



Community and Cultural Influence on Child Schooling: A Case Study of the Fulani people of Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	A B S T R A C T
<p>Received: October 03, 2023 Revised: May 29, 2024 Available online: June 15, 2024</p>	<p>Recent studies in both developed and developing societies have established a connection between socio-cultural background and child upbringing. While socio-cultural activity is an important factor in a child's upbringing, there is a dearth of research about how socio-cultural factors hinder child development. This study employs the sociocultural theory of learning to review how the socio-cultural practices of the Fulani people impact the schooling of Fulani children in Nigeria. The Fulani people of Nigeria own over 90 percent of about 15.3 million heads of cattle. It is noted that beef production from Fulani's cattle farm constitutes a significant portion of the animal protein consumed by the people of Nigeria. However, despite Fulani's prowess in cattle rearing, which contributes significantly to the economy of Nigeria, their children are highly disadvantaged when it comes to access to qualitative education. The researcher searched through the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) for literature published between 2014 to 2024 using keywords like cultural influence, sociocultural learning theory, and the schooling of Fulani children. While the study employs the content analysis method to review the existing literature, the question that this presentation seeks to answer is: Why are the children of Fulani people disadvantaged educationally? What does this tell us, the community engagement advocates, about community culture/socio-economic activities, and children's schooling? How can we organize community engagement and development to support socio-cultural re-engineering efforts?</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Community, Cultural Influence, Nomadism, School Enrolment</p>	
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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is a melting pot of different cultures and tribes. Prominent among the tribes in Nigeria are the Fulanis, who are predominantly located in the country's northern region. Geographically, the Fulani people inhabit various areas across the West African States, including Ghana, Senegal, Guinea, the Gambia, Mali, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone, among others (Mohamadou, 2018). The focus of this paper is to investigate how the social, and cultural practices of the Fulani people impact the schooling of Fulani children in Nigeria.

The Fulani people of Nigeria own over 90 percent of about 15.3 million heads of cattle (Olaniran, 2018). Nigerians consume a significant portion of their animal protein from Fulani's cattle farm (Majekodunmi, Dongkum, Langs, Shaw, & Welburn, 2016; Oke et al., 2022). However, despite Fulani's prowess in cattle rearing, which contributes significantly to the economy of Nigeria, their children are highly disadvantaged when it comes to access to qualitative education (Usman, 2005; Dahiru, Ahmad & Jafaar, 2017).

The question is: why are the children of Fulani people disadvantaged educationally? Many reasons account for this, the main occupation of Fulani people is cattle rearing, and their culture encourages their children's participation in the occupation of their parents (Ojukwu, 2022). The nomadic nature of Fulani people is greatly affecting their children's enrollment and attendance in school because they move in groups during the rainy season to hide themselves and their cattle from rain (Olaniran, 2018). This agrees with the submission of Vygotsky (1978) about the place of the social and cultural environment in child development

During the dry season, they move from the dry land to a location where they can have access to water for their cattle. During the rainy period, they move to the forest to hide from the

infections that could attack their cattle. During post-harvest, their animals usually feed on the waste grain and wet grasses. On market days, their wives are typically sell milk and dairy products. These processes involve the children of Fulanis, thereby influencing their school enrollment and learning outcomes. Therefore, this paper will explore the following topics:

1. Who are the Fulani people of Nigeria?
2. The Fulani people's socio-cultural context
3. The concept of Nomadic and Nomadism
4. The impact of Fulani socio-cultural activities on their children's learning is significant.

While many studies have been conducted focusing on the low-literacy level among the Fulani herders in Nigeria (Aderionye, Ojokheta & Olojede, 2007; Roseline & Amusain, 2017; Muhammad & Daura, 2017; Olaniran, 2018; Madu & Nwakwo, 2021; Ekundayo, 2022), none seems to have touched on the role played by their socio-cultural factors in the schooling of Fulani children. This paper implies achieving Goal four (4) of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Agenda 2030, which is geared towards the "provision of quality education and lifelong learning for all" by the year 2030 (UNDP, 2019).

METHOD

The aim of this paper was to review the sociocultural activities of the Fulani people with reference to their impact on their children's schooling. This review is anchored on the emancipatory paradigm, which advocates for critique and transformation, restitution, and emancipation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The main idea behind the emancipatory paradigm lies in advocacy and activism about the lives and

experiences of marginalized and disadvantaged individuals and groups and how they have been impacted by social injustice. In the review, the researcher adopted an inclusive approach by considering published qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods papers, as well as conceptual and policy documents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory of Learning

Sociocultural theory, also known as socio-culturalism, is mostly traced to Lev Vygotsky (1896 - 1934), a Russian psychologist who also had an interest in human psychological processes (Miller, 2011). The sociocultural theory focuses on the influence that social interaction and cultural background have on an individual's learning and development. Vygotsky believed that human thinking, learning, and development originate in social and cultural interactions that exist in one's environment (Miller, 2011). In other words, the ways an individual interacts with others and the culture in which they live affect their intellectual capabilities. This theory is relevant to this study because it will assist in identifying the place of culture and religion for the Fulani people of Nigeria in their children's learning and intellectual development.

Who are the Fulanis?

The Fula people, also known as Fulanis, are large population spread across Africa, but primarily found in the West African region.

The Fulanis that are found in Nigeria are individuals who hail from the Middle East and North Africa (Ajibefun, 2018). But about the eighth or eleventh century AD, the Berbers of North Africa could be traced to the history of the Fulani origins (Dunmade, 2018). They expanded across the majority of West Africa and certain regions of Central Africa between AD 900 and 1900, a period of more than a millennium (Dunmade, 2018).

The majority of the Fulani migrants were Muslims. The number of people who converted to Islam also increased, as did the population. There were frequent conflicts between the Fulani and the locals at the start of the 18th century. Although these uprisings started as jihads or holy wars, they eventually adopted the fundamental rule of Fulani ethnic dominance in most West African states. The majority of the Fulani people live a nomadic lifestyle, leading the world's largest pastoral community by herding sheep, goats, and cattle.

The major groups of Fulani that could be found in Nigeria are Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Sokoto, and Fulbe Gombe, among others. The nomads have a very close-knit social and family structure (Dunmade, 2018). This enables them to sustain their communities socially, economically, and politically. To achieve these, they encourage koogal, which is first-cousin marriage in the family structure; it's only the men who attain the status of heading homesteads and clans. These positions are firmly established through the patrilineal system of inheritance.

Cattle, camels, goats, and sheep are just a few examples of the animals that pastoralists raise for their livelihood. About 80 to 95 percent of the huge animals in Nigeria are owned by the Fulani. They also have a sizable flock of sheep and goats. Most of the time, they practice pastoral nomadism, or subsistence pastoralism, for the exploitation and management of their livestock. Under this system, Fulani herders produce dairy products and participate in labour-intensive animal husbandry,

occasionally selling or butchering livestock. Most of the time, they sell unhealthy animals and extra animal products like milk and butter. While men are the only ones allowed to sell live animals in the market, women are responsible for marketing excess animal products and using the money earned to buy additional foods, utensils, and other household products.

Other Fulanis' occupations consist of a few crafts, such as rope making and calabash carving. Their mobile nature explains why they do not have an elaborate material culture, believing that bulky and heavy possessions need a permanent home. From this study, it was discovered that a Fulani family's entire possessions can be carried by a couple of donkeys. Although, despite the extreme poverty of material culture, the Fulani are more concerned with the purity of their race, the training of the cow herd, their language and tradition, their ceremonial patterns and above all their cattle. In most areas, raising cattle is not a money-making proposition, but rather a non-profit venture. Fulani see both children and the produce and increase of their cows as gifts of God; their labour is not seen as "creating" these products at all, but simply as maintaining them while they grow.

Another example of Fulani's respect for their cattle is their idea that cattle are very intelligent. This doesn't mean they believe that cattle are smarter than men, but that cattle do have a good sense of what is best for themselves and certain sensitivities that other animals and men do not have. Unlike sheep and goats, for example, cattle can leave camp in the morning on their own, wander around all day, and come back at night. Cows that have previously made the journey to the salt earth area have been known to leave on their own if their masters don't take them there in time. Cattle are sensitive to dangerous animals, and their fine sense of smell can also detect the location of water when rain has fallen great distances away. Finally, each cow knows its name and responds individually or together with the rest of the herd.

To its master's calls. Melle Dupire writes that Wo'daa'be herdsman can use their herds as weapons, both for attack and especially defense. "It is an amazing sight to see the demonstration. The Herdman sets off on a run, calling his zebus; they follow him at a faster and faster pace, and then, at his signal, they stop and surround him. Protected by a half-wild herd that will obey him alone, he can defend against an outside attack (Dupire, 1962:97)."

Cattle are not viewed as a means to the end of making money but are a kind of end in themselves. Although the Fulani believe in individual ownership of cattle, their fundamental attitude toward them is more like that of a trustee watching over a trust. We have seen that the cows tended by a herd manager do not all belong to him, and even his cows are viewed as belonging partly to the inheritors who will eventually receive them.

That the Fulani tend to place the health and safety of their cattle ahead of their ease and comfort is a definite asset in the time of severe stress that the economies of the Sahelian countries are now entering. I believe that the development programs that will most benefit the Fulani and the countries they inhabit build on, rather than attack, these basic Fulani values.

Another strength Fulani have is the ability to recognize a problem and take concerted action to deal with it within a traditional framework. We saw that cooperation in our usual

understanding of the term is foreign to Fulani thinking, but there are other modes of concerted action. The difficulty with these modes is that they tend to have political, religious, or military overtones which are either threatening to governmental authority or illegal in the context of national order. The most striking example of this sort of "self-help" is the pastoral code of the Dina, set up by Sheku Amadu and the Great Council in year three (1821) of the Dina, the Fulani religious empire of Macina.

Finally, I would like to mention a fascinating example of the initiative being undertaken by most of the nomadic and semi-sedentary Fulani living near the left bank of the Niger river south of a line from Tillabery to Filingue. This initiative aims to formalize traditional patterns of lending out animals, to build an institution that enforces the obligations these loans entail, and to develop a spirit of cooperation based on religious feelings and traditional Fulani attitudes towards cattle and herding. This institution is called Laawol Fulfulde, which I would translate as "The Way of Fulani Wisdom"; this phrase has been translated into French as, "La Voie de l'education peul (The Way of Fulani Education)." It is based on a custom called *nanga na'I* or *ha'bbana'i* ("grab cows," or "tie up cows") which is common to both nomads and semi-sedentary Fulani in the Niger-Nigeria border region.

This custom, as described for the *Wo'daa'be* for instance (Dupire, 1962:136-138), involves only the contracting parties and their descendants who continue the relation, while Laawol Fulfulde is a kind of club which herders join voluntarily and which not only enforces the obligations of men who have such a loan between them but also acts to ensure that no harm comes to the cattle of members and that members help one another in time of need. For example, if a member sees that a fellow member's cow is hurt, or has strayed into a field, and does nothing about it, then Laawol Fulfulde will penalise that person for his inaction. Similarly, if a man's wife is sick and he wants the herding group to put off its departure until she is well, the group is supposed to wait.

Understanding the socio-cultural context of the Fulanis in Nigeria

The Federal capital territory of Abuja, located in northern Nigeria served as the ancestral home of the nomadic Fulani pastoralists. They make up a sizable socioeconomic segment in that region of the country. According to Olaniran (2018), there exist categorization of the nomadic population in Nigeria: the Fulanis, with a population of about 5.3 million, the Shuwa, with a population of about 1.0 million, the Buduman, with a population of about 35,001, the Kwayam, with the population of 20,000, the Badawi, and the Fishermen, with the population of 2.8 million and are concentrated in the states of Rivers, Ondo, Edo, Delta, Cross River, and Awka.

The Fulani people of Nigeria are nomadic due to a variety of circumstances. There is a reduction in the amount of grazing ground available, stock movement, deterioration of current rangelands with low biomass yields, water scarcity and inadequate carrying capabilities, endemic diseases, parasites, and more (Usman, 2005).

Remarkably, the children of Fulanis are equally engaged in their family's cattle business as their parents are. Since they must accompany their parents wherever they move in pursuit of "greener pastures for their cattle," their children lack access to basic education. Young female Fulanis lack the cultural freedom

to choose who they want to marry, Aderionye et al. (2007) claim; instead, their parents must give their approval and make the marriage arrangements. According to Usman (2005), the system of child labour in the Fulani manufacturing process hinders the academic success of Fulani children in the formal educational system.

The issues around the Schooling of Fulani Children

Even though basic education is free and mandatory in Nigeria, around 10.5 million children are out of school (UNICEF, 2013). There have been reports of a high number of child marriages, the lowest literacy rate, and the biggest number of out-of-school children in Northern Nigeria, where Fulanis are primarily located (Ojukwu, 2022). Talking about the major tribes in Nigeria, Hausa/Fulani accounts for the highest rate of girl-child marriage, followed by the people of the Northern region (25.7%), while the lowest figures were recorded among the Yorubas who are mostly found in the South (Mobolaji, Fatusi, & Adedini, 2020).

For the children of Fulanis, getting access to formal education is difficult. This is due to the fact that they travel wherever their parents go in order to find grasses for the animal they rare. The females among them do not have liberty culturally to take marital decision, and their parents have the freedom to decide who and when to marry them (Aderinoye et al. 2007).

Some Efforts to put Fulani Children in School

Education plays a major role in Nigeria's social and economic development. The children of Fulanis find it difficult to embrace basic education due to their nomadic nature. The formal school system is perceived by many Fulani nomads as an organised space which was carved purposely for people who are not Fulanis while ignoring the societal needs of the nomadic population. As a result, many Fulanis believe that the formal education curriculum is irrelevant to the social and economic needs of their community.

Niamir (1990), while painting the picture of the formal school system and how difficult it is for the Fulani children submits:

"The formal schools provide the literacy needed in modern times, but their content is too foreign to the pastoralists. They teach the value of sitting in offices behind desks, rather than the value of the land (p.11)"

As a result of this difficulty that arose from the continuous migration of the Fulanis, the Nigerian government recognized that unless a special educational and learning programme was introduced to engage the nomadic Fulanis, their children will find it difficult to access the school system. This led to the introduction of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the year 1989. The Commission is responsible for the provision of basic education and functional literacy skills for the Fulanis to improve their skills and equip them with the required skills needed to advance their trade and further prepare them as active contributors to the nation's economy.

From the year 2010 to 2013, over a hundred nomadic schools were built across the 26 States in the Northern part of Nigeria (Wike, 2013). This led to a considerable growth in the enrolment of Fulani children in literacy classes which in turn led to the reduction of street hawking among the school-age children in the Northern part of the country. Popular among the approaches used by the NCNE include the establishment of

special schools targeted at encouraging Fulani children to come to school, library support services offered to the basic and high schools in the Fulani communities, as well as adult and functional literacy programmes. Radio programmes were also designed to attract the interest of the nomadic Fulani children and adults.

Similarly, radio literacy programme introduced across the country by the Nigerian Government to offer literacy skills to the itinerant Fulanis with the aim of keeping them abreast of the policy and programmes of the government, especially to encourage them towards political participation, civic education and fundamental human rights were operated simultaneously with the classroom-based programmes (Olaniran, 2018). The use of radio as a strategy to reach the nomads eliminates the barriers of space and time. The reason is that most of the Fulanis usually have radio sets, which they carry along during herding. Additionally, the Commission came to the conclusion that no one method would be adequate to meet the educational needs of this nomadic population, leading to the adoption of many ways to make learning convenient and approachable for them.

Olaniran (2018) highlights some of the notable approaches employed by NCNE in making education accessible to the hard-to-reach nomadic communities which include the following:

1. Mobile schools and mobile classrooms: Special schools designed specifically to meet the educational needs of children of pastoral nomads are known as mobile schools. They consist of foldable classrooms that can be set up and taken down quickly—in about thirty minutes—and are neatly transported by pack bulls. Only four pack animals can carry the entirety of a mobile school's furniture, including the movable classrooms. In recent years, motor homes have taken the place of pack animals while transferring schools. Three classrooms are housed in a transportable structure, with each offering space for up to fifteen to twenty schoolchildren to learn. It is important to remember that providing mobile classrooms is much less expensive than providing normal classrooms seen in traditional school settings. Moreover, mobile learning rooms are mobile which makes it convenient to be carried around the place where Fulanis migrate to. In order for these mobile schools to function, teachers and support personnel must relocate with the targeted students whenever their parents do so in order to find greener pastures for their animals. The mobile classrooms are also outfitted with audio-visual teaching resources.
2. Introduction of facilities for canoe and boat schools made of dugouts Boat and canoe schools are among the noteworthy educational techniques NCNE devised to meet the demands of the Fulani migrants and their kids who live close to the waterways. The boat school is designed to accommodate three classrooms per unit and travel from one location to another to pick up children from the creeks and anchor in a location for learning to take place, unlike the dug-out canoe, which was invented to transport schoolchildren to and from their schools on a daily basis. The NCNE provided modern learning resources like computers and multimedia projectors, hostel facilities, and modern classrooms to selected elementary and high schools in the affected areas in an effort to transform the type of nomadic education provided to Fulanis so that it would stand out from the traditional Quranic education familiar with the system.
3. Extension services were created to equip youth and adults with fundamental and useful reading skills in an effort to increase access to quality education among the nomadic community. When it was realised that an integrated approach to lifelong learning would encourage nomads to participate in education and literacy programmes, this specific intervention started in 1996–1997. To establish the programme's curriculum and policy frameworks, collaborations were initially formed with several chosen federal colleges across the nation. To encourage their followers to fully participate in this institutionalized nomadic education, some religious organisations, particularly Islamic ones, were also consulted and cooperated with the programmes.
4. Collaborations with Development Partners: This is regarded as one of the significant actions taken by the Nigerian government to support and enhance nomadic education in the nation. Collaborations between local and international NGOs, CBOs/CDAs, and religious organisations were developed. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Fulbe Development Association of Nigeria (FULDAN), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among others, are prominent among them. Additionally, from 2001 to 2004, the Federal Government of Nigeria collaborated with the World Bank on the literacy by radio programme, which aimed to provide busy market vendors, market workers, and artisans with educational opportunities as well as a capacity-building programme for those in charge of running the programme (Olaniran, 2018).

A recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on revitalising and sustaining almajiri education in the nation was signed by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the previous administration with the collaborations of the governments of the 36 States of Nigeria as well as the critical stakeholders in education. The MoU's three key goals, according to Olaniran (2018), are as follows:

- A. To eliminate idleness and begging for alms, which are common practices among children of the Fulanis;
- B. To encourage the giving of special gifts to out-of-school children that willingly surrender to be enrolled in school.
- C. and to expedite action on the effective integration of Quranic education into the formal school system.

The MoU also has the benefit of addressing important issues that are important to the survival of these special education interventions to the Fulanis in the country, such as the day-to-day running of the schools, introduction of information and communication technology to the teaching and learning, employment of educators who specializes in special education, sponsorship of school uniforms to encourage Fulani children, and the employment of the administrative staff for the special schools (Olaniran, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This paper has identified the effects of socio-cultural activities of the Fulani people of Nigeria on the schooling of their children, with emphasis on the constraints created by the Fulani's main occupation, which is cattle rearing, and their

constant migration in search of greener pasture for their cattle. There are greater risks associated with children not being in school. Such children are vulnerable to poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy. A girl child who missed education in the early years is more likely to fall victim to early pregnancy. While the Fulani people of Nigeria could be seen as people that are rich in culture, this paper has carefully highlighted some parts of their socio-cultural practices that hinder the education and enrolment of their children in schools. As Vygotsky emphasized in his theory of socio-cultural learning, culture does play an important role in the learning of young people, as culture reflects in the initial engagement or activities that a child is exposed to immediately after birth. While culture shapes children's moral and intellectual capabilities, it can also serve as an impediment to certain exposure to other learning that a child needs to achieve holistic development. The cultural and occupational activities of the Fulani people of Nigeria leaves no space for enrolment and throughput of children in school due to their nomadic nature. Even with the creation of special education and schooling programmes to accommodate the nature of Fulani people through the Federal Ministry of Education, the literacy rate is still very low among the Fulani people of Nigeria (Fahm et al. 2022). For Nigeria to achieve the SDGs by the year 2030, a rethink of basic education provision for the children of Fulani nomads and other educational disadvantaged groups in the country must be prioritized. The paper emphasized a need for urgent intervention of the policymakers and stakeholders towards establishing collaborations in finding innovative solutions to the menace of out-of-school children in Nigeria and other developing countries.

The thrust of this study is on the sociocultural influence on a child's schooling with an emphasis on the Fulani people of Nigeria. While the study has highlighted some social and cultural activities of the Fulanis which prevent the smooth enrolment and completion of their children in school, it is important to identify some areas or directions that this paper could not cover for the sake of future researchers that may want to follow explore the areas. These include the valuation of nomadic education programmes for Fulani herders in Northern Nigeria, the provision of vocational skills acquisition programmes for the children of Fulanis in Nigeria, and the socio-cultural factors promoting child marriage among the Fulani people of Nigeria. The author is currently undergoing two empirical research studies that will provide insights to fill these gaps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To encourage the education and schooling of the Fulani children, cultural education and awareness programme is necessary among the Fulani adults, especially those who are the custodian of culture among them. This will not only bring a sense of cultural recognition but also enable the Fulanis to take a critical look at some sections of their culture that needs restructuring.

When such recognition is given to the Fulani culture, I believe it would not be out-of-place if the school curriculum and subject contents are designed around their economic activity which is cattle rearing. This will further encourage the Fulani nomads to send their children to school since it would contribute to the growth and development of their cattle business.

The use of local dialects, also known as indigenous languages, for teaching and learning can be a game changer when it comes to the education and schooling of children from a culturally conscious community. It is recommended that teachers make use of the local dialects of the Fulanis as the language of instruction in the special schools that were established for their children.

The provision of adult education opportunities for Fulani nomads is another direction to look towards encouraging the schooling of Fulani children. Studies have established a connection between the illiteracy of parents and a lack of interest to educate children (Badar & Mason, 2020; Ndanusa, Abayomi & Harada, 2021; Akintolu & Uleanya, 2021; Kolawole & Pusoetsile, 2022). The belief is that educated Fulani nomads will embrace any efforts provided towards enrolling their children in school.

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