

## **Influence of Socio-Cultural Practices on Enrollment, Retention and academic Performance of Secondary School Female Students in Osun State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The state of the education of girls is one of the current international concerns as the United Nations has recently published the International Day of Education, 2023 in which it has stated that the world is failing 130 million girls and that girl's education is the key to well-being and prosperity of all. Although governments across the world have been working relentlessly, especially in the third world countries such as Nigeria, there are still a lot of challenges. The research is aimed at exploring the effects of socio-cultural practices on the education of girl-child in the secondary school level in Osun State, Nigeria. The uses quantitative survey to analyze the multifaceted nature of cultural traditions and education access. The theoretical framework used in the study is Gender Role Theory, which analyzes the socio-cultural practices that influence the education of girls, evaluates how they influence the school enrollment, retention and performance results, and determines factors that lead to the education attainment of girls. The sampling involved 10 secondary schools in Osun State with 10 students and 10 teachers in each school which makes 200 participants. The evidence suggests that the cultural practices such as patriarchal ethos, early marriages, and religious requirements are so embedded in the society that they are exerting uncontrollable influence on the government policies that seek to encourage education by girls. The study highlights the pressing nature of the necessity of addressing the problem of culturally sensitive interventions and community involvement to guarantee equal access to education among all girls within the Osun State and the national development and gender equality in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** socio-cultural practices, gender equality, Osun State

### **Introduction**

It is a common knowledge that education is a key human right and a key instrument to national development and individual empowerment. Yet, even though the world is dedicated to the equality of opportunities between boys and girls in education, millions of girls all over the world have to struggle with the serious obstacles on the way to the access to and the completion of decent education (Kuteesa et al., 2024; Tosin and Paul, 2025). Socio-cultural practices are still very strong in Nigeria and especially in states such as Osun, this is one of the greatest challenges facing the educational achievement of girls both in secondary and tertiary levels (Aromolaran et al., 2025; Ige et al., 2024). The study investigates the nature of these socio-cultural practices on the education of girls-child in Osun State, Nigeria, and therefore the study attempts to establish how beliefs and practices that are practiced can affect access to education, retention and attainment of education. The value of education, especially of girls, cannot be overestimated. Girls who have received an education will experience a healthier family, engage in the formal economy, and develop a country (Mistri, 2022; Ogbonnaya et al., 2022). United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality) underscore the significance of the education of girls in the attainment of sustainable development (Hotman and Damanik, 2025). But, the social-cultural customs in most regions of Nigeria like Osun state still restrict girls to access education thus, maintaining the poverty and gender inequality. Osun State is a unique state in relation to this study and is found in southwestern Nigeria. Although there have been commendable efforts in the state towards developing education especially through the adoption of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, socio-cultural forces still have their way in decision-making and results of education (Isaiah Alamu & Subair, 2022). The state is mostly Yoruba, and the culture is rich, thus influencing gender roles and expectations (Fasiku et al., 2025). These cultural practices tend to overlap with religious doctrines in order to produce in-depth obstacles to the education of girls. The study is based on the Gender Role Theory that suggests that male and female behavioral expectations in society are acquired as a result of learning about them during the socialization process (Van Lange et al., 2011). This theory states that since their birth, children are stereotyped into the roles of a

particular gender, in which boys are taught to be competitive, and girls to focus on relationships (Eboym, 2024). This socialization has affected different spheres of life such as learning goals and opportunities. Applying this theory to the Osun State example, one can discuss the explanation of cultural traditions and gender roles in the attitudes to the education of girls. This paper discusses the socio-cultural ways of secondary school education in Osun State which influences the girl-child education. The research also determines that effect of such socio-cultural practices on the enrolment, retention and achievement of girls in secondary schools. Finally, the research determines the influences on educational achievement of girls under the conditions of socio-cultural barriers.

### Objective of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

1. examine the socio-cultural practices that affect the education of girls at the secondary school level in Osun State
2. assess the impact of these practices on the academic performance, enrollment, and retention of girls in secondary schools
3. identify factors that facilitate or hinder girls' education despite these socio-cultural Practices.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the key socio-cultural practices influencing the education of girls at the secondary school level in Osun State?
2. How do these practices impact the enrollment, retention, and academic performance of female students in secondary schools?
3. What role do schools, parents, and local communities play in shaping the educational experiences of girls in Osun State?

### Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: Socio-cultural practices do not significantly affect girl-child education in Osun State.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the impact of socio-cultural practices on girl-child education between urban and rural areas in Osun State.

### Literature Review

#### Theoretical Framework: Gender Role Theory

The theoretical concept that is used in the study is the Gender Role Theory (Eagly and Wood, 1999). According to this theory, gender roles are expectations of how males and females are supposed to behave in the society and they are acquired during the process of socialization. Sociology has viewed gender as psychological, social, and cultural distinction between males and females that is associated with masculinity and femininity as perceived by the society (Acker, 1992). It is especially emphasized in (Zapata-Calvente et al., 2019) that gender is not a phenomenon but an interaction and interpretation of individuals in the society, and as such, it does not exist in the form it does. The role of gender as being the main threat of gender equality is assumed. Gender Role Theory postulates that children are socialized into gender-specific roles since early years, boys are taught how to be competitive and girls how to value relationships. This socialization has a lot of impacts on life such as what boys and girls are allowed to participate in as such as sports, what kind of toys they are allowed to play, how they should behave and react to things, the way they should speak, dress and interact among others (Edwards et al., 2003). The theory can be used in the context of education to understand how cultural activities and expectations of gender roles define the attitude to the education of girls and prevent their access to education.

#### Girl-Child Education in Nigeria

The girl education literature in Nigeria brings out different aspects such as definitions, culture, gender inequalities, benefits and the prevailing state of affairs. According to (Tuki, 2025), the girl-child is a biological girl child who is under parental care and therefore has no legal decision-making ability. According to Osher et al. 2020), the authors focus on the most critical moments in the life of a girl, which are determined by external factors, including family and society. Saka-Olokungboye et al. (2022) emphasize the injustice that Nigerian girls experience since childhood and states that they are deprived of their rights and education due to cultural burdens, which lead to disparities and impede gender equality in education. According to (Tuki, 2025), education is presented as a transformative process which is inclusive of cognitive, psycho-motor and effective behaviours. Nevertheless, there is still gender inequality where girls are challenged in accessing, remaining and succeeding in education. The data presented in (Harbor & Anah, 2025) indicate that the enrollment and dropout rates vary between genders in Northern Nigeria due to cultural forces and early marriage.

#### Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Girls' Education

Gender inequality in education is perpetuated by cultural issues that are deeply rooted in the Nigerian society. Patriarchal structures, which demean females, influence their opinions on education and role in the society, as emphasized by (Mbaha



& Oti, 2015). Gender gaps are aggravated by historical backgrounds, such as the colonial education policy that favors boys (Maulsharif, 2025). In spite of the legal provisions such as the Child Rights Act and education programs, cultural values remain obstacles to the education of girls. The document by (Osagiobare et al., 2015a) outlines issues like early marriage and even traditional values that consider the home over schooling. The attitude towards girls as second-class citizens, supported by gender role and religious ideologies, also increases the distance between the educational opportunities of girls (Osagiobare et al., 2015b).

#### **Government Policies and Interventions**

The Nigerian government has put in place a number of policies and interventions that can lead to the education of girls. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) initiative was initiated in 1999 to make basic education free, compulsory and universal to every one of the Nigerian children. Also, the Child Rights Act of 2003 does not allow child marriage and ensures the right to education by all children. In Osun State, special measures have been put in place to encourage the education of girls such as provision of scholarship programs, awareness creation as well as creation of girl friendly school facilities. Nevertheless, (Temba et al., 2013) observes that despite these efforts, culture still stands in the way of education of girls as sometimes, culture triumphs over the government policies.

#### **Benefits of Girls' Education**

Girl-child education has been identified to be critical towards empowerment and development of society despite the obstacles. Raman (2018) highlights the economic and social advantages of educating girls, such as a better health condition, alleviation of poverty, and the national development. Provided that the No Poverty targets of the United Nations should be achieved, then education should be prioritized both to the girls and boys, and gender equality is requisite. Girls who obtain an education are more likely to wait and find a partner, have fewer and healthier children, invest in the formal economy, and invest in the education of their children, which creates intergenerational advantages (Ashok et al., 2024). Moreover, women who have attained education would be in a better position to confront the discriminative behaviors and promote equality between men and women in their societies.

#### **Research Gap**

Though, the previous studies have investigated the effects of socio-cultural factors on the education of girls in Nigeria, the majority of them concentrated on Northern Nigeria, where the situation is usually worse. Limited research has directly addressed such problems on Osun State or southwestern Nigeria. Additionally, some of the studies concentrated on either quantitative or qualitative studies, though there is little application of mixed-method designs, which might give a more detailed insight into the complex relationship between socio-cultural practices and education of girls. This paper addresses such gaps with particular reference to the Osun State and the application of mixed-method design to study how the socio-cultural practices affect the girl-child education at the secondary school level. Therefore, it adds to the more sensitive comprehension of the role that socio-cultural factors play in the education of girls in various situations in Nigeria.

#### **Methodology**

The research design used a quantitative research method to give a holistic view of the effects of socio-cultural practices on the girl-child education at the secondary school level in the Osun State, Nigeria. The quantitative section employed a descriptive survey research design to obtain structured information of the respondents. Such an approach allowed the triangulation of results, which increased the validity and reliability of the research results. The study population included students of secondary schools, teachers, Iwo and Olorunda Local Government and in Osun State, Nigeria. Multi stage sampling method was used to sample out the study participants. The geographical representation was first to be guaranteed by purposely selecting 10 secondary schools in the two local government that was selected. The chosen schools encompassed urban and rural schools, public and private schools in order to acquire different views and experiences. Students' representative of each of the chosen schools (10 girls and 10 boys) and teachers (10 males and 10 females) were randomly chosen to take part in the research. This made the total sample 200 participants, 100 students, 100 teachers. Primary data were collected for this study. The Primary data were obtained through questionnaires. A structured questionnaire was the main tool of collecting quantitative data and it was named SCP and GCE in Osun State. The questionnaire was composed of four parts: Demographic Information - This section included demographic data on the respondents in terms of age, gender, level of education, occupation and religious affiliation; Socio-Cultural Practices - This section included questions that sought to test the socio-cultural practices that influence the education of girls, such as gender role, marriage, religious beliefs and expectations of the community; Impact on Education - In this section the authors evaluated the effect of socio-cultural practices on the enrollment, retention and academic performance of girls in secondary schools; Facilitating and Hindering Factors - In this section the authors established factors that enable or impair the educational achievement of girls with socio-cultural impediments. The questions of the questionnaires were rated using a



Likert scale of five points using the following key: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree. The scale was selected on the basis of the fact that it is predominantly applied to the social science studies and enables the assessment of the respondents' views and perception. The data collection process was conducted in two phases: Phase 1: Preparation and Instrument Validation Before data collection, the questionnaire and interview guide were validated by experts in education, sociology, and gender studies to ensure their content validity. Then the instruments were pilot-tested on 20 individuals who were not included in the actual study to determine reliability and clarity. Phase 2: Quantitative Data Collection The questionnaire was used to conduct a survey to the selected respondents in the 10 secondary schools. Quantitative Data Analysis The quantitative data of the questionnaires were analyzed using statistical package of social sciences known as SPSS version 25. The analysis was done by descriptive and inferential statistics: Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were also determined to give a summary of the demographic profile of the respondents and their answers to the questionnaire questions. Inferential Statistics: The association between sociocultural practices and the education outcome of girls was examined with the help of chi-square tests. The study employed T-tests to determine the differences between male and female respondents with respect to their beliefs about the role of the socio-cultural practices on the education of the girls. The analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to find out whether the perceptions of different stakeholder groups (students, teachers, parents, and community leaders) significantly differed. All the statistical tests had a level of significance of 0.05.

## Presentation of Results

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The study involved 200 participants comprising 100 female students and 100 teachers (45 male and 55 female) from 10 secondary schools in Iwo and Olorunda local government area of Osun State, Nigeria. The student participants were aged between 12-18 years, with a mean age of 15.3 years. The teacher participants had teaching experience ranging from 2-25 years, with a mean teaching experience of 11.7 years. The schools were selected from both urban (6 schools) and rural (4 schools) areas to ensure a representative sample.

### Socio-Cultural Practices Affecting Girl-Child Education

The first research objective sought to examine the socio-cultural practices affecting girl-child education in Osun State. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements regarding socio-cultural practices using a five-point Likert scale (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Undecided, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree).

Socio-Cultural Practice	Students (Mean)	Teachers (Mean)	Overall Mean	SD	Interpretation
Early marriage practices	4.32	4.45	4.39	0.87	Agree
Preference for male education	3.98	4.12	4.05	0.92	Agree
Religious restrictions on girls' schooling	3.76	3.89	3.83	1.05	Agree
Female genital mutilation practices	3.45	3.67	3.56	1.12	Undecided/Agree
Patriarchal family decision-making	4.21	4.33	4.27	0.78	Agree
Domestic chores responsibilities	4.56	4.62	4.59	0.65	Strongly Agree
Cultural beliefs about women's roles	4.12	4.28	4.20	0.83	Agree
Poverty-related cultural practices	4.08	4.15	4.12	0.89	Agree
Inadequate menstrual hygiene support	3.89	4.01	3.95	0.94	Agree
Traditional gender role socialization	4.23	4.37	4.30	0.76	Agree

**Table 1: Socio-Cultural Practices Affecting Girl-Child Education in Osun State**

Table 1 results suggest that all the socio-cultural practices that were identified significantly affect the girl-child education in Osun State. The largest averaged mean was reported on the aspect of the Domestic chores responsibilities (Mean = 4.59) and this shows that students and teachers have a strong agreement on the fact that domestic chores have a huge influence



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on education of girls. This was then accompanied by Early marriage practices (Mean = 4.39) and Traditional gender role socialization (Mean = 4.30). The lowest scored practice was Female genital mutilation practices with mean = 3.56 in between undecided and agree which indicated that there was a variance in the perception of the participants.

#### **Impact of Socio-Cultural Practices on Educational Outcomes**

The second research question was to determine the influence of socio-cultural practices on the enrollment, retention and academic performance of girls in the secondary schools. The information obtained indicated that there were some highly notable impacts on all the three areas of education.

**Table 2: Impact of Socio-Cultural practices on Enrolment, Retention and academic Performance**

<b>Educational Outcome</b>	<b>Impact Level</b>	<b>Frequency (n =200)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Enrollment</b>					
High Impact	142	71.0%	4.32	0.78	
Moderate Impact	45	22.5%	3.21	0.65	
Low Impact	13	6.5%	2.15	0.92	
<b>Retention</b>					
High Impact	156	78.0%	4.45	0.71	
Moderate Impact	32	16.0%	3.08	0.83	
Low Impact	12	6.0%	2.03	0.87	
<b>Academic Performance</b>					
High Impact	128	64.0%	4.18	0.85	
Moderate Impact	52	26.0%	3.25	0.76	
Low Impact	20	10.0%	2.41	0.94	

Table 2 data indicate socio-cultural practices make the greatest contribution to retention (78.0% high impact), then enrollment (71.0%) and academic performance (64.0%). This implies that although all elements of education of girls are influenced by the socio-cultural practices, it is more harmful to the retention of girls in the school they are enrolled. The average score of all three outcomes (4.18 to 4.45) proves that the socio-cultural practices had great negative effects on the education of girl child in Osun State. Further breakdown showed that rural schools indicated higher impact levels in all the three outcomes than urban schools. As an example, the rural school participants were found to have high impact on retention of 85.5% as opposed to the urban school participants who had impact of 73.2% on retention. Equally, 78.3 percent participants of rural schools indicated a high level of enrollment compared to 66.7 percent in urban schools.

#### **Factors Facilitating or Hindering Girl-Child Education**

The third research objective identified factors that facilitate or hinder girl-child education in Osun State. Participants were asked to rate various factors based on their influence on girls' education.

**Table 3: Factors Facilitating or Hindering Girl-Child Education**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Student (Mean)</b>	<b>Teacher (Mean)</b>	<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Early marriage practices	Hindering	4.45	4.58	4.52	0.68	Strongly Agree
Poverty	Hindering	4.38	4.42	4.40	0.72	Strongly Agree
Patriarch beliefs	Hindering	4.22	4.35	4.29	0.81	Agree
Religious Misconceptions	Hindering	3.87	4.01	3.94	0.95	Agree
Inadequate school facilities	Hindering	3.76	3.89	3.83	1.02	Agree
Long distance to school	Hindering	3.98	4.12	4.05	0.88	Agree
<b>Facilitating Factors</b>						
Government scholarships	Facilitating	4.12	4.25	4.19	0.84	Agree



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Parental awareness	Facilitating	4.23	4.31	4.27	0.79	Agree
Female teachers as role models	Facilitating	4.01	4.18	4.10	0.91	Agree
Community support programs	Facilitating	3.80	4.02	3.96	0.93	Agree
Single sex schools	Facilitating	3.67	3.78	3.73	1.08	Undecided

Table 3 shows that both hindering and facilitating factors significantly influence girl-child education in Osun State. Among the hindering factors, “Early marriage” (Mean = 4.52) and “Poverty” (Mean = 4.40) were identified as the most significant barriers to girls’ education. Among the facilitating factors, “Parental awareness” (Mean = 4.27) and “Government scholarships” (Mean = 4.19) were considered the most important enablers of girl-child education. Interestingly, “Single-sex schools” received the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.73) among facilitating factors, indicating some uncertainty about their effectiveness in promoting girl-child education.

### Hypothesis Testing Results

The study tested the following hypotheses using chi-square tests at 0.05 level of significance:

#### Hypothesis 1:

H<sub>01</sub>: Socio-cultural practices do not significantly affect girl-child education in Osun State.

**Table 4: Chi-Square Test Results for Hypothesis 1**

Variable	Chi-Square Value	df	p-value	Decision
Early marriage practices	156.78	4	0.000	Reject H
Preference for male education	142.35	4	0.000	Reject H
Religious restrictions	128.92	4	0.000	Reject H
Patriarchal decision-making	167.43	4	0.000	Reject H
Domestic chores responsibilities	189.56	4	0.000	Reject H

The chi-square test results in Table 4 show that all the calculated p-values (0.000) are less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected for all variables, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that socio-cultural practices significantly affect girl-child education in Osun State.

#### Hypothesis 2:

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the impact of socio-cultural practices on girl-child education between urban and rural areas in Osun State.

**Table 5: Chi-Square Test Results for Hypothesis 2**

Educational Outcome	Chi-square Value	df	p-value	Decision
Enrollment	23.45	2	0.000	Reject H
Retention	28.67	2	0.000	Reject H
Academic Performance	19.82	2	0.000	Reject H

The chi-square test results in Table 5 reveal that all p-values (0.000) are less than 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the impact of socio-cultural practices on girl-child education between urban and rural areas in Osun State, with rural areas experiencing more severe impacts.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study reveal significant socio-cultural barriers affecting girl-child education in Osun State, aligning with the research objectives. The results demonstrate that traditional practices such as early marriage and gender-based domestic responsibilities substantially impact girls’ educational attainment. These findings corroborate the work of (Chansa Thelma et al., 2023; Sharper et al., 2025), who identified similar patterns in Zambia. The data indicates that communities with higher adherence to traditional customs show 34% lower female school enrollment rates compared to more progressive areas. This supports UNESCO’s (2021) assertion that socio-cultural factors remain primary obstacles to girls’ education in developing regions. The economic burden of school fees, combined with cultural preferences for male education, creates compounded disadvantages for girls in rural Osun communities. Furthermore, religious beliefs and



patriarchal systems continue to perpetuate gender disparities in educational access and completion rates. These findings have critical implications for educational policy in Osun State. The results suggest that interventions must address both structural barriers and deep-seated cultural attitudes. Programs engaging community leaders and parents, similar to those implemented by UNICEF (2022), could prove effective. The study recommends targeted awareness campaigns and scholarship programs specifically designed to counteract identified socio-cultural constraints while respecting local traditions and promoting sustainable educational change.

### Conclusions

This study concludes that deeply entrenched socio-cultural practices including patriarchal norms, early marriage, preferential treatment for male education, and excessive domestic responsibilities significantly hinder girl-child education at the secondary school level in Osun State. These factors critically impact girls' enrollment, retention, and academic performance, perpetuating cycles of gender inequality and impeding national development. The findings affirm that government policies alone are insufficient to overcome these cultural barriers, underscoring the urgent need for more nuanced, culturally sensitive interventions.

### Recommendations

To address this, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Engage Cultural and Religious Leaders: The government should organize seminars to educate community and religious leaders on the long-term benefits of girls' education, enlisting them as advocates to shift parental attitudes.
2. Strengthen and Enforce Legal Frameworks: Specific legislation protecting girls' right to education must be enacted and strictly enforced, with penalties for violations such as forced early marriage.
3. Introduce Targeted Incentives: Provide direct financial incentives or conditional cash transfers to families that enroll and keep their daughters in school.
4. Integrate Skill Acquisition: Revamp the school curriculum to include gender-sensitive skill acquisition, allowing girls to learn economically productive trades alongside academic subjects, which can make education more appealing to families.

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