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## Introduction

Africa has been fraught with economic, social, and political conflict. From a past of colonialism to growing as a developing nation, vulnerable populations have been hurt the most during this time. While it is not a new concept, girls and women have been underserved, which could be affecting their development. Nigeria provides the best framework for understanding the impact that removing women from the equation especially in education has on the development of a country. This report seeks to understand what social, economic, and cultural obstacles girls face when attempting to pursue an education in Nigeria. My interest in this stems from my interest in the education system as a whole: globally, nationally, and locally. It also originates from my interest in education inequality and social justice. Africa continues to be the largest developing region and also has the highest levels of inequality with regards to the education of women. Injustice in education and its particular relationship to gender is not  a problem that is solely affecting Nigeria, but it affects  countries around the world. This has significance globally, because as one of the largest developing regions, Sub-Saharan Africa and countries are currently investing in the infrastructure and development. This capstone report focuses on Nigeria due to the interesting cultural makeup of the country. Without generalizing, it provides a nice framework for what much of the region is experiencing. The reason why it is important to understand these challenges is that the West is operating under the mindset that this problem will be solved by throwing money at it.  I feel this is an inaccurate perspective of the problems and their possible solutions.

This capstone report will be broken up into different sections based on  support provided by  different articles or sources to the paper. It will look at a historical context to better understand Nigeria and how it ended up in this situation. Then I move into the current state of

the economic, social, and cultural ways that Nigerian girls' access to education is impacted. The theory that I apply aims to guide the reader in understanding the situation and the way Muslim girls are impacted. I will end the research by explaining my findings and how they could offer a solution or at least raise awareness to the different factors explained through this capstone report.

My thesis is that girl's access to education in Nigeria and the problems they face in obtaining an education is not solely due to a lack of funding. There are larger, external forces at play outside of the lack of monetary investment. Rather, the problem is the lack of importance placed on education in many girls' lives, including familial pressure, and societal factors.

## Literature Review

Nigeria was colonized by the British in 1851 and was part of the British colony until 1960, after a freedom movement gained traction. Nigeria also became a home to missionaries and the spread of Christianity under the rule of the British Empire. The spreading of Christianity during the rule of the British Empire and the spreading of Islam at the beginning of 1068AD led to a division throughout the country, which led to divisiveness in society, politics, and education. This division between Christianity and Islam continued throughout colonialism and postcolonialism. This division led to many of the lasting issues that are currently impacting the education system in Nigeria. Understanding colonialism and the larger impression that it had overall, aids in understanding how it continued to have a lasting impact on the current makeup of the country.[1] Islam reached Nigeria 300 years before Christianity and with the large influence that the British Empire had, it is important to understand the hybridity of the colonialism in Nigeria. Sankaran Krishna says that colonialism is not the producing of clones, rather it is the

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[1] Ajayi, J.F. Ade, and Reuben Kenrick Udo. "Nigeria." Encyclopedia Britannica. January 16, 2018. Accessed April 10, 2018. https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria/Nigeria-as-a-colony.

creation of a society that forms a hybrid of the two identities: the colonized and the colonizer. The reason this hybrid form of colonization takes place is that in order to fully mimic a society, there must be an imbalance where the colonizers see themselves reflected in their interpretation of an inferior race.[2] Nigeria's government has been a factor in the lack of support that the education system needs. This is largely due in part to the corruption that Nigeria has been plagued with since the ending of colonialism.[3]

In order to understand the education system, specifically how education impacts girls, it is important to know its history, how Nigeria sees its own educational system and how this system works. The first school was established by Methodist missionaries in 1859. Missionaries have continually been a source of education and Western influence in Nigeria. Nigeria cites a literacy growth rate of .7%, with the claim that a nationwide growth from 66% to 66.71% is an accomplishment.[4]  This growth can be attributed to the rise in private education over the past two years. Most private schools are established by Christian missionaries and are commonly located in the south. Most citizens trust private schools because their implementation of education has been more reliable. Despite being free, the public schools have problems. Either teachers are on strike, or the times classes are in session are inconsistent. This inconsistency predominantly impacts girls, and due to the various other jobs that women are responsible for, many girls cannot be full-time students. Families also recognize that education in the country is poorly funded and this has led to some of the problems that they are dealing with. Convincing students to attend school, especially girls, is not the only issue that the Nigerian government has to deal with, but

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[2] Edkins, Jenny, and Maja Zehfuss. Global Politics: A New Introduction. London: Routledge, 2014. p 356-357

[3] "World Report 2017: Rights Trends in Nigeria." Human Rights Watch. January 12, 2017. Accessed May 07, 2018. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/nigeria.

[4] "Nigerian Formal Education Sector: Summary Report 2010-2012." National Bureau of Statistics. February 2015. Accessed May 08, 2018. http://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries[search]=education.

the high rates of dropouts from primary to secondary school represent about 3.2% of the population.[5]

Nigeria is located on the Western Coast of Sub-Saharan Africa and since its colonization, has been a growing and developing nation-state. The nation's GDP is $480 billion and has a growing population of roughly 186 million.[6] This makes Nigeria the country with the seventh largest population in the world. Half of the population lives in urban areas. The World Bank reported that in 2016 half of their population was 49% female.[7] Despite Nigeria possessing one of the top ten largest populations, a growing economy, and becoming one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most developed nations, Nigeria is still facing low literacy rates and poor education involvement among girls. In terms of access to education, Nigeria ranks 134th in the world, which is a thirty point decrease over the span of ten years.[8] There is approximately a 72% chance that men will have more access to education throughout their lives than girls will. When examining the overall poor literacy rate of the country, there is a contrast between the literacy rates of the North and South. The South, primarily Christian, has higher literacy rates, around 80-90% while the North, primarily Muslim, has literacy rates mostly under 35%.[9]

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[5] "Economies." Global Gender Gap Report 2016. Accessed April 11, 2018. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/#economy=NGA.
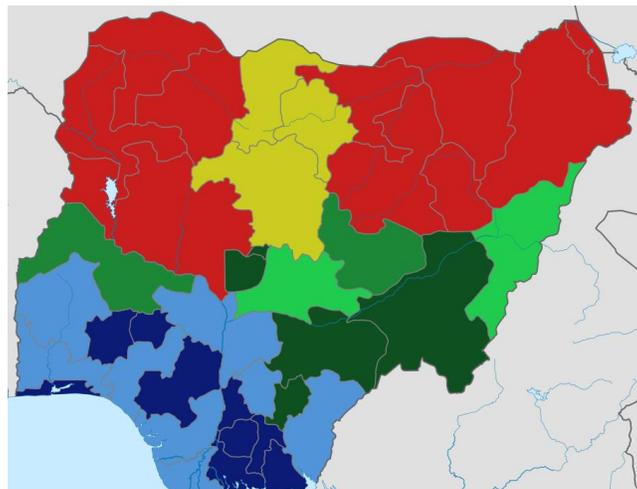[6] Global Gender Gap Report 2016.
[7] "Nigeria Population (LIVE)." Nigeria Population (2018) - Worldometers. 2018. Accessed May 08, 2018. http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/.
[8] Global Gender Report 2016.
[9] Global Gender Report 2016.

**Figure 1: Literacy Rates of Women in Nigeria by Region**



> 90% | 80-90% | 70-80% | 60-70% | 50-60% | 35-50% | < 35%

("EDUCATION STATISTICS." NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS. 2012. Accessed May 02, 2018.

http://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries[search]=education.)

These low literacy rates are not surprising given the low rates of school attendance, 40% of

females are out of school while only 29% of men are out of school. This low school attendance is

present despite the availability of free education for all citizens.[10]This raises the questions, why

are women not attending school, and why do they have such low literacy rates, despite access to

education? Reasons for this have been credited to mostly cultural and social issues rather than an

economic issue.

An example of a social factor that impacts the lives of girls outside of the social

construct of female relations, is the kidnapping of almost 300 girls from school in April 2014 in

Chibok, Nigeria by the terrorist group Boko Haram. This is an incident that has affected the lives

of 300 school girls and the lives of others who fear that it could happen again. Money would not

have fixed this problem, this was not a problem due to lack of access to buildings and resources.

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[10] "UNITED NATIONS GIRLS EDUCATION INITIATIVE." UNGEI. October 10, 2013.
Accessed April 10, 2018. http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/nigeria.html.

This situation was caused by an Islamist terrorist group in the region that does not believe in a modern education system, more specifically that girls should not be taught. This belief stems from their strict interpretation of Islamist teachings, with the belief that modern education steers the country away from these values. Since this event 81 of the kidnapped girls remain in the possession of Boko Haram, three years later. This has become less of a concern among the global scope, as more pressing issues begin to arise for Western nations. When the incident first occurred there was large international support and guidance provided to the Nigerian government over how to handle and resolve this issue. As the issue became a more time consuming issue, that support has waned and it has been pushed to the back of the global sphere. The politicization of girl's education due to the rise of various radicalized groups continues to be a limiting force in women's access to education. Boko Haram is using the safety and the education of these girls as a bargaining chip to drive their agenda of setting up a caliphate forward. Politicians have allowed women's education to be perceived as a bargaining chip and has supported the illustration that it is up for negotiation.

The article by Cynthia B. Lloyd and Ann K. Blanc discuss the role that parents and other members of the household have on the education of children. They consider the completion of fourth grade as a sign of social development, as determined by UNICEF. This determination of success has its challenges though. There are high numbers of children enrolled in school between the ages of 10-14, but it does not guarantee that these children have completed the fourth grade. These students have usually started school at a later age, or they have taken longer to finish a grade because the process is so extensive.[11]This is why organizations like Education for Africa are important, because they get kids involved in education at the preschool level. This article

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[11] Lloyd, C. B., & Blanc, A. K. (1996). Children's Schooling in sub-Saharan Africa: The Role of Fathers, Mothers, and Others. Population and Development Review, 22(2), 265.

stated that the home life does not play a significant role in getting kids to school. However, female led homes have the highest rate of kids in schools. This is thought to be due to the value that women place on education.

Much of the research that I examined before this article was focused on the dropout rate from enrollment in the first grade and enrollment in the seventh grade. The book, Internationalisation of African Higher Education: Towards Achieving the MDGs, was focused on higher education and women's roles in higher education, but it also explored the internationalization of higher education and the impact of Western partnerships has on women and gender roles. Nigeria is not the only country who is struggling to meet the Millennium Development goals. Funding has been set aside in order to reach these developmental goals, but due to lack of infrastructure and societal investment, girls have experienced the largest impact. Due to the education system failing them earlier on, that when given the opportunity to leave and study abroad, many women do. This has resulted in what some would call a 'brain drain'. Chika Sehoole looked at different case studies from around Sub-Saharan Africa and analyzed the various problems and solutions s that persist in these regions.[12]

The World Bank assessed that education is one of the most critical influences of development. Angela W. Browne and Hazel R. Barrett look review how female education is helping development in agriculture, maternal health, and overall survival. They looked at Gambia, another African country, as the case study for their research. The authors also analyze and critique the school dropout rate and low literacy rates that occurred beginning in the 1980's. This establishes that there is a problem in the access of women's education, specifically that when education is affected, girls are the ones who are the most directly harmed. They see

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[12] Sehoole, Chika, and Jane Knight. Internationalisation of African Higher Education: towards Achieving the MDGs. Rotterdam : Sense Publishers, 2013.

education as the solution to a lot of the developmental problems that are plaquing Gambia

specifically; enhancing the education that some are receiving will help the development of

educational resources for the many.[13]

The article is important and could be used as an example for a solution, because it

analyzes the donor's participation and it creates roles for both the government and the donors. It

states that the donor is focused on providing access too much and less on what is happening

inside the classroom. The government needs to be focused on regulating what happens outside of

the classroom, focusing on the issues that are causing the high dropout rates. This is an important

fact to note, but I also think that limits the scope. The main reason why I placed this article in the

Western perception section of the literature review is because the World Bank is seen largely as a

Western tool to help finance and control developing third world countries.[14]

Another perspective as to why some parts of Nigeria, mostly in the North, resist the aid of

missionaries is the resistance of the Western involvement and the continual spread of English. It

is not because Northern Nigerians debate the necessity of the language because they recognize

that it is a world language and continues to be crucial as the United States and Europe continue

to involve themselves in international affairs. They understand the value of learning English, yet

they observed the disappearance of native and local languages as they are not being taught or

being passed along to the next generation. Zehlia Babaci-Wilhite explores the importance of

preserving the native language in the education system, as well as why some Nigerians resist

sending their kids to school in order to protect them from the loss of their native or local

language. When schools are set up by outside members, whether it be a NGO or a missionary,

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[13] Browne, A. W., & Barrett, H. R. (1991). Female Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: the key to development? Comparative Education, 27(3), 275-285. doi:10.1080/0305006910270303
[14] Heneveld, Ward, and Helen Craig. Schools Count : World Bank Project Designs and the Quality of African Primary Education. Vol. 59, World Bank, Washington, DC, 1996.

English is established as the language that the students will be taught. English is not taught as a

supplemental language along with the native tongue, mostly because it is often difficult to find

qualified teachers who speak the native tongue. This has resulted in children either not attending

school, or the parents providing little support for children to invest further in education.[15] This

fear of loss of culture is common in developing nations, especially countries where there is a

large Muslim population. It is seen as further expansion and colonization of the West. These

issues impact girls in particular because girls already have a low attendance rate,  as 40% of the

accounted female population is out of school. When schools are built in areas where the parents

fear a lack or loss of culture, they are not convinced to send their boys, which only lessens the

likelihood that they will send their girls.

An article that could be used to provide a possible solution to the issue addressed above is

research presented in, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in*

*Postcolonial Niger (Women in Africa and the Diaspora).* It looks at a woman, Malama A'ishatu,

who runs an Islamic school for women. It examines the role that Islam plays in government,

politics, and the education of girls. This focuses on Niger and the impact that  tradition and

"Western" influence have on those issues. Since this report is focused on Nigeria and the

particular impact of Islam on the community, this article provides an insight as to possible

solutions to aspects of the problem. Ousseina Alidou describes how education impacts women

and girls specifically, stating "...how each stream of education in Niger set (and continues to set)

its intent and goals and how the latter determine how women have either succeeded or failed to

gain access to educational opportunities in the country…".[16] In a country like Nigeria, where

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[15] Babaci-Wilhite, Zehlia. Local Languages as a Human Right in Education: Comparative Cases from Africa. Vol. 36. Comparative and International Education: A Diversity of Voices. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015.
[16] Karimova, L. (2007). OUSSEINA ALIDOU, Engaging modernity: Muslim women and the

girls are kept out of school due to strict following of Sharia law the option of a Muslim based school could be a safe alternative.

## Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The theory that I'll examining is African Muslim Feminism. Shirin Edwin will provide the theoretical framework for this paper. As mentioned above, the Northern part of Nigeria is predominantly Muslim. African feminist see feminist theory, beholden to the West. That it views all women's rights and global rights as the same, when this is not the case. The experiences and struggles of the African woman are vastly different. This is where intersectionality becomes more prevalent. Intersectionality is defined as, "...particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation."[17] Nonetheless, African feminists did not see themselves represented in feminist theory. This lack of representation was due mostly to the Eurocentric view of Africa being same across all regions, therefore all African women are the same. This lack of representation is also what led to the creation of African feminist theory. Examples of this can be found in the African feminists' view of polygamy as an acceptable form of marriage, while the Eurocentric feminists or "Western" feminists view it as "anti-woman".[18] The intersectionality of religion is nonetheless forgotten in African feminist theory. Many theorists have grouped Islam into the same category as Christianity or colonialism, stating that Islam prevents African women from upward expansion and by limiting the roles of women. Considering the information shown earlier in the paper, this could be a valid argument.

politics of agency in postcolonial Niger. Language in Society, 36(04), 639. doi:10.1017/s004740450707056x

[17] Edkins, 103.

[18] Edwin, Shirwin. "We Belong Here, Too: Accommodating African Muslim Feminism in African Feminist Theory via Zaynab Alkali's the Virtuous Woman and the Cobwebs and Other Stories." Frontiers: A Journal of Woman Studies 27, no. 3 (2006): 140-56. Accessed April 10, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137389.

Much of the Muslim population has lower literacy rates, lower access to education, and overall significantly less development. This is not solely due to the population being Muslim. It also addresses issues of former colonialism and locations where missionaries would set up schools. The North is more populated, but also rural which leaves a larger population with various different needs to serve.

Shirin Edwin corrects this version of African Feminism, stating "Islamic feminism, as defined by this study, is a set of attitudes, choices, and behaviors aligning the vicissitudes of different situations faced by Muslim women in their daily lives-political, economic, professional, social, and familial-with the Islamic way of life."[19] African feminism separates Africa from the rest of the Eurocentric and Western versions of feminism, but also provides a pathway that ignores the African Muslim population, rather seeing it as a form of colonialism, which does a disservice to the population. This is seen specifically in Nigeria. Shirin Edwin's article, "We Belong Here Too", she cites various literature that portrays the average Nigerian Muslim woman. In the literature provided above, many sources cite that Muslim women, primarily in the North, do not have the access and capabilities to seek education.[20] The reason for this being that Islam limits woman's rights and access since they are seen as submissive and expected to remain in the home. Edwin, through the literature from which she draws her theory, cites that this is not the case. The stories of Nigerian Muslim woman, are of girls who hold the virtues laid out in the Quran, but who also go to school, seek independence, and when necessary, they shape and mold the virtues to suit their needs. These novels illustrate the various choices that Muslim woman make. Edwin credits these novels to rebuking the claim that Islam is restrictive and that being both African and Muslim is also restrictive. African Muslims are not restricted in the choices

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[19] Edwin, 145.
[20] Edwin, 144.

they make, as women they are able to shape the values and personalities.[21] African Muslims, much like how the original African Feminists, do not think that one theory represents them. Northern Nigerian woman have worked and contributed to society, yet they do not feel fully represented in the feminist model or the African feminist model.

The methodology that I use in this report will be a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Throughout my research I have assessed the social factors that impact the access of education to girls in Africa. The data was gathered in two different forms. The methodology that I used gather information for this capstone report is made up of mostly qualitative research. There will be statistics, charts, and graphs used to show the various numbers needed to support my claims. These come from different global organizations like the United Nations, Nigerian government sites, the World Economic Forum and other Non-Governmental organizations (NGO), that track girl's education.

The other research that I have obtained for this report will be made up of literature and works written by other researchers. This will be supplemental to the statistics. These articles feature stories from girls in Nigeria, provide information from first hand experience with the education system in Nigeria, and the limitations that girls face. These sources provide an honest, real representation of the problems that girls in Nigeria face. Some of the qualitative sources provide different perspectives to the problem, which adds contrasting views. This develops a full picture of different problems girls face and the societal factors are that limit them. Since I am unable to obtain information from Africa and do the research myself, so mostly secondary sources were used in my analysis.

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[21] Edwin, 147.

**Findings**

The findings for this report vary when considering the different perspectives that have formed. It would lead the reader of this capstone report, to interpret the findings inconclusive. African Islamist theory supports the claim that women are tied to their religion and that African women are offered the choice to make the decision that the "West" has deemed as unmakeable. While not a focal point of the research, the West has interpreted the issues that surround girls' access to education as rooted in corruption, lack of freedom, and lack of funding. In fact, many organizations around the world with origins in the West have started nonprofits that work to fix this problem. However, they usually focus on the fact that it is an issue of a lack of infrastructure or a lack of funding to the education system that causes these problems. The research found in this report would claim that this is not the overall problem, rather just a small piece of it.

Part of the problem seems to stem from a cultural difference within societal standards or expectations. In society the importance of education is commonly placed on boys while the women are held responsible for duties in the home. As mentioned earlier, the girls of Nigeria do in enroll in school, but they usually have a high dropout rate during the time between primary and secondary school. This dropout happens most commonly with the transition from 2nd-3rd grade.[22] Usually what occurs is that the girls begin to have more responsibility around the home. They either cannot balance both going to school and doing the various tasks that they are assigned around the house, or they are forced to drop out. The girls drop out mostly in order to fit the needs of the family. The girls are capable of managing their duties at home with the demand of school, but they often lack the familial support that they need in order to successfully balance

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[22] Nigeria Country Office. "Girls' Education Information Sheet." UNICEF. September 2007. Accessed May 8, 2018. https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Nigeria_Factsheets_GirlsEducation.pdf.

these responsibilities. It has been examined by researcher Denga, that one of the main reasons

that girls are not being enrolled in schools is that there is a higher value placed on boys than

girls, because this is seen as "Nigerian tradition". This 'tradition' is what continues to place girls

in the kitchen..[23] The question that is raised from the desire to address this factor or limitation is,

how can it be fixed without imposing what could be perceived as Western ideals. I believe that it

is important to preserve and protect a nation's culture. This is especially important since, as

mentioned earlier, the fear of a loss of culture or native language can be an influential

circumstance that limits or decreases school enrollment. It would be considered as  insulting or

disrespectful for  Nigerian girls and women to leave behind her family in order attend school.

An inability to attend school continues to further problems. Especially when these

problems relate to laws, increasing political awareness, and adding governmental pressure that

originates from women  not being involved in politics. This is a catch-22 situation where the

problem only continues to add to the problem. If more women were involved in politics then the

rights and needs of women would be more protected and girls would have higher access to

quality education.[24] This is a problem that impacts women throughout the world,  not just women

in Nigeria. Women have been a marginalized population for a long time.  With more

representation in government, these concerns could be addressed. Promoting women's role in

politics would be beneficial in Nigeria because it would refute the stereotype that a woman's

place is only in the kitchen, what has been described as "Nigerian tradition". This is a problem

that requires education, since one of the requirements for being a politician in Nigeria is that you

have a Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE). To be eligible, students must complete

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[23] Denga, Daniel I., and Hannah M. Denga. Educational Malpractice and Cultism in Nigeria: Analysis and Confronting Techniques. Nigeria?: Rapid Educational Publishers, 1998.
[24] Samson Amu, Ohis. "Gender Equality: Factors Hindering Female Participation in Nigerian Politics." World Pulse. April 29, 2016. Accessed May 08, 2018. https://www.worldpulse.com/en/community/users/ohizzy/posts/66590.

the 12th grade and take an exam. Due to the fact that most girls drop out around the third grade, with  even fewer girls reaching the secondary level, it is unlikely that they will be able to meet those requirements.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Girls of Secondary School Age (12-17) in School and Out of School**
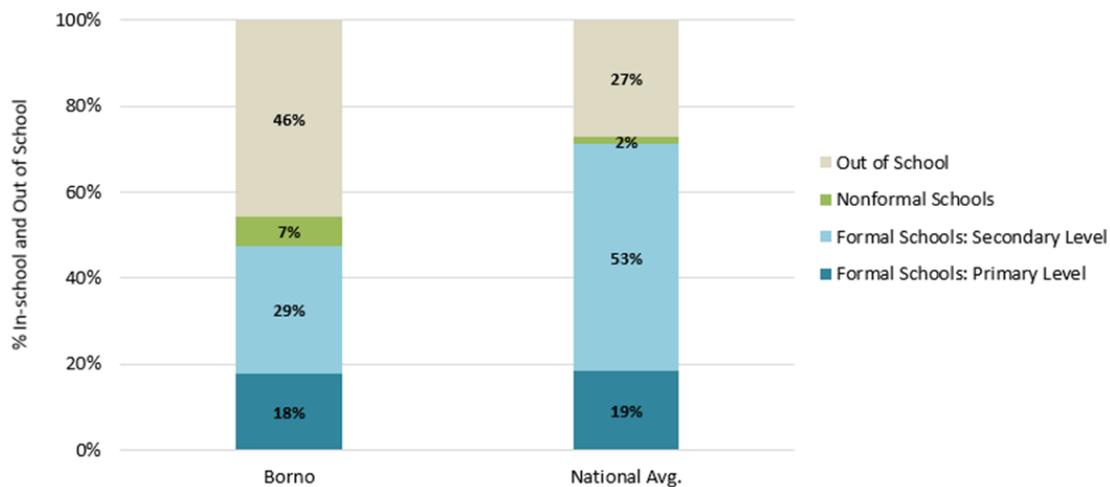


Data Source: EPDC Extraction of 2011 MICS Dataset

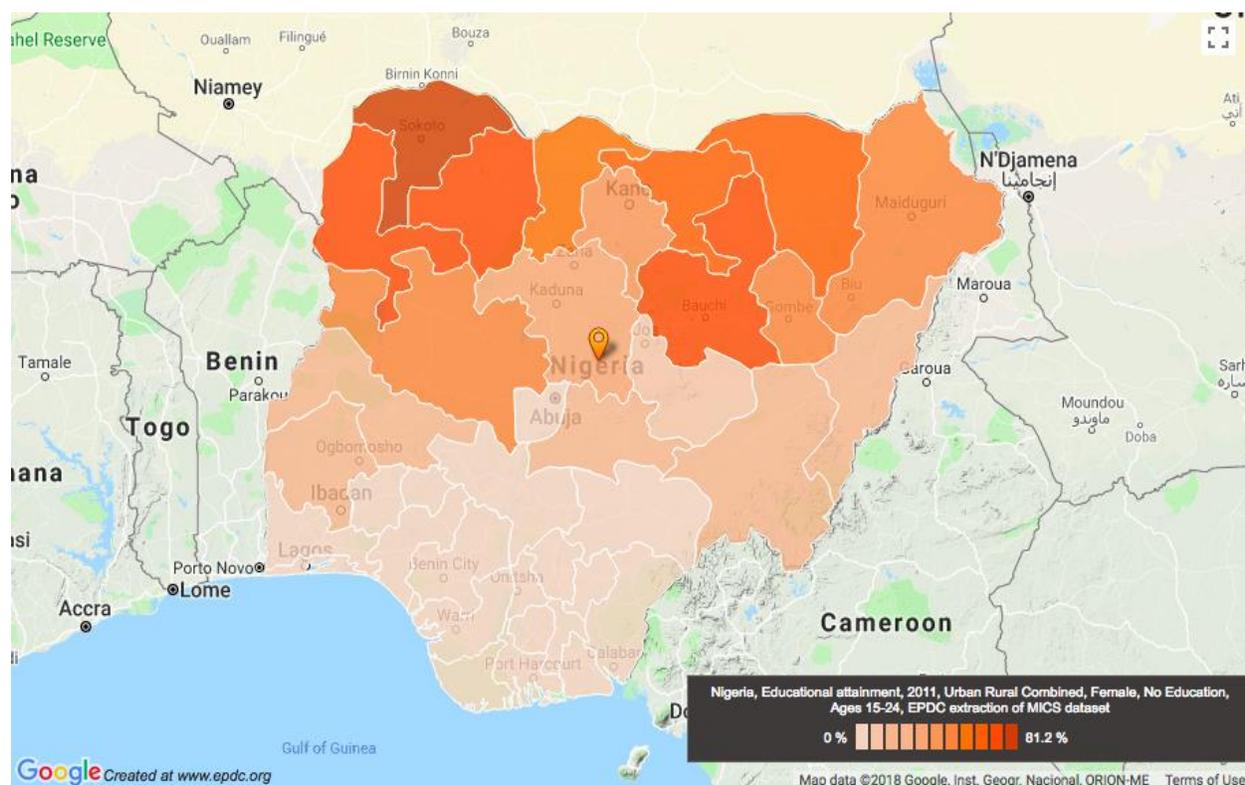("Schooling in Northern Nigeria: Challenges for Girls' Education." Education Policy Data Center. August 18, 2014. Accessed May 02, 2018. https://www.epdc.org/epdc-data-points/schooling-northern-nigeria-challenges-girls-education.)

The graphic above shows the percentage of girls that are currently enrolled in primary school, secondary school, and those that have dropped out. (The graph includes data collected from 2011, however the numbers have seen any significant change over the last seven years). Borno is the northeastern part of Nigeria. A region that per Figure 1 has one of the lowest literacy rates in the state. It acts as a representation of the northern part of Nigeria.

Speaking on the ability to attain education, the World Economic Forum has research how 144 countries have ranked on the Global Gender Gap. The Global Gender Gap Report — "...benchmarks 144 countries on their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and

Survival, and Political Empowerment."[25] Nigeria ranked 122 out of the 144 countries included in

this research.[26] This indicates that on a global scale Nigeria has ranked below the global average

and overall has one of the largest gender gaps. When zeroing in on just sub-Saharan Africa,

Nigeria does not fare any better. Nigeria ranked 38 out of the 40 countries listed in sub-Saharan

Africa.

**Figure 3: Educational Attainment Ages 15-24**



 ("Schooling in Northern Nigeria: Challenges for Girls' Education." Education Policy Data Center. August 18, 2014.

Accessed May 02, 2018.)

This image represents  the overall access of educational attainment of girls between the ages of

15-24. This age group leans toward on the higher end of the age group that I examined, but it

supports the findings that I presented in the earlier. The low ranking on the Global Gender Gap

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[25] "The Global Gender Gap Report 2017." World Economic Forum. 2017. Accessed May 03, 2018. https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017.
[26] "The Global Gender Gap Report 2017", 16.

index only confirms  the unequal access among the genders  in reference to the ability to attain an education. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2017, Nigeria has made notable progress in closing this gap in women's estimated income and the overall enrollment of girl in secondary school. The portion were considerable work could be done to raise their index is in having more women in ministerial positions and the completion of secondary school.[27]

As evident from the history of Nigeria and the research that has been presented in this report, Islam has played a crucial role in the culture and lives of girls in Nigeria. Islam is the most populous religion in Nigeria and is widespread throughout most of the state, with the largest population located in the north. The Islamic population makes up 48.8% of the population's religion.[28] This in turn had a large influence on the people living within the borders of the country. In Nigeria, religion is the social institution in which the people are being organized. The African Muslim Feminists theory has provided a critical analysis of the stereotypes that have been formed surrounding African women, but also surrounding African Muslims. Shirin Edwin works  to disprove these stereotypes by portraying African, Muslim women as multidimensional women. The theory presents the argument that Muslim girls can have access to education if they are willing to defy parts of Sharia law. The claims that are made from the West are that Muslim girls are too limited and controlled by their faith to make the decision that they want an education. Edwin makes the assertion that this is not always the case. A critical analysis of this would show that the girls are not merely mirrors of the situation that all girls in Nigeria face. Radicalized Islamist groups still threaten girls' access to education because of their governmental influence and the terror that they spread. This does not signify that Islam in Nigeria is completely radicalized groups, or repressive of girl's rights. Rather, Edwin's

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[27] "The Global Gender Gap Report 2017", 24.
[28] Wee, Rolando Y. "Religious Beliefs In Nigeria." WorldAtlas. September 08, 2016. Accessed May 08, 2018. https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/religious-beliefs-in-nigeria.html.

articulation of how Islam and feminism work together could make connections towards being a part of the solution.

## Conclusion

Equal access to education and educational attainment is one of the most crucial steps towards further development. It is an essential method to spark growth in  an economy and diversify a population. In consideration with those ideas, it is significant to note that in regards to education, many  developing nations ignore almost 50% of their population: girls. My initial research before starting this capstone report was focused on sub-Saharan Africa, but Nigeria proved to be an excellent case study to look at this issue. This was due to the fact that Nigeria is the largest country in Africa, it has the seventh largest population, religious contrast, and possesses research from various perspectives. The social and cultural issues that affect girls obtaining access to education is predominantly rooted in Islamic faith, cultural tradition of gender roles, and a wariness of Western intervention.

There is not an easy, simple solution or a perfect example of methods to resolve this issue. The underrepresentation of girls in education is a global concern that affects parts of the Western world as well.  I would make the argument that a possible step towards forming a solution in Nigeria, would be investigating the replication of the all girls, Muslim school mentioned in, Ousseina Alidou's article. In a nation where culture, fear of western intervention, and a fear of losing one's culture is prominent, it is imperative to organize an education system specifically for girls, and especially for Muslim girls. This will not address all the issues like the economic instability, political corruption, or the radicalized terrorist groups with the desire to prevent girls in from attaining an education, but it could be a momentous step towards a solution.

This research is vital, because as mentioned above, education is necessary for development and when girls are included in that, development occurs at an accelerated pace. Future studies should be conducted to research possible solutions that would protect the nation and bring forward stability. This information should be largely gathered from the Northern, rural areas as they are the region most largely impacted and with the most to gain from this research. The data  gathered during these future studies should aim towards empowering women to increase their participation in the labor market, as well as  their involvement in local and state politics. The research that is done in these future studies should be used to both promote girl's access to education, but also create adequate opportunities for them to join the workforce.

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