

FACTORS THAT IMPACT GIRLS' EDUCATION IN GHANA

The role of cultural mind-set

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Abstract

This research explores fully, cultural mind-set, as the main factor that underlies the problem of girls' education in Ghana, rather than poverty. This research highlights and analyses the cultural aspects of Ghanaian society that impede girls to enter schooling and break out of the cycle of poverty. In the first part, this study focuses on feminist theories from "developing" countries as a theoretical framework. The second part of this research analyses the traditions and customs against girls' education, concluding with some recommendations.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the Education World Forum, King (2011) points out the importance of education for children's development. However, in countries where tradition and religion are deeply rooted, education is not inclusive and it excludes mainly girls and women. This is the case of Ghana, where a large number of girls and women from patrilineal families have no access to education¹.

The inequality of girls' education has had a great impact on me because when I was pursuing a Master's Degree in African Studies, I had the opportunity to study the disadvantages that girls and women face in patrilineal families within Africa. During my stay in Ghana I also observed first-hand how difficult it was for boys and girls to have access to education; however, the problem is greater for girls because they not only face poverty, they also face the cultural mind-set that impedes them from going to school or staying in school after primary level. This research will explore the most important factors that girls need to achieve a better education.

My research began with my curiosity about this inequity. As I began reading some books about this topic I found a research focus on traditional beliefs and patriarchal traditions. At the same time, as a leader in education, my research contribution not only points out

¹ For the purpose of this study, the term 'education' will be used to imply 'formal schooling'.

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problems, it also analyses possible solutions, so that girls will have the opportunity to attend school and not drop out of it in Ghana.

To guide my research, I have created some inquiry questions related to my frame of study:

Research questions:

What factors impact the education of young girls in Ghana?

How does cultural mind-set impact girls' education?

What solutions can be proposed to change the cultural mind-set against girls' education?

The purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyse factors that affect girls' education and figure out the role that cultural mind-set plays in it.

Justification of the study

There are numerous studies about children's education in Ghana. Institutions such as United Nations, World Bank, and Ministry of Education in Ghana, have analysed this inequity problem (CAMFED 2012, FAO 2012, Ghana Statistical Service May, 2012, Robertson, 1984, UNDP 2016, World bank 2016), however, all of them have concentrated on economic factors, with only a few studies focused on cultural mind-set. This research explores more fully the latter as the main factor that underlies the problem of girls' education, rather than poverty. The aim of this study is to highlight the cultural aspect of Ghanaian society and analyse the cultural factors that impede girls to enter schooling and break out of the cycle of

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poverty. My intention is to conduct this research with respect for all cultures, highlighting those cultural factors regarding girl's education that impede the optimal development of females and males.

Background

Thinking about Africa is to reflect upon many countries inside one continent. Each country has a particular history, culture(s) and many local languages. Africa has been an active participant in the world's economy, even before slavery and colonization. The interactions of Africa with Asia and the Middle East by trade system and cultural influences have been registered in the world history. According to Kabunda (2008) this continent has laid the foundations of mercantilism and later capitalism through slavery, and in modern history, as a principal world provider of raw materials. The consequences of colonization and independence were ethnic conflicts due to artificial borders, enrichment of white elite etc. After independence, the structural adjustment plans implemented by World Bank and IMF have increased the inequalities and external debts. Since 2000, Africa has emerged in the world and its economies have been growing; there is a political stability in most of the African countries. The continent is facing a greater social and cultural revolution, and their international relations have been diversified (Kabunda, 2008).

Ghana is located along the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean, in the sub region of West Africa. Spanning a land mass of 238,535 km², Ghana is bordered by the Ivory Coast in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east, and the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean in the south. This country is a multicultural nation. According to the World Bank (2016) "Ghana has a population of approximately 28.21 million, spanning a variety of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Five percent of the population practices traditional

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faiths, 71.2% adhere to Christianity and 23.6% are Muslim. Ghana's growing economic prosperity and democratic political system have made it a regional power in West Africa". (n.d.)

With reference to UNDP (2016), Ghana's economy has been growing, however, the poverty rate is 21.4%, and life expectancy is 61.5 years. Ghana human development is 0.579, and its global ranking in this field is 139. 25.2% of the population is living below income poverty line. The children involved in labour between 5-14 years are 22%. Violence against women is 22.9% and 76.8% of the population has vulnerable employment (UNDP, 2016).

Ghana is the second cocoa producer all over the world. This country is the biggest gold miner after South Africa and is the fastest growing economy. According to UNDP (2016) "Ghana is the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 1, which is the target of halving extreme poverty" (n.d.).

According to Ghana Statistical Services (May, 2012), despite the efforts made by the government, the inequity in female education is still greater than males and it impacts the rural communities more deeply, which is serious, because the high proportion of the population in Ghana is still rural.

Ghana Statistical Service (May, 2012), also states that this country has greater achievement related to literacy. Compared to the 2000 statistics, the level of literacy has increased from 54.1 percent to 71.5 percent in 2010 (see Appendix, graphics 2 and 3, pps. 61 & 62). This change is more visible related to females; it has increased 19.6% and for males, the increase was 15.4%. In contrast, there is still a gap regarding girl's education. 80.2% of males are more literate and just 68.5% of females are literate. At the same time, the

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percentage of children that never attend school is greater for females (14.3%) than males (9.1%). On the other hand, the employment rate is higher for males (25.3%) than for females (11.4%); nevertheless, the rate for informal self-employment is superior for females (69.4%) than males (60%) (see Appendix, graphic 4, p. 63). There is also research that shows greater disadvantages for women because, in most cases, the terms of self-employment are low and payment is irregular; also there is no access to health insurance protection and social security (FAO, 2012). In addition, women contribute more to household expenses (14.2%) than males (8.7%) . In rural areas, where economic poverty and traditional practices are higher, illiteracy affects more women than men. As FAO points out, just 29% of females are literate compared to 52 % of males. At the same time, 71% of women have never attended school, compared to 59% of men (FAO, 2012) (see Appendix, graphic 5, p.64). As we can observe, this percentage increases significantly in rural areas.

Ghana is a developing country where the majority of children face many difficulties to attend school; however, this problem is greater regarding economically impoverished girls. There has been important reform aimed to find a solution to the higher percentage of illiteracy regarding girls (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011). This research extends economic factors by emphasizing the impact of cultural and religious mind-sets towards girls' education. In doing so it offers deeper understanding of the situation and helps identify real solutions to the problem.

Chapter 2

History of Education in Ghana

According to Tuwor (2007), formal education in Ghana started at the end of Century XV in the early colonial period through evangelization. Firstly Portuguese, and later Danish and Dutch merchants, established the first school in the castles that they built as their forts. The first teachers were Christian Missionaries. The Dutch developed the Ghanaian education system before the colonial era. Basel Mission Society was created by the Danish and their principal achievement was the transcription of local languages such as Twi, ewe, and Ga.

In 1722 the first school appeared in Accra, the capital of Ghana, where the European-style of formal education was introduced. Robertson stated that formal education focused attention on male students (1984).

According to Tuwor (2007), in the second half of Century XIX, the British government had full colonial authority. It wasn't until 1918 when four main points were established in formal education:

- a. Primary education for boys and girls
- b. Training college for teachers
- c. Better salaries for teachers
- d. Creation of Royal College

Accordingly, Prince of Wales College was opened in 1927; it became Achimota College and later it transformed into the current University of Ghana. In 1933 Ghanaian

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schools were recognized as part of the British education system and were granted with the Cambridge University School Certificate. (Tuwor, 2007)

According to Folson (2006), after independence, socio-cultural issues were identified as factors that impacted women's education and their participation in the government (cited in Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011). After Ghana's independence in 1957 about 90 % of women were illiterate; in this order, Kwame Nkrumah's administration (the first president in Ghana) created free education policy for all, regardless of race, religion and gender. The education act was created in 1961 that ensured every child received free primary and middle school education (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011).

Agbemasie-Grooms (2011) notes that the importance of girls' education was included in every period of Ghana history, such as precolonial, colonial and postcolonial; however, every period had different objectives. Domestic education was more important in pre-colonial and colonial times. This focus changed in a postcolonial period where the first goal of the country was free and compulsory education for everyone. Nevertheless, the negative attitude toward girls attending formal schooling was prevalent and the dissatisfaction of women in formal education is reflected in the large number of girls that dropped out of school and where "uncodified [regulations] or invisible veils [are] present in cultural institutions in the community" (Agbemasie-Grooms, 2011 p.73).

Ghana adopted many education reforms since its independence in 1957 to address a better achievement in literacy for every child. The transition from a colonial model of

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education to one that is free and compulsory for everyone was difficult, but it had an important result. Nonetheless, in the economically poorest provinces, illiteracy continued to be a major educational issue (Lambert, Perrino, & Barreras, 2012; Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, & Hunt, 2007).

According to Tuwor (2007), since independence, Ghana government had taken the problem of girls' education seriously, so that the Girls' Education Unit was created in 1961 to help girls enhance and promote their education. The general goals of this program were:

- 1 Equal access and opportunities to education for everyone.
- 2 Girls can Perform better achievement and contribute to national development.
- 3 Enhance women and girls' status.
4. Eliminate gender's disparities. (p.28).

The objective was to help girls remain in school and to develop their capabilities in every subject. In this order, there were international organizations supporting girls' education in Ghana, such as World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID), and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The latter has funded girls' education since 1996. Their objective is enhancing access for girls at the primary school level (Tuwor, 2017).

Although there have been significant accomplishments for girl's education in Ghana, they still face many problems that deserve special attention. These include cultural mind-set

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about gender, school infrastructure, transportation, safety, early marriage, pregnancy, and poverty (Lambert, Perrino, & Barreras, 2012).

Gender Theories

Before exploring this analysis further, it is necessary to point out some theories about gender and highlight important writers who analyse gender inequalities in “developing” countries.

Cabello and Martinez (2013) assert that gender is something that happens in relationships between people and society. This concept refers to power relationships between men and women and causes inequalities in individual and collective aspects of life. At the same time, gender inequalities are the consequences of culture, society, and apprenticeship. These writers point out the system of “sex-gender”, which divides societies in power relationships that are reflected in a social organization such as rights, obligations, prestige, etc.

Vieitez and Morales (2012) note the relation between gender, culture, and society. According to them, culture is a set of different lifestyles and values. Culture is always heterogeneous, with a huge diversity, and always in continuous movement. In this meaning, the gender category is linked with a specific cultural order and special social organization where women are in unequal position regarding men. That is, cultural values will dominate the development and gender's perceptions and will determine the response to these aspects.

Moreover, Tripp (2008) critiques those societies that defend cultural practices to preserve religious identity, ethnic or culture against women. The writer notes that in many cases the defence of those practices is in line to protect some economic and political interests.

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In this order, Vieitez (2013) claims that cultural practices against women should be analysed as an extensive political problem; not just adjusting local legislation addresses to protect women, but it is also important to create educative programs that can change gradually the vision of femininity and masculinity in societies where religious and culture are deeply rooted.

Furthermore, Cabello and Martinez (2013) observe “the strategic interest of gender based on the unequal social, political, economic and cultural position that women have regarding men in a specific context” (p. 91). It is very important to keep in mind “the strategic interest of gender”, because this is a crucial component that can define the inclusion of gender in education and transform the inequality that underlies the social structure of communities. This type of education implies a deep transformation; not just to attend to the basic goals of education as literacy or enrolment, but also, to transform the grass roots of society, arouse consciousness, and create abilities to transform people's cultural mind-set and practices that disparage women or attempt to act against basic rights.

Many feminist theories have influenced the analysis of women's problems in every part of the world. However, the majority of these theories have been created in western universities and their analysis has been from the vision of colonialism. Some feminist writers from “developing” countries have incorporated decolonized views in their gender analysis, accusing western feminism of imposing a particular model of being a woman, and understanding gender relations in an ethnocentric way, “without leaving Africa with freedom of thought about relationships between men and women” (Traoré, 2013, p. 122).

Suárez and Hernández (2008), point out that the approach of feminism from colonized societies has started a process to claim their own cultural identities while they are facing

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traditional practices and beliefs against women. These writers also mention that western feminisms approaches are assumed to be global, ignoring the effects of colonialism and imperialism in the lives of women.

Therefore, I consider it important to mention Mohanty's thesis (2003) about postcolonial feminism. Her thoughts about women in “*one-third/two-thirds world*²” are very timely regarding women with different lifestyles and culture who have had to confront colonization, and how it has impacted their lives and forced women to integrate into the global market. She asserts that “the hegemony of the neoliberalism, alongside the naturalization of capitalist values, influence the ability to make choices on one’s own behalf in the daily lives of economically marginalized as well as economically privileged communities around the globe” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 508). Mohanty also points out that 70% of the world’s population is economically poor and are primarily women and girls. Almost 80% of exiles are women and girls from Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the same time, women make two-thirds of the global production and just earn one-tenth of the profits. Whereas, just one-hundredth of the world’s property is owned by women. Women are also the greater victims of wars, domestic violence, culture practices, and religious persecution. Einstein (1998) asserts that “corporate capitalism has redefined citizens as consumers, and global market replaces the commitment to economic, sexual, and racial equality” (cited in Mohanty p. 514).

² Esteva and Prakash (1998) use this term to differentiate the minorities and majorities living either in north or south societies. This conceptualization is based on the quality of people’s life. According to Mohanty “the advantage of One-Third/Two-Thirds World in relation to terms like Western/Third World and North/South is that they move away from misleading geographical and ideological binarisms” (cited in Mohanty, 2003, p. 506)

Mohanty continues to argue that girls and women's education problems - similar to violence, sexual harassment and other difficulties that are faced by women and girls every day - are located within a capitalist system because it encourages racism and sexism that weakens women and girls (Mohanty, 2003). In this order, this research affirms that the analysis about girl's education should be within a framework that describes the effects of globalization on girls and women in their daily lives. This issue is no longer under the western eyes, rather "west is inside and continually reconfigures globally, racially, and in terms of gender" (Mohanty, p. 515).

In this context, Gallardo (2014) asserts that African feminism share in postcolonial feminist debates about being a woman or being a man and is imposed by dominant ideology from the western patriarchal capitalism. This ideology has been established first by colonization and later by globalization, and as the writer concludes, both social organization models have created homogeneous ideas about culture, religion or society in most countries all over the world.

In a similar vein, Kabunda (2009), notes that it is important to decolonize European feminism which is ethnocentric and Universalist to understand women's problems from their own realities; that is, without leaving aside their culture and relations into their societies. However, it is important not to forget the points that western and African feminist theories and debates have in common, such as defence and guarantee of human's rights for all women, making all women visible regarding race, skin colour, social condition, and the awareness of inequalities. Among all the differences, I would like to highlight the contributions that have been made by African feminists about their vision of construction and socialization of gender.

Amadiume and American Council of Learned Societies, (1997) understand the idea of gender as a cultural construction that focuses on the particularities of each society. She points out the respect for the diversity in every different context. The same thesis is supported by other authors such as Oyèwumi (2010) who criticizes the widespread use of “woman” as a social category without power and always defined in relation to the male. The writer also highlights different forms of inequality (race, gender, class, age or ethnicity) in the social organization, relying on the notion that “gender cannot be separated from the social context and from other systems of hierarchy” (p. 28).

Furthermore, Mobolanle (2011) points out that explaining African women’s problems according to western feminist concepts can bias the reality and misrepresent local culture. For this reason, African feminist concepts advocate rethinking the categories of gender and women from Africa and into African societies. Vieitez (2013) notes that not everyone is into globalization at the same level; that is why we should understand gender from its diversity to develop alternatives according to particular communities and avoiding generalizations.

Inequality is huge in every society all over the world in aspects such as employment, politics, economy and education. In economically poor societies, this inequality causes havoc and deprivation because, in an unequal world where the model of globalization is based on injustice, it is where economic policies that have been dictated by supranational organizations and implemented by local governments create millions of economically marginalized people. The result of these policies is prominent among impoverished women and children because they already live in poverty, but they also have to face discrimination and lack of opportunities for optimal development in their daily lives, and in their dealings with male

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counterparts who enjoy greater privileges imposed since colonial times. As Tuwor asserts “African women lost political as well as economic status under colonization” (2007, p. 18)

Cabello and Martinez (2013) assert that gender inequalities are not the most important; what is relevant is to claim a development that can transform the daily lives of girls and women, taking into consideration particular characteristics in every context. This includes avoiding generalizations, because every society has particular and unique forms of organization, traditions, and points of view regarding their context where local communities grow to confront and assimilating the challenges of any regional environment.

From the point of view of postcolonial African feminism, Tripp (2008) considers gender inequality as a cultural conflict with economic and political interests, so the defence of individual human rights should be compatible with respect for people’s right to self-determination. The writer also affirms that “cultural tradition is invoked as an argument against certain women’s rights” (p. 279). At the same time Tripp highlights the fight against female genital mutilation in Uganda and Senegal and refers to experiences where women become agents of change in their own communities, where education played a fundamental role (2008, p. 279).

In addition, one important aspect regarding the inclusion of a gender perspective in development and education is overcoming a simplistic vision of different cultures, assuming that poverty is a comparative indicator among countries, development as a race to be richest, or feminization of poverty as an intrinsic characteristic of women, just because they are women. This gender perspective reduces development studies to a simple comparison between indicators, dedicated to classifying the population by their shortcomings and not by their opportunities (Cabello & Martinez, 2013).

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Following African feminist's thoughts, Oyègumi (2010) contends empowerment as “the own voice taking” (p. 33); this concept is the process that gives voice to women in public and private matters. In this regard, empowerment according to Freire (2012), relates to a change of mentality, a process that is necessary to achieve transformative action and liberation of the oppressed. The author grants education as the role of awareness about inequalities of the world, also believing that teaching gives the opportunity to learn and develop capacities to exercise power in an egalitarian manner. “If education does not transform the society, the society will not change by itself” (Freire, p. 83).

Traditions and culture

After analysing the above mentioned feminist theories, I consider it important to have a look at culture and customs in Ghana. In this way, it will be possible to contextualize the problem of girls' education.

With reference to Salm and Falola (2012), African identities in general are related to extended families. Those families can include members from three or four generations. Traditional extended families influence every aspect of its members and determine the overall organization of the society. Families are dynamic institutions integrated by many members, where lineages decent, religion, customs and cooperation are crucial (Salm & Falola, 2002).

In Ghana, there are two different family organizations: patrilineal and matrilineal families. For the purpose of this study I will focus on patrilineal families because the majority of Ghana’s population are part of this family organization. At the same time, there are

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different ethnic groups, such as Akan, Ewe, Fanti, etc. In this study, I analyse the problem of girls' education in general. However, there are some differences if we look into each tribe, regarding geographic location, religion, traditions, tribal organization, lineage etc.

As I mentioned above, a patrilineal system is common of lineage organization. In this order, every member of the family is part of the extended family of the father. The common family organization consists of grandparents, parents, unmarried daughters, all sons, and their wives and children. Children belong to a father's family and males inherit the father's properties, while women receive items related to domestic activities (but sometimes women can also receive land to plant and harvest vegetables). Marriage between different ethnic groups is allowed, but children will always belong to their father's side. "Extend family operates as a mutual aid society" (Salm & Falola, 2002, p. 127). Every member has the obligation to provide but also has the right to receive any help when is needed. At the same time, everyone is responsible for moral and ethical instruction for children. Elders believe that "individual behaviours and actions reflect an individual moral character, as well as that of the entire family" (p.127).

In Ghana culture, there are rites that mark important events in people's lives, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Those rites provide status, determine family organization, hierarchies, and lineage relationships (Salm & Falola, 2002). Pregnant women are considered beautiful and fragile, so they have special privileges. Children are considered the future of the lineage. The second ritual is the initiation, which symbolizes the transition from childhood to adulthood and follows special and different ceremonies for girls and boys. The females' ritual starts after their first menstruation. This ceremony implies information about

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sex, beliefs, arts, health, etc. Also, they develop skills that allow them to find a good husband in the future (Salm & Falola, 2002)..

According to Salm and Falola (2002), marriage is the most important stage for Ghanaian people. It is compulsory and it is considered as the most important social institution, where reproduction is the fundamental function of marriage because children represent abundance and status, reflect a successful marriage, provide help in the house, and contribute to agriculture labour. Through marriage, families create a new social network, and establish alliances among family members and other communities. That is why arranged marriage has been part of the tradition. Elders used to link two families together for political, social or economic reasons. In most cases, a man is older than the wife because he has more status in the community, so the union may be more prestigious and give more advantages to a wife's family. In the authors' words "the age and status differences between women and their husbands, however, often reinforced women's position of subservience within conjugal gender relations" (Salm and Falola 2002, p. 130). Although currently it is not very common to have arranged marriage, young people still struggle to decide who they want to be married with. Also they still ask for permission from elders to start the formal process for courtship and marriage, because wedlock is more than the union between man a woman, it is a union among family members.

Noting Salm and Falola (2002), there are three typical legal marriages in Ghanaian society. The marriage ordinance was the most popular in the colonial era; it is monogamous. The marriage customary law and the marriage of Mohammedans ordinance allow polygamy. The three of them are recognized by the government, but just Muslim wedlock is regulated by Muslim law (Salm & Falola, 2002). Polygamy has an especial meaning in Ghanaian

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society; it establishes alliances and relations among different communities. In rural villages, where agriculture is the main means of production, having many wives means more hands to grow crops, and also more children who can enhance prestige and increase wealth. Polygamy also benefits women in their marriage because "...a woman will always be around the house to tend to domestic duties and keep the husband from looking outside of the home for sexual companionship" (Salm & Falola, 2002 p. 133). As I mentioned above, marriage is the most important stage in the life of women and men, however, being married is essential for women. Girls who are of age to be married must get a husband. If for some reason a woman is thirty years or older and she is not married the community criticizes her harshly; some family members believe that the spirits punish her for something wrong or for immoral behaviour in the past. In this manner, polygamy helps women to avoid this censure by getting a husband and being part of a new family (Salm & Falola, 2002).

Although today polygamy remains a part of Ghanaian society, it has declined because of economic and educational reasons. The bad economy has made polygamy not affordable. In modern societies in Ghana, men just have no more than two wives and not as many children as in previous years. In northern Ghana, a prominent rural area where the majority of people do not have access to education and the majority of its population are Muslims, polygamy is still strong; however, it tends to decrease due to declining agriculture production, the highest percentage of poverty, and migration. In southern Ghana, where urban areas are located, women have major access to education, they tend to be married not very young, and they also concentrate more on nuclear family rather than extend families. In urban areas, prestige, lineage, and wealth are more related to having money rather than having many children and wives (Salm & Falola, 2002).

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In Ghanaian society, elders are very well respected; their authority lies in their knowledge about local life and traditions as well as its connection to the ancestors. Elders direct the traditional rituals of the tribe. Their wisdom lies in their life experience which is why they are the advisors in the whole community (Salm & Falola, 2002). The children's role varies according to their gender. Boys are more required for agriculture jobs, while girls perform domestic chores. According to Salm and Falola (2002), there are not any legal barriers that impede girls to attend school, although many girls in secondary school are forced to drop out because they have multiple duties and responsibilities at home. Before going to school, a young girl has to perform many domestic activities and help her younger brothers and sisters. After school, girls have to be able to cook, wash dishes, and perform any domestic activities. Because of this, girls do not have enough time to dedicate themselves to study or do homework. In contrast, boys do not have many activities and they are allowed to play. Parents argue that girls must know how to manage a house, because they must get a husband and have children; at the same time, their help is needed at home. Many parents reject sending their daughters to school because they believe if a woman is educated, no man will want to marry her. "The gap between males and females in educational achievement reflects the additional demands and cultural constraint on female children" (Salm & Falola, 2002 p. 140).

As one can see, men have huge control over Ghanaian family and community. The most important decisions are taken by men. Also, they are obligated to protect and provide all necessary goods for the welfare of the whole family, from the elders to the youngest. (Salm & Falola, 2002). On the other hand, educated women achieve the highest position in the modern society in Ghana. Many of them play a significant role in education at any level of society, from primary school to university, as teachers, principals, researchers, etc. Also,

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women dominate areas related to administration and nursing. Furthermore, when women are old, no matter their education level, they get significant power over the community.

“The Queen mother” participates as a decision-maker in areas such as politics, economic, rituals, ceremonies, and they are responsible for the moral education and behaviour of the whole community (Salm & Falola, 2002).

Chapter 3

Methodology

As I mentioned before, the purpose of this study is to find out the factors that impede girls going to school and also make girls drop out after primary levels of education in Ghana. To achieve these goals, I based my study on qualitative and quantitative methods, documentary analysis, research reports, and my own personal observations and experiences while residing in Ghana.

Qualitative analysis method

This chapter outlines the methods used to gather information about education and gender in Ghana. First, I considered it necessary to use a quantitative analysis method, because it helped me to understand more deeply the problem of girls' education. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998) note, "Charts and graphs illustrate the results of the research, and commentators employ words such as 'variables', 'populations' and 'result' as part of their daily vocabulary...even if we do not always know just what all of the terms mean...[but] we know that this is part of the process of doing research. Research, then as it comes to be known publicly, is a synonym for quantitative research" (cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 597).

Therefore, the quantitative method used in this study is based on Ghana government statistics about education, because those provide a general approach to the phenomenon. At the same time, statistics provide graphics that make it easier to understand the problem. In this particular case of girls' education, through statistics, I was able to see and contrast the differences between boys and girls education as well as women and men. Also, the

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quantitative method of study guided me to see the differences in education between northern Ghana and southern Ghana. The first one is a region that has the highest percentage of poverty, where religion and traditions are deeply rooted, and the population has poor access to health and education. In contrast, southern Ghana, mostly within urban areas, people have more access to many services such as education, health, public transport, network, light and better infrastructure.

Although a quantitative method of study is a convenient method to gather data, it is important not to forget that this method represents generalizations and does not necessarily help to get into the depth of the problem. As Patton (2001) argues “the researcher's methods involve the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which number are assigned” (cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 598). In this way, a quantitative method was not enough to understand deeply the problem of education because this method only measures subjects who are in a similar category (Golafshani, 2003,). In this order, I considered it necessary to also use a qualitative method of approach so that it was possible to contextualize and explain girls’ education problems. As Patton (1999) proposes “....qualitative analysis is a creative process depending on the insights and conceptual capabilities of the analysis” (p. 1190).

Qualitative method

In the process to decide suitable methodology aimed to know more deeply about girls’ education in Ghana, I reflected on my research questions to know the approach I would give

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to my research. In this process, I found out that to address the problem of girls' education requires different approaches because this phenomenon has multiple causes. That is why it was important to understand the context where education problems are happening. This study focused on understanding the cultural mind-set that underlines every aspect of Ghanaian girls, and it is deeply rooted in their daily lives. That is why I considered the qualitative method as the most appropriate to analyse this problem.

Consequently, using a quantitative method for this study allowed me to get a wide variety of references with different approaches. It is important to mention that there are several studies about girl's education in Ghana, but most of them focus on poverty, or economics, rather than the mentality of cultural issues; there are just a few articles that refer to cultural mind-set. Cultural mind-set is a complex factor that causes many girls to drop out from school. In this order, the qualitative method gave me the opportunity to collect data from many resources, such as research articles, books, documentaries, government statistics, historical documents, and my own experience and observation while living in Ghana.

In the process of writing my research, I used feminist theories of African writers, because their approach is from places where they come from. At the same time, their thoughts helped me to clarify my own understanding about the problem from different points of view. Through this process I have come to realize that girls' education deserves a deep analysis and interpretation from within African societies and also from different approaches.

I consider that one of the limitations of this study is that it is based on post research and general statistics, and does not focus on a particular case. Instead, my study is aimed to know girls' education problems in Ghana in general, without entering details about different cultures and beliefs in each tribal and ethnic groups that are in that country. Even considering

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the differences between tribes and ethnic groups, the problems of girls' education show many similarities all over Ghana, except some differences, related to geographic location, and religions situations that are mentioned in this study.

Chapter 4

Findings

Women's education

In Ghana, having access to education is a problem that affects a large number of children. This problem is greater for girls because traditional beliefs and poverty cause parents to value boys' education more than girls. Lambert, Perrino and Barreras (2012) state that female education in Ghana is a multifaceted situation with many different areas that merit attention. Factors such as poverty, sexual harassment, discrimination, cultural mind-set, early pregnancy, marriage and inadequate school infrastructure make it difficult for girls to access education. All factors interact together, which is why it is important to consider every aspect to understand the low percentage of girls in school and the obstacles that girls face to attend it.

In a society where the social and political organization is led by men as chiefs, and councils of elders, the government institutions have little interference if girls try to go to school. Many local authorities believe that girls should not have access to formal education because it implies deep changes in the social hierarchy of the community and it will break the local traditions and customs (Tuwor, 2007).

Furthermore, poverty, harassment, discrimination, cultural mind-set, early marriage and pregnancy have been identified by different writers as the principal barriers to female education (Lambert, Perrino, and Barreras, 2012; Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, and Hunt, 2007; Adusah-Karikari, 2008; Apusigah, 2002; Adu-Yeboah and Forde, 2011).

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Lambert, et al, (2012) assert that “if the family cannot afford to educate all of their children, the parents will prefer boys attend school” (p. 2). Adusah-Karikari (2008) notes that poverty, early pregnancy, and early marriage are critical factors influencing participation and retention in school. Lambert, et al, (2012) mention that “sexual harassment is rampant in the classrooms as well as over sexist bias from teachers” (p. 3). Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011), observes that “harassment seems to be a pervasive problem throughout education, and while it may not outright stop girls from attending school, it does discourage them” (pp. 35-37).

Apusigah (2002), mentions that people in the community do not see the importance of female education (p. 45). Lambert, et al, (2012) observe that traditional Ghanaian culture does not have a positive view of females who advance into higher educational levels, especially in the rural northern Islamic areas. The most complex and important factor to look at when studying female education is the cultural mind-set surrounding female education. Early marriage and teenage pregnancy may be an especially potent area for further research, as it seems to be a large problem that is mainly underground and secretive. (Arku et al, 2014)

Poverty

According to Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011), economic factors impact girl’s education in rural areas more than urban areas. Stephens (2000) mentions that the economic situation of the family affect more girls when parents have to decide if their daughter or their son will attend school.

Apusigah (2002), however, points out some examples of how poverty is not the main reason for girls’ to not go to school. She argues that parents often do not understand the importance of educating their girls. In her interviews with some families, she found the

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negativity of fathers to send their daughters to school because they believe that girls are not part of the family in the same way as boys; their daughters will not stay permanently in the family because they will get married and live in the husband's parents' house, so investing in their education is a waste of money. Other parents mentioned that they preferred daughters to stay at home because it was the best way for young girls to not get spoiled and to respect the traditional rules of the community. Finally, as cited by Apusigah (2002): “[parents] can even withdraw a girl from primary school to marry. Even if a girl is trying to push herself through they will never help with fees and other things because they want the girl to get married” (p. 226).

As we can observe, poverty is not necessarily the principal reason that impedes girls to attend school; however, sometimes it has a strong influence when parents have to decide which member of the family will have formal education. Nonetheless, cultural mind-sets are the most important aspect that affect girls' education because many parents think that sending girls to school is not relevant because they will not carry out with the same responsibilities and their activities inside the house are more necessary.

Lambert et al (2012) contend that buying school supplies, uniforms and paying for transportation are other obstacles for impoverished families. This is most visible in northern Ghana where poverty rates are higher. According to Ghana Statistical Service, (2008b), “In the Northern Region, over 65% of girls over the age of 15 have not received formal education compared with a national average of 21%” (cited in CAMFED 2012 p. 27). While in the same region 43% of children between 6-14 years have never attended school, in contrast to 5% of the same age group from Greater Accra region. Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu, and Hunt, (2007) state that this educational “backwardness” started at the beginning

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of independence where the development was concentrated in Central and Southern regions because the Northern region considered as a sparsely populated where it was not important to use the limited resources available. “Quality was imperative and expanding access was done selectively on the basis of available educational inputs” (Akyeampong, et al, 2007, p. 7).

Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011), assert that National Government policies are not applied to enhance girls’ education in rural communities. The writer mentions that “National Politics is something in the air” (p. 143) because the government does not have strong institutions that can manage education policies; even in urban areas government has little intervention. People organize themselves according to their tribes, where chiefs, elders and religious authorities have control and influence over the society, so government’s policies often are not implemented in local communities. At the same time, the majority of those authorities defend the traditional organization of the village and they do not agree that girls should be formally educated.

Another disadvantage that girls face attending school is the difficulty to get partial jobs that can help them afford the school fees. Stephens (2000) states that many girls spend a large number of hours in domestic work; in contrast, boys do not spend time working at home. Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011), argues that boys do not face the same economic problems because they can get small jobs in farms or any manual job that is reserved for men. “In other hand, girls face difficulties because of societal and cultural expectation imposed on them” (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011 p. 202). Many girls are not allowed to do the same jobs as boys, so job opportunities are less because of traditional beliefs. Thus, in rural

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communities, the yields of crops also impact education because girls have to follow the parents to the city to sell in the markets and leave the school.

Harassment and discrimination

Lambert, et al, (2012) point out that harassment and discrimination - from both teachers and peers - are very common in the classroom and they are important factors that make many girls drop out of the school. Many male teachers prefer to dedicate their effort and time to male students; the result is that many males are able to have more advantages in the learning process. On the other hand, many girls do not receive the correct attention from their teachers, so many of them cannot have an advantage in the classroom. Apart from the classroom, girls have to face the discrimination from their fathers, brothers and classmates who make them feel unwanted and frequently tease the girls. "The girls accept the harassment as part of life, it is a tradition that they cannot change" (Adusah-Karikari, 2008 p.45).

Adichie (2012) mentions a story about her childhood at a primary school in Nigeria and how important it was for her to become a class monitor in her classroom. Being a class monitor implied to have power and authority over other classmates. She describes her effort to get the best score among all students because she wished that position. Finally, when she was granted with the best score, the teacher told her she could not be a monitor because she was not a boy. The second best score was gained by a boy who became a class monitor.

Furthermore, Adichie points out how the teacher did not mention that to become a classroom leader you had to be a boy. Secondly there was the assumption that only boys could get the best score. Surrogate girls had the lowest position in the school and at the same time, implied that girls could not think correctly and were not able to control other classmates because they were not strong, powerful or smart. This situation makes girls feel not confident

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with themselves and stereotypes girls as weak, without intellectual capabilities to compete with boys. Even when this anecdote looks like an isolated incident, it happens in many schools in all grades throughout West Africa (Adichie, 2012).

Agamesie-Grooms (2011) points out many examples of similar situations in primary schools in Ghana. Among poverty and school conditions, the discrimination that girls face in the school is a powerful reason why girls drop out of school more than boys. As I mentioned in the introduction, almost the same amount of boys and girls start primary school, however, this percentage decreases for girls in more advanced grades.

The discrimination of girls is very common in the classroom; most male teachers have a negative opinion about girls, but their attitude becomes more positive if they talk about boys attributes. Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011), notes the negative beliefs of teachers towards female students about their abilities and potential it contributes to making girls drop out of the school and it “influences the girl’s perception of herself” (p. 168).

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In the table below, Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011) mentions the different attributes pointed out by male teachers according to gender:

Female Students	Male Students
Timid	Good attendance
Highly emotional	Determined for success in education
Hardly attentive in class	Shows signs of being studious
High interest in trading/handiwork	Aims at good profession after education
Sees no profit in her attending school	Shows manly and leadership qualities
Good family background	Abreast of current national event
Very neat in appearance	Good in math
Very calm and submissive	Above-average work
School work is below-average	Hard working and strong
Shows disorderly conduct often	Responsible and well-focused

(Retrieved from Agbemabiese-Grooms, K. (2011 p.159)

Lambert et al (2012) asserts that mentality against women is the most complicated element that encompasses girls' education. This mind-set is not only at the school, it starts at home and represents the most difficult issue that girls must overcome. As I mentioned above, poverty is an important factor that impacts the education, however, cultural mind-set cannot be overstated.

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Owusu-Banahene (2000) notes that for many parents, enrolling children in the school means an investment of which they expect a profit. Thus enrolling their daughters in school, seems not to be worthwhile because ultimately, they will get married and leave the house. “Parents are not available to risk any money” (cited in Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011 p. 73).

Certainly, girls face many disadvantages since early childhood in rural and urban areas. Since the girls are born, they are already surrogated the lowest position in society and their significance is related according to their relationships with men. Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011), mentioned that the objective of traditional education is making a boy the head of the family and in some cases the head of the community, so the uncodified rules give boys more rights and privileges and more respect in adulthood.

Furthermore, every child is educated at home to accept gender stereotypes. According to Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011), in patrilineal families, the meaning of a new baby boy is to continue with the lineage and prestige of the family. At the same time, the first baby boy will receive the inheritance and his obligation will be perpetuating the lineage through marriage and new sons. The identity of the boy is always associated with the father; boys are educated to be powerful leaders and warriors in the community. On the other hand, girls are educated to be a mother. In patrilineal families after marriage, motherhood is the most important aspect of the life of every woman. Without children, a woman is not complete and she could be delegated from the community. Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian novelist, in her novel “The joys of motherhood” describes the complexity of the relationship between African women and motherhood and how it impacts every aspect of women in their daily lives (Emecheta,1994).

Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important stages in the life of every Ghanaian woman. Families expect their daughters to marry as soon as they grow. Even when girls are not mature enough for wedlock, parents already have made arrangements for the future wedding. It is most common in rural areas. Similarly, it happens in urban areas; even when some girls can make their choice by themselves, the last decision is made by parents because having a married daughter gives to the families' prestige in the community.

In this order, Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011) states that in the family's economy a son is more important as a family labour worker. If he grows, he will be available to earn a salary and take care of the parents. In contrast, a small daughter who is living with her parents is a burden for the family, because she is just a transitory member that will not represent any help for parents in the future. That is why parents do not consider a daughter's education important because the result of the investment will never return to them; they believe that their daughter will be with another family in the kitchen so, it does not matter how educated she will be.

Early pregnancy

As I mentioned above, maternity is the most important issue after marriage and the community expects that women have many children. However, many girls become single mothers. As was argued by Lambert et al (2012) "teenage pregnancy remains a problem for female education, especially in the poorest communities" (p. 14). According to Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011) when a girl is pregnant she has to leave the school because it is an offense for parents and teachers, so after the delivery most of the girls do not go back

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to the school, not only because the expenses that the newborn baby implies, it is also a lack of respect for elders and teachers. As a result, some girls are forced to marry and others are responsible for the care of the new baby. Robertson (1984) observed that “girls who get pregnant (most are completely ignorant of contraceptive measures) are told not to come to school anymore, although no sanctions are involved for male teachers or students responsible for the pregnancies” (p. 657).

Women in higher education

One of the most effective ways to induce changes in the current girls' education system is greater participation of women in higher education. Women who can access to a higher education level can participate actively as policy makers in the government. However, the percentage of women enrolled in universities is very small. The National Council on Tertiary Education (2006) found that: “in the 2000/2001 academic year, there were only 12% women in the faculty of six public universities in Ghana; in 2005/2006, the number had increased to only 13.8%” (cited in Adusah-Karikari, 2008, p. 16). We can observe that in five years the women participation in universities increased less than 2%. As Adusah-Karikari (2008) noted, in government policies, gender is not included as an important factor that can innovate the education in the universities. She argues that it is very important to include gender issues as soon as possible in the discussion of policymakers, so not only female students will have access to higher education, also professional women can participate actively as a worker in high levels at the university.

The women's position in the universities reflects the women's status in the society. Women are marginalized in higher education; but not only young female students, also

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women teaching staff are very small. As was stated by Morley and Lugg (2009): “it is believed that H[igher] E[ducation] disrupts hegemonic age-related marriage and motherhood norms” (cited in Adu-Yeboah, & Forde 2011 p. 405).

Therefore, Adusah-Karikari (2008), contends that when women are graduated they face fewer jobs opportunities, poor salaries and sometimes sexual harassment by employers and colleagues. If women get a professional position as researcher or teacher they have to work diligently for nobody to question their abilities. The writer mentioned that professional women have to combine different roles such as mother, wife and professional worker. She also points out that the salaries in Ghanaian universities are the same for male and females, however, the universities and government policies do not contemplate any provision for maternity status, so that many pregnant women lose their jobs when they are absent for maternity.

In fact, the patrilineal family system is highly reflected in Ghanaian universities. At this level, Ghanaian professional women still face discrimination and exclusion. The society already surrogates black women in the lowest position in the community even if the woman possesses a higher level of education.

Religion and witchcraft have a greater influence on Ghanaian daily lives and impact girls' education. Salm and Falola (2002), point out the informal union between a man and a woman called *trokosi*. This happens when a tribe member has committed a crime or a disrespect that can damage the prestigious of the family. To avoid this problem a young girl who is between 6 to 15 years old becomes the property of a local priest; often she has to dedicate her childhood to serve him, doing domestic and agricultural activities and have children. According to the writers some of those girls live as slaves. The government has

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banned this practice since 1998, even when this practice is not common, it is still part of some villages' customs. According to Ansah (2003) this traditional practice disempowers girls in many aspects of their lives including education (cited in Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011) Nonetheless, Nukunya (2003) notes that "a young girl who is a Fiasidi or Trokosi is in fact highly respected by her family, because of the esteem she is given as 'preserved for the deity' (cited in Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011, p. 239).

It is certain that the majority of Ghanaian girls are living under a patriarchal hierarchy; however, we cannot forget that in many African societies the age determines the power that a person has in the society. Elders are very well respected and in many cases mature and old women become part of the advisors in their societies. This gives them the power to make decisions in their communities, so that many women still contribute to preserving the patriarchal domination.

Even when many Ghanaian women have received a position in politics, in economics, business and/or academy, the cultural mind-set against women is deeply rooted and still determines the hierarchy that women and men have in society.

Chapter 5

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

The problem of girls' education in Ghana is a phenomenon inserted in a capitalist system that exerts gender violence against poor and uneducated girls and women. Although violence happens on women of all social status, the domination and exploitation are mostly exacerbated on poor girls and women from $\frac{2}{3}$ of the world, who are in disadvantage compared to those who are located in $\frac{1}{3}$ of the world and have access to formal education, sanitary services etc. (Mohanty, 2003).

Therefore, colonialism has been intrinsic to capitalism's development and its consolidation. Colonialism has permeated every aspect of Ghanaian society, changing the traditional structures and organization of the communities, and deeply modifying the consciousness of the colonized people in such a way that they are ready to justify their own submission and exalt their religious doctrines towards their own domination (Kabunda, 2008, Tuwor, (2007).

On the other hand, traditions and customs have to be analysed carefully in context – in order to understand thoroughly the situation and to avoid any value judgment. It is important to understand the traditions and beliefs of Ghanaian society to be able to propose a profound transformation of social structures within their concrete historical circumstances, without violating their identities and respecting those characteristics that make each African society unique and special.

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Making education affordable and open for all boys and girls is a very important aspect for the development of the country and the development of its citizens so that girls and women will participate in more equalitarian terms with their male counterparts, and also, integrate to the global market fully empowered.

At the beginning of this study, I proposed three questions to conduct my research: What are the factors that impede girls' education in Ghana?; How can the cultural mind-set impact girls' education?; and, What solutions can be proposed to change the cultural mind-set against girls' education?

In summary, the socio-cultural aspects of Ghanaian society to access formal education for girls and women has been deeply impacted by an uncodified behaviour, attitude, and beliefs that have been imposed since colonialism, through rituals, religions, customs and traditions that have surrogated females to the lower position in Ghanaian communities. This implies the most important stage for any girl in Ghanaian society from north to south - even with total differences and a certain similarity in religion and cultures: getting married, having children, and being in the kitchen at all times as housewives (Tuwor, 2007). This hierarchy already defines the roles females and males have in the society. It is very visible, especially in classrooms where expectations are totally different for both genders: children are expected to have a very superior academic performance in all subjects in school with the wide range of expectations mostly directed on boys whilst the expectations for girls is being passive and invisible in the school. Onto this expected behaviour, there are various forms of bullying and sexual harassment by their counterparts, men and teachers. And at the same time, girls have many duties at home that impede their studies and better

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performance compared to their male counterparts (who have fewer chores at home and able to outwit girl's in their academic performances) (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011).

There are four main areas that are related to challenges facing girls' education:

1. Cultural mind-set
2. The classroom, school environments and amenities
3. Government policies
4. Poverty

1. Cultural mind-set

How can the cultural mind-set impact girls' education?

In this section, I would like to answer my second question in the way that I have conducted this study because it goes hand in hand with this section.

As I mentioned in this study, cultural mind-set towards girls and women has a deep impact on their education and development. My study confirms that cultural mentality –along with religious-related belief systems - are the most important aspects that impede girls' attendance to school, and also provoke them to drop out of schools. There is an important relationship between uncoded belief systems and religion that disempower many aspects of girl's life including education. Agbemabiese-Grooms (2011) states that patriarchal orientation of religion tends to provoke women to depend on men economically because women have to stay at home and be in the care of their husband - who deserves subordination and obedience because this is the natural order of things. "If the women or girls break this rule her family will be ashamed of her and the girl and family will be punished by God and

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religious authorities” (p. 240). In societies where religion is deeply rooted as Africans communities are, the religious statutes have a capital importance in the actions of each member of the tribe.

Furthermore, since children are born, their role in society is already determined by traditions. Boys and girls will be part of rituals that will settle the different activities and responsibilities that everyone deserves according to their gender. In patrilineal tribes, men are on top of the hierarchy, while women are educated to become caregivers, mothers, wives and daughters. In African societies, breaking the rules, according to elders is going against God’s principles (Salm & Falola, 2002).

Therefore, many girls are ready to attend school, however the education that they receive at a very early age - from parents and society - make them accept their role as caregivers, and their position in the kitchen. At the same time, many who can go to school drop out early because of sexual harassment, verbal violence or because the parents decide their daughter is ready to get married. Nevertheless, Ghanaian women need to be educated because “the average woman leads an essential life that is truncated based on her being ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.” (Mohanty, 2003, p 56).

2 Classrooms, school environments and amenities

Many beliefs against girls and women have been imposed since colonialism. The colonization implied a deep change in the mentality of every African that has been inherited through many generations. These thoughts have penetrated every area of personal and

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collective life in the whole society in such a way that even women are their own and main defenders; in the majority of cases women become exploiters of other women and they justify men's violence against girls and women at home and promote the servility of girls towards masculine figures, as parents, grandparents brothers etc., (Tuwor, 2007). Also we must not forget that elderly African women such as mothers, grandmothers, and Queen mothers, are responsible for transmitting these submissive attitudes to the detriment of the integral development of girls and young women (Salm & Falola, 2002). Those attitudes are reflected in the classrooms; as I mentioned, female and masculine teachers think mistakenly that girls do not have a deep learning capacity as boys, so dedicating attention to their learning process is a waste of time (Agamesie-Grooms, 2011). To compound this situation we have to add sexual harassment, the verbal abuse and violence towards girls, and the poor infrastructure of the schools, where many of them have no minimum sanitary utilities to boast of in any conditions, i.e. water or restrooms, which makes it difficult for girls to attend school, especially during menstruation. Additionally, in several African societies menstruation means the exclusion of women from public life (Lambert et al, 2012).

3. Government policies

The government education policies determine the educational level in the country. Because these should focus on financing the school system, public investment, distribution of educational spending between the state and families, teacher training and recruitment process, the decentralization and distribution of school competitions between the different levels of State administration, these policies indicate the commitment or priority that education has for the government. Besides, the policies impact the decisions that families take regarding education for their children through the imposition or subsidy of school tuition

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and fees. The Ghanaian government has demonstrated an important commitment towards developing the education system in the country - even though Ghana is still a weak state where the government institutions face many administration problems (Kabunda, 2008).

Although Ghana invested 6.26% of GDP in 2016, this is one of the biggest GDP percentages spent in education compared to other African countries (WB, 2016.). Despite all these efforts to develop education, there still remains public policies that should be implemented to address a better education for every child.

For example, primary level education is compulsory and free for every child, however this policy is not valid for secondary and high school levels, and it represents a big challenge for girls, because many of them cannot afford the next school grade and it is also an important cause of dropping out of the school (Tuwor, 2007). Nevertheless, some policies regarding education have changed with the new president Nana Akufo-Addo, who mentioned in the 3rd International Conference on the “Replenishment of the Funds of the Global Partnership for Education” in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2018, the importance of affordable education for everyone; also he pointed out that senior high school has been made free since September 2017 (Ghana News, 2018). It is still too early to know the result of this new policy, but I believe this is an important step to promote literacy for everyone - because lack of education is the principal cause of discrimination against women (Mohanty, 2003).

4. Poverty

Certainly, poverty is one of the main reasons for children to not attend school. The poverty rates in Ghana are very high and it concentrates more in northern regions. In this country more than 60% of the population is living in rural areas where there are not enough

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resources; more than 90% of the crops depend on the rainy season (GSS, 2012). At the same time, because of traditional beliefs and mind-sets, families expect to have many children who will support them, so that, boys, are obligated to work to bring money, while girls have to work hard at home, cooking, taking care of siblings, cleaning and also help in agriculture and trade activities without any compensation (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011).

In many cases young girls from northern Ghana have to emigrate to Accra to work, carrying things in local markets in the city. Receiving a very low payment for their job, many of them sleep on the streets or in improvised places that do not have any safety and sanitary conditions, exposing them to a different kind of sickness and violence on the streets (Agbemabiese-Grooms, 2011). Sometimes, those girls emigrate to support their brothers to go to school because according to elders' beliefs, boys will remain at home and they will be able to support their parents, while girls will get married and leave the parents' house. However, in many cases, after education boys decide to go to Europe or any country outside Africa seeking greener pastures and girls remain at home and continue supporting their parents. If the girl gets married she is obliged to support her children and take care of her parents too (Tuwor, 2007).

Therefore, Ghanaian society is facing an important social transformation, and many women can travel outside the continent but they still have to support their parents. In addition, the local economy is supported by women. Roberson (1984) points out that women dominate the trade system in Ghana. Many women collect and sell food in local markets, but also they can sell different kinds of products; not all are groceries or food. These activities allow them to feed their families, and contribute to household income.

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There have been important efforts to develop the education system in Ghana. During the last decade, it has increased considerably. At the same time the disparities among boys and girls who attend primary level school have reduced and in some areas, those discrepancies have disappeared (GSS, 2012). Even though girls can attend frequently to primary school, the discrepancies among boys and girls who complete primary school are still high, it has an important impact in the access to secondary school and higher levels because many girls drop out in the first levels of education (GSS, 2012) (See Appendix, graphic 5, p. 64).

Ghana is a young country where the majority of its population are under 15 years old. (GSS, 2012) (See Appendix, graphic 1, p. 60). However, the youth are considered citizens of the second category that have no voice and cannot participate in the public life of the country due to traditions and beliefs. And this problem is greater regarding economically poor women and girls. The disparities regarding gender have been analyzed in this study, but in order to have a complete view, we have to add the obstacles related to geographic location, resources and infrastructure, which contribute to the obstruction that many boys and girls face to attend to school.

I believe it is important to focus on the creation of policies that encourage the importance of girls and ensure them access to high levels of education. To make it possible it is important that government, NGOs, and the society participate together.

What solutions can be proposed to change the cultural mind-set against girls' education?

Recommendations

Changing culture mind-sets is a long time process that requires coordinated work between teachers, principals, policymakers, media and NGOs committed to social change.

Use of Media

From my point of view, it is important to use the resources that the population already has to address a gradual change in the mentality of the population. I have found two essential tools that Ghanaian society have at home and can be used to influence the way of thinking towards girls and women. These include radio and cell phones because they have a deep penetration into every family member.

In rural, economically poor communities, radio and cell phones have a significant impact on the population. For example, according to World Bank (2016), there are 38,305,078 mobile cellular subscriptions; while the population is 28.21 million, the mobile penetration is 136.34%. Cell phones are very important in the daily lives of the society; it is not just a way of communication, since most of the families have at least one member abroad, it is also a way to send and receive money. Also, cell phone lines are used to pay many services among the society members. Cell phones allow the transmission of information about prices, news, merchandise, and also they are useful to ship merchandise in the most remote rural areas and make it easier for them to do money transfers by text message. It is true that the penetration of smartphones is not available throughout the country, but at least one cell phone is owned by one or two members of the families even in rural and poor communities (Rocha, & Gómez, 2010).

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In this sense my proposal is to create an advertising campaign towards to the importance of girls' education, and about how girls and women development is relevant for the progress of the whole community. This campaign can be improved throughout text messages for those who have no smartphones, while those who have smartphones the campaign could be made by short videos and text messages using simple phrases as "girls education is important", "an educated girl will benefit your family" and much more. This campaign can be followed by radio programs that talk about the importance of girls' education.

If we want to break the barriers, we must take full advantage of innovation and technology to reach economically poor and marginalized families, and improve the access of education for everyone.

According to Walsh (2018) and Zanello (2012), mass media has important effects in a wide range of the population; in many developing countries radio is the most prevalent mass media. In Ghana, radio coverage is huge even in poor communities. For many Ghanaians radio is the only mass media available. Because it is inexpensive, in many cases unlike television, the radio can be used without electricity. Also radio is included in many cell phones, and as I previously mentioned, every family has at least one cell phone, so this issue can have an important influence in many aspects of the daily lives of the population. Radio stations can produce advertising that impacts the cultural mind-set with very low cost with a wide range of listeners because many radio programs are broadcasted in local languages.

My proposal is aimed at using radio and radio stations as a big influence over the cultural mind-set against women and girls, and their education. Through educative programs,

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entertaining shows such as soap operas and shorts advertising, can include informative messages about education, respect for women and girls, etc. This campaign can help gradually to change the mentality against women and education.

According to Walsh (2018), Ghana liberalized the radio broadcasting sector in 1992 giving more chances in the setting up of frequency modulation (FM) and lessening the interest of listening to colloquial amplitude modulation (AM) which requires high antennas to be reached in the form of audios. Since then, the development of these FM sectors has been viable and visible, and it has included programs, interviews, music and social companies regarding public health that help fight against malaria as well as interviews and programs, through which the government use as part of their plans to give sanitary pads to girls from small towns to help them go back to school (Montgomery, Ryus, Dolan, Dopson, & Scott, 2012). In general, radio stations are democratic and open to inform their listeners. The principal challenge facing the creation of a campaign aimed to change the cultural mind-set of the population is a long-term process and possibly achievable by the projection of time periods of two to three generations to come. At the same time, this kind of campaign should be relayed to every member of Ghanaian families, children, youth, adults and elderly, and also directed to local Chiefs and religious authorities who have the greater influence over the population.

Government policies

Ghana is still a country where government institutions are not strong enough to drive a social transformation. However, the society has embarked on a deep social transformation in spite of poverty and illiteracy. It is important that policymakers be aware of this transformation to create new rules and regulations in three fundamental aspects: economic

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development, gender equity and welfare protection, where education deserves a special attention as the axis of social transformation. To achieve this goal it is important to make education affordable, inclusive, and equalitarian, and one that promotes respect for girls and women. It is important to develop training programs for teachers to make them aware that they are important role models for their students. Through teacher training teachers will have more skills to improve any issue related to gender in the classroom, improve the process of teaching and learning, and help girls and boys develop their abilities and find out their interests.

It is also necessary for better administration and distribution of resources in order to build new schools, make reforms where needed, and improve the transportation system.

Community leaders

The participation of community leaders is very important because they have greater influence in the society; they are in the middle, between government and communities and they have control over most resources. Their role should be to encourage parents to send children to school and prevent dropout of the school regardless of gender. They should also set up scholarships without nepotism to enable good students to access a formal education.

NGOs

In economically disadvantaged societies, the international aid could be very useful only if it can be regulated according to the real necessities of the population. African societies are not the same everywhere and their needs vary according to location, weather, level of development etc., (Nerín, 2011). I consider this point very necessary because is important to regulate international aid to address a real contribution and development of local societies.

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Drawing from the findings of this research, their role is also to understand the cultural mind-sets about traditional or religious practices. NGOs - in collaboration with the government - can finance information campaigns on radio, cell phones and TV about the benefits of education. They can work hand in hand with community leaders to make children's education mandatory for parents and funding scholarships for girls.

Schools

There are two special things that schools can do to help their students. They should avoid uniforms and homework. Uniforms are not essential to attend school and they can be a significant expense for parents. In this particular context of doing away with uniforms, many people may have different point of views about such an opinion, but then this proposal of banning uniforms is aimed at helping parents to send their daughters to school without having to think about extra costs of garments; within a semester of one or two - depending on the development or growth of a girl child and besides other compulsory educational materials required to be in school - costs a fortune (Tuwor, 2007). According to GSS (2016), the education sector represents 23.4% of inflation, many parents are unable to afford uniforms and moreover, most parents have more than one child in school and at the same time having hard times to make ends meet. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, many parents prefer sending their sons to school rather than daughters because they do not see the importance of investing any money in daughters' education.

Similarly, in order to avoid homework, it is necessary to complete school work at school because children, especially girls, need time to complete their domestic duties at home and a large number of houses do not have basic necessities for children to do their school work (such as tables or chairs). Also, every member of the family usually sit on the floor in

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a very noisy environment, where overcrowding is higher in urban and rural areas, (Salm, & Falola, 2002).

In sum, there are many things to consider about girls' education in Ghana. We have advanced in the first step by understanding the cultural aspects of Ghanaian society and how it impacts the development of girls and women. I am optimistic, because through my study I have found some writers that point out aspects that are not very popular in the academy, and they are totally unknown or misunderstood by western societies.

I strongly believe that Ghanaian societies can develop a deep understanding about the meaning of education for everyone and the importance of inclusion of youth in the creation of public policies that can benefit every member of the society. Boys, girls, women, men, and Elders can work hand in hand towards an inclusive and equitable goal - such as the elimination of poverty, illiteracy, and the integral development of everyone, in order to make Ghana more participatory and competitive on the world stage. I conclude this study with a very thoughtful reflection of Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world" (Mandela, n.d.).

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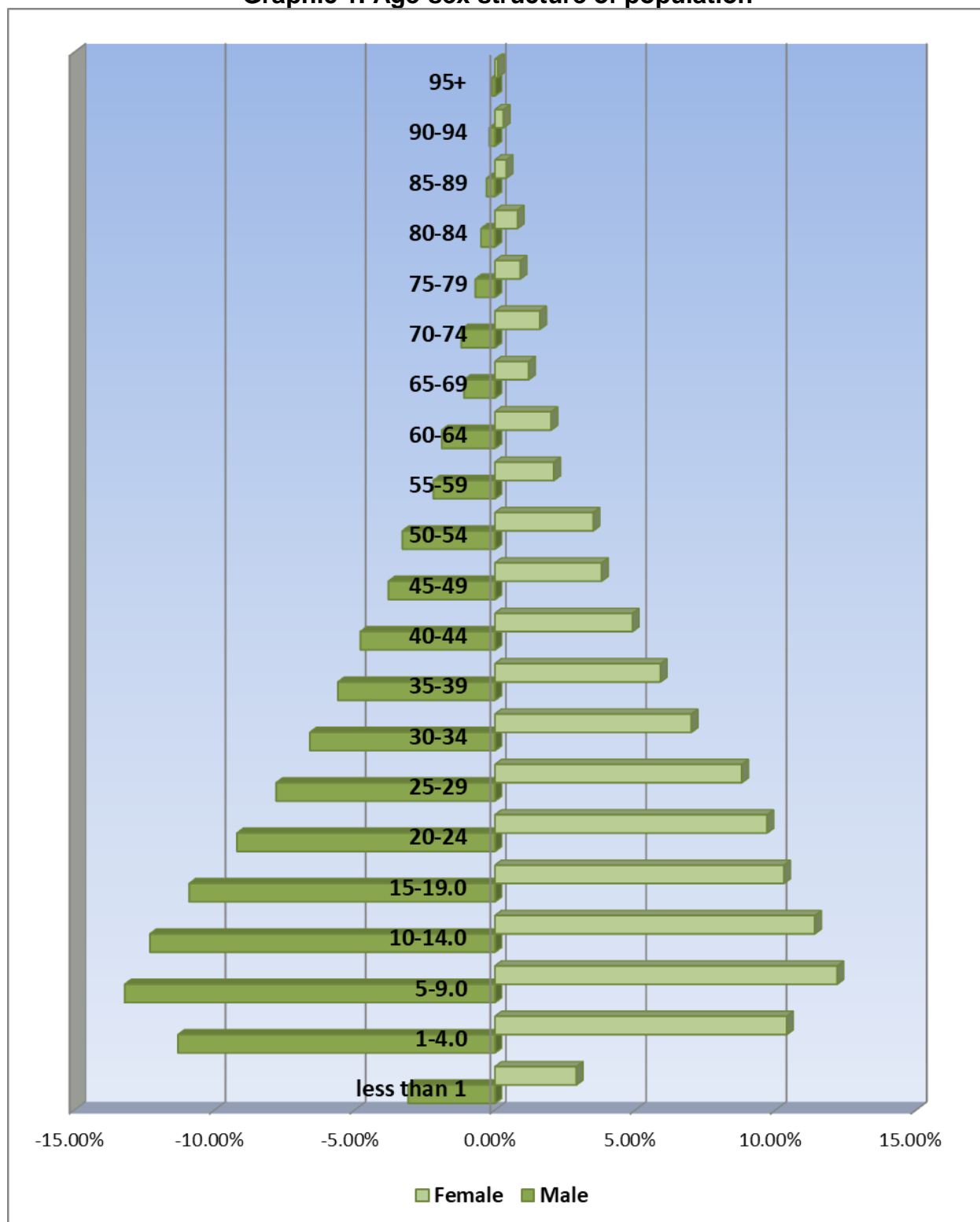
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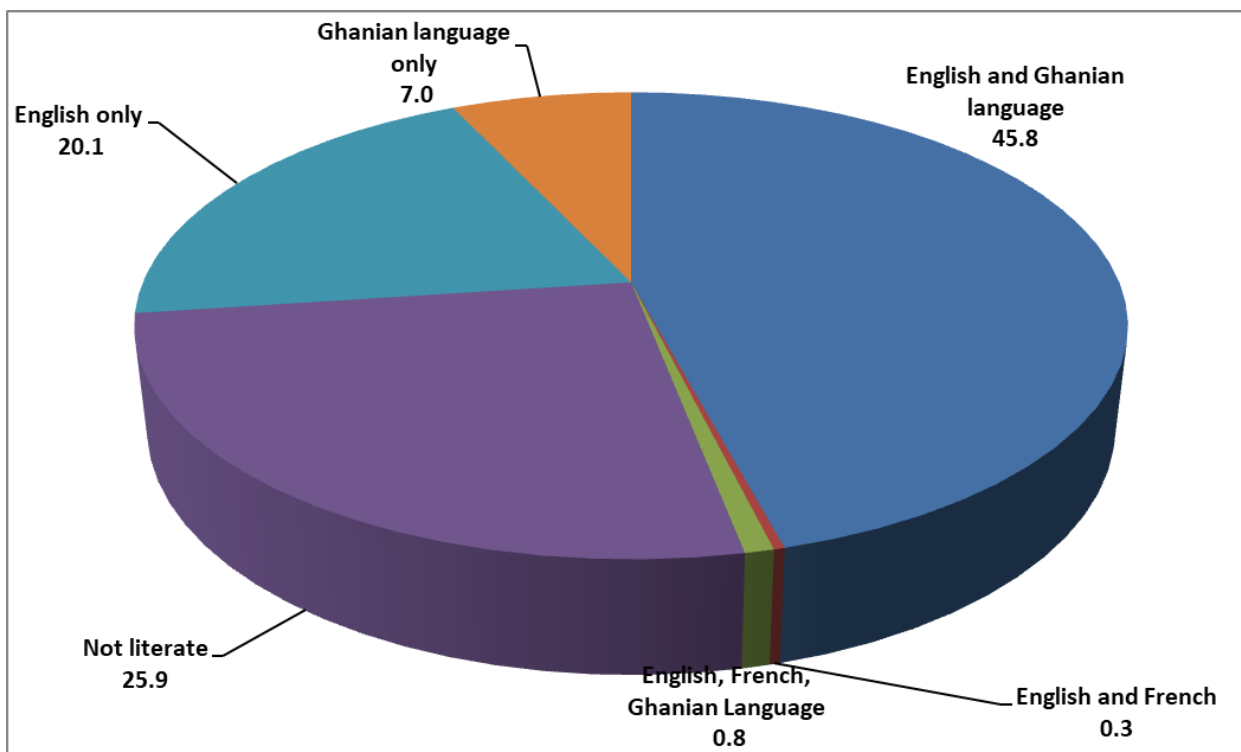
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Appendix

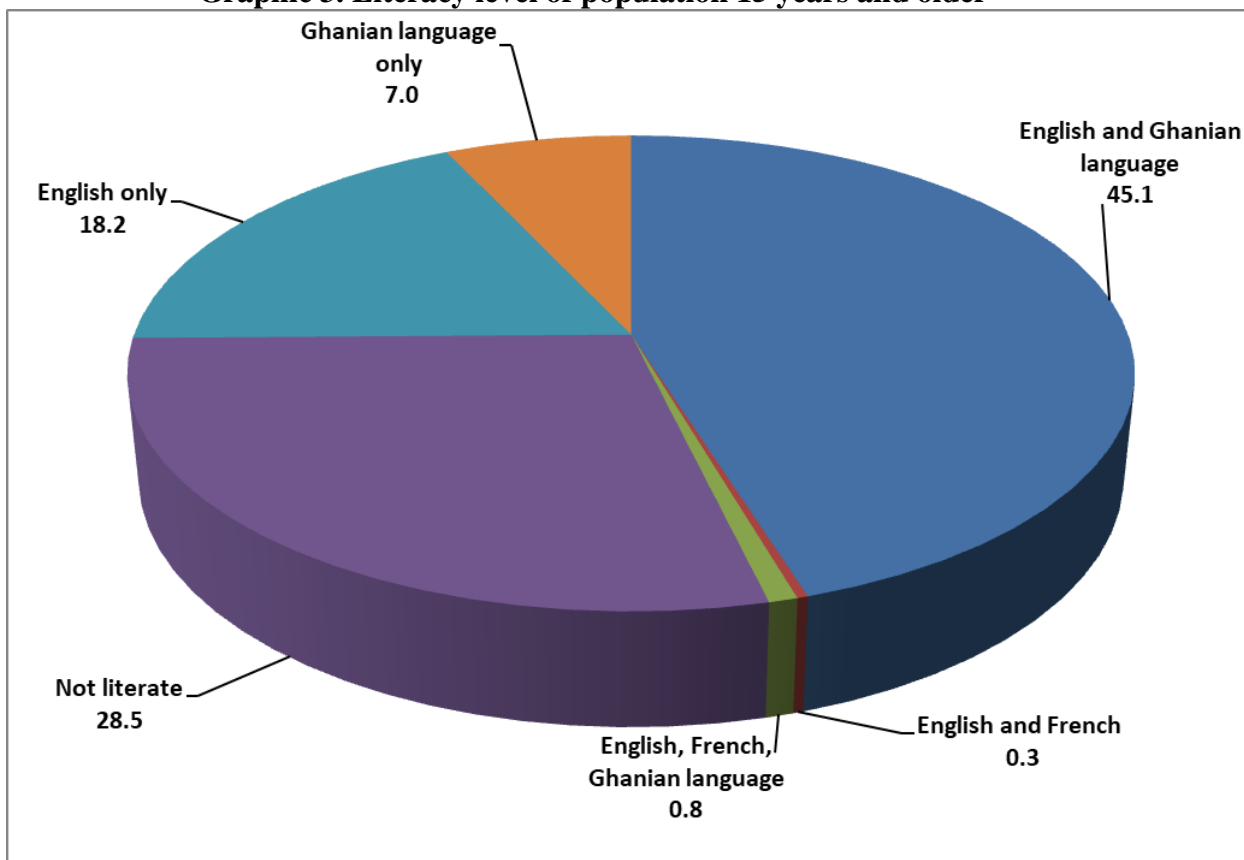
Graphic 1. Age-sex structure of population



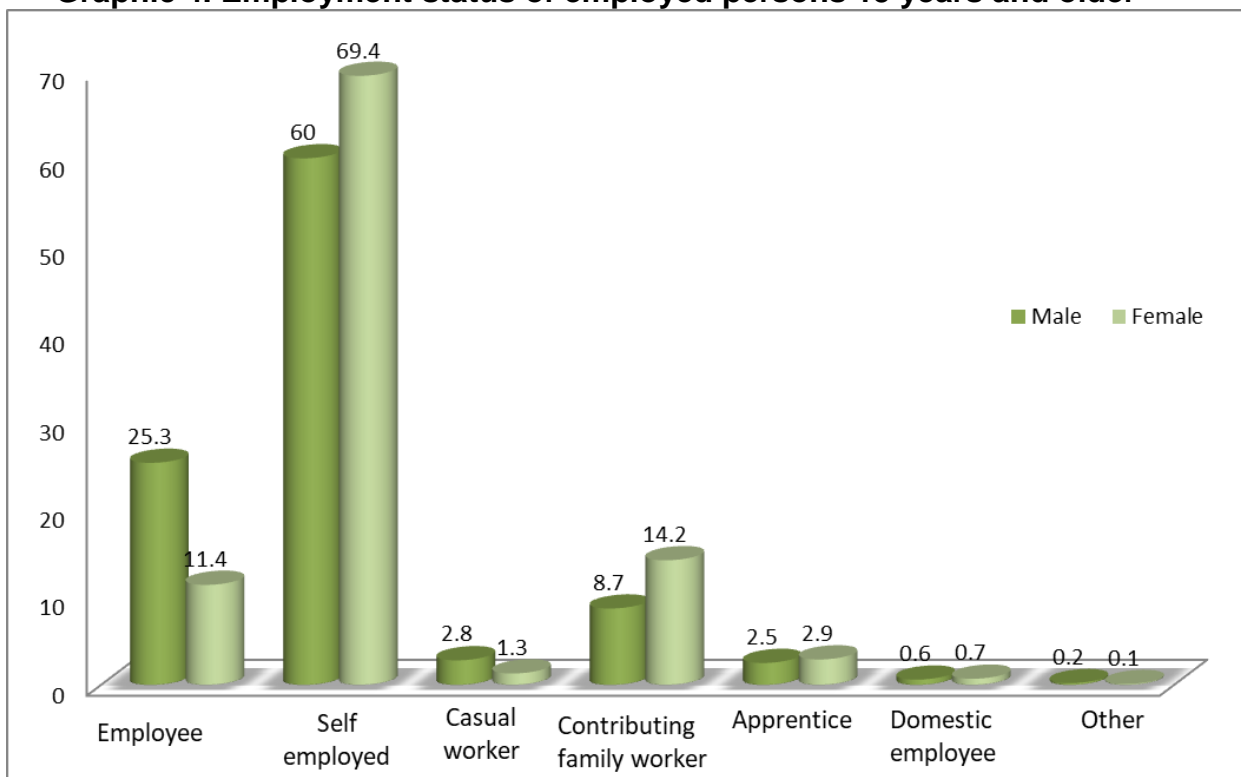
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Graphic 2. Literacy level of population 11 years and older

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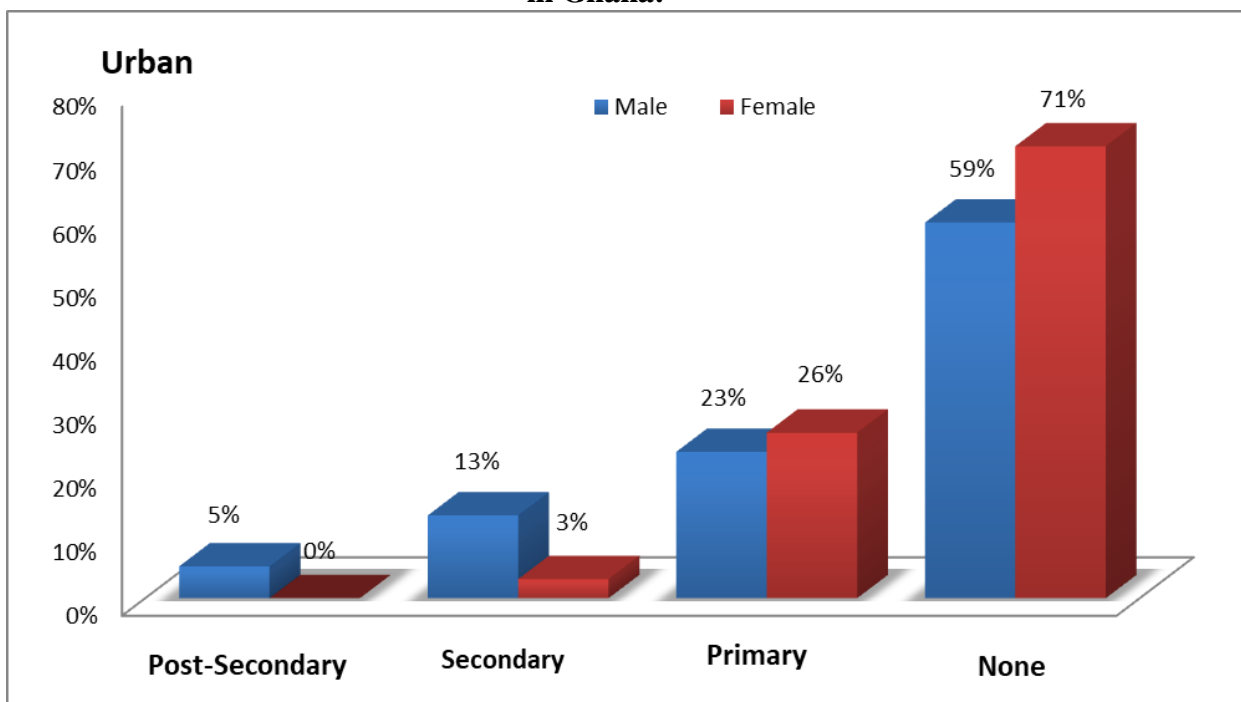
Graphic 3. Literacy level of population 15 years and older

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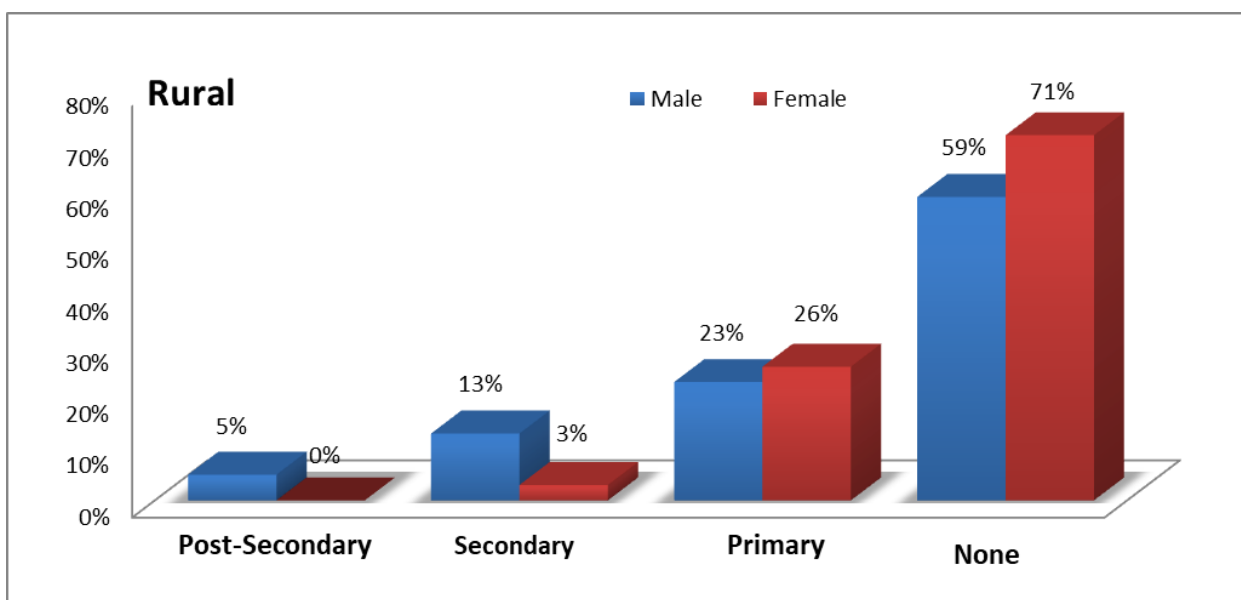
Graphic 4. Employment status of employed persons 15 years and older

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Graphic 5. Educational attainment level for rural and urban adults (25+) and gender in Ghana:

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