

**An investigation into factors that shape secondary school female retention in
two rural public schools, Alimosho Region, Lagos State, Nigeria**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Of

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By

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to the memory of my late brother, Agbomeji Lateef Adekunle, who died while I was at Rhodes University, South Africa, doing what he was instrumental in setting up and supporting.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted previously to any university for degree purposes. Where other people`s work has been used (either from a printed source, internet or any other source) this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the higher degree committee requirements.

A.M.O. Agbomeji

Date

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Abstract

Challenges of access to education in the developing world and elsewhere appear to be widespread. Many declarations and conventions have been developed to assist countries to respond to the issue. While challenges of access are universal, Africa in general and sub-Saharan Africa in particular are presented with additional concerns about gender equality and gender parity. While learner numbers seem to be on the decline globally, dropout amongst girls is disproportionately greater than amongst boys. Even though school retention presents a challenge at all levels of the schooling system, it is more acute for girls at the secondary school level.

This study was conducted to examine and understand factors that shape retention of secondary school female learners in two rural public schools in Alimosho Region of Lagos State, Nigeria. The study design was qualitative and interpretive in nature. Data collection strategies included administered questionnaires in two schools, focus group discussion with twenty female learners in two schools, case studies, individual interviews with four participants from two schools, and observation in English and Biology classes where the two teachers from the two schools participated in the interviews. Ethical clearance from Alimosho Educational Region office and the two schools was obtained before undertaking the study. Participants' school principals also signed written consent forms before interviews. The female learners were briefed about the study interview activities and advised that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any point.

This study drew on Sen's (1989, 2000) capabilities theory to understand the phenomenon beyond dominant discourses on education that view education as a basic human right or that focus on economic and development gains.

The key finding of this study is that in-school and out- of- school factors interact in complex ways to support female learner retention. Key among these are value placed on education by female learners and significant others, particularly parents; family support; and individual aspirations. Extra-curricular participation, government policy, role models, and peer support were also found to be important factors that mediate progression and retention.

Acronyms

DFID:	Department for International Development
EFA:	Education for All
FET:	Further Education and Training Band
FGD:	Focus group discussion
GMR:	Global Monitoring Report
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IPEC:	International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour
MDG:	Millennium Development Goal's
NPE:	National Policy on Education
SSS:	Senior Secondary School
UBEA:	Universal Basic Education Act
UBEP:	Universal Basic Education Programme
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO:	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Challenges of access to education in the developing world and elsewhere appear to be widespread. Many declarations and conventions have been developed to assist countries to respond to these challenges. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), International Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Education for All [EFA] (2000), and the Millennium Development Goals [MDG] (2000) all support the notion that access to education is not only a key human right, but also a necessary precondition to economic growth and development on the one hand and poverty alleviation on the other hand (Harris, 2004:28). UNICEF (2007:1) states that achieving the goal of universal education requires universal commitments because if all the children including the most vulnerable, excluded and marginalized are to realize their rights to a quality rights-based education, all sectors of society must be energized, engaged, and committed to action.

The number of ‘out of school’ children seems to be on the decrease¹. This decrease is aided through government commitments to declarations like Education for All and through monitoring the Millennium Development Goal attainments. The current estimate is that only about 69-million children of primary school-going age remain out of school, (of which 48% (31 million) are from sub-Saharan Africa (MDG report, 2010).

Whilst many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have succeeded in universalizing primary education, a number still find it a challenge to provide meaningful access to education for their population (Lewin, 2007, UNESCO, EFA Report, 2010). Lewin and Akyeampong (2009:143), observe that sub-Saharan Africa is still below par in terms of achieving access to education compared to other regions in the world. A large proportion (53.5%) of out of school children are found in this region. Of these, 32.2 million are at the primary and 21.3 million at the secondary levels of schooling respectively (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2010).

¹The education progression reports by UNESCO (2003, 2006) indicate that the number of primary children out of school was 115million (2002), 104 million (2004), 93 million (2005) and 75.3 million (UIS, 2006). Again, as at 2007, the number of out of school children at the primary level was 71.8 million (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2008) similarly, the number of children not in school as at 2009 was 72 million (UNESCO, 2009).

Not only is access to education a challenge in Africa at large and sub-Saharan Africa in particular, but also retention once children are in school. The EFA Global Monitoring Summary Report (2010) indicates that 38 million children dropped out from both primary and secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa; an issue that goes beyond access to that of retention. Though getting children into school is a vital first step, the larger challenge in many countries in Africa centres on keeping them *in* school. To receive the full benefits of access to education, questions have been raised about the more serious problems of retention and the experiences of children in school that contribute to them either dropping out or staying in school.

While the above are challenges, Africa in general and sub-Saharan Africa in particular are also presented with a concern about gender equality and gender parity. The UNICEF Report (2004) states that of the estimated 142 million children not in school worldwide, more than half are girls. A study by Save the Children (2005) indicates that at the time of the study, 60 million girls were not in school globally. While global numbers of those not at school seem to be on the decline², the problem of gender inequality and in particular drop-out amongst girls, remains persistently greater than amongst boys.

While school retention presents a challenge at all levels of the schooling system, it is more acute for girls at the secondary school level. The UNICEF Report (2005) indicates that in sub-Saharan Africa, the numbers of out of school girls each year rose from 20 million in 1990 to 25 million in 2005. The problem of access to education for the girl-child persists despite considerable efforts by different education monitoring agents to ensure equity in education. Many researchers argue that if education is perceived to empower people to improve their lives and is viewed as an opportunity for social and economic advancement, it would make sense for developing countries to consider questions that go beyond access to education to ask about the inclusion and retention particularly of girls (Pillay, 1994; Carnoy, 2004; Glick, 2008; De Castro & Bursztyn, 2008). Birdsall, Levine and Ibrahim express this by stating:

Educating the poor is particularly important for triggering broader social change. Education has a special quality: human capital acquired through formal education cannot

2 Estimates were about 61.6 million (2001/2002 cited in UNESCO, 2005), 44 million in 2006 and 38 million in 2007 (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2010).

be expropriated. In that respect, it is different from land or financial assets. Education is an asset that enables its owner to earn more and to communicate and obtain information more successfully (2005:25)

Thus, the move to universalize education in developing countries has been seen as a crucial factor in reducing poverty. For this reason, the issue of access, retention and throughput to education is at the forefront of discourses on development and growth. Stromquist (1989:144) argues, “educational access without completion, completion without learning and learning without social recognition does little to ensure improved conditions for women in the society.”

Girl education is not only a fundamental human right; it is also an important catalyst for economic growth and human development (Oxfam, 2000). Girl-child education that also considers retention and participation beyond the primary years of schooling is topical, given the recognition that increased participation by women in education has the potential to advance economic development and poverty alleviation (Enumenu, 2005:41).

1.2 Context of the Study and Research Problem

The need to increase female access to and retention in basic and secondary education is widely accepted amongst policy makers and researchers (UNESCO, 2004:4). Nigeria is no different in its concern about gender equality and parity in education. The focus of the government’s education agenda in Nigeria is directed towards bringing about optimal development of its human resources. This investment, however, would not be completed without a focus on the retention of girls in education (Enumenu, 2005:57).

The broad national education objectives articulated in the National Policy on Education guide the education system in Nigeria. At its inception in 1999 and in response to the challenges in the primary education sector, the administration at that time launched the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEP). Specifically, the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) and the Child Rights Act (1948) provided the legal framework for the implementation of the UBEP, which made basic education not only free but also compulsory. In addition and as a signatory to the 2000 World Education Conference and the six Dakar Goals towards achieving Education for All (EFA), the Nigerian government also established a National EFA Coordination unit under the

Federal Ministry of Education mandated to prepare a national action plan for the delivery of EFA in Nigeria.

Located on the west coast of Africa and with a current population of over 140 million, Nigeria is ranked as one the African countries where gender disparities and out of school children are rampant despite huge financial resources allocated by Department for International Development (DFID) to this country's education sector in Nigeria by 2006. The DFID Report (2006) indicates that 4.3 million girls were currently not in school at both primary and secondary levels in this country. The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2010) supports the finding that the girl child represents the highest percentage of children not in school in Nigeria. Despite a large proportion of the education budget being directed to enhance education quality, bridge gender disparities, and improve access to education for the citizens, Table 1 below suggests that Nigeria still lags in reaching the MDG's 2015 gender parity targets.

Table 1: Secondary School Enrolment by Gender in Nigeria by 2008

Year	Male/Female	Male	Female	Difference
2005	6 246 654	4 081 964	2 164 590	1 917 374
2006	5 078 420	3 979 045	1 199 375	1 779 670
2007	7 781 131	4 800 022	2 981 109	1 818 913

Source: Statistics Branch, Federal Ministry of Education, (FME) Victoria Island Lagos, 2009

Many factors account for the status of female education in this country, not least being the negative attitudes parents hold towards educating girls. Some cultural and social practices embedded within a patriarchal system are found to overtly (and sometimes covertly) interact to hinder women's advancement in education (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 1998 cited in Oniye, 2006:7). Some parents have been found to be reluctant to send girls to school beyond the primary school level. Closely related to this is reluctance to acquire "Western" norms and values, which parents (and girls themselves) understand to be imparted through formal education (Enumenu, 2005). Oniye (2006: 6) identified a number of reasons for the low levels of educational advancement and development of women in Nigeria. He makes the point that these are rooted in history, religion, culture, the psychology of self, law, political institutions, and traditional practices and expectations. He suggests that these factors intersect in particular ways so as to limit female access and retention in formal education compared to their male counterparts.

As with many countries in Africa, material and economic conditions in Nigeria have consequences for girl-children and their access and retention in school. With 70% of the population living below the poverty line, girls are often sent to generate income for families by selling wares in the market or on the street (UNICEF, 2002). Stromquist, (1995, cited in Arnot, 2008) suggests that access to schooling is affected not only by cultural beliefs but also by the economic conditions of the family. According to her, a host of factors outside the school system shape the enrolment, participation, and retention of girls in education. These include but are not limited to lack of time due to domestic work, child labour, early marriage, low aspirations, distance to schools, parents' preference for son's education, and lack of female teachers. She further states that female labour makes girls less available for schooling, and when they are available, they are left with reduced energy for learning.

UNESCO (2003) supports Stromquist's observation that an unequal burden of domestic and family responsibilities weighs heavily upon girls. This inevitably impacts their educational aspirations and the career opportunities society offers them. . Archer, Halshall and Hollingworth (2007), on the other hand, note that "many girls and young women's aspirations and expectation have undergone various shifts in relation to issues such as marriage, careers and educational choices" (2007:166). However, despite such changes in the values and aspirations of many, "working-class young women continue to leave school earlier, and with fewer qualifications" (Archer, *et. al.*, 2007:166).

Aligned to the above, lack of resources also impacts decisions parents make about who should receive formal education. Many Nigerian parents with large families who have limited resources would choose to enrol boys in school instead of or before girls. Some parents also keep their daughters out of school through misinterpretation of the tenets of Islamic Law (UNICEF, 2002).

Early marriage and teenage pregnancy are other factors that tend to militate against female education in Nigeria. According to UNICEF (2002), about 30% of girls drop out of school having already begun child bearing before the age of eighteen.

Conditions in school have also been found to have a bearing on females accessing and/or dropping out of school. Gender bias in content and teaching and learning processes have been identified as barriers to female advancement in education in Nigeria. The UNDP Report (2002) shows that boys were given more opportunities to ask and respond to questions, use learning materials, and to lead groups. Girls were given less time on task than boys in primary and secondary school science classes. Teachers used corporal punishment and also created an intimidating classroom environment for girls.

The above notwithstanding, many girls complete school despite the adverse conditions they face. This study, therefore, focuses on female retention at the secondary school level in a select number of schools in Lagos. It raises questions concerning what factors, influences, and experiences enable girls to progress and remain in secondary school for its duration. The assumption is that structures and agents interact in complex ways (Archer, 1995) to produce experiences that either inhibit or enable female progression through and retention in school.

1.3 Research Goals

This study aimed to contribute to the field of scholarship on access, retention, throughput, and progression, with particular reference to girl education. It aimed to gain further insight into the conditions and experiences (in and out of school) that lead to some girls' retention despite the high attrition rates of others in the same region³. These insights have the potential to contribute to developing sustainable support for more girl children not only to have access, but also to make progress and complete school.

The following main and sub-questions guided the study.

1.3.1 Main Research Questions

1. What are the factors that shape the retention of some (Senior Secondary 3) SS3⁴ female learners in two secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria?

³See Appendix A for a detailed account of the progression of males and females between 2006-2010 in the four schools that were the sites for the study.

⁴SSS3 is the final year of secondary school in Nigeria

2. What are the experiences of a select number of girls concerning these factors that make them remain in schooling for its duration?

1.3.2 Sub Questions

1. What are the perspectives on schooling among some SS3 female learners?
2. What are female learners' experiences of school?
3. What are the discourses about schooling (in the community, family, school) on girl education and how do these shape some girls' experiences of school?
4. What are the influences of the discourses on access and retention on the select group of girls remaining in school?

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter 1 (the present chapter), I introduced the research topic and discussed the motivation for this study as well as its context. I identified the research problem and described the goal, as well as the main and supporting research questions.

Chapter 2 lays the conceptual and theoretical foundation that frames the investigation by drawing on literature that situates female education within gender, equality, and education discourses. This body of literature also provided the lens for the data collection and analysis.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the research design and research process. This chapter provides the roadmap for the study. I provide a methodological rationale for the study and outline the research site and sample together with the decisions that led to my choices. I also describe the research process as well as the data collection techniques. This chapter includes a brief discussion on the data analysis process as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

I present the results in Chapter 4. These take two forms: results from a larger population of 85 female learners derived from a questionnaire and those from focus group discussions with 20 female learners as well as individual interviews with four female learners.

I analyze the results in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 presents the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2 EDUCATION FOR GIRLS: ISSUES AND DEBATES

“I have seen how one year of school changes a child and how years of school transform that child’s future. I have watched as the power of education saved families from being poor, babies from dying and young girls from lives of servitude. And I have lived long enough to see a generation of children, armed with education, lift up a nation”
(Machel, 2011:2).

2.1 Introduction

This chapter lays the theoretical foundation that frames the investigation into factors that shape female retention in secondary school. It situates girls’ education within gender, equality and education and development discourses, providing lenses that informed the data collection, analysis, and discussion of data.

Much of the literature on female education emphasizes two interrelated aspects, namely issues pertaining to access and dropout. An investigation of factors that shape the retention of female learners, therefore, cannot be understood outside discourses on these two issues. For this reason, this chapter begins with examining explanations for dropout in education in general and girl’s education in particular. I proceed with an analysis of the dominant discourses that shape education access, with the view to better understand issues pertaining to retention of girls in education. I end this chapter with a discussion of the benefits and value of girls’ education as well as related studies of factors that shape the retention of girls in education.

2.2 Discourses on Access in Education

There are a number of discourses justifying access to education for all, irrespective of race, class or gender. Understanding these is essential because prevailing discourses in a particular context have a material influence on the decisions made by governments and policy makers.

What follows, is a brief discussion on seven discourses on educational access. These include the human rights discourse; the economic development discourse; the human well-being discourse; discourses on factors shaping drop-out in general and those, shaping drop-out among female learners in particular, discourses on retention; and those on the benefits and values of female education.

The Human Rights Discourse on Education

The adoption of a Human Rights-Based approach to education by the education sector, governments, and bilateral agencies around the world aimed to ensure that access to education is treated as a major global issue needing urgent attention. Access to education has thus become a focal point in national strategies and development assistance to reduce poverty in the developing world. The MDG's (United Nations, 2006) and the Dakar Goals (UNESCO, 2000) associated with 'Education for All' are quite explicit on the need to universalize participation in basic education and achieve gender equity throughout the school systems in many countries around the world. Many, particularly developing countries, committed to these ideals since achieving the goals is seen as an essential component of any effort to reduce poverty, increase equity and transform the developmental prospects of individuals and nation states (EFA, 2000).

While useful to ensure access for all, a human rights perspective focuses primarily on enrolment sometimes to the exclusion of discourses on progression, completion, retention and performance, especially as these pertain to girls.

The Economic Development Discourse on Education

An alternative view links with and justifies access to education based on imperatives or arguments for development. Nelson Mandela (cited in Earle, 2007: 256) stated that "access to education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." It has the potential to stimulate change and to be a building block toward improving the lives of individuals, families, and communities. For Lewin, (2007), access to basic education lies at the heart of development. He says that lack of education is both a part of the definition of poverty as well as a means for its reduction. He argues that linking access to the development agenda is important, in order to sustain and create meaningful access to education. In his view, this link might be critical to long term improvements in productivity, the reduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, the empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality (Lewin, 2007).

Like the human rights discourse, the economic discourse is limited in that it focuses mainly on the economic benefits of education and foregrounds success as an outcome that might lead to economic growth and development without considering the conditions and the social and cultural issues that might constrain success. Success in the case of an economic development discourse instance directly relates to economic value and contribution by the individual to the economic health of a society, sometimes to the exclusion of individual health and well-being.

The Human Development and Capability Discourse on Education

A third view, articulated by scholars such as Amartya Sen (1989, 1999, 2003) and Nussbaum (2000) proposes an expanded notion of access to education and development (and by implication its link to poverty reduction). Central to Sen's argument is the call for flexibility in approaches to poverty reduction and a shift away from rigid policy frameworks that emphasize provision of public services towards one that focuses on political empowerment, and how in this shift, gender issues are central. His discourse on capabilities shifts emphasis from human rights to human development and capabilities. Sen (1989) defines human development as the process of enlarging a person's "functionings and capabilities to function, the range of things that a person could do and be in her life," (in Fukuda-Parr, 2003: 304-305). To Sen, a human development approach is premised on the notion that the purpose of development is to improve "human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do, such as to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable, and to participate in community life" (in Fukuda-Parr, 2003: 304). Development then attempts to eradicate the blockages that preclude people from reaching their full potential and goals; critical blockages being illiteracy, poverty, lack of access to material resources and lack of political and civil freedoms (Fukuda-Parr, 2003). Seen from this viewpoint, development is about removing obstacles to what a person can do or become in life.

Not only is gender equity central in Sen's conception of capabilities, but also the role of collective agency (Fukuda-Parr, 2003). Sen (1993:30) defines capabilities as a "person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being." Thus, capabilities are opportunities or freedoms to achieve what an individual reflectively considers valuable. In evaluating learning, education or schooling, it is therefore important to assess not what money or happiness an individual derives, but the range of valued opportunities, and the freedoms that will support the

connection between these valued opportunities and outcomes or capabilities and functionings. Equality (for example, gender equality) should thus not be evaluated according to preferences or desires; rather equality should be considered in relation to capabilities, which is a range of valued 'beings and doings' available to the individual.

Sen's (2002) conception of human development distinguishes two central features: the 'evaluative aspect' and the 'agency aspect'. The evaluative aspect is concerned with improving human lives as an overt and measureable development objective. Sen proposes that the most critical of these objectives includes the capacity to live a long and healthy life, to be educated, and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living (Fukuda-Parr, 2003). Freedoms also include the potential for public and civil participation. Thus, development should be evaluated by advances in human well-being and not merely by advances in the economy as a measure of real progress (Haq & Sen, cited in United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1999). Put differently, success becomes evaluated by a change in human lives rather than by the dominant measures that focus on economic growth. The human development approach thus is striking in its emphasis on assessing development by how well it expands people's capabilities. Development becomes unjust and discriminatory if, for example, most women are excluded from its benefits (United Nations Development Programme 1995 cited in Fukuda-Parr, 2003: 308).

The second, 'agency aspect', concerns what and how people can contribute to change in their own lives. This happens at the structural level (policy and political) as well as the individual (agency) level (United Nations Development Programme, 1995). The human development approach shares with other approaches the idea that investing in people's education and health is a powerful means to achieve overall economic and social progress in society. But the human development approach goes further in at least two ways: first in its concern with the role of collective human agency for changing policy, social commitment, and norms, and second, in its concern with human rights (Fukuda-Parr 2003: 309). Human beings can be agents of change through both individual and collective action.

This perspective combines human rights and well-being in a discourse that includes economic well-being, but not to the exclusion of other forms of individual development. It places the individual at the centre of education and development discourses. Success in this instance is measured through assessing the individual's functioning to contribute to personal and collective action and well-being. Such a "capability" approach offers ways to consider education beyond its economic value; to also consider its instrumental, positional, and intrinsic value (Unterhalter and Brighouse, 2003 in Chisholm and September, 2004:88).

A limitation in Sen's capability approach lies in its inability to explain individual and collective differences in society that might preclude people from achieving full functioning. As it pertains to education, this discourse underplays the role of external forces that constrain progression, retention, completion and performance especially as it relates to female education.

Nonetheless, Unterhalter and Brighouse, (2003 in Chisholm and September, 2005:89) state that Sen's capabilities approach is a useful conceptual lens that helps to consider access and development beyond economic and rights-based benefits. They propose that education in respect of gender should be considered or measured in terms of achievement concerning intrinsic, instrumental and positional values.

Any discussion on retention would not be complete without including factors that militate against learners remaining in school for its duration. Having examined discourses and debates that shape education in general, I examine discourses on drop-out. I begin with a general discussion and follow this with a section that examines drop-out factors with special reference to females.

2.3 Factors shaping Drop-Out in Education

The need for education is critical, as for some, education may be more than just an opportunity; it may be a chance for survival. The statement "everyone has the right to education" was written in 1948 by the United Nations in Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights. Although education is a human right, in many countries worldwide, this right has yet to become practically exercised or realised.

Household income is found to be an important factor in determining access and retention. This is because schooling incurs a range of costs (unforeseen or hidden), particularly at the initial stage when learners enter school each year. These costs include, for example, school fees, as well as important (yet often hidden) costs for uniforms, travel, school resources; and the opportunity costs of sending a child to school. Household income also impacts school experiences in that it may affect the age at which children enter school for the first time, whether they are able to sustain regular attendance and whether or not they may be affected by temporary or permanent withdrawal (Croft, 2002).

Household income is integrally linked to the economic health of a family. A number of studies⁵ highlight the link between not only poverty and school drop-out, but also exclusion from school. Hunt & May make the point that poverty is “the most common primary and contributory reason for students to be out of school” (2003: 5). They suggest that poverty might be the most compelling reason why learners not only drop out of school but also fail to progress smoothly through school as intended.

In addition to household income, research highlights a number of important links between education and rites of passage ceremonies which mark the move from childhood to adulthood, all of which are reported to impact on retention, progression, and drop-out from school. One group of studies reveal that ceremonies and preparations for rites of passage often overlap with the school calendar, thus increasing absenteeism and potential drop-out from school (Syongho, 1998 cited in Ackers et al, 2001; Colclough, 2000; Boyle et al, 2002; Nekatibeb, 2002; Kane, 2004). A study by Colclough (2000) found that boys and girls in Guinea who undertook initiation ceremonies had school disruptions because these ceremonies sometimes lasted for up to a month and took place during term time. This often led to drop-out, especially amongst girls as it was considered ‘shameful’ for them to return to school.

⁵Birdsall, Levine, Ibrahim, 2005; Boyle, Brock, Mace & Sibbons 2002; Brown & Park, 2002; Bruneforth, 2006; Cardoso & Verner, 2007; Gakuru cited in Ackers, Migoli & Nzomo 2001: 369; Dachi & Garrett, 2003; Hunter & May, 2003; Porteus, Clacherty, Mdiya, Pelo, Matsai, Qwabe & Donald 2000; Ranasinghe & Hartog, 2002; UIS & UNICEF, 2005; Vavrus, 2002), Porteus et al (2000: 10)

A second group of studies highlights how rites of passage ceremonies impacted on the way families prioritized finances. For example, a study in Guinea by Kane (2004) found that many families prioritized initiation ceremonies to the disadvantage of school attendance. Put differently, parents chose to spend money on initiation ceremonies rather than children's education.

A third group traces the implications and meanings of rites of passage; namely, induction into adulthood. While positive, these practices have the unintended consequence of making children view themselves as adults who can make independent decisions about their future (Kane & DeBrun, 1993; Thomas, 2002 cited in Kane, 2004). For example, Nekatibeb (2002) found that after initiation some communities in Ethiopia accepted that such girls are adults who need not attend school.

Another body of studies in sub-Saharan Africa highlights the link between poverty and dropping out from school (Birdsall, 2005; Boyle, 2002; Brown & Park, 2002; Bruneforth, 2006; Cardoso & Verner, 2007; Gakuru, cited in Ackers, 2001: 369; Dachi & Garrett, 2003; Hunter & May, 2003; Porteus, 2000; Ranasinghe & Hartog, 2002; UIS & UNICEF, 2005; Vavrus, 2002). Porteus, (2000: 10), whilst describing exclusions rather than drop-out per se, paints poverty as 'the most common primary and contributory reason for students to be out of school'.

2.4 Factors shaping Female Drop-Out in Education

A number of studies indicate that pregnancy is a significant cause of drop-out from school by teenage girls⁶. Dunne & Leach (2005) found that pregnancy was the most significant factor that disrupted female learners' progression through school in Botswana and Ghana. Another study in South Africa by Hunt (2007) found that while according to regulations students may not be discriminated against because of pregnancy, in practice students were nonetheless expected to leave school as soon as their pregnancy showed.

⁶ Cardoso & Verner, 2007; Fentiman, 1999; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Hunter & May, 2003; Njau & Wamahiu, 1998 cited in Nekatibeb, 2002; Dunne & Leach, 2005; Brock & Cammish, 1997; Kane, 2004; Boyle et al, 2002.

Grant & Hallman, (2004; 2006) found other contributory factors that include poor school performance, low economic status, and family migratory lifestyles in a study in South Africa. They also found that in some cases, institutionally-led discriminatory practices also acted as a factor in discouraging girls from remaining in school (Grant & Hallman, 2006).

Like Hunt, Lloyd and Mensch (1995, in Grant & Hallman, 2006) found that lack of social and economic opportunities for girls, early pregnancy and domestic demands such as household chores all place female learners at a disadvantage in that they impact on school performance.

Laws regarding pregnancy in school are found in countries such as South Africa (Hunt, 2007), Malawi (Kane, 2004: 71) and Botswana (Dunne & Leach, 2005: 28). Malawi and Botswana temporarily exclude both male and female. Dunne & Leach's (2005) research found that in practice, girls rather than boys were mainly targeted. As a consequence, the drop-out rate for girls was much higher than for boys.

Gender disparity cuts across a wide range of constraints that lead to drop-out. For example, Colclough, Rose & Tembon (2000) describes gendered cultural practices, which differentially influence female and male educational chances and experiences. Studies indicate the preference by many households to educate boys over girls, with girls' education often deemed less important and drop-out consequently more likely (Admassie, 2003; Boyle, 2002; Kobiané, 2002; Odaga and Heneveld, 1995, cited in Nekatibeb, 2002; Rose & Al Samarrai, 2001). For example, the gendered division of labour in many homes often sees girls taking on household and child care duties, which not only reduce their attendance but also lead to them dropping out entirely.

Another important factor relates to views on the value of educating girls. In a six country comparative analysis, Boyle, Brock, Mace & Sibbons (2002) found that households tended to value boys' education over that of girls, associating it with greater future economic rewards. Another study in Ethiopia by Colclough, et al., (2002) found that the reasons put forward for not investing in girls had to do with their future not lying in income support for the family. They describe how some parents in Ethiopia claimed that twelve years of schooling would mean their daughters could not perform housework and as a result may not be able to find suitable

husbands. Families in the study viewed educating girls as a poor investment because it was assumed they would marry and leave home, bringing the benefits of education to the husband's family instead (Colclough, 2000). Similarly in Guinea, parents mentioned that primary schooling was irrelevant to girls' future roles. Both studies thus indicate a lack of motivation by parents towards educating girls, mainly because they saw it as a waste of financial resources.

Meerman (2005); Lewis and Lockheed (2006) in their study conducted in rural Tunisia on female school participation at secondary school level state that social exclusion due to immutable factors, such as gender, ethnicity, race and linguistic membership are 'ranked' as contributing to low educational participation by girls and members of subgroups in that country.

The link between education and marriage potential was also highlighted by International Labour Organization/International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC, 2004). This study emphasizes the propensity for girls to be excluded or withdrawn from school earlier than boys, 'in the belief that, as a girl, she does not need to be educated or indeed should not be too educated in case it blights her marriage potential' (2004: 19).

2.5 Retention in Education

Concerns have been raised in many international research reports pertaining to keeping children in school once they have accessed formal education (DFID, 2006; UNESCO EFA, 2010; MDG's 2010). Lotz-Sisitka (2010:210) states, "[T]he most recent Education for All Global Monitoring Report discusses the importance of education that reaches the marginalised and makes the important point that education enables children to have access to a wider range of life choices and chances. Failure to retain children in school expands the chances of their exclusion and marginalisation." The former Minister of Education in South Africa, Naledi Pandor defines retention as "the continued participation of a learner in the formal schooling system until the completion of the compulsory schooling phase" (DoE, 2007: 3). Compulsory schooling in a South African context does not include the Further Education and Training Band (FET), which is the stage at which many children 'disappear' or drop out from the school system. Using such a definition would obscure some of the more critical discussions on what retention means and how it should be operationalized. Retention, therefore, is not only a matter of keeping children *in*

school; it is more complex as it is imbued with different meanings, all of which have implications for ways in which education is conceptualised, planned for, and managed.

Different scholars emphasize different aspects of the term ‘retention’ Common to all is the notion that retention is context specific, fluid, and complex. Brooks (2003) views retention as “social promotion”; that is the policy or practice of promoting students even when they failed academically. Bean (2001) characterizes it as normal progression, which is when learners enrol each semester until graduation (and may carry forward courses they failed). A third emphasizes grade retention, in which learners continue with their age peers regardless of academic performance (Natale, 1991, Alexandra and Karl, 2002). A fourth category would be where learners are only promoted on merit having passed all subjects.

Within the development discourse, debates have been not only on how to maintain children who already have access to school but also how to expand the number of those who enter school (Lotz-Sisitka, 2010, UNESCO, 2009). Lotz-Sisitka (2010) argues that far too few questions are posed by policy makers beyond the need for physical access. In the main, retention is associated with keeping children in the schooling system regardless of (a) how they progress, and (b) the circumstances that create exclusions. Lotz-Sisitka (2010) does not discount the need for initial access to school. Rather, she calls for conceptions that extend the notion of retention to include epistemological access and relevance as key ingredients.

Lotz-Sisitka (2010) makes a second point relevant to this study by proposing that retention discourses ought to be closely related to quality and relevance. In so doing, she relies on Popkewitz’s notion of ‘social epistemological access’, which he describes as “making the knowledge of schooling as a social practice accessible to sociological enquiry” (Popkewitz, 1991:15 in Lotz-Sisitka, 2010: 215). A social epistemological perspective takes account of the historical and socially constitutive nature of the power-knowledge relationship and as such recognizes the relational and social embeddedness of knowledge in practices on the one hand and the political and constitutive nature of pedagogy on the other hand. Retention in this instance is understood to be continuous participation by learners in the formal schooling system; one that

incorporates all relevant structures⁷ that support learners to completion. This perspective moves the focus from only considering the number of children in school to understanding that pedagogical processes (content, processes, structure, pacing) also shape experiences that include or exclude children and thus have implications for not only the outcomes of schooling but also retention and progression through school. Popkewitz's conception thus shifts the emphasis from physical access to a discourse on retention and access that includes the examination of participation and subsequent action in school (Popkewitz, 2000; Lotz-Sisitka, 2010).

The following section highlights discourses on the benefits of education for girls.

2.5 Benefits and Value of Female Education

Historically, less attention has been given to the education of girls/women than to that of boys/men (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Experiences in Namibia, for example, show that if parents were to choose which of their children to educate, girls would likely be left out of school (UNICEF, 2003:5). The obstacles to girls' access to education around the world have long been recognized as significant barriers to social and economic progress (Murphy, Belmonte & Nelson 2009). Girls' education is associated not only with returns of increasing income and economic growth, but also with health benefits, AIDS prevention, the empowerment of women, and prevention of violence against women. These are seen as indicating economic progress and development benefits, as detailed below.

Economic Benefits

Education is a tool that can be used to increase economic status globally. The Global Campaign for Education (2010) notes that when individuals have the opportunity to seek educational advantages such as learning about basic life skills or learning to read, poverty declines and economies grow. Cotton (2007) notes an increase in poverty reduction when countries educate girls and women. Educating girls and women has, moreover, been identified as the best way to break the cycle of ill health, hunger, and poverty (Satyarthi, 2005 cited in Earle, 2007). Earle (2007:250) states that investing in girl's education can be the single most effective way to reduce

⁷The UNESCO (2010) report refers to this as a conception of retention that includes "relevance, structure, task-oriented classroom environment, and teachers' subject mastery.

poverty. In reducing poverty through education, there is a potential for economic growth. Every additional year of girls' schooling has a direct impact on economic growth.

Health Benefits

Education is viewed as a vital component in health delivery; especially education for girls and women. The Global Health Report (2010) reiterates that the lack of education poses health risks and enrolling girls in school is one of the most effective ways to benefit their health. Literate women are more likely to use family planning (Luthra, 2007). Family planning reduces the number of pregnancies and births a woman will have, which lowers the chance of maternal deaths caused by birth complications. Educated women are likely to seek medical care when necessary (Luthra, 2007). In general, education of girls and women improves the health status of themselves, their families, and potentially their communities (Luthra, 2007).

Individuals, especially women, who have a basic education and become parents, are more competent to provide care to their children (Veneman, 2007). Education provides knowledge of life skills such as hygiene and nutrition, which can be practiced and passed on. Girls and women who are educated are found to marry later in life and have smaller families (Cotton, 2007). Women with education understand the need to manage the size of their family commensurate with their capacities (Veneman, 2007).

A major effect of educating females is that educated women are more likely to send their own children to school (Veneman, 2007). If a mother understands the importance of education and its benefits, she is more inclined to make every attempt to send her own children to school.

Conversely, UNESCO (2005) notes some of the disadvantages of women who are not educated, noting that children whose mothers have no education are twice as likely to be out of school as those whose mothers have some education. Uneducated women also have higher fertility rates, lower opportunities for financial independence and earning power, increased rates of HIV/AIDS, and higher infant, child and maternal mortality rates.

The above discussion therefore indicates that girls' education is not just a matter of improving earning potential: in the long term, its power extends to matters of life and death.

The next section highlights literature focusing on female retention.

2.6 Factors shaping Retention in Education

There seems to be relatively little literature on factors that shape the retention of learners in school, particularly literature that concerns females. Much of the literature uses the notion of 'retention' to activate discussion of problems associated with drop-out rather than aspects that keep learners *in* school. Few studies emphasize factors that *sustain* learners at school for its duration. Put differently, the dominant literature examines reasons why learners are not retained in school, highlighting factors that contribute to dropping out. Much of this dominant work reports structural factors (e.g. gender disparity) that preclude school completion; emphasizing the importance of removing these hindrances, especially for girls.

The above notwithstanding, some literature does describe factors that impact retention. Retention is implied rather than addressed directly in this body of literature. This literature emphasizes learner achievement and academic success with little or no discussion of the link between access, retention, and academic success.

Value Impact

Education is an important ingredient in the development of any nation. This is because education enlarges people's choices in life thereby enabling them to have access to essential resources for a decent standard of living (Andoh, Bisiakoh, and Afranie, 2012:1). Sen (2002) argues that education is to be considered as a component in development and one that enlarges people's capabilities. He argues, too, that people engage in activities they believe in or that will lead to desired goals or outcomes; assuming motivational factors either internal or external that drive this belief. The value placed on education, therefore, becomes an important factor shaping retention.

Holden (2003) makes a distinction between the intrinsic, extrinsic and contextual value of education. She suggests that students' drive always is governed by some kind of reward. To her, students who are extrinsically motivated or driven engage in tasks to obtain extrinsic rewards, such as praise and positive feedback from the teacher and parents. Students intrinsically motivated are regulated by rewards that include developing understanding, having a sense of accomplishment, and enjoyment. Students who are contextually motivated do something to obtain contextual rewards, such as acknowledgement from parents, peers, sense of achievement resulting from overcoming a challenging task and seeing the usefulness of the task.

Goodchild (2001) also relates extrinsic and intrinsic value with ego and task orientation and with performance and learning goals. According to him a learner is extrinsically motivated when s/he does something because it leads to an outcome external to the task, such as gaining approval or proving self-worth. A learner is intrinsically driven when s/he considers the task to have a value for its own sake; s/he engages in the task in order to understand or for enjoyment.

Family Involvement in Education

The influence of family in relation to education access, attendance, performance, and retention cannot be underestimated. Families can have a positive or negative influence. The circumstances in which families find themselves can affect children's education. Hallam (1996:139) argues, "... parental support and interest are important in explaining the attitudes of pupils towards school." Jacob (2010) highlights that parental aspirations and expectations are critical factors in learner achievement. That is, parents are the key predictors of their children's educational attainment.

Studies by Gill & Reynolds (1999), Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland (2004) and Davis-Kean (2005) also point to parent levels of education as a determinant in children's level of attainment. They report that parents who are of lower socioeconomic status, as well as parents who have completed lower levels of school, expect their children to complete less education than parents who are of higher socioeconomic status and have attained more education.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) found that parent-child conversations in the home were valuable, in terms of enhancing children's school achievement, suggesting that schools should

encourage parents to talk to their children about school activities at home. This signifies that ‘at home good parenting’ has a positive effect on children’s achievement and adjustment in school.

Bastiani (2003) found that parent participation in school also positively affected learner participation and achievement. He also suggests that parental school involvement resulted in more positive learner attitudes and behaviour. Hill and Craft (2004) also report on the link between parental involvement and low student achievement or engagement (and by implication, retention). In fact, several researchers consider parental involvement to be the missing link in educational equity (Colombo, 2006).

Despite the inability of researchers to clearly define parental involvement, it may be characterized as the level of investment a parent (caregiver) makes regarding their child’s education both at school and home (Larocque, et al., 2011). Gonzalez and Wolters (2006) assume that parental involvement is multidimensional and that it contributes to learner motivation, thus affecting learner performance, which includes retention.

Teacher Impact on Education

Teacher quality is the most important school resource input. Different studies show that amongst the resource inputs, teacher quality is the most important predictor of learner achievement (Goldhaber, 2003). Hanushek (2005) and Goe (2007) include teacher qualification, teacher attitudes and attributes, expectations from learners, and classroom practices as factors characterizing teacher quality. Classroom practices in this instance include but are not limited to teacher willingness to explain, discuss and respond to questions by learners.

Peer Support

Peer effects in education are generally accepted as important. The effect of peer groups on learner academic performance plays a prominent role in various education policy debates. Many current education interventions, for example, school choice, ability tracking, and formative action have the potential to influence student outcomes through their impacts on peer composition. Some studies show positive effects of peer quality on academic achievement

(McEwan, 2003; Kang, 2007, Angrist and Lang, 2004, Lefgren, 2004). Despite this, there is no general consensus on the scope and direction of the effect peers have on one another.

Bullying

The presence of bullying behaviour in school has been shown to have adverse effects on many areas of a child's life (Olweus, 1993). In their publication entitled *Youth Bullying*, the American Medical Association stated, "bullying may have serious effects on the psychological functioning, academic work, and physical health of children that are targeted" (AMA, 2002:11). Being bullied has been found to lead to lower self-esteem (Delfabbro, et al., 2006; National Education Association, 2003), higher rates of depression (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivera & Keric, 2005; Nansel, Graig, Overpeck, Saluja & Ruan, 2004), loneliness (Glew, et al., 2004; Nansel et al., 2001), and anxiety (Delfabbro et al., 2006). In an article aimed at increasing public awareness on the issue of bullying, the National Education Association (2003:7) states, "[S]tudents who are targets of repeated bullying behavior can, and often do, experience extreme fear and stress. They may be afraid to go to school or even to ride the bus to school. Once there, they may be afraid to be in certain places in the building, such as restrooms. They may exhibit physical symptoms of illness and may not be able to concentrate on schoolwork."

In conclusion, this study engaged as theoretical framework, the human development capability approach of Amartya Sen. This framework was chosen because it models how the literature reviewed above relates to the research questions.

Sen takes issue with approaches that evaluate social policy by focusing on the aggregated benefits an initiative or individual has for the whole society (Sen, 1999; Sen, 1992). According to Sen's views, for example, investing in education for women or girls is justified by its benefits not for them, but for the societies they live in. These approaches to evaluation do not look at whether any adult or child has been discriminated against in the provision of education, because the education is not for those individuals but for a larger grouping – the community, nation, and future generations. Here there might be a weak interest in gender equality in education, but only insofar as it is needed to ensure a range of social benefits.

The capability approach, by contrast, looks at a relationship between the resources people have and what they can do with them. As Sen puts it, in a good theory of wellbeing, 'account would have to be taken not only of the primary goods the persons respectively hold, but also of the relevant personal characteristics that govern the conversion of primary goods into the person's ability to promote her ends' (Sen 1999:74). What matters to people is that they are able to achieve actual functionings that is 'the actual living that people manage to achieve' (Sen, 1999, 73). The concept of 'functionings'... reflects the various things a person may value doing or being ranging from the basic (for example being adequately nourished) to the very complex (for example being able to take part in the life of the community). But when we make interpersonal comparisons of wellbeing we should find a measure which incorporates references to functionings, but also one that reflects the intuition that what matters is not merely achieving the functioning but being free to achieve it. So the capability approach looks at the freedom to achieve actual functions that one can have a reason to value (Sen, 1999:73) or, to put it another way, 'substantive freedoms, the capabilities, to choose a life one has reason to value' (Sen, 1999:74). A person's capability refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (Sen, 1999:75).

There is a paucity of literature that emphasizes retention factors that sustain learners at school, a gap the current study addresses.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study sought to understand factors that shape retention of female learners in selected secondary schools in Alimosho Region, Lagos State, Nigeria. The research participants were final year senior secondary school learners, as already noted in Chapter 1, whose schools had some of the highest female attrition rate in the region. This chapter provides the research design and outlines the decisions and choices made to attain the research goal. This includes decisions on the research site and sample, the data gathering techniques, the data analysis process, the research ethics and validity and reliability of the data. I end this chapter with a brief description of the limitations of the study.

3.2 Methodology

A qualitative orientation to the research was most appropriate given that I wanted to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of knowledgeable participants who had experience of the phenomenon. Qualitative research is any kind of research that produces findings from real-world settings, wherein the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally (Patton, 2001:39). Grix (2004) defines qualitative research as research that involves the interpretation of data whereby the researcher analyses cases in their social and cultural context. Merriam (2001:5) gives a similar definition and makes the point that qualitative research is an all-embracing concept that interchangeably denotes naturalistic research, interpretive research, field study, participant observation, inductive research, case study, and ethnography. This orientation assumes that people are a product of their consciousness, where there is an interconnection between the world and individual and in which reality is multilayered and complex (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 22).

In qualitative research, subjective and personal views and experiences are acknowledged. Qualitative research, therefore, is concerned with exploring people's life history or everyday behaviour in the context in which they make meaning of their lives (Silverman, 2000:1). This type of research allows the researcher to study selected cases (defined later in this section) in depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:5), and draws on a variety of methods to understand the

phenomenon. To Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research is best for situations when we want to know the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives of the target population. It allows the research participants to speak and makes it easier to access the meaning that people have constructed (McMillian & Schumacher, 1993). Working within a qualitative research design enables the researcher to participate in the world of the individual, to understand the experiences and perspectives from the participant's points of view (Cantrell, 1993, Creswell, 1994, Fields, 1995, Savin-Baden, 2000, and Merriam, 2002). In the case of this study, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate as it focused on the context as it influenced the retention of female learners in some secondary schools in Alimosho Region, Lagos State, Nigeria (Maxwell, 1996).

Within general qualitative research methodology, an interpretivist approach was most relevant since it allowed the researcher to apply reflective interpretation of the phenomenon (Gall, M.D., Borg, W.R., & Gall, J.P. 1996). Erickson (as cited in Gall et. al., 1996) defines interpretive research as the study of the immediate and local meanings of social activities for the actors involved in them.

An interpretive approach provides opportunities for looking deeply into the world of participants; their experiences and actions. Such an orientation accepts the inseparability between values and facts and attempts to understand reality, especially the behaviour of people, within a particular social context (Cantrell, 1993). According to Cantrell interpretive researchers are keen to understand the meaning people make of daily occurrences and how they interpret these within the contextual social and natural setting that they find themselves in. Interpretive research regards people as agents of creation of meaning in their settings and these meanings are valuable and useful for research (Janse van Rensburg, 2001:16). Such an approach acknowledges that people's interpretations and interactions with their situations create their social reality.

The epistemological assumption in this paradigm is that events are understood through the "individual's mental process of interpretation, which is influenced by and interacts with social context" (Cantell, 1993:83). Cantell maintains that reality within the boundary of the perspective of interpretivism is "multiple and divergent" (Cantell, 1993:83). This means that reality is not

only situated and contextual but also that people may experience the same phenomenon differently. Locality is based on social meaning and these meanings are not static.

My interest was in contextual meaning-making from the learners' perspectives and experiences; hence the purposive sample and size, as I explain later on in the chapter (Janse van Rensburg, 2001). As this study sought also to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of those experiencing it, such an approach provided the researcher with a way to understand how people interpret their experience through their own words and the meanings they attribute to this experience (Merriam, 2002).

In my study, therefore, qualitative interpretive research offered the opportunity to gain insight into the world of participants (their attitudes, motivations, aspirations, expectations, culture or lifestyle, concerns and value systems).

In conducting a qualitative inquiry, a case study approach is one method that can accommodate a variety of research designs, data collection techniques, epistemological orientations and disciplinary perspectives. I used a case study approach since it "provides unique examples of real situations" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, and 2000:181). A case study enables a researcher to "penetrate situations in a way that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis" (Cohen et al., 2000:181).

Human development and capability approaches provide the theoretical framework for the study. It is premised on the notion that the purpose of development is to improve human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do, such as to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable, and to participate in community life. Therefore, this theoretical framework helped me to understand how human development and functioning attempts to eradicate the blockages that preclude people from reaching their full potential and goals, critical blockages being illiteracy, poverty, lack of access to material resources and lack of political and civil freedoms. In this case, human development and functioning were used to identify factors that shape female learners' school access, retention, progression and throughput. Consideration

of human development and functioning goes beyond viewing enrolment access in terms of equal numbers of boys and girls.

The focus in this instance was on the phenomenon (namely, female retention in secondary schools) under examination rather than the number of schools or participants. The study used purposively selected schools, not as cases but as sites to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that shape the retention of female learners in educational settings.

3.3 Research Site and Sample

Silverman (2000:159) defines sampling as the procedure to select a subset from the population. According to Patton (2002:230), “purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under scrutiny.” It can be defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, and/or institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s questions (Maxwell 1997:87). Sampling in the case of this study included selecting particular schools as well as particular groups of learners.

Sampling the Research Site

The study was conducted in Alimosho Region, Lagos State. This region was selected due to the high female attrition rates relative to the rest of Lagos State. However, the schools were selected independently of identified related challenges that impede the retention of some female learners. The said schools follow the Nigerian schooling system that is, (6-3-3-4) system. In this system a learner is expected to have completed the six years of primary school and three years of junior secondary before graduating to the last three years being the senior secondary within the age range of 17-18 years. And finally, a Nigerian learner is also expected to spend at least four years in a higher institution which may be a university, polytechnic or a college of education.

Within this region two schools were purposively selected, using female attrition rates as the main criterion. The region where the study is located has some of the highest attrition rates, making it an interesting site to gain insight into factors that *retain* the few who remain in school for its duration. I also worked in this region - an aspect that made it easier for me to gain access to the

departmental structures from which I needed to obtain permission to conduct the study, as well as guaranteed full cooperation from principals and staff.

The original plan was to include only two schools in the study. However, I decided to sample a larger population of females in SS3 as phase 1 of the research process, the consequence of which was the selection of two additional schools.

Therefore, sampling schools took two forms. The first comprised four schools for the survey component of the research. From these, two were selected for focus group discussions and individual interviews with a select number of learners, and a biology and English teacher.

Sampling Participants

As in the case of schools, participant sampling took two forms related to the two main stages of the research. The first stage included obtaining data from a large sample of female learners and the second stage involved obtaining data from a small sample of learners and two teachers.

Sampling participants for the questionnaire

First, I sampled all SS3 learners in the four participating schools. SS3 is the final year of secondary school, making this population appropriate for understanding how it is learners were able to remain in school amidst high attrition rates not only in the region but also especially in their respective schools. In total 85 learners participated by completing a questionnaire, details of which follow in the next section. Criteria were obvious given the focus of the study: being female and in the final year of school.

Focus Group Participants

As already indicated above, two of the four schools were targeted for in-depth focus group discussions and individual interviews. Ten learners were selected from each school for this process. To make the selection I used the results from the questionnaire. I looked for divergent responses to questions, openness in the responses, and their understanding of the research focus.

Individual Interview Participants

Four learners were selected for individual interviews; two from each of the schools that participated in focus group discussions. I used the focus group discussion to make the selection. The choice of the four was based on their perceived honesty, levels of participation, interest in the topic, and their responses during the discussions.

3.4 Research Process

This study included a pilot and main phase, the latter of which comprised two stages.

Pilot Study

Maxwell (1996:45) posits that conducting a pilot helps the researcher understand the concepts and theories held by people one is researching. It helps the researcher understand the meaning that these phenomena and events have for actors who are involved in them and the perspectives that inform actor's actions. In the case of this study, I conducted a pilot in one school where I trialled the survey and individual interview schedule with two learners. The results from the pilot served three immediate purposes, apart from those mentioned above. First, it helped me confirm the feasibility of the research in that learners were eager to respond. Second, the pilot helped me refine the research instruments. Finally, this phase of the study helped me understand the socio-cultural context of the study, which included understanding how female learners would respond to a male researcher. The upshot was the inclusion of a school counsellor in the focus group discussions to create ease and build trust between the researcher and participants before the individual interviews.

The two learners who participated in this phase of the study were included in the subsequent focus group discussions and one in an individual interview in the main study.

The Main Study

This component of the research included a questionnaire to a large population in four schools followed by focus group discussions and individual interviews with a select group of learners and with two teachers from two of the four selected schools. It also included observations in the classes of the two teachers that were interviewed. The fieldwork took approximately three months to complete. Each data gathering methods is explained below.

3.5 Methods of Data Gathering

I employed a variety of methods of data gathering in this study. Table 1 below outlines the data-gathering plan by providing a summary of the focus and method.

Table 2: Data Collection Plan

Data Focus	Data Collection Method
a) Participants' Profile	• Questionnaire • Focus group discussion • Individual interviews
b) Participants' prevailing school experiences that shape their school retention	• Questionnaire • Focus group discussion with the selected sample • Individual interviews with the selected sample • Observation and field notes during the learners' biology and English classes in the two focus schools
c) Ways in which learners describe the factors that shape their [girls'] school retention, inhibiting factors and steps/support they need to achieve their [girls'] dream	• Focus group discussion with the selected sample • Individual interviews with selected sample • Interview with biology teacher from school one • Interview with English teacher from school two

Questionnaires

The initial stage of the main study relied on a questionnaire that was conducted in four schools in the region. Munn & Drever, (1990), Gilham, (2000) and Cohen, (2007) agree that questionnaires can reach a large number of participants and provide richly descriptive data. Anderson & Silverman (2000:119) suggest that if a researcher's set of questions is well constructed, valid data may be collected in a simple, cheap and timely way.

Given the nature of the study, only girls in SS3, the final year of secondary school, were targeted. The purpose of this survey was to gather information that would provide a contextual profile of broad patterns of student experiences, beliefs, attitudes, views and decisions relevant to retention decisions or culture.

One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed, with 85 returned. The results were used descriptively, making this return rate acceptable. Lancet, (2002:145) states that descriptive studies answer six questions; Who?, What?, Why?, When? Where? and So What?. He further argues that descriptive studies provide clues about causes that can be followed up. Descriptive

studies consist of two major groups; those that deal with individuals and those that relate to populations. In the case of this study, the former was used.

The survey contained a combination of open and close-ended questions relating to familial circumstances, religion, economic resources, duties in the home and school, expectations of girls in the community, role models, subject choice, aspirations, and perspectives on teachers and schooling (see Appendix 2). Gall & Borg, (2003), argue that open-ended questions allow the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up. Gall & Borg (2003) also note that since close-ended questions provide a set of answers from which the respondent must choose, they limit responses. I used open and closed questions in this questionnaire, combining their strengths.

This wide survey, as indicated in the sample section above, was also used to assist me in the selection of the participants for the rest of the study.

Focus Group Interviews

The purpose of doing focus group interviews is to “understand what the people experience and perceive about the focus of inquiry, through a process that is open and emergent” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:103). Krueger and Morgan (cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) suggest that it is best that a focus group interview be conducted with not less than four participants. Such an approach to data gathering enables respondents to gain new insights or help them to develop their ideas more clearly (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:104). Kruger and Casey (2000:12) explain that, “focus group interviews work particularly well to determine the perceptions, feelings, and the thinking of people about issues, products, services or opportunities.”

I conducted four focus group interviews in two schools, each comprising five participants. I used results from the questionnaire to make the selection. Each focus group took place after school in the school hall and lasted approximately one-and-a-half hours. School counsellors were present each time.

Questions were focused on broad aspects such as the role of social and cultural practices in advancing or limiting their educational opportunities, family practices and experiences, perspectives of school, and the role of education in their lives (see Appendix 3).

Focus group discussions were recorded so as to allow the researcher to concentrate on the process. Though I would have preferred video recording, the school principals at two schools did not allow video recording so as to ensure confidentiality of the participants, Therefore I used audio recording.

Individual Interviews

According to Patton (2002: 341), “the purpose of the interview is to allow us to enter into another person’s perspective.” Patton argues that interviews give us an opportunity to know what is going on other people’s mind and to capture their perspectives about events. Gillham describes an interview as a “conversation where the interviewer is seeking responses for a particular purpose from the interviewee (2000:1).

I used an in-depth semi-structured interview schedule to gain a detailed picture of four girls’ (two from each school) perspectives and experiences of school, and the factors they propose have enabled them to remain in school. As Silverman (2000:31) noted, semi-structured interviews allow respondents to express themselves more openly than in a structured interview, reflecting the respondents’ own thinking and feelings. Topics were identified from the existing literature, the focus group interviews, as well as from the questionnaire data. They were open-ended in order to foster participants’ descriptions of their own experiences and perspectives (see Appendix 4).

An interview was also conducted with a biology teacher in one school and with an English teacher in the second school. While not the primary source of data, these interviews were used to triangulate information derived from focus group and individual interviews. Permission was sought to audio-record each interview.

3.6 Data Analysis Process

Data analysis was an on-going process throughout the research process. I commenced my data analysis process on the day I conducted my first interview because it is an ongoing process from the beginning of the data collection (Lithman, 2010; Anderson & Arsenault, 1998)). I also employed “interpretation analysis” that guided me in my data analysis (Gall, & Borg, 1996:562). According to Gall et al., interpretation analysis is “... the process of examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied” (1996:562).

In my study all interview data were prepared for analysis by transcribing (verbatim) and translating where applicable. It was arranged and sorted to identify common themes, patterns, differences, and similarities that I used to organize the presentation of the results (Litchman, 2010).

3.7 Verification of Data

To ensure the reliability, credibility, and validity of my study, triangulation of data was applied, seeing that, in qualitative data “validity might be addressed through the depth, richness and scope of the data achieved” (Cohen, et al., 2007:105). Triangulation of data uninfluenced by emotions or personal prejudices of the researcher might also add to its trustworthiness (Cohen, et al., 2007:105). Triangulation is defined as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints cast light upon a topic (Wendy Osen, 2004:3). Silverman (2000) suggests that a study’s validity is enhanced when the researcher actively searches for evidence that contradicts as well as confirms the explanations being developed. Therefore, triangulation uninfluenced by emotions allowed me to cross-check the data by using multiple data collection methods to increase validity of my research.

3.8 Ethical Issues

First, I sought a clearance letter from the Faculty of Education, Rhodes University to conduct research on the approved topic. The clearance letter from the Faculty was taken to the Ministry of Education, Lagos State, Nigeria seeking permission to conduct research in public schools. With the letter of consent from the Ministry of Education, I then approached stakeholders (local

government and regional education department) and school principals. Once their permission was granted, I entered the schools with my letter of introduction to discuss the research.

Female learners were asked for their consent and each was given a letter for their parents requesting permission for their children to participate. All participants were briefed on the objectives, process, and relevance of their participation in the study. I tried as far as possible to enable them to understand what my research is all about and inform them that their participation was voluntary and free without attracting any monetary reward. I ensured they understood that they were free to withdraw from the interview exercises when they felt like doing so. Confidentiality was assured to all participants and privacy and anonymity was provided to protect their identities. The identification of participants and institutions were substituted with fictitious names. The participants were assured that all the information given would only be used for the research purposes and that their permission would be sought when real names were necessary.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

Case studies are known for their lack of generalization because they focus on specific cases and are thus not transferable to other contexts. Each individual experiences a phenomenon in a different way; therefore, comparing individuals with those in other contexts might be difficult.

Another factor that limited my study was being a male researching into the world of female learners; a challenge I needed to confront. I tried as far as possible to be professional, making use of a school counsellor and teacher to help me secure participants' cooperation and thus ensure credible results.

The nonchalant attitudes of some of the participants towards filling in the questionnaires might have impacted negatively on the overall results. This notwithstanding, these data were used descriptively and thus the number returned was sufficient to make the claims presented..

The principals of the selected schools refused the use of an audio-tape for the focus group interviews with students. This meant me having to take annotated notes. Some valuable information may have been compromised even though I worked hard to recall the interviews.

Finally, the study consumed a lot of money, most of which went into airfares from South Africa to Nigeria to collect data, because the site was situated in Lagos state of Nigeria. Without a bursary, this aspect proved to be a challenge in the completion of this study.

This is only an exploratory study and I do not claim to provide definite answers to the questions related to the case, but I believe that these research findings will make a contribution to understanding the factors that shape the retention of secondary school female learners.

CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This study investigated factors that shape female school retention in two selected secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria. As noted in the methodology chapter, the data were derived mainly from three methods; questionnaires, focus group and individual interviews.

To initiate the study and as a first data source, a survey questionnaire was administered to eighty-five SS3 female learners from the *four* selected senior secondary schools. The survey served four related purposes. First, it provided the backdrop to understand factors shaping the retention of a larger population of female learners in schools in the region. Second, it enabled me to select two schools for the in-depth component of the study, namely conducting focus group discussions, individual interviews and brief observations. Third, the results enabled me to select learners for the focus group discussions in each of the participating schools. Finally, I used the results from the survey to develop the questions for the focus group discussions and individual interviews.

The second source of data was derived from focus group discussions conducted with twenty female learners from two of four schools in the study. These schools became the focus of the study due to their high attrition rates relative to the other two schools. Attention to attrition rates (at the sampling phase) became important for understanding factors that enabled some learners to remain despite the overall high attrition around them.

A third source of data was individual interviews conducted with four participants (two in each of the two selected schools) as well as interviews with a biology teacher from the first school and an English teacher from the second school.

A key finding in this study as I outline below, was consensus among participants (including the two educators from the two selected sites) about factors that enable participating female learners to remain in school.

I present the results in three board sections, with each offering a different layer of analysis.

Section 4.2 presents the results of the questionnaire data that highlights trends from a large sample of 85 learners. These results provided insight into widely held perspectives that enabled me to situate the results from the focus group and individual interviews within a broader context.

Section 4.3 offers more detailed perspectives derived from focus group discussions as well as from interviews with teachers. In these, I probed some of the trends that emerged from the questionnaires. This section also includes observational data. This level of analysis offers insight into respondents' perspectives on how communities view education in general and girls' education in particular. This insight is pursued with the view to better understand retention of girls in school.

The final section in this chapter, section 4.4, which includes case studies of four learners with data derived from individual interviews, homes in on individual experiences that highlight family perspectives on girls and education. This offers the closest-focusing lens for scrutinizing the phenomenon under study.

While I separate data for the purposes of presenting the results, I understand their interrelatedness and combine the findings in the analysis and discussion in Chapter 5.

4.2 Questionnaire Results

This section presents results from self-reported questionnaire data. It provides insight into aspects that shape access to school in general and retention in particular. I begin with a demographic profile that includes learners' age, language proficiency, and transportation and distance to school. This is followed with the presentation of results in *five* themes; namely *familial circumstances, factors shaping retention, aspiration and careers, the importance of role models, and factors inhibiting participants from fully participating in school*. Each theme includes a number of categories.

4.2.1 Demographic Profile

The demographic profile includes the participant's age, language spoken, mode of transportation and distance covered to school.

Age of Participants

The age of the females in this component of the study ranged from 14 to 19 years of age, as shown in the Table 3 below. Three learners did not identify their age.

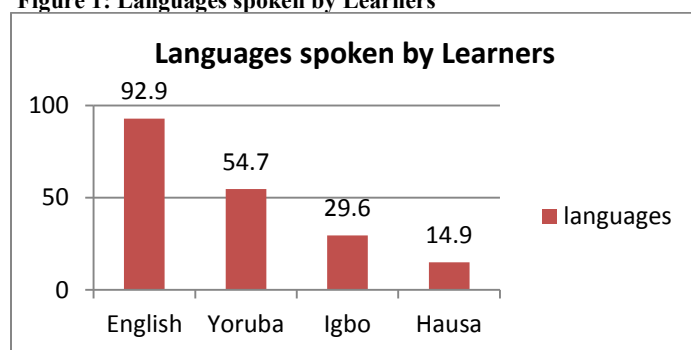
Table 3: Age of Participants

Age Range	Frequency	%
14-15	28	32.9
16-17	46	57.8
18-19	8	9.4
Missing	3	5.9
Total	85	100

Language Proficiency

The majority (92.6%) of learners reported that they speak (and are proficient in) English which is the medium of instruction and a core subject in Nigerian schools. Many learners also reported to speaking at least one other major indigenous language as indicated in Figure 1 below. Although people in the area where the study was conducted speak predominantly Yoruba, only 54.7% of learners speak it.

Figure 1: Languages spoken by Learners



Transportation plays a role in shaping access and retention and as such, forms part of this brief demographic profile. I also briefly outline the distance and time it takes for those who walk to school.

Transportation and Distance to School

A large proportion (58.8%) of the learners in this sample walks to school, while 30.6% use either public transport (bus or motor bike) as a mode of transport to school. Only 10.6% travelled to school with parents as Table 4 below indicates.

Table 4: Mode of Transport

Mode of Transport	Frequency	%
Walk	55	64.7
Public transport	9	10.6
Cycle/motor bike	12	20.0
Parents car	9	10.6
Total	85	100.0

Tables 5 and 6 below indicate the distances and time reported by the sample that walked. Table 4 shows that of the 55 learners who walk to school, the majority (37) walk more than two kilometres.

Table 5: Distance to School

Kilometre	Frequency	%
1-2	18	21.2
3-4	29	34.1
5 or more	8	9.4
Total	55	64.7

Table 6 below indicates the time learners reported that it takes them to walk to school. Twenty three reported that it takes them longer than 30 minutes to walk to school.

Table 6: Duration of walk to School

Minutes	Frequency	%
0-15	10	11.8
16-30	22	23.5
31-60	12	14.1
61 or more	11	8.2
Total	55	64.7

4.2.2 Familial Circumstances

In this section, I present results on the primary caregiver that learners live with, as well as the number of siblings they have. I also include the number of siblings reported to be still in school. These data also include reported highest family qualifications, the highest qualification of a female in the family as well as the educational resources available in the family.

Primary Caregivers

Table 7 below indicates the primary caregiver in the lives of the respondents. Only two respondents did not provide a response to this question. Sixty-three (74.1%) of the learners live with both parents. The rest (25.9%) live either with a father only, mother only, grandmother, uncle and/or aunt or with siblings only.

Table 7: Primary Caregiver

Primary Caregiver	Frequency	%
Both Parents	63	74.1
Mother only	8	9.4
Father only	4	4.7
Grandparents	3	3.5
Uncle/Aunt	5	5.9
Missing	2	2.9

Primary Caregiver Employment Status

Learners were asked to indicate the primary caregiver's employment status. As in the results above, two learners did not respond to this question. As Table 8 below indicates, more than half (54%) reported that their primary caregivers are self-employed, while 3.5% reported that their caregivers are pensioners. Only one learner indicated that her primary caregiver was unemployed. It would seem that the majority (92.9%) of participants, therefore, come from families where primary caregivers earn some form of income (self-generated or as employees).

Table 8: Primary Caregiver Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	%
Employed	33	38.8
Self-employed	46	54.1
Unemployed	1	1.2
Retired/Pensioner	3	3.5
Missing	2	2.4
Total	85	100

Number of Siblings

Table 9 below indicates that 80 (94.1%) of the learners have siblings; with the majority (55: 65.7%) reporting to have three or more siblings.

Table 9: Number of Siblings

Number of Siblings	Frequency	Siblings in school
None	5	13
1	8	14
2	17	25
3	25	18
4	9	7
5	11	3

6 or more	10	5
Total	85	85

The majority (72:84.7%) reported to have siblings in school (see Table 8 above); with many 58 (86.2%) reporting to have two or more siblings still in school. Five in this group reported to have six or more siblings still in school.

Highest Qualification by a Family Member and Highest Qualification by a Female Family Member

Learners were asked to indicate the highest qualification by a family member, as well as in a separate question, report on the highest qualification by a female in their families. Table 10 below indicates that about half of learners (50.6%) have a family member who has a university degree. Interestingly, the picture was different when asked about highest qualifications amongst female family members. Thirty-seven (43.6%) indicated that females in their families had a senior secondary certificate or less. Only *one* learner in the cohort of 85 indicated that the highest qualification amongst females in her family is primary school. Twenty learners (23.6%) had female family members with some form of university education.

Table 10: Highest Qualification in the Family & Highest Qualification by Female Family Member

Highest qualification in the Family	Frequency	%	Highest qualification by Female Family Member	Frequency	%
Primary	None	None	Primary	1	1.2
JSS	2	2.4	JSS	5	5.9
SSS3	18	21.2	SSS3	31	36.5
Certificate/Diploma	21	24.7	Certificate/Diploma	25	29.4
Bachelor	29	34.1	Bachelor	13	15.3
Postgraduate	14	16.5	Postgraduate	7	8.3
Missing	1	1.2	Missing	3	3.5
Total	85	100		85	100

Thus, at the very least, the results above indicate that education seems to be valued; a factor that (as I show later on) shaped decisions of some in the study to remain in school.

Resources in the Home

Learners were asked about the resources they had in the home that potentially shaped their ideas about education and school. These included media sources as Table 11 below indicates. The majority had access to television and radio, with fewer indicating access to print material.

Table 11: Educational Resource in the Home

Resource	Frequency	%
Television	82	85.5
Radio	75	88.2
Novels	69	81.2
Magazines	51	60.0
Newspapers	42	50.0
Video games	18	21.7

The next section of this chapter describes the factors identified by learners as shaping their school experiences.

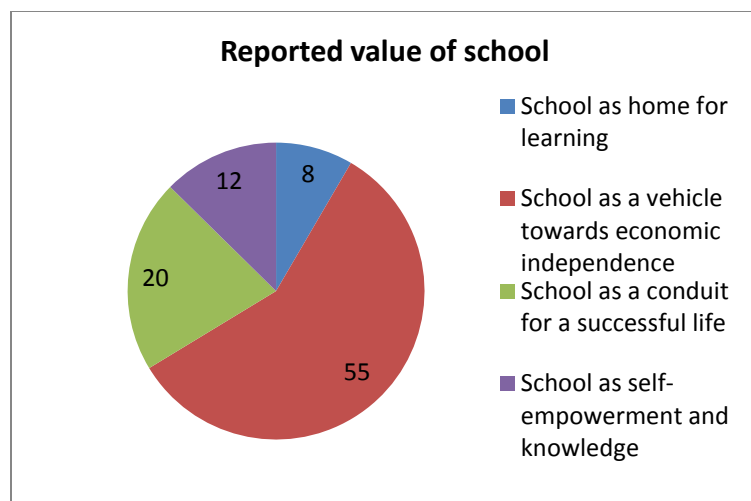
4.2.3 Factors Shaping School Experiences

The findings below includes factors such as value of school, school structures, in-school and outside school factors that makes school easy to stay in, confidants available when the learner has a problem in the school, aspirations and careers and extra-curricular participation. Learners identified all the above mentioned factors as having influenced their school experiences positively.

Perspectives on the Value of School

One of the important findings in this study relates to learners' perspectives on the value of school; not only in what it represents currently, but also in its place in their future life choices. Figure 2 below indicates that the majority of the learners (55: 64.7%) state that school represents a vehicle toward economic independence, while 20 (about a fifth) consider it as a way to achieve a successful life.

Figure 2: Value of School



Factors in and out of school that made it easy to stay in school

Figure 3 below describes factors that this cohort said made it easy for them to remain in school. Extra-curricular activities were presented as the primary reason for remaining in school, with school performance as another key incentive. Teachers and friends played important roles in influencing this cohort to remain in school.

While not the most important factor, government policy ensures free and compulsory education to all women up to 18 years. Sections 8 and 10 of the Child Rights Law⁸ of Lagos State, May 2007) under the Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, states that any child would be eligible for a bursary who attends school for at least 80% of the school calendar year. This policy shaped learners' school experiences as reported in focus and individual discussions.

⁸ Nigeria signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with the Child Rights Act (2003). Lagos State adopted the Act in 2007 and named it the Child Rights Law (2007).

Figure 3: In school factors that makes staying in school easy for learners

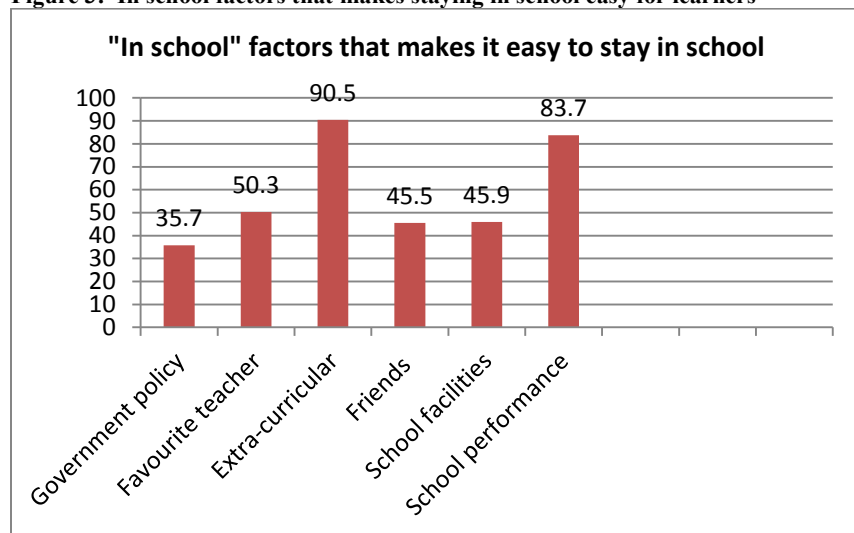
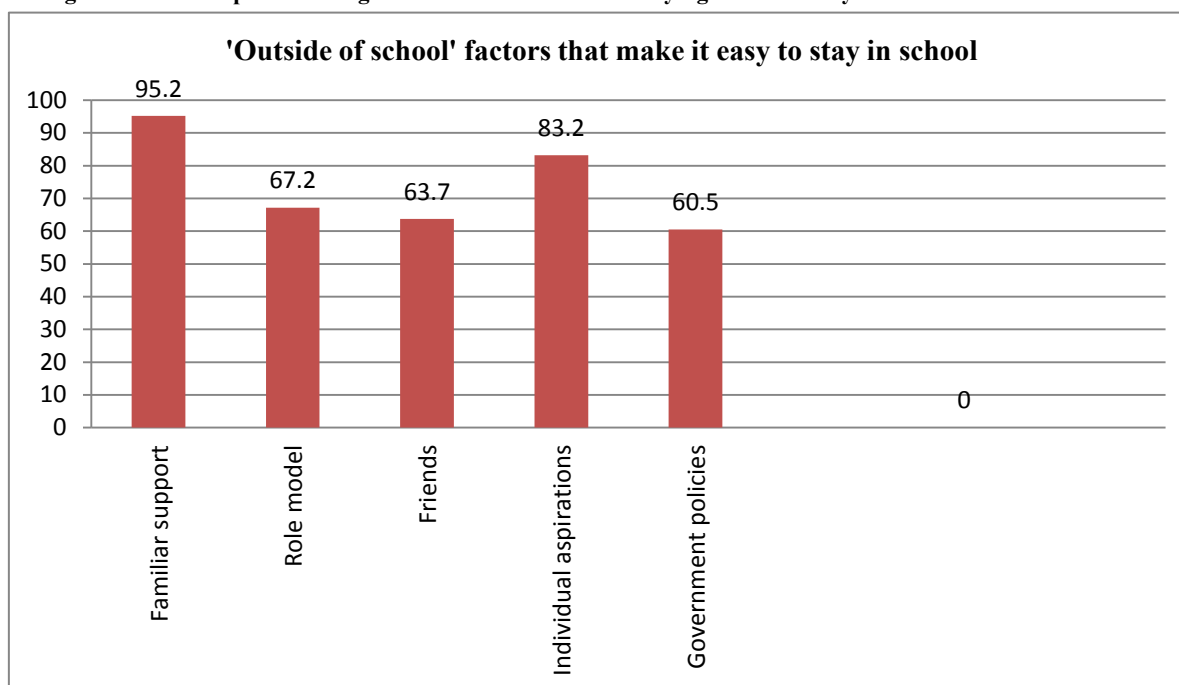


Figure 4 below indicates the factors outside of school that learners suggested made them stay in school. Family support was put forward as the primary factor. Friends, individual aspirations and role models also accounted for why these learners proposed they remained in school. The Child Rights Law (Section 14 & 15) places responsibility on parents to ensure school attendance by children of school-going age. Parents receive a penalty should children be found loitering or hawking during school time. This law is enforced and regulated by the Nigerian Police Force. Learners reported that this law served to regulate their school attendance, thus inadvertently making it easy for them to stay in school.

Figure 4: Most important thing outside school that made staying in school easy for learners



Learners in the study indicated there were times when they experienced difficulties in school (see Figure 6). They reported that these challenges sometimes discouraged them from coming to school. For this reason, I asked learners a question on whether or not they were able to confide in someone should they have a problem.

Confidant when learner has a problem in school

Table 12 below is a response to the question on to whom (a confidant) learners turn to when they have a problem at school. A small group (18.8%) report that they keep things to themselves when they have a problem, while a larger proportion (27.1%) report that they turn to either a favourite teacher or school counsellor. About 53% of the learners report that they speak to a family member when they have a problem at school.

Table 12: Confidant when Learners Experience Problems at School

Confidant	Frequency	%
Keep it to themselves	16	18.8%
Parent	12	14.1%
Guardian(Aunt/Uncle)	24	28.2%
Grandparent	3	3.5%
Siblings	6	7.1%
Favourite teacher	13	15.3%
School Counsellor	10	11.8%
Total	84	98.8%
Missing System	1	1.2%
Total	85	100

Interesting in these results is the extent to which learners seek (a) assistance or help in the first place, and (b) assistance within the school structure. While slightly less than a third of the sample did so, it does suggest a certain level of openness towards and by the school structure.

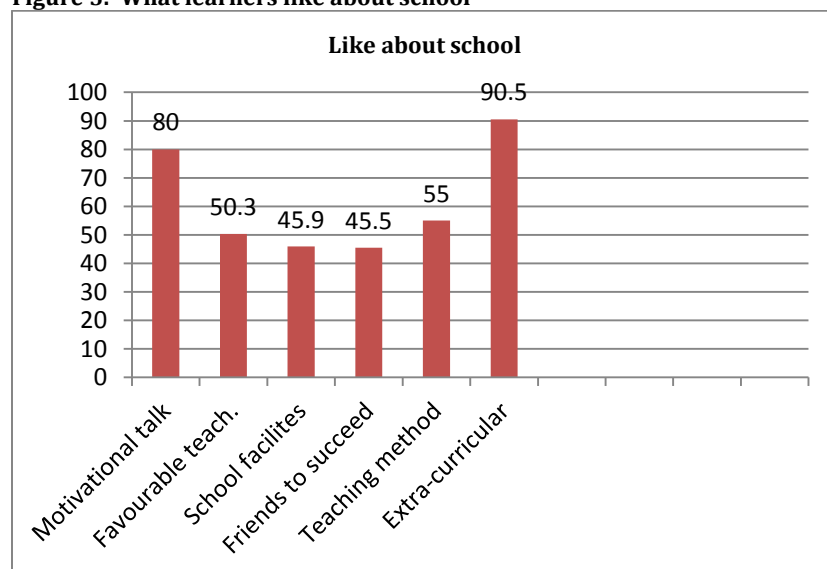
The next section of this study provides some insight into factors this cohort reports as shaping their school experiences more directly.

School Structures

This section presents data on what learners like about school, favourite teachers, favourite subject, and subject choice.

The most popular like was extra-school curricular activities, followed by motivational talks organised by the school, as Figure 5 below indicates.

Figure 5: What learners like about school



Favourites Teacher

Learners were asked if they had a favourite teacher and if so, to highlight the features that endeared the teacher to them. Table 13 below shows that the majority of learners (82.4%) report having a favourite teacher.

Table 13: Favourite Teacher

Favourite Teacher	Frequency	%
No	15	17.6
Yes	70	82.4
Total	85	100.0

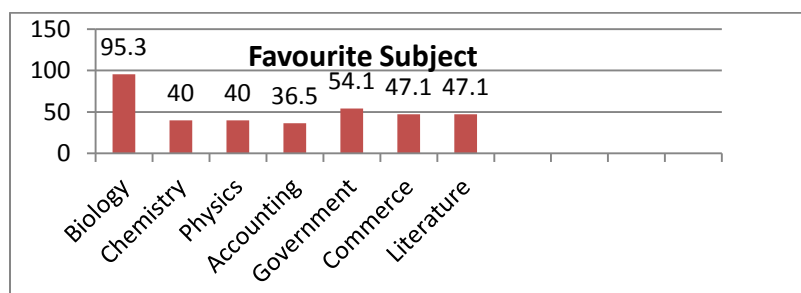
Learners who reported having a favourite teacher pinpoint qualities such as politeness, fairness, care, loving, punctuality, and attentiveness as attributes that make them endearing.

Those who reported not to have a favourite teacher reported that some teachers are not always punctual, use corporal punishment, or prefer to give boys more class responsibility than girls. They also cited teachers' lack of competence in teaching their subject as well absenteeism as reasons for their discontentment with these teachers.

Favourite Subject

The above represents the qualities learners saw in their favourite teacher and by implication the qualities whose lack they resented in their least favourite teacher. In Figure 6 below, I present the results to a question on their favourite subject. Learners in all four schools identified biology as their favourite subject.

Figure 6: Favourite Subject



Subject Choice

English, Yoruba, biology, and mathematics are compulsory subjects in the four participating schools. As Table 14 below indicates, science and commerce seems to be the fields of choice amongst this cohort, with 40% taking science subjects (physics and chemistry) and at least 40% taking commerce related subjects.

Table 14: Subject Choice

Subject	Number of Learners	%
French	23	27.1
Physics	34	40
Chemistry	34	40
Government	46	54.1
Literature	40	47.1
Christian Religious Knowledge	32	37.6
Geography	39	45.9
Accounting	31	36.5
Commerce	40	47.1
Computer Science	34	40
Additional Mathematics	21	24.7
Agricultural Science	38	44.7
Food and Nutrition	24	28.2
Technical Drawing	1	1.2

Learners' subject choice seemed aligned and consistent with their career choices as Table 16 will indicate later. Put differently, learners in this study selected subjects relevant to their future career aspirations.

4.2.4 Aspirations and Careers

Learners were asked to report on their aspirations and future career choices. They were also asked to identify aspects they thought would stand in the way of them reaching their dreams. I report on each below.

Learners Aspirations

Learners were asked about their aspirations in a question that referred to where they saw themselves in five years. As Table 15 below shows, the majority (81%) of this cohort imagined themselves at a higher education institution.

Table 15: Aspirations in Five Years

Aspirations in five years	Frequency	%
University/Polytechnic/College	68	80
With a child	1	1.2
Employed in an organization	10	11.8
Self-employed	3	3.5
Married	2	2.4
Missing	1	1.2
Total	85	100

Tables 16 below are the responses to respondent's future career aspirations. They show that the majority see themselves in professional positions.

Table 16: Future Career Aspiration

Aspiration	Frequency	%
Accountant	10	11.9
Agriculturist	2	2.4
Medical Doctor	20	22.7
Business Manager	15	17.6
Engineer	15	17.6
Lawyer	5	6.2
Journalist	8	9.8
Pharmacist	9	10.8
Teacher	1	1.2
Lecturer	1	1.2
Missing	1	1.2

An analysis of each learner's subject choice and career trajectory is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a cursory analysis revealed that learners' subject choices were informed by their career aspirations. Put differently, their subject choice (see Table 14) seemed consistent with respondents' career choice and aspirations.

I asked learners what would stand in the way of them fulfilling their career dreams and aspirations. They were able to provide more than one response to this question. As Table 17 below indicates, the most consistent reason related to lack of parental support with 64.7% of learners reporting this to be an inhibiting aspect. The same number of learners (50.6%) claimed that lack of teacher support and friends to succeed respectively, would inhibit their aspirations. While important, economic circumstances did not seem to be of primary concern amongst this cohort.

Table 17: Aspects that would stand in the way of learner dreams or goals

Aspects that would stand in the way of learner dream or goal	Number of Learners	%
Nothing	19	22.4
Lack of parent support	55	64.7
Economic Limitations	35	41.2
Unforeseen realities	45	52.9
Lack of teacher support	43	50.6
Friends to succeed	39	50.6
School performance as an incentive	43	45.9

4.2.5 Extra-Curricular Participation

Table 18 below shows the array of extra-curricular activities in the school curriculum, which learners engaged in while in school. From the table, it is clear that most learners were involved in at least one of the school extra-curricular activities.

Table 18: Extra-Curricular Activity and Participation

Extra-Curricular Activity and Participation	Number of learners involved	%
Science Club	24	28.2%
Sports	11	12.9%
Debating	12	14.1%
Music	8	9.4%
Environment Club	9	10.6%
Reading Club	20	23.5%
Mathematics Club	14	16.5%
Poetry Club	7	8.2%
Red Cross Society	9	10.6%

4.2.6 Role Models

The most common role model among this cohort was a family member as Table 19 indicates. Surprisingly, the least common was a teacher or principal, despite the fact that the majority of learners reported having favourite teachers (see Table 13 above).

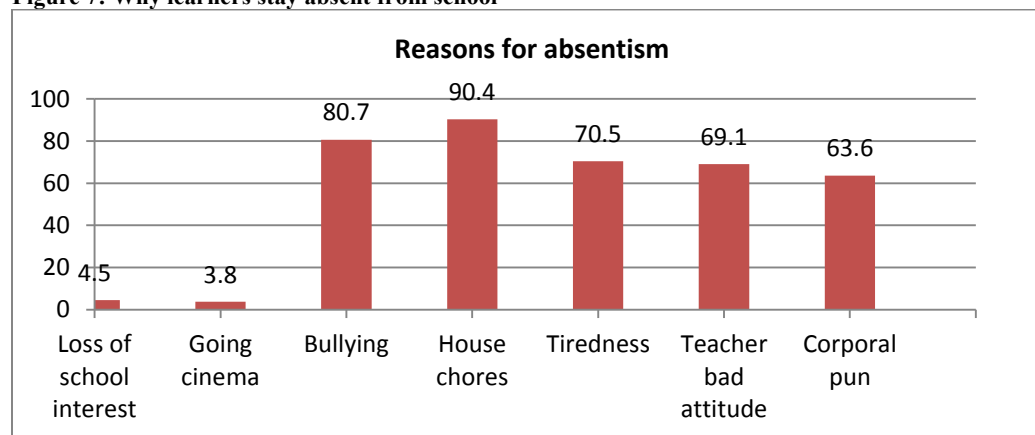
Table 19: Role Model

Role Model	Frequency	%
Celebrity	21	24.7
Current president	5	5.9
Family (father, mother, siblings, uncle, aunt)	31	36.5
Human right's Activist	13	15.3
Pastor	5	5.9
Past president	8	9.4
Principal/Teacher	2	2.4
Total	85	100

4.2.7 Factors that might inhibit full participation in school

Learners identified the following factors as having a negative impact on their school retention. Nevertheless, these did not completely block them from fulfilling their aspirations not only to complete school, but also to eventually attain their goals or dreams. Figure 7 below suggests that chores, bullying, and tiredness were the most frequent reasons why learners stay absent from school.

Figure 7: Why learners stay absent from school



I was particularly interested to understand the circumstances outside of school that shaped learners' participation in school. Literature (see Chapter 1) indicated that chores girl-children do around the home account for their non-participation or completion of school. While learners

cited other aspects in school as justifying absenteeism, I probed activities outside of school that may contribute towards absenteeism, non-participation or retention. The majority of learners indicated that they perform various household chores before and after school that sometimes account for them being absent from school.

Chores Before and After School

With regard to chores before school, Table 20 below indicates that the majority cite selling in parent's small business as the activity they do most frequently.

Table 20: Chores before School

Activity	Frequency	%
Fetch water	5	5.9
Cook	20	23.5
Clean	26	30.8
Sell at shop	32	37.6
Missing	1	1.2
Total	85	100

Table 22: Duration of Chore before School

Time	Frequency	%
0-15 minutes	3	3.5
16-30 minutes	27	31.8
31-45 minutes	19	22.4
46-60 minutes	7	8.2
60 minutes or more	28	32.9
Missing	1	1.2
Total	85	100

For the most part, activities take between 30 minutes to more than an hour before going to school.

Unlike the activities learners are involved in before school, cooking was the activity most common done after school.

Table 22: Chores after School

Activity	Frequency	%
Fetch water	11	12.9
Cook	48	66.5
Cleaning	16	18.8
Sell at shop	10	11.8
Total	85	100

As with the time spent before school most learners stated that the chores after school took them between 30 minutes to more than an hour, as shown in Table 23 below.

Table 23: Duration of chore after school

Time	Frequency	%
0-15 minutes	11	12.9
16-30 minutes	12	14.1
31-45 minutes	23	27.1
46-60 minutes	13	15.3
60 minutes or more	24	28.2
Missing	2	2.4
Total	85	100

4.2.8 Synopsis of Questionnaire Results

The age range of the female learners in this component study ranged from 14-19 years, indicating that the majority progressed through school as expected that is, without disruptions (drop out or repetition) in their school trajectories.

All respondents indicated themselves to be proficient in English; the medium of instruction and a core subject in schools in Nigeria. They also indicated proficiency in at least one other language, particularly the dominant local language, Yoruba.

The results also show that the majority of learners live with both parents, the majority of whom are employed; with more than 50% self-employed.

Most learners not only reported to have more than one sibling, but also to have siblings still in school. This, together with family members' educational status, as I show later on impacted decisions by this cohort to remain in school for this long.

While the majority in this cohort walked to school, the distances they travelled did not seem to negatively affect their decisions to remain in school.

Overall, this section of the data revealed a cohort of learners whose material and social conditions went some way to predispose them to understanding the value of education.

Forty-three of the 85 learners reported that a family member attended university. Concerning females in their family, five girls reported that the highest level of qualification amongst females in their family was junior secondary and only one reported that the highest qualification was a primary school certificate.

The majority of the learners presented perspectives that indicate that they valued education and the importance of school.

Extra-curricular activities were presented as the primary reason for coming to school even though aspects like favourite teacher, school performance, and government policy all served to incentivize girls' school-going.

Concerning factors outside school that motivated them to come to school, learners identified family support as the most compelling.

What stood out in the results was the close link between favourite subjects, subject choices, and future career aspirations.

Learners highlighted factors that had a negative impact on their school attendance. Household chores and bullying were the most frequent reasons girls put forward as negatively shaping their school experiences. Nevertheless, these did not block their path towards fulfilling their aspirations to complete school and so eventually attain their goals or dreams.

4.3 Focus Group Discussion Results

As I outlined in Chapter 3, 20 learners took part in four focus group discussions; two in each participating school. Results discussed in this section extend the views reported by learners in the previous section by providing a more nuanced representation of aspects in and out of school that they report as contributing to their retention in secondary school. While the general patterns identified in the previous section persist, interacting with learners in the focus group offered me the opportunity to go back to some of the responses in the questionnaire to probe issues concerning the context of girls and education in communities and schools.

The results that follow present perspectives from learners from Schools A and B presented in five themes. Each theme comprises a number of categories. Section 4.3.1 includes perspectives on the value of education in general, community perspectives on girl's education in particular, and perspectives on the value this cohort places on education. Section 4.3.2 presents results that highlight learner perspectives on factors that keep girls in school. This is followed by Section 4.3.3 which describes factors that girls propose impact school experiences amongst their peers. Section 4.3.4 presents results of factors that pose a challenge to some girls persevering in school and the final section (4.3.5), deals with the link between school retention and academic aspirations.

4.3.1 Community Perspectives on the Value of Education

The learners in the study were asked a series of questions regarding the perspectives, value and purpose of education. This included questions on the perceived value of education in the community in general and about girls' education in particular.

Community Views on Education

The majority of learners reported that school was valued in their community with only three of the twenty learners in the focus group reporting that in their community, schooling was perceived to be a waste of time and investment.

The 17 who reported that most of the community people value schooling offered different reasons why this was the case. The prevailing reasons included the notion of schooling as a cornerstone for success; as a home for discovery, enlightenment and self-improvement; as a channel for the achievement of a successful life; and as a means of gaining respect in the community. Justina's response was characteristic of the general pattern in all four focus groups. She said, "... people in my community believe that school is the cornerstone for success. They see school as what you need to support yourself to become successful in life [and] so that you can be respected in the society." Sonto, a learner from another school, put it this way, "... community people here believe that children must go to school to learn how to read and write so that children will not suffer what they [parents] suffered by not going to school in their own

days.” Oyebola at the same school agreed but extended the reasons why schooling was important by saying “... *people in my community believe that school is a place where you learn how to read and write to be enlightened and to make you a greater person in life.*” Grace agreed and said that her community encourages schooling because it offers opportunity for self-improvement and future success. She said, “... *people in my community say that school is a place to learn how to read and write and a place of life improvement to become doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers, yes... they encourage schooling.*” That education offered some guarantee toward future success, was underscored by Balikisu who added, “... *people say that school can help one to have a successful and better life because without education one will be ignorant in the society.*” Lope’s perspective included schooling as a means to enable one to function in a modern technologically driven world. She stressed that having access to technology would ensure that one remains abreast with ‘new discoveries’. She put it this way, “... *people in my community say that school is a place to learn how to discover new things because technology like computer, internet and that without school one will be out of fashion*”

While the above represented the prevailing perspective, three of the twenty female learners proposed that though most of members of the community valued schooling, some still viewed schooling as a waste of time and that it is expensive and a waste of investment. Elizabeth said,

In community here which is village [and] because it underdeveloped, people don’t really believe in school. They say that it is expensive to send children to school; rather they prefer that a child should learn handwork so that such children can make quick money. These parents believe that school is a waste of time.

Ebunoluwa on the other hand reported that people spoke about schooling as a waste of time because of the current economic situation in Nigeria, where unemployment is high. The investment in education would not necessarily lead to employment. She said,

People in the community here don’t really believe in schooling at all. They will tell you that in the world of today especially in Nigeria, there are no job. They believe that it is a waste of time to send children to school because after school, there won’t be job to do even with the certificate from school. Therefore, they discourage children from going to school, and they say that schooling is a waste of investment.

The above representations suggest that while some community members may view schooling as a waste of time, expensive, and waste of investments, the majority in the same community

understand the value of schooling and appreciate its potential to improve one's quality of life as well as life chances.

While in the above sections, I reported on community views on schooling in general, the next section reports on learners' perspectives on how the community views girls' education in particular.

Community Views on Female Education

The feelings of this cohort about education for girls started to become clear when they were asked what people in the community say about girls staying in school. Interestingly and as shown in the above, more than half of this cohort reported a community that supports and encourages children to go to school as a general principle. However, when probed, this encouragement turns out to be skewed in favour of boys. The community was believed to not accord the same value to schooling for girls. Reasons included that girls end up as housewives (and not primary breadwinners), that they become 'trophy wives' and that they do not maintain their surnames, thus not adding any value to the family's position in the community.

Perspectives differed somewhat amongst the 12 learners who proposed that girls' education was undervalued by members of the community. For example, many reported that community members believe that educated girls are only of benefit to the husband because (a) they marry and become housewives, (b) they relinquish their surnames in favour of their married name, and (c) families cannot and in fact, do not rely on girls to maintain the family.

Elizabeth, said, "[M]y community people don't see any reason to send girls to school because they believe that after all their [girls] education end in their husband's kitchen ... so they don't talk good about girl's education in my community." Ebunoluwa stated that people also held the view that the investment in girls' education ended up as an expensive investment for them only to become housewives. She said, "... community people believe that all women's certificates, after so much money and efforts that their parents have spent on them, is a waste because they will decorate their husband's kitchen with those certificates. So there is no need to send them [girls] to school at all." Concerning husbands benefiting, Opeyemi suggested "[T]he community

where I live, people believe that girls should not stay or go to school because, after marriage, they will surely change from their father's name and take all the school qualifications to their husband's house. Boys will continue to bear their father's name even after marriage." Some community members even held the view that husbands should bear the responsibility of educating their wives once married. Sandra's account confirms this sentiment, "[P]eople from the eastern part where I come from believe that it is the responsibility of your [girls'] husband to send you to school... because girl's family cannot benefit anything from girl's education ... but the husband will enjoy all the benefit." Balikisu proposed that people saw girls' education as not advancing the family's social or economic status and as such not worth the investment. She said,

My community people believe that girls should not stay in school. They say that the family does not depend on them; but the family depends on male child...because if boys are sent to school after graduation, they will source a job, have a family of their own, and take care of their extended family in future. The male child will be a breadwinner in the family but girls will leave their family and care for her husband's family.

Thus, while on the one hand education is perceived as having extrinsic value and is thus an important investment, the same worth was not accorded to girls' education. It would seem though that these perspectives did not stand in the way of the girls in this study, as I outline below. The section that follows describes how girls in the community individually and collectively understand what school represents or what its value is, despite the views believed to be held within the community.

Girls' Views on the Value of Education

Seventeen of the twenty female learners in the study proposed that in defiance of the views of the majority of the community people about educating girls, school to them represents a home for learning, a conduit for a successful life, a vehicle toward economic independence, and a means of self-empowerment and knowledge.

A majority of learners (17) in the focus group discussion said that that for many girls in the community, school represents a "home for learning." Elizabeth said, "[I]n my community, girls see school as home for learning because school is the only thing that can make one to know how to read, write both letters and figures properly, which makes your future bright." Some of the learners viewed school as a vehicle towards economic independence. They assumed it would

offer them power to undo economic limitations their parents experienced that most often had denied their parents economic self-sufficiency. Hannah stated,

Girls in my community view school as a vehicle toward economic independence and power to undo economic limitations ... because they believe that after completing school, you get a job that allows you to work and get money that can be used to assist the family. Because most often, parents advice that girls must go to school so that they don't become a liability in future. And because school completion enables you to get work it therefore encourages girls to stay in school.

Ebunoluwa said that girls in her community describe school as “... *as home of knowledge for self-empowerment, a pathway and a strong key to unlock ignorance; for one to be knowledgeable and a skill for self-empowerment. School is the answer and that is why girls aspire to go to school at all costs.*”

Elizabeth agreed, but included the notion of school as a place where positive characters are formed and nurtured. She said, “[T]he girls believe that to be successful in life you have to go school and pass. In fact they define school as an environment where successful people are made and this understanding helps them to want to remain in school.”

The clarity in learner responses was insightful. At one level, it illuminated why this cohort have remained in school because in the focus groups they displayed confidence and a tenacity to succeed despite their school-going not being valued in the community as it was for boys.

The next section reports the factors that learners proposed as shaping the retention of female learners in school.

4.3.2 Perspectives on Factors that keep Girls in School

The discussion below describes factors that this cohort said made it easy for girls to remain in school. These factors include individual aspiration, government policies, school facilities, favourite teachers, and family support.

Individual Aspirations

Nearly all the respondents as well as the two teachers in the study suggested that individual aspiration (what girls wanted to become in future) had been one of the reasons why they stayed

in school. Nineteen of the 20 learners proposed individual aspiration or future dreams as the primary reason that they remained in school. Ebunoluwa from School A, presented a common view by saying,

The aspiration of some girls that is, what they want to become in life, for example nowadays the aspirations of most girls is to become successful in whatever they so. As for me, my aspiration is to become a journalist and that is why I am staying in school, and studying very well to achieve my dreams in life.

Like Ebunoluwa, Hannah from School B also agreed with the suggestion that future aspirations contributed to girls staying in school. She said, “[D]reams and aspirations of what some girls want to become in life for example, I like to become an accountant and you can only be one if you attend school. Therefore most girls stay in school because of their dreams and aspirations to become greater person in life.”

Funke from the same school acknowledged other reasons why girls remain in school, but agreed with her peers that individual aspiration is the main driving force behind girls staying in school. She said,

Yes, I agree government policies, parent’s words of encouragement, and at times senior friends. But more importantly, the individual aspirations of girls to be literate make some girls to stay in school because these days no girl wants to be a ‘pepper seller’⁹ in the market; they like to be literate and not illiterate. Most girls like to be a professional like medical doctor, engineer, lawyer, and accountant.

During my involvement as a researcher studying the learners’ questionnaire responses and interacting with the participants during the focus group discussions, I observed that the majority of these learners showed passion towards progressing, staying and completing school because of the value they place in school and their individual aspirations - what they dream of in life.

Government Policies, Self-Surveillance, and Parent’s Desire

Government policies on education in Lagos State, Nigeria were another vital factor that learners in this component of the study presented as a reason why girls stayed in school. The policies serve two functions; one punitive in nature and the other an incentive (see Figures 3 and 4 in the questionnaire presentation of results). Aligned to the policies were learners’ self- surveillance

⁹A pepper seller is viewed as an uneducated woman who is not valued in society.

mechanisms that included fear of parents, fear of pregnancy, and embarrassment were they to fall pregnant. Grace from School B captured a common response by stating,

The government policies that places penalties on parent of any school-age children that hawk, loiter around during school hours. Another one that says should any man impregnate a teenager of school age (he) will be put into prison without bail. [This] put fears into girl's hearts and despite the government policies; girls would not want to put their parents into trouble again. Most girls are ashamed of being impregnated by men.

Baliksi from School A put forward a different policy imperative as an incentive for learners to remain in school. She said, *"... one the Lagos State Government policies that states that any student in secondary that has school attendance of up to 80% will be given scholarship. Therefore, this policy has helped most girls to stay in school because they like to receive the scholarship."* Ebunoluwa, the outspoken learner from School A, said, *"[M]ost girls stays in school to fulfill their parent's desires because most parents like to be proud that my child is in school, and they [parents] do give word of encouragement to inspire children to stay in school to make them [parents] proud"*. In saying this, Ebunoluwa made the connection between self-surveillance and parent's desire.

School Facilities

Eighteen of the 20 learners reported that facilities in school aided learning and encouraged them to stay in school. These facilities included computers, the library, and good laboratories. Learners also mentioned well-maintained separate toilets for girls. Sonto from School B said,

The things in school that make some girls stay in school is the availability of school facilities like school computer laboratory, science laboratory, school library where learner can borrow books that parents cannot afford to buy. Also, what encourages girls to stay in school because in most homes, the facilities are not available to be used by the learners; they only have access to them while in school.

Opeyemi from School A put it this way, *"[I]n my opinion, what keeps girls in school are some of the schools facilities like good toilets, laboratories, computers, and a library that most parents cannot provide at home. All these make girls come to school regularly so as to use them for their studies."*

Favourite Teacher

Despite the fact that some learners reported that they stay away from school because of corporal punishment by especially male teachers, it was notable that many learners still appreciated what teachers do to make learning pleasurable. Seventeen of the learners stated that a favourite teacher was the reason why many girls attend school regularly. Elizabeth from School A shared her opinion,

Our biology teacher is one of the reasons why most girls come to school. Though he is very strict, but he is our role model in this school. He is like a father to us; he does not play with study. Whenever, you are not in school, he does not jump to conclusions. He comes to you in a fatherly manner to know why you were absent from school and also he does give advice on future careers. Class is fun and always full during the biology period because girls enjoy his teaching style.

Justina, another learner of School B described her mathematics teacher as her favourite. She said,

Mr X has a very good approach; he does not make any student to feel inferior and he allows everyone to contribute during the class and he allows girls to come to the staffroom to ask for his help in solving some mathematics exercises. He relate mathematics to things of live most time to allow everybody to participate, very nice man and polite, he always encourage students not to run away from mathematics rather encourage students to attend school regularly, and that is why most girls like to come to school.

Family Support

While the majority of learners mentioned the foregoing as reasons that kept girls in school, only five of the 20 learners suggested that family support was a reason why some stayed in school thus far. Evenly from School B proposed,

Parents are the reason while some girls stay in school because many will not want their daughter to suffer what they suffered because of lack of education. Therefore, most parents give words of advice to their daughter to be educated and become a figure in the society so that they can be proud of such girl.

Mercy, also from School B agreed that parents value education and thus support their children irrespective of gender. She stated,

Parents play a major role in ensuring that girls stay in school especially family that make education first priority. Although most parents also would not like to be fined by the government for sending school-age children on errands during school hours; but these days most parents considers education first for their children.

Gift from School A shared the sentiments that parents value education and in so doing do not discriminate between boys and girls when it comes to educating their children. She reported, *“.....motivation from parents in the form of financial support, making children see advantages of education, words of encouragement, and their own love for education by not discriminating*

between boy or girl education encourages girls to remain in school.”

It would seem that when available, family support took various forms and was motivated by parent’s valuing education as an important tool for all children, irrespective of gender.

The above encouragements notwithstanding, the next section draws attention to aspects girls put forward as challenges making school attendance difficult at times. While these were identified as constraints, they nevertheless did not deter this cohort of female learners from persisting through school.

4.3.3 Factors that impact school experiences amongst girls

I was interested to understand the circumstances in and out of school that shaped learners involvement and participation in school. Observations from discussions with learners as outlined below, suggest that household chores, bullying, fatigue, and teacher attitudes are the most frequent reasons why learners sometimes stay absent from school. Though these factors did not block this cohort’s determination both to complete school and also to eventually attain their goals or dreams, they nonetheless impacted negatively on their school experiences, as the data reveals.

Chores, Fatigue, and Distance from School

The majority of learners in the larger sample as well as 16 participants in the focus group discussions reported that various household chores affect girls’ regular school attendance. Some reported that the distances they needed to travel also accounted for them either coming to school exhausted or staying out of school. Learners also linked absenteeism with punctuality in that many reported that they stay absent due to fear of punishment by teachers were they to come late.

Treasure, a learner from School B, highlighted the complexity of the issues and their interrelatedness. Fatigue related to the issues highlighted above negatively impacted their engagement with schoolwork and in so doing caused them to stay absent. She said,

Most girls stay absent from school because of tiredness as a result of distances [they] walk to school and some household chores like sweeping, cooking, fetching water, sell at shop. [This] affects some girls in not doing their homework assignments because [they] are too tired to read

and these keep girls out of school when they are tired because of too much of house chores activities.

Funke from School A described the link between coming to school on time and the chores girls needed to perform before school. She too emphasized fatigue but also alluded to the link between punctuality and school performance by stating,

Many reasons make some girls not to stay in school and tiredness is one of them because household chores like sweeping, fetching water, cooking, care for siblings, and cleaning affect the punctuality of girls at school and this affects their performance as well because they are too tired to cope with study in class.

Ebunoluwa from School A and Hannah from School B shared similar views on how different household chores pose a challenge to their school attendance. The former reported that chores before school not only caused fatigue, but would lead to punishment from teachers should they come late to school. Ebunoluwa said,

House chores like sweeping, cooking, cleaning and so on make some girls not to stay in school because most of the time before they complete these house chores they are tired, and they will be discouraged to come to school that day... because they will not like to be late so as not to get punished by teachers.

Hannah on the other hand highlighted yet another combination of factors that affected school attendance. She made the point that chores together with the responsibility for siblings affected girls' engagement in school. She said, *"... house work like fetching water, sweeping, cooking, cleaning, selling at the shop and looking after siblings makes some girls not to come to school sometimes because all this so called house chores weaken girls at school to concentrate on study."*

The results point to a complex array of factors that intertwine to create challenges for school attendance by girls. The interrelationship between chores, fatigue, and the distance to school sometimes resulted in (a) girls choosing to stay absent from school for fear of punishment were they to arrive late; (b) a lack of concentration in school; and (c) interference with studies (and the ability to complete school assignments).

Bullying

Bullying from other learners, particularly from boys, was identified by most learners in the study as one of the major reason why girls sometimes stay absent from school. Eighty-one percent of the large sample and 17 girls in the focus group reported this to be the case. Learners reported that bullying was not taken seriously by teachers, as illustrated in the following excerpts from two learners. Rakat, a learner from School B, said, “... *boys bullying discourages girls most of the time to come to school. Last week, that guy [male learner] was laughing at the size of my body and all his friends also joined him and I was ashamed at myself, but when I reported them to our class teacher, he was not serious with me.*” Tobi from School A agreed with this general sentiment about boys as bullies. She reported,

Another reason why girls sometimes stay absent from school has to do with the way boys treat girls in school. They will bully you [and] during the break period, they try not to allow girls to use the football court to play and when you try to play they beat you and when you report them to school teachers, the teacher will not care to beat them back and this in a way discourages most girls from coming to school sometimes.

Not only does bullying lead to absenteeism, some girls also reported that it sometimes leads to girls dropping out of school. Berthy, a learner from school A, who shared the same view as her friends said, “*I quite agree with Opeyemi and Funke that what makes some girls not to stay in school is bullying from boys. Some boys like to override girls in everything they do together. [They] bully them and make them feel inferior and that is why some girls sometimes stay absent from school.*”

Teacher Attitude, Behaviour, and Competence

Despite the fact that some learners indicated having favorite teachers as some of the reasons why some girls remain in school, many reported that teachers play a role in discouraging girls from attending school regularly that sometimes even results in girls dropping out. In particular, learners highlighted teacher attitude, competence, and behavior towards girls as important factors that shaped their school experiences. Opeyemi, a learner from School A reported,

Apart from what I said before, another reason why girls do not stay in school or absent from school is because of bad attitudes of some teachers in applying punishments to girls. Some teachers apply the punishment in a wrong way. Sometimes, they [teachers] like to disgrace girls in public when they beat you on some part of your body [that] will be exposed and boys will laugh at you. Again, when some of the male teachers want to date you and you refuse, then you become a bad student and you are treated like [an] outcast. All these sometimes in my view discourage girls from coming to school.

Sandra, a learner from School B highlighted teacher competency and attitude as reasons why some girls stayed absent. She also stressed the disparity in the treatment of the different genders in class, making the point that many teachers privileged boys. Sandra's comment illustrates the point:

The bad treatment and bad attitudes of some teachers toward girls in school sometimes make girls to be absent. Sometimes, some teachers are boring; they are not good enough at teaching the subject. When you ask them question, they are cross again. Some teachers don't even give girls opportunity to participate in the class exercises fully; they give preference to boys. When a girl are trying to answers questions, some teachers ignores her and this sometimes make girls not like to come to school.

The challenges reflected above highlight issues that make it difficult for school attendance amongst females. Learners also put forward some challenges girls face in attempting to remain in school. Economic limitations were put forward as the greatest barrier to girls remaining in school, as I outline in the next section.

4.3.4 Factors that pose a Challenge to some Girls Persevering in School

Economic limitations and unforeseen realities (for example, pregnancy) were factors suggested by the learners that affected the school trajectories of girls.

Economic Limitations

Unlike in the larger study where more than half of the cohort suggested that economic limitations would stand in the way of their dreams or goals, only six learners in the focus group discussions identified this as a barrier to girls' fulfilling their educational aspirations. Esther from School B mentioned parents' financial status as a barrier that might be responsible for why some girls would not come to school. She said,

Though, it is true that house chores, pregnancy, and distance walk keep girls out of school. Another important reason that also keeps girls out of school is parents' financial status. Some girls walk a long distance from their home to school if parents cannot give money for transportation. Government only makes school fees free but transportation is not free. Therefore, economic limitations as a result of parent's financial status could pose reasons why some girls might not come to school.

Lope from the same school also acknowledged that parents' financial position might bar some girls' dreams of remaining in school. She reported,

Some girls would not be able to come to school and achieve their dreams if their parents are poor. Government does not provide everything that we need to stay in school free. For instance, parents provide uniforms, school bags and money for food. So in my own opinion, should a parent be unable to provide any of these, then such girls will stay at home and there won't be any dream of becoming a literate person in future. Economic limitations sometimes deny girls of coming to school and achieving their dream.

Unforeseen Realities

As mentioned earlier, the majority of learners in the bigger study identified unforeseen realities, especially pregnancy, not only as a barrier to attending school but also as an impediment to their dreams. Learners from focus group discussions, though few in number, proposed pregnancy as a factor that could stop girls from coming to school and from achieving their set goals.

Liasu, a confident learner from School A, described and commented on the effect of teenage pregnancy while girls are still in school. She reported,

Teenage pregnancy while girls are school is a big blow that kills dreams and not making many girls come to school. Once school discovers that girls are pregnant, the principal will send for the parent and send that girl out of school. Girls are afraid to be pregnant when they are in school because that will be the end until when you deliver and you cannot come back to the same school. You get transferred to another school because of shame from other students and teachers.

Dunni from School B commented that unwanted pregnancy while in school not only prevented some girls from coming to school, but also made the family feel disappointment and hatred. It meant that girls would need to start from the beginning again. She commented,

Unwanted pregnancy makes it difficult for girls to come to school. Most parents feel disappointed when they find out that their daughters are pregnant. They hate such children because they believe it is a disgrace to the family at large. Also, such girls will be sent out of school and become a laughing matter among her friends, especially boys. Pregnancy while in school can affect some girl's dream of becoming great in life because you [will need to] start all over again.

4.3.5 School Retention and Academic Aspirations and Goals

The cohort of learners in the study was in its final year of school. The majority (80%) of those in the larger sample had aspirations to go to university (see Table 14) and to become independent. This was no different in the focus group discussions. Having a goal and desire to become someone propelled these learners to make individual decisions that would support their dreams. As a by-product, these steps ensured that they remained and progressed through school. Learners

in the focus group identified the following as steps they took to remain in school so as to achieve their dreams.

Concentration and Working Hard in Studies

More than half of the learners believe that for girls to achieve their goals in life they need to concentrate and work hard on their studies.

Ebunoluwa from School A stated, “[G]irls need to take some steps to achieve their dreams in life. They need to stay in school all the time, work hard, and concentrate on their books at all times because nothing good comes easy.” Rakat from School B added that one needed to be determined as well as hard-working to achieve one’s goal. She reported, “[P]ersonally I think concentration and working very hard is the key to pass examination to move to another class. So for any determined girl to achieve any goals or dreams, she needs full concentration and [has to] study very hard to get to that point.”

Staying in Class and Being Serious with Studies

Fourteen of the 20 learners agreed with the claim that for girls to achieve dreams or goals in any chosen future career, regular school attendance and being serious with school studies were necessary. Treasure from School A was among those who emphasized this point. She said, “...the steps that girls are taking to stay in school to achieve their dreams/goals are many. For example, they have to stay in school, read hard, do their homework, and move with good friends both at school and outside school. Finally they need to take their studies seriously.” Hanna, a learner from School B, agreed with peers, but added that advice from successful girls was a necessary condition to motivate one to stay in school. She reported,

For girls to stay in school and achieve their dream they have to come to school regularly, read their books, and do all the homework and get good information of those that have passed out earlier and not going to parties when they are to be in school because my parents use to tell me that life is in phase, being serious with school assignments and listen to the teacher attentively while in class.

Self-Determination and Focus

The respondents acknowledged that self-determination, focus, studying hard, and making informed decisions about friends in school are some of the major ingredients girls required to accomplish their goals in life. Elizabeth from School A reported,

Well, most of us girls we have a common thing and that is good dream that is to be successful in life. But we need lots of steps to achieve our dreams in life. One, we need to be determined within ourselves to be there. Also, we need to study hard so that our parents will be interested to assist some of us to further our studies... move with good and focused friends at school.

Her peer Rakata also emphasized personal determination as an important factor that mediated success. She said, “[S]teps that girls are taking to achieve their dreams and goals while staying school are numerous, but most importantly, girls need to be determined personally and study hard.”

Justina emphasized the need to be focused in order to achieve one’s goals. She said,

Girls need to be punctual, listen to their parent’s advice about how they can stay in school. {They need to} read very hard, move with good friends, get on well with the teachers, be focused, and self-disciplined... not to be pregnant while in school, because many girls like to prove that they are big girls trying to show that they have handsome boyfriends who many at times buys them things... and at the end, they get carried away so girls need self-discipline to achieve any dream they desire.

Success in Examinations and Good Counselling

From learner responses in focus group discussions, it was clear that they understood the importance of good results as well as the need to seek advice about future choices. Sources of such advice, they agreed, could be school counsellors, parents, teachers and friends who were already in university. Evenly said,

In my own view and my school experience, girls need first of all to pass all their examinations to move to the next level in their education. And to achieve good school performance, they need to be punctual at school... no loitering around ... they must stay in school and be part of the school activities. Again, girls need to be open to their parents because they need their word of encouragement... and they also need good counsel from teachers to guide them so that they will know those subjects that are compulsory for their chosen career while they remain in school.

The next section below presents the case studies of four learners. These results provide yet another layer to understanding the factors that contribute to individual learners staying in school.

4.4 Case Studies of Four Participants

4.4.1 Introduction

What follows below are the results from individual interviews with four participants (two from each school) who also participated in the focus group discussions. Unlike the questionnaire and focus group data, individual case studies highlight experiences that shape individual decisions and choices about school in general and remaining in school, in particular. While I employed a semi-structured approach to the interviews, I allowed learners' responses to lead and guide the discussion, hence slight differences in the way I report each case below.

4.4.2 The Participants

Ebunoluwa is 16 years old and lives in Isefun, Alimosho area of Lagos State, Nigeria. She lives with both parents. She is a final year student at her secondary school. Ebunoluwa has an older brother and younger sister. Her father is monogamous, despite polygamy being common in the area where they live. Ebunoluwa's brother is attending university. She said that he is the first member in her family to do so. No female in her family completed school¹⁰. This she says makes her determined to be the first female to complete school.

Ebunoluwa's father is a printer and her mother a trader. Both parents are self-employed. Her father has a great influence on the educational choices Ebunoluwa makes. He especially, values education and in so doing, monitors her activities outside of school. In this regard, Ebunoluwa said, *"... my father does not like to see me going around the street. He always wants me to stay in the house and do my homework. He only wants me to go out to see my friend if I have school assignment with them. My parents [would] love to see their children being educated."* She reported that her father advised her about there being no short cut to success in life by saying, *"... there is no short cut to success in life. For you to be successful in life, you must go to school no matter what- stay at school, read your books and do all your homework."* Ebunoluwa's mother shares similar sentiments about school and its potential. She reported that her mother encourages her to *"... go and stay in school"* because *"she tells (Ebunoluwa) that she does not want [her] to suffer what she has suffered by not going to school. During her [mother's] days nobody encouraged her to go to school."* Ebunoluwa attributed her persistence in school to her

¹⁰See Table 9 where 6 learners indicated that the highest qualification by a female was either primary or JSS.

father's encouragement and her mother's devotion in making sure that she reads her books and does her homework. Even though she was expected to perform household chores before and after school, she made the point that at times, her mother helped her to complete these because, as she says, "... *my family is supportive to my education.*"

Ebunoluwa's role model is her father, as she says, "... *he is a free giver, and he gives at free will. He does not hide anything from anybody either. He is open to people and he thought to be a free giver and also he do give good words of encouragement about my study.*"

Ebunoluwa walks four kilometres to school, which she said takes her about 45 minutes. She reported that walking to school does not deter her from fulfilling her dream, which is to become a journalist. In particular, she would like to report on entertainment, so that she "... *can talk to different kinds of people in society.*"

Apart from her parent's support, Ebunoluwa stated that teachers, especially her mathematics teacher, have been instrumental to her staying in school. In this regard she said,

Especially my mathematics teacher, he takes his time to teach and explains the subject and allows students either boy or girl to ask questions when you don't understand the topic. We are free seeing him during or after school hours if you have any problem. The mathematics teacher has really of help to my understanding of mathematics and staying in school at large.

The mathematics teacher is the one she reported to consult when she experiences problems at school. She said, "... *our mathematics teacher is like a father; he does not discriminate and he gets to the root of the matter before passing comment.*"

Ebunoluwa views school as a place of empowerment. She said, "... *school is an institution for self-empowerment and knowledge, where you determine what you like to become in life. School allows you to learn how to read and write and also empowers you for things to come in future.*"

Ebunoluwa identified bullying by male learners and lack of support from some teachers as factors that made coming to school a challenge. She said, "... *bullying from male students ... every little thing they laugh at you as if you are not like them. No teacher cares to punish those [boys] for that behaviour.*" Furthermore, distance from school, household chores and punitive measures by teachers against late-coming also served as disincentives, sometimes making it

difficult for her to stay motivated. Ebunoluwa said, *“I don’t come to school at times because of household chores like sweeping, fetching water and cleaning dishes. Most times I will be too tired to walk the distance to school, and if you are late teachers will give you punishment.”*

Ebunoluwa has friends in higher education that she says motivate her to stay focused and remain in school. She stated,

My friends in higher institutions [university]; they call and encourage me that... I can become someone greater in life as long as I go to school, attend my classes, and read my books. [They say] if I pass my WAEC then I can also join them in the university after my SSS3 and this one of the reasons why I like being in school.

Ebunoluwa is confident about where she would be in five years. She said, *“... in five years I will surely be in the university studying journalism.”* She mentioned that her *“... self-determination and ability to study hard”* are aspects that will help her fulfil her dream.

On the advice she would give a friend about staying in school, she said,

I will tell my friend to stay in school and face her studies because there is no short cut to success. ‘Go through school, and let school pass through you’, because school is home for learning. My friend must stay in school so that she can read and write, because someone who does not know how to read or write can never become successful person in life.

Elizabeth is 17 years of age, lives in Obadore, Alimosho area, Lagos State, Nigeria and is in her final year of secondary school. Like Ebunoluwa, she lives with her parents and four younger siblings (two brothers and two sisters), all of whom are still at school. Elizabeth is thus the oldest in her family. She walks about 3 ½ kilometres to and from school, which she says takes her about 40 minutes each way.

Elizabeth’s parents are self-employed. Her father is a general contractor while “my mum is a fashion designer.” No other female in her family has completed school. She has an uncle who is the only person in her family to graduate from university.

Elizabeth’s role model is her mother because she loves her behaviour. She said,

I love everything about her; she believes so much in God, talk to me freely, advises me to be focused on my study not to move with bad friends. She also tells me to move with good friends at school and to become an important person in life. She is so free with people and is very diligent

in the society. She has good behaviour; in fact everything about her is good and she makes me happy.

Education and religion are important to Elizabeth's family. She stated, "... *my parents believe so much in their children's education and religion; especially Christian religion.*" Elizabeth reported that her father emphasized the importance of his children having an education because he was not given the opportunity. She said the following,

People in my family talk well about school, especially my dad. He will tell you that though he did not have the opportunity to go school because his father practiced polygamy and had many wives, and because of [the need for] lots of money to send children to school then, and since they were many, he [Elizabeth's grandfather] couldn't send them to school; he preferred they learnt hand work.

For this reason, her father does his best to ensure that his family remains in school irrespective of economic circumstances and gender. She said, "... *as long as he can still send us to school, we should try as much as possible to stay in class and study our books.*" Elizabeth reported that her father "... *talks to [them] when [they] are going to school and when [they] come back from school using words from Bible to encourage [her] and [her] siblings.*" The support from her parents has encouraged her to remain in school. She said, "*my mum has been so helpful, she gives me money when I need things for school especially for my school practicals and my dad always give me a very strong advise that I should stay in school and read my books.*" To Elizabeth's parents, education "*is the only legacy they can give to us to become what we desire in life.*" She reported that the encouragement she received from her parents was instrumental in keeping her in school until now. Not only did Elizabeth want to make her parents proud, she also wanted to reach the goals she set for herself. Elizabeth said, "*I have to be educated to make my parents happy and also to achieve my dream as well.*"

Religion plays a dominant role in Elizabeth's life. She reported to come from "*a Christian home*", with both parents, "*leaders in our church.*" Elizabeth emphasized how this shaped her own behaviour and disposition. Her uncle and dad believe in "*discipline and diligence.*" Elizabeth further stressed that her "*parents believe that you don't just behave anyhow so that when people outside see me and my siblings they ... know that these ones are from good home because of good manners we learn from our parents.*"

Elizabeth viewed school as “*a home for learning*” that to her, represented a space where not only are characters shaped, but also where knowledge acts as an instrument toward independence. She said the following in this regard, “... *school represents many things. One, school is home for learning; without school, you can’t read or write. School moulds character, gives one [a] sense of new discovery. {It} makes one to be self-independent and shows you how to live a successful life if you can endure.*” She recognized the importance of being focused and, as she says, having the ability to “*endure.*”

Elizabeth’s dream is to become medical doctor¹¹. Elizabeth said,

My dream is to become medical doctor because medical doctors are well respected in Nigeria and the whole world. They deal with life; they cure people. I have met a medical doctor one-on-one in my life, and ... I like the way he dresses, expresses himself like an educated person and people give him respect. He does not behave like an illiterate person; because some people are educated but you doubt them by their attitude, but this doctor that I met was very good.

Concerning reasons for her choice of career, she said, “*I would like to make my parents proud by being the first female doctor in our family.*” She also acknowledged that another motivation to remain in school related to the current economic situation in Nigeria and the need to “*survive.*” Elizabeth said, “*I always tell my friends that in Nigeria where the living standard is very high, for them to survive the cost of living, they must be educated. They must know how to read and write by going to school so that they don’t become a liability in life, Even if they are to be trade; they must be educated.*” Elizabeth had no doubt that she would achieve her goals. She said, “*I will be in the university in five years’ time studying medicine by the special grace of God.*”

Elizabeth commented on why she was able to stay in school while others around her dropped out. She said, “... *many things in school have helped me to my final year; especially the morals taught from by our teachers and the school counsellor about our future careers. These have motivated me to want to stay in school. Also, some of the education materials in school such as projectors and well-equipped laboratories for our practical. Then there is the school library. Apart from all of these, the government has made education free to all students*” On how all of the above helped her, Elizabeth stated, “... *government pays for the final WAEC [and that]*

¹¹Subsequent to the interview, Elizabeth communicated that she was successful in the entrance examination for medical school in 2013

helped me. I also use the school library to borrow books that I don't have at home and again the laboratory in school shows me the practical of what we are learning in the classroom."

The above notwithstanding and like Ebunoluwa, Elizabeth identified aspects that were sometimes a challenge to her not only staying focused but even staying in school. These included negative attitudes towards girls by some teachers and teachers often not being punctual. She said, "... *the attitudes of teachers in class. They come late and when they come, they talk to students arrogantly. Again some teachers have their favourite students especially among the boys [and] they treat them [boys] nicely.* Like Ebunoluwa, she also identified the manner in which boys treated girls and the lack of teacher intervention in this regard. She said, "[Ag]ain, *most boys talk to female students roughly, they bully you when you make efforts to participate in the class exercises and teachers will not care to control them [boys].*" The foregoing seemed to shape her actions when she experienced problems in school. She made the point that she did not rely on anyone to help her. Rather, Elizabeth said, "[A]nytime *I have problem with school, I don't go to anyone; I take decision on my own, I advise myself. When I am walking in the street, I advise myself;[like] I call myself to order. In fact, I advise myself on good and wrong things,*" She would only divulge her challenge once she had come up with a solution. Only then would she share her problem and possible solution with her mother. She said, "*I only go to my mum if I can do it.*"

Elizabeth recognized her role when asked what would stand in the way of her achieving her dreams. She said, "... *when I am not doing well in my study, [that] can affect my dream.*" The following comment supported this line of argument, "*I can achieve my dream by working hard, [being] prayerful, reading my books, attending and staying in classes.*"

She identified peer support as contributing to her staying in school. This took the form of academic groups that she referred to as 'reading groups'. Elizabeth said, "... *me and friends formed a reading group where we discuss those topics that are difficult. We do this together mostly after school hours or during weekends.*"

With regard to activities in the home before and after school, Elizabeth reported that being the oldest in the family put certain pressures on her. Not only did she have chores to complete (before and after school), but she also had the added pressure of being a ‘role model’ to her younger siblings. She said, “*being the first born to my family; every morning after family prayer I fetch water for the family to bath, clean our yard and drop my two junior sisters at their school before I go to my own school.*” The expectations she said, centred on her being viewed as a ‘good girl’ who complies with family expectations. In addition, Elizabeth reported to sometimes staying absent from school, though “*very rarely.*” In the event this happened, she said. “*... fetching water, stress of dropping my junior sisters at school and also the distance I walk to and from to school*” influenced decisions not to attend school.

Balikisu is a 16-year-old Muslim who lives with her mother in the Ayetoro Alimosho area of Lagos State, Nigeria. She has a younger brother and sister who are both still at school. Balikisu’s father is a businessman and her mother is a teacher at the school that Balikisu attends. Her mother “*possesses a National Certificate of Education.*” Her father has two wives. She said, “*... my mother is the second wife and he [father] lives with his first wife and their five children.*” While Balikisu sees her father only occasionally because “*... he is a very busy man.*”, she stated, “*[H]e only comes around once in a while but he provides me and my brother and sister with necessary money.*” Balikisu’s mother takes her and her siblings in her car to and from school every day.

Balikisu comes from an educated family. She said, “*[M]ost members of my dad and mum’s family are all educated.*” She also comes from a deeply religious family who “*believe in Allah, because they are all Muslim.*” Being from a Muslim and educated home, makes education a priority in her family. She thus recognizes the importance of being educated and said, “*education is very important for children, because in the Nigeria of today you have to be educated if you want to be recognized and respected.*”

Balikisu’s religious background shapes her actions in and out of school. Her mother plays an important role in shaping Balikisu’s actions. She said, “*[M]y mother is very religious. She monitors everything that I do.* This is particularly so because her mother is “*a teacher in our*

school.” Balikisu stated that her mother advises her to “*stay in school [and to] face [her] studies*”, always reminding her of the future benefits not only of staying in school, but also passing well. Interestingly, and unlike Elizabeth who viewed education as a means towards becoming independent, Balikisu’s mother linked a good education with the possibility of finding a ‘good’ life partner; despite her own independence as an ‘educated woman’. Quoting her mother, Balikisu said, “[*I*]f you pass well in your final examination and you enter university, a good man we look for you as wife one day.”

Balikisu’s mother also played a role in deciding on her friends. As she reported, her mother used her knowledge of the children in the school to support the selection of Balikisu’s friends. She restricted Balikisu and her friends’ movements and also discussed relationships with boys. Balikisu’s mother cautioned them about getting involved in relationships as she said it would stand in the way of their aspirations to become somebody one day. Balikisu said, “[*M*]ost of the time, she invites me and my friends and gives us sex education and tells us not allow any man to destroy our future ambition with sweet words.”

Balikisu’s role model is her uncle because “*he creates time to advice[her] on the issues of life.*” Her uncle is a lawyer who visits her family home regularly and encourages her to be a good example to her siblings. He too is religious. He inspires Balikisu to “*stick to [her] education*” so that she “*can move on in life and be somebody.*” He narrates stories to her about his success, stating that he “*has never lost any case in his career.*” Her uncle, she reports, is very truthful, religious, and unlike her father, has just one wife. She describes him as “*very generous to people [and] he does not believe in money much; rather he loves a person with good character.*”

Like Elizabeth, Balikisu also stated that school represents a “*home for learning.*” She expanded this to include notions of school as a space that provides opportunity for future success and where one becomes knowledgeable about the world around one. She said school is a “*pathway to success and a strong key to unlock ignorance for one to be knowledgeable and to know what is going on globally.*” To her, attending school is neither an option nor is it negotiable; “*you have to be in school no two ways about it.*”

Balikisu wants to follow the example of her role model and sees herself as a law student at university in the near future. She aspires to become a human rights lawyer, and states, “... *my dream is to be a good lawyer like my uncle to defend people’s rights*. She also wants to be recognized as the “*first female lawyer in my family because already we have female doctors and accountants.*”

Bullying and negative teacher attitudes towards girls sometimes discourage Balikisu from wanting to go to school. She said, “... *the attitudes of some teachers toward girls. Most time they don’t encourage girls to answer questions. Some teachers prefer boys.*” On the question of bullying, Balikisu made the point, “... *most of the boys when you are late or you answer questions wrongly, and they bully you and make you look inferior to them.*”

When questioned about academic support and whom she went to when she had a problem at school, like Elizabeth, Balikisu reported that she was silent about her problems. She said, “*I keep my problem to myself. Whenever I have problem with school [and] because, I don’t like telling people anything about myself, and I don’t want anybody to laugh at my problem.*” Learners varied in their reasons for not disclosing problems. Unlike Elizabeth who preferred to work things out for herself before sharing the problem with someone, Balikisu chose not to share because she is a private person, and for fear of being laughed at.

Balikisu was confident that she would become successful. She said, “*[N]othing will stand [in] the way of my dream.*” She was aware of the support from her role model whom she said would “*go the extra mile*” in ensuring that Balikisu “*will **surely** become a known lawyer*” as long as her uncle is still alive.

Balikisu suggested that apart from her family who have encouraged her to remain in school, her English teacher also played a supporting role. She said, “*[O]ur English teacher has also contributed to my staying in school because despite that she is a friend to my mother, she talks to me like her own daughter.*” This teacher also “*cites many women in the society who have made (become successful) it to encourage me and my friends, that if ‘we can see it, we can achieve it’*”

The English teacher emphasized, *“school is the only thing that guarantees successful and happy life.”*

In addition to from government support, Balikisu referred to extracurricular motivational talks as further motivation to remain at school. She said, *“[A]nother thing in school apart from government policies that eases children’s education, is the motivational talk during the extra-curricular activities; when the school invites professionals to come and give talks to students.”* She claimed that her school had appropriate facilities that supported her academically by saying, *“especially the school library where I chose to spend my quiet time to read”* Like Elizabeth, Balikisu’s friends from other schools contribute to her staying in school. She said, *“[M]e and my friends from other schools exchange ideas. Especially, we do past question papers together whenever the opportunity comes.”*

Balikisu’s mother and uncle seem to have influenced not only her stay in school but also her career choice through the words of encouragement from both. On how and what she needed to achieve to fulfil her dream, Balikisu said, *“ I can achieve my dream by working hard on my studies, by reading my books at all time, and by staying in school with good friends and support from my family as well.”*

Olajumoke is 15 years of age and lives in Ayobo, in Alimosho area of Lagos State, Nigeria. She lives with both parents. Her father is a commercial taxi driver, while her mother has her own small grocery business. Both parents are self-employed.

Olajumoke’s father takes her in his car to school every morning but she walks a distance of about 3 to 4 kilometers back home in the afternoon. Like Elizabeth and Ebuluwa’s, Olajumoke’s parents are in a monogamous relationship despite the environment that supports polygamy. Olajumoke is the second born in the family and has an older brother, two younger brothers, and two younger sisters. She mentioned that her older brother is in university, and the rest of her siblings are all still in school .She has an aunt currently in university.

Olajumoke's father and mother seem to be instrumental in her educational success thus far because of their attitudes towards her education. Both parents stress that she should be willing and ready to stay in school and study hard while there. They both support her with their positive attitude and encouragement. Olajumoke said, *"... my father and mother's attitude toward my education is that I should not roam around the street with bad friends. Rather, I should be focused, willing, and ready to stay in school, and concentrate on my studies because school is all that I need to succeed"*. The time she spends with her father as he takes her to school seems important in how they communicate about her education. She said, *"... my father does encourage me with words of advice while taking me in his taxi car to school in the morning. He will show me those that do not attend school but hawk [selling] on the road ... that education is the gateway to success"*.

Olajumoke attributed her staying at school to her parent's home supervision, devotion, and dream for success. Like her father, Olajumoke's mother shared similar views about the value of education in one's life. Her mother ensures that Olajumoke rests after school, before supervising her homework. Olajumoke concluded, *"... my father and mother have been supportive to my staying in school so far. They appreciate the value of education and their dream is that one day, they would like to see me in the university like their friend's daughter who is in the university."* Though she participates in household chores like cooking, cleaning, and sweeping, Olajumoke said, *"... my parents minimize chores that I do at home to allow me to do my school assignments. They buy me all the necessary textbooks needed at school and give me advice to stay in school when teachers are not around, attend classes, and be humble."*

Olajumoke's role model is her aunt because, as she narrated,

She is the only one in university and she does use herself as an example to advise me. [She tells me about] when she was in the secondary school and all she did to enter university. So she does tell me all that I should do at school; stay in class even if teachers are not around, read my book at all times, attend classes regularly, and that I should not follow bad friends.

It would seem that as a pacesetter in the family, Olajumoke's aunt serves as a mirror to her niece, who is also the person she goes to when she needs advice about school. She said, *"[S]he [aunt] gives me necessary good advice that I need; like using herself as an example, and her*

experiences at secondary school days to advise me on how to stay school and achieve my dreams in life.”

Olajumoke’s dream is to be a pharmacist because, “... *I like to learn how to produce good drugs to cure people’s illness. I hate fake drugs.*” Thus, she saw herself in university in five years’ time.

Olajumoke attributes her staying in school to government policies on education in Lagos State. She made the point,

One of the things that have helped me to stay in school, apart from my family support, is the government policies that make education free from primary to secondary school. Also, the policies further stated that during the school hours any child found roaming, hawking around will be arrested, locked up in the prison, and the parent will pay a sum of #30,000.00 (thirty thousand naira) to bail such students. I don’t want to put my parents into problems instead like to make them happy and proud of me. Also, policies that stipulated that a bursary will be given to any student that marks up to 80% in school attendant during the school year. So, I like to get the bursary and that is why I do everything to come to school every day.

Olajumoke said that she liked being in school because, “*school is fun, lively and is home for learning where one learns how to read and write. School also moulds one to be economic self-independent because it [school] allows you to get job and not depend on anybody in life.*” She said, “*I will advise my friends to stay in school to gain from teachers, to learn how to read and write because school is home for learning where one can be shaped to be successful in life.*” She said there were some things she did not like about school. This included, “... *bullying from other students. Whenever you make any mistakes, they laugh at school. Even some male teachers also bully girls-when you are wrong in answering questions, they call you all manners of names and also corporal punishment from male teachers - they don’t care that you a girl.*”

There are times when Olajumoke is unable to attend school as a result of household chores, bullying from other students and corporal punishment especially from male teachers. She narrated, “*I don’t come to school sometimes because of household chores (cooking, sweeping, cleaning and sell at shop) and when I manage to go to school late teachers will punish me and boys will bully (laughing) at me.*” Despite the negative experiences, she still sees the value of attending school regularly. Olajumoke acknowledged that there is “*nothing*” would be a barrier

to her dream. She acknowledged her role in making her dreams a reality by admitting that “*hard work, self-belief and courage*” are the attributes she needs to exhibit to fulfil her dreams.

4.4.3 Synopsis of Factors shaping Individual Girls’ School Retention

In the four individual interviews that focused on factors that shape female learners’ school retention the responses of all four participant learners reflected that they placed much positive value on school. They suggested that school represents an institution for self-empowerment and knowledge, a home for learning and a pathway to success. They proposed that it moulds character, encourages self-independence and leads to a successful life.

Learners in the study claimed that many factors shaped their school retention among them are; support from family with special emphasis on father as a motivational factor, government policies on education in Lagos state, role model, favorite teacher, school facilities and peer pressure. All the four learners account that all the mentioned factors though in different degrees shaped their school retention.

On the challenges they face to stay in school, they all claimed that house chores, bullying from other students, fatigue and lack of parental and teacher support were challenge they faced to staying in school for its full duration.

Furthermore, these four learners proposed that there are steps and support necessary to achieving their dream and some of these are determination, regularity of attendance, self-belief, confidence/focus, exam success, self-discipline and good counselling. They also indicated that they need support from family, government (in the form of scholarships), teachers and friends.

The foregoing discussions have considered the data presentation from the survey questionnaires, focus group discussions and individual interviews in this study. In all three segments of discussions and interviews the learners highlighted an array of factors that contributed to why they [as girls] stay in school. This leads on to the analysis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The greater failure is not the child who doesn't reach the stars, but the child who has no stars that they feel they are reaching for
(Gordon Brown, 2007:1)

5.1 Introduction

The study was carried out in order to understand the factors that shape the retention of female learners in some senior secondary schools, Alimosho Region of Lagos State, Nigeria. While there were a number of factors, the most prevailing as reported by learners in this study included perspectives on the value of education and individual learner aspirations. Other important factors that kept girls in school also included the value of education within families, familial support and extra-curricular participation.

In this section, I use Sen's (1989; 2002) theory on human development and capabilities to understand the attitudes, views, behaviours, and values of this cohort as well as the community notions on the education of girls. This theory describes human development as the process of enlarging a person's 'functionings' and capabilities to function; the range of things that a person could do and be in life. Sen's conception of human development distinguishes two central features: the "evaluative aspect" and the "agency aspect." The first is concerned with improving human lives as an overt and measureable development objective. The second, 'agency aspect', concerns what and how people can contribute to change in their own lives. This happens at the structural (policy and political) as well as individual (agency) levels. The perspectives created by this theory combine human rights and well-being that places the individual at the centre of education and development discourse. The theory goes beyond presenting education of an individual in terms of its economic value to also considering its intrinsic, instrumental and positional value.

It was useful to adopt Sen's proposition of human development and capabilities for the study to investigate the value, beings, doings, and freedoms of each individual. A limitation in Sen's capability approach though, lies in its inability to offer tools to evaluate these. For this purpose of analysing results I apply Unterhalter and Brighouse's (2003 in Chisholm and September, 2005:88-9) notions of intrinsic, instrumental and positional values. Together, these models

helped to analyse and explain the reciprocal interrelationship between the value of education and females learners' school experiences and perspectives of education.

In addition, I compared and contrasted my findings with those of other researchers in the field of female education. This analysis highlighted the contribution of my study to this field.

What follows is the analysis and discussion in eight themes. These are:

- Value of Education and Aspirations
- Family Support, Positional Value, Motivation, and Female School Retention,
- Extra-Curricular Participation, Progression, and Retention
- Teacher Impact around Female School Retention
- Government Policy and Female Education
- Peer Support and Female School Retention
- School Performance as an Incentive toward Progression and Retention
- Role Models, Female Education, Retention

5.2 Factors that Shape Retention

The majority of learners in the study acknowledge the impact and influence of internal and external factors on their school progression as well as retention

5.2.1 Value of Education and Aspirations

The findings from the three sources of data, that is; questionnaire, focus group discussions and individual interviews, indicate that two primary reasons account for why female learners in this study stay in school. The first has to do with the value of education and the second, individual aspirations.

The results show a complex interrelationship between intrinsic and extrinsic values of education that shape learner retention. The results also point to a complex relationship between individual and family (agency and structure) values that work reciprocally to produce favourable outcomes for female learners in this study.

Learners reported to like being in school, with the majority in the larger study (questionnaires) indicating that their progression and staying in school for its duration comes from value benefits, pleasure and satisfaction, and self-determination without the influence of external factors. From the narratives of the majority of the female learners, one can deduce that they remain in school because of the intrinsic reward for the individual and their belief in what school can offer for future aspirations. The majority of these learners foresee their interest to progress and stay in school as something that is born out of personal feelings or comes from within the individual. Staying in school had individual and intrinsic value, external factors notwithstanding. This though was not the whole story because the personal feelings had to do with family values about school.

Learners in focus group discussions provided data that displays the complexity in the internal/external and intrinsic/extrinsic relationship. The majority determined that girls remain in school because of family values and ideals about school. Some girls reported that many girls' stay in school due to its positional value (Unterhalter and Brighouse, (2003), whereby some parents place value on the education of their children, especially girl's education. Females also reported extrinsic rewards in that, rather than experiencing only individual inherent satisfaction at being in school, many stay in school because of positive encouragement or praise from parents and extended family.

Sen (1993:30) defines capabilities as person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being. Thus, capabilities are opportunities or freedoms to achieve what an individual reflectively considers valuable. When evaluating learning, education or schooling, it is therefore important to assess not what money or happiness an individual derives, but the range of valued opportunities, and the freedoms that will support the connection between valued opportunities and outcomes or capabilities and functionings.

The majority of the learners in the study considered education progression and retention of greater value beyond its economic value, extending also to their individual development and social status.

My study supports Holden (2003) in noting that students' value of education is governed by some kind of rewards, which can be intrinsic, extrinsic and contextual. McCullagh and Wilson (2005) too suggest that enhanced education drive or value promotes learning, performance, enjoyment, and persistence to achieve, among other benefits.

The participants in the study narrated that motives to succeed, progress and remain in school is because of the value (intrinsic and extrinsic) of good performance as an incentive, and fun of being in school; adding to individual functioning's (Sen, 1989) and well-being beyond the economic value of education. Put differently, the majority argue that they progress through and stay in school because of value, fun, satisfaction, pleasure and desire for a successful life and this according to McCullagh (2005) is the intrinsic value for an individual who needs to feel competency and pride in something. The motives of these learners is also supported by Holden (2003) who maintains that learners' intrinsic drive is governed by core rewards, which concern developing understanding, feeling powerful and enjoying the task. Goodchild (2001) anticipated that learners would be driven intrinsically when they consider the task to have a value for its own sake; when they engage in the task in order to understand and achieve a goal.

Another important reason that female learners reported for school progression and retention is the aspirations that an individual learner might become not only successful but become 'somebody' in life. Aspirations are defined as functions of the degree to which the basic needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy have been satisfied. Aspirations thus refers to needs and motives (Ryan & Deci, 2008). Aspirations, however, usually connote the achievement of something high or great and address both present and future perspectives

This was the case with the majority learners in the study, who reported high aspirations not only educationally, but also through participation in extra-curricular activities that developed talents relevant to becoming active citizens. These were evidence of aspirations that contribute in a broader societal sense; beyond individual to collective functioning's (Sen, 1989, 2002).

The majority of the learners in the study not only aspired to progress through school, but actively made choices that would enable them to reach their goals and aspirations. This manifested in

three ways, namely, subject choice, friendships and family relationships, and choice of extra-curricular activities and participation (discussed above). Subject choice and career choice articulated with friends outside of school in particular, encouraging learners to stay in school. The results demonstrate that aspirations do not exist within a vacuum, but rather within a social context. Individual learners in this study drew their aspirations from the lives of others around them. For example, some learners drew inspiration from role models, sometimes a friend, family member or teacher. In this sense, individuals have an aspirations window through which they view the possibilities that exist within their social sphere (Ray, 2006).

The learners in the study, therefore, made subject choices that influenced how their potentialities were cultivated based on their perceptions and attitudes toward what school represented. Krahn and Taylor (2005) propose that educational aspirations predict future educational attainment, denote self-perceptions and influence attitudes toward school.

In the study, I observed that learner's educational value and aspirations were interrelated. These two components helped learners to progress through and remain in school.

The value learners placed on education and their individual aspirations describes the intrinsic value of education. But this was not to exclusion of extrinsic value given the important role family played in the lives of the majority in this study. Agency exercised by learners interacted in complex ways with school and family structures and support to produce the outcome central to this study: retention. Aspirations that include among other things life goals as affiliation, personal development; and an emphasis on intrinsic goals were not only associated with education success, but also with greater health, well-being, and performance as an active citizen (Sen, 2002; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). This, according to Sen (1989) expands the range of things that a person can be and do, such as to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable, and to participate in community life (in Fukuda-Parr, 2003: 304). In the study the female learners believed that staying in school until completion would better and improve the life they intend to live; to become independent, knowledgeable, successful, and to become 'somebody'.

Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001:72) propose that success tends to encourage learners to raise their levels of aspiration, an aspect prevalent in this study. Learners cited good grades and high performance in school as reasons that made them persist through school.

Sen's (2002) conception of human development maintains that the evaluative aspect is concerned with improving human lives as an overt and measureable development objective. His view of success is measurable through human achievement – that is, through a change in human lives, in contrast to the dominant approaches that focus on economic growth as a key measure of achievement. The human development approach is unique in its emphasis on assessing development by how well it expands the capabilities of all people. Development then attempts to eradicate the blockages that impede a person from reaching his/her full potential and goals. For the female learners in this study, school progression and retention is one way to confront and address blockages; thus creating important pathways to help them achieve their goals.

Learner agency was a critical ingredient in the overall results. Despite perspectives in the community that viewed female education as a waste of time, expensive, a waste of investment and girls' schooling ending up in their husband's kitchen, the majority of female learners demonstrated the powerful role of individual and collective agency. Examples of individual and collective agency include learner perspectives on the value of education¹², their relationships and associations with positive role models, and their informed decisions regarding subject choice, downplaying the role of chores before and after school. Sometimes individuals made the choice to act in ways that advantaged and kept them in school. At other times agency emanated from collective, where girls decided to 'prove the community wrong' by acting outside the expected.

Learners' understanding of the value of schooling, progression, and retention are in line with Andoh, Bisiakoh, and Afranie (2012:1) where they stated that education enlarges people's choices in life thereby enabling them to have access to essential resources for a decent standard of living. The majority of learners in the study narrated that school progression, retention and completion will enlarge what they can do or be when they reiterated that school would enable to

¹²School as a home for learning, a conduit for a successful life and an important ingredient in the development of any nation, a vehicle towards economic independence and as self-empowerment and knowledge.

reach their dreams of becoming medical doctors, engineers, bank managers, business owners or celebrities. Not only did they believe that their school progression and completion would be a path that would secure their future aspirations, they actively worked towards its achievement through subject choice, regular attendance, completing homework, and obtaining good grades.

Determination served as yet another factor in females remaining in school. The majority in the study proposed that girls are determined to achieve their individual aspirations. Many used words like “*surely*” in five years they will be in the university to study in their chosen future career and that “*nothing*” would be a barrier to their dream. This is in line with suggestions by Sen about the role of human agency for changing policy, social commitment, and norms that require collective action (cited in Fukuda-Parr 2003: 309). He argues that human beings can be agents of change through both individual action and collective action. This reflects in how learners in this study explained how girls used collective agency to reconstruct community understandings of girls’ education and its value.

There is no doubt of the reciprocity between progression and retention, individual and collective agency, and aspirations and visions for improved quality of life. Learners envisioned themselves as successful professional people with academic qualifications in future. In other words, learners’ staying in school was seen as something that might help provide economic independence, social mobility, personal enrichment, and power. This is a reflection of Appadurai’s (2001:16-17) argument that, “the capacity to aspire provides horizon within which more concrete capabilities can be given meaning, substance and sustainability... the exercise and nature of the capabilities verifies and authorizes the capacity to aspire and moves it way from wishful thinking to thoughtful wishing ... a deeper capacity to aspire can only strengthen the poor as partners in the battle against poverty.”

5.2.2 Family Support, Positional Value, Motivation, and Female School Retention

The findings reveal the centrality of family support. Learners reported that the positive role played by family, especially parents, not only ensured that they progressed and completed school but also constituted their source of motivation, inspiration, and encouragement.

Unlike literature that proposes de-emphasis on female education by family, especially in developing countries, the majority of females in this study experienced support and motivation from family members to remain in school.

Parent-child communication about school increased motivation and feelings of support amongst this cohort. Many learners in the focus groups reported home communication supporting the value of school, encouragement and support to complete school tasks¹³ as aspects that facilitated retention in school. This concurs with Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) having found that parent-child conversations in the home were valuable in terms of enhancing children's school achievement, progression and sustainability.

The majority in this study lived with both parents who, as Edwards & Orr (2001) maintain, are the primary educator of the learners. Their support in relation to attendance, progression, retention, completion, and performance in learner's school success thus cannot be underestimated; learner agency notwithstanding. The results refute earlier results, particularly in developing countries that report lack of parental support for girls to remain in school (UNICEF, 2002; Archer, *et. al.*, 2007)

Parents in particular, are regarded as, "the most important significant other" in the study by Burns (1986:203 cited in Willemse, 2006). She maintains that children always seek the approval of parents in regarding their educational affairs. This cohort was no different; with the majority claiming that they sought advice from family members, particularly parents.

My study also found that the majority of the cohort lived with families who, employed, and who valued education: aspects that mediate learner beliefs, values, dispositions and responses to education.

Studies by Davis-Kean (2005), Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland (2004) and Gill & Reynolds (1999) proposed that parents' own levels of educational attainment to a large extent determines, or at the very least, influences children levels of attainment. The majority of learners

¹³Help with homework, chores and sometimes even diminished responsibility in the home.

in my study report to live with parents who were employed. All but one learner's highest education level by an adult female in the family was SS3 or above. Learners also had examples in the family of members who had tertiary education, with some learners describing such family members as role models.

In addition, parental involvement was found to be related to fewer behaviour problems in school (Domina, 2005), better attendance, and class preparation, (Simon, 2001), better school completion (Simon, 2001) and lower dropout rates (Rumberger, 1995). This was the case in the study where the majority of learners saw family members as confidants whenever they experienced problems at school.

Sen (2002) and Nussbaum (2000) propose alternative measures in education based on the capability approach to evaluate not only functionings, but also the value of being. They explain that educational attainment or retention depend on the contributing actors' positional values which determines how individual freedoms engage in their capabilities (Unterhalter & Brighouse, 2003).

Narratives by participants revealed that girls saw parents or families as the biggest source of external motivation in accomplishing their school progression, inspirations, dreams, and goals; thus facilitating school completion. The majority of those interviewed also revealed that most parents valued education for all their children, irrespective of gender; referred to as positional value by Unterhalter & Brighouse (2003). The girls in the study acknowledged their parents' hopes, expectation, and dreams for them to become independent and successful in life and for them to strive beyond the myth that a girl is only good for becoming a child-bearer, wife, and house-cleaner. Both Gonzalez and Wolter (2006) and Sirvani (2007) ascertain that parental involvement contributes to student drive.

Jacob (2010), (cited in Fan & Chen, 2001) highlights parental aspirations and expectations as critical factors in student achievement and as they relate to this study, retention. This was the case in my study where the majority of learners maintained that they would like to fulfil their

parent's aspirations and expectations by becoming successful and professional in whatever they chose to do or be.

Contrary to Coclough (2000) who describes how some parents in Ethiopia and Guinea claimed that twelve years of schooling would mean their daughters could not perform housework and as a result may not be able to find husbands, learners in my study reported positive parent aspirations for female children. In addition, ILO/IPEC (2004:19) highlights the propensity for girls to be excluded or withdrawn from school earlier than boys, "in the belief that, as a girl, she does not need to be educated or indeed should not be too educated in case it blights her marriage potential." Like Coclough (2000) ILO/IPEC report that educating girls was often perceived to be a poor investment because they will marry, leave home, and benefit the husband's family instead. While the majority of the learners performed household chores before and after school set by their parents, such a practice did not negatively affect progression or school attendance. In fact, some claimed that parents would help with chores when learners had school pressure.

My study contradicts also results by Tjipueja (2005) who proposes that female eagerness to continue their education is reduced by the social expectation of girls that they should become good homemakers and mothers. Results from this study display aspirations, decisions, and choices that contradict stereotypes identified by Tjipueja (2005). The majority of learners saw themselves in professions such as medical doctors, female lawyers, teachers, accountant, and business managers. Not only did they aspire, but also actively pursued their goals through subject choices, support-seeking behaviour, performance, participation in class, and regular school attendance.

5.2.3 Extra-Curricular Participation, Progression, and Retention

School extra-curricular activity was an important factor that female learners proposed as an in-school incentive encouraging them to make progress, stay at school and complete their studies.

Lotz-Sisitka (2010:210) proposes that enrolling learners into school is not the ultimate. Rather, other in-school factors such as content, process, structures and pacing enable children to have access to a wider range of life choices and chances. She suggests that these factors also facilitate

school progression, retention, and completion. She further states that using Popkewitz's conception shifts emphasis from physical access to a discourse of retention and access that includes an examination of participation and subsequent action in school (Popkewitz, 2000; Lotz-Sisitka, 2010). Such a perspective moves the focus away from only considering the number of children in school to understanding pedagogical and school processes that acknowledge the relational and social embeddedness of knowledge in practice. She relies on Popkewitz's (2000) notion of 'social epistemological access', which he describes as making school knowledge more accessible. Lotz-Sisitka proposes that incorporation of all relevant structures that assess and evaluate what happens to learners after enrolment might support learners to completion of the schooling phase.

Extracurricular activities are those that students participate in that do not fall into the realm of normal curriculum of schools. There are many forms of extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, governance, student newspaper, music, art, and drama. Extracurricular activities are voluntary (Erin, 2010:2). In the study, respondents reported to be involved in extra-curricular activities, recognising future benefits. They participated in a wide range of clubs, including science/engineering, sports, debating, music/dance/drama, Environmental-Eco, reading, mathematics, poetry, and Red Cross Society. They were of the opinion that such activities introduced and exposed them to a wider range of life choices and chances; a factor that contributed to their perspectives on the value of education.

Extracurricular activities help in the development of skills in learners working in groups: in the cultivation of hobbies and interests, in the production of yearbooks, newspapers, and plays, and in participation in inter-scholastic athletics and intra-mural sports. Participation presents opportunities to learners for discovering and developing talents that approximate life in the adult community (Larson, 2006). Extra-curricular activities allow students to "apply the knowledge that they have learned in other classes and acquire concepts of independent life" (Erin, 2010:2). The positive benefits of participation have been noted as improved behaviour and grades, school completion, positive attitudes to becoming successful adults, and a social aspect. Brown (2000) maintains that learners gain better self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence, enhanced status among peers and reduced behavioural problems when engaged in extra-curricular activities in

school. Foster (2008) in his study argues that extra-curricular activities influence the way learners think, feel, believe, and act.

Learners in the study testify to the impact of extra-curricular participation on their school progression when the majority remarked that these shaped girls school career aspirations in the sense that it inspired some girls to achieve their dreams of being a professional in future. They saw value in participating in reading and science clubs in particular. The majority of learners narrated that they were inspired whenever their school invited professional goal-oriented guest speakers to give motivational talks. They said that it instilled belief, confidence, dispositions and attitudes to make them want to succeed.

A study by Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown (2004) found that learner participation in extracurricular activities provides students opportunity to create a positive and voluntary connection to their school (2004:223). Casinger (2011) also found that learners who participate in extracurricular activities are less likely to drop out and more likely to have higher academic achievement. Indeed, the results from this study attest to female learners confirming this result.

In the same vein, Holloway (2002) argues that students who participate in school extra-curricular activity perform better and complete school because extracurricular activities have positive effects on students need to become productive student leaders, enhancing their teamwork, organization, analytical thinking, problem solving, and time management in future. This was also the case with the majority of the learners in this study.

Erin (2010) proposed regarding extra-curricular activity “[S]tudents that are involved in extracurricular activities meet many new people. That is extra-curricular activity has a positive impact on student’s social life aspect. Some of the learners in my study agreed with this claim when they narrated that school extra-curricular activity offers them opportunity to meet professionals invited for motivational talks by the school management.

Another argument in favour of extra-curricular activities in the study is that every learner not only has a basic human right to education, but also to expansion of functionings and capabilities

(Sen, 1993). Learners have different capacities and should be given ample opportunities for development before specializing in a specific field of interest. They need skills that will equip them for family and leisure life too. This would, in Sen's (1993:30) words, increase "capabilities as person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being." Learners in this study indeed saw value and worth for their own lives in participation.

5.2.4 Teacher Impact School Retention of Female Learners

Teacher impact was another contributory factor to female learner progression, retention and completion revealed in this study. The majority though agreed that teachers use corporal punishment sometimes, which they did not appreciate. They nonetheless still reported that teachers were instrumental in helping them achieve goals, with some learners even reporting that teachers are role models to them. Learners in the larger sample also reported that some teachers are their confidants whom they approach when they have problems in school.

The influence that teachers have on progression, retention, and completion by learners cannot be underestimated. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) postulate that teachers play a role in students' decisions to persist, affecting school completion. Many students that drop out of school prematurely do so as a result of poor academic advisors or teachers (Tuttle, 2000). Some learners in this study reported that they were sometimes absent from school because of corporal punishment and negative teacher attitudes toward female learners.

Hunter and White (2004) suggest that organized and structured attempts in sustaining students in school have to do with good teacher-student interaction. Williams, Glenn, and Wider (2008) elaborate on the benefits of these types of relationships, stating. "this relationship can improve the student school academic performance, progression, retention and provides students with a sense of security." The teacher-student relationship also provides a sense of connectedness where students feel that they belong to the school and that the school belongs to them. Teacher attitudes and the attributes they bring to the classroom help to determine learner expectations, retention and achievements (Goe, 2007:4). Results from this study show that the majority of learners stay in school despite criticizing, punishment and some punitive behaviour by some teachers.

Teacher quality has an important role in student achievement as Goldhaber (2003:1) states, “[T]eachers clearly play an important role in shaping the future of individuals.” Teacher quality as an ingredient for better school retention was also revealed in my study when some female learners alluded to why they sometimes did not attend school. They claimed that they sometimes do not come to school because some teachers are not very good and that in some cases class was boring. A portion of the sample claimed that some teachers did not have experience in encouraging girls, since they too concurred with prevalent negative views about girl education and its value in the community. Nonetheless, girls in this study claimed (and also demonstrated by their school attendance and progression) that nothing would stand in the way of them fulfilling their dreams, not even negative teacher attitudes.

5.2.5 Government Policy and Female Education

The narratives of most participants in the study indicate that for female learners to remain in school and achieve their goals or dreams, they need government policy that supports girls’ active involvement in education. Government involvement in education is recognized universally as fundamental. UNICEF (2007:1) states that achieving the goal of universal education will require universal commitments. The declarations and conventions described in Chapter 1 attest to the need to hold governments accountable, especially in relation to girl’s education.

Nigeria is no different in its concerns for equity and equality in educational opportunities as I described in Chapter 1. Specifically, the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) and the Child Rights Act (1948) provided the legal framework for the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme, which ensures basic education that is free and compulsory. In addition and as a signatory to the 2000 World Education Conference and the six Dakar Goals towards achieving Education for All (EFA), the Nigerian government also established a National EFA Coordination unit under the Federal Ministry of Education mandated to prepare a National Action Plan for the delivery of education for all in Nigeria. Implementation of government policy in the region under study has gone some way towards ensuring quality education delivery that includes equal access, progression, retention and completion for female learners. Among what the majority of the female learners in the sample suggest are free education for all policy

that penalises child abuse and government intervention in providing a good school environment for learning and good school structures.

The study revealed that government participation in education generally and girls' education in particular is yet another factor affecting female learner participation, progression and retention. The questionnaires and focus group discussions in particular, showed that most girls progress and stay in school because of the policies, especially at local level, that not only make education of children especially girls free but also compulsory.

The learners in the study reported that girl's progress and school completion was due to policies of the Lagos State Government that place fines on any parent who sends children on errands during the school hours. There are also fines on any adult males who impregnate a teenager. In addition, the regional/local government provides bursaries to any learner with at least 80% school attendance. Together these structural mechanisms provided by the Lagos State Government of Nigeria were reported by the majority of learners in the study as an impetus that expanded their capabilities and thus encouraged school progression, retention and completion among female learners.

Sen (1993:30) states, "[C]apabilities are opportunities or freedoms to achieve what an individual reflectively considers valuable." Again, Sen (2002) proposes that human agency is concerned with what and how people can contribute to impacting changes in their lives. He states that for individuals, irrespective of gender, to achieve what they consider valuable, they require very good structural policy and political will that might assist them in using their individual agency. Archer (1995) argues that structures and agents interact in complex ways to produce experiences that either inhibit or enable agency. That is indeed shown in the case of this study in girls' progression through and retention in school. Political will and policy structures in at state and local level were geared towards enabling girls not only to progress and remain in school, but also to expand present and future capabilities and functionings.

The study concurs with the proposition by Amartya Sen (2002) that good structures are needed for an individual to engage their capabilities. Again, the study also attests Archer's (1995)

observation that structures and agents interact in complex ways to produce experiences that either inhibit or enable in this case, girls' progression and retention in school. The narratives of the majority of female learners show that for them to function well as agents they rely on the policy structures made available by government. Thus, provision of education that accommodates progression, retention and completion of learners irrespective of gender was perceived by learners as enabling them to remain in school for its duration.

5.2.6 Peer Support and Female School Retention

Peer effect in education cannot be underestimated because friends/peers also either enable or inhibit educational progression and achievement. Studies by Hoxby (2000), Sacerdote (2001), Zimmerman (2003), McEwan (2003), Groux and Maurin (2006), Hoxby and Weingarth (2006), Graham (2008), and Ammermueller and Pischke (2009) support the view that learners benefit from being around high-achieving peers.

This study reveals that friends had a positive impact on the decisions made by the majority of female learners in the study. Learners in the focus group in particular, reported the influence of peers in and out of school. They claimed support, motivation, and friendship as factors that sustained their behaviour and positively influenced why they remained in school.

Some learners formed reading and study groups with peers. Friends at university encouraged some learners to aspire to come to university. Some learners also reported that their friends are their confidants, discussing with friends whenever they experienced problems in school. Therefore, learners confirmed the positive effect of friends on school retention; a factor that others studies also report (McEwan, 2003; Kang, 2007, Angrist & Lang, 2004, Lefgren, 2004).

McCullagh and Wilson (2005) suggest that enhanced motivation promotes learning and performance, while Holden (2003) argues that students who are contextually motivated, do something to obtain contextual rewards, such as acknowledgement from peer students. This was the case in this study, as some learners identified motivation by friends and/or parent aspirations as sources of inspirations to progress through and complete school.

5.2.7 School Performance as an Incentive toward Progression and Retention

Low quality in learner school performance can suppress school enrolment and impede student progression, retention, completion and achievement in developing countries (World Bank, 2004). Studies by Balfanz & Byrnes (2006), Hanushek & Rivkin (2006) and Schmidt (1999) also that students with low school performance tend to show clear signs of behavioural and emotional disengagement from school. Kamela (2012) maintains that student progression and performance affect retention.

School performance as an incentive was also instrumental in what the majority in this study reported to keep them in school. They recognized the reciprocal relationship between performance and staying in school by proposing that the better their performance the more likely it was that they would not only attend, but also attend regularly and stay in school.

Studies analysed do not overtly link school performance as an incentive for learner retention though that was a factor identified in this study. Females in the study linked hard work, determination, self-belief, courage, and being focused on studies as factors that worked together to facilitate progression and retention.

5.2.8 Role Models, Female Education and Retention

A role model is defined as somebody to be copied; somebody regarded as a person to look up to and often as an example to emulate (Encarta World English Dictionary, 2004). Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, and Wright (2001:108) define role models as one source through which learners acquire attitudes, values, and patterns of conduct. Zirkel (2002:357) asserts, “[R]ole models have long been thought to play an important role in young learner’s development.” Zirkel states that a role model is a source of information on how learners should behave, while also providing support and mentorship. Modelling teaches learners not only overt behaviour but also expectations, ideas, self-concepts and internal standards. Students develop standards of their own behaviour and expectations about what they can do. These standards and beliefs affect learner attitudes and form the core of their personality (Bee and Boyd, 2004:251). This was the case in study when the majority of respondents reported having a role model they emulated. The majority named family members as role models, especially their father

and mother. They based their decisions on the attitudes, conduct and values displayed by role models.

The majority of the learners in the study reported the critical role played by role models in the life choices and decisions they made.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to investigate factors that shape retention of secondary school female learners in two rural public schools in Alimosho Region, Lagos State of Nigeria. I acknowledge that factors that shape the retention of girls in school are context-specific; hence a case study and interpretive orientation.

The findings reveal that various factors shape retention, primary of which were value placed on education by learners themselves and significant others (especially parents); learner aspirations and agency; and family support.

The use of Amartya Sen's theory to provide a theoretical lens made it possible for me to ask different kinds of questions about schooling, female education, and retention that few studies focus on in current literature. Therefore and importantly, the results highlight the complex interplay between structure and agency and between the individual and collective. Put differently, learner beliefs, values, and aspirations on the one hand, and family circumstance, community attitudes towards girls' education, and some school structures on the other hand, interacted reciprocally to produce experiences of school that enabled females to progress and remain there. This reciprocity is an aspect I did not explore fully in the analysis, and thus is an area for further research.

Educational inclusion enables girls to exercise their agency to propel their capabilities, and in so doing, increase functionings (Sen, 1999). The results allude to potential for girls: namely, possibilities for a different and even better future that puts in motion change processes that serve as building blocks to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

The next section presents recommendation of the study, based on the collected information provided by the female learners in the study, as understood and examined in terms of various factors. It is therefore suggested and recommended that the following recommendation should

provide a baseline on how best to serve the education of female learners for their school retention, completion, progression, throughput and development.

6.2 Recommendations

Education is the basic and fundamental tool that should be made available to all children, irrespective of gender. This study shifts emphasis from what does not retain females in school, to identifying structures and individual agency that positively sustain their progression through school. On this basis, I would like to make the following recommendations:

Recommendations for Schools and Ministries of Education

1. Deepen understanding of shifts in parent desires, aspirations, and value of education for female children. Such shifts might be points of discussion in teacher/parent meetings or through inviting parents as guest speakers. A key consideration in this regard would be to strengthen home/school relations that include open communication about aspirations and desires.
2. School management teams should find strategies to improve and strengthen parental involvement by making all possible efforts to invite, engage, guide and (where necessary) educate parents with regard to issues affecting their children's ability to stay in school. An ideal would be to invite experts to give presentations at parent meetings about female education, which might further enhance and motivate parents to desire more for their girls.
3. Create structures in schools that actively seek to improve teacher-female learner communication. One way to do this might be awareness workshops for teachers on the impact of their classroom practice on female learners' school experiences, gender disparity and pedagogy, female education in Nigeria and so forth.
4. There should be school, parent and learner forums where learners will be allowed to express what keeps them in school (and the challenges they face in sustaining that) without fear of school management and parents.
5. Sustain efforts to provide more educational opportunities at all levels for girls; especially in higher education.

6. Mobilize learners for higher education by providing incentives in the final years of school that establish learning pathways for girls.
7. Government should continue to enact and apply laws that learners identified in the study.
8. Government should engage in school mapping exercises, which aim at reducing the distance between homes and the school and thus lessen parental concern for the safety of their daughters and child fatigue.
9. There should be greater participation by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the promotion of the rights of girls especially in matters relating to their education.
10. Improve and strengthen the existing learner support programmes such as extra classes.
11. Strengthen and broaden the range of extra-curricular activities that privilege females.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study has examined factors that shape the retention of female learners in two rural secondary schools in Alimosho Region, Lagos State, Nigeria. It is believed that apart from the findings of this study, there are several other significant factors related to girls' school retention. Hence, further studies should attempt to identify these factors through ethnographic work and longer time spent in the field. While some in-school factors were identified, it would be important to examine school and classroom practices in more depth, in order to identify not only factors that promote retention and progression but also those that inhibit them.

Finally, since this study was conducted in one region of Lagos State, Nigeria. It would be important that similar studies be carried out in other States and Regions to impact policy and school practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Education Statistical Progression Data (2010) for Lagos State, Alimosho, Region.

Progression Table 1: Ifesowapo Aboru Senior Secondary School, Alimoso Region Lagos State, Nigeria

Year	SSS1	SSS2	SSS3
2006/2007			
Boys	291	265	249
Girls	95	50	23
2008/2009			
Boys	497	401	352
Girls	99	67	29
2009/2010			
Boys	360	324	309
Girls	150	73	31
2010/2011			
Boys	449	396	387
Girls	261	95	42

Source: Alimosho Region, Lagos State (education report 2010)

Progression Table 2: Estate School One Senior Secondary School, Alimoso Region, Lagos State, Nigeria

Year	SSS1	SSS2	SSS3
2006/2007			
Boys	410	368	346
Girls	123	64	19
2008/2009			
Boys	375	367	352
Girls	168	79	34
2009/2010			
Boys	401	324	305
Girls	211	73	31
2010/2011			
Boys	375	360	355
Girls	197	95	41

Source: Alimosho Region, Lagos State (education report 2010)

Progression Table 3: Ijegan Senior Comprehensive High School, Alimosho Region, Lagos State, Nigeria

Year	SSS1	SSS 2	SSS 3
2006/2007			
Boys	457	370	334
Girls	180	87	26
2007/2008			
Boys	560	487	458
Girls	285	192	53
2009/2010			
Boys	865	784	750
Girls	357	207	79
2010/2011			
Boys	1,049	995	845
Girls	552	283	90

Source: Alimosho Region, Lagos State (education report 2011)

Progression Table 4: Estate School Two Senior Secondary School, Alimoso Region, Lagos State, Nigeria

Year	SSS1	SSS2	SSS3
2006/2007			
Boys	248	222	197
Girls	98	37	17
2008/2009			
Boys	371	364	352
Girls	99	57	22
2009/2010			
Boys	267	254	199
Girls	173	73	31
2010/2011			
Boys	307	299	256
Girls	188	75	29

Source: Alimosho Region, Lagos State (education report 2010)

APPENDIX 2: Learner Survey

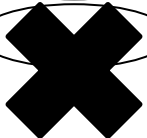
Learner Survey

Instructions

- Please complete all questions.
- Read each question carefully before you respond
- Circle only ONE choice for each question like this:

1	Age	16-17 18-19 20-21
---	-----	--

- Leave the “Code” section unmarked.
- Write clearly, where this is required.
- Mark or cross out with an ‘X’ when you make an error. Thereafter mark the correct one, like this.

1	Age	16-17 18-19 
---	-----	---

Use a blue or black pen only.

Name of school: _____

Learner's name only: _____

Learner Code: _____

SECTION A: Learners' Background				
No	Question	Response		Code
1	Age	12-13		1
		14-15		2
		16-17		3
		18-19		4
		20 and above		5
2	What languages do you speak?	English	Yes	1
			No	2
		Yoruba	Yes	1
			No	2
		Hausa	Yes	1
3	Who is your primary caregiver with whom you stay? (<i>circle only one</i>)	Both parents (mother and father)		1
		Mother		2
		Father		3
		Grandmother		4
		Uncle/Aunt		5
4	How many brothers and sisters (siblings) do you have?	Siblings only (brothers and sisters)		5
		Other, specify: _____		7
		None		1
		1		2
		2		3
5	How many of your siblings are still in school?	3		4
		4		5
		5		6
		More than 6		7
		None		1
6	How many of your siblings are not in school?	1		2
		2		3
		3		4
		None		1
		1		2

		4 5	5 6
7	What is the highest level of education reached in your family?	Primary 6 JSS SSS Certificate/Diploma Undergraduate degree (e.g. BA, BSc) Postgraduate degree (i.e. Masters, PhD)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
8	What is the highest grade any female member of your family has completed?	Primary JSS SSS College certificate or diploma Undergraduate degree(e.g. BA, BSc) Post-graduate degree (e.g. masters, PhD)	1 2 3 4 5 6
9	Who is your role model?		
10	What it is you admire most about this person? <i>You can list more than one thing.</i>		
11a	How do you get to school?	Walk Public transport Cycle/motor bike Parents car Others, specify: _____	1 2 3 4 5
If you walk to school, complete 11b & 11c below			
11b	How far do you walk to school? (<i>answer this circled walk</i>)	1-2 kilometres 3-4 kilometres More than 5 kilometres	1 2 3
11c	If you walk to school, how long does it take?	0-15 minutes 16-30 minutes 31-60 minutes More than 61 minutes	1 2 3 4
12	If you travel by car, public transport or motor cycle, how long does it take you to get to school?	0-15 minutes 16-30 minutes 31-60 minutes More than 61 minutes	1 2 3 4
13	What is the main chore you perform before school every day?	Fetch water Cook Clean Wash dishes Sweep Herd cattle, goats, sheep	1 2 3 4 5 6

		Water garden	7
		Nothing	8
14	How long does it take you to do the chore in (13)?	0-15 minutes	1
		16-30 minutes	2
		31-45 minutes	3
		46-60 minutes	4
		Longer than 61 minutes	5
15	What is the main chore you do after school every day?	Fetch water	1
		Cook	2
		Clean	3
		Wash dishes	4
		Sweep	5
		Play	6
		Sell at shop	7
		Nothing	8
16	How long does it take you to do the chore in (15)?	0-15 minutes	1
		16-30 minutes	2
		31-45 minutes	3
		46-60 minutes	4
		Longer than 61 minutes	5
18	Which of the following do you have in your home?	Television	Yes No
			1 2
		Radio	Yes No
			1 2
		Novels	Yes No
			1 2
		Magazines	Yes No
			1 2
		Newspapers	Yes No
			1 2
		Video games	Yes No
			1 2
		Car	Yes No
			1 2
		Bicycle	Yes No
			1 2

Section B: Learners Parents/Guardians Profile			
1	What is the employment status of your primary parent/caregiver?	Employed	1
		Self employed	2
		Unemployed	3

		Retired/pensioner	4
2	If they are employed, what do they do?	Self-employed (subsistence farmer)	1
		Self-employed (with own business)	2
		Self-employed (selling wares on the street)	3
		Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, Nurse, Teacher, Pharmacist)	4
		House helper (domestic worker)	5
		Skilled worker (driver, chef, tailor)	6
		Casual labourer (hawking, selling fruits)	7
		Civil worker (permanent secretary, directorate, principal officer)	8
		Politician (party councillor, chairman, governor)	9

Section C: Learners' School Experiences, Perspectives and Aspirations			
1	Name one thing you <i>like</i> about school.		
2	Name one thing you <i>dislike</i> about school.		
3	Do you have a favourite teacher?	Yes No	1 2
4	If yes , what is it about the teacher you like?		
5	What in your view makes him/her different from other teachers		
6	List all the subjects you do in school in the column on your right		
7	What is your favourite subject and why?		

8	What is your least favourite subject, and why?		
9	What would you like to be one day?		
10	What is your dream?		
11	What subjects do you need to achieve this dream?		
12	What do you think you need to fulfill your dream?		
13	What steps are you taking to fulfill your dream?		
14	What will stand in the way of your dream? <i>You can circle more than one thing in the column on your right.</i>	Nothing Lack of parent support Economic limitations Unforeseen realities like illness Early marriage and pregnancy Lack of teacher support Peer pressure Academic (still in school, poor performance)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
15	How can the school help you reach/achieve your goals/dreams? Name the most important thing.		
16	What activities are you involved in at school apart from study? <i>You can</i>	Science club/engineering club Sports	1

	<i>circle more than one.</i>	Debating club Music/dance/drama club Environmental eco-club Reading club Maths club Poetry club Red-cross society None Other, specify: _____	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
17	Who helps you with homework at home? <i>Please circle the one who helps you the most often.</i>	Mother Father Both parents Grandparents Uncle/aunt Sister/brother Other, specify: -----	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18	What make you stay absent from school sometimes?	Loss of school interest Going to cinema Lack of teachers (counsellor) Peer pressure (Friends) House chores Teachers bad attitude Academic (poor performance) Economic limitation (financial, farming, informal trading) Unforeseen realities (illness, death,) Parent / Guardian (send on errand) Tiredness	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
19	Where do you see yourself in 5 years?	In University/Polytechnics/ College of Education At home, unemployed With a child Employed in an organization Self Employed Married Other, specify: _____	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20	What is the most important thing in school that made it easy for you to stay in school so far?		
21	What is the most important thing outside school that made it easy to stay in school?		

22	Who do you go to first when you have a problem with school	No one, I try to solve the problem myself Parent My guardian (aunt/uncle) Grandparent Sibling (brother or sister) Favourite teacher School Counsellor	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23	What advice would you say to friend about staying in school like you?		

APPENDIX 3: Focus Group Schedule

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do people in your community say about school
2. What do people in the community says about girls staying in school
3. Who do community believe should stay in school and why
4. In your view, what keeps girl in school
5. What do you think, why do some girls not stay in school?
6. What are things in school that make it easy for girls to stay in school?
7. What are things outside school that make it easy for girls to stay in school?
8. What are things in school that make it difficult for girls to stay in school?
9. What are things outside school that make it difficult for girls to stay in school?
10. What is it that makes some girls stay absent from school sometimes
11. What are the steps that girls are taking to stay and achieve their dreams while staying in school

APPENDIX 4: Individual Interview Schedule

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduce by saying... the purpose of the study. My study wants to understand factors that enable young girls like you to stay and complete school. I chose you because you are in your final year of school. I would like to know a little about you and the things that have helped you to stay in school till this period. I am going to ask about your family, your school experience and reasons why you think school is important.

1. Tell me a little about yourself; your family and where you grew up
2. What stands out about growing up in your family?
3. What do your parents or guardians do?
4. What do people in your family say about school
5. (If the girl has siblings ask this questions)
 - a. Who (and how many) in the family are still in school
 - b. Who in your family has completed school?
 - c. How many female in your family has completed school?
6. Who is your role model and why?
7. What would you like to be one day?
8. Tell me about how you think your family did or did not help you stay in school.
9. What are things in school that you think helped you to stay in school for so long? (probe when the child responds)
10. What advice would you give to a friend about staying in school like you?
11. Who do you go to first when you have a problem with school?
12. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Tell me how you think you can achieve this.

APPENDIX 5: Permission Letter: Ministry of Education

The Director of Education

Alimosho Region

Lagos State

Nigeria

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

I am Master Degree student in the Education department at Rhodes University who seeks permission to conduct research at four selected schools in Alimosho Region area. My research is titled: **An investigation of factors that shape retention of secondary school female learners in two rural public schools, Alimosho Region Lagos State of Nigeria**

The research is to be conducted among young men aged 15 – 19 years who will voluntarily agree to take part in the research. In order not to interrupt the school programme, questionnaires will be given to the selected learners to complete at home while the interviews will be conducted after school during the learner's free time. The research will be carried out from 06 March – 10 May 2012.

It is hoped that my study will contribute to the understanding of factors that keep learners in general and female learners particular in school. Enclosed here, is a letter from my University authorizing me to conduct the research in schools.

Thank you very much

Yours Sincerely

.....

Agbomeji A.M.Oladele

APPENDIX 6: Permission Letter: Principal

The Principal

.....

Alimosho Region

Nigeria

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

This letter is to ask for permission and at the same time inform you that I have selected your school as one of the schools in the Alimosho Region area where I intend to conduct my research. The research will be carried out from 06 March – 10 May 2012.

In order not to interrupt your school programme, questionnaires will be given to the selected learners to complete at home while the interviews will be conducted after school during the free time of the selected participants. I have received permission from the Regional Education Director to conduct my research to show that what I plan to do is understood. Enclosed here is a letter from my University explaining the nature of my research.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours Sincerely

.....

Agbomeji A.M.Oladele

APPENDIX 7: CONSENT LETTER (To participants parents in school 1 and 2)

The Parent

.....

School one and two

Alimosho Region

Nigeria

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF CONSENT

This letter is to ask for your permission and at the same time inform you that I have selected your daughter as one of the participants in the Alimosho Region area school one where I intend to conduct my research. The research will be carried out from 06 March – 10 May 2012.

I have organized the programme in such a way that it will not affect her school programme, she will be given questionnaires to be completed at home while the interviews will be conducted after school during the free time agreed by your daughter. I have received permission from Alimosho regional education Director and her school principal to conduct research to show that what I intend doing is well stated. I hereby enclosed a letter from my University to illustrate the objectives and the nature of my research.

However, I like to say that the participation of your daughter is voluntary and free, attract no rewards in any form and she is free to withdraw at any point. Also, her name or personalities will be protected that is confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours Sincerely

.....

Agbomeji A.M.Oladele

APPENDIX 8: CONSENT FORM

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Research Title: An investigation of factors that shape retention of secondary school female learners in two rural public schools, Alimosho Region Lagos State of Nigeria

Interviewer : Agbomeji A.M.Oladele

Telephone number: +2348023812800/ +27734745978

Supervisor : Prof Jean Baxen, PHD

Telephone number: (27)46 603 8698 (w)/ (27)82 321 3936 (mobile)

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to take part in a research. Before you decide to be part of this study, you need to understand the risks and benefits. This consent form provides information about the research. I will be available to answer your questions and provide further explanations where needed. If you agree to take part in the research, you will be asked to sign this consent form. This process is known as informed consent. Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose whether or not to take part in the study. Participants in the study should be young female learners aged 15 – 19 years old who are permanent resident of Alimosho Region area of Lagos State, Nigeria.

PURPOSE

The research will be conducted at four secondary schools in Alimosho Region area of Lagos State, Nigeria among young female aged 15 -19 years old. The main aim of the study is to understand the factors that shape the retention of female learners in school. The interview will be conducted in the English language and will take place after school at an agreed venue. Each interview will last for 60 minutes. For those who will be selected to take part in individual interview will have another day for interviews or discussion.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

You will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study but will get opportunity to learn how a research is conducted and will learn from others how to answer questions and possible new knowledge from other participants.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you may decide not to begin or to stop this study at any time.

PRIVACY OF RESEARCH INFORMATION

Your information will be kept private and confidential. No one will know except for the interviewer that you I part of this study. The supervisor acting on behalf of the university may review your information and if that happens only information related to the study will be availed to her. Except for the supervisor at the university, your information will be kept private unless you permit the release of it or when the information is asked for by court order. Your information will be used for research purpose only. During interviews I will take notes and at the same time tape record the conversations and no real names should be used during the occasion without your permission.

SIGNATURES

By signing this consent form, you agree that you have read this informed consent form, you understand what is involved, and you agree to take part in this study. You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form.

.....
Participant (Print name)

.....
Signature

.....
Date

RESEARCH STATEMENT

I certify that the research has been explained to the above individual by me including the purpose, the procedures, the possible risks and the potential benefits associated for participating in this research. Any questions raised have been answered to the individual's satisfaction.

Agbomeji .A. M. Oladele
.....

Interviewer

Signature

.....**Date**

APPENDIX 9: LETTER FROM UNIVERSITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Imbalelozi • 1928 • Imibalelozi

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8393
Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
E-mail: education@ru.ac.za

DATE: 25 June 2012

To whom it may concern,

Dear Sir / Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

CANDIDATE: Agbomeji Ayinde M. Oaldele

STUDENT NUMBER: 11A2048

This letter is to confirm that Oladele Agbomeji is a registered student in the Education Faculty at Rhodes University. He has been registered for a Masters in Education.

Oladele will be required to conduct research for his thesis. This letter serves to request permission for him to conduct research in your school for this purpose.

Oladele's proposal was approved by the Education Higher Degrees Committee on 16 February 2012. The proposal complied with the ethical clearance requirements of the Faculty of Education.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J. Baxen
Chair: Higher Degrees Committee
Faculty of Education

www.ru.ac.za