

The Analysis of Gender Inequality in Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: In recent years, the awareness of gender equality has been gradually awakened in people's minds. Nigeria is one of the strongest countries in Africa but still faces problems of poverty, gender discrimination, and social welfare. The paper focuses on analyzing the gender inequality in education in Nigeria, its causes, and suggesting some possible solutions. Analyzing gender inequality in education in Nigeria will provide insight into the impact of ideology and policy on education and provide a new perspective on how gender inequality in education can be improved. The study was conducted through analysis and review of previous literature and comparative data analysis of the entire educational environment in Nigeria, from elementary schools to universities and even the academic sector as a whole. This thesis finds that although gender inequality in education in Nigeria has improved in recent decades, it remains a severe problem, not primarily due to deficiencies in policymaking but rather to the entrenchment of ideas and internalization of behaviors.

Keywords: Nigeria, education, gender inequality, education equity, policy

1. Introduction

Gender inequality and education are described separately as very familiar, but when the two concepts are put together, they are usually ignored as a regular and everyday occurrence. Gender equality does not require men and women to be the same and to be entirely fair because gender itself is different. Gender difference as an essential dimension in sociology has been studied and discussed by scholars. Gender equality does not only require equality in policies but also in ideas and concepts. In many developing countries, the policy system is relatively well-developed for gender equality and educational equity, but perceptions are difficult to change. Today, the awareness of gender equality is a hot topic of discussion. Nigeria, one of the leading countries studied and researched by the author's university, is found to face still many challenges, such as poverty issues, gender discrimination, and social welfare. In the field of education in Nigeria, gender inequality is particularly prominent. Therefore, this dissertation aims to provide an in-depth analysis of gender inequality in education in Nigeria and its causes and propose possible solutions. The background of the study is based on the continuous attention and call for gender equality issues globally over the past decades. The motivation of the study was to draw attention to the issue of gender inequality in Nigerian education and to provide new perspectives for thinking about improving the issue. The study population covered all aspects of the academic profession, from elementary school to university and beyond. This study employed literature analysis, review, and comparative data analysis to achieve

this goal. By synthesizing the relevant literature in the field of education in Nigeria and comparing different data, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of the current state and root causes of gender inequality. This thesis aims to promote gender equality in education in Nigeria. By revealing the existence and causes of gender inequality, we can draw attention to the issue and lead to improvements in related policies and how to change the entrenched perceptions within people. In addition, the methodology and findings of this study provide references and lessons for future researchers in related fields to create a more equitable and inclusive educational environment.

2. Definition of Gender Inequality

Gender inequality began thousands of years ago, and its effects are far-reaching and unshakeable. Gender inequality is a gender-based “beyond the mean” manifested in unequal social norms and power. In traditional sexist conceptions, roles are assigned to different genders, where gender is often confused with sex and gender as male or female. Gender roles can present two different societal expectations: work and education. Women usually need to be defined as “gentle,” “sensual,” “hardworking,” and family-oriented,” and appear as caretakers and homemakers. Men, on the other hand, appear as “brave,” “responsible,” and primary breadwinner in the family. Behind the identification of roles are the functions set by social norms for gender, the traditional division of labor in society. In a community where men are expected to grow up quickly and be oriented towards independence and are usually likely to be resilient and work hard to earn money, society tilts most of its resources in favor of men. Often, women’s resources and education are hidden. As more and more women become educated, the women’s movement, brought about by awakening women’s consciousness, has made gender inequality aware and partially solved. However, the effects of gender inequality are still prevalent in many underdeveloped countries.

3. Overview of Gender Inequality in Education in Nigeria

Until 2010, 44% of 10-year-old girls in Nigeria had never been to school [1]. The issue of gender equality in education and the resulting quality of education has been a primary concern in Nigeria. Notably, access to primary education in Nigeria and in Africa as a whole is already improving. Many scholars agree that there is no more extended inequality in access to primary education globally. Data show that primary education enrollment in sub-Saharan Africa is rising rapidly from 58% in 2002 to 74% in 2007 [1]. However, there are more pronounced gender inequalities in higher education, and the ratio of females to males is often a disparity. Not only is there gender inequality in the recipients of primary education in Nigeria, but there is also gender inequality in people as educators. Women occupy less than 35% of academic positions in Nigerian universities. They occupy most lower and middle-level academic positions and have lower participation rates than men. In the 2006 statistics of the University of Ibadan, the number of faculty members was 3081; female faculty members constituted about 1/6 of the total faculty members. Also, only 20 of the 83 University of Ibadan’s outstanding alums showcased were women [2].

4. Analysis of Factors Affecting Gender Equality in Education in Nigeria

4.1. Economic Factors

Poor economic development has led to a significant decrease in state investment in education. In the early 1980s, the decline in economic activity made education a luxury for many Nigerians. The impact of Nigeria’s wealth gap on educational inequality is enormous, with 71% of children aged 3-6 years from the poorest group above primary school entrance age who have never been to school, according to UNESCO in 2013. However, only 3% richest family’s children [3]. From a macro perspective, the

country's development affects the education system and each family's development, leading to a gap in economic status that accentuates gender inequality.

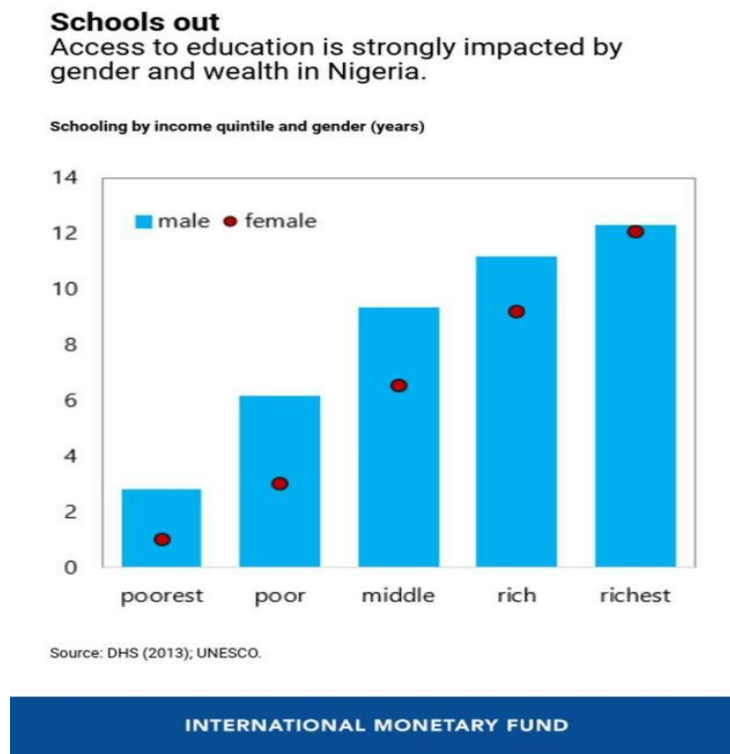


Figure 1: Access to education is strongly impacted by gender and wealth in Nigeria. [4]

Figure 1 shows that as families get more decadent, access to education increases. Whereas for the top 20% of households, gender inequality in education is entrenched and hardly going away. At a micro level, each economically affected family will generally choose only one child to be educated, usually of the male gender. In addition, families also try to reduce the financial burden by marrying off their daughters. Nigeria, the largest populated country in sub-Saharan Africa, accounts for 16% of Africa's total population, is the sixth most populous country in the world [5]. The gap between the wealthy and impoverished and the gender equality gap generated by the large population is magnified even more. Investigated within the country, Nigeria is also more diverse in the north and south. Because natural and local resources are more abundant in the southwest, people benefit from a demographic dividend, urbanization, increased human capital, and greater access to education.

4.2. Social Factors

Gender inequality does not appear to be a newly formed thing. Back in the colonial days of Nigeria, a dominant religious narrative was developed, mainly in Islam, that privileged men. The implication is that the rights of men are supreme compared to women. This point suggests that religion is one of the primary reasons affecting the issue of gender equality in Nigeria. The people of Nigeria are 90% religious, with those who practice Islam having a high percentage [6]. Islam is mainly found in the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and some other regions of Africa and Asia. Islam preaches the inferiority of men and that women do not have equal rights with men. Nigeria's society has been rife with a culture potentially harmful to female emancipation, where gender will be stereotyped within the family [7]. For example, girls will be forced into early marriages at the age of 18 or even younger or even become pregnant, thus abandoning their studies to inherit affairs within the family. Statistics

show Nigeria has some of the highest child marriage rates in the world, with 43% of women married by the age of 18 [8].

Stereotyped gender roles, where women have to take most of the responsibility for the family in Nigerian society and men go out to study and work, can lead to a loss of decision-making power, physical autonomy, and various rights for women. Marriage was identified as one of the significant causes of gender inequality in Nigerian academia. All respondents agreed that this is more prominent because women face higher mobility in the academic field. Some women have had to relocate or leave academia for their husbands' careers. Marriage and responsibilities as parents pose more problems for women than for men in their quest for continuity in research work [2]. In addition, gender roles and family values in Nigerian society have significantly impacted the development of women in academia. In some traditional perceptions, women are expected to be family-oriented, while men are expected to be more focused on their professional development. The existence of such perceptions leads to the fact that women often need to face more compromises and sacrifices in marriage. They must balance the conflict between caring for their families and pursuing an academic career, which may not be as pressing or essential for men. The patriarchal system has been deeply imprinted in the people of Nigeria's minds, and it has a significant impact. This tradition attaches a higher value to a man than a woman, whose place is believed to be the kitchen.

5. Strategies to Address Gender Inequality in Education in Nigeria

5.1. Government Policies and Initiatives

Gender inequalities in Education have led to discontent among many in society and the elicitation of their desperate desire to change the status quo. In terms of the Nigerian state's own policies, the Education of girls at the primary level received a further boost when Nigeria endorsed the goals of the conference in 1990 on Education For All (EFA). The primary aim of EFA is to achieve universal primary Education and to reduce adult illiteracy as much as possible by the end of the century [9].

International policies call for and improve women's rights, such as the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, which established that "women's rights are human rights. [10]" One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) goals is for countries to work towards eliminating gender inequality, including providing equal access to education and resources.

One of Nigeria's Federal Government agencies introduced Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999, intending to provide a policy of free, compulsory, and quality primary education for all children in Nigeria. It emphasizes equal access to education for girls and boys, including the provision of gender-sensitive infrastructure, educational materials, and the recruitment of female teachers.

5.2. Community Involvement

The United Nations Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was introduced to protect the civil and legal status of women and to address the impact of cultural factors on gender relations. The Child Right was introduced to consolidate the fundamental rights of children, including their dignity and access to free and Compulsory Primary Education, and to prohibit child marriage. The policy has resulted in better educational conditions and more educational opportunities for children than were previously available.

5.3. Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns

The first thing to realize is that gender inequality is a long-standing issue that is very difficult to change. Women will continue to be disadvantaged in education, work, and life. In the above study,

the Nigerian government has a well-developed policy to address the issues of education for all, equity in education, and the unequal treatment of individuals in society due to gender inequality. However, it is not only the policies but also the people's perceptions that influence the overall development of the people. People internalize some of their traditional ideas; they assimilate and conform to them through two mechanisms. The only way to raise awareness is to strengthen the new generation's education and slowly transform their perceptions. Awareness campaigns can focus on increasing school enrollment, especially for girls, by emphasizing the importance of education and its long-term benefits. An increase in education means that the quality of the entire population will improve. This could involve targeted outreach programs, scholarships, and incentives to encourage families to send their daughters to school. In addition, advocacy efforts should emphasize the negative impact of child marriage and early pregnancy on girls' education. By raising awareness of these issues and promoting policies that protect girls from such practices, more girls can be encouraged to stay in school. Finally, advocacy should work with government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to advocate for policy changes that address gender inequality in education. This may involve lobbying for increased budget allocations, developing gender-sensitive curricula, and implementing laws and regulations protecting girls' education rights.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation focuses on gender inequality in Nigerian education and its causes and suggests possible solutions. Through the analysis of relevant literature and comparative data in Nigeria's education field over the past decades, it was found that although gender inequality has improved in Nigerian education, serious problems still exist, mainly due to entrenched perceptions and internalized behaviors. This study concludes that gender inequality in Nigerian education needs more attention and improvement. In addressing gender inequality, policy formulation alone is not enough; attention needs to be paid to changes in perceptions and ideologies. Although this thesis proposes some solutions, there is still room for improvement. Future research could further explore the root causes of gender inequality in Nigerian education, such as field trips and visits to study it, to better develop effective responses. It is predicted that future research could focus on the following areas. First, the impact of gender inequality in Nigerian education on individuals and society could be examined to assess the potential benefits of gender equality for society. Second, Attention could be given to reforming educational systems and policies to promote gender equality and improve the quality of education. Finally, the status of gender equality in different countries and regions can be compared to find opportunities for learning and exchange to advance the process of gender equality jointly.

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