



Educational Disparity in Nigeria: A Gendered Analysis

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Received date: 26 September 2019; Accepted date: 8 June 2020; Published date: 22 July 2020

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Abstract

This paper examines the inequalities and discrimination from which the female gender suffers. It is a major infringement of the rights of women and girls and therefore a major challenge to the development process. Gender can be referred to as the social and cultural construction of females' identities in a given society which leads to socially constructed roles, responsibilities, obligations and attributes about the relationships between men and women. This study observes that to encourage gender equality and parity in learning, Nigeria must aim its struggles not merely towards education itself, but also towards the society's cultural and utilitarian framework. The study alludes to UNESCO (2003) which stipulates that gender parity is attained when the same proportions of boys and girls, relative to their respective age groups, enter the education system, achieve the set goals and advance through the different lifecycles. The problem-oriented approach is adopted in this paper in appraising the government policies and interventions, since posterity is severely compromised as a result of the poor-quality education in Nigeria. This study is carried out using both primary and secondary data to conclude scholarly publications, books, journals and internet sources. This study, therefore, concludes that the socio-cultural imperatives must be properly located and dealt with, or else the issue of education and gender equality in Nigeria would remain unattended to.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Parity, Education, Development.

Introduction

Oniye (2000) opines that education supports men and women to claim their rights and

recognise their potentials in the economic, political and social arenas. It's otherwise known as the one most powerful means to take individuals out of hardships. Though,

many individuals, most importantly ladies, are still exempted from education in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Education ought to be a basic of any approach to handle the gender-based discrimination against ladies that continues to be dominant in our society.

According to the Gender Statistics (200), the present wave of globalization has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide, especially the lives of women within the developing world. Even so, ladies are still deprived from several areas of life, such as employment, health and civil rights, beside education. Studies have shown that consistent with the U.S. Agency for International Development and also the World Bank, 57% of the 72 million elementary school-aged youngsters who don't attend school, are females. Also, females are 4% less probable than boys to finish primary education (Gender statistics, 2010).

While several advantages are created with regards to the overall level of education worldwide, and more youngsters are currently attending elementary school than ever (King, 2013), there's still no worldwide gender parity in education. In each revenue bracket, there are more female youngsters than male youngsters who don't seem to be attending school. Jensen, (2000) states that typically, ladies within the poorest 20% of the families have the least probability of obtaining an education (Jensen, 2010). This difference doesn't essentially modify in adulthood.

Statistics show that, of the 774 million illiterate adults worldwide, 64% are females – a datum nearly unmoved from the early Nineties (Gender Statistics, 2010). The UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is to push gender equality and empower females, thus using education as its target and also the appraisal of gender inequality in education as its indicator of progress. Through the efforts of the international community, the United Nations hopes to eliminate gender inequality in primary and secondary levels of education

no later than 2015. Gender disparity in education is tremendous. Females are less probable to access education, to stay in school or to progress in education. Despite nearly thirty years of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and 20 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), females still constitute around 56% of the 77 million youngsters not going to school, and women constitute 2 thirds of the uneducated adults. Even the ladies, who do sign up at school, could have irregular turnouts thanks to other demands on them, and also the incontrovertible fact that their education might not be prioritized. Females are more probable to repeat school years, to drop out early and to fail key subjects, and in most countries, girls are less promising to finish the transition to secondary schooling. Inevitably, the disparity in society has a sway on the availability and content of education. This study observes that to encourage gender equality and parity in learning, the Federal Republic of Nigeria should aim its struggles not simply towards education itself, however towards the society's cultural and utilitarian framework. This study is going to be qualitative with the help of secondary information from profound publications, journals, newspaper reports and knowledge from the archives.

Conceptual Framework

Gender

To begin with, gender is perhaps most apparent in the social differences between females and males. These differences indicate how individuals are viewed, and how they view themselves. The differences between males and females are learned and deeply rooted, but also cultural, contextual and subject to change over time. Through interacting with other key factors, such as ethnicity, religion, class and sexual orientation, gender critically indicates identity.

Fayomi & Olu-Owolabi (2013, 105) posit that gender resonates on the differences between men and women and the unequal relationships that result from that. The term indicates that the differences between men and women are not inevitable products of biological sex differences. They also went ahead to explain that gender refers to a set of culturally conditioned traits associated with maleness or femaleness (Fayomi & Olu-Owolabi, 2013: 103). Kabonesa (2005:14) also opines that 'gender' refers to the social and cultural construction of female and male identities. She goes further to explain that the social and cultural constructions about men and women lead to socially constructed roles, responsibilities, obligations, attitudes and relationships between men and women. The differentiated perceptions and expectations of men and women lead them to occupy specific positions and/or space in society. In addition, the differences that arise from these social constructions, attitudes, perceptions and expectations change over time; vary within and among cultures; and vary within specific political and economic contexts. Meanwhile, Parker, Lozana & Messner (1995) state that indeed, gender relations have changed and continue to change in the African continent, as elsewhere, with changes in the socio-economic and political stability.

Gender Disparity in Education

Gagnon (2010) states that education is a right for females and males. Education is a cornerstone of the economic development and has edges for national health, social and political stability, democracy, etc. Education is crucial for the action of the Millennium Development Goals in health, education, social equality, etc.

The gender parity index (GPI) is an appraisal to assess gender variations in education. It's outlined by the worth of a given indicator for females divided by that for males.

- I. GPI = 0.97 to 1.03 -> Parity achieved
- II. GPI > 1.03 -> Female's advantage

III. GPI < 0.97 -> Male's advantage

The GER is the range of pupils or students registered in a given level of education, regardless the age, expressed as a fraction of the population within the theoretical age bracket for the identical level of education. The GER is an indicator that not only measures participation in education, but furthermore a country's capability to accommodate all of the relevant school-age population.

Equal Access to Education in Nigeria

The report that concisely stated that "Women are Nigeria's hidden resource", (National Population Commission and ORC Macro, 2004, 2009) exposed that over than 1.5 million of 6-4-year-old youngsters (8.1%) in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, are presently not in school, a scenario that has effortlessly attained the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the world's largest out of school youngsters country, an unfortunate action of a strong nation. In eight Northern States, over than 80% of women are unable to read, compared with fifty-four percent of men (National Population Commission and ORC Macro, 2009). It was not understood that simply a couple of investments have a massive payoff as females' education.

In different surveys, at the secondary level, rates of turnout among 12-17-year-old youth were low in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. A review of a variety of Demographic and Health Survey [DHS] 2003 & 2008 and DHS Ed Data Surveys 2004, 2010 reveals the following:

- i. The percentage of 12-17-year-old youth that attended high school increased from 35% in 2003 to 44% in 2008.
- ii. Whereas, 37% of the population with the age of fifteen years and older had completed elementary school in 1990, half of them had done this in 2003 and nearly two in three by 2008. Throughout the whole 3 years, men were more

- probable than females to complete that level of schooling.
- iii. In 2003, 20% of men and 12% of women of fifteen years and older had completed high school, compared with 29% of men and 20% of women in 2008.
 - iv. Literacy rates have remained constant, with half of the 15–49-year-old females ready to read an easy sentence in 2003 and 2008, compared with three in four 15–59-year-old men, for both years.
 - v. In 2003, there was a 16-point gap within the GAR by sex (GAR among males of sixty-nine, compared with fifty-three among females). In 1990, the GAR among males was forty, compared with thirty among females. By 2008, the gap was solely 5 points (GAR among males of sixty-eight, compared with sixty-three among females).

Educating and empowering the female child implies preparing her for future family relationship challenges that may, within the nearest future, affect a family and therefore the larger society, either positively or negatively.

Gender Inequality in Education At Global Level

The United Nations Education for All (EFA) report on the elimination of gender disparities in enrolments raises several queries for governments and civil societies in Nigeria and other developing countries (Douglas, 1992). It's accounted that 57% of the calculable 104 million kids within the 5-10 years' age bracket who are out of school worldwide, are believed to be females. The registration of girls in several countries is just three-fourth that of boys. The report aims at eliminating gender disparities in primary and high schools by 2005 and guaranteeing gender equality by 2015 (Rena, 2005:8). The report cautiously stated that the 2015 target for achieving improvements in 50% of the adult literacy and universal

primary education might remain just a dream for one-third of the world's population. The 164 national governments, that adopted the Dakar Framework of Action at the World Education Forum in Senegal in 2000, committed themselves to set in place policies to facilitate these goals. The international community conjointly ascertain that these resources wouldn't be a constraint. However, the EFA report notes that aid flows are disappointingly low in recent years.

Paradoxically, this comes at a time where the focus on primary education has been high on the agenda of many developing countries. The gender difference is so prevailing in several developing countries like the State of Eritrea.

However, the persistence of this gender disparity within the arena of children's education should not be treated as inevitable.

Further, per Global Crisis Solution Centre, two-thirds of the one hundred thirty million kids in the world, presently not in school, are females. This suggests that about 86.7 million females are out of school. The UNICEF report indicates that the number of females out of school in the Sub-Saharan region rose over the last decade from twenty million in 1990 to twenty-four million in 2002. This expressively shows that just about 28% of all the women in the world who are out of school are found solely in the Sub-Saharan region. This distressing issue influences Nigeria too.

Below, are the frameworks built by the international community to prevail gender equality across the globe:

Education for All (EFA) Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focal point on guaranteeing women' full and equal access to and attainment in basic education of fine quality (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000).

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Goal 3: Promote gender equality and

empower females. Target 4: Eliminate gender inequality in primary and secondary education ideally by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Goal 5: The Sustainable Development Goals aim to build on these achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere. More girls are in school now compared to that in 2000. Most regions have reached gender parity in primary education. The percentage of women getting paid for their work is increasing.

Gender Disparity in Nigerian Education

It is an approach in the fair distribution of resources between men and women. It's worn out such a way that existing gap in equality is closed. As an example, females were discriminated against in terms of access to education. The principle of equity demands that they ought to have a good share to bridge that gender gap. The principle of equity could manifest in kinds of free education or special schools (i.e. women's colleges) and scholarship awards. The equity principle ensures that there's real equality in access to education, health facilities, housing and economic resources. Beside equity, females aren't discriminated against; they receive an equal treatment before the law and in other areas of social services provision and social interaction.

Aja-Okorie (2013) opines that gender equality in education means the participation of all female and male students in all levels of education, as equal individuals and at autonomy where each gender fancy the social, political, economic and cultural advantages. The realisation of equality between female and male students in education relies on the institution of social, political, economic and cultural framework that enables each gender to decide on varied instructional courses, in spite of their gender and away from any rigid cultural and religious beliefs which act as stereotypic gender roles. Whereas education for everybody remains a serious concern in the

State of Eritrea, keeping females in class and supporting their success and continuation into secondary and better education are preponderant challenges.

Today's females are thought-about as tomorrow's women. Caring for today's girls is out and away the best way to care for future mothers. It's deeply known that female education ought to be given prominence since education isn't solely a method of skyrocketing women's economic productivity, it also improves their children's health and learning, and at the same time lowers fertility, which therefore, serves in decreasing the high population growth rates within the country.

Nigeria considerably influences the action of the SDGs in Sub-Saharan attributable to its sheer size. Nearly one in four females in Sub-Saharan region is Nigerian. Hence, the matters of females in Nigeria play a key role in the progress of the entire region. Nigeria has performed poorly in terms of gender equality. Per the 2012 Gender in Nigeria Report, information recommends that Nigeria ranks 118 out of 134 countries within the Gender Equality Index.

At each instructional level, females earn, but their male counterparts, and in some cases men with less education, earn quite higher than educated female peers. Also, the Nigerian women drop-out of college rate exceeds their male counterparts. The proof shows that quite two-thirds of 15-19-year-old females in Northern Nigeria are unable to read a sentence. Of course, these facts are devastating, however, what's a lot worrisome is that the efforts by the Nigerian government for the past twenty years to tackle the gender inequality in education seem to have had no vital impact. Concerning women's education, Nigeria's education policy has evolved since the Nineteen Eighties towards gender focus.

Factors Militating Against Gender Parity In

Nigerian Education

Morrisson, Simpson & Sinha (2007) acknowledged a variety of practices which affect the girl-child education in Nigeria. These comprise of poverty/child labour, illiteracy/ignorance, early wedding Islamic religious practices of early wedding, social stratification/family background and socio-cultural worth, peer influence etc. A number of factors militating against girl-child education embody the following:

- a) **Poverty/Child Labour:** There are common practices to ascertain females of school-age hawking numerous articles of trade in several parts of Nigeria, particularly in Northern Nigeria. This case had been blamed completely on the unacceptable poverty level in Nigeria.
- b) **Illiteracy/Ignorance:** Closely associated with impoverishment and child labour are unawareness and illiteracy. The worth of education for females had not been acknowledged by most parents in Northern Nigeria, especially those who reside within the remote villages.
- c) **Islamic Religious Practices:** even though Nigeria is a secular country, however, Northern Nigeria is preponderantly Muslim. The Islamic ethical tenants which supported chastity discourage fornication. Based on this belief, most parents encourage their females to marry early at the expense of going to school.
- d) **Socio-Cultural Value:** The socio-cultural value originated in most of the country encourages the education of males in favour of the girls who are expected to perform numerous domestic chores at home. The social background and family structure of the girl-child, to an outsized extent, depend upon their

probabilities of enrolment to formal education. Enlightened parents or families don't discriminate against girl education.

Conclusion

The past twenty years have witnessed an improved- however not ample - registration of the feminine population in an educational activity. However, a better analysis of higher education statistics reveals the various nature of the matter in several socio-cultural and economic contexts. A variety of cultural barriers still exists within the Nigerian society that seriously impedes women's development as voters and professionals. Efforts to enhance girl education in Nigeria have to transcend rhetorically and may involve policies and programs with measurable results. Efforts to make sure that education is available to low-income families and rural populations, with special attention and sensitivity to women/girls, are dominant if family stability, and successively, national development are enviable in Nigeria.

Below are some recommendations for females' education, family stability and national development in Nigeria to thrive.

1. Each policy maker and school proprietor ought to promote the principle of equality between females and males in school curricula, instructional programs and teaching activities. To understand that, it's become expedient to introduce the problem of gender equality in teachers' training programs and embrace the facts and information concerning the family, gender equality and duties of females and males within the family along with the shared responsibility of all the related parties and their roles in sexual education schemes.

2. Each varied government (national, state and local) and non-governmental agencies ought to perform and popularize, through the media, educational and data programs on promoting equal standings of females and males. It's necessary to enhance networks for utilizing findings of analysis and studies on

gender-based problems to lift social awareness on the problem of equal rights and opportunities in education and employment. These will be done through the utilization of the media to publish international documents relating to women's rights and gender equality and conjointly propagate knowledge and findings of studies providing information on the problem of females and males in Nigeria. The support analysis establishments conduct such studies.

3. The policy makers in education ought to develop sensible orientating mechanisms targeted at making certain equal access to education for females and males (in all kinds of schools and levels) and taking rural areas into account.

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