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Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Lack of access to education for girls in northern Nigeria.**

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### **Citation**

Obomanu, A. C. (2021). *Lack of access to education for girls in northern Nigeria.*

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



**Universiteit  
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Institute of  
Political Science

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**Date of Submission: 14 June 2021**

### **Thesis Paper**

**Title: Lack of access to education for girls in northern Nigeria.**



**Figure 1. The Map of Nigeria**

## **Abstract**

“Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful” (Lucius Annaeus Seneca). Nigeria is among the world most religious nations with a very low national literacy rate which does not represent the situation of education across the country’s geopolitical zones. This research examines the extent to which religion obstructs the development of girls’ education in the Northern region of Nigeria. Through a review of existing literature (secondary sources) and empirical research method of semi-structured interviews, collected samples from the Northern and Southern regions were able to make comparisons of the nature and degree of impact of Islam and Christian religions in Nigeria.

The research findings show that across the two comparable regions, religion has a critical influence on social, political, and economic factors, but at varying degree and outcome. In the Muslim North, access to education of girls is being restricted to the ground of religious fidelity and by the ruling elites, while in the distanced South, religion has helped to promote the extension of access to girls’ education.

*Keywords: Religion, tradition/culture, girl-child, access to education.*

*Word count:10,200*

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## **Introduction**

The United Nations International Children's Education Funds describes education as absolute tool used for development of the human race irrespective of one's colour, age, or gender (UNICEF, 2017). It emphasizes the importance of education as the key factor in attainment of social order and unification both in national and international settings. The right of all to education is recognized as a human rights in the International Conventions including the Universal Declarations of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights, and the national Constitution (Bakar., Abdullah, 2016). These conventions recognize the right to free and compulsory basic education for all as inalienable human rights.

For decades, gender inequality in education has come to the forefront of debate among scholars, policy-makers and civil society organizations (Manion, 2012). Women are underprivileged in their communities, workplaces, and social circles due to cultural norms and values, power dynamics between men and women, and gendered division of assets (Gupta, 2019). The international community recognizes the challenges that emanate from gender disparity as a factor of global development setbacks. Hence, creating an enabling environment for equal participation in education has been the priority of the international community (Kassa, 2015).

## **Problem Statement**

Nigeria is a religious country where religion is part of every sphere of individuals, family, and institutional life. Christianity and Islam are the two main religions that divide both the populations and regions of the country (Kitause., Achunike, 2013). This is reflected in the way Nigerian Christians and Muslims protect their religiosity on issues of concern at national and international community environments. The country is polarized by traits of culture, languages, social values, and geographical factors. Some authors have stated that these elements of diversity have made it difficult to obtain a

unified standard of development across the country’s geopolitical regions (Canci., Odukoya, 2016; kitause., Achunike, 2013). The Nigeria culture, as well as Christianity and Islam religions apporion

varying degrees of authority to the male gender. This might be due to the patriarchal dispositions of societies in which these socio-cultural factors emerged (Stroebe, 2015). The estimated 200 million population of Nigeria is almost equally divided by Islamic and Christian religions (Edewor et al., 2014). The nature of the Islamic religion that is widely practised in the Northern part of the country is far more patriarchal than what is practiced in the Christian South.



**Figure 2. Source: Chukwuonye et al, 2018: *Map of Nigeria showing the geopolitical zones of the country.***

According to Olaniyi (2019) “One in every five of the world’s out-of-school children is in Nigeria”. The author states further that “ in Nigeria about 10.5 million children are not registered in school even though education is officially free and compulsory“ (2019). This situation in Nigeria may speak for other sub-Saharan and possibly other developing countries in the world.

Some authors have argued that all the world religions and traditions today are preferably maintaining male social dominance within the societal structures (Sekscinska et al., 2016). This is because the construct of tradition and doctrines of religion prepare women to participate in traditional and religious life, but ultimately not to lead (Hamplova, 1994; Renzetti, Curran, 1999). In the affected countries, the attendance of formal education remains troubling as we become aware of how such failure affects the lives of women and the community in general. To improve the lives of women, the United Nations (UN) has been playing a leadership role in the advocacy and promotion of international norms to support girls’ participation in formal education (Kassa, 2015). A formal education that is of Western values differs from Islamic education. The Islamic education originates from Arab values and Quranic religious thought such as Islamic theology (Kalam) and the Islamic jurisprudence (the *fiqh*<sup>1</sup>) (Douglass.,

<sup>1</sup> *Fiqh* is an Islamic word that means human scholarly interpretation.

Shaikh, 2014). The international community is concerned about the situation of those deprived of their rights to education anywhere in the world.

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Female Literacy Rate (15-24)</b>
<b>North West</b>	<b>38.0%</b>
<b>North East</b>	<b>41.9%</b>
<b>North Central</b>	<b>62.0%</b>
<b>South West</b>	<b>92.6%</b>
<b>South-South</b>	<b>94.8%</b>
<b>South East</b>	<b>95.4%</b>

In Nigeria, as a case study country, despite national and international efforts in eradicating gender inequality which still prevails at a disproportional rate across the national regions. The situation of the northern region having the lowest literacy rate for women in the region has for decades as can be seen in table 1, gained the attention of the international community. Some scholars are pointing at religion as the main cause of high illiteracy rates and gender inequality in the region (Stonawski et al., 2016).

Table 1. Source: NBS Literacy rate across regions of Nigeria

Access to education, in general, is a topic that should be high on every country’s agenda as it allows individuals contribute fully to the development of their society. Girls’ education in particular is a highly significant and relevant subject about the study of social change, because examining the factors that constraint girls’ education is indeed key to understanding the level of social inclusion of females in the context of the Northern region of Nigeria as well as the possibilities for them to be treated as democratic, equal citizens. Hence, research question is therefore “*How does religion impact the access to education of girls in northern Nigeria?*”

Guaranteed reliability for this study comes from the use of diverse data sources. Primary research of semi-structured interviews were conducted and completed with content analysis as secondary approach. Here, data and information were analysed by the use of peer review articles and statistical data. This approach supplemented the goal to examine the factors that contribute to lack of access of girls’ education in Northern Nigeria. Rational Choice theory is employed to explain the dynamics of girls’ access to education.

**Literature Review**

Education is the search light that captures the plan for emancipation and development of humans, and the society that hosts them (Ishaq, Ali, 2014). In pursuance of this societal value, one of the popular

quotes from Muhammad A. Jinnah is that “no struggle can ever succeed without women participating side-by-side with men”. This is the junction that binds the values of education and equality.

### Access to education is a Human Rights

Over the past decades, education has progressively become a Universal Human Rights with pressure from the international community. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has a right to education was adopted in 1948 by the UN General Assembly (Adami, 2018). The UN declaration on education is aimed at achieving a common standard for all her member states. The emphasis on Western education which is referred to as formal education connotes the dominance of traditional Western form of education over other traditional education, such as the Arabic (Islamic) education and other forms of educations that prevail in societies of non-Western values (Sarbah, 2016). Islamic education can be referred to efforts by the Muslim community to pass along the heritage of Islamic knowledge by educating its own through its primary sources, the Quran and the Sunnah (Douglass., Shaikh, 2004). This sort of education can take place in mosques, school buildings (madrasa) and other institutions set up by Muslims over the centuries (Douglass., Shaikh, 2004). Still, we have limited knowledge about how the various traditions, cultures, or customs shape Christianity and Islamic religions in the regions where these two dominate (Fourcroy, 2006).

The Arabic form of schools in Nigeria compels young minds to memorize only the basics of Arabic to cite the Quranic doctrines. In this situation, this system of education has not fulfilled the quality of Islamic education as in the Saudi Arabia where this religion and education originated. On the contrary, Western education is sufficiently fulfilled in its approach of knowledge dissemination because, it is taught in the way that they are taught in the Western countries where it had originated (Nyanhongo, 2011).

Fourcroy (2006) states that access to women’s participation in formal education must be examined within the framework of the environment in which a woman lives. The social customs of a people in a community, such as tribe or region and the measure of religious influence will generally determine their approval on a right of girls to a Western education. Fourcroy argues that this will also determine the level of literacy rate of the population in general (2006). This situation is more prevalent in many developing countries or regions with historical ties and influences of Islamic education.

### Colonial factor

Prior to the periods of Africa’s colonization and the resulting Western system of government, traditional institutions were the only source of governance across the ethnic nationalities that make up the present-day Nigeria (Ajayi, 2020). All the traditions adhere to traditional religions, which place

more power and rights to the men. The advents of religions brought in a new sense of society. Nigeria became an amalgamated country of many nationalities with different religious values and aspirations.

The period of colonial rule changed traditional leadership of the regions to different directions (Canci., Odukoya, 2016). The authors further explain that during the period of colonization, the Southern part of the country was administered through the direct-rule system while the Northern region had the indirect-rule system. This meant that the population of the Southern region was enticed to accept Christian values by the missionaries who spread the Western education in the Southern region. The British applied the indirect-ruled system in the North. This means that the colonists did not show any interest in replacing the existing Islamic values in the Northern part of Nigeria. Therefore, it is obvious that the division and disparity in religion and education that still persists in Nigeria is rooted in the country’s colonial circumstances (Canci., Odukoya, 2016).

### Economic factor

There is also a wide economic gap between the populations of the two regions. This gap exists

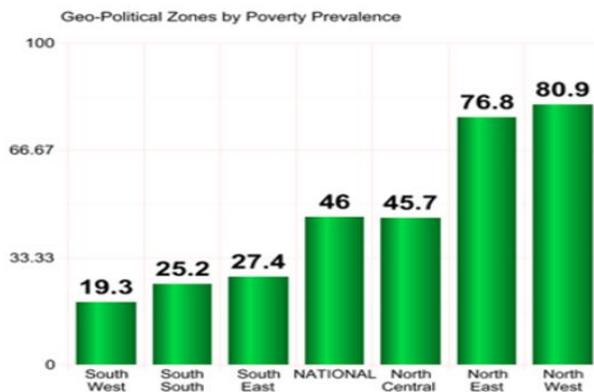


Figure 3  
Source: UN Poverty Index, (2015) Nigerian states by % above national poverty average

both in the GDP<sup>2</sup> and per capita between states in the North and South geopolitical zones. This gap is further exacerbated by the prevailing cultural restrictions on women’s economic participation. Bakwai (2014) observed that the consequences of restricted access to women’s education are a contributing factor to the prevailing situation of the disproportional poverty in the Northern region. The Northern region is the least industrialized part of the country that offers less

exposure for the opportunity of engaging in the Western way of production. Therefore, in such poor families, the available little income is prioritized to the education of the male gender than the female.

### Political factor

It is the role of the legislative arm of the government to set legal priorities through drafting and adaptation of the national constitution. The Nigerian federal government has persisted mere strong rhetoric on education as both rights and means of achieving national development (Adewala et al., 2006). However, this has not translated into legislative action, especially in the affected Northern

<sup>2</sup> Gross domestic product

region. Article 8 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution states that the government shall provide free education when practicable creates a constitutional loophole or weakness (Nigerian constitution, 1999). This automatically falls short of demonstrating a strong will or recognition of illiteracy as a matter of urgency that requires immediate action and the inclusion of women.

Nigeria has not supported its educational need with adequate financing. This is evidenced on the inconsequential national budgetary allocation to education which has resulted in a very dilapidated situation of education in the country (Adewala et al., 2006). The authors observed that the current administration in 2020 allocated only 5.6%, which was reported as the lowest in the past ten years. Again, the Nigerian constitution in its chapter 1, part II, states that “the government of the federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion. In practice, Sharia law prevails and is more recognized in the 12 states of the Northern region and where Qur’anic education remains the preferred system of education for the poor masses.

### Socio-Cultural Factors

Reports from different international aid organisations present in regions of Nigeria have attributed the literacy rate gap between the North and South of the country to the differences in social and cultural values. In one of UNESCO country situation report (2016), the organisation expresses dissatisfaction with the poor record of early school registration, despite all efforts. The fact is that the cultural environment of the North does not attach much importance to formal education as means of human development (Bakwai, 2014). They believe that a woman’s place in the development of society should be restricted to domestic chores (Rex, 2019). While in the southern region, private investment in primary and secondary school education is a lucrative business where mothers will struggle to pay for a better standard of education for their children irrespective of the gender as Edewor (2014) observed that even a widow will not want to deny their children access to education.

### Perception of female gender’s roles in a society

Education is the root of human development that benefits the society, meanwhile, the potential degree of access to education for girls will depend on how much culture and religion emphasize the place and roles of women in that society (Kassa, 2015). This will decide the level of the government’s priority and determination to utilize emerging opportunities for the advancement of women and their contributions to the general well-being of society. Schewel and Franssen (2018) argue that societies whose values are guided by a religious sense of morality are more likely to produce government

structures that limit its responsibility on women's education to domestic skills. Such patriarchal society subjects women to situations of poverty by promoting the religious-based culture of male dominance where women are deprived of the opportunity to contribute to political or socio-economic development (Kassa, 2015). According to Richards (2013), in patriarchal societies, institutions of policies are supported by laws and legislations that defend the reasons for women's subservience. As a result, this has caused and upheld inequalities between men and women in access to education, political position, and other socioeconomic advantages (Iqbal, 2018).

One of the distinguishing attributes between the rich Western countries and the rest is their historical ability to overcome culture and religious setbacks to human development with the concept of secularity. The West has ensured equal access to the institutions of learning through the accomplishments of some development programmes of many decades (Kantola, 2010). In Nigeria the average literacy rate is not only unequal between the male and female genders, but also across the Muslim Northern and Southern Christian regions of the same country. According to Varrella (2020), the average female literacy rate in the Southern regions is about 79% against the average of 36% in the North.

### Insecurity

For more than a decade, violence between government forces and Islamist Boko Haram terrorist groups in the northern region killed an estimated 38,000 people and displaced over 3 million people (Husted, Blachard, 2020). Boko Haram which literally means "Western education is forbidden" in the local language has evolved and expanded since 2009 to become one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world (Smith, 2015). In 2014, in the Chibok local government area of the Northern region, 276 Secondary School girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram. There have been more kidnappings, IDPs<sup>3</sup>, and rampant attacks on Christian infrastructures. Girls captured by Islamic radical groups were compelled to recite the Quran verses (Smith, 2015). Still, on insecurity, the region is sparsely inhabited as the largest region of Nigeria. This makes the sites of basic schools to be distanced from many homes. With the religious culture that forbids girls from walking alone without a male relative escort and the growing threats of Boko Haram, it becomes difficult or impossible for girls to access schools in the Northern region (Ishaq., Ali, 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> Internal Displaced Persons

### Religious context

Religion and education are the two human endeavours that have assumed their roles in society from the early periods of human existence. They are applied simultaneously in shaping human actions for the desired direction of the development of society (Rougier., Honohan, 2015). According to Niekerk (2018), religion is defined as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things. It unites individuals into one single moral community. Niekerk states further that religion focuses on collective values to create the influence of the commonly recognised moral power of society over people. Religion and education became vital assets of dominance from the historical periods of trade and colonization. The two main religions; Islam and Christianity gained their prominence from the periods of Arabs and European exploration respectively (Georgiou, 2012).

Religion controls all activities in the Islamic North than the Christian South where secularity is increasingly gaining ground in both government and social circles (Husted, Blanchard, 2020). Sharia is recognized in the Nigerian Federal Constitution, and it is within state’s prerogative to adopt this practice (Kabbani, 2016). The Islamic Almajiri form of education in the North places a higher priority on the boys by giving them the skill for menial jobs, but not science and engineering skills. Yet, girls are subjected to an even lesser levels of learning, with the priority of preparing them for early marriage and making them future good housewives who will be submissive to their future husbands (Kabbani, 2016; Okin, 1999). This situation is completely different in the South where the Christian families feel obligated by their religion to give a girl-child (at least) a basic education.

### International Development Instruments

Over the past seven decades, the United Nations has initiated series of programmes that aim at promoting gender balance in all its member states. The preceding Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the current Sustainable Development Goals, and the Security Council Resolution 1325 are examples of the UN programmes that are strategically designed to help the situation in developing countries (Chinkin, 2019). What is significant and a major setback to the UN initiated programmes is the lack of willingness of member states’ governments. The degree of commitment of national governments to reduce the effect of religious inclination could be a reason why some governments are reluctant to implement certain UN programmes. Consequently, international norms are encountering resistance, especially in the more non-secular societies like Northern Nigeria. In the affected Northern region, there is a wide public perception against international programmes that touches on a range of traditional Islamic norms. Some have argued that even the best UN programmes are usually reduced in a pool of public misguided discontent, that without a good level of public acceptance, well-intended international programmes may not produce the right result (Ekiyor., Wanyek, 2018).

### Benefit of English language in Nigeria

The use of the English Language became the official language of Nigeria on which education, and business transactions are conducted even before the periods of colonization when British merchants

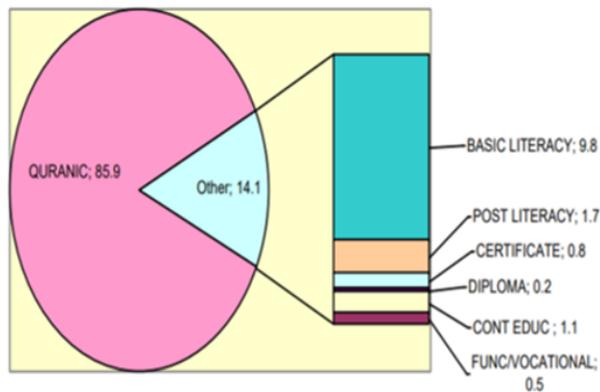


Figure 4  
 Source: Nigerianstat.gov.ng. (2018).  
 The Northerners excel in Islamic education |  
 than other regions.

and Christian missionaries settled in the coastal southern towns of Nigeria (Taiwo, 2009). This was not the situation in the North where the British ruled through an indirect system during the period of colonization. This has resulted in both economic and social setbacks with the low literacy that persists in that region. Nigeria’s national educational policy measures have failed to stimulate the interest of the Northerners in pursuing formal education and thereby mixing up

with the rest of the population in a central language of English. Rather, the region continues to excel in Islamic education, as can be seen in figure 4, which unfortunately does not support their economic aspiration in the landscape of Nigeria. The inability of the population of the Northerners to communicate in the English language has reduced their economic values, especially the female gender. Gaining employment in all sectors in Nigeria requires a minimum of spoken English which most youths and especially the female gender from the Northern region cannot afford. So, for this larger population to be integrated into the Nigerian social standard, the need for Western education is needed and girls’ education must be recognised as a special priority (Taiwo, 2009).

To conclude, several factors contribute to the prevailing situations of lack of access to education for girls in Northern Nigeria. The existing literature gap points to the statistical generalisation of Nigeria’s literacy rate. This study would provide more insight in examining the nature of major literacy rate differences between the Islamic and Christian regions.

## Theoretical framework

An African popular adage says, “when you educate a man you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman, you educate a nation”. This adage speaks volumes on the topic of this research. In theory, this statement implies that “education given to a girl-child who eventually grows into a woman at marriage has a lot of benefits to her person, children, family and to her society in general (Ishaq., Ali, 2014). Hence, a girl-child can be referred to as a female human being below the age of 18 (Nwonu, 2014). For this study, international norms will be examined on how it relates to rational choice theory.

Firstly, at the level of the international community, the United Nations in its promotion of universal human rights treats education as a public good that must be made available to all citizens (Bodansky, 2012). A public good has two key distinguishing characteristics of non-excludable, and non-rivalrous. It is the role of the government to provide education as an essential part of a substantive public good. Although people see education as a vital public good in nature, but to some Islamic parents in affected Northern Nigeria this is not the case. The ill-informed families see formal education as a move that comes to change their Islamic belief. On the other hand, the Christian south has constantly challenged their government to ensure the provision of education as a vital public good.

In Nigeria’s environment, religion is a strong factor that could resist education as a public good which is provided by the national government and the International Community. The government’s role of providing public goods can only be effective if the public users are not prevented by their own choice of belief. The Muslim populations of the Islamic Northern region of Nigeria perceive formal education (Western education) as having negative public benefits. Against this backdrop, Western education is preached in some mosques as producing knowledge that is against the tenets of Islam. Also, there is an economic consideration on the contest of Western education. Especially, the poor followers believe that committing a child to activities of street begging, or menial jobs or earlier marriage for dowry is economically rewarding and religiously justified than enrolling the child in formal school.

Secondly, rational choice theory examines the roles that individuals play in furthering collective actions. This theory is significant for the study of social problems and collective action. It recognizes the rationale behind the actions of individual actors as they strive to satisfy their interests, mostly at the detriment of general interest of the community (Brando et al, 2019; Ostrom, 1998; Olson, 1965). International norms are implemented by national actors, which further delegate implementing power to some lower authorities. This suggests that the implementation of international norms in national environment will depend on the degree of allegiance and fairness of the chain of local actors. The local

actors may be less committed to ensuring the success of any international norms which may reduce the existing advantages enjoyed by a local actor. This can be better explained by examining the factors that sustain gender inequality in the Northern region of Nigeria.

Rational choice theory may suggest that in such a male dominated environment, the commitment to enforce international norms that challenge existing value systems may not gain the support of the male gender implementors. Muslim men in the North may consider it insulting to take job instructions from women (Sarbar, 2016). The implementing government offices are dominated by men who will not work against their interests by cultivating a foreign culture that will challenge their positions and rights in the society. For instance, a Nigerian senator of Northern extraction, Sani Yerima who married a 13-year-old girl was aired on television as he took his stance at the Senate floor to fight against a bill that aimed at proscribing child-marriage in Nigeria in 2016 (Nwonu; Oyakhiromen, 2014). He succeeded in blocking every attempt to modernize the Nigerian constitution. Campaigners, who accuse him of violating the “Child Rights Act” are calling for the senate to change the law (Hirsch, 2013). Child-marriage is the marriage of a child below the age of 18 years. More women from the Southern region came out against Senator Yerima than women from the Northern region (Ekot, 2013).

Rational choice theory suggests that it will be a challenge to achieve a collective action in a society with self-interested individuals. It argues that actors are selfish and interested in maximizing their profits. This is illustrated in the ‘zero contribution theory’ which states that self-interested persons are not willing to make voluntary contributions to realize the public good interest, even if it would bring mutual benefit (Ostrom, 2000; Olson, 1965). Hardin Garrett (1968) supports this argument in his book of ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’. He illustrated a prisoner’s dilemma game theory which shows that rational people cannot overcome collective action, because they only think about short-term interests alone. Consequently, this causes conflicts with a long-term effect that disrupts the welfare of a society.

On the other hand, the southern region that had for decades embraced Christian values through the missionaries who spread Western education does not have the problem of educating their children irrespective of their genders. Therefore, the research question is ***‘How does religion impact the access to education of girls in northern Nigeria?’*** and the sub-questions: ***‘Which other factors constraint girls’ access to education in northern Nigeria?’***. ***How does access to education for girls contribute to human development?***

The actions of the Islamic religious and political northern elites such as senator Yerima who still promote child-marriage for their self-interest in this manner obstruct girls’ education with their action. Northern elites know that access to education to a girl-child will be an eye-opener, voice empowerment,

enlightenment, recognize that all these ingredients can eventually make an oppressed, slave-driven individual to know that there is a light out there and want out of the darkness (Osaghae and Irabor, 2019). Unfortunately, in the northern region, the religious elites who are in control of the people's mind may not be willing to share their respect with competing norms, even when the elites themselves are enjoying the luxuries of Western values. The research hypotheses are ***H1: An Islamic background obstructs access to education for girls in northern Nigeria. H2: A Christian background promotes access to education for girls in Nigeria.***

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### ***Religion/ Tradition/ Culture,***

Religion intermingles with the tradition and culture of any given society to define the norms on which they define their values (Fourcroy, 2006). Culture and tradition are complementarily used in expressions and can be defined as customs and belief system passed on from generations to generations as an acceptable way of life (Brammah, 2014). Culture defines a society and civilization on which a people is recognised. Hence, it directs the system and substance of education that a human society relies on to advance its recognized norms (Fourcroy, 2006). Cultural norms define normal gender roles and chastity of women, marriage and family values in society (Yilmaz, Ergun, 2008). These traits are created to guide the aspects of human relations.

Sigmund Freud's (1989) individualistic view of religion emphasises that religious ideas arose from the need to defend oneself "against the crushingly superior force of nature". He argues that religion can be related to rational choice theory which emphasises on individual pursuit of self-interest. The views of Freud on religion as an instrument of rational choice is true of societies where religion is used to defend the actions of privileged individuals in a position of service of society.

The differences that exist between the two regions of Nigeria can be related to the behaviour of the lead actors. Education can bridge social gap such as inequality in society if those in authority do not undermine the international norms that strive to breach the inequality gap, because of their personal interests. Comparably, Islam remains more patriarchal than Christianity (Rex, 2019). Education as a public good is desired by all citizens and can only be realized for the interest of the society if the implementing actors act with commitment. With the degree of influence of Islamic and Christian religions on the tradition and cultures of people of the Northern and Southern regions respectively, rational actors are able to protect their self-interest at the cost of societal development.

## Research Methodology

### Case selection

Nigeria is selected for this research because it presents an interesting case of differing literacy rates within national regions. Nigeria's highly religious population of over 200 million is equally divided among Muslim and Christian faith. The country's history of colonization holds the explanation of how the country has provided a fertile religious ground for the two main world competing religions (Islam and Christianity).

Based on this fact, the case selection is ideal on the research goals of examining the critical factors that have contributed to the differences in literacy rate and access to girl's child education within the North and South regions that host Muslims and Christians respectively.

The international community has initiated series of programmes with the goals of bridging the existing gap in literacy-rate between nations and within national regions. This includes the successive UN resolutions that aimed at promoting women's participation. The situation in Nigeria provides a suitable case study on religious doctrines that have resisted all efforts towards ensuring equal access to girl-child education.

The Nigerian government has not acted effectively on education as a vital aspect of the public good. This is evidenced on the inconsequential national budgetary allocation to education which has resulted in a very dilapidated situation of education in the country. The literacy rate and access to girls' education in the South are suggested to be different, because of their Christian religious faith that goes with the formal education before and colonization.

### Method of data collection

This is a qualitative research method that is intended to gain an in-depth understanding of explanatory processes of data analysis (Hyldegard, 2004). The data were collected through primary and secondary sources and analysed to identify related issues with the scholarly intention of examining the key indicators on areas of research issues. The research process applied the method of semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were designed as open-ended interviews (Guest., Bunce, 2006).

This research method directs interviewees to answer specific research questions in an explanatory manner (Fernandez, 2018). The purpose is to engage interviewees in a deeper discussion, allowing them the relaxation to discuss issues according to their levels of understanding on research issues.

The target respondents were a selection of purposive sampling of 12 adults from Islamic and Christian families. According to Morse and Niehaus (2009), a purposive sampling was intended to maximize efficiency and validity. This includes four men and eight women between the ages of 20 to 50. This age bracket is considered active parenthood in Nigeria. The 12 purposive samples place emphasis on saturation as selecting more participants may not provide more information (Guest and Bunce, 2006).

The sample selection was carried out by a local female gender-based Non-Profit organisation called Adiari Farm Project (AFP). AFP is a gender-based local NGO with significant experiences in rural communities and matters of human development. AFP was chosen for this assignment because the foundation has good working and social relationship with the locals as well as institutional actors in the Northern and Southern regions. AFP assisted in the research tasks of sample selection and arrangement for a fitting time for interviews. The interviews were conducted by telephone by the researcher in consideration of the social distancing requirements on the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study provided detailed and more valid interpretations of deeper understanding of religion amongst a group of people in the northern region. It provided opportunities for respondents to give a voice in expressing their views, which might not otherwise be heard. Consequently, this could be influential in creating an understanding among international stakeholders.

### Operationalization

The semi-interview questions were designed to collect extensive information from two homogenous groups of respondents (Guest and Bunce, 2006). The population samples were collected from the Islamic and Christian communities in the two comparable regions of Nigeria. The following are the indicators:

#### **Religion**

Religion constitutes the dominant factor that directs the tune of the interview of the open-ended discussions. The discussion was intended to derive information on the following areas: -

- The situations in the Islamic and Christian communities as a measure of the impact of religion on education differences
- Level of individual, family and community commitment to religious dictates.
- Examines the main source of compulsion to religion (for instance, where poverty circumstances push people to religion because religion provides them with assistance, the level of government gaps which translate to lack of social and physical facilities, and the level of ignorance that is assumed from lack of education that makes people depend on religious authorities for knowledge support (Hylegard, 2004).

### **Tradition**

The tradition of the people existed before the advents of religions hence, it is important to examine the following traits:

- Knowledge of original tradition and the ability to differentiate tradition from religion examines the degree of change that religion brought on original tradition, and identified the degree to which tradition resists the intrusion of Western values into their original traditions.

### **Education**

Education is a process of learning recognised by society. Hence, every human race has its system of education (Aaron et al., 2006). The advent of foreign education only changed the process, but did not originate the need for education. Hence, the interview stressed to identify the following on education: -

- Interviewee's knowledge on traditional education, the degree of importance attached to modern (formal) education, the level of parents' education, whether all the children including the girls are in school, and whether girls in the family are equally supported to attend school

### **Parent & Family circumstances:**

Children's education may be determined by parents' circumstances, especially their own level of school attendance. Hence, it was important to observe the following: -

- The level of parents' education to identify the degree of attached importance to education, identified frequency of mother's education in family and how it affects chances of girl-child education, and identified number of children in Muslim and Christian families, and, whether the opportunity for education is prioritized to boys.

### **Economic circumstances**

The financial ability of families to bear the costs of education was examined to determine the effect on girl-child education. Hence the following traits were examined: -

- Sources and sustainability of family income, the structure and size of the cost for children's education in regions of Nigeria, identified family-scale of preference (opportunity cost).

### **Security & Safety**

Security has emerged to become the more recent threats to education in Nigeria. It is of significance that the insecurity of Boko Haram directly challenges Western education. Hence, the following traits were monitored.

- The nature and degree of threats to people who would refuse doctrines (from family environments to the public), the level of government protection, for the safety of schools and attendants, identified the distance between available (basic) schools and family homes.

## Methods of Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from the interviews were analysed by an in-depth assessment of the respective responses to the research questions. This allowed for comparative analysis for further descriptions on the findings. Data collected was mainly focused on making findings on situations in the Northern region. Inclusion of the Southern part of the country served the purpose of making a comparison with the situation in the northern region (Hyldegard, 2004). The comparison identified valuable information on differences in religion and other social challenges that might affect girl-child education in the focus region. This explains the different situations of women in both regions and how their roles in their communities are affected by the causal factors as discussed earlier. In conclusion, it is believed that the research findings will be useful to national policymakers in their endeavours for improving the situations of women and girls in the affected region.

## Research Analysis

Firstly, Islam which is the predominant religion in Northern region supports larger family size. Five out of the six parents who were interviewed are in a polygamous family with a total number of 70 children. In this circumstance, children's education at the formal institutions cannot be guaranteed, considering the choice to be made for affordable Islamic education. In such families with many children, any consideration for formal education will be prioritized to the male-child and certainly not the girl-child whose adult value is limited to that of becoming a wife and mother. Comparatively, the 6 Christian families interviewed are all in a monogamous marriage with 22 children. The parents are averagely educated and have sustainable sources of income. With these, they can guarantee the cost of formal education for the children, including the girl-child.

Secondly, the impact of religion on access to girls' education can be further assessed within the context of Islamic teachings on moral values. Based on the empirical research, Islam places sacred values and demands on women to be protected from exposure to certain environments. From the narratives of the interviewees, the girl-child needs for education can only be realized at the confinement of Islamic schools, which is unfortunately insufficient for personal and societal development. The patriarchal nature of this society can be related to the rational choice theory. In the sense that the male gender that controls the societal institutions of authority (Islamic clerics and government officials) and

also as head of families may not want to change the religious status quo. In comparison with their southern counterpart, Christian society has no opposition to attainment of formal education. Over the decades, the Christian women have increasingly gained considerable power in the religious institutions and other facets of the society where their appearance is not restricted by religious inclinations. The narratives of the interviewees revealed that Christian institutions have found education to be worthy of investing. Christian religious groups have been involved in the educational sector through the provision of Nursery, Primary, Secondary, and other levels of education and training courses. These differences clearly show that the Islamic religion is not as tolerant and supportive in enabling access to girl-child education as the Christian religion. While the Islamic religion in the North accepts begging as a trade, the Southern tradition outrightly forbids streets begging, but instead tolerate child labour as a means of subsidizing family income.

Thirdly, the aspect of political factor which contributes to lack of access of girl-child education is closely related to religion. This is evidenced from the fact that the Northern political elites have succeeded in enshrining Sharia laws and values into the Nigeria's constitution. However, Sharia law which deprives women in the region of their right to education is only obtainable in the implementing Northern region of the country. In the sense of rational choice theory, Northern political elite fiercely oppose any legislative proposals or ban on girl-child marriage towards enforcement of compulsory formal education for all children. From the narratives of the interviews the affected women believe that the political actions of their representatives are in their interest. Hence, they show just a minimum resistance.

Fourthly, the socio-economic circumstances and the security threats that prevail in the Northern region still bear its credence from the religious factor. 4 out of the 6 women from the Northern region disclosed that their family low income at the scenery of serious situation of threats have prevented them from sending their girls to school. Boko Haram which is the biggest threat in the region claims its legitimacy from the Islamic religion. Schools are no longer safe for girls because of constant kidnappings and murders. Since after 276 girls were kidnapped from their school in 2014, more kidnappings of schoolgirls are still going on. Some of the women from the northern region stated that their homes are distanced from the location of schools in the community as this is another factor that poses a challenge for girls' education as girl-child school enrolment has drastically decreased due to these threats (Herrmann, 2019).

Fifthly, the impact of the external intervention of the United Nations has not made an impact on the affected region despite the huge resources already committed to change the situation. Notably, that the real affected people are not aware of any of the UN programmes supporting education in both regions.

The summary of the findings concludes that the Islamic religion has a major impact on the access to education of girls in Northern Nigeria. In the Muslim Northern region, religion defines the cognitive thought and cause of actions in politics, economic and social norms. Formal education and equal participation of girls are perceived as a social order that is against the fundamental values of Islam. The religious, traditional, and political leaders in the Islamic highly patriarchal society are defensive of their religion, but for their benefit. The Northern elites promote their self-interest and they perceive formal education as a rebellious instrument of emancipation of the oppressed women (Osaghae and Irabor, 2019). The situation of the Nigerian Islamic North may not represent the situation in all Islamic countries, but partly represent the aftermath of colonial indirect rule administration in Nigeria.

In the Southern region where the Christian religion has influenced social values, education is a priority and the inclusion of girls in education planning has helped to make the region more developed. Also, through the Christian churches, more private schools are being set up in the southern region to empower girls' education for the betterment of society.

## Operationalization Table on Research Analysis

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Village/LGA/ State	Religion	Family Structure	Degree of Formal Education	Occupation	No. of children in a family
One	35	Female	Swa, Balanga, Gombe State	Islam	Polygamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents (no formal education)</li> <li>Children (only boys in primary school, girls in Islamic education)</li> </ul>	Petty trader	14
Two	27	Female	Lafiya, Lamurde, Adamawa State	Islam	Polygamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents (no formal education)</li> <li>Not all boys in primary school, girls do house chores.</li> <li>Only son attended secondary school education</li> </ul>	Farmer	21
Three	40	Female	Jibiya, Jibiya, Katsina State	Islam	Polygamy married at the age of 13 (Child-marriage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents have no formal education</li> <li>Boys were not interested in education</li> <li>Girls did not complete primary school because of child-marriage</li> </ul>	Farmer	11
Four	45	Male	Lemu, Gbako, Niger State	Islam	Monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent stopped half way at secondary school level</li> <li>All children in school.</li> </ul>	Clerk	4
Five	48	Male	Agwashi, Doma, Nasarawa State	Islam	Polygamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents stopped half way at primary school level</li> <li>Older children did not attend school, but younger ones are in schools, primary &amp; secondary school.</li> </ul>	Farmer	6
Six	28	Female	Saki, Kware, Sokoto State	Islam	Polygamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents did not attend primary school</li> <li>Older children- no education, but younger ones (both boys and girls are now in schools)</li> </ul>	Petty trader	14
Seven	32	Female (now a widow)	Mbutu, Abob Mbaise, Imo State	Christianity	Monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents attended more than secondary school level</li> <li>All the children are in school</li> </ul>	Trader	3
Eight	40	Female	Ifetado, Ife South, Osun State	Christianity	Monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents attended more than secondary school</li> <li>All children are in school</li> </ul>	Teacher	4
Nine	39	Female	Isieke, Ebonyi, Ebonyi State	Christianity	Monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents' attended a minimum of basic education</li> <li>All children are in school</li> </ul>	Trader	3
Ten	32	Male	Okpaliko, Eziowelle, Anambra State	Christianity	Monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents' attended the level of secondary school</li> <li>All the children are in school</li> </ul>	Trader	5
Eleven	48	Male	Ikot Iya, Etim Ekpo, Akwa Ibom State	Christianity	Monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents attended more than secondary school level</li> <li>All the children are in school</li> </ul>	Car Mechanic	3
Twelve	49	Female	Komoforaba, Kulu Ama, Bayelsa State	Christianity	Monogamy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents' attended secondary education</li> <li>All the children are in school.</li> </ul>	Trader	4

Table 2

## Implication of research

This study may create wider awareness to increase pressure on the regional, state and federal governments of Nigeria about access to girls' education. Such pressure is expected to come from both internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, research findings could fuel religious resistance from the religious activists who will want to preserve norms that forbid the education of the female gender. According to Jabbi (2014), religious authorities command the loyalty of their followers. In this sense, religious authorities in the region whose mandate is to maintain religious values may feel threatened by actions for change.

## Academic and societal relevance

Girls' education is recognised to be the foundation for sound economic and social development. Therefore, educating girls produces mothers who are educated and who will evolve in educating their

children, care for their families and provide their children with adequate nutrition. Subsequently, educating girls will make better health for the children, reduction in child mortality that will help in achieving national development of their society (Nwonu., Oyakhiromen, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Islamic and Christian religions that are predominantly practised in the Northern and Southern regions respectively are deeply interwoven with social norms that are practised in the two regions. The 10.5 million children who are not registered in school are largely from the Islamic North even though basic education is free and compulsory.

The empirical research has led to the conclusion that the Islamic religion does not adequately support the education of girls in the Northern region of Nigeria. Islamic norms provide the backing for other prevailing factors of tradition, socio-economic, and political as they prevail against equal access to education of girls in the region. Islamic background obstructs access to education for girls in the way it sustains the patriarchal society that revolts against Western values. On the other hand, the Christian religion has contributed to girls' education in the Southern region by building a societal background that recognises and pursues the economic power in Western education.

From the Islamic background, rational choice theory may explain why the religious and political elites are defensive of the very system that sustains the indoctrinations against Western values. In the Christian background, the relationship of the religion with the Western culture explains why education is popular and acceptable to the population of the region. The affected Northern region will remain economically depressed and a cause for national depression as long as the region remains educationally backward. It is remarkable from the research findings that the Muslim population are gradually becoming aware of the importance and are increasingly accepting Western education. It is therefore the reserved duty of the government to address the setbacks, especially that of insecurity in the region.

As a line of recommendation, the federal government of Nigeria must re-consider the existing areas of constitutional loopholes which are been exploited by elites in such a patriarchal region of the country. More investment must be made in education with an increase in budgetary allocation to address some of the peculiarities of the Northern region.

Also, the federal and state government must exercise the right to use force by prosecuting state and non-state actors, whose actions are against girls' education and economic empowerment. International programmes to support child education must be brought to the awareness of the people as

a means of motivation. The international community on its part must show a willingness to act according to the peculiarities of national environments.

This research is limited to the religious environments of the two main regions of Nigeria. For reasons of Covid-19 restrictions, the empirical research approach employed the system of telephone interviews which is considerable of less effective than a physical discussion format. Also, some interviewees were cautious not to divulge critical and sacred information about their faith. Further, the remoteness of the environment of the interviewees presented some difficulties in ensuring proper documentation and procedures as demanded by the supervisor. It is vital for the purpose of this research that the sample is evenly collected from the comparable regions to ensure viability and reliability of the result. Due to the vastness of these regions, past research works on this subject have not been able to cover both regions in a comparative manner.

Religion is the primary factor examined in this study. It will be suggested to research the political, cultural, socio-economic factors to determine to what extent these factors influence access to girls' education in northern Nigeria. Further research on these areas will complement existing knowledge as provided in this research on religion.

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## Appendix

### Operationalization table

Background concept	Conceptualization	Operationalization
<b>Religion</b> (See definition in Literature review section)	Islam/ Christianity	What religious faith are you?  How many times a month do you attend Mosque/church service?  Do you read the Quran/Bible regularly?  Would you consider yourself to be a religious person? Why?
<b>Education</b> (See definition in literature review section)	Family	How many children do you have in your family? Are all your children in school?  How would define the level of education in your family? Are girls in your family equally supported to attend school in your family?
<b>Family value and Tradition</b> (See definition in literature review)	Social equity	Do you think women and men have equal rights in your community? Are women free to take employment in your family? At what age do you think you will give your daughters' hand in marriage?
	Safety/security	Is it safe for your girls to attend school, and what is the distance of the school from your home?

Table 2

## Interview Transcript

The tune of these semi-structured interviews is designed to meet the local contents of the target respondents. The questions were aimed at achieving greater input of respondents in a relaxed tone of discussions.

### **Respondents of Muslim Background**

#### **Respondent Number One - (A woman)**

**Question 1: Can you tell me about yourself and family background? (This was to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.).**

**Respondent:** My name is Halima Kwaro from Swa (district area) in Balanga Local Government Area (LGA) of Gombe State. I am 35 years old. I have four children. My husband has two other wives and a total of 14 children including my four children (out of which eight are females and six are males. I am a petty trader.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions aimed to know whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I am a Muslim by birth and all my family members are Muslims. Everybody in this community is a Muslim. I cannot read Quran, but I know many things in the Quran because I was taught the words of Allah in the Mosque. I and my family members are committed Muslims and we follow the words of Allah. I have said it before that I was born a Muslim. All my friends are Muslims just like me.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? Do your children go to school? (The discussions aimed to gather information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** All the boys go to block school, but not the city school (secondary school). The senior boys are within 16, 20 and twenty-five. The girls go to the Mosque school 3 days a week to learn Quran. Quranic education will make girls become good mothers and wives.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? Do you think your religion supports girls to attend formal education? (The discussions aimed to know the level of**

**respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education). And what the differences are with UN sponsored education.**

**Respondent:** My traditional education is the same as the Islamic education. In my tradition, girls are taught their roles in our community. Our tradition demands every family to train the girls to be responsible wives and mothers who will bring honour to their family. Girls help more in domestic chores and help to take care of their younger brothers and sisters. Moreover, if girls are allowed to go to block school or city school, they will not find husband quickly or not find a suitable one.

The tradition also demands that the boys should learn how to take care of the family and the community. My tradition is different from foreign tradition (education), because foreign education does not respect women, and does not treat women well.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls attend formal education? (This is to gather some information on whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** No, my religion does not support girls to attend any school that is not Islamic. Non-Islamic schools teach women the wrong thing. The most important value for a woman is to be a good mother and a good wife to the husband. In non-Muslim communities, they allow girls to attend block school and even attend big schools in the city. So, these girls do not respect their husbands when they are married and do not take care of their children.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (Discussions aimed to know the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** No, I have not heard about such school, it is not in our community.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions aimed to find out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** We can afford to send the boys to block school in our community, but cannot afford to send them to city school, because it is expensive and dangerous. In the city school, they used to kidnap our children. The block school is important for the male children, because they use it to get work, sometimes in the city. The girls do not need it because they have to learn from the Quranic school how to take care of the children and family. I myself was married when I was a little girl.

I do not know how far the distance to school is, but I know it is far, and we cannot allow girls to go there. It is not safe for girls. Even the boys that sometimes go there, many parents in this community do not have enough money to buy school uniforms for all their male children. School books are also very high, though we do not pay school fees for block school (primary school).

**Respondent Number Two (A woman)**

**Question 1: Can you tell me about yourself and family background? (This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.).**

**Respondent:** I am Aisha Adamu from Lafiya, in Lamurde Local Government Area (LGA) of Adamawa State. A 27- year-old woman. I am married with six children (4 girls and 2 boys), but there are other four wives before me. There are 21 children in all (6 boys and 15 girls). My husband likes to male children, but I do not think he has had enough as he would have wanted to. I am a farmer. I help my husband in the farm and the children help as well.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions aimed to know whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I come from a Muslim family and married into a Muslim family. I live in a Muslim community. I cannot read, but can cite Quran off head all the time. I know what the Quran wants everyone of us to say and do. They teach us the words of Allah in the Mosque during prayer. I and my family members are going to Mosque like 4 times a week and we obey what the Quran says we should do or behave. According to our spiritual leaders, girls do not need Western education, because they learn everything from Quranic school.

All my friends are Muslims. I can talk with non-Muslim women sometimes, but I do not consider them as friends.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? Do your children go to school? (The discussions aimed to gather information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** I help my husband work in the farm, I do not need education for that. Even before I got married, I have been helping in the family farmland. I cannot read books. I went to Mosque when I was young to learn Quran and I still go to mosque to learn. In fact, I met my husband in the mosque when I

was 11 years old and after two years we got married. He was 35 years at the time. My husband cannot read nor write, but read the words of Quran from his head.

Not all the children go to school in the family. At the moment only 3 boys out of the 6 boys go to primary school. The most senior boy who is 24 is now married and lives nearby, he completed primary school and did not finish his secondary school in the city before getting married. The girls are not in school because they help at home and also at the farm. They are not in formal school, but follow the teachings of Quranic education where they learn how to read Quran without a book.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? Do you think your religion supports girls to attend formal education? (The discussions aimed to know the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education). And what the differences are with UN sponsored education.**

**Respondent:** Traditional education I think is the Islamic education. Girls are taught how to perform their duties at home and when they get married in the community. The values of our tradition are to teach our children, both boys and girls to be responsible husbands and wives who will bring respect to the family. Girls are taught to be more domestic. Allowing our girls to go to school which is sometimes not close to our homes. Our tradition and religion forbid prostitution. If girls are free to walk alone, they may be harassed or groom into prostitution by dangerous people. This will bring dishonour to our family as Muslims.

The tradition lays out the rules for our boys on how to learn to take care of their wives and children and be good people in the community. My tradition is different from Western tradition (education), where children are spoilt and do not obey their parents nor being responsible wives to their husbands.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions aimed to know whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** My religion does not allow that because it is not Islam. It is Haram. In formal schools they teach women a lot of bad things. The most important value of a woman is to be a good housewife to the husband. In non-Muslim communities for instance, in Christian families, where they support girls to attend formal education of primary and secondary schools. The way of teaching in these schools make these girls to be promiscuous and lack respect to their husbands when they are married.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (This is to gather some information on the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights**

**of the female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** No, what is that? I haven't seen such in this area. If it is in our community, I could have heard about it.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (This is to gather information about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** It is a challenge for us to provide all the money needed to send all the boys to school, not to mention sending girls. But if we have enough, we would like to send the remaining 3 boys to school in order to find a better job in the city. Girls do not need formal education. It turns them into prostitution.

The school the boys go to everyday is not far. It does not mean we will send the girls to that place. It is too open for girls, they may end up in the hands of bad people on the road, and we do not have enough money to waste like that. We are only farmers here in the village. It is not easy to let boys go to school when they should be helping their fathers in the farm as well. Finally, school books and teachers are asking for money all the time for one thing or the other such as when school uniform is torn.

**Respondent Number Three (a woman)**

**Question 1: Can you tell me about yourself and family background? (This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.).**

**Respondent:** My name is Fatima Ramatu, from Jibiya, in Jibiya LGA of Katsina State. I am a 40-year woman. I have been married since I was 13 years. My children are 8 in number and they are all grown up (4 women and 4 men). I have only one co-wife. My co-wife has 3 children (a girl and 2 boys). I used to help at the farm and I do the cleaning, cooking and taking care of my children when they were young, but now I am a full housewife because I am not strong to do farm work. Now I help in raising my co-wife children while she does her trading of selling box of snuff at the market square. Our husband died 3 years ago by road accident. He used to travel to the city to work as a Maison. He used to carry blocks at building sites. That was our income before he died.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions aimed to know whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I am a Muslim. My parents were Muslims. This is a Muslim community and I have never lived outside this community. It is true that I cannot read nor write, but I know Quran in my head all the time. I know what the Quran wants everyone of us to say and do. During prayer in the mosques or at home, we say and obey the words of Allah. I go to the mosques 5 days a week to pray and cite the Quran. All my friends are Muslims, because everyone in the community is a Muslim. I speak with non-Muslim families when they come to our community with their children, but I do not like the way they dress. My parents told me that time when I was young that they were not respectful as they talk freely with men. My parents did not like them at all.

Our religious leader in the mosque said that women who are educated do not make good wives neither do they respect their husbands. For this reason, girls are barely not allowed to go to Western school (formal education). But I hear that rich people of Muslim background go to school here in Nigeria and also overseas. This confuses me a lot. So, I am not sure if our religion really forbids female children from going to school as they say.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? Do your children go to school? (This is to gather some information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** My husband and I did not attend primary school because I was engaged to him at a very early age. I moved in to his parents and they did not have money to put me to school. I was following his parents to the farm and helping in doing house chores. I got married to my husband when I was at 13 years. My husband was 17 and the only surviving son of his parents. He married early to start having children.

Six out of my grown-up children attended primary school. 4 of the girls went to primary school. But they did not finish primary school. They got married and their education had to be stopped. Two of my children did not want to go school at all and we couldn't force them. They learned handwork. They are carpenter and Bricklayer.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? Do you think your religion supports girls to attend formal education? (The discussions aimed to gain insight on the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education). And what the differences are with UN sponsored education.**

**Respondent:** We see a lot of people claiming to be this and that. But most of us do not know much about education apart from the one we learn in the mosque.

Our traditional and Islamic education are one. Women and girls get teaching from the spiritual leader on what our roles in the community are. For example, for us to be good wives and mothers to our children and husbands. This brings honour to the community and the family. The traditional and Islamic education teaches how men can do handwork to provide for his family while women help to take care of children. Moreover, if our female children are allowed to go to primary or secondary, they will become prostitutes and no man will marry them.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions aimed to understand whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** My religion does not allow that because it is Haram. In formal schools they do not follow the words of Allah. Important value of a woman is to bring honour and respect to her family and to the family of her husband. I do not know anything about other faiths such as Christianity. But I know they have no respect and the manner their women and girls are dressing is not proper. They are too exposed. Majority of them do not cover their heads when they are going in the church. Christianity do not have good values as I am seeing them. I hear a lot of divorce in their community.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (Discussions aimed to know the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of the female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** I haven't heard such in this area. There is nothing like such programmes in this community. Maybe they have such in other communities.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (Discussions to lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** Most of us in this community are farmers or petty traders. We do not make enough money. We cannot train all the children, but even if we had to, boys will go and girls will stay at home. I believe it is a waste of money to train a girl and she will marry later and goes to her husband's house. Why would someone spend that money on a girl who will be married to another family? If the husband wants to send her to school after marriage, we the parents cannot refuse. It is out of our hands by then.

I do not know how far, but it is far. In our community, we live a little bit far from one another. We only have two school buildings in our community. The local government built one school in the centre of

the community and the one around the market square. So, the school is far from us. I hear that they have separate classroom for girls and boys in one school while the other school has joint classroom and it is always empty. Parents hear a lot of children being kidnapped so they are afraid that their children, especially their daughters might be kidnapped by Boko Haram.

#### **Respondent Number Four (A man)**

**Question 1: Can you tell me about yourself and family background? (This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.).**

**Respondent:** I am Babangida Audu, from Lemu, Gbako (LGA) of Niger State. I am a man of 45 years and have a wife. I have four children (2 boys and 2 girls). My children are still young, because the oldest is 15 and the youngest is 9. I am a civil servant. I work as a clerk in one of the schools in our local government area.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions aimed to know whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I am a Muslim. My parents were Muslims as well. I was schooling till half way in my secondary school when my father died. I had to stop because there was no one to care for my father's household. For secondary school, we pay school fees and could not afford that. Today, I am using the level I achieved to work for the government, and that is good for my family.

I heard a lot of people say that Islam discourages female education for some reasons. To be sincere, to educate children whether boys or girls depends on the fathers and less on the mothers because the women are under the men and should follow the men's decision. I say so because a lot of fathers want to obey all the rules of our religion while others are more relaxed about it. My father was relaxed about all the rules about Islam, especially on matters of foreign education. People might say we are not true Muslim but that is far from the truth.

I go to the mosques often and have quiet time to read the Quran. All of my friends are not Muslims, I have friends of other religious faith such as Christians. I do not see anything wrong with other religions as long as they respect Allah and my own religion. We all pray to one Allah or God. My parents accepted parents of my friends because in my school, other children from other religious faith were in the same class with me.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? Do your children go to school? (Discussions to lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** The level of formal education in my family is secondary school. I stopped half way in secondary school. My wife finished her primary school after I married her, because she parents did not send her to school. Her parents did not know the value of education for her. She said that even though they had wanted to, there was no stable source of income as they were peasant farmers.

My four children are attending school. Two of them are in primary school and 2 older ones are in secondary school. My income is not much, but we are managing with the small money my wife is contributing with her trading of kola nuts. My aim is to send them to university if they would like to study further after their secondary education. I know the value of education; therefore, my wife and I are working hard to give our children the best we can. No daughter of mine will be given out in marriage without completing at least secondary school level. With education, my children can easily get better employment in life.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? Do you think your religion supports girls to attend formal education? (The discussions aimed to know the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education). And what the differences are with UN sponsored education.**

**Respondent:** Actually, I do not know if the UN is sponsoring any education. All I can if that the Nigerian government gives free education in primary school level and not in secondary school. Level.

**Respondent:** Traditional and Islamic education are mainly the same because girls are taught of what their roles in the community should be. They are also taught how to behave in the public by wearing proper clothes and cover their heads. This demonstrates that they are from responsible families. For women to behave in certain ways is very important to Islamic teaching. Men are taught how to cater for their families financially. This brings respect and honour in the eyes of our religion. The traditional and Islamic education teaches how men can do handwork to provide for his family while women help to take care of children.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions aimed to know whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** My religion does allow formal education for girls. I have not read where Quran says we should deny the female gender a formal education. I believe it is the religious extremists are twisting the words of Allah. This confuses some illiterate parents of refusing their daughters to enjoy education. Those parents are brainwashed that formal education spoils their daughters and brings them into prostitution and disrespect to the husbands when they get married. Moreover, they are meant to believe that they are ones who are the real Muslims.

I do know about Christianity and I value their faith as well. People say they don't have respect for their husbands, but I think otherwise. Only few of them especially young wear clothes that do not cover them well or do not cover their heads when they are going in the church. but majority of them do dress good.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (Discussions led to know the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of the female genders' education).**

**Answer:** Well, I can't answer that because I don't know about it.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (This is to gather information out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Answer:** Most people in this community are farmers. I am one of the fortunate ones to work as a civil servant. Our income whether you are a farmer or civil servant is not much. Sometimes it is a challenge to train all the children even if you want to. You have to buy school uniform, books and other things on your own.

In this community we have three schools. I wouldn't say the schools are far or near, because some people live like 3 miles to school and some live a mile to school. Anyone who really wants his children to go to school will wake them up very early every day to prepare for school. Though it depends on how the parents of the child value formal education. I know if the school is a bit far, parents will not let their daughters go there because of kidnapping or sexual harassment. But I know we need more school building to make it easily accessible for everybody.

**Respondent Number Five (a man)**

**Question 1: Can you tell me about yourself and family background? (This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.).**

My name is Mallam Ibrahim. I am 48 years old and I was born in Agwashi, Doma in Nasarawa State. I have two wives now because one of my wives died some years ago. I have nine children and has lost three of my children. The oldest of my children is 27 years (son) and he lives kano with his wife and two children. I am a farmer and grow onions and carrots that are sold in the cities.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

I am a Muslim, and my family lineage has always been Muslims. I attended the madras school till I was 18 years. My parents are good Muslims who would want every of their child to be faithful to Allah. I can read the Quran a little because I did not attend enough government school. I can recite the Quran very well and I still teach the younger ones the message of Allah as it is in the Quran. I can say that everyone in this village is a Muslim. I don't know much about the ways of life of other people who are not Muslims because, I have not had a non-Muslim friend, although they do come to this village to buy our farm produce, but not as friends. Those who come from the city to buy our produce only think of money, they don't pray and they are always in a hurry.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? Do your children go to school? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

I only attended the government school (referring to formal, primary school) for maybe three years. My own parents did not attend the government school. In fact, in their own time there was no government school around. I made mistake of not putting my older children in the school, but the younger ones are doing well. Three of my children have finished their school in the city (referring to Secondary school). Maybe, some of them will go higher (referring to University level). My own children must make sure that their own attend good school so that they can have good jobs. In our village school, we don't have many girls, but I think many families are bringing their daughter also to school. My younger female children are now going to school, but two of my older daughters did not and they are already married. I want my children to allow the girls to go to government school.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).** And what the differences are with UN sponsored education.

The traditional education that my parents and myself met in this village is Quranic education. It was used to be essential that every child must attend a good level of this traditional religious education. But now, it appears many families are not taking it important, but put their children in government school. The Quran teaches everything about the society and the separate roles of males and females in the family and society. I will like my own children and grand-children to attend both the religious and

government education, because the two are important for a man and woman to prosper in the present and future society.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

Many people believe that it is haram (forbidden) to attend government school and some feel it is not for the female gender. For me I think my religion is not against government school because the Quran encourages Muslims to go for knowledge. I don't think government education will make women to be bad wives and mothers. That is why it is important that our children must attend both the Quran and government schools so that they can gain knowledge from the both sources to be better Muslims.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to know the level of awareness of the UN for the promotion of the rights of the female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** I don't know anything about that one.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? How far is the nearest school in your community? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondents:** People in this village are mainly farmers. We have plenty of food and some necessities, but government schools are still expensive. We don't pay school fees, but we must buy the books, the uniforms and other needs. Not all the families can afford these for all their children. I think that is why we prefer to put the children in religious education and take them to the farm to help. It is also becoming dangerous to send our children to schools, especially the girls because of the growing kidnapping and other forms of threats from the extremists who are not good Muslims in reality.

**Respondent Number Six (A woman)**

**Question 1: How would you describe your background? (This includes: sex, age, marital status, children, profession). This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.)**

My name is Zaineb Sani and I am 28 years old, from Saki in Kware LGA of Sokoto State. I have been married for at least 13 years and have four children. My husband has 2 other wives, and I am the last wife. There are a total of 14 children in the family from the three wives, five males and nine females. My children are among the youngest in the family. The older children from my co-wives are all grown

up and have their own children. My husband takes good care of me and my co-wives because we are not really working to earn our own income. Sometimes, we do petty trading, but our husband doesn't really want us to do that because he can always support us.

**Question 2: What is your religious faith? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

I am a Muslim woman from a Muslim family background. My husband and co-wives all have strong Muslim background and Islamic education. I completed my primary school before I got married. I also attended Quranic school till I got married. I speak enough Arabic and can read the Quran and I can also recite the Quran very well. My co-wives did not attend any formal school, but they are also well trained in Islamic values. That has helped us to co-exist as co-wives.

Whether Islam support formal education may depend on families than Islam. My father cherished both Islamic and Western education and hence, gave us all his eight children equal opportunity to finish at least primary education. One of my half-sisters even attended secondary school in Kaduna. All my male siblings completed their secondary school and some even went higher. So, you can see that it is more about family than Islam. My husband is a trader and he takes his goods to the city. So, we have some non-Muslim friends who visit us from the cities but almost everyone in this village is a Muslim except some Igbos who live in the other side of the village. From my family and my marriage background, I was brought up to accept non-Muslims as good people, so I don't have problems with other religions and cultures so far, they respect my own religious values.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

The level of formal education in my family is not high. Still, many families in this village do not have our level and they approach us to help when it is official matter. Although, my husband did not have much education, but he is making sure that all our children attend good schools. He is trading in the city, so he has gained a lot of exposure to the good part of formal education for the girls and boys. He said he wants to have doctor and lawyer in the family too. So, he is putting a lot of effort on the education of the younger children.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? And what the differences are with UN sponsored education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's**

**familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).**

Our traditional education is derived from Islamic values. So, the young ones are sent to the Quranic schools at the early age to learn these values. This form of traditional education helps people to grow with every essential knowledge to serve Allah and the society. In the past, many Muslims perceived formal education as sin and unacceptable to Islam. This perception is changing at a fast pace. I know that many families would like their children to be educated. Who says, women cannot be educated to lead? What about Queen Amina?<sup>4</sup> I think every family will like to have a Queen Amina too. I too want my daughter be another Queen Amina.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

Yes, I think Islam supports us to allow girls to attend formal schools. I think formal education can be adapted to fit the needs of the different societies. The formal schools in this Islamic society are different from those in the South Southern part of Nigeria. I was in Lagos and I saw that the formal schools are very different from what we have here. They don't observe any doctrine. Islamic religion supports formal education that is adapted to respect the values of Islam. It is wrong to deny anyone, boy or girl the chance to learn.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of the female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** Yes, I have participated in UN programmes. I also know some friends from my school days who went higher and are now working for the UN agencies. I think the UN is trying to encourage education and especially for the girls. Although sometimes, they don't want to respect our own values, but they have helped in increasing school registration in this region.

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<sup>4</sup> Queen Amina was a warrior queen in Zaria who ruled the Hausas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She was among the elite in northern Nigeria, but she rebelled against the corruption of her class and against the oppression of her gender (Janis, 2008).

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** I think what matters is interest and not money for child primary education. We have one primary school in this community. The school is far to some families, but those who want to see their children in school still bring them. When a family is interested, they prioritize the child's school needs. We don't pay fees for primary school, but I also have to accept that many families are very poor to let their children stay in school instead of helping with farming or other family business. I also believe that poverty and insecurity are responsible for the poor literacy rate and the deprivation that girls suffer most.

### **Respondents of Christian Background**

**Respondent Number seven (A woman)**

**Question 1: How would you describe your background? (This includes: sex, age, marital status, children, profession). This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.)**

**Respondent:** My name is Chinenye Onwuzuoha and I am 32 years old. The name of my village is Mbutu in Aboh Mbaise of Imo State. I am a single mother because I lost my husband about two years ago. I have three children; a boy of 16 years and two girls of 13 and 9 years. I also have two of my husband's younger brothers living with me. I trade in wrapper and head-ties. I don't have a shop, so I meet my customers in their homes and business places.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I am a Pentecostal Christian, but my family is of Catholic faith. Every native in this village is a Christian although those selling native medicines and doing some building labour work are Muslims from the North. I read the Bible quite often at home and in church. I did my elementary school in this village and travelled to Owerri to do my secondary school. I also learnt sewing in Owerri before marrying my husband. We later returned to live in this village where we both originated from. I use to have some Muslim friends when I lived in the city but here, they are few and mainly males. I don't

think my religion is against having a non-Christian friend. Of course, Christianity encourages education for both the male and female gender

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** Everybody in my immediate and extended family has the basic education of at least more than primary education. My father in-law was a teacher. My husband studied civil engineering and built many private homes in this town. When it comes to education, we don't consider gender but who is better and can go far. The spirit of my late husband will not be happy if I fail to do my best for the sake of the children's education. There is no priority, but equal opportunity that goes to the best.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? And what the differences are with UN sponsored education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).**

**Respondent:** My traditional education is taught at home. It's still a bit of conflicts with Western education, but really serious. The Christian education has for long over-shadowed our traditional education. We still make efforts to defend our culture. The truth is Western education has for long been accepted in this community.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** Completely, the Christian religion and the formal education came from the West. My religion and education complement each other. There are still families who believe that education should be given to the boys than the girls. They believe it is wasteful to train girls who later be married away to another family. Increasingly, families are seeing the benefits of girls' education and economic resourcefulness.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of (female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** I know just a little about the UN programme and support for education, but I don't know how I have not benefitted from their programmes because my parents paid for my education and I am paying for my children.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** Education is becoming even more expensive in this community, because we have provided most essential for the public schools. Many families find it difficult to keep their children in school, but they do because that is the first priority of every family. The primary school in this village is well centralized to be accessible to all children. From the beginning age of about six, they can run down to the village school by themselves with other children, we also have a secondary school which is away from this village but still walkable. Most families in this village engage in either farming or trading. So, the school also help in keeping the children focused while their parents go out to fend for the family. Only now that we start having fears about our children's safety at school. We heard that the Fulani herdsmen are killing and kidnapping innocent people. So, sometimes I am afraid that they will attack our village too.

### **Respondent Number Eight (A woman)**

**Question 1: How would you describe your background? (This includes: sex, age, marital status, children, profession). This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.)**

**Respondent:** My name is Kemi Oluwadare. I am 40 years old. The name of my village is Ifetedo in Ife South Local Government Area (LGA) of Osun State. I am married and has four children, one boy and three girls. My oldest child is a girl of 14 years and my youngest is 6. I am a teacher in our village school. I attended secondary school and a training for teachers. I like teaching, because my mother was also a teacher. I could not go to university because my father died when I was still in junior secondary school and my mother managed to give me and my siblings at least secondary education.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I am a Christian. The whole of my family are all Christians, in fact my father was an Anglican clergy. Therefore, we read our Bible a lot. My parents were very strict when it comes to education and the only friend you are not allowed to have is the one that hates school. Most of the citizens of this village are Christians, but we still have some Muslims, we live and do everything together. My Christian religion strongly supports education for both the male and female gender. All my

children are in school. My oldest daughter is in her first-year secondary school in a neighbouring village. She goes from home. My religion supports girls' education. I had mine and my daughter will go higher than I achieved.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** My husband and I have achieved more than the level of secondary school. Despite my husband's secondary education, he still learnt trading in building materials for more than four years. That is what he is doing in this village. Every child in my family has the right and resources to attend a good level of education. I think it will depend on the children's interest and capacity and not gender.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? And what the differences are with UN sponsored education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).**

**Respondent:** I don't know much about my traditional education because, even though I was brought in this village, but my family taught us Christian values. My father was a Catechist on our local church, he was not supportive to traditional way of life. I grew up knowing that every child must attend formal education. I respect my cultural norms and rituals, but this never interfered with my commitment to formal education.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** Christian religion supports girls' education. In this village both the Christian and Muslim ensure their children, including girl's completion of basic schools. However, priority is given to the male child when it comes to high level of education.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** I don't have any idea about UN programmes, and I do not know anyone with such knowledge.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** People in this village can afford to put their children through the primary school level. Every family takes this as a priority. Members of this community will query any family who fails to put a child in the school. So, financial circumstances cannot be an excuse. Every village in this local government has a primary school which is accessible to every child. The Secondary school is sometimes at distance location. We have always felt our children are safe to walk to school until the last two years. We are now afraid of the Fulani herdsmen who are coming from the northern part. They are causing problems everywhere and we can only pray that they don't bring their problems to our village.

**Respondent Number Nine (A woman)**

**Question 1: How would you describe your background? (This includes: sex, age, marital status, children, profession). This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.)**

**Respondent:** My name is Janeth Okorie. The name of my village is Isieke, Ebonyi of Ebonyi State. I am 39 years of age. I am married and has two girls and a boy. My older child is 17. She will be completing her secondary school this year and she's already making efforts to get university admission. Only we don't want her to get university admission to go to the North, because of the situations there. My husband and I are traders in different stocks. I sell soup ingredients in our village market while my husband sells plastic wares in his small store.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** My religion is Christianity and all my family members and people of this Ihito village are all Christians. In fact, as a Christian community, we place priority to formal education of our children which is consistent with religion. Traditionally, men are treated as higher on right at both family and community matters. Christianity also teaches that men are head as I have read from the Bible. Even though, I do not read my Bible often. So, I believe this also supports the level of inequality in our society. Our society cannot accept denying women a level of education, but they will support giving priority to men when it comes to higher education. Hence, I don't know of any women in Ihiti today,

born after the 1975 or thereabout who did not complete primary school. It must be established that Christian religion did not say that women should not aspire for the highest level of education. All my children have equal access to education with our family financial capacity and neither religion nor traditional laws is against that.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** I would say that everyone in my family has at least a minimum level of education which is completion of primary school and possible learning a trade. We work hard every day to see that our own children go higher than our own parents were able to give us. Every one of our children will have equal right to education. It will only depend on our financial capacity and their own ability.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? And what the differences are with UN sponsored education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).**

**Respondent:** My parents taught me all about our cultural norms and rituals. Also, our village is strict about preserving our culture and tradition. The fact is that our tradition is progressively accepting all forms of formal education.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** Both my Christian and traditional religion support girls' place in formal education. In fact, families in this village boost of their daughter who accomplishes the highest level of education.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** I don't know anything about UN sponsored programme in this village. Maybe people in the city may know the UN programme, but for us here in the village, only the churches do help the schools.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** People in this village are not rich, but they can afford to send their children to our village school. We all believe that when we train our children very well then, they can afford to take care of us when we old and doing nothing. We don't have any problem with the security of our children at our village schools, because the schools are not far from us. Not everyone in this village can afford to train their children in higher schools but all parents are working hard to provide more than our village school level.

### **Respondent Number 10 (A man)**

**Question 1: How would you describe your background? (This includes: sex, age, marital status, children, profession). This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.)**

**Respondent:** My name is Aloysius Uzoho. I am 32 years old man. I am an indigene of this village called Okpaliko, Eziowelle in Idemili North LA of Anambra State. I am married with three children; two boys and one girl. I learnt trade and my master settled me six years ago. My wife is a fashion designer.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I am a Christian and the line of my parents have always been Christianity. My grandfather also practiced traditional worshipping, but he was also a Christian who goes to church and performed all Anglican rituals. I read my Bible maybe twice a week. My family line has never been strict and discriminatory to other religious faith or denominations. In my extended family we have Pentecostals, Catholics and other Christian faith. There is no indigene of this village who is a Muslim, but we have Northerners who live here as traders and labourers who are of Muslim faith.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** Many people from this village engage in trading in cities across Nigeria. Our people aspire to gain only the level of education that is sufficient to learn the art of trading. My past generations have all engaged in trading occupation. Right from the period of my late grandfather, my family has always completed primary school before learning trading. I completed my secondary school and my wife too has a sound secondary school education and a training in cloth making. My extended family circle has not denied our daughters the right to at least basic education. The fact is that our men are not ready to marry illiterate women.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).**

**Respondent:** I believe that many people of our own generation only know the Western education and very little about our traditional education. However, custom demands that every Igbo man and woman must know our tradition and adhere to the virtues of our norms and rituals on all endeavour. Our culture is not against Western education. We compete to be successful in trading and now it is accepted that we need good education to be successful businesspersons. I still hope to go back to the university some day and very soon.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** The Christian religion brought formal education to this village many years ago. Since then, Christian religion has become the popular religion of everyone in this village. Education of women is supported not only by the Christian religion, but also by new sense of our tradition. In this village no family can stand the shame of not sending a girl to school at the right age.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** I don't know what you mean by UN programme because I have not heard of it in this village. I also do not know anyone who has engaged in such programme.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the costs of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** Honestly speaking, I don't know of any family who cannot afford to send a child to primary school and possibly to secondary school. Some children make the decision to stop at completion of primary school to continue with training on trading, which is called "apprenticeship. We have a primary school at the centre of the town and a secondary school at the boundary with the other village. Children can always walk to school without fear of danger.

Our village is currently under attack by the cattle herdsman from the north. This may bring a problem of insecurity for our children who want to walk freely to their schools.

### **Respondent Number 11**

**Question 1: How would you describe your background? (This includes: sex, age, marital status, children, profession). This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.)**

**Respondent:** My name is Okon Essien. I am 42 years old. The name of my village is Ikot Iya in Ikono, Etim Ekpo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. I am married with three children. I lost one of my children. The three children that are still alive are enough. I want to work hard to see them through high education. My first and second daughters, 20 and 17 respectively are in the same University. I am the only motor mechanic in this village. My wife has a canteen in the neighbouring village where we have shell workers.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I am a Christian and everyone in my family and this entire village are Christians. The biggest church in our village is Anglican. My father was a strict disciplinarian who believed in strict compliance to all Christian norms. Ironically, my grandfather was a popular traditionalist as native doctor. His shrine has been closed because none of his children or grandchildren wants to follow his footsteps. I can read Bible, but I can't say how often I read the Bible. We don't have Muslim in this village, but there are many from the next village. Those Muslims of course come from the North. Before the past four years we never had any problem or distrust with the migrant Muslims, but the situation is not well today.

I think the religion of Christianity is synonymous with formal education which is of western origin. I believe that Christian religion encourages education of women.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** I completed secondary education and my wife completed primary school and also learn the canteen business from her mother. I was an apprentice motor mechanic in Ikot Ekpene for six years and started working as a mechanic in that city before returning to my village. It is fine with my business here in my village, because it is fast developing. My parents also had a level of education that supported them in what they did.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? And what the differences are with UN sponsored education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).**

**Respondent:** Every man and woman of Anak tribe is expected to have good knowledge of our tradition. Parents must do this obligation to their children, because our traditions are not taught in formal education. My wife and I completed a good level of basic education and still learnt a trade that is helping us today. Our children will be helped to achieve higher level of education.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** My Christian religion strongly supports girls to attend any level of formal education. People will see you as a Pagan if discriminate women on education. Maybe, some families will prioritize the male child on cost of university education as the male are expected to occupy positions in the family and community issues.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of the female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** I only know the roles of United Nations from my secondary education, but I have not directly benefited from whatever they contribute. My parents paid my fees and other cost of my education.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** There are a lot of poor families in this village, but this is not to the extent that families cannot send their children to primary school. Our primary school is accessible to all families at a walkable pace to children. Insecurity is growing in our entire state and affecting both education and occupation. In this community any elder can ask a child or the parents why the child is not at school if they see the child at home during school hours.

**Respondent Number 12 (A woman)**

**Question 1: How would you describe your background? (This includes: sex, age, marital status, children, profession). This is to gather information on the marital status, number and gender of children in the family, number of wives, etc.)**

**Respondent:** I am Mrs Gloria Oworo from Komoforagbene, Kolu-Ama in South Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. I am 49 years old, married and has four children, two boys and two girls. My husband is a fisherman and I help in the marketing of his catch.

**Question 2: What is your religion? Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** I and everyone in my family are Christians. The entire population of this village is of Christian religion. My late parents made sure we completed all Catholic sacraments and would never want anyone of their children to change to another Christian denomination. We read our Bible, not that I understand everything in it. Some words are even too difficult for me to pronounce.

**Question 3: How would you describe the level of formal education in your family? (The discussions will lead to gathering information on whether the parents have any level of education and if all children have equal priority to education in the family).**

**Respondent:** My parent gave all their children equal opportunity to accomplish our primary school, but the males were given higher priority to attend any other higher level of education. My two brothers and I completed our secondary schools at a distanced town, but my two sisters stopped at the level of primary school. Things have changed now. Today, everybody wants their daughters to achieve higher level of education. My husband and I would have the views that all our children will have equal opportunity. We will spend our money on anyone who is good with his or her study.

**Question 4: What do you know about your traditional education? And what the differences are with UN sponsored education? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of respondent's familiarity with traditional dictates and values and how that affects his or her perceptions on formal education).**

**Respondent:** My traditional education as an Ijaw woman is on the power of water. Everything in my tradition is related to waterpower. These days people are ashamed of following our tradition. Christianity has destroyed our culture and tradition. We are happy to accept Western education. Anyway, we still manage to maintain some of our traditional values and teach that to our next generation. Our people accepted Christianity without resistance, so I believe there is no conflict between the two.

**Question 5: Do you think that your Religion supports or allows girls to attend formal education? (Discussions will lead to knowing whether religious doctrines are responsible for gender inequality in education).**

**Respondent:** My traditional religion places some limitation to the extent women can aspire. That makes the men to be superior with access to more opportunities. Although, Christianity which is the dominant religion of my people advocates equal access and rights of women to formal education. Since I am a Christian, I will say my religion supports girls to attend formal education.

**Question 6: Have you or someone you know participated in any UN programmes in your region? (The discussions will lead to knowing the level of awareness on the UN promotion of the rights of female genders' education).**

**Respondent:** My village is a creel island. I have not participated in any UN programme and also, I do not know anyone who has.

**Question 7: Do you think people in your community are able to afford the cost of their children's education? What do you think the benefits for education are for boys and for girls? (The discussions will lead to finding out about family income and how school distance and security of children affect parent's interests of their children's education of the girl-child).**

**Respondent:** The primary school in this village was brought by the missionaries. It is tuition fee free and accessible to all families. We still have to buy books, uniforms and other needs. We still don't have secondary school here. A nearest secondary school is in the nearby village called Ogbia town. Many people in this village are engaged in the occupation of fishing and petty trading. We are not rich, but I will say we can afford our basic needs. Education of our children is considered as a prime basic need. It is very expensive for us to send our children to secondary school in another village. I believe that more of our children will achieve more than primary school if we have secondary school in this village.

We don't have problems of security of our children in their schools, because this is an island village. Those Fulani cattlemen that are causing problems of security are not able to get here. We pray they don't get here, because that will make parents to risk the lives of their children in school.

