



The Negative Effects of Cultural Identity on Preschool Girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties of Liberia

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ABSTRACT

This paper probes into the multifaceted issues surrounding violence against women and challenges to girls' education in Liberia. Coomaswamy's 2002 research underscored the role of cultural behaviors in family structures contributing significantly to violence against women. King and Winthrop's 2015 study explored factors such as poverty, gender norms, and cultural expectations, contributing to discussions on fair educational opportunities. Cunningham et al.'s 2023 research delved into gender disparities across economic, educational, healthcare, and political spheres, employing a women's empowerment perspective. Theoretical frameworks rooted in gender and social norm theories were employed to understand the impact of cultural identity on preschool girls' education in Liberia. The study focused on evaluating negative effects on preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba counties, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to create a supportive environment. Coomaswamy's 2002 insistence on rejecting the use of cultural considerations to justify violence against girls resonates globally. The study also highlighted disparities in girls' primary school enrollment rates in the region compared to the global average, emphasizing the urgency of addressing educational inequalities. Overall, this paper contributes valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and communities, advocating for positive change in Liberia's educational landscape and women's empowerment.

Keyword : Cultural identity, Negative Effects, Preschool Girls, Liberia

1. Introduction

In 2002, a research conducted by Coomaswamy revealed that cultural behaviors within family structures significantly contributed to violence against women. This included an examination of specific behaviors, traditions, or norms that perpetuated harm and discrimination against women. King and Winthrop (2015) investigated the interconnectedness of various factors, such as poverty, gender norms, and cultural expectations. The authors aimed to present a nuanced and thorough understanding of the intricacies surrounding girls' education by examining the complicated interplay of these aspects. As a result, the paper added to the larger conversation on promoting fair educational opportunities for all. The overarching purpose was to shed light on the multiple barriers that girls encountered in accessing excellent education to improve policies and efforts that promoted inclusivity and gender equality in educational settings. A study conducted by Cunningham et al. in 2023 mentioned numerous issues, such as impediments to education, societal norms affecting girls' access to school,

prospective chances for development, and methods to improve girls' educational experiences in Liberia.

Theoretical framework

Using a theoretical framework rooted in gender theory and social norm theory, the researchers explored the impact of cultural identity on the education of preschool girls in Liberia. Gender theory emphasized how individuals sustained dominant cultural gender ideals and how gender norms contributed to existing discrepancies in power and resource access, based mostly on sociological and anthropological viewpoints. This framework helped understand the cultural barriers to girls' education in Liberia. Similarly, the social norm theory, which was based on social psychology and behavioral economics, explained why societal expectations had such an impact on conduct. This viewpoint aided in the investigation of the prevalent cultural and societal beliefs in Liberia that prevented girls from receiving education (Grabill et al. 2005).

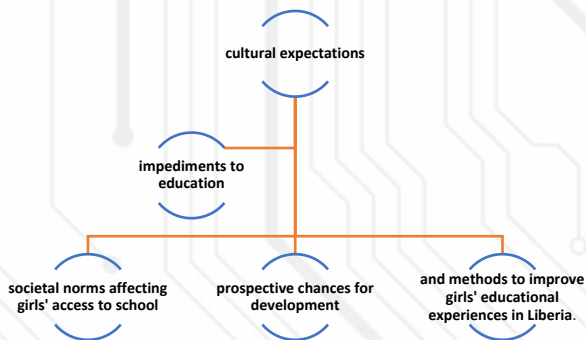


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework (Grabill et al. 2005)

This framework delved into the complicated challenges surrounding girls' education in Liberia, examining cultural expectations, learning barriers, societal norms that impeded access to schools, the potential for developmental opportunities, and proposed methods to improve girls' overall educational experiences. It emphasized the complex interplay of cultural influences, social norms, and systemic issues that impeded girls' educational advancement, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies and interventions to overcome those obstacles and foster positive change in Liberia's educational landscape for girls.

Main Problem:

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the negative effects of cultural identification on preschool girls in the Liberian counties of Bong, Lofa, and Nimba. By focusing on the negative consequences, the study aimed to better understand how cultural factors shaped and potentially limited the experiences and development of preschool-aged females in these communities. The emphasis on cultural identity included a study of traditional norms, attitudes, and expectations that might have offered problems to the well-being and educational possibilities of young females. This study had the potential to shed light on specific cultural factors that might have contributed to disparities in preschool girls' experiences, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and communities in developing targeted interventions that promoted a more equitable and supportive environment for young girls.

Statement of the Problem

What effect do cultural norms have on the self-esteem of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba?, How do cultural expectations about early childhood development effect the social skills of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties?, To what extent do cultural practices contribute to differences in educational support for preschool girls in these counties? and what are the long-term effects of negative cultural influences on the well-being and academic achievement of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba?

Significance of the Study

This study was selected because it was important to identify and restrict harmful cultural influences in order to strengthen preschool girls' education. Goal 5 Gender Equality and Goal 4 Quality Education of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aligned well with this research as well. Comprehending and mitigating harmful cultural impacts on preschool-aged girls could facilitate the attainment of global objectives. With the support of this research, an environment that supports girls' holistic development and frees them from cultural constraints to reach their full potential may be established.

2. Research Methods

The research design for this study is quantitative in nature, primarily relying on structured surveys administered to teachers at the preschool level and traditional head in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba. **Research Respondents:** A sample of preschool teachers and traditional head (n= 10) from Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties will participate in the survey. A sample of preschool teachers and parents (n=10) from various preschools in Voinjama City participate in the interview and survey.

Data Collection/Administering:

Qualitative and quantitative data through interview and surveys were distributed to preschool teachers and parents. **The formula to estimate the sample size is:**

$$n = Z^2 * (p) * (1-p) / E^2 \tag{1}$$

Where: - n is the sample size - Z is the z-score (which corresponds to the confidence level you want to achieve. For example, for a 95% confidence level, Z is 1.96).

- p is the estimated proportion of the population that has the attribute in question (if you don't know, you can assume p=0.5) - E is the margin of error. I was able to derive a sample size of 10 from the population of 21 based on the equation (Lu & Lohr, 2010).

Data Collection/Administering:

Quantitative data will be through structured surveys distributed to preschool girls and traditional head in the study area.

Data Gathering:

Closed-ended questions about the negative Effects of Cultural Identity on Preschool Girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba will be included in the survey questionnaires.

3. Results and Discussions

This work focuses on the negative effects of cultural identity on preschool girls in Bong, Lofa and nimba Counties of Liberia **and** throws light on how the data was analyzed. The study used the interview method and it was analyzed using the following objectives:

1. What effect do cultural norms have on the self-esteem of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba?
2. How do cultural expectations about early childhood development affect the social skills of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties?

3. To what extent do cultural practices contribute to differences in educational support for preschool girls in these counties?
4. What are the long-term effects of negative cultural influences on the well-being and academic achievement of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba?

Section One: What effect do cultural norms have on the self-esteem of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba?

This objective deals with the effects cultural normal have on the self-esteem of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties and can be deduced from the tabular analysis below:

Table 1. the effects cultural normal have on the self-esteem of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties

| What effect do cultural norms have on the self-esteem of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba? | Relative Frequency (RF) | Absolute Frequency (AF) |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| It makes the girls lose confidence in themselves especially when expressing their views | 4 | 40% |
| They won't be as competitive as their male counterparts in their academic performance | 3 | 30% |
| They will have a mindset that will prevent them from becoming productive due to cultural differences | 2 | 20% |
| Their chances of progressing in education will become slim | 1 | 10% |
| Total | 10 | 100% |

Source: Field Interview December, 2023

The above table shows that out of the respondents interviewed in the three counties, the majority (40%) said It makes the girls lose confidence in themselves especially when expressing their views, while 30% said they won't be as competitive as their male counterparts in their academic performance, whereas 20% said they will have a mindset that will prevent them from becoming productive due to cultural differences and finally, 10% said their chances of progressing in education will become slim. Conclusively, the majority (40%) of them said that girls will lose confidence in themselves especially when expressing their views in the study area.

Section Two: How do cultural expectations about early childhood development affect the social skills of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties?

This objective looks at the cultural expectations about early childhood development effect on the social

skills of preschool girls in the three named counties above and could be seen from the analysis below:

Table 2. The cultural expectations about early childhood development effect on the social skills of preschool girls

| How do cultural expectations about early childhood development affect the social skills of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties? | Relative Frequency (RF) | Absolute Frequency (AF) |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Some skills are only meant for boys culturally, as such, it hinders the girls' social skills development of any sorts | 3 | 30% |
| It creates a ceiling glass for the girls and there will be a gap in the development of social skills. | 2 | 20% |
| Culturally, if girls develop certain social skills, there's a wider belief that girls will equate themselves with men; as such, culture prevents them from achieving the skills required for their social development | 4 | 40% |
| There is little or no progress in their social skills development | 1 | 10% |
| Total | 10 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey December, 2023

The above table indicates that out of the respondents interviewed in the counties, the majority (40%) said culturally, if girls develop certain social skills, there's a wider belief that girls will equate themselves with men; as such, culture prevents them from achieving the skills required for their social development, while 30% said some skills are only meant for boys culturally, as such, it hinders the girls' social skills development of any sorts, whereby, 20% said It creates a ceiling glass for the girls and there will be a gap in the development of social skills, and finally, 10% said there is little or no progress in their social skills development. Conclusively, 40% of them said culturally, if girls develop certain social skills, there's a wider belief that girls will equate themselves with men in the study area.

Section Three: To what extent do cultural practices contribute to differences in educational support for preschool girls in these counties?

This objective throw light on the extent to which cultural practices contribute to differences in educational support for preschool girls in the three named counties and can be deduced through the analysis in the table below:

Table 3. The cultural practices contribute to differences in educational support for preschool girls

| To what extent do cultural practices contribute to differences in educational support for preschool girls in these counties? | Relative Frequency (RF) | Absolute Frequency (AF) |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Very great extent | 4 | 40% |
| Great extent | 3 | 30% |
| Moderately extent | 2 | 20% |
| Small extent | 1 | 10% |
| Total | 10 | 100% |

Source: Field Interview December, 2023

From the table above, it could be realized that out of the total number of respondents interviewed in the field, 40% of them said to a very great extent, while 30% said to a great extent, whereas 20% said moderately extent, and finally, 10% said to a small extent. Conclusively, 40% of them said to a very great extent in the study area.

Section Four: What are the long-term effects of negative cultural influences on the well-being and academic achievement of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba?

This objective looks at the long-term negative effects cultural influence has on the well-being and academic achievement of preschool girls in the above-named counties and can be understood from the analysis in the table below:

Table 4. The long-term negative effects cultural influence has on the well-being and academic achievement of preschool girls

| What are the long-term effects of negative cultural influences on the well-being and academic achievement of preschool girls in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba? | Relative Frequency (RF) | Absolute Frequency (AF) |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Loss of sense of self-esteem both in academic activities and emotional well-being | 4 | 40% |
| The creation of an artificial gap between boys and girls in the achievement of their goals | 1 | 10% |
| Girls will continue to look at themselves as always being inferior to the boys | 3 | 30% |
| There's going to be a continuous dominance of the boys over the girls because culture determines it. | 2 | 20% |
| Total | 10 | 100% |

Source: Field Interview December, 2023

The above table shows that 40% of the respondents said girls will have a loss of sense of self-esteem both in academic activities and emotional well-being, while 30% said girls will continue to look at themselves as always being inferior to boys, whereas 20% said there's going to be a continuous dominance of the boys over the girls because culture determines it and finally, 10% said there's a creation of an artificial gap between the boys and girls in the achievement of their goals. Conclusively, 40% of the respondents said girls will have a loss of sense of self-esteem both in academic activities and emotional well-being in the study area

4. Conclusion

The dataset was subjected to rigorous statistical analysis to uncover patterns, trends, and relationships. Our analysis focused on the responses from those interviewed. From the analyzed data above, it could be seen that the majority (40%) of them said that girls will lose confidence in themselves especially when expressing their views in the study area when it comes to the effect cultural norms have on girls' self-esteem. When it comes to cultural expectations of girls, 40% of them said culturally, that if girls develop certain social skills, there's a wider belief that girls will equate themselves with men in the study area. Considering the extent cultural differences have on girls' educational support, 40% said a very great extent, and finally, looking at the long-term effects of cultural practices on the well-being and academic achievement of girls, 40% of the respondents said girls will have a loss of sense of self-esteem both in academic activities and emotional well-being. Conclusively, cultural practices negatively influence girls' social, emotional, and academic performance in the study areas.

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