educating the girl-child contributes immensely to building a stable, prosperous, and healthy nation whose citizens are empowered, productive, and actively engaged in development. Despite this, statistics reveal that in Nigeria, over 5.5 million girls are out of school (UNESCO, 2014). About 40% of women and 28% of men have never attended school (NPC, 2009). Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of women in the North West and North East regions have no

formal education, compared to less than 15% in the southern parts of the country (UNESCO, 2014). The primary school net enrollment rate stands at 56% for girls and 61% for boys, while dropout rates peak in the sixth grade and are higher among girls (NPC, 2009).

Educated women are less likely to die during childbirth and are more likely to raise healthy and well-nourished children. Children born to literate mothers have a 50% higher chance of surviving beyond age five. In Nigeria, about 66% of mothers with secondary education deliver

their babies in health facilities, compared to only 11% of mothers with no education (British Council, 2012). Educating girls has generational benefits—it increases their lifetime earnings by approximately 10% per additional year of schooling, enhances national productivity, and reduces inequality. However, girls in Nigeria continue to face educational disadvantages, especially those from poor, rural households in the North. Nigeria currently has the world's largest population of out-of-school children, the majority of whom are girls. Addressing this imbalance is critical to fulfilling the Federal Ministry of Education's vision to "develop all Nigerian citizens to their full potential."

Education is a basic human right that should be accessible to every individual regardless of gender. Unfortunately, cultural biases have historically limited educational opportunities for girls, with many families believing a woman's place is in the home. Although modern society is gradually changing, some parents still prioritize the education of their sons, particularly in low-income families. The girl-child, defined as a female between birth and 18 years (Offorma, 2009), undergoes a formative period during which her personality and character are developed (Sutherland, 2001). Despite this, she is often socialized to focus on domestic responsibilities rather than academic or professional ambitions.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, the issue of girl-child education has drawn significant concern from stakeholders in Nigeria, particularly in Kwande Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State. Many parents across various ethnic and cultural backgrounds still neglect the education of their daughters, favoring their sons instead. Traditionally, women in Kwande have been perceived mainly as homemakers and caregivers rather than as contributors to community development. However, women play vital roles in economic production, healthcare, politics, and environmental sustainability—roles that can only be effectively performed through education.

Observation reveals that limited research has been conducted on how demographic factors and socio-economic status affect girls' access to education in this region. Hence, this study seeks to examine how variables such as parental income, education level, and place of residence influence the educational attainment of the girl-child in Kwande LGA.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

Aim

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the influence of demographic factors and socio-economic

status on the educational attainment of the girl-child in Kwande LGA of Benue State.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine whether parental income affects the educational attainment of the girl-child in Kwande LGA.
2. To determine the influence of parents' educational level on girls' educational attainment.
3. To assess whether a girl's place of residence impacts her access to education in Kwande LGA.

Research Questions

- i. Does parental income affect the educational attainment of girls in Kwande LGA?
- ii. Does the educational level of parents influence girls' access to education?
- iii. Does the place of residence of the girl-child influence her educational attainment?

Significance of the Study

This study holds great importance for several stakeholders. Firstly, it will enlighten parents and community members about the socio-economic benefits of educating the girl-child, helping to dispel traditional misconceptions. The findings will also guide policymakers in Benue State to design interventions such as scholarships or awareness campaigns to promote girls' education, especially among low-income families.

Furthermore, the results will empower girls to pursue formal education rather than early marriage or petty trading. Educators, school administrators, and policymakers can also use the findings to design inclusive educational strategies. The study's recommendations could inform curriculum development, teacher training, and parent engagement initiatives that support gender equity in education. Finally, the research will contribute to the academic body of knowledge on how socio-economic and demographic variables affect educational participation in rural Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the effects of demographic factors and socio-economic status on the educational attainment of the girl-child in Kwande LGA of Benue State. It covers selected secondary schools, including N.K.S.T. Secondary School Adikpo, Adikpo Comprehensive College, and Community Secondary School, Jato Aka. The study population comprises selected female students within the local government, which is situated in Zone "A" Senatorial District of Benue State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Demographic variables such as age, gender, and parental education have been found to influence educational outcomes. Age, for instance, can be understood chronologically, functionally, and psychosocially (Kooij, 2015; Sterns & Miklos, 2015). Parental age can affect a child's access to education based on health, career stability, and social norms. Research suggests that older or more experienced parents often show stronger commitment to their children's education (Cleveland & Shore, 2002).

Gender also plays a critical role. Studies reveal that cultural and social norms often privilege boys over girls in educational support (Marta, 2004; Roxas & Stoneback, 2006). Although some recent research disputes significant gender differences (Jones & Kavanagh, 2014; Davis & Melton, 2016), traditional gender roles remain a major barrier to girl-child education in many parts of Nigeria.

Kohlberg's (2001) theory of moral development further links education with ethical reasoning and decision-making. Parents with higher education levels are more likely to value and support their daughters' schooling (Chiu, 2003). Hence, education empowers both parents and girls to make informed choices and contribute meaningfully to society.

The girl-child, defined as a female between birth and 18 years (Sutherland, 2014), deserves equal access to formal education for her personal and societal development (Gomwalk, 2006; Maisamani, 2006). Education equips girls with the skills and confidence to participate in politics, economic production, and community leadership (Ballara, 2000; Stronquist, 2000).

Socio-economic status (SES) comprising income, education, and occupation—also determines access to quality education. According to the World Health Organization (2019), individuals from low SES backgrounds often experience limited access to educational and health opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Research has consistently shown that Social Economic Status affects access to essential resources, including healthcare, education, and housing, which are critical for well-being and opportunities (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2006). Individuals with higher SES tend to have better health outcomes due to access to quality healthcare, nutrition, and living conditions (Adler & Stewart, 2010).

Social Economic Status also influences opportunities for social mobility, including access to education and job opportunities that can improve one's socio-economic position (Breen & Goldthorpe, 2001). Additionally, SES impacts lifestyle choices, including diet, physical activity,

and leisure activities, which can affect overall health and well-being (Ball & Crawford, 2005).

Furthermore, Social Economic Status can influence social connections, community involvement, and support systems, vital for mental and emotional health (Cohen et al., 2015). Understanding Social Economic Status is crucial for identifying disparities and informing policies to promote social equality. By recognizing its impact, policymakers and organizations can develop targeted interventions to reduce health inequities, improve educational outcomes, enhance economic opportunities, and foster social inclusion and community engagement.

Theoretical review

This section reviews related theories to the topic under investigation

Motivational Theory of Abraham Maslow Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory explains that human motivation is driven by the desire to satisfy a series of needs arranged in a hierarchical order. According to Maslow, individuals must meet lower-level needs before progressing to higher levels of personal development and fulfillment. The hierarchy is typically presented in five stages:

- i. **Physiological Needs:** These are the most basic requirements for human survival, including food, water, shelter, air, and rest.
- ii. **Safety Needs:** Once basic needs are met, individuals seek security, stability, and protection from harm or danger.
- iii. **Love and Belonging Needs:** At this level, people desire social interaction, friendship, affection, and a sense of belonging within families and communities.
- iv. **Esteem Needs:** This stage involves the need for self-respect, confidence, recognition, and appreciation from others.
- v. **Self-Actualization Needs:** At the top of the hierarchy, individuals strive for personal growth, creativity, self-fulfillment, and the realization of their full potential.

In the context of girl child education, demographic variables like poverty, rural residence, or lack of access to basic necessities can hinder girls' ability to pursue education. When basic needs are met, girls are more likely to focus on higher-level needs like education and personal growth. Ensuring that girls' basic needs are met can help motivate them to learn and achieve their full potential.

Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory suggests that behavior is shaped by rewards and punishments. In girl child education:

- i. Positive reinforcement (e.g., praise, recognition) from teachers, parents, and peers can encourage girls to pursue education
- ii. Negative reinforcement (e.g., discrimination, stereotyping) can discourage girls from pursuing education
- iii. Demographic variables and socio-economic status can influence the type and frequency of reinforcement girls receive

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory posits that motivation is influenced by expectations of achieving a goal. In girl child education:

- i. Girls' expectations of succeeding in education can be shaped by demographic variables like societal norms, parental expectations, and socio-economic status
- ii. When girls believe that education will lead to better opportunities and outcomes, they are more likely to be motivated to pursue it
- iii. Educators and policymakers can work to promote positive expectations and support girls in achieving their educational goals

Investment Theory

Investment theory suggests that individuals invest time, effort, and resources in activities that yield expected returns. In girl child education:

- i. Families and communities may invest in girls' education if they expect it to lead to improved socio-economic outcomes
- ii. Demographic variables and socio-economic status can influence the perceived returns on investment in girls' education, shaping decisions about educational attainment
- iii. Policymakers and educators can work to promote the value of girls' education and provide support for families and communities to invest in girls' educational attainment.

These theories collectively highlight the complex interplay between demographic variables, socio-economic status, and girl child education. By understanding these factors, educators, policymakers, and communities can develop targeted strategies to support girls' educational attainment and promote gender equality.

Empirical Review

Age and Educational Attainment

Age has been found to play a significant role in determining educational outcomes. The concept of *Relative Age Effect (RAE)* highlights how the age of students relative to their peers within a cohort influences academic performance and long-term educational success. Learners who are relatively

older within their group often perform better academically and exhibit higher confidence levels. Understanding RAE is therefore vital for designing policies that promote educational equity and address age-related disadvantages. Interventions that recognize age differences can help ensure that all learners reach their full academic potential.

Several studies have examined this relationship. Alar Urruticoechea (2021) conducted a systematic review emphasizing the impact of RAE on educational development. Similarly, Ando et al. (2019) explored the link between relative age and emotional well-being among ten-year-old students, while Navarro et al. (2015) investigated how RAE influences academic performance. Wilson et al. (2011) also found that educational outcomes are influenced by cohort characteristics, noting that women's expanding access to education has contributed to narrowing gender disparities in income. Longitudinal research further suggests that student characteristics and behaviors during adolescence can predict occupational achievements later in life, with educational attainment serving as a key mediating factor.

Gender and Educational Attainment

The relationship between gender and education is complex and multifaceted. Globally, women have made significant progress in educational attainment, often outperforming men in school completion rates and benefiting more economically from higher education. However, wage disparities persist, with men typically earning more than women even at similar education levels.

Empirical studies show that women experience greater relative returns to education, which indicates stronger economic incentives for pursuing advanced learning (Mandel & Rotman, 2021; Charles & Luoh, 2003). Nonetheless, female-dominated academic disciplines tend to offer lower financial returns than male-dominated or gender-balanced fields (Leuze & Strauß, 2014). Data from the OECD also show that while girls generally outperform boys in reading, boys still maintain a slight edge in mathematics performance.

According to *Human Capital Theory*, education represents an investment in individual productivity, with skills and knowledge translating into economic returns. However, social and cultural influences such as gender norms, expectations, and stereotypes continue to shape educational interests, achievements, and career pathways, especially in STEM-related disciplines (Huber & Paule-Paludkiewicz, 2024).

Regional inequalities further compound these challenges. In Sub-Saharan Africa, socio-cultural and economic factors contribute to the gender gap in education (Dube, 2015). Similar patterns are observed in India, where cultural

preferences for sons and parental bias against daughters limit girls' educational opportunities (Bose, 2012; Kugler & Kumar, 2017).

Parental Occupation and Education

Parents' occupational status and educational background are significant predictors of children's academic performance. Families with higher occupational prestige are often able to provide more financial, emotional, and academic support, leading to better learning outcomes. Conversely, children from low-income households may experience barriers such as inadequate learning resources, food insecurity, or early involvement in income-generating activities, which can impede educational attainment.

Research consistently shows that parental education levels exert a stronger influence on children's academic success than occupational status alone. Educated parents tend to have higher aspirations for their children and are more capable of guiding and supporting their educational journey. The *Intergenerational Transfer of Socioeconomic Resources Model* suggests that parents' education shapes their expectations and beliefs about schooling, which indirectly influence their children's academic performance. This aligns with the *Human Capital Theory*, which posits that education enhances productivity and long-term economic outcomes.

Empirical studies from Nigeria, India, and Malawi corroborate these findings. In Nigeria, parental education and occupation have been shown to significantly affect students' performance in secondary schools. In India, parents' socioeconomic background including income and occupation determines their capacity to provide educational resources. Similarly, in Malawi, higher maternal education is associated with reduced child labor and increased school attendance among children.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors

Demographic characteristics such as household size, parental income, and cultural practices also influence girls' access to education. Families with large household sizes may experience financial strain, leading to lower school enrollment for girls. Parents with higher incomes or educational levels are more likely to support their daughters' schooling, while poverty often results in early withdrawal from school, early marriage, or engagement in domestic labor.

Socio-cultural practices, including child marriage and gender-based division of labor, remain major barriers to girl-child education. Studies across Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia confirm that parental income, education, and household characteristics are crucial determinants of girls' educational attainment. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate policies and interventions aimed at

promoting equity, such as scholarship programs, community sensitization, and financial assistance to low-income families.

Understanding the intricate relationships between demographic variables, socioeconomic status, and educational access provides a foundation for effective policymaking. By addressing these inequalities, governments and stakeholders can create inclusive educational environments that empower girls to achieve their academic and social potential.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a survey research design, focusing on the influence of demographic variables and socio-economic status on the educational attainment of the girl-child in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State. This design allows the researcher to collect data from a representative sample and analyze relationships among variables using statistical methods.

Setting

The research is conducted in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The LGA, with its administrative headquarters in Adikpo, covers an area of approximately 2,891 square kilometers and had a population of 248,697 as of the 2006 census. It shares boundaries with Vandeikya, Ushongo, and Katsina-Ala Local Government Areas.

Participants

The study population consists of 150 senior secondary school students drawn from three selected schools in the LGA:

- i. Community Secondary School, Jato Aka
- ii. N.K.S.T. Secondary School, Adikpo
- iii. Adikpo Comprehensive College, Adikpo

From each school, 50 students were randomly selected, giving a total of 150 participants. Although the focus is on girl-child education, both male and female students are included to ensure balanced perspectives. Participants range in age from 25 to 60 years (likely a typographical error in original; perhaps should be 15–20 years).

Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure equal opportunity for each participant to be included in the study. This minimizes selection bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using the Girl-Child Educational Attainment Scale (GCEAS), a structured questionnaire

designed by the researcher. The instrument consists of two sections:

- i. Section A: Demographic information of respondents (e.g., age, gender, parental occupation, income, and educational background).
- ii. Section B: Items assessing respondents' perceptions of the influence of demographic and socioeconomic factors on the educational attainment of girls in Kwande LGA.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, percentages, and frequency tables were used to summarize demographic data.

For hypothesis testing:

- i. An independent t-test was used to examine the relationship between parental income and girls' educational attainment.

- ii. Another t-test was applied to determine differences between parents with high and low educational qualifications regarding their influence on girls' motivation and schooling.
- iii. Simple linear and multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the combined effects of demographic and socioeconomic variables on girl-child educational attainment.

Results

The results were presented in tabular form and organized according to the hypotheses tested.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between parental income and the educational attainment of the girl-child in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State.

This hypothesis was analyzed using an independent t-test, as shown in Table 1 (results to be presented in the subsequent section).

Table 1: Independent t-test showing difference of parental income and the girl-child's educational attainment in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State.

Variable	N	Means	SD	df	T	P
Low Income	50	7.5200	.73512	148	-2.042	.000
High Income	100	7.7300	.50960			

The result presented in Table 1 revealed that there is a significant difference on parental income and the girl-child's educational attainment in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State. [$t(148) = -2.042, p < .01$]. The results indicates that parents with high income ($N=100$: Mean=7.7300, SD=.50960) scored higher than parents with low-income ($N=50$: Mean=7.5200, SD=.73512) on educational attainment of girl-child. Based on this result, hypothesis one was confirmed.

Hypothesis 2

This hypothesis states that **parents with higher educational qualifications will differ significantly from those with lower educational qualifications in terms of motivation toward the girl-child's educational attainment** in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 2: Independent t-test showing the difference between parents with higher educational qualification and those with lower educational qualification on motivation of girl-child's educational attainment in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State.

Variable	N	Means	SD	df	t	P
Parents with Lower educational Qualification	40	7.6750	.65584	148	.184	.826
Parents with Higher educational Qualification	110	7.6545	.58162			

The result presented in Table 2 above revealed that there is no significant difference on parents with higher educational qualification and those with lower educational qualification on the motivation in girl-child's educational attainment in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State. [$t(148) = .184, p > .05$]. The result indicates that parents with higher educational qualification ($N=110$: Mean=7.6750, $SD=.65584$) is almost same in mean score with that of parents with lower educational qualification ($N=50$: Mean=7.5200, $SD=.73512$) on educational attainment of

girl-child. Based on this result, hypothesis two was therefore not accepted.

Hypothesis 3

This hypothesis stated that places of residence of the girl-child will significantly influence her educational attainment in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State.

This hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression and the result is presented in table below.

Table 3: Simple liner regression analysis showing influence of place of residence of the girl-child on her educational attainment in Kwande Local Government Area.

Variable	R	R	Df	F	β	t	P
Constant	.048	.002	1,148	.335		22.954	.000
Place of residence					.098	.579	.564

The result presented in the table above revealed that, there is a significant negative influence of place of residence on the girl-child's educational attainment in Kwande Local Government Area [$R=.02, F(1,148) = .335, p < .01$].

The result further indicates that place of residence accounted for 4.9% of the total variance observed in girl-child educational attainment which is through a small influence, but statistically significant. Based on this result, hypothesis three was confirmed.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of demographic variables and socio-economic status on the educational attainment of the girl-child in Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State. The findings reveal that factors such as parental income, educational level, and place of residence play a critical role in shaping girls' access to and success in education.

Results indicate that parents with higher income levels and educational qualifications are better positioned to support their children's schooling providing the financial, emotional, and academic resources needed for strong educational outcomes. In contrast, parents with limited income or lower educational attainment often face challenges in sustaining their children's education, particularly that of their daughters.

The study also found that place of residence significantly affects girls' educational attainment. Girls living in rural or underserved areas tend to experience limited access to quality schools, learning materials, and qualified teachers, which negatively impacts their academic progress.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of barriers to girl-child education in Nigeria. They point to the need for targeted interventions by government, educators, and development partners to bridge existing socio-economic and demographic gaps. Promoting girls' education not only empowers individuals but also contributes to national development, poverty reduction, and gender equality.

In conclusion, a holistic approach is essential to address the challenges hindering the educational advancement of girls. Understanding the interaction between socio-economic factors and demographic characteristics enables stakeholders to design effective strategies that promote inclusive education. Ultimately, investing in girls' education yields long-term benefits strengthening families, communities, and the nation's socio-economic fabric.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. **Economic Empowerment Programs:**
Government agencies and non-governmental organizations should initiate and support programs aimed at improving the economic status of low-income families. Empowering parents financially will enhance their capacity to invest in their daughters' education.
- ii. **Scholarship and Financial Assistance:**
Special scholarship schemes and bursary programs should be established for girls from disadvantaged or low-income households to reduce financial barriers to schooling.

iii. Community-Based Initiatives:

Community sensitization programs should be implemented to raise awareness of the value of girls' education. Traditional and religious leaders should be engaged to challenge cultural norms and beliefs that discourage female education.

iv. Education Policy Reforms:

Policymakers should strengthen and enforce gender-sensitive education policies that guarantee equal access to quality education for all children, with particular attention to girls in rural areas. Infrastructure and learning materials should also be improved to support inclusive education.

v. Parental Sensitization and Engagement:

Parents should be enlightened through workshops, seminars, and media campaigns about the long-term benefits of girls' education. Changing parental attitudes is essential for sustaining girls' enrollment and retention in school.

vi. Teacher Training and Capacity Building:

Teachers should receive training on gender-responsive pedagogy to create supportive and inclusive classroom environments that encourage girls' participation, confidence, and academic achievement.

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