

Convoluted path, invisible force and girls' education in Ghana

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Abstract: The prognosis in tomorrow's crowded competitive economic environment will be for people to sharpen their skills, build their capacities and obtain the requisite succours that can enable them achieve their dreams especially, those already disadvantaged by natural collage and human disarrangements. Even though local or indigenous knowledge is appropriate in this regard, it does not suffice as a contrivance that can radically stimulate long term growth, and by transforming or renovating human aptitude as formal education does. This study examines whether there were any differences between parents educational status and girls acquisition of formal education and the effect of girls' acquisition of formal education. In conducting this study, a mixed method approach was adopted. The study revealed that the probability of girls acquiring formal education in Ghana can be directly related to the educational status of their parents. Thus, there were significant relationships in the response variables. About 76% of the respondents believed that formal education can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future while 24% of respondents shared a different view. In this study, we argue that any effort at promoting or enhancing the acquisition of formal education for girls in Ghana must be focused on putting greater emphasis on influencing the perception and personal beliefs of parents who have never been to school before. This is because parents provide a source of motivation and model for their children. The study concludes that the educational status of parents has a direct effect on the future of girls.

Keywords: Formal Education, Girls, School, Parents and Guardians, Educational Status

1. Introduction

Over the years, social, cultural and religious obstacles have significantly thwarted the ability of girls to succeed in life. Today, more girls are significantly more likely to get married earlier in their life time than boys [26]. Again, girls unlike their male counterparts are more likely to be introduced to sex earlier in life. What is even more worrying is their level of contraceptive usage, knowledge about health issues, and their inability to negotiate for safer sex during sexual intercourse among others. For instance, in 2009, about 5 million young people were living with HIV in developing countries; out of this number, 3.2 million were young girls [Ibid]. It is estimated that about 17.6% of children in Pakistan work as domestic help workers to support their families and more than half of this figure (17.6%) is made up of girls from poor and deprived homes [1].

According to the former UN Secretary General, Kofi

Annan; "millions of girls slip easily to the margins of our societies-less healthy than they could be, less skilled, with fewer choices in their live and less hope for the future. As they grow into women, they are ill-prepared to participate fully in the political, social and economic development of their communities. They-and their children in turn-are at higher risk of poverty, HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation, violence and abuse" [25: p.vii]. Conditions like these have a propensity to worsen the already vulnerable situations that girls find themselves.

Women constitute more than half of the population of the world, yet they are engaged in about two-thirds of the work in the world, receive about one-tenth of the income of the world and hold below one-hundredth of the property of the world [22]. What this means is that, girls are more likely to go through more turbulent times in life than their male counterparts. Again, in every developing region, girls

are more likely to grow and take up less secured jobs with fewer social benefits [27] and their lack of skills and confidence has and will often give them very little space or opportunities to manoeuvre.

In Africa, a number of factors have traditionally conspired to put girls at a disadvantage. Girls are introduced to the complexities of marriage and adulthood early in life than their male counterparts. In sub-Saharan Africa, girls are two to four times more likely to contract HIV/AIDS in their life time as against boys [26].

In Ghana, many girls turn to lack behind in many endeavors such as business, education, job acquisition and job placement among others. For instance, "women consistently lag behind men in formal labor force participation, access to credit, entrepreneurship rates, income levels and inheritance and ownership rights" [11]. Knowledge about health issues is also very low and most often than not girls tend to suffer from some of the worse forms of health related complications. In urban Ghana, more girls end up as house maids in homes when family units become disjointed in the rural and peri-urban areas.

Their role as care givers in the family and the time wasted in performing these roles has also significantly reinforced the perception that girls are always at a disadvantage. "According to the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, studies show that women experience greater poverty, spend more time on household duties, have less access to productive resources and have lower rates of literacy. Lack of the start-up capital and resources to generate income and a heavy workload in smaller households prevent women from escaping poverty" [12; p 3]. Girls are constantly living at risk of being raped, abused, being single parents, or stricken by extreme poverty which could inadvertently be translated to their children. Among the population of migrants who trudge or trek to the urban centre's to work, girls are more likely not to be able to pursue their dreams and may return home worse-off. According to Ojewski [16, p1] migrant girls "from rural Ghana, live in dangerous and degrading conditions and tend to lack the opportunity to improve their situation"

Available data indicates that more girls work or are more likely to grow and work in the informal sector than in the formal sector in Ghana [7]. "A lower portion of women, 8.6 percent are estimated to be in paid employment compared to men 26.9 percent in 2005/2006" [11]. In 2005/2006, the number and proportion of women in unpaid employment increased to about 28.5% from 24.5% in 1998/1999 [Ibid]. If this is juxtaposed to the fact that poverty is ubiquitous and more pronounce in the informal economy [8] then there are serious implications ahead if nothing is done to reverse this trend. Currently, more than 29 percent of people in the self-employed sector who are into small and micro enterprises are below the poverty bracket [Ibid]. Despite this, new projections still show alarming trends. That is, regions in Ghana that are experiencing rising trends and levels of poverty appear to have female population of between 50 to 52 percent [Ibid].

Over the years, a number of deliberate interventions and policies have been introduced by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and governments to reverse this disturbing trend. Some of these interventions have taken the form of the provision of direct support such as cash for short term social relief, free health screening, capacity building, and the establishment of skills development and acquisition centre's to train young girls in various enterprises such as soap making, dress making and hair dressing among others. Ironically, over the past years, most of these interventions have not achieved the long term desired impact as was expected as more girls tend to lack the needed capital or ingenuity to utilize their skills when they pass out of skills training programmes. The search for solutions outside the formal system has generally not worked mainly because of issues of sustainability and how long term impacts could be achieved. To this extent, in order to achieve long term results, a number of organizations, institutions and governments are now putting greater emphasis on "schooling" or formal education. This is because among the various interventions that have been introduced over the years to improve the lives of girls, none of them has worked extensively and swiftly in transforming the lives of girls like formal education or "schooling" does.

Developing the human capacity to effectively function will depend on concerted solutions that have trans-generational impacts and influence. These solutions must not only work to bring short term reliefs to those in immediate distress but must provide opportunities or space to accommodate future fore-bears. Formal education has generally been acknowledged as one of the tools that have the potential to reshuffle people's lives and to break a generation of incessant poverty; lack of confidence and low self-esteem among others. Education is an "important indicator for examining the wellbeing and social status of people. It determines, to a very large extent, the income status and access to and affordability of some social amenities and services-safe drinking water, health services, among others. Education also provides opportunity for social mobility and escape from poverty" [7; p42]. At the World Education Forum in 2000, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan stated that; "no development strategy is better than one that involves women as central players. It has immediate benefits for nutrition, health, savings, and reinvestment at the family, community, and ultimately, country level. In other words, educating girls is a social development policy that works. It is a long-term investment that yields an exceptionally high return....We need those with power to change things to come together in an alliance for girls' education: governments, voluntary progressive groups, and above all, local communities, schools, and families" [2] [25, p1].

To this extent, in order to promote and accelerate the acquisition of formal education by girls, various stakeholders within the international and national community have been making tremendous contributions.

Some of these contributions are aimed at widening access and creating awareness about the potentials of formal education for girls. For instance, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, the introduction of the UN Millennium Development Goals in 2000, the World Education Forum 2000, in Dakar inter alia were all attempts to promote the acquisition of formal education by girls. In Ghana, the 1992 constitution, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy, and the introduction of the capitations grant among others are all efforts at putting greater premium on the acquisition of formal education by girls. Other interventions from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and governments have been in the form of programme and project specifics', aim at removing the barriers that impede girls' acquisition of formal education. Governments have also been providing infrastructure and teaching and learning materials. Again, governments and other stakeholders have been providing funding in the form of grants, scholarships and food rationing among others.

Even though these interventions have generally worked to improve girls' acquisition of formal education; on the reverse side, there are several factors that still remain a major setback impeding the attempts by girls to acquire formal education in Ghana. Some of these issues are environmental, cultural, religious and psychological among others. To be precise, poverty, cultural, religious and personal belief factors have pushed about 2.7 million girls in Ghana out of school [10]. What is however not very clear is whether the educational status of parents and guardians can also affect the chances of girls acquiring formal education. It is within this context that the thrust of this study is defined to assess whether there are any significant relationships between parents and guardians educational status and girls' acquisition of formal education and whether formal education can significantly help girls achieve their dreams in future. This is because girls usually lack the capacity to fit in.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Area

The study was conducted in the Northern Region of Ghana. The Region covers an area of 70,384 km². It shares boundaries with the Upper East and the Upper West Regions to the North, the Brong Ahafo and the Volta Regions to the South, and two neighboring countries, the Republic of Togo to the East, and La Cote d'Ivoire to the West. In 2000, the population of the region stood at 1,820,806. However, in 2010, the population of the region increased to 2,479,461 [7]. Islam is the main religion in the region. The figure (1) below shows the study areas of the research work.

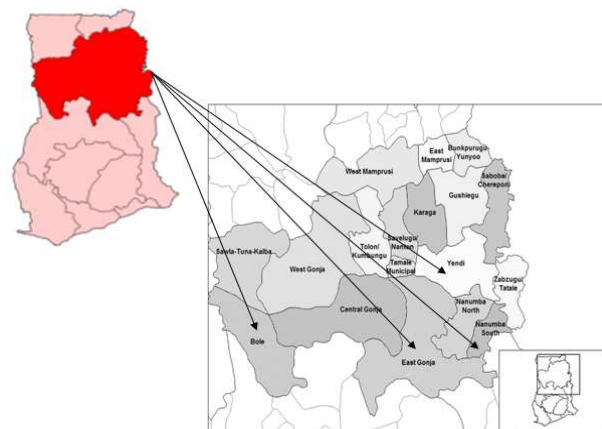


Figure 1. Map showing the Study Areas.

Educational attainment in the region is quite low; it is estimated that about 22.0 percent of people in the region who are fifteen years and above are literate. In terms of sex, the proportions of people who are literate among males are 12 percent higher than the proportion of females in the region [Ibid].

2.2. Data Collection Procedure

This study is a case study one with a mixed method approach [29] [21] [3]. Primary and secondary data were collected from 2013 to 2014. A total of two hundred (200) respondents were sampled from four districts in the Northern Region of Ghana for the study. These districts were Yendi, Wulensi, Bole and Salaga district. The Districts were selected based on a simple random sampling process. The researchers selected fifty (50) respondents each from both urban and rural/local communities in the four districts. The respondents included both males and females and were made up of hundred (100) males and hundred (100) females. For the purposes of triangulation [19] [14], data was collected from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and other relevant documents such as books and journals. We employed face-to-face key informant interview and questionnaire as the main tools for primary data collection.

To begin with, we reviewed extensive literature from data related to education. The FGD's were held in all four districts (Yendi, Wulensi, Bole and Salaga) and were held separately with parents and guardians who had never attended school before and also with parents and guardians who had ever attended school before.

The composition of the FGDs ranged from ten (10) to twelve (12) participants. According to Tsiboe [23] this technique of data collection is suitable if the objective of the research is to examine the experiences and opinions of a section of the population in relation to some specific issues connected to their environment. The individuals engaged in the FGDs were selected through a purposive sampling procedure and included both men and women. An audio recorder was used during the FGDs. This was done with the consent of the respondents.

In order to obtain relevant answers that will meet the objectives that were set in this study, in-depth face to face interview was conducted with community leaders, Assembly men, officials from the Ghana Education Service and some selected teachers. This method enabled the researchers to ask factual questions and made the respondents to actively participate and brought their understanding to enrich the questions in just a manner that the researchers never expected and knew off. The technique was also used in order to ensure that the respondents in the study had ample time to express themselves. This also offered the researchers the ability to explain the research questions very well to the respondents in order to petition for the right effects and answers [14]. Audio recording and note taking were carried out during the in-depth face to face interviews.

We administered questionnaires to some NGOs, CSOs, and FBOs in the study districts who were working in the area of education. These organizations included Actionaid Ghana, SNV, World Vision, Songtaba, Assemblies of God Relief Development Agency, Tumakavi, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Catholic Church.

The recordings from the audio tape were transcribed into a notebook. The transcribed recordings from the audio tape and the notes taken during the in-depth interview process and the FGDs were edited in order to improve on the quality of the data. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed using Nvivo and the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) respectively. A chi-square analysis was conducted in order to determine whether there were any significant relationships between parents and guardians' educational status and the decision of these parents and guardians to take their girls' to school. The effect of girls attending school and girls not attending school was also analyzed through the FGDs. Data presentation was done using tables and graphs.

2.3. Theoretical Model and Analysis

A Chi-Square Test of Independence was conducted to measure whether there were any significant relationships between parents' educational status and girls' acquisition of formal education. The equation for computing the Chi-Square value is given as;

$$x^2 = \sum \left[\frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} \right]$$

Where;

Σ = Sum across all categories of the variable

f_o = observed frequency

f_e = expected frequency

Also;

df is the "degree of freedom" ($n-1$) and is defined as the number of items in the group minus one (1) restriction [17].

In this study, a significant value (α – alpha) of 0.05 was used.

2.4. Stating the Hypothesis

H_0 = There is/are no significant relationship/differences between parents and guardians educational status and parents belief on whether "schooling" can help girls achieve their dreams in future.

That is;

H_0 = proportions in each response category for both parents and guardians who had never attended school and parents and guardians who had ever attended school on issues regarding whether they belief that "schooling" can help girls to achieve their dreams in future are independent.

$H_1 = H_0$ is not true (two-tail)

Where;

H_0 refers to the null hypothesis and

H_1 refers to the alternative hypothesis

In this study;

If $p > 0.05$ then we fail to reject the null hypothesis

If $p < 0.05$ then we reject the null hypothesis (There are differences).

2.5. Validity and Reliability Test

From the chi-square analysis used in this study, the results show that 0 cells (.0%) have expected counts less than 5. This means that we have not violated the minimum expected cell frequency of five (5) which will make the chi-square test inaccurate (see table 5).

Again, from the chi-square analysis conducted, the Continuity Correction significance value (.002) and the Fisher's Exact Test significance value (.001) are all less than the significant value (α) of 0.05. This makes the chi-square analysis accurate since the p-value of the results generated is also less than 0.05 (see table 5).

3. Conceptual Framework

In this study, it is postulated that every person has the universal right to education including the girl child as encapsulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, the UN Millennium Development Goals 2000, Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education 1995, and the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Again, in this study, we postulated that even though there may be other factors that influence the adaption of "schooling" or formal education by girls as a conduit to fulfill their future dreams, the educational status of parents and guardians also plays a critical role. We assumed that this could go a very long way in making girls opt for "schooling" or formal education as a pedestal to achieving their future dreams. This is because we belief that parents and guardians educational status determines the kind of support, role modeling, encouragement and motivation that girls will and can receive in the pursuit of their dreams. Again, in this study, we postulated that parents and guardians who have ever attended school will have a positive attitude towards "schooling" or formal education. On the other hand, parents and guardians who have never attended school will or are likely to have a

negative attitude towards formal education or “schooling”.

The decision by parents and guardians who have ever attended school and those who have never attended school before to take their girl child to school are usually influenced by a number of factors. Some of these factors may include government policies, parents and guardians’ perception about education, teachers’ attitude and school environment among others. In this study, we assumed that girls who do not attend school are most likely to face a wide range of complications in life [18, 5]. Some of these issues include low confidence, work in less secured jobs, work in low paying jobs, be a single parent, be illiterate, be abused, poor and likely to marry early in life inter alia.

In other to overcome these factors, it is postulated that “schooling” can boost or enhance the personal confidence of girls, improve their skills acquisition, increase their level of literacy, expand their social and economic capacities, delay marriage and provide job security among others. In this study, we also postulated that “schooling” can significantly enhance or transform the lives of girls through knowledge acquisition, skills building and the sharpening of attitudes that will enable girls function to their fullest capabilities [15]. This can improve their social and

economic empowerment, political orientation and break cultural, religious and personal belief systems about the abilities and potentials of girls. The growth and development of children and rural communities can also significantly be enhanced when girls attend school. Thus, we assumed that the role of girls in the family and the community has a “triggering” or “multiplier” effect. On the other hand, we assumed that, the overall effect of girls not attending school means that their social, economic, political and cultural well-being is significantly worsened. This also has a negative effect on children and communities. In this study, other factors that affect “schooling” such as distance to school, teachers’ attitude, school environment, cost of schooling (school fees) and family size among others have been deemphasized or not considered in this study. Again, “schooling” or the “school” as used in this study is also referred to as formal education. To suffice, even though we acknowledge that other factors can influence girls’ acquisition of formal education, this study measured only parents’ educational status and whether it has any relationship with girls’ acquisition of formal education. The figure (2) presented below shows the conceptual framework of the study.

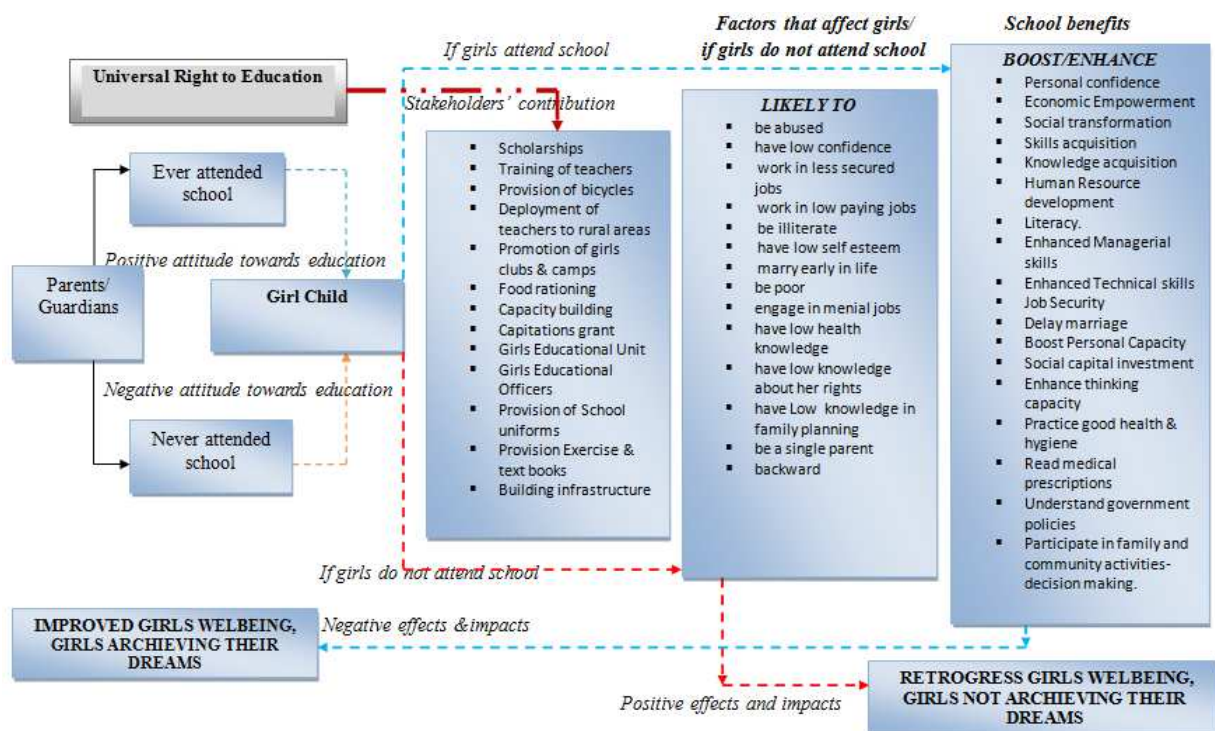


Figure 2. Conceptual framework for analyzing whether schooling can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. (Source: Authors own construct, 2014.)

4. Results and Discussions

Promoting formal education is a fundamental human right for all as encapsulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948. From the sample population of two hundred (200) respondents who were contacted for this study, 34.0% of the respondents who had never attended school before said they did not belief “schooling” can help

the girl child achieve her dreams in future. While 66.0% of respondents who had never attended school before had belief that “schooling” can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. The table (1) presented below shows the responses from respondents who had never attended school before and respondents who had ever attended school before.

Table 1. Table showing the cross tabulation of respondents who had ever attended school and respondents who had never attended school before.

		Do you belief "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future		Total
		NO	YES	
Have you ever attended school before?	Count	34	66	100
	Expected Count	24.0	76.0	100.0
	% within Have you ever attended school before.	34.0%	66.0%	100.0%
	% within Do you belief "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future	70.8%	43.4%	50.0%
	% of Total	17.0%	33.0%	50.0%
	Count	14	86	100
	Expected Count	24.0	76.0	100.0
	% within Have you ever attended school before.	14.0%	86.0%	100.0%
	% within Do you belief "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future	29.2%	56.6%	50.0%
	% of Total	7.0%	43.0%	50.0%
	Count	48	152	200
	Expected Count	48.0	152.0	200.0
Total	% within Have you ever attended school before.	24.0%	76.0%	100.0%
	% within Do you belief "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	24.0%	76.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2013-2014.

Among the respondents who did not belief "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future, 70.8% of them had never attended school before. A sample of 43.4% of respondents who had belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future had never attended school before. On the other hand, 14.0% of the respondents who had ever attended school before said they did not belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. While 86.0% of the respondents who had ever attended school before had belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future.

The study also revealed that 29.2% of the respondents who did not belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future had attended school before. Another 56.6% of the respondents who had belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future had ever attended school before.

In other to provide a very clear analysis of the responses collected, a bar graph has been drawn to show the distribution of the views of the respondents. From the bar graph distribution, majority of the respondents who had attended school before (86%) had belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. On the other hand, among the respondents who had never attended school before, majority of them (66%) had belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. To suffice, the bar graph (figure 3) shows that the number of respondents who had ever attended school

before had more belief that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future as compared to respondents who had never attended school before. The bar graph (figure 3) below shows the actual distribution of the responses of the respondents in the study.

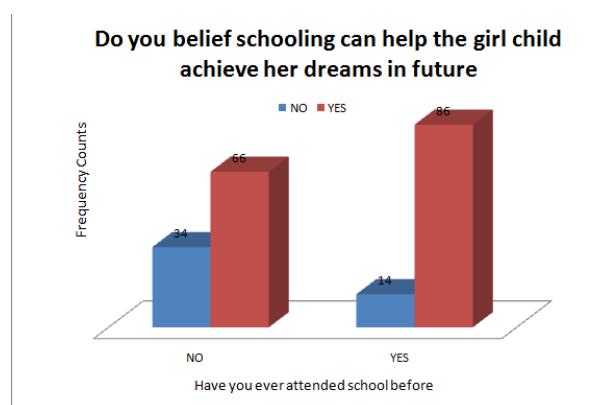


Figure 3. Graph showing the distribution of responses from respondents. (Source: Field Survey, 2013-2014.)

Among the respondents who had ever attended school before, educational experience and travel exposure were among the factors that influenced their decisions. On the other hand, respondents who had never attended school were generally influenced by educational campaigns by government, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Faith-Based

Organizations. Other reasons were the attitude of educated women as well as the presents of female government workers in the communities. These included female community health nurses, female teachers, and community

development workers inter alia. The tables shown below (2, 3, and 4) show the summary of responses from focus group discussions of parents who had ever attended school before and parents who had never attended school before.

Table 2. Responses from FGDs of parents who had never attended school before.

Have you ever attended school before	Reasons	NO
Do you belief "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future?	NO	<p>Apprenticeship/schooling period is too long.</p> <p>Even though it's free at the basic level, the cost at the tertiary level is very high.</p> <p>Schooling requires a lot of attention and supervision from parents who in themselves don't know what "schooling" is all about.</p> <p>Schooling requires going through or completing various stages before you can find any meaningful and secured job in future.</p> <p>Since schooling takes a longer time to complete, it could be risky and given that we are risk adverse we don't think it is a proper investment when you can easily farm and monitor how well your crops are doing.</p> <p>Girls attending school become promiscuous.</p> <p>Some teachers do not come to school or come late to school.</p> <p>Children play a lot when they go to school and this time could be put to good use in doing sometime else.</p> <p>Most teachers do not encourage or provide counseling for girls.</p> <p>Some girls attended school and later dropped out and now those who have never attended school before are now better off than them.</p> <p>Girls who attend school are arrogant and disrespectful.</p> <p>Girls who attend school to higher levels fail to do household chores when they come back home on holidays.</p> <p>Girls who go to school refuse to get married in order to keep the family's respect.</p> <p>Girls who attend school are not able to fluently speak our local language anymore.</p> <p>Girls who attend school lose their religious values.</p> <p>Girls who attend school lose their cultural values.</p> <p>Girls who attend school always want to change their local names for English names.</p> <p>Girls who attend school expose themselves when they dress.</p> <p>Girls do not have the confidence and resilience for schooling.</p> <p>Girls attending school cause them to leave the home when they complete school and they don't visit home frequently any more.</p> <p>When we are sick or in old age we rely on our girls to help us perform household chores therefore girls attending school will make them leave the house.</p> <p>It makes children dodge farm work.</p>

Source: Field Survey, 2013-2014

Table 3. Responses from FGDs of parents who had ever attended school before

Have you ever attended school before	Reasons	YES
Do you belief "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future?	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Girls attending school can help reduce gender disparities. ▪ Girls attending school can help reduce infant mortality. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase their level of participation in the family. ▪ Girls attending school can help reduce early marriages among girls. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase their awareness and usage of contraceptives. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase their awareness about family planning. ▪ Girls attending school can help break religious barriers. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase their awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS, gonorrhoea among others. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase attendance at ante-natal and post natal care. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase and improve personal hygiene among women. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase their awareness about exclusive breast feeding. ▪ Girls attending school can help improve the wellbeing of their children. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase their participation in politics. ▪ Girls attending school can help break cultural barriers. ▪ Girls attending school can help reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy. ▪ Girls attending school can help boost their self-esteem. ▪ Girls attending school can help serve as resource persons/role models in rural communities in order to encourage or boost schooling among other girls

Source: Field Survey, 2013-2014

Table 4. Responses from FGDs of parents who had never attended school before

Have you ever attended school before	Reasons	NO
Do you believe "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future?	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We all admire educated girls. ▪ Educated girls like to support the family. ▪ Girls cannot farm and therefore need to attend school. ▪ Schooling will boost the level of confidence of girls. ▪ Schooling can help girls acquire more secured jobs in future. ▪ Schooling will help girls participate in decision making. ▪ Schooling will make girls literate. ▪ Schooling gives girls some level of honour and credibility. ▪ Girls who attend and complete school are a source of pride to their families. ▪ Girls attending school can help increase their knowledge about health issues. ▪ Girls who attend school better appreciate and understand issues. ▪ Girls attending school can help reduce poverty levels in poor homes.

Field Survey, 2013-2014.

During the FGD that was held with parents who had ever attended school before, the parents revealed that economic and social support from the family is usually very low for girls who attend school. The discussions also revealed that girls who are able to make it through the basic level find it tough and challenging going through secondary and tertiary education.

Even though these respondents had ever attended school before they argued that their experience in education revealed that girls usually lack the mental ability and resilience to pass their examinations giving the host of environmental factors from school and home. These respondents however strongly hold the belief that giving the right support girls can excel in schooling no matter how challenging or tough the task of acquiring formal education is.

From the FGDs, it was lucid that most parents and especially girls do not only prefer but are convinced that the acquisition of formal education is a fail-safe insurance for the future. However, because of the complexities in the acquisition of formal education most girls in the Northern Region tend to complement formal education with informal job apprenticeship such as trading. The essence of doing this is to create a safety net for themselves when schooling fails

4.1. Test of Hypothesis

The chi-square test revealed that $X^2 (1, N = 200) = 10.965$, $p = .001$.

Where;

$$X^2 = 10.965$$

1 = Degree of freedom (*df*)

N = the total number of respondents in the study (200)

Significant value = .001

The chi-square results can also be read as chi-square with one (1) degree of freedom equal to 10.965, with p -value of = .001. This means that, the Chi-square Pearson value of 10.965 was obtained from the sampled population. The Chi-square Pearson value of 10.965 has a degree of freedom of 1 at a significant value (α) of .001. Table 5 shows the results of the chi-square test of independence.

Table 5. Results of Chi-square Test of Independence.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.965 ^a	1	.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	9.896	1	.002		
Likelihood Ratio	11.232	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
N of Valid Cases ^b	200				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 24.00.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

4.2. Interpreting the Chi-Square Results

From the analysis (table 5) $X^2_{(2)} = 10.965$, p -value is significant (two-tailed). This means that, with 1 df , the p -value associated with the computed chi-square value is .001 from a two tailed test (2×2). The significant value (alpha) of the chi-square test of .001 is less than 0.05 and this means that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there were significant relationships or differences between parents and guardians educational status and their belief on whether "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. Thus, since $.001 < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis.

Alternatively, the results can be read as $p (.001 < 0.5) = 10.965$ on 1 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the alternate hypothesis (H_1) is rather retained or accepted.

Finally, since $.001 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected and we can safely say that the educational status of parents and guardians and their belief about whether "schooling" can help girls achieve their dreams in future are related.

4.3. Understanding the Results of the Study

There are relevant lessons that can be drawn from the results of this study and the conceptual framework (figure 1). The results of the study revealed that there were significant relationships or differences between parents and guardians' educational status and parents' belief on whether "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. That is parents who have ever attended school before are extremely likely to believe that "schooling" or formal education can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future and hence take girls to school. Conversely, parents who have never attended school before are less likely to believe that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future and thus will not take girls to school.

Sending girls to school is an important aspect of facilitating growth and development. Available data in Ghana indicates that women who have no education tend to have very low earning capacities and are further dredged by deprivation which includes infant mortality and hunger in children [12].

The findings of this study confirm the findings of Cohn and Geske [4], Kane [13], Forum of African Women Educationist [6], Girls Education Unit [9] and the World Bank [28]. In their studies, Cohn and Geske [4], Kane [13], Forum of African Women Educationist [6], Girls Education Unit [9] and the World Bank [28] concluded that, women and men who attend school were more likely to believe that "schooling" can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future and hence will take their children to school, especially females [4, 13, 6, 9, 28]. Again, from the FGDs and the results generated from the chi-square test of independence, there is a direct relationship and effect between parent's educational status and girl's acquisition of formal education in Ghana. This relationship is shown in the figure (4) below.

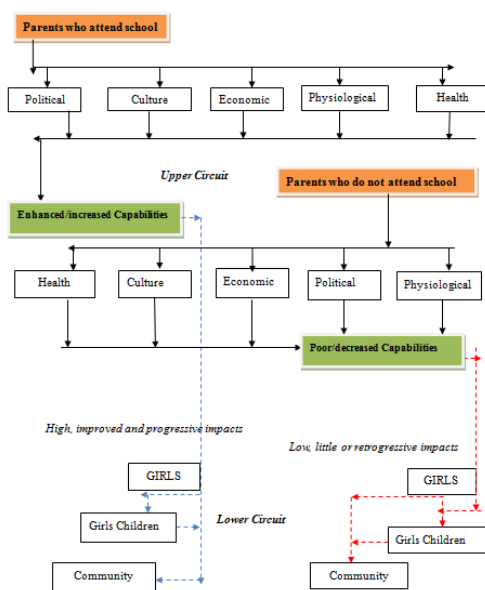


Figure 4. Relationship between educational status and the effect of girl's acquisition of formal education (Source: Authors own construct, 2014).

Parents and guardians who have ever attended school before have a greater influence on the chances of their girl child to also attend school than parents and guardians who have never attended school before. The reverse is also true.

Thus, the probability of girls attending school in Ghana can be directly proportional to the educational status of their parents and guardians if we do not consider other factors that can influence enrolment. According to the World Bank [28] the acquisition of formal education and its effects are usually carried on from one generation to another. In terms of effect, the Ghana Statistical Service [8 p.45], reports that "generally in Ghana, higher income, better employment opportunities and better living conditions are associated with educational status."

4.4. Implication of Results

The results of the study have serious implications on the effort of governments' and the efforts of other stakeholders' in accelerating formal education in Ghana. Thus, if we consider only parents school attendance to influence parents belief and girls school attendance, and we do not consider other factors that promote school attendance such as cancellation of school fees, provision of infrastructure, effective monitoring and supervision, supply of free text books and school uniforms, then what it means is that more girls are likely not to attend school in Ghana. According to the Ghana Living Standards Survey [10], the number of people aged 15 years and above who have never been to school in Ghana is about 31 percent, representing over four (4) million people. In another lode, it is estimated that about half, representing 6.4 million adults living in Ghana have never attended school before [Ibid]. The implication is that, because these individuals have never attended school before they are most likely to have a negative influence on girls' acquisition of formal education in future.

Again, the adult school attendance rate in the Northern Region alone stands at 28 percent in both rural and urban areas [Ibid]. Current data from the Ghana Statistical Service [7] reveals that about 54.9 percent of people in the Northern Region of Ghana have never been to school at all. These figures are disturbing and are likely to significantly influence the number of girls acquiring formal education in the Northern Region if conscious steps are not taken to provoke other factors that can influence girl's acquisition of formal education in the region.

Some of the issues that need urgent attention and must be addressed now are how to change attitudes by softening cultural and personal belief stands of parents who have never been to school before. This can be done through the use of formal education as conditionality for financial and material baits. Again, religion and religious leaders can play a central role in influencing the perceptions and attitudes of parents if these strengths are well harnessed.

Globally, it is estimated that, there are about 880 million illiterate adults in the world representing about 84.1%. Out of this figure; a greater number of them are women from Africa sub of the Sahara [24]. Also, about 60 percent of

children worldwide who are out of school are girls [Ibid]. If these figures are true, then the number of girls who will attend school in the future will continue to drop if we only consider parent's educational status as the only factor that influences girl's school attendance.

Naturally, girls have receptacles and skills that enable them to play a centralized role in the family. At the community level, their centralized role has been very useful for the introduction of community driven projects and programmes that are designed to have long term and broader impacts, but girls attending school can further significantly enhance these strengths. "The elimination of gender inequalities in all spheres of life including education, as both a human rights issue and as an impetus for poverty reduction and development generally, has gained centre stage in the global and national development agendas. Girls' education is particularly acknowledged as being a major catalyst in this endeavour, and has found explicit expression in most developing countries' national development policies, programmes and strategies" [20 p2]. To suffice, there is no real contrivance for development which is more effective, efficient and sufficient in influencing girls' acquisition of formal education as well as the growth and development of the well-being of girls than formal education does [25].

5. Conclusion

Girls in the Northern region of Ghana face several challenges in life which sometimes makes it very difficult for them to achieve their dreams in future. The acquisition of formal education in the region is very low, particularly among girls thus further recapitulating the difficult times that girls in the region go through. The trajectory of this phenomenon is visible and well known among development actors in the region and the country as a whole.

In conducting this study, the researchers measured the relationship between two independent variables and two dependent variables. Data was collected to ascertain whether parents and guardians find relevance in the formal school system as an avenue that can help girls to achieve their dreams in future. It is estimated that 76% of the respondents had belief that formal education can help the girl child achieve her dreams in future. This is against 24% of respondents who shared a contrary view.

The study revealed that parents and guardians who had ever attended school before were more likely to belief that "schooling" can help girls achieve their dreams in future and hence take their girls to school than parents who had never attended school before. The significance of this study is potted on the fact that the educational status of parents and guardians can directly influence their decision to take their girl's to school.

Even though this study is not a longitudinal one but the responses from the focus group discussions revealed that majority of the respondents in the study were convinced beyond doubt that formal education can help girls in the

Northern region to achieve their dreams in future.

In this paper, we were able to establish that there is a relationship between educational status and the effect of girl's acquisition of formal education. This means that parents who attend school have a positive effect and impact on their children and communities than parents who do not attend school.

In sum, even though there are other factors that can influence girls acquisition of formal education such as family size, funding, school environment, teachers attitude among others we want to stress that parents educational status can also significantly influence girls acquisition of formal education in Ghana and thus subsequently affect girls quest to achieve their dreams in future. The social cost and other associated cost of girls not attending school today is far greater and has wider implications in the future than the cost of deferring girls education now.

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