
EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The study investigated Educational Inequalities and Economic development of women in South-south Nigeria. Unlike most parts of the developed world where instance of discriminatory disposition towards women are perverted due to effects of globalization and course, attainment of most of the millennium Development Goals (MDG”S) targets, Nigeria is yet to put in place relevant gender mainstreaming policy. 120 respondents from five Federal universities constituted the sample for the study. Three research questions were structured to guide the study; Data were collected with the aid of questionnaires, which were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation (SD). Analysis of data revealed unequal access to educational opportunities as the bedrock of ignorance and powerlessness associated with women’s social disempowerment in the country. In necessary consequences of a well coordinated gender mainstreaming strategy. The researcher’s therefore, recommended that, to empower women in South-South Nigeria, educational opportunities should be enhanced. Skills, attainment and capabilities should henceforth take primary over detestable gender stereotypes in categorizing and rewarding people in the country. The researchers concluded that the eradication of poverty, ignorance, and societal insecurity in the society require that women and men be given the same opportunities in educational

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and socio-economics field, as well equal access to and control, over the resource of the society. Based on this the society would become a more livable entity for males and females to progressively coexist.

Nigeria's 80.2 million women and girls have significantly worse life chances than men and also their sisters in comparable societies. Violence compounds and reinforces this disadvantaged exclusion. The opportunity women are Nigeria's hidden resource, investing in women and girls' education now will increase productivity in this generation and will promote sustainable growth, peace and better health for the next generation. What happens here to women and girls matters, not least for realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The last five centuries, viewed as the age of modernity, have been fundamentally structured by varying historical processes. Notably, gender and racial categories emerged during this era as two basic axes for exploiting people and stratifying societies (Oyewumi 2004:1). Eurocentrism, being a characteristic of ensuing modernity, enabled the creation and imposition of Euro/American cultural power throughout the world. Consequently, male-gender privilege as an essential part of European ethos became enshrined in the culture of modernity. In the quest of comprehending African realities, and indeed, state of gender relations in Nigeria, this global context for knowledge production has become imperative. At the commencement of colonialism (and, of course, Christianity), rigid binaries about everything including gender perceptions were imposed on the African mind. Thereafter, the woman's role has come to be limited to sexual and commercial labour; satisfying the sexual needs of men, working in the fields, carrying loads, tending babies and preparing food (Hammond and Jablow 1992:150).

However, the disempowering colonial 'ideology of domesticity' as espoused by the practice of 'housewification' provided the springboard for women's educational imbalance in parts of Africa (Gaidzwanwa 1992). As such, the attainment of overall human development in Nigeria is being obliterated by this unevenness in educational accessibility across gender categories (Abdullahi 2000). In measuring up to the mean record already attained by other developing societies in the process of facilitating educational parity, Nigeria needs to jump-start an affirmative action plan focusing on transformatory educational mainstreaming. For instance, China and India, by themselves 38% of the World's population, have considerably realized most of the objectives of the MDG2 and MDG3 targets i.e. universal basic education for all, and gender equality and women empowerment respectively (Sachs 2004) Despite impressive growth since democratisation, poverty levels remain unacceptably high. The poverty rate is currently estimated to be about 54.4%, a slight improvement from the peak of 66.9% registered in 1996 (Okojie, 2012). Nevertheless, poverty is at double the rate that it was in 1980, when the poverty level was 27.1%.

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Table 1 shows poverty levels in Nigeria between 1980 and 2010, by region

Table 1: Indicative Poverty Trends by Region, Nigeria

Level	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004	2010
National	27.1	46.3	42.7	65.6	54.4	69
Sector						
Urban	17.2	37.8	37.5	58.2	43.2	61.8
Rural	28.3	51.4	66.0	69.3	63.3	73.2
Geopolitical Zone						
South-South	13.2	45.7	40.8	58.2	35.1	63.8
South-East	12.9	30.4	41.0	53.5	26.7	67
South-West	13.4	38.6	60.9	60.9	43.0	59.1
North-Central	32.2	50.8	64.7	64.7	67.0	67.5
North-East	35.6	54.9	70.1	70.1	72.2	76.3
North-West	37.7	52.1	36.5	77.2	71.2	77.7

Table 2: Gini Coefficient of Inequality 1985-2004. Nigeria

level	1985	1992	1996	2006
National	0.43	0.41	0.49	0.488
Sector				
Urban	0.49	0.38	0.52	0.544
Rural	0.36	0.42	0.47	0.519
Geopolitical Zone				
South-South	0.48	0.39	0.46	0.507
South-East	0.44	0.40	0.39	0.449
South-West	0.43	0.40	0.47	0.554
North-Central	0.41	0.39	0.50	0.393
North-East	0.39	0.40	0.49	0.469
North-West	0.41	0.43	0.47	0.37

(Okojie, 2012)

Employment gives regularity and predictability to income streams for individuals. Formal employment permits families to develop income or consumption-smoothing strategies, especially in urban settings, and opens up access to other assets, like bank finance that often depend on having a regular job. The ability to accumulate an old age pension relies on regular wage employment as do access to social security (health insurance), union representation, communications and other education benefits (Okojie, 2012). He stressed that a recent survey shows that some 10.7 million adults in

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Nigeria have access to a wage income linked to a regular formal sector job in the public and private sectors.

Nigerian Labour Markets are Gendered. A Majority of those in Formal Employment are Men

NBS data (2010) confirm that in 2007 only 32.5% of women were employed in the (non-agricultural) private sector. The public sector, which is often perceived to be more progressive (it is the only area where direct public policy intervention can effect changes in gender composition) does not fare any better. Table 1 shows the proportion of women and men employed in the public sector.

Table 3: Proportion of Women and Men Employed in the Public Sector, 2001-2004 in Nigeria

Year	Women (%)	Men (%)
2001	28.5	71.5
2002	28.7	71.3
2003	30.7	69.3
2004	29.5	70.5

With respect to top positions in the public sector, a similar lack of gender parity is evident. There are nearly five times as many male judges and permanent secretaries as there are female ones.

Table 4: Male and Female Senior Appointments in the Public Sector, 2001-2007

Judges

Permanent secretaries

Type	Women	Men	Women (%)	Women	Men	Women (%)
2001	146	724	16.8	135	657	17.0
2002	178	764	18.9	131	697	15.8
2003	184	787	18.9	149	787	15.9
2004	198	809	19.7	154	802	16.1
2005	208	887	19.0	163	839	16.3
2006	208	913	18.6	178	826	17.7
2007	226	901	20.1	208	797	20.7

No detailed analysis has investigated the reasons for this gender gap. However, the President of the Federal Republic has recently shown his desire to respect gender

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targets by appointing 13 women among his 42 member cabinet. For some, this demonstrates a high level commitment to take the National Gender Policy (NGP) seriously. Fatile (2011) argues, however, that this approach to gender parity will need to cascade down through the public services, where women are still under represented.

Since the advent of colonialism in Africa, women have always been exposed to varying forms of discrimination due to the simple fact of their 'femaleness', which ought to have been understood on the basis of its mutual usefulness (Obbo 2005). It is observed that most African countries have not had specific laws or policies to stem the tide of gender disparity. However, the colonial hegemonic philosophy, dependent political ideology and identifiable socio-economic exigencies are seen as factors aiding the prevailing (educational) distinctions between men and women in the society (Adeniran 2006).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

From the review of literature and theories, a conceptual framework illustrating factors that enhance educational imbalances and subsequent incidence of socio-economic disempowerment among Nigerian women is adopted.

Educational Constraints and Women-s Socio-economic Disempowerment

With the 2005 MDGs' first deadline for attainment of gender parity in primary and secondary schools' enrolment already missed, the ability of women and girls to empower themselves economically and socially by going to school, or by engaging in productive and civic activities is still being constrained by their responsibility for everyday tasks in the household division of labour (CEC Report 2007).

In Nigeria, educational facilities are generally believed to be inadequate, and access limited for many, especially girls and women (Uku 1992). According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2005), Nigeria was classified as a low development country in respect of equality in educational accessibility. Female Adult Literacy Rate (ages 15 and above) for the country was 59.4% as against male, 74.4%; the Combined Gross Enrolment for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools for female was 57% and male, 71%. Consequently, Ojo (2002) affirms that women are fewer than men in certain socio-economic activities. According to him, the percentages of female workers in some selected professions were as follow: architects, 2.4%, quantity surveyors, 3.5%, lawyers/jurists, 25.4%, lecturers, 11.8%, obstetricians and gynecologists, 8.4%, pediatricians, 33.3%, media practitioners, 18.3%.

However, Omolewa (2002) showed that this inequality has its root in the colonial system of education which was primarily geared toward meeting the manpower need of the colonial government that obviously alienated women from

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educational and economic opportunities. Women in Nigeria are harder-hit than men by poverty due to the non-challant emphasis placed on female education, and the prevalence of early marriage which tend to further impoverish the womenfolk, and subject them to statutory discrimination (Ojo 2002).

To Mamdani (1996), incidence of poverty is more rampant among the female-gender in Africa because of discrimination in educational opportunities.

On the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), Nigeria ranks a disparaging 123rd position with the Estimated Earned Income for female as low as US \$614 and the male, US \$1,495 (UNDP 2005).

Okafor (2002) observes that major health problems among women in the country are directly or indirectly associated with poverty and ignorance.

Furthermore, in a study of South-South Nigeria, Owa (1992) show that with the introduction of user charges in hospitals and increasing economic hardship at the household level, there was a striking sustained decline in attendances for antenatal care and hospital delivery. Meanwhile, according to CDC Report (2000), about 70-80% of Nigerian women are married out before the age of 20 particularly in rural areas, with each having an average of 6.2 children at the end of her reproductive life. This has negative implications for women education and economic empowerment. On their part, Narayan and Patti (2002) in their studies observe voicelessness as being pervasive among poor women, affecting every aspect of their lives. Obbo (2005) asserts that when women acquire opportunities and space to exercise their agency, it usually has a major influence on development.

However, in a study by Adebayo (2004), the level of educational attainment by women generally determines the extent of their socio-economic participation.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

This segment examines relevant theoretical postulations to the study's objectives which is "Engels' Marxism".

Marxist Perspective

Engels (1986) in "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" attempts an analysis of gender relations from a Marxist point of view. He observes that 'the first class distinction which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between men and women in the monogamous marriage, and the first class repression with that of the female by the male'. According to him, within the family structure, the man is the 'bourgeois', the woman 'represents the proletariat'. He insists on the loss of freedom of the women in this process. He claims that since the

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unpaid domestic work of women does not constitute 'socially productive work', only their entrance to the market-place and the 'socially productive work' would secure liberation for them i.e. gender equality.

Essentially, this assumption seems insufficient to ensure real freedom for women since most of their 'actual work' is yet to be appreciated. At the formal workplace, gender equality still influences patterns of reward and promotion as a result of disparities in educational qualifications, and of course, other factors such as envisaged unproductiveness of females during maternity.

Statement of Problem

Over time, skewed educational accessibility has been inhibiting women's socio-economic empowerment in Nigeria. Nigeria has the largest population of any African country, about 162.5 million people, of this magnitude 80.2 million are girls and women which is about 49%. So any discussion about Nigeria's future must necessarily entail consideration of girls and women, the role they play and the barriers they face in making the future. 54% of Nigerians still live in poverty and the proportion has doubled since 1980 (when about 28% were classified as poor). Nigeria's human development indicators are also worse than those of comparable lower middle-income countries, 42% of Nigerian children are malnourished. The averages hide a context that is worse for women and girls, nearly six million young women and men enter the labour market each year but only 10% are able to secure a job in the formal sector, and just one third of these are women (Sachs, 2004).

This situation has dire consequences for human development and conflict mitigation. This is not a problem of northern Nigeria versus southern Nigeria hence the statistics are troubling in all parts of the country. It is a Nigeria wide problem which we all, as government, private sector, civil society and families must tackle. In government for instance we are working to provide early business opportunities to young persons through innovative ideas, such as the Youth WIN programme (Obbo, 2005).

This study is of critical importance because it draws together the literature that references the role of girls and women in Nigeria in one practical and serious document especially south south. It distils from that corpus the key issues that need to be addressed to maximise the potential of girls and women. It focuses attention on critical but little known statistics, which paint a clear picture about the seriousness and importance of women's situation, with hope that this study will have wide relevance to all players interested in the future of women in South-South Nigerian society. The researchers believe it will amplify the issues, hasten development and serve as a resource for a wide and non-specialist readership.

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This research therefore provides a comprehensive view of gender in south-south zone of Nigeria. It assesses progress in key areas, including: employment and livelihoods, education and health, political representation, and violence. It finds that women and girls suffer systematic disadvantage and discrimination that is magnified for those in the South-South Nigeria. It recommends policies to improve the lives of women and girls and identifies priorities for action. Excellent policies and intentions have not translated into budgets or action to make the changes required if women are to contribute effectively to Nigeria's development. The National Gender Policy has yet to bear fruit, while implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has stalled.

Conceptually, the stereotyped roles assigned to women by the colonial 'ideology of domesticity' which emphasizes domestic education for the womenfolk have made gender unevenness to be sustained in the country. These prejudices have been exacerbated further by vagaries of missionary education and other male-gender privileging colonial literature (Hammond and Jablow 1992). The political culture that has emerged from the colonial orientation has been particularly patriarchal. It reflects gender inequalities in men and women's roles, and levels of access to state power, resources and institutions (Mama 1997).

Specific development policies targeted at women's education and socio-economic participation have been largely ineffectual in the country. Unhealthy 'state-controlled developmentalism' has, indeed, helped to erode (any) independent feminist scheme ever geared toward women educational progression in the society (Tsikata, 1997).

Nigerian women's access to formal education is still being constrained due to their unfair workload within the household division of labour. Hence, the realization of the MDG3's 'gender equality and women empowerment' targets is being impeded vacuously (Opaluwah, 2007).

Across various geo-political delineations in Nigeria, a greater percentage of school-age girls are needlessly out-of-school, compared with the ratio applicable to boys of same age grouping. Therefore, the attainment of the MDG2's target i.e. 'education for all' by 2015 is glaringly at a crossroads; having missed the initial deadline of 2005.

It is all these incongruence outlined above that made a stringent questioning of the country's political and institutional frameworks, as they pertain to educational accessibility imperative. These issues are thus the pre-occupation of this study.

Purpose of Study

The major purpose of the study is to determine the impact of education on women's socio-economic empowerment in South-South Nigeria. Specifically the study seeks:

- I. How educational discrimination impact on women's empowerment?
- ii. To understand the effectiveness of specific strategies targeted at women's liberation;
- iii. To examine the implications of colonial educational policies for women's empowerment in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

These research questions are structured to guide the study:

- i. To what extent does educational discrimination impact on women's empowerment?
- ii. What are the specific strategies designed to combat women's disempowerment?
- iii. How does colonial educational policy led to women's disempowerment in the society?

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of administrative competencies of educated women and men in work places.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted in this study. The population of this study comprises 120 senior officials in all public Universities in South-South Zone of Nigeria. The Federal tertiary institutions include University of Benin, Benin City, Federal University Otuki, Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State, University of Port-Harcourt, Port-Harcourt, University of Calabar, Calabar.

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire made up of two sections. Section A sought the demographic data of the respondents while section B consisted 18-item on a 4-point scale. The 4-point rating scale is as follows: Strongly Agree (4 point). Agreed (3 point). Strongly Disagree (2-point). Disagree (1-point). Any item above 50% was regarded as 'Agreed and any item less than 50% was regarded as 'Disagreed. The instrument was face validated by three experts. for facts, relevant and content validity.

The final draft of the validated instrument was tested by administering it to 24 senior officials in the selected universities. Data collected were analysed and the internal consistency of the instrument determined using Cronbach Alpha formular. The reliability index obtained was 0.86.

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The instrument was administered to the respondents with the help of two research assistants. All the 120 questionnaire distributed to the selected officials were retrieved. The research questions were answered using percentage variables whereas t-test statistic was used to test H_{01} .

Presentation of Analysis of Data

Research Question I

To what extent does educational discrimination impact on women's empowerment?

The research question was answered using the data shown in the Table 5

Table 5: Respondents' Mean Rating on Educational Discrimination on Women Empowerment

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Contributes to high level of drop out among women	3.60	1.40	Required
2.	Contributes to early marriage among women	4.00	1.00	Required
3.	Leads to women disempowerment in south-south zone	3.40	1.60	Required
4.	Contributes to high level of poverty among women	3.27	1.73	Required
5.	Contributes to low level of women in policy decision	4.01	0.99	Required
6.	Leads to high level of domination by men in work places	3.82	1.18	Required

The analysis in Table 5 reveals that all the items recorded a mean rating above the criterion level of acceptance of 3.0. This is an indication that all the variables are outcomes of impact on educational discrimination of women empowerment.

Research Question 2

What are the specific strategies designed to combat women's disempowerment?

Table 6: Respondents’ Mean Rating on Strategies Designed to Combat Women’s Disempowerment

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Encouraging girl child education	3.62	1.38	Required
2.	Regular sponsorship of women to higher education	4.00	1.00	Required
3.	High employment quota for women	3.70	1.30	Required
4.	Creation of special schools for girls only	3.45	1.55	Required
5.	Discouragement of early marriage for girls	3.01	1.99	Required
6.	Abolishing some cultural practices that inhibit women	3.80	1.20	Required

The analysis in Table 6 reveals that all the items recorded a mean rating above the criterion level of acceptance of 3.0.. This is an indication that all the variables are strategies required to combat women disempowerment in the South-South Zone of Nigeria.

Research Question 3

How does colonial educational policy led to women’s disempowerment in the society

Table 7: Respondents’ Mean Rating on Colonial Educational Policy on Women’s Disempowerment

s/n	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Did not encourage women participation in education	3.70	1.30	Required
2.	Colonial policy on education was men oriented	3.00	2.00	Required
3.	Scholarship was awarded to men only during colonial era	3.80	1.20	Required
4.	Contributes to women’s set back	3.30	1.70	Required
5.	emphasized that women place was in the kitchen	4.00	1.00	Required
6.	placed high premium on men ego	3.80	1.20	Required

The analysis in Table 7 reveals that all the items recorded a mean rating above the criterion level of acceptance of 3.0. This is an indication that all the variables of colonial educational policy on women's disempowerment contributed immensely to women's backwardness in the society.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of administrative competencies of educated women and men in work places.

Table 8: The T-Test Values of Administrative Competencies of Educated Women and Men in Work Places

Responses	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Level	t-Cal	T-Crit
Women	60	2.42	24.48	98			
Men	40	2.46	16.32		0.05	0.98	+1.96

The table 8 above shows that the calculated t is less than the t-critical. The null hypothesis at 0.5 level of significance is consequently supported.

Discussion

It is acknowledged here that gender equality is not only significant in itself, but is a fundamental human right and a question of social justice. It is seen as crucial for development and social empowerment, necessary for the realization of the MDGs' targets by 2015. Of recent, as a variable of international development, gender equality serves as a major prerequisite in accessing foreign aids by the developing nations.

Meanwhile, the nature of political leadership in Nigeria, which essentially evolved from the colonial orientation, has been largely unhelpful to the course of women's educational empowerment. Omolewa (2002) noted that a gross disparity exists between schools' enrolment of boys and girls in Nigeria due to political ineptness. Social determinants, such as cultural beliefs - wife-inheritance, early/forced marriage and widowhood practices - obtainable in most rural and semi-urban settlements, and narratives of religion have continued to impede educational accessibility by women in the country. Moreover, the denial of inheritance and property rights, dysfunctional and gender-skewed development policies have equally been constraining women from taking advantage of educational opportunities, and by implication, economic opportunities in the country.

However, the Eurocentric contextualization of male-gender privilege, impact of tenets of Christianity (and Islam), and more importantly, the colonial 'ideology of

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domesticity' (i.e. 'housewification') have all combined together to lay the foundation for women's educational disempowerment in our society. Indeed, they serve as the pivot around which other impediments revolve. It is, therefore, opined that with a functional gender mainstreaming policy in place, all these odds would be meaningfully tackled, and South-South Nigerian women would be better for it.

Specific Findings

Man-made social differences between the males and females have been so pronounced and made manifest thereby segregating the society into a needless gender antagonism, with their attendant consequences on female-gender educational enrolments, employment opportunities and general disempowerment of women in all facet of economic and social development.

Building the knowledge necessary to eradicate poverty and deprivation, combat illiteracy and ensure social progress may be improbable until girls are given equal opportunities to compete with their male counterparts in school, as we head toward 2015 MDGs' targets;

Though, westernization initially facilitated the universalization of contemporary mode of gender relations, nevertheless, attributes of gender disparity are now more pronounced in developing societies like Nigeria, such as in women educational enrolments. More importantly, educational unevenness and job opportunities have been constraining women in Nigeria from active socio-economic and political participation, unduly.

Conclusion

This paper has singled out identifiable institutional and contemporary prejudices as the impetus for sustained educational, and of course, socio-economic disparities among Nigerian women, in spite of the claim of promoting gender parity and women empowerment at both national and regional levels by the respective authorities.

Unambiguously, therefore, it is opined that the eradication of ignorance, poverty and social instability in our society demands that women and men be given equal opportunities in educational and socio-economic spheres, and have equal access to, and control, over the resources of the society. As such, our society would become a more habitable entity for both sexes to co-exist, progressively.

Finally, the eradication of poverty, ignorance, and societal insecurity in the society require that women and men be given the same opportunities in educational and socio-economic fields, as well have equal access to and control, over the resources of

the society. Based on this, the society would become a more livable entity for both sexes to progressively co-exist.

Recommendations

The paper anchored the attainment of liberty and development in the country on the freedom and empowerment of the women, and the best hope for peace and prosperity in the world is the enlargement of the platforms of opportunity for women. However, to empower the womenfolk in Nigeria, enhanced educational opportunities are considered expedient. Consequently, the following suggestions would be relevant in the process:

1. To empower women in South-South Nigeria, educational opportunities should be enhanced. Skills, attainment and capabilities should henceforth take primacy over detestable gender stereotypes in categorizing and rewarding people in the country.
2. The primary instrument to achieve socio-economic empowerment i.e. education mainstreaming should be used in a more effective and practical way so as to make real progress towards the attainment of the MDGs' education for all's goal by 2015 realizable;
3. The secondary instrument that is, specific targeted actions such as abolition of leadership position discrimination should stop, women should be given opportunity to be head of state, governors to mention but a few. This can serve as a compliment of mainstreaming strategies;
4. Imperialist male-gender privilege, biased traditional and religious myths impeding women's education should be de-emphasised in the society;
5. An empowering educational approach, incorporating women as invaluable partners for social development should be encouraged;
6. Skills, capabilities and achievements should henceforth take pre-eminence over obnoxious gender stereotypes in classifying and rewarding people in our country.

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