

# GENDER ROLES AND FAMILY VALUES AS CORRELATE OF GIRL-CHILD EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN IKWERRE ETHNIC GROUP OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** This study investigated gender roles and family values as correlate of girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria. Employing a correlational research design, the research focused on a population of 265,400 parents comprising of 152800 men and 112600 women from four communities across two Local Government Areas: Obio/Akpor (Rumuodomaya and Choba) and Port Harcourt (Rumuokwuta and Ogbunabali). A two-stage sampling method was used to select 400 participants, including 225 fathers and 175 mothers, based on the Taro Yamane formula. Data collection involved two self-structured questionnaires: the Girl-Child Gender Roles and Family Values Questionnaire (G-CGRFVQ) and the Girl-Child Educational Development Questionnaire (G-CEDQ), both validated by experts with reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.78. Out of 400 distributed copies, 241 were returned, yielding a 60.25% return rate. The study employed statistical methods, including mean, standard deviation, and regression analyses, to address the research questions. Specific hypotheses were tested using multiple regression with analysis of variance (ANOVA) at a 0.05 significance level, supplemented by simple regression with t-tests to establish joint correlation significance. Findings revealed that in Ikwerre ethnic group, gender roles (20.7%) and family values (14.6%) individually have limited correlation to girl-child educational development but their combined effect (30.6%) is moderate, highlighting the need for increased support. It was therefore concluded and recommended that comprehensive reforms addressing educational policy, community engagement, and targeted educational programmes providing mentorship and tutoring support for disadvantaged girls are essential to improve girl-child education in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Girl-Child education; Gender roles; Family values; Educational development; Ikwerre ethnic group

## 1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Ikwerre ethnic group, located in Rivers State, Nigeria, plays an integral role in the socio-economic and political landscape of the Niger Delta region. Renowned for their industrious nature and resourcefulness, the Ikwerre people predominantly reside in four local government areas: Obio-Akpor, Port Harcourt, Emohua, and Ikwerre. These areas are home to critical institutions and industries, notably the oil and gas sector, higher institutions of learning such as the University of Port Harcourt as well as various commercial hubs that are essential to Nigeria's national development [1]. Given the strategic importance of the Ikwerre ethnic group to the economy of Nigeria, it is vital to ensure the educational development of all community members, especially the girl-child, to maintain their relevance and influence in national affairs.

Nevertheless, entrenched traditional gender roles and family values in Ikwerre communities appear to perpetuate patriarchal norms that favour male children over their female counterparts in crucial areas such as educational opportunity [2]. Like many African ethnic groups, the Ikwerre community is steeped in patriarchal traditions that designate the male child as the primary heir and the family's breadwinner, while the female child is often confined to women's work or family maintenance tasks. This cultural framework highlights the contradiction of a society striving for significant progress while simultaneously clinging to antiquated practices [3]. Such customs increasingly conflict with the imperative to unlock the full potential of all citizens, including women, to promote national development. It is alarming that, as with many other ethnic groups across Nigeria's Niger Delta, the Ikwerre girl-child may find herself overtime in a challenging position, caught between reinforcing traditional roles and the necessity of intellectual development for personal and national advancement [4].

Notably, the dynamics of gender roles and family values as it concerns the girl-child encompass a variety of factors that significantly influence individual families and their developmental trajectories. Key aspects worth evaluating include traditional beliefs regarding the girl-child daily living tasks, societal expectations regarding marriage and child-rearing, the impact of economic constraints on girl-child educational opportunities, girl-child life skills deficits- impeding their capacity to navigate complex social dynamics, build confidence, and develop a positive self-image among others. Within the Ikwerre ethnic group, these dynamics have evolved over time [5], often overshadowing the importance of girl-child intellectual development and leaving their potential largely untapped. As the adage goes, "education is the passport to the future." Consequently, the girl-child's future prospects become increasingly elusive, hindering personal growth, community progress,

and the development of balanced and effective leadership as well as professionals within the society. This stagnation will undoubtedly perpetuate cycles of inequality and poverty, diminishing the Ikwerre ethnic group's contribution to national development and limiting its capacity to address pressing societal challenges.

As a result, if the cycle of girl-child underdevelopment continues, it will have far-reaching and adverse consequences, affecting not only the Ikwerre ethnic group but also the nation as a whole. This situation at hand highlights the urgent need for a paradigm shift in attitudes and localized socio-cultural policy toward girl-child education within the Ikwerre ethnic group, emphasizing the importance of empowering girls to reach their full potential and make meaningful contributions to the larger society. Therefore, understanding the correlation between gender roles, family values and educational development in the Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria is crucial. It will inform targeted strategies that will address these challenges so as to empower girls to reach their full potential thereby promoting inclusive growth, and unlocking opportunities for socio-economic advancement in Rivers State and prosperous nation-building.

## **2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite the Ikwerre people's significant contributions to Nigeria's socio-economic landscape, deep-seated patriarchal norms continue to overshadow the potential of half the population - the girl-child. Caught between traditional expectations and modern aspirations, the girl-child struggles to find her place. The complacency of socio-cultural organizations who are custodians of family values within the ethnic group perpetuates cycles of disadvantage, restricting girls to limited roles that fail to contribute to the community's intellectual and economic vitality. As traditional values conflict with the imperative of cultivating educated leaders, the future prospects of the girl-child grow increasingly uncertain. If this trend continues unabated, the nation will be confronted with the stark reality of stifled growth and innovation, forfeiting the immense potential of women who could have blossomed into visionary leaders. Therefore, this study investigating the correlation between gender roles, family values, and girl-child educational development within the Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State assumes paramount importance.

### **2.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

This study was aimed at investigating gender roles and family values as correlate of girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the extent to which gender roles correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. ascertain the extent to which family values correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. determine the extent to which gender roles and family values as joint variables correlate to girl-child educational development in the Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **2.2 Research Questions**

1. To what extent do gender roles correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent do family values correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. To what extent do gender roles and family values as joint variables correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria?

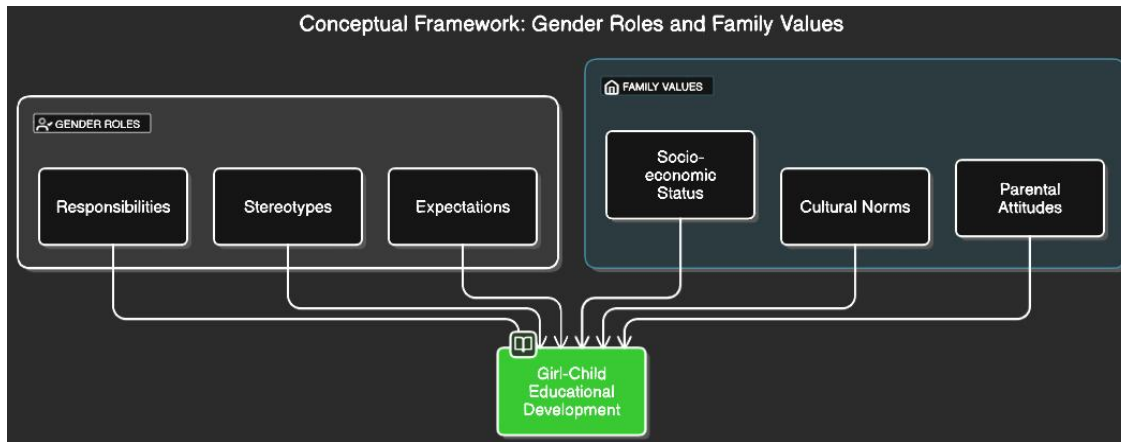
### **2.3 Hypotheses**

The following three (3) null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. Gender roles do not significantly correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. Family values do not significantly correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. Gender roles and family values as joint variables do not significantly correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

The study's framework is anchored on gender roles and family values pertaining to the girl-child and the need for the girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria, illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Relationship between Variables

Source: Researcher's conceptualization (2025)

## 2.5 Literature Review

The intersection of traditional gender roles and family values has profoundly impacted the educational development of the girl-child across various African ethnic groups, including the Ikwerre ethnic group in Rivers State, Nigeria [5,6]. Research has consistently shown that girls are socialized to prioritize modesty and humility over assertiveness and leadership, limiting their aspirations and undermining their potential for academic and professional success [7]. Studies have highlighted the pervasive influence of patriarchal family systems in perpetuating gender prejudice, fostering obedience and submissiveness in girls while discouraging leadership qualities [6,7].

In the Ikwerre context, cultural expectations emphasizing filial piety and discouraging deviation from traditional norms have been particularly detrimental to girls' educational development [5]. Similar patterns have been observed in other cultural contexts, such as Tajikistan, where traditional norms have comparable influences on girls' education [8]. However, researchers emphasize that local dynamics, such as those in Rivers State, require targeted approaches to dismantle entrenched biases limiting educational access [9]. The expectation for girls to focus on marital and maternal responsibilities is another deeply entrenched value hindering their educational development [10,11]. Surprisingly, in this 21st century where gender equality through quality and sustainable education as well as women's empowerment are increasingly advocated, some families are still prioritizing early marriages for their daughters as a means of securing family honour and reducing financial burdens with one man having the socio-cultural nod to have a good number of these beautiful as desired wives [12-14]. This cultural expectation resonates strongly in the Ikwerre ethnic group, where girls are often prepared for roles centered on marriage rather than career aspirations [5,11]. The persistence of such practices is perplexing, given that educating girls has been shown to improve family economic outcomes [1]. This contradiction underscores the complexity of balancing traditional values with modern educational demands. Girls in the Ikwerre ethnic group face additional pressures to conform to societal beauty standards and norms, diverting attention from their education [3]. Excessive time spent on unpaid domestic work and personal grooming leaves girls with limited time for academic pursuits [15]. The prioritization of family honor and reputation over individual needs continues to influence educational opportunities for the girl-child in the Ikwerre ethnic group [16]. Parents often restrict girls from participating in activities perceived as "male-dominated," perpetuating gender bias and limiting girls' academic interests [17,18]. However, shifts in cultural narratives, such as the Ashanti example in Ghana, demonstrate progress in integrating female education into traditional systems through effective community mobilization [19-21]. Community participation through empowerment efforts is crucial in breaking down these barriers. This approach can create a transformative ripple effect that changes the lives of girls in the Ikwerre community, setting them on a path to brighter futures [2,4,22].

## 2.6 Theoretical Framework

Gender role socialization theory, articulated by Lewis in 2006 and reinvigorated by Lips in 2018 asserts that the process of gender role socialization begins in the family environment [23,24], where children are introduced to societal expectations and gender norms. These norms vary across cultures, often subordinating and restricting the girl-child, diminishing her power and potential from an early age within the family context. This theory emphasizes parents' primary role in shaping their child's understanding of societal expectations and gender norms. Perceived disparities prompt parents to adjust family policies in pursuit of fairness, which is subjective and influenced by their social and cultural biases. Thus, the theory highlights how socialization, culture, and parenting, impact child's orientation about themselves and the world around them

which in most cases often subordinate status of the girl-child. The theory therefore informs this study on gender roles and family values as correlates of the girl-child's educational development in the Ikwerre ethnic group by presenting the intersection of variables to examine the complex relationships between gender socialization, family values, and educational outcomes.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a correlational design, targeting a population of 265,400 parents comprising of 152800 men and 112600 women across four selected communities of in 2 Local Government Areas of Obio/Akpor (Rumuodomaya and Choba) and Port Harcourt (Rumuokwuta and Ogbunabali). A two stage sampling technique of disproportionately stratified sampling was utilized to select 400 participants comprising of 225 fathers and 175 mothers through Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Data collection was facilitated using two self-structured instruments titled, Girl-Child Gender Roles and Family Values Questionnaire (G-CGRFVQ) and Girl-Child Educational Development Questionnaire (G-CEDQ), which underwent rigorous face and content validation by three experts. Both instruments consisted of ten items respectively. While G-CGRFVQ was divided into two sections, G-CEDQ was not sectionalized. Both instruments have responses captured on a four-point Likert scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE), assigned weighted values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The instruments demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.76 and 0.78 respectively using Cronbach Alpha analysis. Out of the distributed copies of questionnaire, 241 copies were completed and returned—119 copies from fathers ( $119/225 \times 100 = 52.89\%$  return rate) and 122 copies from mothers ( $122/175 \times 100 = 69.71\%$  return rate), resulting in an overall return rate of 60.25% ( $241/400 \times 100$ ). The study addressed the research questions using mean, standard deviation and simple regression for research questions 1 and 2, while multiple regression was used for research question 3. The hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested through multiple regression analysis associated with analysis of variance (ANOVA) at a 0.05 significance level. Simple regression analysis associated with t-tests was used to establish the significance of the joint relationships in hypothesis 3. The following indices were used to assess the strength and direction of the correlations between the independent variable and the outcome variable:

0- 25% (i.e. 0 - 0.25)	=	Low	51 - 75% (i.e. 0.51 - 0.75)	=	High
26 - 50% (i.e. 0.26 - 0.50)	=	Moderate	76 - 100% (i.e. 0.76 - 0.100)	=	Very High

(Source: Umeghalu & Onyeike [25])

### 4 RESULTS

#### 4.1 Answer to Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** To what extent do gender roles correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 1** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of the Extent to which Gender Roles Correlate to Girl-Child Educational Development in Ikwerre Ethnic Group of Rivers State, Nigeria

S/N	Test Items from G-CGRFVQ Assessing Gender Roles and Girl-Child Educational Development	$\bar{x}$	sd	Remarks
1.	The cultural norms in most Ikwerre communities emphasize the importance of girls taking on family-oriented tasks, which may limit their opportunities for academic achievement.	2.55	0.34	High Extent
2.	In Ikwerre culture, it is commonly believed that girls are encouraged to engage in apprenticeships instead of pursuing advanced formal education.	2.63	0.38	High Extent
3.	Parents in my community encourage boys to pursue higher education more than girls.	2.60	0.36	High Extent
4.	In this Ikwerre community, gender stereotypes discourage girls from participating in traditionally male-dominated fields.	2.62	0.36	High Extent
5	Leaders in this community promote initiatives that favour male education over female education.	2.45	0.22	Low Extent
<b>Cluster Mean/SD</b>		<b>2.57</b>	<b>0.33</b>	High Extent

Criterion mean score = 2.50,  $r = 0.209$ ,  $r^2$  (coefficient of determinism) = 0.207, Adjusted  $r^2 = 0.207$ ,  $n = 241$

Results in Table 1 indicated that gender roles significantly influenced girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group, with a cluster mean of 2.57 (SD = 0.33) reflecting a high extent of impact. Most items indicated that cultural norms

and stereotypes contributed to this mean score, discouraging girls' academic progress. However, despite this significant influence, the coefficient of determinism was relatively low at  $r^2 = 20.7\%$ , illustrating that gender roles accounted for only 20.7% of the variance in girl-child education. This suggests that while gender roles hinder academic advancement, other factors also play a crucial role.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do family values correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 2** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of the Extent to which Family Values Correlate to Girl-Child Educational Development in Ikwerre Ethnic Group of Rivers State, Nigeria

S/N	Test Items from G-CGRFVQ Assessing Family Values and Girl-Child Educational Development	$\bar{x}$	sd	Remarks
6.	Family emphasis on education affects girls' academic performance in a positive way.	2.27	0.14	Low Extent
7.	Support from family members influences a girl's decision to pursue higher education.	2.46	0.22	Low Extent
8.	Family financial constraints limit girls' access to quality education.	2.83	0.51	High Extent
9.	Parents believe that educating girls is equally important as educating boys.	2.49	0.28	Low Extent
10.	Families encourage girls to develop leadership skills and participate in community activities.	2.45	0.22	Low Extent
<b>Cluster Mean/SD</b>		<b>2.50</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

Criterion mean score = 2.50,  $r = 0.149$ ,  $r^2$  (coefficient of determinism) = 0.146, Adjusted  $r^2 = 0.144$ ,  $n = 241$

Results in Table 2 indicated that family values influenced girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group, with a cluster mean of 2.50 (SD = 0.27) reflecting a high extent of impact. Most items revealed that family financial constraints (mean = 2.83, SD = 0.51) contributed the most to limiting girls' access to quality education, while support from family members and encouragement to develop leadership skills were rated as having a low extent of influence. However, the coefficient of determinism was relatively low at  $r^2 = 14.6\%$ , indicating that family values accounted for only 14.6% of the variance in girl-child education. This suggests that while family values do impact academic advancement, their role is modest, and other factors significantly contribute to determining girls' educational progress.

**Table 3** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on Girl-Child Educational Development Questionnaire (G-CEDQ)

S/N	Test Items from G-CEDQ	$\bar{x}$ (Mean)	SD	Remarks
1	The distance from our home to my child's secondary school is reasonable.	2.50	0.29	High Extent
2	Schools in this community maintain good standards of hygiene, promoting a conducive learning environment for girl children.	2.21	0.12	Low Extent
3	The caliber of teachers available at the secondary schools in this community is adequate to support girl-child education.	2.25	0.17	Low Extent
4	Male teachers in my child's school treat female students with respect.	2.46	0.22	Low Extent
5	Single-sex secondary schools are available for girls in this community.	2.28	0.23	Low Extent
6	Single-sex secondary schools positively influence the educational outcomes for girls in this area.	2.38	0.24	Low Extent
7	Rivers State Government provides equal encouragement and support for girls' education as they do for boys.	2.48	0.30	Low Extent
8	My child's school participates in state-wide quiz competitions that promote equal participation of boys and girls.	2.43	0.27	Low Extent
9	Television programmes that showcase career pathing roles for boys and girls positively impact girls' aspirations in this community.	2.52	0.31	High Extent
10	Christian religion activities in our community promote equal opportunities for girls' education.	2.51	0.29	High Extent
<b>Cluster Mean/SD</b>		<b>2.43</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>Low Extent</b>

Criterion mean score = 2.50,  $SD_Y = 0.22$ ,  $n = 241$

Results in Table 3 showed that the mean scores for various test items assessing girl-child educational development primarily indicated low extent influences, with a cluster mean of 2.43 (SD = 0.22). The distance from home to secondary school scored the highest at 2.50, categorized as a high extent factor. Items concerning school hygiene (2.21), teacher adequacy (2.25), and treatment of female students (2.46) showed low support for girl-child education. Notably, television programmes

and community Christian activities positively impacted aspirations, scoring 2.52 and 2.51 respectively, but overall, support for girl-child education was limited in selected Ikwerre communities.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do gender roles and family values as joint variables correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Table 4** Joint Variable Correlate of Gender Roles and Family Values to Girl-Child Educational Development in Ikwerre Ethnic Group

	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
	0.310 <sup>a</sup>	0.306	0.306

Results in Table 4 revealed that the joint regression coefficient (R) and regression square coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) were 0.310 and 0.306, respectively. The extent of correlation was determined by the coefficient of determinism, which was 30.6% (0.306 × 100). This indicated that gender roles and family values jointly correlated to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group by 30.6%. While this showed a moderate extent of impact, it suggested that gender roles and family values together accounted for only about one-third of the variance in girl-child educational development in selected Ikwerre communities, with other factors contributing significantly to the remaining variance.

#### 4.2 Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Gender roles do not significantly correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 5** T-test Associated with Simple Regression on Gender Roles and Girl-Child Educational Development in Ikwerre Ethnic Group

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Decision
	B	Std. Error				
1 (Constant)	0.011	0.061		1.55	0.13	Not Significant.
Gender Roles	0.1	0.071	.209	1.41	0.16	

Results in Table 5 indicated that the beta value for gender roles and girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group is given as 0.209. The t-test value of 1.41 is not significant at 0.16 when subjected to a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. By implication, gender roles do not have a statistically significant correlation to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** Family values do not significantly correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 6** T-test Associated with Simple Regression on Family Values and Girl-Child Educational Development in Ikwerre Ethnic Group

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Decision
	B	Std. Error				
1 (Constant)	0.05	0.061		1.55	0.13	Not Significant.
Family Values	0.038	0.043	.149	0.88	0.38	

Results in Table 6 indicated that the beta value for family values and girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group is given as 0.149. The t-test value of 0.88 is not significant at 0.38 when subjected to a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. By implication, family values do not have a statistically significant correlation to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 3:** Gender roles and family values as joint variables do not significantly correlate to girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 7** Multiple Regressions Associated with ANOVA on Gender Roles and Family Values as Correlate of Girl-Child Educational Development in Ikwerre Ethnic Group

Model	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F	Sig.
<b>Regression</b>	5.00	2	2.50	1.244	0.29 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Residual</b>	480.00	239	2.009		
<b>Total</b>	485.00	241			

a. Dependent Variable: Girl-Child Educational Development.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender Roles, Family Values.

Results in Table 7 indicated that the F-test value on gender roles and family values as correlate of girl-child educational development in Ikwerre ethnic group is 1.244, with a significance level of 0.29 when subjected to a 0.05 level of significance. The regression SS is 5.00 and the MS is 2.50, with two predictors: gender roles and family values. Since the significance value ( $p = 0.29$ ) is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is retained. By implication, gender roles and family values do not jointly have a statistically significant correlation to girl-child educational development in the Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State, Nigeria.

## 5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings underscored how cultural norms and stereotypes served as significant barriers to girl-child education in Ikwerre ethnic group. Despite their prominence, the influence of these gender roles remained limited, accounting for only a fraction of the variance in educational outcomes. This aligned with the insights of Barni et al. [7], who contended that while family-based sexism played a crucial role in shaping gender norms, its impact on educational attainment was mediated by broader socio-economic factors. Similarly, Mensah highlighted that patriarchy and gender roles [11], though influential, could not fully explain the systemic inequalities faced by girls in education. This perspective challenged the findings to consider the multidimensional nature of barriers beyond cultural stereotypes. Financial constraints emerged as a dominant factor restricting girls' access to education, corroborating the work of Atakpo et al. [10], who emphasized the critical role of household income in shaping educational opportunities. Although family encouragement had been rated low in impact, Ojobah and Osuala contested this [26], suggesting that parental attitudes could significantly motivate girls to pursue education, even amidst financial hardship. This contrast highlighted the need for a more nuanced understanding of family dynamics in educational progress. Interestingly, findings on school-related factors such as distance, hygiene, and teacher adequacy revealed systemic barriers. Evans et al. argued that infrastructural deficits disproportionately affected girls in marginalized communities, reinforcing gender disparities [9].

Furthermore, Wami corroborated that community participation [2], like promoting girl-friendly schools, could help mitigate these challenges. While television and religious activities showed some positive impact, they were insufficient to address the structural inequities, as noted by Agi and Emelie [13]. The moderate correlation between gender roles, family values, and educational outcomes faced further contestation from Ogide [3], who posited that entrenched societal expectations had long-lasting effects on girls' educational aspirations. Nevertheless, Okere acknowledged the growing influence of external factors [27], including governmental policies and NGOs, in counteracting these traditional constraints. This supported the findings' suggestion that other factors played a significant role in educational progress. By implication, the insignificant correlation between gender roles, family values, and educational outcomes, as highlighted in the findings, aligned with Echendu [5] as well as Thompson and Onyekwere [4], who advocated for a shift in focus toward addressing systemic issues like poverty, teacher shortages, and cultural reforms. Yakubova [8] and Shafi [22] further emphasized that traditional gender norms, while impactful, could not operate in isolation and called for a more holistic approach. In conclusion, while the findings revealed moderate impacts of gender roles and family values within Ikwerre ethnic group, they underscored the need for multifaceted interventions. This echoed the arguments of Elewa [1] as well as Onyido and Osigwe [28], who advocated for comprehensive reforms addressing socio-cultural, financial, and systemic barriers simultaneously in Nigeria.

## 6 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that gender roles and family values affecting girl-child education in Ikwerre ethnic group of Rivers State presented significant challenges due to socio-economic disparities and cultural norms, corroborating existing research on educational inequities in marginalized Nigerian communities. This study underscored the need for comprehensive reforms that addressed educational policy and practice beyond gender roles and family values. Moreover, the influence of community participation and parental attitudes on girls' educational aspirations highlighted the importance of supportive learning environments. While traditional gender norms created obstacles, growing governmental and non-governmental efforts provided potential solutions to these challenges.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. To enhance community engagement and awareness regarding girl-child education, it is essential for State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), past and present commissioners for education in Rivers State in partnership with community leaders to organize regular town hall meetings that educate parents about the importance of supporting girls' educational aspirations, thereby fostering a more supportive environment for learning.
2. In order to advocate for policy reforms and infrastructural investments, stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and community groups, should collaborate to lobby for increased funding and resources for schools in Rivers State, ensuring that educational facilities are adequately equipped to meet the needs of all students, particularly girls.
3. The State Ministry of Education should develop targeted educational programmes and resources that provide mentorship and tutoring support specifically for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, thereby addressing the socio-economic barriers they face and promoting their academic success.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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