

A Comparative Analysis of Literacy and Educational Qualification of Mothers of In-School and Out-of-School Children: A Case for Investment in Girl-Child Education



Introduction

The education of the girl-child has profound implications for societal development. Several studies have shown consistently that children of educated mothers are more likely to attend school, have longer schooling durations, and achieve higher educational levels. Research highlights that there are significant differences in the educational outcomes of children based on the educational status of their mothers. Family background including parental education, contribute to disparities in children's academic performance. Nevertheless, low educational qualification of mothers has also been linked to negative outcomes such as child marriage. Similarly, children with less educated mothers are more likely to be out of school. One reason for this may be that less educated mothers often lack the resources and knowledge to support their children's education, such as helping with homework and procurement of learning materials. They may also face socio-cultural barriers that hinder their ability to advocate for their children's education. Although literature exists on the impact of mothers' education levels on educational outcomes of their children, there is a dearth of data in Nigerian, and a lack of comparable data on the educational qualifications of parents of in-school and out-of-school children. This brief summarizes our findings on the comparative analysis



of educational qualification of parents of in-school and out-of-school children, highlighting the need for targeted investment in the education of the girl-child.

Methodology

This research was part of a larger country-wide mixed-method study on learning poverty in Nigeria. We analyzed the multiple indicators cluster survey data set for patterns between child marriage and the mothers' educational qualifications. We conducted a survey among 2,374 primary 5 and 6 pupils, drawn from 241 public schools in six (6) states, Gombe, Sokoto, Ekiti, Edo, Anambra and FCT, each representing a geopolitical zone of Nigeria. We also surveyed among 1,338 out-of-school children spread across the six states. The surveys were administered by trained interviewers and data was collected on tablets in July 2022. Rigorous measures were undertaken to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the National Health Research Ethical Committee. As part of the analysis process, statistics were performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) software.

Results

A quick analysis of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) data sets in Nigeria as depicted in Figure 2 below revealed a clear relationship between child marriage and the education levels of their mothers. Consistently, higher percentages (68%, 69%, 63%) of the child brides (aged ≤ 18) have mothers with no education compared to those whose parents attained secondary education (6%, 16%, 23%) in 2007, 2011 and 2017 respectively. This pattern is observable for both categories of child marriage, thus indicating that the percentage of child marriage decreased as mothers' education increased.

Mothers' Education Level and Child Marriage

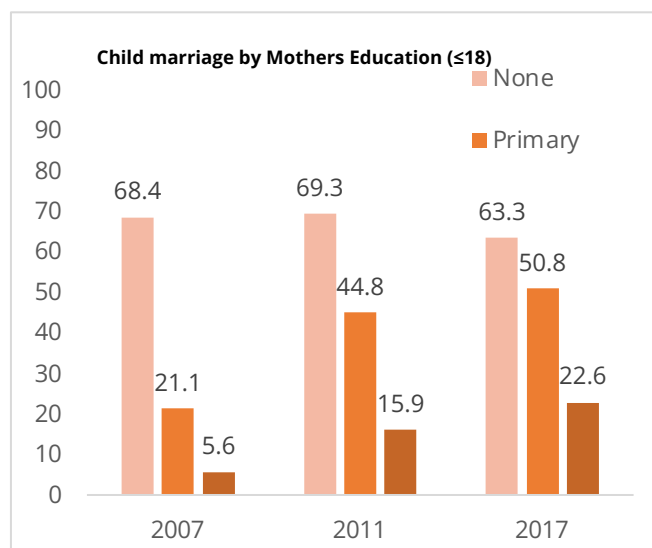


Fig. 1.

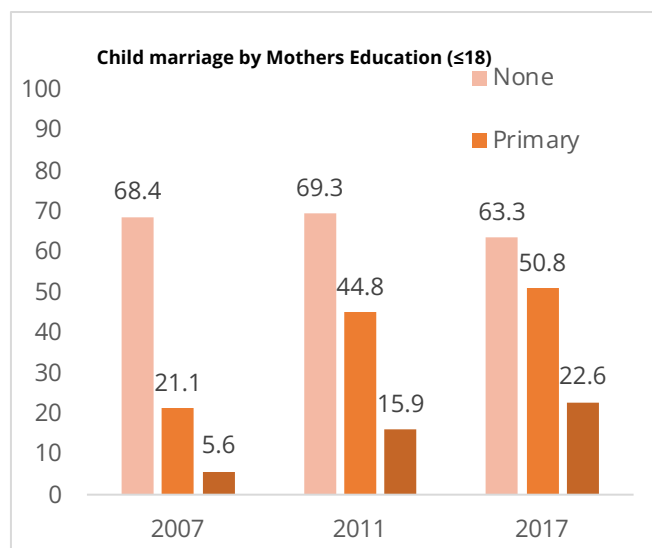


Fig. 2

Source: MICS 2007-2017

Comparative Analysis of ISC and OOSC Mothers' Educational Level

The graph (Fig. 3) reveals the self-report of in-school children (ISC) and out-of-school (OOSC) on the educational levels of their mothers. A higher percentage of OOSC mothers (46.3%) have no education compared to ISC mothers (17.6%), indicating that a lack of maternal education is more prevalent among out-of-school children. Conversely, a higher percentage of ISC mothers (16.1%) have completed primary education compared to OOSC mothers (10.1%), suggesting that factors such as basic education among mothers can positively influence school attendance for their children. These gaps become more pronounced with higher education levels as well; the proportion of ISC (27%) who reported their mothers completed secondary school education was four times more than OOSC (7%). These patterns underscore the influence of maternal education in promoting school attendance.

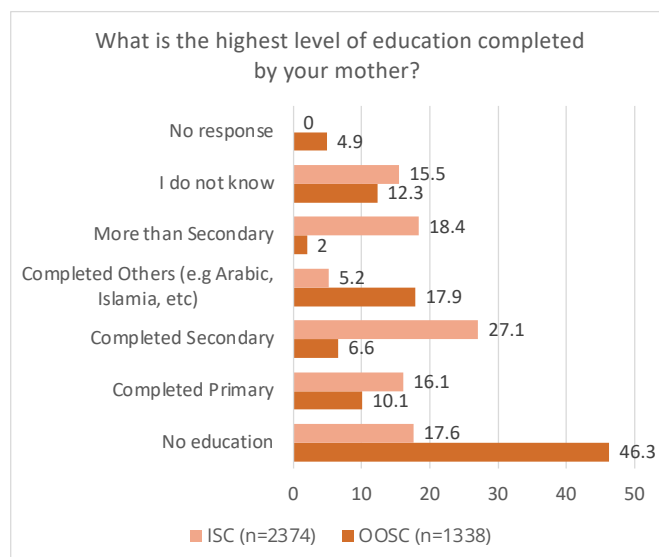


Fig. 3: OOSC and ISC Mothers' Education Level

Comparative Analysis of ISC and OOSC Mothers' Literacy

The percentage of OOSC mothers (76.3%) who could not read or write in English, was twice that of ISC mothers (38.1%), indicating that English literacy is more common among mothers of in-school children. Conversely, the percentage of ISC mothers (57%) who could read and write in English was four times more than OOSC mothers (11%). [See fig 4]

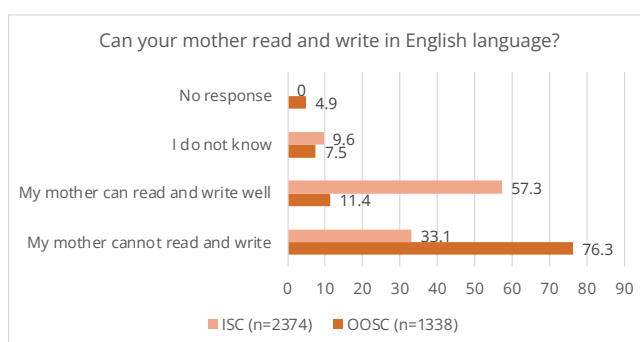


Fig. 4: English Literacy Among OOSC and ISC Mothers

Policy Implication

The results of this study provide evidence on the relationship between mothers' educational level, literacy and their children's outcomes. Given that a girl-child ultimately becomes the mother for future children, investing in girl-child education is a strategic step towards increasing school attendance and performance of her potential children and reducing the prevalence of negative outcomes such as child marriage. Educated girls grow into empowered women who contribute significantly to the well-being and development of their families and communities. Therefore, increasing girl-child agency through strategic investments in education is paramount for harnessing the dividends of democracy and ensuring future child rearing practices and outcomes.

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   @policycentreng

 pic@nesgroup.org

 www.policyinnovationcentre.org

