

FACTORS INFLUENCING GENDER INEQUALITY IN ASSESSING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is written on the factors influencing gender inequality in assessing educational opportunities in Nigeria. Education is considered as an engine of economic growth and development in any nation especially in the developing nation's like Nigeria. Gender education particularly which is the type of education that influences, such growth and development, but this women education is hindered with so many factors that affects the inequality of educational opportunity between male and female, masculine and feminine, boys and girls in our nation. These inequalities of opportunities are as a result of many factors which include socio economic factors, cultural and religious factors. It was recommended that, Religious and cultural factors should encourage educational opportunities for all irrespective of gender and also Educational stakeholders and government should emphasized the need for education and its role in economic development of the nation.

Key words: Gender, Education, Opportunities, Socio-economic, influences

Introduction

Education plays an important role not only in economic development but also in improving social equity. It enhances the overall quality of human resources within an economy. Better health and nutrition, improved hygiene, higher child survival and increased Health education and awareness have all been associated with education (Dundar, & Worth, 2013). Since 1960 both primary and secondary enrolments- have increased in developing nations; average developing country primary gross and enrolments have increase from 66 to 100% and from 14 to 40% respectively (Pritchett, 2001). Despite the progress made so far, the current record of pupils enrolment and other indices for measuring educational outcomes remain poor and disappointing. The persistent low quality of education, high prevalence of examination failure (Adeyemi, 2011; Ijaiya, 2000), and wide gender and regional inequalities in education, have led many to suggest that education in developing regions is in crises. This poor quality low levels of literacy and achievement and a major obstacle in achieving sustainable economic growth.

Recent Research in Nigeria has shown that in spite of the progress made in advancing the educational system achievement in education across different group is related social class differences socio-economic status (SES), which has been determined to influenced educational performance in modern industrialized countries, also plays a major role in explaining persistent differences in academic achievement in a developing country such as Nigeria (Maqsd, 2021, Yunusa & Basil, 2018). Scholars have also established that inequality in achievement worsen when other factors such as gender, region, and rural urban locations are considered. Studies, have shown that in the analysis of gender and region, revealed that boys are advantage in education and more likely to have better academic achievement than girls, which brings about the factor influencing educational inequality opportunities in terms of

gender in Nigeria.

Concept of Gender

Though there are several biological differences between males and females the most differences on gender roles in the society are socially and culturally constructed. This has placed great deal of disparity on the gender role in every society. This is portrayed in the gender definition in Kendall, (2014), referring it as the culturally and socially constructed differences between females and males found in the meanings beliefs and practices associated with femininity and muscularity. According to Ejiugha, (2015), an early definition of gender was meant to distinguish social and biological aspects of the differences between women and men. Lobert, cited in Ejifugha (2015), views genders as those aspect of women and men shaped by social forces or to be a meaning that a society has given to biological differences, Kendall, (2014), asserts that "gender as a term that has psychological and cultural connotations if the proper terms for sex are "male" and female", the corresponding terms are "masculine" and "feminine" these latter might be quite independent of (biological) sex.

Oakleg, (2002), believes that, gender role is "culturally" rather than "biologically" placed, She outlines four basic ways how socialization in the modern industrial societies shapes the behavior of males and females right from the homes:

- a) "**Manipulation** ": Is in which the child's self-concept is affected by manipulation for instance mothers tend to pay more attention to girls hair and to dress them in feminine clothes.
- b) "**Canalization** " which can be achieved by directing the interests of the boys and girls towards different objects for example in handling toys, girls are given dolls, soft toys and miniature domestic objects and appliances to play' with which encourages them to rehearse their expected adult roles as mothers and housewives, while the boys are given toys which encourage more practical, logical and aggressive behavior such as guns and automobiles.
- c) "**Verbal appellations**" which tries to shape their attitudes and leads young children to identify with either gender and to imitate adult of the same gender, For example, "you area naughty boys", or that's a good girl.
- d) "**Exposure to different activities**" for instance girls are more exposed to domestic tasks than males, which the boys are mostly exposed to manual works than girls.

Gender and Educational Inequality

As a concept, gender can be understood in much better fashion through the roles and responsibilities and cultural and social norms in the various institutions of home. family, community, society and work places of different categories. The concept of gender can also be understood well in many other social and cultural institutions, social economic and political connotations of power relations. These social and cultural practices however have given rise to certain kinds of roles and responsibilities for men and women, girls and boys. As cited in the Haralmbos and Holbom (2008). Stroller (2018) observed that, the vast majority of the population can clearly be categorized as male or female according to their physical characteristics, stroller maintained that biological differences are widely believed to be responsible for the difference in both the behavior of men and women and the roles that they play in society. Stroller, cautioned against such an assumption that:

Gender is a tern that has psychological and cultural connotations. If the proper terms for sex are male and female, the corresponding terms for gender are masculine and feminine. These latter might be quite independent of (biological) sex (p.93).

Women and men therefore have different identities taste and inclinations because women are less socialized and are closer to nature than men, in his words Dukheim as cited in Giddens. (2006) asserts:
Man is almost entirely the product of society while women is to afar greater extent to produce of

nature. Expanding on these observations, a man's taste, aspiration and humour have in large part a collective origin while his companions are more directly influenced by her organism. His needs quite different from hers (p. 110).

On inequality and education for instance, Giddens (2006) stated that gender differences are very obvious when one looks at subject choice in schools and the view that certain subject are more suitable for either boys or girls. This however reflect in the differences both boys and girls faces in later life. Also as cited in Fatokun & Idagboyi (2010), asserted that, the manifestation of stereotyping in schools are what is termed as "hidden curriculum" which send out messages to girls to conform to role expectations. Williams also stated that most teachers in institutions of learning are males implying an absence of role models to inspire female students to achieve higher.

In this regard, Cohen and Kennedy (2009), content that, particular social groups are persistently denied the same degree to access to social rewards and resources than other groups. The disadvantaged groups are also exposed to forms of discrimination as well as ideologies, culturally dominant values and roles that induce them to accept their "proper social place", Education which is a fundamental rights of all including girls and women and despite significant efforts made over the years on the same women are still less educated and are more likely to be in many countries of the world (Olaleye and Ajiteye, 2004), In 4 research conducted by Ogunshola, Bamidele as cited in Fatokun and Idaghoyl, (2010), on finding out the strategies for Supporting girls learning in schools, it was discovered that school learning environment tends to favour males than females and that gender bias is associated with the content of various disciplines through subjects offered in school, Oluwa, (2011) observed in Nigerian situation however institutionalized ideas, beliefs and practices about the role of women and their status tend to impeded women education, These beliefs and practice inhibit their access to education limiting the types of opportunities available to them.

However, UNESCO in Mohammed, (2009) observed that there is an estimation adult illiterates in the world and a large proportion of them are women, majority of which are from the third world countries of which Nigeria is one. Okeke, Nneka and Eze in Mohammed (2009) asserted that at all levels of education, studies have shown that females are grossly marginalized, be it in enrolment, participation, retention and achievements.

Factors Influencing Educational Opportunities

A number of factors are responsible for the women's limited participation in education. These include

1. socio-cultural
2. religions and
3. economic barriers

Cost of Schooling

To Obasi (2000), poverty and gender biased operated in the following ways to keep many girls out of school. Before the introduction of the universal primary education (UPE) more girls than boys stayed-out of school because of the existence of gender biased tradition in patriarchal ethnic groups in groups in which females were considered inferior to mates. The male child was regarded as superior because he succeeds his father and perpetuates the family name. The male was preferred over the female and therefore accorded better life chances including the opportunities to attend and remain longer in school at the cost of much parental deprivation even in situations of economic austerity

Early Marriage

Boys education is also highly favoured, because girls as soon as they are age, are expected to marry into other families and investment in their education, is loss of by their family of birth to the family of their marriage (Obasi, 2000). Dynamics in Marriage also determine the educational future of girls

David (2000), asserts that marrying young is common in developing countries. Women and girls often have no say concerning when and to who they marry. Economic hardship often forces families to give up their daughters to early marriage which not only leaves the girls vulnerable to abuse but also limits their educational opportunities.

Education can play a direct role in poverty reduction by enhancing the marketable skills of the economically disadvantaged and the vulnerable groups and by expanding their ability to take advantage of income generation possibilities and available social services - optimists in women education contend that it plays a key role promoting the interest of women by increasing and diversifying their potential to contribute to national development goals. However, strategies to increase enrolment of the females and retention in school are as important as female access to education (David, 2000).

Cultural factors

Poor perception given to women education by the society, that women or girls when given education may not get husband to marry or may be impregnated in the school which may result of not getting husband to marry.

Access to Education

In Nigeria, there is a great emphasis on education by the federal government (World Bank, 2003). As such the government has adopted education as an instrument "per excellence for effecting national development. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly articulates the educational needs and objectives of the citizens. The Constitution in principle, ensure equal and adequate educational opportunities, striving to eradicate illiteracy and when practicable provide free, compulsory universal primary, secondary and tertiary education, well literacy programmes, promote indigenous language and as well provide education that is more equitable more accessible and meaningful to the people interspersed the text (constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Despite all the arrangements, the goals of reaching equitable education for all are far from being realized.

Women Role in Nigeria as a Factor of Inequality of Educational Opportunity in Nigeria

Gender is a primary conduct for assigning roles and responsibilities. Gender shapes institutions, ideologies interactions and identities (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). A very great deal is made of gender. After the entire first question asked at birth is it a boy or a girl? and the response is a prelude to a behavior expectation that is spoken or unspoken and affects how a people perceives a particular individuals within a culture. The gender of a person is the primary predictor of behaviour used to make judgment and determines to a large extent the dress, expectations and role). Gender norms prescribe the division of labour and responsibilities between males and females and accords different rights to them. Either intentionally or unintentionally, they help to socialize children into gender-defined behaviours and attitudes early in life (Murphy, 2003). Gender expectation because the filter through which we screen our perception of the world and these gender screens often affects ways in which we view ourselves in the world of work and the world of home". Women in Nigeria see themselves and their many roles and positions from many perspectives that reflect the cultural milieu and expectations. (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003)

Conclusion

In conclusion, education plays an important role in the development of any nation especially the developing nations like Nigeria, and gender education particularly that of women is an engine of growth and development of each and every nation. With women education there will bring changes in terms of economy, health wellbeing, nutrition fertility rate, agriculture and politics to mention a few. All these mentioned are in the way or the other not adequate in the Nigerian society due to the inequality of educational opportunities between boys and girls, male and female within the Nigerian

society due to the socio-economic religious and cultural factors.

Recommendations

1. Religious and cultural factors should encourage educational opportunities for all irrespective of gender
2. Educational stakeholders and government should emphasize the need for education and its role in economic development of the nation.

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