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ATTITUDE OF MEN TOWARDS WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF LITERATE MEN IN ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Gender inequality is a phenomenon that has posed serious challenge to the achievement of educational goals in Nigeria. This study therefore examined attitude of men towards women's participation in higher education with particular reference to literate men in Abeokuta, Nigeria. The descriptive survey method was adopted while a structured questionnaire was designed to collect the required information; it is titled "Attitude Towards Women Participation in Higher Education (ATWPHE)". The instrument has two sections; section 'A' contains demographic information of the respondents while 'B' contains 15 items on attitude towards women's participation in higher education. The questionnaire possessed reliability coefficient of 0.74, which was established through test-retest method in an interval of four weeks. A research question and two null hypotheses were tested through the measure of central tendency, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics. The results revealed that literate men showed negative attitude to women's participation in higher education. Respondents' were different in their attitude towards women's participation in higher education on the basis of religion and educational qualification. It was therefore recommended that, guidance counsellors and other stakeholders in education sector should sensitise literate men on the importance of higher education. Emphasis should be placed on changing religious orientation of literate men to favour women's participation in higher education.

Keywords: Attitude, literate men, higher education, participation.

Introduction

Education has been acknowledged as the most veritable tool which nations have used to develop their environment and improve the wellbeing of the citizens. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations, education is one of the fundamental human rights which every child regardless of gender has a right to (Bukar, 2011).

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN) (2004), realising the significant role of education to national breakthrough, clearly stated that education has been adopted as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. This education is believed to be the most powerful and dynamic instrument for social, political scientific and technological development of nations (Fadipe, 2000; Turcotte, 2011). Despite these facts, women participation in education and higher education in particular has remained a challenge to the Nigerian society. Records by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), according to Yusuf – Ajibade, (2008), showed that both male and female persons have the potentials to be great and to contribute meaningfully to nation building after acquiring educational training, unfortunately women are not benefiting adequately from education perhaps because of some limitations. In Nigeria, as in many third world countries, there is gap in terms of access to education between male and female because women constitute the majority of illiterates in the country (Akogun, 2009). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme currently in practice in Nigeria might have made some impact on the enrolment of girl-child at lower level of education since, every child irrespective of gender is compulsorily expected to attain UBE. Despite its overwhelming significance, the gender gap in access to education at higher level has not been given the required attention because the UBE policy does not capture post-secondary education.

Historically, the current African Higher Education institutions are created with direct connection to their instrumental roles as citadels that must provide technical knowledge for practical purposes. The National Policy on Education (NPE) stated that higher education covers the post-secondary section of the national education system which is given in Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of technology, Colleges of Education and such institution as may be allied to them. Therefore the four cardinal aims of higher education in Nigeria are as follow:

a. the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for survival of the individual and society;
b. the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environments;
c. the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community;
d. the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environment (FRN, 2004).

Considering these noble aims, it should be expected that every group in the society be encouraged to attain higher education without barriers. However, women participation in higher education has not been encouraging (Fapounda, 2011). The trend has its root in the history of Nigeria. With the establishment of the first University in Nigeria (University College, Ibadan) in 1948, a total of 104 students were admitted but only 3 were women. The factors that could account for low enrolment or participation of women in higher education are many.

According to Sanni (2001), only 9% of the total undergraduates across Nigeria in 1965 are female which later rose to 25.5% in 1974. He attributed the low rate to cultural barrier which ascribes domestic roles to women. Out of 50,277 students admitted to Universities in Nigeria in 2000/2001 academic year, only 19,006 (37.8%) were women. Alao and Ajayi (1998) observed that women's education is still in dire need of emancipation from various cultural background; they found that attitude of fathers towards girl-child was poor. Little (2000) found that the roles and duties which a woman is expected to perform as a daughter, a wife, and mother affect her educational pursuit. Thus, cultural bias plays significant role in hindering women education generally in the traditional context, women are often regarded as inferior to men. Assie-Lumumba (2006) categorized the factors that constitute hindrance to gender balance in educational opportunity as socio-economic, socio-cultural, social-political and institutional. He inferred that the most relevant variables and their respective weight inevitably reflect the internal dynamics of each country or people.

Basically, a woman in traditional Nigerian society is only domestically inclined: she is a complete servant to the husband and is bound to live her life as the husband dictates. This singular reason puts the destiny of women, especially their participation in higher education, in the hands of their husbands. Thus, the attitude of men towards

their wives' participation in higher education will significantly determine how much and how soon the country will overcome the challenges associated with equal access to education between male and female without which the national development remains an illusion. This study considered Abeokuta as its locale because it is the capital city of Ogun State, Nigeria which has produced great men who had higher education such as Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo (who was reknown nationalist), Late Justice Sowemimo, Late Tai Solarin, Late Prof Olikoye Ranson-Kuti and many others. However, there is no corresponding number of women with higher education the (Ogun) state (Ishola, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the fact that there has been improvement in the participation of young girls in educational pursuit at pre-secondary (UBE) and secondary school levels (probably because of UBE programme), the yearning of women for higher education has continued to be limited by social norms and dictates as well as cultural barriers. (Akogun, 2009; Osunde & Omoruyi, 2003). The National Commission for Mass Literacy (2010) revealed the literacy rate in Nigeria in 2010 based on age as 81.6 for male youth population while the rate for female youth population was 71.4. The Federal Office of Statistics (2006) in its Annual Reports indicated that the total enrolment of females on full time in the universities stood at 75,548 against their male counterparts with 168,217 in 2005. The number of females who participate in higher education has been consistently low compared to their male counterparts. This may provide explanation for the significant difference between men and women in their contribution to national development. Manya (2000) found that personal reasons accounted for low participation of women in education Nariobi. Lasode and Awole (2013) found that married female undergraduates in Ogun State, Nigerian are faced with many challenges and the topmost being domestic. The present study investigated attitude of literate men in Abeokuta, Nigeria towards woman's participation in higher education.

Research Question

1. What is the attitude of literate men towards women's participation in higher education?

2. Is there any significant difference in the attitude of literate men towards women's participation in higher education based on religion?
3. Is there any significant difference in the attitude of men towards women's participation in higher education based on Educational Qualification?

Methodology

The descriptive survey method was used to carry out this study. The researchers employed the use of questionnaire to sample the opinion of representative portion of the study population. A total of 650 literate married men were purposively selected to participate in the study. The respondents were selected at different locations in Abeokuta city: such places include corporate offices, public establishment educational institutions and public functions. The instrument (questionnaire), "Attitude Towards Women Participation in Higher Education", which was designed for the study has two sections (A and B). Both sections contained demographic information and items on attitude towards women's participation in higher education. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest method in an interval of 4 weeks. A coefficient of 0.74 was obtained. The measure of central tendency (mean) statistics, t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), frequency counts and percentage were used to analyse the data collected. The cut-off point for determining the significance of the items on attitude was 2.50, since the highest score for each item was 4 points. Any item with value less than the cut-off did not reflect the attitude of respondents.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on Religion and Educational Qualification

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Religion		
Christianity	353	54.31
Islam	297	45.69
Total	650	100.0
Educational Qualification		
Primary	107	16.46
Secondary	381	60.15

Tertiary	152	23.39
Total	650	100.0

The results in table 1 shows that there are more Christian than Muslim respondents (54.31% and 45.69% respectively) and respondents who have secondary school certificate (60.15%) are more than those with primary and tertiary education certificates (16.48% and 23.39% respectively).

Research Question: *What is the attitude of literate men towards women's participation in higher education?*

Table 2: Rank Order of Response on Attitude towards Women's Participation in Higher Education

Women's participation in higher education would	X	Rank
prevent women from performing domestic responsibility	3.21	1st
cause unhealthy rivalry with men	3.18	2nd
make husband become inferior	3.17	3rd
negate religious teachings	3.13	4th
make husband lose leadership values	3.11	5th
make wife to become arrogant	3.08	6th
cause tension in home	3.07	7th
expose women to marital infidelity	3.04	8th
make domestic chores rest more on husbands	3.01	9th
make women become rebellions to husband	2.98	10th
creates fear in husbands	2.95	11th
affect children development	2.92	12th
threaten men's authority	2.88	13th
create discomfort for husband	2.83	14th
affect family's economy	2.81	15th

The result in table 2 provides answer to the research question which sought to establish the attitude of men towards women's participation in higher education. It reveals negative attitude of men towards women's participation in higher education because all the items have mean scores above the cut – off (2.50).

Null Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant difference in the attitude of men towards higher education based on religion.*

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) and t-value on attitude of Literate men towards women participation in higher education based on religion

Religion	No	Mean	SD	Degree of Freedom	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value
Christianity	353	57.79	9.23			
Islam	297	62.54	14.45	648	*3.67	1.96

**Significant*

The result in table 3 reveals that there is difference between Christian and Muslim respondents in their attitude towards women's participation in higher education. Since the mean score (62.54) of Muslim respondents is greater than that of Christians (57.79). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. It indicates that respondents from Islamic faith showed more negative attitude to women's participation in higher education than their Christian counterparts.

Null Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant difference in the attitude of literate men towards women's participation in higher education based on educational qualification.*

Table 4: ANOVA Results on attitude of men towards women's participation in higher education based on educational qualification

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean square	Calculated f-ratio	Critical f-ratio
Between Groups	1715.32	2	857.66		
Within Groups	24471.88	647	37.24	*23.21	3.00
Total	26187.20	649			

**Significant, $p<0.05$*

The results of ANOVA in table 4 revealed that there is significant difference in the attitude of literate men towards woman's participation in higher education on the

basis of educational qualification. The null hypothesis was rejected; F (df2 & 647) = 23.21, $p<0.05$.

Table 5: Duncan Multiple Range Test showing the direction of the significant difference

Duncan's Grouping	Mean	No	Educational Qualification	Group
A	38.11	107	Primary	1
B	35.18	391	Secondary	2
C	33.72	152	Tertiary	3

The result in table 5 revealed that all the groups are different from each other. However, group 1 (respondents with primary school certificates) has the most negative attitude towards women's participation in higher education followed by groups 2 and 3 (secondary and tertiary education) respectively.

Discussion

The result in table 2 revealed that literate men showed negative attitude to women's participation in higher education. The respondents believe that women's participation in higher education will prevent them (women) from performing domestic responsibilities, cause unhealthy rivalry with men, and make husband feel inferior. This corroborates with early submission of Alao and Ajayi (1998) which identified poor attitude of fathers as being the bane to girl-child education in Nigeria. In another study, Sanni (2000) equally attributed low enrolment of women in Universities to cultural barrier which ascribes domestic roles to women. Thus, the present study reflected cultural bias which often regards women as inferior to be a major reason for the poor attitude of literate men towards women's participation in higher education: men might feel threatened by women's attainment of higher education. Respondents believe women's participation in higher education will cause tension at home, expose women to infidelity and affect the family economy.

The result showed that null hypothesis 1 was not accepted. Thus, the respondents were different in their attitude towards women's participation in higher education based on religious affiliation. Respondents from Islamic faith showed more negative attitude. The reason could be the socio-cultural traditions of the Muslims, which

seems to be over-protective of women and thereby limiting their freedom to participate in education, particularly higher education but giving more freedom to men. Manya (2000) did not find any difference in the perception of respondents on importance of girl-child education on the basis of religion. The study was however conducted in Kenya.

Null hypothesis 2 was also not accepted because there was significant difference in the attitude of literate men towards women's participation in higher education on the basis of educational qualification. The results of the Duncan Multiple Range Test (the Post-hoc test) revealed that respondents with primary education have the highest negative attitude towards women's participation in higher education while those with secondary education followed. The reason could be that, the respondents (men) with primary education are more threatened seeing women with higher education, and qualification. Also, it could be that, respondents with primary and secondary education are not well informed about the importance of higher education to women and the society at large. Assie – Lumumba (2006) has earlier categorized the factors militating against gender im-balance in educational opportunity to include socio-cultural, socio-economic and institutional. Thus, educational qualification of respondents could be a reflection of some of those categorises.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that:

i. Literate men in Abeokuta have negative attitude towards women's participation in higher education;
ii. Respondents believe women's participation in higher education would prevent them from domestic responsibility, cause unhealthy rivalry between men and women, and make husband become interior;
iii. Lastly, respondents differed in their attitude based on religious affiliation and educational qualification.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that guidance counsellors should rise to the challenge of educating literate men in particular on the importance

of women's participation in higher education. Counsellors should employ different strategies such as public lectures, electronic and print media to change attitude of men towards women's participation in higher education. In addition, there should be legislation against hindrances to women's right to higher education.

Guidance counsellors and other stakeholders in education sectors should work on religious orientation of literate men that does not promote women's participation in higher education. Furthermore, literate men with primary and secondary education should be encouraged to embrace women's participation in higher education while those with tertiary education should be directly or otherwise involved in campaign to increase women participation in higher education.

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