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**Parental Perception as a Correlate of Girl-Child Academic Attainment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined parental perception as a correlate of girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher developed three objectives of the study, three research questions and three hypotheses that guided the conduct of the study. The research design used for the study was a correlational research design. The population of this study was 11,920 parents and senior secondary II (SSII) students of Public Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis for the 2024/2025 academic sessions. The sample size of the study was 398 parents and students. This figure was generated using Taro Yamene formula. The simple random sampling technique was employed in the study. This study used self-structured questionnaires for data collection titled "Parental Perception Questionnaire and Girl-Child Academic Attainment Questionnaire. The instruments were divided into two sections. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the research questions and test of null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the data analysis, the finding of the study revealed that parental socio-cultural beliefs, parental economic factors and parental education level have significant relationship on girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Based on the findings, the study recommends that: government, community leaders, and educational stakeholders should organize awareness campaigns and community sensitization programmes to discourage harmful socio-cultural beliefs that undermine the education of girls, government and non-governmental organizations should introduce scholarships, grants, and financial assistance programmes specifically targeted at supporting the education of the girl-child, especially for families with limited economic resources and Adult education and literacy programmes should be strengthened to improve parents' level of education and awareness about the importance of education for all children*

**Keywords:** Parental Perception, Girl-Child, Academic Attainment

**INTRODUCTION**

Human development is known to be facilitated by education. Therefore, education is a means by which wisdom, aptitude, morality, values, and disposition are gained and passed to the following generation. Similarly, education exposes an individual to acquire knowledge about the environment so as to know the causes of variations in a person or persons, groups and also for sustainable development in a country (Eze and Eze, 2018).

Education is a fundamental right for all, including girls and women. Women according to UNESCO (2007) opine that, education could contribute to the improvement in the standards of living not only to their immediate families but to the society in general. Girls' education does not only empower girls, but it is the best investment in national development. The UNICEF document emphasized that education helps the girl to be self confident, participate effectively in the society and protect them from related diseases such as HIV/AIDS and other sexual exploitations. It further asserts that girl's education also assist in reducing children and maternal mortality rate, controlling diseases and improving health status. The realization of the need for education for all segments of the world's population has intensified global attention to education for all. Goal 2 of Education For All (EFA) according to Imhabekhai (2021) provides

that member state shall ensure that by 2015 all children particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

The girl-child education has been a global issue, particularly in the developing countries. The girl-child education can be compared to a coin which has two sides. This is because in the some part of the world girl-child is not encouraged, whereas in the other part reverse is the case. But culturally women are confined to their traditional roles with lots of sanctions imposed on them either by custom, norms or religion. It has been revealed that the girl-child education has suffered a lot in the society as cited by Mohammed (2018). This has been the case since in 1850s. However, in the sixties, the situation was really a break through because out of 10 school children that went to school beyond primary 4, only one as a girl. Missionary activities started in certain parts of world before the turn of the century.

Education is one of the essential parts of the modern era to enhance knowledge and practices at individual as well as community level. It provides knowledge and skills to the people for making positive changes in the previous cultural norms, values and practices (Schafft, 2016). Education is the most important aspect nowadays because it involves the participation of every person. Furthermore it cannot be distinct from the life of human.

Education is the bedrock on which sustainable development can be achieved. Proper education enables citizens to be actively involved in the growth and development process of their nation contributing meaningfully. Over the years there have been collective efforts on both national and international frontiers to see the total eradication and elimination of gender gaps in education. The benefits of girl-child education to a nation cannot be overemphasized and are inexhaustible. Omede (2016) has it that a girl-child is a person below 14 years of age, she is a biological female offspring from birth. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stage of development. The girl-child is seen as a young female person, who would eventually grow into women and marry. She is conditional to look after the young ones the home and kitchen. Girl- child education is the education geared towards the development of the total personality of the female gender in any society. Such education promotes the development of the whole nature of women-physically, intellectually, morally, socially, economically and politically which makes them active participating members of economic development (Ahmadu & Usman, 2015).

In the words of Mulkah (2015) who posited out that a girl - child refers to a baby born biologically as a female offspring between the ages of 6 to 18 years. This period in human development is made up of infancy, childhood, early adolescent and finally late adolescent stages. The girl-child at a certain period of life grow into maturity and marry thereby become a wife and a mother in future. Within the context of education, many scholars have defined the concept of girl-child education in various ways. The concept of girl- child education incorporates the necessary attitude, cultural and behavioral training which parents give to their daughters at home to enable them become useful, resourceful and respectful citizens of their countries.

In most communities in Rivers State, boy children are preferred to be sent to school with believe that they will inherit and carry on the family name while the girl child will be married off to another family. Alabi (2014) stressed that parents' demand for the education of their daughters is low, and this is worsened by cultural perceptions of girls as child minders, marriage material and a burden to the family. Some parents decided in many cultures that, education is not worthwhile for their daughters who will move into their husbands' families when they marry and that the gains in productivity or income due to education will accrue to the families of the sons-in-law rather than to them. In Nigeria, it is generally believed that the position of a girl-child is subservient. Culture has placed a lot of demand on her, as the one who should do most of the domestic chores like; fetching water, firewood, farm work, care for her siblings, prepare meals, clean the house, wash dishes and so on. In spite of the overwhelming contributions that women have made, are making and are expected to make to the development of the Nation, they are still frustrated with many obstacles that tend to limit their activities. Some cultural and traditional practices have made it virtually impossible for women to be very active in the patriarchal environment, where men in organizations are much larger in number and domineering (Amaechina, 2015).

Cultural and traditional values stand between girls and their prospects for education. Achievement of girls' right to education is capable of addressing many of the societies' deeply rooted

inequalities, which condemn millions of girls to a life without quality education as well as a life of missed opportunities. Today, some societies still deliberately deny girls and women their right to education. This is articulated by the fear of power that women can have through education. Several traditional and cultural values existing in high poverty areas where girls are uneducated include beliefs that educating a girl child is a waste of resources as she will eventually get married. Girl's labour is used to substitute for mothers' work such as caring for siblings, fetching wood and water, caring for animals, pounding grain and farming (Zulu, 2023).

The wrong notion that the place of the girl-child is in the kitchen, to be seen and not to be heard have had very serious implications on the girl-child's ability at self-actualization. Umaru (2015), declares that female-child particularly in the Northern Nigeria is made to believe that her place as a woman is in the kitchen and home and she is socialized into accepting her traditional role of bearing and rearing children and also maintaining the welfare of her family. As far as parents are concerned, there is no need for female-child to be prepared beyond attaining to such traditional roles of being mothers and wives. It can be understood that this restricted view of female-child education resulted in persistent lukewarm attitude towards exposing female-child to western education in the northern part of the country. Even though parents are now aware of the importance of education especially of the girl-child, there are still some parents who hold on to the belief that the girl-child's place is in the kitchen and should not be granted the privilege of education.

It has been identified that some parent's perceptions as barriers to girl – education is based on economic factors. Obayan (2014) indicated that access and equality of educational opportunities is marred by economic system operated in Nigeria. Nigeria is a capitalist state where there is unequal distribution of wealth and excessive individualism. The nation is stratified into upper, middle and lower classes. Children from upper and middle classes have special privileges and unhindered access to the best schools and so irrespective of the claims by government officials that government has invested so much in public education, their children are never found in those schools. Nigeria as an independent entity is undoubtedly characterized by very harsh economic conditions. This has resulted into scarce resources. As a result of this, choice has to be made between whom to send to school, and most often, it is the girl-child that remains at home. Omede (2016) revealed that due to poverty, girls get withdrawn from schools so as to help to supplement family income through hawking, trading or even working on the farm so as to support the family. In some cases, the girls are given out as house helps or even sent into early marriage because of a huge bride price.

Poverty is one of the major obstacles in the way of girl - child education. Poverty is the single largest factor that causes disparities in education. Poverty is pervasive across sub-Saharan African. Most people live on less than \$1 per day. A strong association between poverty and gender inequalities in education has been established. Inability to pay school fees, the costs of uniform, shoes, transport, stationary, added to the opportunity costs of what children might be contributing to household labour, eat away at meager resources and push children from school (Victor, 2022).

It is evident that girls are most often the ones that are not enrolled in school for obvious social reasons. This situation is largely due to gender inequality and discrimination, which takes its root in patriarchy. A large factor in the subordination, oppression and status of women is systemic conditioning, which originates in the family and in society. The widespread operation of patriarchal systems of social organization of early marriage; early pregnancy, heavier domestic and subsistence duties of females and generally lower regard for the value of female life, adversely affect the participation of girls and women in formal education. Teenage pregnancy also contributes to high-school dropout rates in sub-Saharan Africa (Victor, 2022).

The discriminatory attitude between the girl child and the boy or male child by the society puts the girl child in a disadvantaged position. This leads to the suppressing of the potentials of the girl-child and therefore leads to her inability to achieve self-realization. In support of this assertion Kipkulie (2015) opined that early marriage denies many girls the opportunity of going to school. Usually, girls who drop out of school to get married are difficult to return to school after marriage. This could be attributed to what Adebola, Anyachebelu and Madu (2022) noted that early responsibility of motherhood thrust on a girl would sentence her to life of hopelessness. In support of the assertion Odomore (2015) is of the opinion that one of the factors that hinders girl - education in developing nations is child marriage. Child

marriages occur in many developing societies around the world and prevent females from obtaining their education.

From the fore gone, it clear that poverty compels many parents to marry off their daughters to wealthy men instead of sending them to school. This is because education is so expensive that parents do not consider the returns for girls' education. Instead, parents would rather prefer the returns of marriage in terms of bride prize. Many parents believe that when girls are educated, the benefits go to their family of procreation instead of the family of orientation. Zulu (2023) declares that investment in women's education is essential for poverty reduction, empowerment and economic growth. There is an interrelationship that exists between education and poverty. Education and health endowments of individuals are important components of human capital which make them productive and raise their standard of living or reduce poverty. The higher level of education of women, the fewer the number of poor individuals because it is documented that education impacts knowledge and skills supportive in higher wages.

When the girl-child is educated, her knowledge base is expanded; she is able to understand and undertake socio-economic, cultural and political transformations necessary to achieve development. Education of the girl - child is positively related to her living standard and the only effective scheme to alleviate poverty. To achieve this, is to expand the educational opportunities available to the girl-child. With education, a girl- child is made to be aware of fight against powerful social structures, cultural traditional practices and attitudes that may retard progress in the society. National development can be described as a multifaceted process, which involves the restructuring and repositioning of a whole system which maybe in the areas of economic, political, education and even social development. National development could be at various levels but at the individual level it encompasses self-capacity in the maximization of skills and creativity leading to innovations and ground breaking achievements (Ugwu, 2015). Obasi (2020) sees national development as a social process by which a nation is able to make resources readily available for the sole purpose of bettering and enhancing its citizen's standard of living by the provision of good jobs, social amenities such as quality education, proper infrastructures, and access to good medical care (Kamaldeen, 2022).

One of the factors that negatively affects girl - child education is the parent's attitude. Many studies have revealed that parental attitude towards their sons and daughters is a fundamental factor hindering girl - child education. The parents' perceptions about education of their children are different across backgrounds communities, occupations categories, and regions. As earlier noted, parental attitude is impacted by some parental characteristics e.g gender, age - range, occupation and literacy level. Kipkulei (2015) points out that parental income is a leading socio - economic factor affecting girls' education. This is closely followed by parental education; meaning there is a close coherence between the meaning of education to parents and their children's participation in education. Thus, if education is regarded as a value in the family, there are high chances that children will participate in education.

The importance of education in building a democratic society cannot be overstressed. Therefore Nigeria as a nation and parents should accept the fact that the education of their children is the right of such children and this could make them independent, intelligent and good innovators of tomorrow. The belief in this, parents toil day and night in their farms and work place to make sure that their children acquire the best education. Therefore this brings us to the fact that education play's vital roles in hatching new cadres for the nation, especially. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, this was why the National Policy on Education (2016) states that every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his or her ability. In view of the above aims of education between many others, however the girl-child education is given a lack deistical approach by parents.

For example, Kamaldeen, Buhari and Parakoyi (2022) reported the obvious difference against girls in enrolment, attending and Completion rates in all levels of education in Nigeria mostly in northern parts of the country due to a diversity of socio-cultural and religious factors. Terhemba and Umaru (2015) have stressed that female-child access to basic education particularly in northern states of Nigeria appear to be something of great alarm. They sustained that the ratio of boys to girls' enrolment, retention and completion of secondary education mostly in Niger state remains alarmingly low. This is because only 20 percent of women in North-central Nigeria were well- educated.

In Africa, the problem of girl-child education is not a regional, state, national or continent but a global issue of concerned. About 35% of the world's girls are not in school as at 1999 and from this 18% were in Africa more specifically in sub Saharan Africa which was 12% (Abu-Ghaida, 2004). A number of solutions were attempted in different countries of the world including Ethiopia to alleviate the problems of girl child education of these solutions, all regions have increased overall school enrolments- the world average was 81% by 2002. Regional variation is enormous, Latin America and the Caribbean enrolment rates are close to North America and Western Europe, 94% and 97% respectively; South Asia lags behind at 74% and sub-Saharan Africa languishes at a mere 59% (UNICEF (2010)

According to a study conducted by UNICEF and world education forum in 2002, girls constitute the largest population of illiterate children (28%) in the world till date that is 62 Million from 115 Million. Estimates in 2002 indicated that the number of children out of school had been brought down to about 115 million worldwide; 62 million were girls. While there were more children than ever in the world's primary schools, far too many remain absent- the majority girls (Mohammed, 2008). Without educating the women of the country we can't hope for a developed nation. It is said that if we educate a man, we educate a man only, but if we educate a woman, we educate the whole family. This highlights the importance of female education. It is a fact that women are the first teachers of their children. Hence, if mothers are well educated, they can play an important role in shaping and molding of their sons and daughters (Suresh, 2012).

There are regional disparities in the level of girl-child access to basic education. A recent survey shows that a number of girl-children had no formal education in post primary schools in Africa. Even though the case was slightly better than before. The enrolment of children to primary, secondary, technical and tertiary institutions as upheld by Oleribe (2022) also discriminate against female gender. Male enrolment is more than girls in all levels of education in Nigeria. Out of the primary schools enrolment indicated an imbalance ratio as only of, in Kaduna state, 41% girl- child and many ended up not going for secondary education. In all parts of Africa, girls lag behind boys in access to education (Adeyemo, 2007). It is important to note that despite the progress made towards girl-child education in the developed and some parts of the world, years of neglect have left very high illiteracy rates for girl-child in many developing countries of the world.

Parental attitude is a measure or an index of parental involvement. A child, brought up with affection and care in the least restrictive environment would be able to cope up better with the sighted world. Turnbull (1983) has identified four basic parental roles- parents as educational decision makers; parents as parents; parents as teachers and parents as advocates. Since the parent's attitude is so important, it is essential that the home and school work closely together, especially for children with disabilities. The Warnock Report (1978) stresses the importance of parents being partners in the education of their children. The role of parents should actively support and enrich the educational processes.

An attitude is "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols (Hogg & Vaughan 2000). Attitude is the feeling or mental disposition of an individual which influences the human behavior. Attitude is a vital ingredient for the success or failure of children in their optimum development. Attitudes structure can be described in terms of three components. However, a girl-child education could be seen as a form of knowledge impacted to a young female child, in order to increase her sense of dignity and self-respect. (Blossom, 2023). It is noteworthy that, countries dominated with low-income groups, had a declining level of a girl child completing

Parental perception of girl-child academic attainment is multifaceted, heavily influenced by socio-economic status, cultural beliefs, and education level, often oscillating between traditional views of domestic roles and modern empowerment goals. Key dimensions include the perceived value of education for future security, the impact of household chores on study time, the influence of gender preference (valuing boys over girls), and the financial feasibility of schooling. Key dimensions include:

1. **Parental Socio-Cultural Beliefs:** In many areas, especially rural ones, traditional, religious, or cultural views may lead parents to believe that a girl's primary role is managing a home, thus devaluing formal education. Parental socio-cultural beliefs, such as gender preference for boys,

early marriage, and traditional gender roles, significantly hinder the academic attainment of the girl child, leading to lower enrollment, high dropout rates, and poor academic performance. These beliefs prioritize domestic chores over schoolwork, limiting girls' study time and reducing their educational opportunities. Conversely, when parents hold positive, progressive views, and are actively involved, it can lead to higher motivation, better academic performance, and higher, more consistent attendance for the girl child (Lent, 2014).

### **Socio-Cultural Factors Impacting Girls' Education:**

- a) **Gender Preference and Roles:** Beliefs that boys are the future family providers often result in parents prioritizing male education over female education. Girls are often expected to fulfill domestic roles (child rearing/housework) that limit their time for studying.
  - b) **Early Marriage and Initiation Rites:** Cultural practices such as early marriage and traditional initiation ceremonies contribute to high school dropout rates and lower educational attainment for girls.
  - c) **Low Value on Female Education:** In some communities, formal education for girls is viewed as less important or unnecessary for their, expected future roles as wives and mothers.
  - d) **Negative Parental Attitudes:** When parents believe education is not beneficial for girls, they may not invest in their school fees, uniforms, or materials, causing poor academic performance and absenteeism (Zulu, 2023).
  - e) **Gender Stereotyping in Subjects:** Cultural perceptions often suggest that certain subjects, particularly science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), are "male-only" fields, limiting girls' confidence and performance in these areas.
2. **Parental Economic Factors:** Parental perception is often shaped by income levels, where poverty or the cost of education can limit the perceived value of educating a girl-child, often favoring the male child. Economic factors, particularly poverty and low household income, severely hinder the academic attainment of the girl child by restricting access to schooling, causing high dropout rates, and limiting the availability of learning materials (Martincin & Stead (2014). Financial constraints force parents to prioritize boys' education, leading to early marriage, child labor, and poor academic performance due to, among others, hunger and lack of school fees.

Economic factors affecting the girl child's education include:

- a) **Poverty and Lack of Funds:** Inability to pay school fees, purchase uniforms, and buy learning materials significantly causes high dropout rates and absenteeism.
  - b) **Parental Income Level:** Low income directly correlates to lower educational attainment for girls, often forcing them into premature labor or domestic chores to support the family.
  - c) **Cost of Education:** High, hidden costs of schooling (hidden costs) make it unaffordable, causing parents to prioritize the education of male children, particularly in rural areas.
  - d) **Distance to School:** Poverty limits access to better-resourced, distant schools, forcing girls to attend closer schools that may have poor facilities or long, unsafe commutes.
  - e) **Nutritional and Basic Needs:** Low family income often results in poor nutrition and lack of basic personal effects, negatively impacting a girl's concentration and health in school.
3. **Parental Education Level:** Educated parents are more likely to hold positive views, understanding the importance of education regardless of gender, whereas less educated parents might limit a girl's education. Parental education level significantly impacts a girl child's academic attainment by fostering a supportive home environment, setting higher educational expectations, and providing better financial resources. Educated parents model learning, actively monitor academic progress, and offer better academic guidance, which improves their daughters' performance, confidence, and long-term educational aspirations. Conversely, lower

parental education levels are linked to reduced academic engagement, lower expectations, and potential financial constraints, which can negatively affect a girl child's educational journey (Leung, 2021).

### **Impacts of Parental Education on a Girl Child:**

- a) **Supportive Environment & Motivation:** Educated parents are more likely to create a conducive, learning-friendly environment at home, including providing educational resources and fostering positive attitudes toward learning.
- b) **High Academic Expectations:** Parents with higher education levels hold stronger academic expectations, which positively correlate with their daughters' educational investment, motivation, and attainment.
- c) **Active Involvement:** Parents with higher education levels tend to be more involved in school-based activities (PTA meetings) and home-based activities (monitoring homework, setting routines).
- d) **Financial & Cognitive Resources:** Higher parental education often leads to higher household income, reducing poverty-related barriers to education and allowing for investments in tutoring or better schools.
- e) **Modeling Value of Education:** Educated parents, particularly mothers, model the value of education, which is crucial for encouraging girls to pursue higher studies and overcome societal limitations.

Girl child academic attainment is rising globally, with near-parity in enrollment, yet significant gaps in completion persist, especially in low-income, conflict-affected areas where 63% of girls finish primary school versus 67% of boys. In Nigeria, 7.6 million girls are out of school, with major barriers including early marriage, poverty, and regional disparities. To improve these outcomes, it is recommended that governments make education free and compulsory from primary to senior secondary levels (Thenacho, 2015).

Educating girls and women drives employment and reduces poverty. The World Bank supports strong, fair, and accessible education systems to ensure everyone has the chance to learn and develop skills needed for productive life. The Bank works to eliminate barriers preventing girls and women accessing education and training needed for a path out of poverty (Terhemba & Umaru, 2015). The World Bank's Gender Equality Strategy 2023-2030, discusses education interventions to address these barriers, including ensuring girls' safety in learning environments, and providing relevant job training to support community and economic contributions.

Investing in girls' education also creates a more prosperous and equitable future for all. Economies benefit when all individuals of working age take part in the labor market, leading to improved lives, self-sustaining communities, economic growth, and global stability. A 2018 World Bank study estimated that the "limited educational opportunities for girls, and barriers to completing 12 years of education, cost countries between \$15 trillion and \$30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings." All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty (Oluigbo, 2019). According to the World Bank's report, *Pathways to Prosperity for Adolescent Girls in Africa*, adopting improvements in girls' education could potentially generate an extra \$2.4 trillion in income for African nations by 2040.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental tool for individual empowerment and national development. In many societies, the education of the girl-child has received increasing attention because of its significant role in promoting social progress, gender equality, and economic development. Despite efforts by government and educational stakeholders to promote equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls, disparities in academic attainment among female students still persist in some parts of Rivers State.

One of the factors that may influence the academic attainment of the girl-child is parental perception toward female education. Parents play a critical role in shaping their children's attitudes,

aspirations, and educational outcomes. However, in some families, traditional beliefs and cultural expectations may lead parents to prioritize the education of male children over that of female children. Such perceptions may influence the level of encouragement, financial support, and educational resources provided to the girl-child. When parents perceive girls' education as less important, it may negatively affect the motivation, confidence, and academic performance of female students.

In public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, it has been observed that some female students experience challenges that hinder their academic attainment. These challenges may include limited parental support, gender-based expectations related to domestic responsibilities, early marriage pressures, and societal stereotypes about the capabilities of girls. While government policies advocate equal educational opportunities, the attitudes and perceptions of parents may still influence how girls participate in and benefit from schooling.

Furthermore, although several studies have examined factors affecting students' academic performance, there is limited empirical evidence specifically focusing on the relationship between parental perception and the academic attainment of the girl-child in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Without adequate understanding of how parental perceptions influence girls' academic outcomes, efforts to improve female education may not achieve the desired results.

Therefore, the problem of this study is to examine parental perception as a correlate of girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study seeks to determine the extent to which parents' attitudes, beliefs, and support for female education relate to the academic attainment of the girl-child in the state.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate parental perception as a correlate of girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study aims to:

- 1 Examine the relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
- 2 Examine the relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
- 3 Determine the relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
2. There is no significant relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
3. There is no significant relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The correlational research design was adopted for this study. This research design helps to solve the existing problem or condition but also it was used for comparing features of a group. The population of this study was 11,920 parents and senior secondary II (SSII) students of Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State for the 2024/2025 academic sessions. The sample size of the study was 398 parents and students. This figure was generated using Taro Yamene formula. The simple random sampling technique was employed in the study. This study used self-structured questionnaires for data collection titled "Parental Perception Questionnaire (PPQ) Girl-Child Academic Attainment Questionnaire (GCAAQ). The instruments were divided into two sections. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the research questions and test of null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 1: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis on the parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State**

		Correlations	
		Parental Socio-Cultural Beliefs	Girl-Child Academic Attainment
<b>Parental Socio-Cultural Beliefs</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	751**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
<b>Girl-Child Academic Attainment</b>	Pearson Correlation	751**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State is ( $r = 751$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This implies that there is a perfect relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Since the r-value is significant with  $p < .05$ , therefore the null hypothesis one is rejected. Hence, restated that there is a significant relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This means that the increase in parental socio-cultural beliefs will affect girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and vice versa.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

**Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State**

		Correlations	
		Parental Economic Factors	Girl-Child Academic Attainment
<b>Parental Economic Factors</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	652**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
<b>Girl-Child Academic Attainment</b>	Pearson Correlation	652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State is ( $r = 652$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This implies that there is perfect relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Since the r-value is significant with  $p < .05$ , therefore the null hypothesis two is rejected. Thus, restated that there is a significant relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This means that increase in parental economic factors affect girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and vice versa.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis on the parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State**

		Correlations	
		Parental Education Level	Girl-Child Academic Attainment
<b>Parental Education Level</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	658**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
<b>Girl-Child Academic Attainment</b>	Pearson Correlation	658**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State is ( $r = 658$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This implies that there is a perfect relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Since the r-value is significant with  $p < .05$ , therefore the null hypothesis three is rejected. Hence, restated that there is a significant relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This means that the increase in parental education level will affect the girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State and vice versa.

### Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study in research question one: What is the relationship between parental socio-cultural beliefs and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State revealed that parental socio-cultural beliefs has significant relationship on girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This finding is in collaboration with Lent (2014) who admitted that in many areas, especially rural ones, traditional, religious, or cultural views may lead parents to believe that a girl's primary role is managing a home, thus devaluing formal education. Parental socio-cultural beliefs, such as gender preference for boys, early marriage, and traditional gender roles, significantly hinder the academic attainment of the girl child, leading to lower enrollment, high

dropout rates, and poor academic performance. These beliefs prioritize domestic chores over schoolwork, limiting girls' study time and reducing their educational opportunities. Conversely, when parents hold positive, progressive views, and are actively involved, it can lead to higher motivation, better academic performance, and higher, more consistent attendance for the girl child.

The study in Research Questions 2: What is the relationship between parental economic factors and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State indicated that parental economic factors have perfect relationship on girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This study is in the same view with Martincin & Stead (2014) who asserts that parental perception is often shaped by income levels, where poverty or the cost of education can limit the perceived value of educating a girl-child, often favoring the male child. Economic factors, particularly poverty and low household income, severely hinder the academic attainment of the girl child by restricting access to schooling, causing high dropout rates, and limiting the availability of learning materials. Financial constraints force parents to prioritize boys' education, leading to early marriage, child labor, and poor academic performance due to, among others, hunger and lack of school fees

The findings of the study in Research Question 3: What is the relationship between parental education level and girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State showed that parental education level has positive relationship on girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The finding is in the same vein with Leung (2021) who reviewed that educated parents are more likely to hold positive views, understanding the importance of education regardless of gender, whereas less educated parents might limit a girl's education. Parental education level significantly impacts a girl child's academic attainment by fostering a supportive home environment, setting higher educational expectations, and providing better financial resources. Educated parents model learning, actively monitor academic progress, and offer better academic guidance, which improves their daughters' performance, confidence, and long-term educational aspirations. Conversely, lower parental education levels are linked to reduced academic engagement, lower expectations, and potential financial constraints, which can negatively affect a girl child's educational journey.

### **CONCLUSION**

The parental perception as a correlate of girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State cannot be over emphasized. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that parental socio-cultural beliefs, parental economic factors and parental education level have significant relationship on girl-child academic attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The study also deduced that The girl-child education has been a global issue, particularly in the developing countries. The girl- child education can be compared to a coin which has two sides. This is because in the some part of the world girl-child is not encouraged, whereas in the other part reverse is the case and that in some areas in Rivers State, boy children are preferred to be sent to school with believe that they will inherit and carry on the family name while the girl child will be married off to another family

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to ensure that the study meet its objectives.

1. Government, community leaders, and educational stakeholders should organize awareness campaigns and community sensitization programmes to discourage harmful socio-cultural beliefs that undermine the education of girls. Such programmes should emphasize the importance and long-term benefits of educating the girl-child for family and societal development.
2. Government and non-governmental organizations should introduce scholarships, grants, and financial assistance programmes specifically targeted at supporting the education of the girl-child, especially for families with limited economic resources. This will reduce the financial barriers that may prevent girls from achieving their academic potential.
3. Adult education and literacy programmes should be strengthened to improve parents' level of education and awareness about the importance of education for all children. Educated parents

are more likely to value and support their children's academic development, including that of the girl-child.

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