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The Influence of Culture on the Educational Achievement of Adolescent Girls in Lebialem Division

Efuetngwa, Diana Fobellah

Higher Technical Teachers' Training College (H.T.T.T.C) Kumba. University of Buea, Cameroon.

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the relationship between culture and adolescent girls, Educational achievements in Lebialem Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. Specifically, the study focuses on cultural practices, early marriage and their impact on the Educational achievements of adolescent girls. The sample comprised 652 adolescents selected from nine secondary schools in Lebialem Division. Data collected were subjected to the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using the statistical package for the social science (SPSS). The findings revealed that "There is a significant relationship between culture and adolescent girls' Educational achievements. Based on this finding, some recommendations were made. The society at large should revive its obnoxious stereotypes and understand that the world is evolving with many more challenges. The woman has to be part of the team to face the challenges. For this reason, the "Nweh" people should reconcile their culture and socialization with learning and give both the girl/boy child equal opportunities. If the 2035 vision has to be met, the society must start accepting females can do what was hither-to believed to be done only by males. This can only be possible by a change in mentality.

INTRODUCTION

Although research has shown the many benefits of women's education to the family, the nation and the women themselves, there is still a gender gap in terms of access. Retention and achievement (Smock, 1981; Hyde, 1989; Floro and Wolf 1990; King and Hills, 1993). Some parents and teachers, who hold gender stereotypes, particularly in rural areas, still believe that girls do not need to be as educated as boys. They tend to appreciate the girls more for their social roles as wives, mothers and other social functions in the society. In this context, girls are not encouraged to aspire highly to further their education in much the same way as for the boys.

According to Okojie et al (1996), gender imbalance in education still persist despite the progress made in improving girls' education in many countries in

Sub-Saharan Africa. Girls still continue to face many stereotype gender biases in schools, in the family and in the society, which impede their learning and which tend to sustain their under education. Researchers have identified some of the obstacles to gender parity (Hyde, Okojie et al. 1996) in Sub-Saharan Africa. They include: socio-cultural attitudes and practices, socio-economic factors, school factors, ethnic and religious factors and child fosterage.

This study examined one of these barriers in the context of girls' education namely culture to see the influence it has on girls' educational achievements. The culture of Lebialem people discriminates in the way male and female children are raised and this has gone a long way in affecting these children and their educational aspirations and achievements. Gender-based discrimination within the culture remains one of the constraints tothe education of girls. Parents raise their boys and girls differently, making the boy child to believing that he is supposed to forge ahead while the girl child remains at home with the mother who prepares her for marriage. The foundation forstereotypes in gender roles is laid by early gender socialization. Children learn cultural roles according to their sex, boys and girls treated differently by members of their own families, (Ntemgwa, 1998). Lebialem is a patriarchal society and value is placed on the boy -child's education than that of the girl -child. Girls are subordinated and undervalued such that they do not have educational opportunities equal to boys. In homes where there is poverty with few financial resources, girls will be forced to drop out of school prematurely in favour of boys. This is because some parents believe that boys are more intelligent, that they perform better in school and that they are a better educational investment than girls (Odazga)&Heneveld, 1995). A factor often ignored in discussions of parental preference for boy's education is the prevalence of patrilineal inheritance systems. As the prime beneficiaries of family assets, boys are favoured in human capital investment decisions. In addition, parents worry about wasting money on the education of girls who are likely to get pregnant or married before completing their schooling (Odaga&Hanaveld, 1995).

THE PROBLEM

There is a gender disparity and inequality in education in Lebialem Division and this tends to influence the values, aspirations and interest of adolescent boys and girls. Culture, gender-socialization and early marriage seem to contribute to this problem. In bringing up the children, parents tend to have greaterexpectations of their sons than of the daughters, particularly in the area of academic achievement and career choice. They encourage the boys to work harder in school, attempt subjects which will enable them to get into careers or jobs which are either science related or prestigious. They do not give similar encouragement to their daughters whom they expect to be given in marriage as soon as the opportunity comes. In this way, boys tend to

dream of various careers for their future, while girls dream more about their future husbands and the roles they will be expected to perform in the society. Early marriage which is a violation of human right in general and of girls' rights in particular is highly practiced in Lebialem Division. For both boys and girls, early marriage had profound physical, intellectual, psychological and economic impact. Many young girls become mothers before they are twenty. Many children, most of them girls do not aspire high in education. Most parents are not literate, hence do not see education as a necessity for their girl children. Parents prefer to spend the little money they have on the education of the male child because they see the female child as an asset, that is potential wealth (dowry)/bride price). The girl child on her part has been socialized to see herself as wife and would-be mother. Aside child bearing, she does farming, takes care of domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, fetching wood and looking after children. Traditionally, she is expected to be obedient, submissive, respectful, faithful and hardworking (Mengu, 1997).

LITERATURE REVIEW

When we talk about "culture" we often mean intellectual and creative products, including literature, music, drama, and painting. Another use of "culture" is to describe the beliefs and practices of another society, particularly where these are seen as closely linked with tradition or religion.

But culture is more than that. Culture is part of the fabric of every society, including our own. It shapes "the way things are done" and our understanding of why this should be so. This more comprehensive approach is proposed in the definition of culture adopted at the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico, 1982) and used in ongoing discussions on culture and development: "Culture… is… the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs." (Greenfield & Bruner, 1996).

Shiraev&Levy (2001) defined culture as a set of attitudes, behaviors and symbols shared by a large group of people and usually communicated from one generation to the next. Culture may include beliefs, languages and idiom, verbal and non-verbal communication, protocol, music, ritual and beliefs in the origin and nature of knowledge, ethnicity, age, gender (Bennett, 2003). It is a behavioral pattern, belief and all other products of a particular group of people that are passed down from generation to generation (Santrock, 2004). Culture is an integral part of every person. Cultural differences therefore play a large role in determining individual differences. It is a way of life, the

contest within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. It establishes for each person a context of cognitive and affective behavior (Brown, 1994). Culture facilitates human and environmental interactions and it is learned and shared by all the members of a society (Murdock, 1961 cited in Brown, 1994). He went further to state that teaching is considered an activity firmly fixed with culturally bound assumptions about teachers and students. Culture affects the way teachers teach and the way children learn.

Cultural context and child development are centre concerns that have received attention and psychology during the last few decades. This outcry has been echoed by some writers on the importance of culture to child development. However, there is increasing importance of cultural context in psychology and it is now being viewed as a major determination in shaping behavior (Lee, 1994, Cole, 1996). It is clear that without an understanding of the consequences of culture, explanations for many central aspects of behavior will remain elusive (Fieldman, 1999). Different cultures dictate what knowledge and skills to be learnt. Other psychologists contend that culture shapes and reflects a society's behavior, understanding of the world, and attitudes and values (Nsamenang, 2005). Culture in the Nweh ethnic group comprises the learned behaviors, beliefs, attitudes that are characteristic of the people.

The meanings assigned to the implications and consequences of cultural values vary from society to society. Therefore, a child growing up in the American society for example and going to an American school is confronted with a cultural environment that differs from that of a child in an African school especially that of "Nweh" child. The behavior of such a child is governed by the rules and values for children in their society (Harkness and Super, 1987). The cultural environment in all its variety sets the stage within which the human being lives and responds as a personality and a way of life.

Expectations about attributes and behaviors appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men in other words, gender is shaped by culture. Gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, but also in the wider community and the workplace. Gender (like race or ethnicity) functions as an organizing principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female. This is evident in the division of labour according to gender. In most societies there are clear patterns of "women's work" and "men's work," both in the household and in the wider community and cultural explanations of why this should be so. The patterns and the explanations differ among societies and change over time. While the specific nature of gender relations varies among societies, the general pattern is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their

disposal, and limited influence over the decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. This pattern of disparity based on gender is both a human rights and a development issue.

The single largest household factor in preventing girls from fully participating in education is poverty which, when combined with cultural and even legal factors, as it usually is, creates a particularly intractable situation that requires wide-ranging cross-sectorial interventions (Kano, 2007).

Culture affects girls' education in two ways, first, as a source of ideas about the educational process and, secondly, as a set of ideas and practices about the rights and responsibilities of women. All of this can have either positive or negative impacts on improving girls' participation in education.

First, culture is the medium in which the educational process is embedded—drawing on traditional philosophical approaches to knowledge, taking heed of what constitutes a good education in a particular country or region, shaping teaching practice through an understanding of how knowledge is gleaned and of 'who has a responsibility to participate in' teaching and learning, shaping the curriculum by determining what knowledge is relevant and what cognitive and behavioral skills should be inculcated in students (Kano, 2007). However, most professional educational practice is based on western cultural input. Many developing countries have, at best, a locally adapted version of a western system rather than an education system founded on local cultural insights. Indeed, in many educators' minds, even the words "local," "traditional," "indigenous," and so on, have come to represent barriers to be overcome, barriers than sources of educational strength (DeBrun, 1995).

Second, culture creates an ideational system that defines the roles of the sexes. "Culture" per se is rarely an obstacle to girls' education. Most parents want children of both sexes to lead successful, productive lives. However, the combination of poverty and of the failure of institutional supports is always interpreted within a cultural framework, both in the North and in the South, and, in all parts of the world, tends to work more against girls than against boys. There is a common saying in Eritrean villages to the effect that:

> *"it is better to bring up the son of a dog than the son of a daughter," reflecting the fact that a girl's "line" is lost {to the family. And when girls are married, they tend to forget their parents—at that time, she would want the husband to become king rather than even the closest relative. So if you have to make a choice, send boys to school. [Men in a Gambian village) (DeBrun, 1995,28).*

The combination of all these factors makes it more 1ikely for males to be regarded as the mainstay of a family's economic well-being, even when, as in the case of Africa, women are responsible for most subsistence production. Families conclude that a boy's future economic security, as well as that of the parents in their old age, lies in maximizing his chances of securing a paying job, which is a scarce commodity, while that of a girl lies in protecting her marriageability through cultural safeguards (Coldough et al., 1998). The marriageability of females is a concern that is not restricted solely to developing countries, but when combined with concerns over the economic, religious and cultural well-being of the family and of the female herself, can be yet another powerful force in education. In many societies, schooling for girls beyond, perhaps, the most basic level, is considered both expensive and risky. The thinking is that girls will "lose their culture" and their amenability. They may question parental decisions and, later on, the decisions of their spouses. Their behavior may damage the family honor and jeopardize, not only their own marriageability, but also that of other women in the family (Malawi, 1998).

However, marriageability is not the only-issue. As recent history shows, there is a "hidden" concern about girls' education related to the fact that, in times of rapid, unsettling change, women in many cultures are seen as the symbolic core of the "true" culture, and some people fear that education could threaten their ability or desire to fulfill this role (Bray, 1996). This point cannot be overemphasized and takes on increasing importance in newly emerging nations and nations reasserting their political or religious identity. For example, women have worked side by side with men in many revolutionary movements, but when the goals of the movement arc met, they often find themselves in more culturally conservative and restricted roles than before, legally, socially, and even expressively, in terms of dress, while their male colleagues go on to represent the new nation,

drawing at will on both Western and "traditional" culture (Mingat, 2003).

Recent studies in Ethiopia and Guinea by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and the Forum for African Women Educationalists. FAWE, (1995) offers a microcosmic summary of the cultural barriers found in most countries. They show that, although poverty is associated with under-enrollment of children at both the nationwide and the household levels, "the gendered outcomes of such under-enrollment are more a product of adverse cultural practice than of poverty itself." Early marriage, initiation ceremonies, fears for girls' safety, gendered divisions of household labour and the belief that investing in women's education has lower economic returns owing to limited employment opportunities for women, the loss of a woman's contribution to the natal household upon her marriage and a belief that females are less intelligent all contribute to these "gendered outcomes," where poverty-creates rationed enrollment opportunities (FAWE, A.A.S. 1995). Hence the conclusion that culturally gendered practices are so pervasive as to require policy intervention, and that economic development alone will not lead to gender equity in schooling (Colclough *et al.,* 1998; Rose, Yoseph*et al.,* 1997: Tembon, Diallo et al., 1997; Mlama, & Colcough, 1999).

METHODS

The target population for this study consisted of all adolescent boys and girls in forms 4 and 5 of all the Government Secondary schools in Lebialem for 2014/2015 Academic Year. The accessible population was made up of all the adolescents in nine Government Secondary schools which are found in all the three Sub-Divisions of Lebialem Division. The sampled population was made up of 652 adolescents selected sample was done in accordance with the table developed by Kredice and Morgan (1977) as cited by Amin 2005, 25).

Table 1: Distribution of Sample per Division, Schools, Classes and Gender

Sub-Division	School	Class				Total
		Form 4		Form 5		
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Fontem Sub-Division		26	34	40	55	155
	GBHS Fontem	7	11	9	14	41
	GBSS Atulia	1	4	4	8	17
Alou- Sub-Division	GHS Alou	4	7	38	55	105
	GHS Anya-Lewoh	15	21	11	15	63
	GHS Mmock-Bie	9	13	11	17	49
Wabane Sub-Division	GHS Wabane	17	24	22	30	93
	GHS Besali	16	25	19	29	88
	GHS Mundani	11	15	5	7	41
Total		106	156	160	230	652

The research instruments used were students and teachers' questionnaire items, interview guide for parents, motivation for Occupational Preference Scale (MOPS) students' end of year result broadsheets. Before the instruments were effectively used, they were pilot-tested. One section of the questionnaire had only two options "yes" and "No" and the other respondents had several options "always" "sometimes" "never" and the other section required them to "tick" the answers in the boxes corresponding to the condensed version of the Likert's scale (strongly disagree, strongly disagree, disagree). It also had closed and open- questions). The researcher administered the students' questionnaire with the aid of some teachers while the interview for parents was administered personally.

The instrument was trial-tested to establish its reliability in the schools not used for the main study. The Cronback Alpha technique was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The quantitative data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statiscal analysis using the statistical package for the Social Science (SPSS) version. For descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, and means were used while the chi-square test of independence was used for inferential statistics in order to verify the hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS:

The educational achievement of most adolescents is influenced by culture. This study is focused on the hypothesis that, "Thereis a Significant Relationship between Culture and Adolescent Girls' Educational Achievement". This hypothesis was analyzed using the questionnaire items. See table 3.

What differences exist between the academic achievements of girls and boys in secondary schools?
Table 2: Mean scores of male and female students per class in each school

School	From 4		From 5	
	Boys mean score	Girls mean score	Boys mean score	Girls mean score
Fontem Sub Division				
Fontem Sub-Division	11.49	10.54	12.09	10.01
GHS Fontem	12.41	9.25	13.59	9.16
GBSS Atulia	13.40	10.20	12.25	11.05
Alou Sub-Division				
GHS Alou	12.13	10.21	11.95	10.63
GHS Anya-Lewoh	12.84	11.07	12.35	10.78
GHS Mmock-Bie	12.74	10.45	12.51	10.81
Wabane Sub-Division				
GHS Wabane	12.47	11.10	12.13	10.37
GHS Besali	12.91	10.62	12.93	9.57
GHS Mundani	12.63	11.58	12.30	10.89

Analysis of the student's End of year results

The annual averages of all the 652 students were collected and used to find out whether a relationship exists between gender socialization and adolescent girls' educational achievement.

From Table 2 it can be seen that in all the schools' boys have a higher mean score than girls. The same picture is seen in forms 4 and 5 where boys consistently have higher means score than girls. In form 4, the highest mean score for boys is 13,4 while for girls it is 11.58; the lowest mean score for boys is 11.49, while for girls it is 9.25. mean scores than girls. In form 4, the highest mean score for boys is 13.4 while for girls it is 11.58; the lowest mean score for boys is 13.59, while for girls it is 11.05; lowest mean score for boys is 11.95, while for girls it is 9.16. the lowest mean score for boys in form 5 is higher than the highest mean score for girls.

Table 3: Gender stereotypes: Behaviors and roles expected ofgirls and boys

Statement	Frequency		
In Nweh culture who should do the following?	Boys %	Girls %	Both %
Sweep the compound	234 (35.89)	312 (47.85)	106 (16.26)
Clean the house and windows	202 (30.98)	339 (51.99)	111 (17.02)
Dust the chairs and tables	182 (27.91)	365 (55.98)	105 (16.10)
Wash dishes and pots	247 (37.88)	397 (60.89)	8 (1.23)
Fetch water	365 (55.98)	273 (41.87)	14 (2.15)
Clear the cocoa farm	423 (64.88)	114 (17.48)	115 (17.64)
Harvest vegetables from the farm	113 (17.33)	443 (67.94)	96 (14.72)
Plant maize, beans etc. in the farm	89 (13.65)	475 (72.85)	88 (13.50)
Plant yams and cocoyams	118 (18.10)	436 (66.87)	98 (15.03)
Till the soil	46 (7.06)	525 (80.52)	91 (13.95)
Dig a latrine	652 (100.0)	-	-
Cut down a tree for plank	652 (100.0)	-	-
Trim the edges of palm trees	652 (100.0)	-	-
Mould mud blocks for building	154 (23.62)	127 (19.48)	371 (56.90)
Mould cement blocks for building	652 (100.0)	-	
Build a shelve for kitchen utensils	517 (79.29)	35 (5.37)	100 (15.34)
Cook food for the family	-	652 (100.0)	-
Build shades for people during family	652 (100.0)	-	-
Slaughter a chicken; goat for ceremony	652 (100.0)	-	-
Earn money for family upkeep	652 (100.0)	-	-
Work in the office	558 (85.58)	34 (5.21)	60 (9.20)
Stay at home to care for a child.	117 (17.94)	435 (66.72)	102 (15.64)
Gender and Educational Aspirations			
Be sent to school in case of limited financial resources	416 (63.80)	117 (17.94)	119 (18.25)
Be encouraged to work harder in school	411 (63.04)	147 (22.55)	94 (14.42)
Be encouraged to become a professor	493 (75.61)	78 (11.96)	81 (12.42)
Be encouraged to become a medical doctor.	469 (71.93)	81 (12.42)	102 (15.64)
Be encouraged to go to university.	511 (78.37)	79 (12.12)	62 (9.57)

Interpretation of table 3

The majority of the respondents said the girls should do the following, sweep the compound, clean the house and windows, dust the chairs and tables, wash dishes and pots, harvest vegetables from the farm, plant maize, beans in the farm, plant yams and cocoyams, till the soil, cook food for the family and stay at home to care for children. Most of the respondents were in favor of the fact that the boys should do the following: clear the cocoa farm, dig a latrine, cut down a tree for planting, trim the edges of palm trees, mould cement block for building, build a shelve for kitchen – utensils, build shades for people during family occasions, slaughter a chicken, goat for ceremony, earn money for family upkeep, work in the office, be sent to school in case of limited financial resources, be encouraged to work harder, encouraged to become a professor, medical doctor and go to university. However, most of the respondents were of the opinion that, both boys and girls should mould mud blocks for building.

Table 4: Early marriage and the education of the girl child

Item	Sex	Responses	
		Yes	No
In Nweh culture doearly marriages hinder the education of the girl child?	Boys	227(79.1%)	60(20.9%)
	Girls	301(82.5%)	60(17.5%)

Interpretation of table 4

For this item, 227(79.1%) of the boys said yes while 60(20.9%) said no; 301(82.5%) of the girls said "yes" while 60(17.5%) of the girls said no. A high percentage, 301(82.59%) of the girls said "yes" as compared to 227(79.1%) of the boys who said "yes". Since majority of the respondents 528(81%) said yes and only 124(19%) said no, it implies that in Nweh culture, early marriages hinder the education of the girl child.

Table 5: How early marriages influence adolescent girls' educational achievement

47(b)		Frequency of Response and Percentage	
Reasons	Sex	Frequency	Percentage
− They will give birth to children and will no longer have time to go to school	Boys	73	46.79
	Girls	83	53.21
− Most of their husbands will not like them to continue school	Boys	78	44.32
	Girls	98	55.68
− They may no longer have enough money to continue school	Boys	54	40.60
	Girls	79	59.40
− They may not have someone to take care of the children for them to go to school	Boys	82	43.85
	Girls	105	56.15
Total	**Boys**	**287**	**44.02**
	Girls	**365**	**55.98**

Interpretation of table 5

The majority of them said when the girl gets married, and starts giving birth to children, they will not have time to continue schooling. Secondly, most of their husbands will not like them to continue schooling.

Table 6: Frequency of responses and percentages for item 48

Culture influences the educational achievement of adolescent girls)	A	SA	D	SD
Frequency	189	116	47	27
Percentage	49.9	30.6	12.4	7.1

From table 6, 189 (49.9%) strongly agreed, 116 (30.6%) agreed, 47 (12.4%) disagreed while 27 (7.1%) strongly disagreed. This table shows that most of the students
. accepted that culture influences the educational achievement of adolescent girls.

Table 7: Observed and expected frequencies

Culture influences the educational achievement of adolescent girls.	A	SA	S	SD
Observed frequency	189	116	47	27
Expected frequency	94.75	94.75	94.75	94.75

df = 3 x^2 = 7.82 at 0.05 level of significance

The calculated value of x^2 (171.02) is greater than the critical value (7.82) at the α = 0.05 level of significance so the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained following the decision rule. Using the response format and weighting on table 5, the effect of culture on adolescent girls' educational achievement has a percentage of 86%, meaning that the relationship is high following the decision rule.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Relationship between Culture and Adolescent Girls' Educational Achievement

To come up with the significance of this hypothesis, the calculated Chi-square value (17.02) was greater than the critical value (7.82) at α=0.05 level of significance. As a result, the hypothesis was retained. Inference made led to the conclusion that there is a relationship between culture and adolescent girls' educational achievement. Using the response format and weighting on table 7, the effect of culture and adolescent girls' educational achievement had a high influence with (86%).

The results of this study also showed that cultural expectations, early marriages, and gender-stereotyping, accounted for the relative poor performance of the adolescent girls. The society through its culture and practices is a macro-system and acts as a spring board to education. For this reason, a society that has very strong cultural values that work against the education of the girl child would only perpetuate gender in balance in children's academic achievements. This premise is in support of the FEMSA studies Torto (2002). This study revealed that, perceived gender roles characteristics influenced the way children are expected to behave, the kind of careers they do and even the way they pursue education. Hari & Torto's studies also revealed that in most of the twelve countries, girls for example, are rarely those sent to shops to do shopping, neither are they allowed to play outside the home for long periods of time as boys often do. This denies the girls the opportunity to explore and experiment with diverse activities and situations outside the home, which could be useful to them within the school. On the contrary, when boys go for shopping they get to practically use the knowledge and skills acquired in mathematics and get various related activities. As a result, they (boys) develop confidence in themselves and have advantage over the girls' informal classrooms.

Data collected from the field showed some differences in the way culture impacts learning. Unlike some practices that promote learning, like storytelling, proverbs, playing just to name these, some other practices inhibit female education such as early marriages and the way the people perceive higher education for girls. Many parents despite their low educational level, were able to name some of those activities that "Nweh" children indulge in which can facilitate learning in school. The results showed that a majority of the respondents 528(81%) said early marriages hinder the education of the girl child as against a fewer portion 124(19%) who were against this idea. Some of the reasons advanced were that when girls get married early they will give birth to children and will no longer have time to go to school. Most of their husbands will not like them to continue school and may not have enough money to continue school. This is in support of the work of Mathur (2003) &Nour (2006), which showed that parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children in hope that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family. More over poorer families do not see the need educating their daughters because to them the potential rewards of educating daughters are too far off and therefore their education is not recognized as an investment (Malhotra &Malthur 1997).

Moreover, the Human capital model illustrates that parents view marriage as the ultimate goal for girls and do not consider education necessary. Parents prepare their girls for child bearing and boys for education and further professional preferences. In the same light, this Eritrean saying epitomizes what we are saying "It is better to bring up the son of a dog than the son of a daughter" reflecting the fact that a girl's "line" is lost to the family. And when girls are married, they tend to forget their parents at that time, she would want the husband to become king rather than even the closest relatives so if you have to make a choice, send boys to school (men in a Gambian village) (DeBrun, 1995).

In the same light, the fact that the "Nweh" people do not see the need for the girls to continue school up to the University hinders the girls potential and inhibits their educational achievement. From the data collected, a majority of both boys and girls (60.3%) and (57.3%) respectively denied that girls should be allowed to study up to the University. It is amazing that even the girls themselves denied they should be allowed to study up to the University as seen in their 209 (57.3%) representation of those who said no. These results are in contrast with research conducted by (Tchombe, 2008), who indicates that educational returns are higher in a woman than a man. To her female education stimulates changes in knowledge, power and attitudes in areas such as fertility, health and children's education but regrettably girls in Cameroon rarely attain the level of education reached by boys. In the same light, (Amin 1990) reiterates that in Cameroon, fewer girls enroll in school and few persist as far as boys. As a result, fewer girls acquire the knowledge and qualifications necessary for active roles in the economic and civic lives of their country. To further buttress the above points, many studies (Amin, 1990, Amin & Fonkeng, 2000, Tchombe 1993, 1995) show that girls of certain regions in Cameroon attend school less frequently than boys due to the discriminatory attitudes towards girls in the socialisation process, attitudes linked to economic, social, educational and pedagogical factors.

Similarly, recent research in Guinea and Ethiopia suggest that culture can play at least as important a role as poverty in the education of the girl child (Rose *et al.,* 1997) Tembong et al., 1997; Colclough et al., 1998). Institutional factors such as age barriers usually have more of an effect on girls because they often start school late or because demand for girls'; education is sometimes more sensitive to distance, and they leave

early once again to work for reasons of cultural seclusion, for initiation and early marriage.

CONCLUSION

Culture is an important fabric of any given society. It defines a people, their behaviour, attitude, customs and you name the rest. Adhering to one's culture is imperative. Cultural practices that inhibit education in general and the education of the girl child in particular is the bone of contention of this study. The study revealed that, the under-achievement of adolescent girls has been attributed to the internalization of negative attitudes borne out of stereotyped thinking in society. Parents and teachers have negative attitudes toward the female and positive attitude towards male students' high educational attainment. Nevertheless, culture which is a microcosm of Lebialem society should not be "razed" rather it should be practiced with caution to mitigate its effects especially on the girl child's quest for education. One cannot completely wipe away one's culture for, a man without a cultural identity is incomplete. We need to preserve our cultural heritage for better sustainability. "A tree that goes out inquest of the sun must hold firm to its mother earth".

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