

Effect of Self Management Strategy on Discriminatory Behaviour against the Girl-Child

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Abstract

The present study examined effects of self-management strategy on discriminatory behavior against the girl-child. The study adopted a quasi-experimental, 2x2 factorial design and a total of 80 participants were systematically randomly selected from 2local government areas in a state in Nigeria. 40 of them were males and 40 females. Validated self-reported measures were used for data collection and two hypotheses were tested in the study using Analysis of Covariance. Result showed a significant difference in the gender discriminatory behavior of parents in the experimental and control groups after treatment, thus hypothesis one was accepted. Hypothesis 2 was also accepted because there was a significant difference in the discriminatory behavior between male and female parents in the CG, SMS and CRS after treatment. It was thus concluded that self-management strategy has significant effect on changing discriminatory behavior against the girl-child.

Keywords: Discrimination, discriminatory behavior, Ondo, Self-management Strategy

1. Introduction

Everyone has the human right to freedom from discrimination on the ground of gender, race and ethnicity; these human rights are expressly set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other widely adhered-to international human rights treaties and Declarations.

The human right to freedom from discrimination entitles every woman, man, youth and child to fundamental human rights including the human rights to freedom from distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on gender, which has the purpose or effect of impairing the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms; the human right to equality between men and women; the human right to equality between boys and girls in all areas including education, health, nutrition and employment; etc.

Furthermore, all human beings have the human right to livelihood and work, and human rights norms and standards guarantee women full equality in all aspects of economic life. Women have the human right on equal terms with men to dignified, creative and productive labor, free from discrimination and exploitation enabling them to live in peace, security, justice and dignity. Girls also have a bundle of rights, which are fundamental to them without prejudice.

(Articles 1, 2, 7 and 23, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 A/Res/217 of 10 December, 1948. <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/udhr.html> (accessed on August 8th, 2012), Despite several policies and articles like the above on the protection of the right of the girl-child, there seems not to be an observable significant change all over the world (UNICEF, 1994; Maccoby, 2002; Okagbue, 1995 and John, 2007) and most especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, where most cultures prefer the boy-child to the girl-child (Izuagbara 2004). This is not only an open demonstration of the low value for the female child, it is also an abuse on the child and can be considered a crime against humanity; since it was not the girl-child that determined her own sex at birth.

Youth Advocate Program International (YAPI, 2004), reported too that based on the general discriminatory belief that girls are more useful than boys for domestic labour, they are often saddled with the responsibilities of taking care of their younger siblings, cooking, other house chores and have greater vulnerability to being trafficked for commercial sex exploitation and other forms of child labour than boys. It is therefore not an overstatement to say that in many Nigerian societies, (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa, alike) the pattern of socialization experienced by both boys and girls differ drastically. While boys are often lifted and adored, the girls are often treated as inferior (Tine-Diop, 1998; Nyager, 2005).

The family as a basic unit in all societies of the world is expected to love, nurture and train the child (irrespective of the child's gender), with reference to societal norms however, as pointed out in the preceding discussion, quite often the girl-child is readily vulnerable to all forms of discrimination in the family and in the society at large. Unfortunately, a situation where the family singles out the girl-child for discrimination will ultimately exert negative effects on her. Such negative effects may be disastrous to the physical, psychological

and mental well-being of the girl-child. In other words, the persistent negative behavior towards the girl-child from every quarter could result into a feeling of low self-esteem, introversion and self-pity situation. This could also end up in intimidating her to accepting that she is never to exhibit unfeminine traits such as aggressiveness, independence, and ambition. The sum of these experiences can sum up to affect the girl-child's capacity for full intellectual development and if this continues, it might eventually deprive her of acquiring the basic life skills to equip her for future life challenges.

There is therefore the need to constantly or regularly access the existence of any form of discrimination against the girl-child in a given society with a view to proffering workable strategies to curtail the spread of such discrimination, and improve the orientation of parents, as well as children who are already victims of such discrimination.

It is against this background that the present study examined the effectiveness of self-management strategy in dealing with discrimination against the girl-child in Ondo State of Nigeria.

1.1 Discrimination against the Girl-Child among Families

Girl-child discrimination occurs when parents consciously or otherwise give preferential treatment to the boy-child at the expense of the girl-child (UNICEF, 1994, and ILO 2003). Noting sadly, Ghosh (1992), Bai (1993), Netherlands (1994) and Pandey (1995), have reported that; all over the world, girls are found to experience disadvantage in the form of a shorter and lower level of education, less food, and less say, that is, "being seen, but not heard".

Amao-Kehinde (2000) and Philips (2003) observed further that gender discrimination has a lot to do with the benefits and privileges which customs attach to the boy-child, but deny the girl-child from enjoying. It is generally noted therefore that through socio-economic, cultural, political, educational, career, and religious sentiments, the girl-child unlike her boy-child counterpart, does not seem to have her rightful place in society. This makes Egunjobi (2005) in her work on gender inequality to express the view that, socially, the girl-child and the woman could be described as a "person without an identity of her own" For her identity, she has to be consistently tied to the man either as the daughter, wife, or worse still, a concubine. It is therefore not surprising too, that when it comes to career choice, the traditional perception of the career concerning male and female differs. To support this, Jegede and Taiwo (1996) in their study on gender differences and specialization in medical profession, observed that parents do not like to encourage their female children to pursue a prestigious profession such as Medicine because of the monetary implication. They see it as a waste of resources since the girls would get married and take such glory to their husbands. This would therefore explain why certain careers such as nursing, secretariat studies and cleaning duties, seem to be more of the females' than males'. While generally, professions like Engineering, Medicine, Lecturing, Technical and Managerial positions, are seemingly reserved for males.

Politically, Amao-Kehinde (2000), Badejo (2005), and Attoe (2006) described the position of women as being so insignificant compared to the men despite their numerical strength. According to Amao-Kehinde (2000) in her publication on the education for the rights of women in the new millennium, the few number of women who make it to decision-making level, are put in positions where they are likely to make no meaningful contributions. Amao-Kehinde (2000), Attoe (2006) and Fayankinnu (2003) observed further that the problem of religion and tradition is found to further widen the disparities between the male and the female gender in Nigerian society. This is because both tradition and religion are basic factors dictating the type of jobs and activities to be taken up and involved in by either the girl-child or the boy-child. For example, Aluko (2003) stated that cultural and religious ideologies assigned women to the family domain, while the men are assigned to the public sphere.

UNICEF (1994) and Fayankinnu (2003) stated that the girl-child lacks equal access to economic resources. This is because, according to Fayankinnu (2003), from childhood, the girl-child is socialized to believe that she has to look up to the man to earn her living. Therefore, unlike her male counterpart, the girl-child and the woman is not expected to have landed properties or have access to bank loans. Her major role according to Fayankinnu (2003) lies strictly in the home. This might explain the domination of the labour market by men and the patriarchal values.

Empirically, a lot of evidences are available to establish that there is discrimination against the girl-child world-wide. During the 4th World Conference for Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the DPI [2000] identified the persistent discrimination against the girl-child and the violation of her rights. The report further stressed that discrimination against the girl-child is an issue which spreads across many countries, both developed and developing. It further acknowledged that in almost all the countries of the world, the status of girls is significantly worse than that of boys.

Aruna (2005) examined some of the traditional practices affecting gender in Nigeria, particularly in the six Yoruba speaking states of Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Lagos and Ekiti States. Though the result of the study

showed that there were divergent cultural traits, the states still shared a lot of things in common. The findings therefore showed that the girl-child suffered the same fate of discrimination due to factors like the patriarchal nature of the society, family type, male-dominance, and many other harmful traditional practices. More findings of the study showed that based on the personal experiences of the female respondents, their younger brothers were more respected and acknowledged in the family circle. E.g. in matters of inheritance, the female children were only entitled to movable properties, while their brothers were entitled to inheriting all the landed properties.

Still on the socio-cultural practices and their influence on the discriminatory behaviour against the girl-child, Ajala (2000) carried out an investigation on the reasons for discriminatory attitudes against the girl-child in two Local Government Areas, namely Ibadan North (Bodija) and Ibadan South-West (Beere). The sampled population comprised of women within the reproductive years of 15-49, and men aged between 15-65 years. 57% of the respondents were females, while 43% were males. The result of the study showed that about 41% of the respondents were of the view that girls should be assigned more household chores than boys. It was found to be alarming that just about 2% of the respondents believed that girls should not be saddled with more household chores.

When it comes to educating the children, the result of the study showed that 64% of the respondents agreed that boys and girls should be given equal opportunities. The result however showed that discriminatory behaviour of the respondents came into play when the level of educational attainment for the two sexes was considered, about 85% and 61% (males and females), expressed their views in relation to boys and girls, respectively. This therefore shows why less females than males, have access to education.

This present study therefore set out to evaluate the effect of self-management strategy on the discriminatory behavior against the child in one of the western states of Nigeria. This is with the hope of help the girl-child live a better and happier life in a society that seems to have opposed her peace and happiness.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant difference in the gender discriminatory behavior against the girl-child in the Control group (CG), Self Management strategy (SMS), and Cognitive Restructuring Strategy (CRS) groups before and after treatment.
2. There will be significant difference in the gender discriminatory behavior against the girl-child between male and female parents in the CG, SMS, and CRS groups before and after treatment.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quasi experimental design. It consists of one experimental group and one control group. The experimental group was exposed to the Self-Management Strategy (SMS) of Behaviour Therapy (BT), while the control group was not.

2.2. Population of the Study

The population for the study consisted of all parents from all the three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of study in Ondo State, Nigeria. They included all categories of parents, single parents, Parents in monogamous and polygamous families, parents in urban and rural areas, literate and illiterate parents.

2.2.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used a total sample of 80 parents. 40 males and 40 females who were selected using the stratified random sampling technique. The 80 parents were put into 2 groups, with 40 in each group. The first group formed the experimental groups, while the second group formed the control group. The groups were reasonably far from each other to avoid interference.

The procedure for the selection of participants from each of the 2 LGAs was carried out by the administration and scoring of the instrument used as pretest for the study. In other words, the Parental Behaviour Questionnaire (PBQ) was administered on the target population of parents from each of the 2 LGAs. The cut-off points for the selection of the participants was based on the summation of all responses of the respondents divided by the total number of items. This gave an average score of 90.06 which formed the baseline score for the selection of participants to take part in the experiment. In other words, any participant that scored above this score was considered to be discriminatory towards the girl-child. This helped in ensuring that only parents who had the tendency to discriminate against the girl-child, were retained for the study.

2.2..2. Research Instruments

The first research instrument used for the collection of relevant data for the study was designed and developed by the researcher. It was titled "Parental Behaviour Questionnaire (PBQ)" The PBQ consisted of 2 parts; Parts A and B. Part A was to elicit information on the personal data of respondents. While Part B was subdivided into seven sections, comprising thirty-five items altogether. The instrument was measured on a 4-point

Likert Scale. Respondents were to choose one of the four alternatives provided to indicate their response to each item (please see appendix 1, of the study for more details). The second research instrument was the adapted version of Utulu (2000) entitled “Female Perception of Traditional Practices Questionnaire (FPTPQ)”, which served as the construct validity to the PBQ.

2.2.3. Validity of Instruments

The research instrument PBQ was presented to the researcher’s supervisor. It was also given to other lecturers in Test and Measurement both within and outside the department of Guidance and Counselling, in the Faculty of Education, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. All the lecturers agreed that the instrument has face validity. For further scrutiny for the content validity, the test specialists carefully studied the items, modified some, while others were reconstructed. They all agreed that the items were quite adequate to reflect a measure of discriminatory behaviour against the girl-child in terms of coverage and structure.

The construct validity of the instrument was ascertained, using the adapted version of Utulu (2000) “Female Perception of Traditional Practices Questionnaire (FPTPQ)”. The FPTPQ was administered in parallel along with the PBQ, on twenty (20) parents made up of 10 males and 10 females, who were not part of the subjects for the study. The score obtained from the two instruments were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The construct validity test yields a correlation index of 0.64. With this value, the PBQ is convergent with the same positive instrument (FPTPQ), was considered valid enough to be used in the study.

2.2.4. Treatment Packages

The treatment packages are in form of counselling talks and interaction on how participants in the experimental group for the study, could be properly re-oriented to change their discriminatory behaviour against the girl-child, and replacing such with more acceptable behaviour. Self- Management Strategy (SMS), was employed in teaching participants to learn how they could successfully apply some Behaviour Modification Strategies, such as Self- monitoring, Self-Contract, Self-Reinforcement, towards reducing their gender discriminatory behaviour against the girl-child, in their respective families.

Since the research design was an experimental pretest, posttest, control group design, participants were assessed before, and after the treatment, to measure the effects of the counselling strategies. The study lasted eight weeks

2.2.5. Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. General and research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics; ANCOVA was used to analyze all the six hypotheses. In order to determine which of the treatment strategies or the categories viz: gender, family types, educational level, location and socio-economic status of parents, exhibited the significant difference; the Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was applied. All hypotheses generated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

2.2.6. Result

Each of the hypotheses stated was tested and the results presented below. The first hypothesis was tested with an Analysis of Covariance and the summary of result is presented in table 1. First hypothesis states that ‘There will be no significant difference in the gender discriminatory behavior against the girl-child in the Control group (CG), Self Management strategy (SMS), and Cognitive Restructuring Strategy (CRS) groups before and after treatment’.

Table 1.

Table 1 showed the effects of treatment on the gender discriminatory behavior of subjects. Data on the table showed that f-cal of 175.941 was greater than the f-table value of .000 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was thus rejected. Therefore, there was a significant difference in the gender discriminatory behavior of parents in the experimental and control groups after treatment.

Second hypothesis states that ‘There will be significant difference in the gender discriminatory behavior against the girl-child between male and female parents in the CG, SMS, and CRS groups before and after treatment’.

Table 2.

Table 2 showed that the f-cal of 249.338 was greater than the f-table value of .000 at 0.05 level of significance. This implied therefore that there was a significant difference in the discriminatory behavior between male and female parents in the CG, SMS and CRS after treatment

3. Discussion

As mentioned earlier in this study, it is still very difficult to have access to any experimental work that particularly treated discrimination against the girl-child among families. Many of the available studies are in descriptive forms. However, the few empirical reports on the use of CRS and SMS, were in areas of human

deficiencies, violence against women, gender imbalance in education, amongst others. It is therefore on these limited areas, that the related discussion in this section of the study was based.

Results of the study on table 3 and figure 2, confirmed that before the commencement of treatment, gender discriminatory behaviour against the girl-child was a common phenomenon among all parents in the three groups, that is, the CG, SMS, and CRS. This agreed with the findings of Aruna (2005) who examined some of the traditional practices affecting gender in Nigeria, particularly in the six Yoruba speaking states. He stated that even though there were divergent cultural traits among the states, they still shared a lot of things in common. Aruna (2005), in line with the present study showed that the girl-child suffered the same fate of discrimination due to the common factors among the Yoruba states such as, the family types, the Patriarchal nature of the Society, to mention but a few. Also the findings of Taiwo (1996), Amao-Kehinde (2000) and Phillips (2003) all agreed that discrimination against the girl-child has a lot to do with the benefits and privileges which customs attached to the boy-child, but deny the girl-child from enjoying.

Another similar study which complemented the current finding was that of Oniyiriuka (2006) on gender inequalities in rate of under-five hospitalization and mortality in Benin City, in Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that, compared to the overall proportion of boys to girls admitted in the hospital, it was 58.8% (boys), versus 46.2% (girls). This implied that the boy-child mortality rate during such hospitalization was 3.3% compared to 6.0% for the girl-child. It was evidenced based on these findings that parents generally fear losing their male children, whom they saw as the pillars of their homes, while they seemed to feel that girls were not as important. In line with this view too, Egunjobi (2005) stated that socially, people see the girl-child as a person without an identity of her own. Therefore, through socio-economic cultural, political, educational, career and religious sentiments, the girl-child unlike her boy-child counterpart does not seem to have her rightful place in society. These informed the interest of the researcher to see what could be done to solve this big problem of the girl-child discrimination.

The findings of the study on table 3, however confirmed further too that there was a significant difference between the gender discriminatory behaviour of parents in the experimental group (SMS and CRS), and those in the control group after treatment. This means that the two treatment groups showed their potency by reducing the discriminatory behaviour of parents. This implies therefore that hypothesis one of no significant difference was rejected.

The finding of this study justified the assumption of Behaviour Therapy, which according to Bandura (1974) assumes that man is the product of learning. To establish this assumption therefore, Odufuwa and Dosumu (2006) noted that parents who are the first teachers often use punishment and rewards to reinforce their offsprings to being feminine or masculine. This tends to be confirmed by the change in behaviour of parents in the CRS and SMS which were the experimental groups. It could be rightly said therefore, that the reduction in their gender discriminatory behaviour could be traced to their exposure to some forms of positive learning. The findings thus revealed that all the parents benefited from their exposure to SMS and CRS treatments.

Hypothesis two was rejected. This implied that there was a significant difference between the posttest mean scores of male and female parents in the CG, SMS and CRS groups after treatment. This finding further confirmed the effects of the two treatment strategies on the reduction of discriminatory behaviour of the parents against the girl-child. This finding was supported by Ellis (1962) and Uba (1989), who stated that the use of CRS helped the client a great deal on the modification of his or her internal sentences. This is done by encouraging the client to find more rational sentences to himself. This finding was also in agreement with Jeremy, Alden, and Davidson (2005), in their study where they applied Cognitive Restructuring of REBT, and the Behavioural Skill Training of BT on client anxiety level as a moderator variable in assertion training. Both treatment conditions were run in a group format, consisting of six 2-hours sessions. The result of their study showed that even though low-anxiety subjects benefited equally well from Skill Training and Cognitive Restructuring, the clients were reported to have benefited more from Cognitive Restructuring Strategy of REBT than from skill training of BT.

Though the outcome of this study showed that both the male and female parents in all the three groups still exhibited discriminatory behaviour towards the girl-child even after being exposed to SMS and CRS packages, a closer observation at the findings however showed that there was a minimal difference between the posttest mean scores of the female parents in the two experimental groups. In other words, the posttest mean scores of the female parents were higher than those of male parents. This confirmed the fact that the effects of the treatment strategies were greater on the male parents than the female parents in the two experimental groups. This finding was in agreement with that of Ajala (2000) who carried out an investigation on the reasons for the discriminatory attitudes against the girl-child in two LGAs of Oyo state, Nigeria. The findings of his study showed that higher percentage of females (46.19%) than male respondents (42.6%), were of the view that boys should be given preferential training over the girls while 11.30% remained neutral. This singular reason may explain why discriminatory behaviour against the girl-child remains so strong in the society. At least, one would

have expected that almost all the female respondents would have supported preferential training of the girl-child against the boy-child, however the reversed was the case. This showed how gender socialization in female development and behaviour, affects self-evaluation, identity processes, and the social roles that girls and women adopt.

The result of the study also fell in line with the assertion of Ellis (1962) that people irrational behaviour or attitudes, and philosophies often take the form of extreme dogmatic 'must' 'should' and ought. This is to say that it the preference for extreme philosophy that are often responsible for depression, guilt, discrimination, and the like towards the girl-child in the home. In agreement with the finding of this study too, Chauhan (1981) stated that, women are more discriminatory towards the girl-child because of the negative valuation they place on the girl-child in the family. Women are therefore more skeptical and psychologically affected about their inability to have the boy-child because of the fear of being rejected by other members of their husband's extended family on the ground that there is yet to be a pillar in such homes.

The finding of this study also agreed with UNICEF (1994), Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2004) and Kurf (2006) who, while trying to have an indept look into the behaviour of male and female parents in their relationship towards their children among families, agreed that the father in all ramifications is in control over the household. In fact, the father is described as having all authority to the detriment of the girls and the mothers. Frank (2002) still maintaining the same view with the study, also observed particularly that, though fathers are involved in parenting, mothers however spend more time caring for children than fathers. Specifically too, fathers are more involved and ready in playing with their boy-child than their girl-child. This explains why women often entertain more fear when the preferred male-child is absent in the family. According to Anom (2000), this situation of lower valuation of women would remain the same unless there is a counter-conditioning. With the application of the CRS and the SMS, it is hoped that the outcome of the study might change the whole scenario.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we conclude that self-management strategy has significant effect on changing discriminatory behavior against the girl-child.

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Table 1 ANCOVA summary table showing the Comparison among the CG, SMS and CRS Groups on the Basis of parental Gender Discriminatory behaviour against the Girl-Child

Source	SS	df	MS	f-cal	f-table
Corrected Model	32590.051	3	10863.350	129.544	.000
Intercept	4894.053	1	4894.053	58.361	.000
Pretest	3215585	1	3215.585	38.346	.000
XGroup	29508.219	2	14754.109	175.941	.000
Error	9727.540	116	83.858		

** significant $p > 0.05$*

Table 2. ANCOVA showing the Interactive effects of Treatment on Gender of Parents and Discriminatory Behaviour towards the Girl-Child

Source	SS	df	MS	F-cal	F-tab
Corrected Model	35623.380	6	5937.230	100.222	.0000
Intercept	2632.822	1	2632.822	44.443	.000
Pretest	4146.838	1	4146.838	70.000	.000
Sex	1000.486	1	1000.486	16.888	.000
Sex X group	2027.833	2	14771.010	249.338	.000
Error	6694.212	113	59.241		
Total	847067.000	120			
Corrected Total	42317.592	119			

**Significant at $P > 0.05$.*

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