

**ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN IN ATTENDING
HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA:
IMPLICATIONS SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION**

ABSTRACT

The researcher investigated the assessment of factors influencing women in attending higher institutions in Sokoto state, Nigeria. To attain this objective, the researcher came up with four objectives to guide the study: socio-cultural practices, education policies, academic performance and socio-economic status. Descriptive survey method was used as the study intended to collect data from members of a given population to determine the status of that particular population with respect to one or more variables in the study. The target population for the study was 74100 women representing the total number of women students in the two higher institutions. A sample size of 382 was used in the study. A proportionate sampling technique was used to select respondents. The research instruments used in this study were questionnaires. A pilot study was done and the questionnaire validated by the expert from the faculty of education and extension services to establish the instruments validity. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, split half technique was employed. Frequency tables were used to analyze the collected data. The finding was presented with the help of simple tables of frequency count and simple percentage. Results were interpreted and required recommendations made at the end of the study. It was found that less was less access to higher institution by women because of social cultural practices, educational policies, academic performance and socio-economic status. Recommendations for further research were made.

Keywords: Factors, Influencing, Women, Attending Higher, and Institutions

Introduction

Females are known to be the instruments of changes and of good honor in homes and society at large, as such their education and social awareness should be seen as paramount to enable the society to develop in all ramifications. Despite their role in the nation and societal development, females are observed to be left so far behind in terms of studies. The global claim that education is a major source and potential instrument for the attainment of sustainable development to all human in the society today. Education is conceived as a powerful that is

instrumental in bringing about the desired changes in the social and cultural life of a nation. (Ighbed cited in Özbay & Uyar, 2008). Developing countries face barrage of extra-ordinary problems among which are abject poverty and ignorance.

The solution of course lies in proper education of the citizenry. Okemakido cited in Sarkar and Behera (2016) explained that education helps to cushion high rate of literacy effect, emancipate the masses from the shackle of ignorance, equipping them with cognitive skills to induce development and make them aware politically economically, socially and enable them produce and develop teaming human resources. Weje and Uwaifo (2009) Opined that education unlocks the door of modernization and sustainable development and that, it is teachers that hold the key to the door.

The whole process of education is hoped and moulded by human personality called the teacher, who plays a pivotal role in any education system. Thus, the teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policies into practice and programs into action. Okafor (1991) writing on the secret of American power pointed out that America built her greatness in the classroom. He enjoined developing countries to emulate America. It is clear from the foregoing that the role of the teacher in sustainable development cannot be quantified, especially in the act of training personnel in various areas of workforce. However, there is need to be properly educated and trained for professional efficiency and inculcation of positive attitude that will enable one to go through the training properly and come out well equipped for the responsibility ahead. Many nations have solved many of their problems through education and the secret lies in the effective classroom activities, management and control (Nwanekezi, 2011).

Conversely, since very little is given to teachers in Nigeria, it is erroneous to expect so much from them. Notwithstanding the fact that teacher's remuneration is meager, it is not regular

yet teachers like every other worker have their family and other dependents to cater for. AnikwezeOjo and Maiyanga (2002) observed that no school leaver in Nigeria wants to be a teacher in view of the fact that teacher in Nigeria have been terribly and economically pauperized and emasculated. All these present the teacher as a poor, pitiable and helpless fellow in the society. Teaching has often been regarded, and generally referred as a profession. Profession, according to Enyi (2014), has to do with an occupation that has exclusive body of knowledge which are relevant to the society, and which members possess special skills and competencies acquired from training. The question is not only whether teaching is a profession but also does it enjoy the prestige of professionalism as is seen in medicine, law, Engineering Accountancy and other professional field (Nwite, 2012). Ascribing a perfect professionalism to teaching will help boost the moral of the serving teachers as well as of the prospective teachers in that there would not be a bias mind to whether teaching is a profession or not. Lawyers, Engineers medical practitioners etc were made by teachers. In spite of the good work of teachers in the society, there is still a wide spread misconception towards teaching profession. The public look down on teachers and his profession. The word teacher and its related terms to the public signify abject poverty inferiority and social misfit (Okemakinde cited in Sarkar & Behera, 2016). Teaching, according to Okemakinde cited in Sarkar and Behera (2016) is unskilled job meant for women, the old and the poor. Teachers on their own believed on this as they regard themselves as less privileged compared to other profession concluding that their reward is in heaven. This believe about teachers might contributes to some extent the negative attitude of students towards teaching profession.

Attitudes have a very important position in our daily lives. From this aspect, attitudes help individuals to interpret their environment and guide their behavior in the social life (Erwin cited

in Özbay & Uyar, 2008).). Having also an important influence on the decisions, attitudes have a strong effect on what one will do, what kind of profession one will perform, which school one will go to, where one will live, and whether one will accept new ideas (Schafer and Tait cited in Özbay & Uyar, 2008). Attitudes are defined by words such as emotional content, important beliefs, reactions, prejudices, evaluations and state of readiness (Celik, 2011). Factors such as physiological factors, personality, and process of socialization, group membership and group norm contribute to the formation of attitudes as well (İnceoglu, 2000). Within the framework of these definitions; it is possible to state that the attitude generally includes a tendency, stance, reaction. Attitudes are influenced by personal opinions, life experiences, and they are shaped by means of education and acquire a different dimension (Hacieminoglu, 2015). In this scope; it is important to stress that there is an opportunity for students to gain important attitudes in their social and school lives.

In this framework, Ataunal (2003) states that; in schools; the communication that the teacher has established with the students through positive or negative attitudes has an important influence on shaping the lives of the students. Teachers' behaviors can be imitated by the students as well as being directly accepted. These points out the importance of schools thus the teachers' responsibilities in terms of the attitudes (Ulug, Ozden & Eryilmaz, 2011, p.739). Schools are important institutions for the academic, psychological and social developments of the students (Sarı & Cenkseven, cited in Sarkar and Behera, 2016). The teachers and others in the school environment have an influential position for the attitudes along with the school age (Ozbay & Uyar, 2008, p.633). This situation is important for indicating the importance of schools in terms of attitude. Similarly, Alici cited in Sarkar and Behera (2016) also expresses that considering the individuals spend a significant part of their lives in school environment, the

effects of their emotions and thoughts towards the school on the personality traits and achievements could be understood more easily

Statement of the Problem

In the present day's women lack interested in studying in the higher institution due to some factors preventing them from attending higher institutions. These factors include religious, political economic, and society factors. In a study conducted by Kwesiga (2002) whose objective was to establish how religion as part of socio-cultural practice influenced women in attending higher education noted that various religious practices that provide their own line of thinking and although religion is not always a barrier to girls' education, it can be. Her arguments are supported by, (Beoku-Betts, 1998) who stated that while variations exist; Muslim regions and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa tend to have more rigidly defined gender role, norms and practices. Which affect access and attainment rates for girls in the higher educational system only few have chance to study beyond secondary School. This has over years affected and prevented women in occupying many public offices. It is view of this background that this study was set out to examine critically assessed the factors influencing women in attending higher institutions in Sokoto state, Nigeria. In addressing this problem, the following research questions were raised:

1. How does educational policy influence access to higher institution education by women in Sokoto?
2. What are the opinions of the participants on how economic factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state?
3. What are the opinions of the participants on how cultural factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state?

4. What is the attitude of female students toward professional development?

Theoretical Framework

The human development perspective and the classical modernization perspective which explain why modern societies are more conducive to gains in gender equality. The cultural and institutional path dependency presents historical legacies potentially capable of affecting the improvement and modernization it brings to women's social and political status. The developmental trends of social modernization may face legacies of path dependent cultural and institutional organization that affect societies' abilities to improve women's lives (Krasner, 1984; Skocpol, 1992). Researcher note that, the emergence of institutions, whether cultural or the result of policy, sometimes consists of types of social organization that have a continuing and somehow determinant to influence the phenomena relevant to those institutions far into the future (Peters, 1999).

This influence can take the form of an inertial tendency where institutions affect relevant phenomena that would have otherwise changed due to other social forces, like modernization. The researcher consider four measures of path dependent processes highlighted in the literature as those factors capable of influencing women in attending higher institutions: educational policies, economic factors, a state tradition of investing into welfares rather than coercive forces, and a cultural factor.

Depending on the nature of their traditions, religions vary in opportunity for women's emancipation. For instance, relative to other religious heritages, scholars find that a Protestant religious heritage improves the status of women in a country (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Inglehart, Norris & Welzel, 2002; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). With its tradition of sectarianism and volunteerism, Protestantism holds a tradition particularly hospitable to democratic values, such as respect for individualism, reciprocity and popular sovereignty.

Researcher also approach the influence of religious on women's empowerment through measures of publics' levels of secularization (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). As societies secularize that there is greater deference to rationality and expertise, and this typically gives rise to the modern state and widespread social services. The secularizing trend typically occurs from the pre-industrial through the industrializing phase of modernization. During this transition, traditional units restrictive of women's development such as the family and the religious lose their authority as individuals place greater emphasis on rationality and individualism. Scholars working with the World Values Survey have developed a value dimension for capturing this transition to secular, rational values. Studies find positive relationships between this and measures of women's empowerment (Inglehart & Norris 2003; Inglehart & Welzel 2005).

In addition to religion, path dependent processes with respect to women may affect the potential to increase gender equality in particular societies. Suffragist policy represents instances when elites and dominant political groups open the system of political representation to former, politically constructed out-groups. Countries with earlier suffragist policies for reforming women's formal political exclusion are likely to have a stronger institutional legacy of women's formal political inclusion. (Kenworthy & Malami 2004).

In summary, there are few studies that systematically, comparatively test the role of women path dependent processes next to other competing explanations of factors influence women in attending higher institution. It is therefore difficult to hypothesize what role these factors will play and when in influence women in attending higher institution.

Methodology

The researcher used descriptive research survey design. In this study the choice of this research design was considered appropriate because of its advantage of identifying attribute of a large population in well definite population (Okoro & Liman, 2016). The design was suitable for

the study as the study seek to assess the factors influencing women in attending higher institutions in Sokoto state. The population of this study was 74100 comprising of all female students studying in higher institutions in Sokoto state. A sample of 382 was used and the researcher arrived at that using of purposing sampling technique which include stratified and random sampling method to give any individual equal chance of participating. The main sample of the study from five wards area is selected for higher institution. The first stage involves the use of proportional random sampling technique to determine the number of respondents in each schools. The researcher collected data for this research using the instrument title: Factors Influencing Women in Attending Higher Institutions (FIWAHI) which was self-designed. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts in measurement ad evaluation Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria. The reliability of the instruments was obtained through test-retest reliability which were correlated through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) 'r' and it yielded 0.85. The data for this study was analyzed using The data collected were analyzed using frequency count and Simple percentage to answer research questions.

Results

The discussion of the results is based on strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree but submerged to agreed and disagree

Research Question 1: How does education policy influence access to higher institution education by women in Sokoto?

Table 1: Education Policy Influence Access to Higher Institution Education by Women in Sokoto

Statements	Agreed		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%
Mainstreaming gender concerns	300	78.53	82	21.47
promoting gender specific programme activities	184	48.17	198	51.83
Giving special attention to the girl child education	197	51.57	185	48.43
Combined with parental perceptions of the opportunity costs of investing in girls' education influence for higher education	200	52.36	182	47.64
Average	220	57.66	162	42.34

Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Table 1 revealed that 300 of the respondents representing 78.53% agreed that mainstreaming gender concerns. 184 of the respondents representing 51.83% disagreed that promoting gender specific programme activities. 197 of the respondents representing 51.57 % agreed that giving special attention to the girl child education. 200 of the respondents representing 52.36% agreed that combined with parental perceptions of the opportunity costs of investing in girls' education influence for higher education.

However, Table 1 indicated that 220 of the respondents representing 57.66% agreed to the characteristic of policy influence access to higher institution education by women in Sokoto. Thus, 220 of the respondents agreed that policy influence access to higher institution education by women in Sokoto.

Research Question 2: What are the opinions of the participants on how economic factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state?

Table 2: How Economic Factors Influence Women in Attending Higher Institution in Sokoto State

Statements	Agreed	Disagree
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	F	%	F	%
Status of a family is a strong indicator of the level of education a girl is likely to achieve.	298	78.01	84	21.99
Marriage entrench gender oppression	302	79.06	80	20.94
Education shedding shocking light on the way societal structures and institutions such as the family	330	86.39	52	13.61
Practice of bride wealth payment and how it mitigates against women going on with higher education	250	65.46	132	34.55
Average	295	77.23	87	22.77

Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Table 2 shows that 298 of the respondents representing 78.01% agreed that status of a family is a strong indicator of the level of education a girl is likely to achieve. 302 of the respondents representing 79.06% agreed that marriage entrench gender oppression. 330 of the respondents representing 86.39% agreed that education shedding shocking light on the way societal structures and institutions such as the family. 250 of the respondents representing 65.46% agreed that practice of bride wealth payment and how it mitigates against women going on with higher education.

More so, Table 2 indicated that 295 of the respondents representing 77.23% agreed to the characteristic of how economic factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state. However, 295 of the respondents agreed that how economic factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state.

Research Question 3: What are the opinions of the participants on how cultural factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state?

Table 3: How Cultural Factors Influence Women in Attending Higher Institution in Sokoto State

Statements	Agreed	Disagree
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	F	%	F	%
Difference between the emotional encouragement they received	197	51.57	185	48.43
Financial support that was imperative in their ability to stay in school	330	86.39	52	13.61
Women felt compelled to give back to their hometown communities for future generations of female students.	200	52.36	182	47.64
Investing in education surfaced as a major reason that these women believed they were able to pursue tertiary education	250	65.46	132	34.55
Attitude of fathers being a key factor in encouraging or restricting the schooling of their daughters	340	89.01	42	10.98
Average	263	68.85	119	31.15

Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Table 3 indicates that 197 of the respondents representing 51.57% agreed that difference between the emotional encouragement they received. 330 of the respondents representing 86.39% agreed that financial support that was imperative in their ability to stay in school. 200 of the respondents representing 52.36% agreed that women felt compelled to give back to their hometown communities for future generations of female students. 250 of the respondents representing 65.46% agreed that investing in education surfaced as a major reason that these women believed they were able to pursue tertiary education. 340 of the respondents representing 89.01% agreed that attitude of fathers being a key factor in encouraging or restricting the schooling of their daughters.

However, Table 3 indicated that 263 of the respondents representing 68.85% agreed to the characteristic of on how cultural factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state. Thus, 263 of the respondents agreed that cultural factors influence women in attending higher institution in Sokoto state.

Research Question 4: What is the attitude of female students toward professional development in Sokoto state?

Table 4: Attitude of Female Students Toward Professional Development in Sokoto State

Statements	Agreed		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%
Lack of female students' understanding of the career opportunities available to them	295	77.23	87	22.77
Lack of female mentoring opportunities	263	68.85	119	31.15
Personal feelings of intimidation surrounding advanced studies requirements	184	48.17	198	51.83
Teachers are given opportunities for further studies by the ministry of education in the state.	200	52.36	182	47.64
Higher positions attract higher salary.	220	57.66	162	42.34
Average	232	60.84	150	39.16

Source: Fieldwork (2019)

Table 4 revealed that 295 of the respondents representing 77.23% agreed that lack of female students' understanding of the career opportunities available to them. 263 of the respondents representing 68.85% agreed that lack of female mentoring opportunities. 198 of the respondents representing 51.83% disagreed that personal feelings of intimidation surrounding advanced studies requirements. 200 of the respondents representing 52.36% agreed that teachers are given opportunities for further studies by the ministry of education in the state. 220 of the respondents representing 57.66% agreed that higher positions attract higher salary.

More so, Table 4 revealed that 232 of the respondents representing 60.84% agreed to the characteristic of the attitude of female students toward professional development in Sokoto state. Hence, 232 of the respondents agreed that the attitude of female students toward professional development in Sokoto state.

Summary of Finding

The findings of this research was as follows;

1. The education policies are one of major factors that influence women to higher education it promotes and provide equal opportunity for all genders.
2. Women also noted socio-economic status to be contributing to low access to higher institutions. With majority agreeing, that poverty played a big part to their low level of access to higher institutions.
3. Socio-cultural practice is what takes many forms and attributing low levels of access to higher institutions to lack of and less support from their parents respectively.
4. Attitude of female students toward professional development played a major contribution towards low access to higher institutions by women.

Discussion of Findings

This study sought to find out assessment of factors influencing women in attending higher institutions in Sokoto state, Nigeria. The problem of low number of women accessing Higher institution is very common despite government effort to ensure equality in education to all people despite their genders. According to vision 2030, one of its key pillars are education for all. The findings discovered that, the major factors influencing women in attending higher institutions in Sokoto state, is a Socio-cultural practice, which takes many forms and attributing to low levels of access to higher institutions to lack of and less support from their parents respectively. 75% Agreeing that domestic role affect their studies and a majority of them saying they receive levels of encouragement ranging from medium, low and very low towards their higher institutions and while 25% they received encouragement from their parent immensely.

Education policies were discovered to be contributing to low access to higher intuition by women. And attributing low access to education policies such as distance from school,

pregnancy said to affect their motivation towards higher institutions and respectively where 60% of the respondents agreeing that such policies affected level of access to higher institution by women in Sokoto 40% were on the different view. Academic performance at O-level played a major contribution towards low access to higher institutions by women. Majority of respondents with 70% saying their performance at O-level affected their decision to pursue higher institutions while the remaining 30% are with view that O-level does not affect their decision.

Lastly, 65% of women also noted socio-economic status is one of the major things to be contributing to low access to higher institutions. With majority agreeing, that poverty played a big part to their low level of access to higher institution, while 45% not support this observation for attending higher institutions.

Conclusion

It was established that access to higher institutions by women was a function of complex interaction of many factors. The researcher has suggested some measures that if implemented may help improve or completely enhance women access to higher institutions. In conclusion, the availability of reliable data, particularly of women at the higher institutions, low access by women is an exception. In most part of Sokoto, there is need to strengthen data collection units of higher institutions, to know how much it costs the community to send their children or how much it costs them not to send them to higher institutions. The estimates of the cost of low access to higher institutions by women in Sokoto and the Country at large needs to be known so that budgetary provision can be made for the same. The ministry of education needs to ensure that women establish proper policies to check the problem of low access to higher institutions. Taking into account the benefit of access to all to higher institutions, private returns to education are higher than any other investment.

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations made out of the findings of the study so as to increase access to higher institutions by women include the following:

1. The education policies should be structured in a way that they provide equal opportunity for all genders to advance academically to higher levels without any form of discrimination; this will ensure equal access to education at all levels.
2. On socio-cultural practices, the government through the ministry of education should come up with measures that will ensure some cultural practices that seem to interfere with academic advancement of women to higher institutions are done away with, to increase the level of access to university education by women.
3. Socio-economic status, the higher education's board should come up with policies that will see those women students who have excelled at O-level and qualify for higher institutions are provided with financial assistance to ensure they complete their studies at the university; this will ensure increased access to higher institutions by women
4. Lastly, Attitude of female students toward professional development played a major contribution towards low access to higher institutions by between men and women to ensure both genders have equal opportunity to advance to university education.

Sociological Implications

In the preliterate era women in the North-west of Nigeria are seen as part of domestic property kept at home and secluded from the outside world. They were seen as fragile and unable to withstand the outside world. This situation led to the inability of the women folk to get the necessary skill required for social, economic and political development to develop

themselves in areas of self-actualization. Women were seen as property to be protected and that was why they were denied the necessary education during childhood stage. Onwuka (2008) observed that women need to be upgraded to bridge the gap that long existed in their pursuit of education.

When western type of education was initially introduced, it was considered useful only because it prepared boys to qualify for employment such as, clerks, interpreters, teachers, catechist, evangelist, stewards, cooks , etc for government offices, commercial houses and the missionaries. Girls were not considered necessary for such opportunities (Onwuka, 2008). It is pertinent to say that in the process of time few educated men who were teachers, clerks, evangelist, interpreters, who knew the value of western education for human development, encouraged their wives to go to school. Thus in order to encourage girls enrolment in schools some school proprietors and missionary schools initially allowed girls to attend school without paying fees, while some allowed them to pay half of the fees paid by boys(Ezeani, 1998). He was of the opinion that school was established for girls, then was just to prepare them to be good mothers, wives and not to be seen in public life.

Women in Nigeria have had various challenges in order to obtain equal education and creation of awareness and rights for women. Education is a basic human right and has been recognized as such since the 1948 when Education of women has been reorganized as a disposition for a lifelong acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, competence and skills. (Schultz, 2002). Nussbaun (2003) observed that women are informally trained especially in preparation for their marital life. While Women with some formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure their children are immunized, be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements, and adopt improved sanitation practices. Education thus ensure that their infants and children have higher survival rates and tends to be healthier and better nourished

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