

***Child Schooling in Nigeria: The Role of Gender in Urban, Rural, North
and South Nigeria.***

By

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Abstract

This research was conceived as a result of increasing drop out of children from school as well as high incidence of children combining schooling with some economic activities in Nigeria. Though many researches have been conducted in areas of school enrolment of the children in Nigeria, little or none of these researchers has bordered much on the role of child, parent, household and community characteristics on child schooling. Previous works centre mainly on explorative studies rather than econometric causes of the observed trends in school enrollment.

Although Nigerian government recognized the importance of child schooling by establishing many programmes such as the recent Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE), School Meal Programme among others, the effectiveness of these programmes in increasing participation of children in school depends on careful analysis

of the determinants of the observed trends in child education in Nigeria. This study attempts to investigate the role of child's, parent's, household's and community's characteristics in urban, rural as well as north and south zones on increasing or decreasing child school attendance in Nigeria. This will help the policy makers to focus more effectively on targeting the problems of child schooling in Nigeria.

The data for the study was sourced from the Child Labour Survey collected by Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) in conjunction with International Labor Organization (ILO), which started from July 2000 and ended in February 2001. Apart from descriptive statistics, bivariate probit model was used to achieve the broad objective of the study. However, in order to avoid mixing the determinants of delay enrollment with determinants of school attendance, the econometric analysis concentrated on those children aged between 8 and 17 years. This is because it is expected that any child interested in schooling should have entered school after the age of 7 years

The descriptive statistics showed interesting findings. First, it must be acknowledged that many children are in the school. Equally, many children combine school with work. This has implication on performance of children in school. Child participation in schooling is influenced by sector, age, gender household poverty status and regional differences. For instance, more children participate in schooling in urban, south and non-poor households. The urban advantage in child schooling merits comment. No one would be surprised at this because urban households have easier access to school than do the rural households. In addition, south advantage in schooling may be because of religious differences, which was not captured in the model. The result shows also that more male children are enrolled than female children. The fact that girls suffer from

disadvantage relative to boys is not enough to conclude gender discrimination in child schooling in Nigeria. However, the disadvantages facing girls are eased to some degree in urban Nigeria, but no systematic evidence emerges to this effect in rural Nigeria.

The general econometric model shows that child schooling is determined by gender, age of the child, relationship of the child to the household head, gender of household head, age of household head, household head education status, household composition, regional differences, location and access to school. Specifically, female children are more disadvantaged in attending school than male children. This disadvantage is probably occasioned by the perception of parents in a male child as their only representative identity that will ensure the family continuity when the parent dies. This may also be the problem associated with opportunity cost of training a female child in school to that of male child. The ages of the child has no significant influence on school attendance until children aged 14 year and above. In addition, it should be noted that the likelihood of attending school by children from 8 years and 13 years has positive association with school attendance while above 13 years have negative relationship with school attendance. This indicates that drop out becomes more prominent among the junior secondary school children. However, this relationship is weak except those in JSS 3. The general model also shows that being a child of the household head increases the probability of attending school by 7% than other children living with the household head. The result also reveals that children from female-headed households are more likely to attend school. It is interesting to note that children from educated fathers have stronger impact in increasing the probability of child school attendance than educated mothers. The result also shows that poverty though positive, has a very weak influence on child

school (<3%). Children in the North West are disadvantaged to attend school compared to those in North East. Though all children in southern Nigeria are more likely to be in school, marginal effect is stronger for children in South East compared with South West. Interestingly, location in rural or urban does not matter much in child schooling in Nigeria, thus contradicting most of findings in other developing countries. Access to school also has large negative effect on child schooling. This indicates that access to school is an important factor in increasing participation of children in school.

The result of separate model ran in urban and rural Nigeria by gender shows that girls are more likely to drop out in school than boys. For instance, at the age of 17 years, the probability of drop out among girls is 23% compared to 12% for boys in urban areas. The same goes for household head's son or daughter. Education of the father has stronger marginal effect on girl's education than boy's education while education of mothers has stronger effect on school attendance by girls. Household poverty status has a stronger effect on girl's education than boy's education in urban Nigeria.

We also found interesting result in rural Nigerian data. Rural boys are more likely to attend primary school. However, at the age of 17 years, the drop out of girls from school is more prominent as indicated by marginal effect of 16% for girls than those of boys (<5%). Though education of the father has almost equal influence on male and female child education, education of the mother is more important in sending girls to school than boys in rural Nigeria. Poverty status of household has a strong influence on girls than boys. For instance, the marginal effect of poverty on girl's education is 21% while this is only 5% in rural Nigeria. It is more likely that girls located in North Central and boys in North West will not attend school. The marginal effects for these are 38%

and 25% respectively. Access to school has equal effect for both girls and boys.

There are basic differences between factors influencing the education of boys and girls in Southern Nigerian. The most prominent among them is that school attendance by girls is significantly influenced by age while age is not significant for boys. Education of mother or father as well as poverty status of the household has no significant influence on child education in southern Nigeria. However, a different trend is observed in education of boys and girls in Northern Nigeria. The result also shows that mother's and father's education have equal influence on the girl and boy education. It must also be mentioned that access to school and location are also important factors in school enrollment of the kids.

In conclusion, therefore, in targeting kid's school enrolment, gender, age, education of the parents, poverty status of the household and accessibility of school should be considered in line with location of the child and regional differences.

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