GENDER, HOUSEHOLD-HEAD AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME: A STUDY OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Most literature on gender and welfare of children in developing countries suggest that, female headship leads to poverty and subsequently, poor child welfare outcome. This study utilizes a state level data to analyze how gender and household headship influence children's educational outcome; it evaluates the educational outcome of children in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Benue State, Nigeria. The data was analyzed using information obtained from the administration of four hundred (400) questionnaires. The primary data was complemented through content analysis of secondary sources. This study shows a significant difference in child enrolment into primary, secondary and post-secondary institution by sex of head of household. It reveals that 67% of children in female headed household (FHH) repeat their classes compared to 45.9% in male headed households (MHH). In the aspect of full attendance in school, the results are higher in MHH, compared to FHH (74.8% and 59.2% respectively. This study found that household headship remained a strong predictor of children's educational outcome. Poverty has a woman's face, of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 70 percent are women. Most literature on gender and welfare of children in developing countries suggests that female-heads of households are special group of people deserving special attention. A large body of literature has examined the relationship between household-headship and health, poverty, education, empowerment in Nigeria, very little is currently known about the relationship between household-headship and children's educational outcome in Benue state.The results supports access base policies for FHH with children.

Introduction

The literature on gender development and planning gives prominence to FHH as HH in need of special attention because of the observed relationship between female headship and poverty (Buvinic and Gupta, 1997). The household occupies a single housing unit and therefore the most relevant population concept for use in analysis of housing trends and planning. It is also an important institution for socialization and child rearing (NDHS,2010). Recent evidence shows that FHH's constitute 13% in the middle East and North Africa, 22% in Sub Sahara Africa, 16% in Asia, 35% in the Caribbean and 24% in Latin America. The proportion of female - headed households in Nigeria is 17% FHH and83% for MHH(NDHS,2003). In Benue, FHH constitute 10% of the entire rural households (CWIQ, 2001). However, this figure might be an underestimation of female headship because of the range of biases in actual data collection of main report on the core welfare indicator questionnaire for Benue state. As the traditional structure of husband, wife and children give way to other forms of family life, demographers and sociologist in many part of the world are asking why (Abel, 2010)

Since women almost everywhere are disadvantaged relative to men in their access to assets, credit, employment and education, itis often suspected that FHH's are more vulnerable to risk and economically less able to invest in the health and education of their children (Buvinic and Gupta, 1997 ; World Bank, 2021). Interestingly , robust empirical evidence supporting this claim is scarce . Though a variety of case studies around the world have documented the disadvantages faced by FHH's results from empirical studies are far from conclusive. For instance, Buvinicand Gupta (1997), reviewed 61 studies on headship and poverty, and FHH's were disproportionately represented among the poor in 38 cases.

The literature on the effect of headship on children's welfare is similarly inconclusive. A study in the United States shows that children who grow up in FHH's experience lower educational and occupational attainment and female children are at a higher risk of teenage pregnancy (Mchanahan and Sandefur, 1994). A growing literature also suggests that, in many developing countries, children from FHH's may far better than their counterparts in MHH's (Lioyd et al.,1996; Funmi, 2013). Kennedy and Peters (1992), carried out their research in Kenya and Malawi, it was revealed that though FHH's were in the low income group , the nutritional status of pre-schooled children in these households were significantly higher than any other type of household.

In more developed regions, nearly all girls are likely to attend school than are boys (47% compared to 56%), largely due to social, cultural and economic factors (PRB, 2010). In Nigeria, children in the north are disadvantaged in terms of schooling compared to those in the south , also, urban and rural girls are more likely to drop out of school than urban and rural boys (16% of

girls compared to < 5% of boys). It is more likely that girls located in the north central and boys in the northwest will not attend school (Okpukpara et al., 2006). The minister of state for education, Chief Nyesom Wike states in an interview that, out of the more than10 million children out of school in Nigeria , 7.5 million are females (Nnabugwu, 2021). Benue accounts for 260,000 out of school children in Nigeria, placing the state on the list of states with low school enrolment rates (UNICEF, 2020). The educational deprivation in Benue state isdriven by various factors, including economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, especially for girls.

Does gender of household head affect a child's educational outcome? Are there disparities in the gender of child enrolled in school by headship ofhousehold?

The Study Area and Research Method

Benue state has an estimated population of 4,253,641 individuals (population census, 2006). The state is transverse by River Benue from east to west and derives its name from it. River Benue is the second largest river in Nigeria. Benue has two major ethnic groups, namely Tiv and Idoma's and twenty-three LGA's. The study area comprises of four LGA that were purposively selected from the two major ethnic groups in the state using population size, social amenities and infrastructural development. Gboko and Gwer West from the major ethnic group (Tiv), while Otukpo and Okpokwu from the second largest in the state. Districts and villages in the selected LGA'S were subjected to Taro Yamane's method of sample selectionand a choice of seventeen (17) villages wasselected. Taro Yamane's sampling technique was preferred not only for scientific representativeness but also because it saves time, money and effort, since the population is very large.

The main study from which this paper is extracted took place in Gboko, Gwer West, Otukpo and Okpokwu Local Government Areas (L.G.A) of Benue State, Nigeria. Two sources of data were explored, (i) Primary and (ii) Secondary Sources. The main targets were female heads of households and their children. A total of four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered using Taro Yamane's sample size method as shown below;

$n=N/(1 +N(e)2)$

Where; n=sample size

N= population under study
e= margin of error

The population of the four LGA's under study is:

Gboko=487,700
Gwer West = 122,145
Otukpo = 266,411
Okpokwu =175,596
Total = 1,051,852
N=1051852/ (1 + 1051852(0.05)2) = 1051852/1+1051852(0.0025) = 1051852/ 1+2629.63

1051852/2630.63=399.84 = 400.

The questionnaires were administered purposively on the basis of being a MHH or FHH. Simple descriptive analysis has been used in order to understand the basic relationship between female headship and child welfare in terms of education. The chi-square was also used to test the hypotheses.

3.0 Results

Demographic and socio- economic characteristics of respondents

An equal number of questionnaires were administered to both male and female headed households. On the basis of gender disparity, 38.1 % of female heads (FH) are in the older generation (60 years and above), compared to 20.2% of male heads of households. This conforms to the fact that women make-up the majority of elderly population in literature (Panda, 1997). FH are less likely to be married (15% to 31.2%), more likely to be widowed (28% to 18%], more likely to be divorced (33% to 30.3%). This is in line with the national statistics which shows that 1.8% of women are widowed compared to 0.5% of men, and that 2.9% of FH are divorce in Nigeria compared to 1.8% for males[NDHS, 2003). Literate males seem to be higher than females (28.9% MHH to 18.8% FHH). Studies in northern Nigeria have revealed disparity in school enrolment by sex, 37.55% in MHH's and 26.2% in FHH's (Mamman, 1992). In some parts of Benue, the education of the female child is seen as a waste of resources (Odeh , 1997).At the time of survey 11.0% of FH were found not to be working compared to 8.3% of MH, those who were used as agricultural wage labourers are 24.8 % in FHH's compared to 20.2% in MHH's. The study also shows that FHH are smaller than MHH (48.6% compared to 22.5% MHH). The small average size of FHH stems from the fact that women have different upbringing from Men, and have lower income which limits the number of persons in their households.

3.2 Gender of household head and child enrolment by age

Educational attainment is perhaps the most important characteristics of household members and an important tool in determining children's health, poverty and general wellbeing.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of child enrolment by age and gender of household head

CHILD ENROLMENT BY AGE	BOTH SEXES				BOYS				GIRLS			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
6-11 years	55	28.0	87	42.7	82	40.4	79	39.0	94	45.9	98	47.7
12-17 Years	64	32.1	57	28.9	72	35.8	57	33.5	66	33.0	64	32.1
18-21 years	81	39.9	56	28.4	46	23.9	654	27.5	40	21.1	38	20.2
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	200	100.0	200	100.0	200	100.0	200	100.0
Calculated x2 degree of freedom						critical x2 (P = 0.05)						
303. 1882								5.99				

Table 1: Shows enrolment age into primary school (6-11 years) to be higher in FHH, compared to MHH (42.7% and 28.0% respectively). On the basis of sex of child, the female child seems to have higher enrolment, irrespective of gender of household head (see table 1). This disparity in favor of the female head (FH) could be due to the fact that schooling at such age is cheap and most times, almost free or it could be social or cultural factors. In 2004, Adamu carried out a research were a total of 224,599 children were enrolled into school in Sokoto, only57,898were girls, representing less than 26% of the enrolled children. This suggests that there are likely to be disparities in child schooling by gender in different regions, state or even countries.

The result for child enrolment into secondary and post-secondary institutions seems to be higher in MHH compared to FHH, disparity also occur in terms of sex of child (see Table 1). It is evident that girls are kept from schooling not because parents saw no need to educate them but also to protect their morality, this is evident from the explanation below;

"I was not sent to school because in our time, as far as school was concerned, it was only for boys….. Sending females to school was to get their "eyes opened" it was believed that a girl who went to school would be morally spoiled and would therefore spoil the family name" (WIN, 1991)

The calculated x^2 value is greater than the table value, therefore we conclude that the observed association between child enrolment by age into primary, secondary or post-secondary institutions by sex of HH is statistically significant (see table 1)

A review of literature on the disparity in education of male and FHH can be found in NDHS, 2003; Panda; 1997; Adamu 2004 ; Funmi, 2013; UNICEF, 2020.

Educational outcome

To measure the actual educational outcome of children, repetition, daily attendance and dropout rates were analyzed in both male and FHH, as these are signs of educational performance.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of child educational outcome by head of household

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME	BOTH SEXES OF CHILDREN				BOYS				GIRLS			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
REPRTITION AMONG CHILDREN	100	45.9	146	67.0	89	40.8	93	42.7	129	59.2	125	57.3
CHILDREN WITH FULL ATTENDANCE	163	74.8	129	59.2	138	63.3	123	56.4	80	36.7	95	43.6
DROPOUT AMONG CHILDREN	77	35.3	105	48.2	83	38.1	104	47.7	135	619	114	52.3

The data on table 2 shows that, of the total 400 sampled HH, 41.7% repetition cases are for boys and 58.3% for girls, the number are also higher in FHH (67%) than in MHH (45.9%). The result also shows that girls are likely to repeat in MHH compared to FHH (59.2% and 57.3% respectively). This could be due to the fact that the girl child now carries Household responsibilities meant for their mothers. The result slightly differs from that from the western world where repetition rate for girls are higher in both male and FHH's (Seltzer, 1994; Barros et. al, 1995; panda 1997).The results on table 2 shows that full attendance is higher in MHH compared to FHH, the result also holds true for sex of child by gender of HH (Table 2)

This is in line with Adamu's study in 2004, were she attributed seclusion of women in Sokoto as one of the reasons that affects girls access to education. Osakue (1998) also found disparity in school attendance by sex of child and also in the gender of socialization of the child as seen below:

" I was only taught how to cook, trade and be a good housewife, while my brothers were given a very sound (formal) education because my father felt it's the men who will bear his name throughout life…..he felt that when women are educated, they will later carry the wealth to their husband's family" (Osakue,1998).

Failure to complete school is also associated with persistent poverty among certain segment of the society. The result on table 2 shows that shows that a higher proportion of children dropped out of school in FHH's compared to MHH's (48.2% and 35.3%, respectively). Marked differences were also observed when analysis was carried out for sex of child (see table 2). Surprisingly, women heads of households also placed more value on boys' education in Benue state. To verify these results further, a Chi-Square test of significance was carried out to test the observed variables.

TABLE 3: CHI-SQUARE RESULTS FOR EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME BY SEX OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME	CALCULATE X^2	CRITICAL X^2 (P = 0.05)	DEGREE OF FREEDOM
REPETITION AMONG CHILDREN IN SCHOOL	336.748	3.48	1
CHILDREN WITH FULL ATTENDANCE	260.322	3.84	1
DROPOUT RATES AMONG CHILDREN IN SCHOOL	312.409	3.84	1

The calculated chi-square value for children who repeat school by head of household is greater than the critical x^2 value at 1 degree of freedom (Table 3). We therefore conclude that the association between the observed variables is highly significant. This compares favorably with study carried out by Adamu in 2004. She attributed seclusion of women in northern part of the country (Sokoto) as one of the reasons that affect girls access to education, since secluded women need girls to hawk goods for them, she cited a woman who said:

"There is too much suffering in meeting the demands of educating girls, because if a girl

is schooling one cannot engage her in any serious occupation" (Adamu, 2004)

Children with full attendance by sex of HH yields a chi-square result of 260.322. The critical chi-square value is 3.84 at 1 degree of freedom. Therefore, the observed relationship is highly significant. Gelles (1989), suggest that the "parent absent" hypothesis reflects a lack of social support and the consequent social isolation increases the stress on a lone parent to meet the demands of child care.

The calculated chi-square result for difference in dropout rates by sex of head of HH is also statistically significant (Table 3). Sibanda in "Who drops out of School in South Africa?", revealed that, girls and children with physical disabilities are statistically more likely to drop out of school than children without any disability (Sibanda, 2005).

Other factors also contribute to the disparity by sex on educational outcome of children; these factors include money, laziness, occupation, etc

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by reasons for dropping out of school

REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL	SEX OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD					
	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
LACK OF FINANCE	70	34.4	72	35.3	142	34.9
HEALTH/ DISABILITY	45	22.9	26	14.2	71	18.6
NO JOB	34	17.4	38	19.3	72	18.3
STUBBORNNESS OF CHILD	51	25.2	64	31.2	115	28.2
TOTAL	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0
Calculated X^2	Critical X^2 (P = 0.05)				Degree of Freedom	
38 7 . 11	7.81				3	

A Sex Analysis of the gender of head of households shows finance as the major reason why children drop out of school (35.3% in FHH against 34.4% in MHH). It is followed by the stubbornness of the child, which is higher in FHH compared to MHH (Table 4). Hyde (1993) and Lioyd et.al (2000) revealed that the likelihood of dropping out of school is also influenced by a weak demand for education, poor performance and by school community-specific factors. Children also drop out of

school to enter the labor force or help at home or as a result of pregnancy, poor health or diminished household financial resources (Lloyd et. al. 2001)

The calculated x^2 value is greater than the critical table value (Table 4), this implies that the status of the head of household affects dropout rate of children in school. UNICEF (2020), reports that Nigeria accounts for one in every five out-of-school children in the world and 45% of children in West Africa; while Benue state accounts for 260,000 out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Discussion

This study covers the relationship between household headship and children's educational outcome in Benue state. The study conforms to existing literature on children in FHH having lower educational outcome compared to children in MHH's. FHH's were more likely to be in the older generation, less likely to be married and more likely to be divorced. They have lower literacy rate and just a few of them were working at the time of the survey (11.0% to 8.3% MHH). The National Bureau Statistic (NBS, 2009) showed that 16.5% of HH are headed by women, and majority of who are women. The study also holds true for parents' level of formal education as a strong determinant of educational outcome of children. Okojie (2002), opined that educated mothers are likely to send their children to school creating a vicious circle of education and poverty reduction.

There were disparities in enrollment of children into Male and FHH's. Results from the study showed FFH's and girls to be disadvantaged in terms of enrollment into primary, secondary and post-secondary institution. Shockingly, more girls were enrolled into primary school; this could be due to the fact that schooling is cheap at this stage. Gender like geography and poverty is an important factor in the pattern of educational marginalization. States in the northeast and northwest have female primary net enrollment rate of 47.7% and 47.3%, respectively. Meaning that more than half of the girls are not in school (UNICEF, 2020), this finding is different from that of Benue state. Secondary and post-secondary enrollment was higher in MHH's. This conforms to Panda's study of female headship in 1997.

Full school attendance, repetition and drop-out rates were used as measures of children's welfare. Full school attendance was higher in MHH's, so is the percentage of children who repeated or dropped out of school. An interesting find is, when the sex of child was used, results showed that more girls repeated in FHH's and also dropped out of school. This shows that women are also biased when it comes to the sex of their children. Family preferences for boy's education and the need for children's labor services within and outside the household often limit the education of girls in rural communities (Beneria and Bisnath, 1996). Funmi (2013) has a different result with similar study. She found the relationship between headship and children's educational performance not to be statistically significant. She agreed to the fact that

parent's level of formal education affects a child's performance positively but, disagrees with the myth that women are constrained by time and resources, which affects their children's educational performance.

The study confirms the argument that female headship leads to poverty and poor child welfare outcomes. Most children in the study area dropped out of school in FHHs due to finance. The majority of the female heads of households were agricultural wage laborers (24% in FHH to 20.2% in MHH).Ashimolowo et al. (2017), in their study of situation analysis of FHH's in AwoEkiti, asserts that FHH's had low level of education, were constrained in lack of micro credit facilities (74.2%) and extension services (93.5%), as well as lack of support from government (93.5 %) and non-governmental organization(90.3%). Quisumbing et al. (1995), in their study of gender and poverty in 10 developing countries showed weak evidence of FHH's being over rated among the poor. The absence of a male bread winner in the HH results to children going to work instead of school, this makes their future to be tied to poverty (Joseph Lebni et al., 2020). Results on reasons why children dropped out of school showed finance and stubbornness of child as the main cause. On the basis of gender of head of HH, the results were higher in FHH's. Female heads of HH are confronted with a lot of tension with children and a lack of control over children cause them to be unable to perform their duties and children disobey the FH's. These challenges go to cultural beliefs and patriarchal dominance (JosephLebni et al., 2020).

All children, no matter where they live or their gender, have the right to quality education. In Nigeria, about 10.5 million children are not in school and Benue state accounts for 260,000 out – of-school children in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2020). It is obvious from this study that the relationship between female headship and children's educational outcome is statistically significant. It is obvious that FHH's in Benue are time constrained and lack resources to take care of their children, there's a need for empowerment, which leads to better status and invariably, better children welfare.

Conclusion

Understanding the consequences of female headship on children's educational outcome have often been observed by comparing characteristics of FHH to their wealthy MHH and also, ignoring causes of female headship. This study provides an empirical data for female headship and children's educational outcome. Child enrolment by age is used to ascertain children access to education. Enrolment into primary school by age is higher in FHH's compared to their male counterparts, but enrolment into secondary and postsecondary institution by age is lower in FHH's compared to MHH's. Data on the sex of child shows more boys are generally enrolled in secondary schools compared to girls. An interesting find in this study is the fact that FHH's are also biased in the education of their children (boys

27.5% and girls 20.2% in the same household).

Repetition, full attendance and dropout rates among children enrolled in school was used as a measure of educational outcome. More girls tend to drop out of school, repeat classes or have low attendance rate in school, this could be due to the fact that some parents felt that education was better for the boy child than the girl child (Panda, 1997).

Intervening variables such as education, occupation and income of head of HH was used to test for children's access to social services and their actual welfare outcome.

From these findings, I recommend further research on the issues concerning women, especially female heads. Donors can play a more affirmative role in encouraging national researchers to study issues on women's work, poverty and child welfare, as this will subsequently lead to real changes of awareness at the national levels, of the importance of women's role in human development.

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