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Factors Hindering Women's Aspiration for Tertiary Education in South-West Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is a survey of factors that hindered married women who had secondary education from aspiring for tertiary education in South-West Nigeria. The population for the study comprised all married woman that finished secondary schools but did not embark on tertiary education in the geo-political zone. Findings revealed that women's aspirations for tertiary education in South-West Nigeria were hindered by marital factors such as; marriage, childbearing and family financial needs. On the other hand, factors such as; religious belief and gender discrimination were found to be insignificant in hindering women aspiration for tertiary education in the zone. It was also found out that the effects of most of the factors were more potent on the aspirations of older women than on those of younger women. Based on this it was recommended that women aspirations for higher education should be aided by functioning policies from government and non-governmental organizations.

Keywords: women, aspiration, hindrance, tertiary education

Factores que Obstaculizan la Aspiración de las Mujeres hacia la Educación Terciaria en el Suroeste de Nigeria

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Resumen

El estudio es un análisis de los factores que dificultaron a las mujeres casadas que tenían educación secundaria el aspirar a la educación terciaria en el suroeste de Nigeria. La población abarca a toda mujer casada que terminó la secundaria pero no se embarcaron en la educación terciaria en esta zona geo-política. Los resultados revelaron que las aspiraciones de las mujeres de educación terciaria en el suroeste de Nigeria fueron obstaculizadas por factores maritales tales como el matrimonio, las necesidades financieras familiares y la maternidad. Por otro lado, los factores tales como las creencias religiosas y la discriminación de género resultaron insignificantes en obstaculizar la aspiración de las mujeres hacia la educación terciaria. También se descubrió que los efectos de la mayoría de los factores fueron más potentes en las aspiraciones de las mujeres mayores que en las mujeres más jóvenes. En base a esto se recomendó que las aspiraciones de las mujeres hacia la educación superior deben ser potenciadas por las políticas del gobierno y organizaciones no gubernamentales

Palabras clave: mujeres, aspiración, obstáculos, educación terciaria



Education in many societies is designed mainly by government to serve as a social mechanism through which individual differences emanating from cognitive and socio-economic incapacities can be managed and adjusted to achieve social equality. For example, societies design and implement educational policies to help illiterates acquire social and economic with which to survive in his/her societies. Also, with education, societies strive to unify their linguistic and cultural differences which otherwise would have hinder their achievement of cohesion and peace. No doubt, since creation of man, education has been structured formally or informally to uplift every member of the society from the state of ignorance and discrimination.

More specifically, Nigeria as a nation has identified education as the main instrument of achieving the five national objectives spelt out in her Second National Development Plan (SNDP). Thus, through series of educational principles and practices, the country aimed at becoming a free, democratic and egalitarian society; become a united, strong and self-reliant nation where economy is diversified and citizens have full opportunities to develop their potentials (NPE, 1998).

Having seen education as very important instrument of development, nations have conscientiously provided it at three levels, namely: primary, secondary and higher education levels. While primary level of education provides basic knowledge of life and smooth transition from home to school, higher education is expected to provide technical and advance knowledge and skills needed in the world of work and socio-economic survival.

The Nigerian National Policy of Education (NPE) clearly spelt out the concept of and national expectations from higher education in Nigerian societies. The policy defined Higher Education as the post-secondary aspect of Nigerian system of education which is given in universities, colleges of education, correspondence colleges and in other institutions allied to them (NPE, 1998). Nigerian higher education is technically designed to develop in Nigerian youth proper value-orientation, intellectual capacities, physical and intellectual skills for their individual and societal survival. Therefore, to achieve these, Nigeria has conscientiously designed, implemented and evaluated her higher education policies with the motive of achieving equality and excellence.

In addition to the objectives for which higher institutions are established,

Nigeria has always strives to lift the provision of higher education from level of mere policy speculations and has successfully made higher education a priority in the Exclusive Legislative list. The government of Nigeria, even before becoming an independent nation, has always embark on rigorous establishment of higher institutions across the nation.

The University College, Ibadan, established in 1945, marked the beginning of efforts at providing higher education in the country. Following this was its conversion to full fledge university and creation of the First Generation Universities in 1960. In 1975 the seven second generation universities were established at JOS, Calabar, Portharcourt, Sokoto, Ilorin and Kano. Many others were also created thereafter and with the promulgation of Decree 9 of 1993, many private universities were established. At the pick of the establishment came creation of nine more Federal Universities in 2010 (Sodimu, 2011). With these series of establishment, government provide higher education and encourage citizens to aspire for and get enrolled in higher education.

Consequently, enrolment at these universities and other tertiary institutions offering higher education has been on the increase. Specifically, degree students enrolment increased from 104 in 1948 to 1,395 in 1960; 40,000 in 1976; 172,000 in 1988; 448,000 in the year 2000 and today, it has gone beyond a million (Sodimu, 2011). These series of increase have been attributed to many factors, which include change in policies that allow movement of students from secondary school straight to university, (Benjamin, 2000). Some researchers attributed the increase to high awareness of the importance of higher education in accessibility of socio-economic opportunities in Nigeria and around the world (Timothy & Dende, 2011).

However, the recorded increase in students' enrolment has not been large in the side of female students. Many of the available data in Nigeria still point to the fact that male students aspire for higher education than female students at the completion of their secondary education. Many have pointed to the fact that many secondary schools graduates, even when they have the academic qualification required for access into higher education; tend to terminate their education for one reason or the other (Timothy & Dende, 2011). However, apart from voluntary termination of academic pursuit, a large number of students are said to be pressurized by cultural reasons to

quit education at the completion of secondary education.

Using University of Lagos as a cases study, the Table 1 below illustrates this gender differences in university enrolment. University of Lagos is in South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria, a Federal University that draws its candidates from mainly Yoruba communities (Randle, 2009).

Table 1

University enrolment of students by faculties and gender

Faculties/Units												
2001/2002			2002/2003		2000/2001							
%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	
Arts			433	40.1	646	59.9	924	42.3	1262	57.7	1075	
39.4	1656	60.6										
Bus/Adm.			2302	56.9	1741	43.1	2414	57.4	1793	42.6	2270	55.8
1799	44.2											
Education			538	39.9	809	60.1	881	45.5	1054	54.5	1315	45.4
54.6												
Engineering			3261	84.8	583	15.2	3192	83.4	636	16.6	3164	83.4
632	16.6											
Env. Sciences			766	73.0	284	27.0	902	74.7	305	25.3	1104	72.9
410	27.1											
Law			464	38.1	755	61.9	498	41.5	702	58.5	489	41.4
691	58.6											
Sciences			1403	55.4	1128	44.6	1797	56.4	1387	43.6	1865	53.5
1622	46.5											
Soc. Sciences			1735	57.9	1264	42.1	1683	58.5	1174	41.5	1364	54.6
1134	45.4											
Pharmacy			--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	176
216	55.1											44.9
Coll. of Med			1150	53.3	1007	46.7	1193	53.3	1047	46.7	1030	57.2
770	42.8											
Total			12052	59.5	8217	40.5	1384	59.0	9360	41.0	13852	56.9
10510	43.1											

Source: University of Lagos statistical digest 2000/2001-2002/2003

A closer look at the data in Table 1 indicates a clear difference in the percentages of female and male persons that were enrolled at University of Lagos within the covered academic sessions. For example, female enrolment constituted only 40.5% of total enrolment against 59.5% of male enrolment in 2000/2001 session, 41.0% against 59.0% of male enrolment in

2001/2002 and 43.1% against 56.9% of male enrolment in 2002/2003. These gender-based disparities also reflect in the number of female lecturers lecturing in universities around Nigeria. For example, the available data of the number of Professors in Nigerian universities show that University of Ibadan had 253 male professors against 38 female professors, University of Lagos had 198 male professors against 27 female professors and Ladoke Akintola University had 23 male professors against none female professor in the 2001/2002 academic session respectively (Oyekanmi, & Nwabueze, 2006).

Accessibility of education at any level is not expected to be hindered by any sociological factors; not by gender or religious factors. The series of international resolutions which Nigeria is a signatory encourage nations to make education available to all and to make sure that higher education itself is indiscriminately provided. Nations are expected to make sure every individual who can meet up with the academic and financial requirement of higher education be given the opportunity to acquire higher education. Where there are sociological factors capable of obstructing educational aspiration, government is expected to act in good faith to amend such factors for national interest (Dada, 2007).

Yet, the problem of gender-based inequality in aspiration and access to tertiary education still persist. Unequal aspiration for gender-based enrolment in tertiary education has not really been peculiar to Nigerian societies alone. Until 1972 when the American Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Acts, sex discrimination in access to education was common in the country (Macionis, 2009). Past researches also confirm that apart from unequal access, Americans were discriminated against in the term of courses they could offer. Macionis (2009) wrote that in the country, girls were tracked into courses such as home economics, typing, and shorthand that prepared them to be homemakers or to perform clerical work in offices, whereas, in American colleges, men were encouraged to study the sciences (Spender, 1989).

It has been argued that reasons for differences in access to education vary from country to country on the line of cultural and socio-economic elements in societies. Madiago (2003) argued that researchers should not limit their studies of reasons accounting for difference in enrolment, retention and completion of an educational programme to culture. The

reason for Madiago's suggestion may have to do with the assumption that most of the factors relating to individual's aspiration for educational pursuit are relative to the components of culture.

On this background, this study was designed to find out factors hindering female individual's aspiration for university education in some selected Nigerian South-West states. States in the South-West are inhabited predominantly by Yoruba people and these states happen to be a geo-political zone that has very earlier encounter with the European missionaries that brought western education to Nigeria (Adeosun, 2006). Thus, a study of this focus will be significant in accessing factors relating to the success or otherwise of the geo-political zone in attracting her female inhabitants to higher education opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

The essence of theoretical framework in social researches cannot be over emphasized. Theories provides base for reaching conclusions in social researches. Thus, this study is theoretically framed on the Conflict Theory. Conflict theory, in relation to education, opines that there is a conflict of interest among groups in society. Specifically, conflict theory maintains that the powerful gain at the expense of the less powerful. Haralambos & Holborn (2008) posited that from the conflict perspective, education largely serves the interest of the powerful. It maintains their power, justifies their privileges and legitimizes their wealth.

Salmon (2008) identified gender as one of the main factors that determine one's power in the society. He claims that in traditional societies, gender determines how one is respected and allowed to tap from the socio-cultural resources of the society. Salmon (2008) maintains that women are not potentially empowered as men in the society and therefore cannot be regarded as among the powerful of the society. Thus, going by the Conflict theory, women may not always be at advantage in benefiting from educational opportunities that are available in the society.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following research questions:

- 1. What are the factors hindering Christian and Muslim women aspiration for university education in Nigerian South-West states?
- 2. What are the factors hindering old and young women aspiration for university education in Nigerian South-West states?

Methodology

The study was designed as a survey. A survey involves sampling opinion of a representative of a specified population to arrive at a valid conclusion that would be applicable to the entire population. Thus, the population for this study comprised every female individual having academic qualifications for higher education in the five states constituting South-West Nigeria. The states are: Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo and Lagos States. From the five states, cluster sampling technique was used to sample a total of 500 respondents with an average of 90 respondents sampled from each state. All the sampled respondents were married. To sample the respondents, the researcher used the venues of Parents Teachers’ Association (PTA) meetings as the contact points where women who verbally claimed to have had secondary education but did not embark on tertiary education were contacted and given the questionnaire to respond to. The respondents were further stratified on the basis of religion and age.

Table 2
Numeric description of the sampled respondents on the basis of religion and age

Religion				Age			
Christians		Muslims		Older		Younger	
n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
250	50	250	50			229	
45.8		271		54.2			

Data on Table 2 indicate that 50% of the sampled respondents were Christian and the remaining 50% were Muslims. On the other hand, 45.8% of the samples were women below 40 years and the remaining 54.2% were women older than 40 years.

A self -designed questionnaire titled Aspiration for Higher Education Questionnaire (AHEQ) was designed to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument has two sections. Section of AHEQ has items eliciting information on the biographical data respondents. Such data included their religion, age and residence. Responses to these items were used to stratify the respondents. Section B has 15 items grouped under Financial Factors (FF), Marital Factors (MF), Cultural Factors (CF) and Residential Factors (RF). Each of the items has two response options named: Applicable (APP) and Not Applicable (NP).

The validity of the instrument was determined using Face Validity Approach (FVA). This involved giving the draft of the instrument to two selected Sociologists of Education from two of the universities in the five states covered. They were asked to adjudge the relevance and adequacy of the items in relation to the studied phenomenon. Their assessment confirmed the instrument valid for the purpose of the study. A reliability co-efficient of 0.66 was derived for the instrument using test-re-test approach. This involved administering the instrument twice to sub-sample drawn from two randomly selected states among the five states covered. The Pearson Moment Correlation Co-efficient (r) was used in finding the reliability co-efficient. Collected data were analyzed using percentages.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the factors hindering Christian and Muslim women's aspiration for tertiary education in Nigerian South-West states?

Table 3
*Percentage Description of Factors Hindering Christian and Muslim Women
 Aspiration for Higher Education*

<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Christian</i>						
	Applicable		Not Applicable		Applicable		Not
Applicable	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
%							
Financial Reasons							
Weak financial strength	76	30.4	174	69.6	81	32.4	169
67.6							
High cost of school fees	59	23.6	191	76.1	47	18.8	203
81.2							
Unemployment (present)	111	44.4	139	55.6	143	57.2	107
42.8							
Poor employment prospect	13	5.2	237	94.8	11	4.4	239
95.6							
Marital Reasons							
Marriage			177	70.8	73	29.2	211
84.4 39 15.6							
Childbearing	115	46	135	54	199	79.6	51
20.4							
Spouse's level of education	48	19.2	202	80.8	71	28.4	179
71.6							
Children's financial needs	139	55.6	111	44.4	202	80.8	48
19.2							
Cultural Reasons							
Gender discrimination	26	10.4	224	89.6	19	7.6	231
92.4							
Fear of not getting married	88	35.2	162	64.8	111	44.4	139
55.6							
Religious belief	---	---	250	100	03	1.2	247
98.8							
Residential Reason							
Unavailability of School	--	---	250	100	---	---	250
100							
Distance from home	49	19.6	201	80.4	66	26.4	184
73.6							
Inadequate information	21	8.4	229	91.6	36	14.4	214
85.6							
Weak school security	--	---	250	100	--	---	250
100							

The data on Table 3 illustrate the factors women across religious groups identified as hindrance to their aspiration for higher education. For example, 70.8% of Christian women and 84.4% of Muslim women said marriage prospects hindered their aspiration for higher education at the completion of their secondary education. Another related factor was childbearing which 79.6% of Muslim women agreed hindered their aspiration for university education. Also, 55.6% of Christian women and 80.8% of Muslim women identified pressure to cater for the financial needs of their children as what hindered their aspiration for university education. As can also be seen on the table, none of the sampled respondents said they did not aspired for higher education because the schools were not available or because the schools were insecure for academic purposes. On the other hand, only 1.2% of sampled Muslim women and none of Christian women believed their aspiration for tertiary education was hindered by their religious belief.

Research Question 2: What are the factors hindering old and young women's aspiration for tertiary education in Nigerian South-West states?

Data on Table 4 indicate that 61.5% percent of sampled women that identified marriage as factor that hindered their aspiration for higher education are young women below 40 years and 91.1% of them are old women that are above 40 years old. On the other hand, 42.7% of those who believed their aspirations for higher education were hindered by childbearing were young women and 79.7% of them were older women. Also, 32.7% of young women and 45.7% of older women were among those that got their aspiration for tertiary education hindered by fear of not getting married on time.

Table 4

Percentage Description of Factors hindering young and old Women Aspiration for Higher Education

Old	Young						
	Applicable		Not Applicable		Applicable		
Not Applicable	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
%							
Financial Reasons							
Weak financial strength	99	43.2	130	56.7	58	21.4	213
78.5							
High cost of school fees	61	26.6	168	73.3	45	16.6	226
83.3							
Unemployment	94	41.0	135	58.9	160		59.0
111 40.9							
Poor employment prospect	14	6.1	215	93.8	10	3.6	261
96.3							
Marital Reasons							
Marriage			141	61.5	88	38.4	247
91.1 24 8.8							
Childbearing	98	42.7	131	57.2	216	79.7	55
20.2							
Spouse's level of education	27	11.7	202	88.2	92	33.9	179
66.1							
Children's financial needs	95	41.4	134	58.5	246	90.7	25
9.2							
Cultural Reasons							
Gender discrimination	31	13.5	198	86.4	14	5.1	257
94.8							
Fear of not getting married	75	32.7	154	67.2	124	45.7	147
54.2							
Religious belief	01	0.43	228	99.5	02	0.73	269
99.2							
Residential Reason							
Unavailability of School	--	---	250	100	---	---	250
100							
Distance from home	76	33.1	153	66.8	39	14.3	232
85.6							
Inadequate information	09	3.93	220	96.1	48	17.7	223
82.2							
Weak school security	--	---	250	100	--	---	250
100							

Discussion

Education is one of the issues that nations have ever unanimously agreed to co-operatively advance and make accessible to all irrespective of class background or political affiliation. Around the world, government authorities always come up with policies aimed at giving every member of the society opportunity to be educated and become functional in the society. However, despite the intention and efforts, nations have not been able to eradicate discriminations in their educational principles and practise (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

Many authors and researchers have tried to identify reasons for unequal access to educational opportunities. Bowles and Gintis (1999) believed that class background is the most important factor influencing levels of educational accessibility and attainment. Though they agreed that education is free and open to all in policies but in practice, some have much greater opportunities than others. In the opinion of Bowles & Gintis (1999), the children of the wealthy and powerful tend to obtain high qualifications and highly rewarded jobs irrespective of their abilities in school. Some other theorists in the category of Functionalism have maintained that educational accessibility depends only on merit and that it is itself a means to sustaining equality (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

However, some other reasons or factors determining accessibility or aspiration for higher education particularly among female population have been identified in this study. For example, this study found out that most of the potent reasons why women do not aspire for tertiary education are marital. They are reasons relating to women marriage and/or marital prospect.

More specifically, none of the sampled respondents in this study attributed her none-aspiration for tertiary education to unavailability of higher institutions to attend in their societies. Rather, to 70.8% of sampled Christians and 84.4% of sampled Muslims, their none-aspiration for tertiary education is attributable to marriage prospect. They may have envisaged not getting married if they pursue higher education or that attending university will affect their marital commitment and responsibilities. Similar to this is the issue of childbearing that 46% of Christian and 79.6% of

Muslim sampled women believed hindered their none-aspiration for university education.

No doubt, the influence of family pressure can be potent in women's social development (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Many family members always pass through financial stress and in life time. This may account for why 55.6% of sampled Christian and 80.8% of Muslim women attributed their none-aspiration for university education to pressing financial needs of their children. Also, the women's educational none-aspiration is not attributed to poor employment prospect. In fact, 94.8% of sampled Christian women and 95.6% Muslim women said the issue of poor employment prospect was not applicable to them.

In this study, analysis of respondents' responses further show that the influence of marital factors on women's aspiration for tertiary education can vary on the basis of age. For example, out of the women that pointed at marriage as what hindered their aspiration, 91.1% were women above 40 years of age and 61.5% of them were women below 40 years old. Also, while 42.7% of women that identified childbearing pressure as what obstructed their aspiration for university education were below 40 years old, 79.7% of the women with the same reason were above 40 years. The implication of this is that the influence of marital factors on women aspiration for tertiary education may be reducing as it is shown in this study to be higher among older women population than among younger women population.

Generally, women are the most socio-economically pressed members of the society. Haralambos & Holborn, (2008) argued that women often find it difficult to cope with issues outside the family circle because much is expected from them in home up- keeping. This stance justifies the reasons above and further confirms that much need to be done to help women access education.

Conclusion

From the illustrations from the analysis and the subsequent discussion above, it can be concluded that women aspiration for tertiary education is more hindered by marital factors than by financial or residential factors. In fact, it was found out that marriage and the pressure of meeting children's

financial needs often suppress women's aspiration for tertiary education in South-West states of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Government and non-governmental agencies should advance policies and practices that will ease out women marital pressure and make higher education more accessible for them.
2. Adequate orientation should be given to women to avert incidences of early marriage and unplanned childbearing among them.

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