

INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN THE ACADEMIA ON FEMALE STUDENTS'  
VOCATIONAL SKILL ACQUISITIONS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*This paper focused on the influence of women in the academia on female students' vocational skill acquisition in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Vocational and Technical Education is a vital component of education in the development of practical and saleable/marketable skills for economic development and empowerment of youths in Nigeria. Important areas highlighted include: concept of Vocational and Technical education, problems facing female students, the major objectives of the girl-child education project (GEP), women in academics, **social vices and the way forward**. It was concluded that the family, with regards to the social and economic support, will no doubt, contribute effectively to the individual responsibilities in the development of the society. It was recommended that women in academics, especially in vocational educations, should have conscious interest in helping and influencing vocational female students in getting interested in acquiring vocational skills through counselling and encouragement to work hard and avoid engaging in social vices as having one vocation or the other could sustain their present and future lives.*

**Keyword:** Vocational and Technical Education, skill acquisition, women academia, influence, female students, social vices.

**Introduction**

In Nigeria, women have been playing vital roles, in the development of the Nation, hence the roles of women cannot be over emphasized. Nigeria recognizes education as fundamental human right and signatory to major conventions for the protections of the right of children and women, especially the convention of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in 2003 and passed into law the child right act, aimed at facilitating the realization and protection of the right of children, in its quest to achieve the objective of Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) (Safiya, 2013). In educational and economic studies, it has been found that women background such as family size, family type, family income, location (rural or urban) and women education are determinants of the amount and quality of education female children receive over time in their life (Dokubo, 2014).

The job opportunism once available to less educated individuals are becoming scarce as more employers are raising their employment standards, college graduates are replacing employees with high school degrees. As the job market changes, individuals of all races and backgrounds should have the basic skills, education and opportunities to compete at the same levels. It is evident that family and women background factors can either benefit or harm the chances of female children receiving basic and vocational education and excelling in scholastic environment. Parental background impacts negatively or positively on the gross performance of the female child. Family financial resources, which are associated with parents' occupation and educational attainment, often imply increased learning opportunities both at home and in school. Better educated parents can contribute to their children's learning through their day to day interactions with their children and involving themselves in their children's school work (Asikhia, 2010).

Convention of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in Maimuna (2018) noted that in Nigeria, most families are poor and cannot adequately afford 3-square meals not to talk of meeting the educational needs of their children. This indeed has serious implications on the learning and performance of less privileged female students in schools. Students from such families are forced to miss classes, unable to do their exam due to nonpayment of school fees. The authors notice that most of the students can not complete their school programme which aligned with the views of Osunloye (2008) and Ushie, Onongha, Owolabi, and Emeka (2012) that family background in terms of family type, size, socio-economic status occupation and educational background indeed play important role in children's educational attainment and social integration. This is the reason the Federal Government of Nigeria DFID and United nation international children education fund (UNICEF) jointly undertook the efforts to boost girls' schooling in Nigeria and accelerate progress towards the MDGS, especially with respect to United Nations International children education fund gender equality (UNICEF, 2003).

Various aspects of the family economic, social and cultural conditions have been found to

have consistent impact on the academic performance of female students. Students whose parents have better jobs and higher levels of educational attainment and who are exposed to more educational and cultural resources at home tend to have higher levels of academic performance (Maimuna, 2018). It is worthy of note that academic performance is affected when parents give positive reinforcement and the female student is more likely to achieve higher educational standard than the male student who does not receive any reinforcement from parents. Therefore women are usually considered the primary agents of socialization because their influence begins so early in life. Although the family is supposed to care for, socialize and optimize the potential of children, it sometimes falls short of these goals (Maimuna, 2018).

The authors observe that in Nigeria tertiary institutions, most female students in vocational and technical education, are always not being able to complete their programmes of education because some of them cannot write exams because of non-payment of school fees. Abolarin (2010) noted that there are social, economic and political problems bedeviling the Nigerian female students. The policies put in place to salvage the situation of Nigeria children include children's decree, the new political dispensation, the Human Right Commission and the ministry of women affairs with a full department for child development matters but in spite of these measures, leadership and socio-economic problems have not allowed for effective implementation and monitoring or observance of the rights of the female students. The issue of female education is now a global issue of importance; in recent times the implementation and monitoring or observance of the rights of the female students should be a fundamental resolution and this was reached at the Dakar Agreement on female student's education.

#### **Concept of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)**

Ekpenyong, in Adelowo 2018 defined Vocational and Technical Education as the education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. Okoh (2000) also viewed Vocational Education as part of the total experience of the individual whereby he/she learns successfully how to carry on a gainful occupation which involves the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes required for success in the occupation. Nigerian Educational Research and development Council stated that it prepares individuals for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work.

The aims and objectives of VTE in Nigeria as enshrined in National policy on Education (2004) are:

- (a) To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology, commerce particularly at sub-professional grades.
- (b) To provide technical skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- (c) To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
- (d) To give training and improving the necessary skills leading to production of craftsmen,

technical and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.

- (e) To enable young men and women to have intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

As laudable as these objectives are, technical education is bedeviled by several challenges which hinder the realization of its objectives. Among these challenges there is low enrolment of female students into the TVET programme in tertiary institution.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) in her national technical education enables its recipients to become active people who contribute positively to the well-being and economic development of society. The implication of this is that technical education gives attention to the development of both material and human resources (Adelakun, Oviawe & Barfa, 2015). They added that for these good yields of Technical, Vocational Education and Training programmes, it is obvious that no nation will adequately develop its technological base if it neglects the development of its workforce.

#### **Problems facing Female Students**

Lack of vocational skill acquisition has rendered many female youth over dependent on parents, husband and relatives. In order to reduce or eradicate the level of maltreatment, neglect, negative attitude of the parent towards female children, vocational skills acquisition is paramount.

Usman (2007) emphasized that it was initially believed that the influence of western education on the female child was inimical and that those schools would change their ways of life and make them discard their traditional as well as their cultural ways of life. To others, when the female student is educated, it has no direct or immediate benefit to the family, since she has to get married someday, so the responsibility of training her should rest on her husband.

Despite all the efforts made by the government and other private agencies to encourage the female students' education, there are still cases of low enrolment, issues of unemployment cases among female children and the youth in general, and, female students in relation to vocational skill acquisition in tertiary institutions. There is therefore the need to enlighten, encourage and motivate all those concerned on the benefit of vocational skills to female students.

It is in the light of the above observation that this paper reviewed the influence of women in academia on female students' vocational skills acquisition in Nigeria and other factors responsible for low enrolment of girls into schools, such as socio-cultural, economic, societal negative attitude to female child education, early marriage and gender bias, among others.

#### **Major Objectives of the Girl-Child Education Project (GEP)**

The major objectives of the girl-child education project (GEP) in UNESCO (2003) as outlined by Maimuna (2018) include:

1. Raising national awareness on girl-child education and increasing political and financial commitment through advocacy and sensitizing of policy makers at all levels.
2. Developing technical capacity of schools and teacher pedagogical skills to create child

friendly school environments that enhance the participation of the child and improve learning outcome.

3. Establishing female friendly school teachers as minimum benchmark for effective schools, link to community empowerment.
4. Building instructional capacity of stakeholders on gender sensitivity sexuality.
5. Collaborating with government and other stakeholders in reviewing existing curricula and teaching materials for gender sensitivity.
6. Promoting the employment of more female teachers in the rural areas where they are most needed to serve as role model and assist in the monitoring of out of school girls as stipulated in the Federal Ministry of Education (FRN, 2013), the national average for school enrollment and adult which is negatively influenced by the gender factors where by female enrollment and female literacy have remained very low. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been recognized the world over as tool for empowering people, especially the youth, for sustainable livelihood and social-economic development.

#### Women in Academics

A woman is an adult female person. An academic is someone who teaches or does research at a College or University. Therefore, a woman academic is an adult female person who teaches or does research at a College or University. Women are very important in national development, and the role of women at home also cannot be overemphasized. In recent years, women have put aside gender inequality, marginalization and inferiority complex. In spite of being academics, female lecturers are also expected to keep their homes (Akinsanya, 2012). Women carry a dual burden that they must pursue both their academic interest while meeting traditional obligations, for which they get little or no help from their male partners and spouses. A woman academic is concerned with childbearing and rearing, cooking and domestic household chores and their supervision. Odejide (2001) found out that women academics are confronted by the sexual prejudice that abound among their male counterparts and the lack of a suitable framework within which they can articulate their concerns.

In studies conducted by Nasir (2001), Yolonfoun (2003), they found that women lecturers instructing university students as well as women intellectuals relating to male counterparts are generally perceived as being less knowledgeable, and also have to work twice as hard in order to legitimize their positions and authority. Women academics need to develop masculine heart in their approach to female students about the academic work in order to live up to expectation (Yolonfoun, 2003).

Women are strong and energetic. Omolade, (2012) reiterated that the performance measures of women in academics can either be qualitative or quantitative. The quantitative performance involves the number of times the women are present in attending lectures, meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences, attending to students' projects among others. Qualitatively, in terms of

students' feedback, successes recorded per time, accessibility, dedication at work, and reward for excellence to mention a few. At the same time, there are a lot of job constraints on the part of women academic based on a number of reasons such as home factors, life expectancy, which include pregnancy, child rearing to changes in their jobs. Other constraints include breast feeding, attending to family problems, perception and lack of mentor. Recently government has approved six month maternity leave for women in some states to breast feeding their child (Omolade, 2012).

#### Social Vices

Apase (2019) noted that social vices are fast becoming national and global trends. Social vices cut across ethnic nationalities, races and even religious cleavages. Some of the social vices include but not limited to examination malpractice, indecent dressing and prostitution, political thuggery, cultism, drug addiction, targeted assassinations, armed robbery, pipe-line vandalism, vandalism of electricity installations and cybercrimes variance to social norms and values which include beliefs, attitudes, honesty, hard work, customs and traditions, ideals, skills and taboos which a society cherishes and passes on from one generation to another via formal and non- formal education. Few of these social vices will be explained in this article.

Many female students, because of the wrong perceptions from parents have refused to take to vocational and technical skills, and even when they take to it, they seem not to be interested probably because some view the programme as meant for weak, never –do-well and dropouts, hence, there is unusually low enrolment in the TVET programme. The few need encouragement and women in academics have this role to play in instilling consciousness for handwork into them. When girls lack vocational/technical skills, they tend to engage in examination malpractices during examinations, prostitution, drug abuse, stealing, indecent dressing, cultism among others.

Oyetunde (2004) stressed that examinations exert a very powerful influence on the educational system on what is taught or how it is taught, and they determine how far students can go in their academic pursuits and job aspirations. Entire family lives can be influenced by a child's performance in an examination because that performance can constrain or expand future employment possibilities for the child (Copper, 1996) in Safiya, (2013). Examinations therefore are very important to students as their future seems to hang on them. All manner of examination malpractices are therefore trending.

Furthermore, female students may engage in indecent dressing due to poverty. Ogbonnaya (2009) stated that social norms and values are part of the culture of a people. They value decent dressing but abhor near nude dressing associated with prostitution. Nigerian youths have a penchant for any kind of dress even foreign dresses. They dress in British dresses, gowns and suits, Chinese wears, American trousers and suits and German wears. Social media and the internet have influenced the dressing of our youths negatively. It is common to see on the streets and campuses half-clad boys and girls or wears that show the contours of all vital statistics of their bodies.

Ogbonnaya (2009), citing Nwoke (2006) defines cult anthropologically as a set of practices

and belief of a group in relation to a local god. These activities relating to the local god are highly secretive as members always swear oath of secrecy. Secret cults or societies are those organizations which completely conceal their rules, the names of their members, their signs, passwords from outsiders and the members take oath of secrecy and are often under the threat of severe punishment in the case of its violation. Youth restiveness is typified by political assassinations, ethnic militia, armed robbery, sexual assault or rape, kidnappings among other vices. Cultism is an extension of violence in the Nigerian society. Whereas Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on:

- (a) The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen;
- (b) The full integration of the individual into the community; and
- (c) The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (Federal government of Nigeria, 2004).

#### Way Forward

Ogbonnaya (2009) noted that for quality education in a globally depressed economy, Nigeria and other nations must plan education to cater for the decadent society. Education should be planned to correct the ills in the society. Education should be planned to cater for the need of both the rich and the poor, in this way prostitution may also be reduced. It is in this respect that the classical economists do not often regard education strictly as an economic but a social good, luxury consumption good.

In view of the important roles that women in academics can play, the paper therefore suggested the following as way forward:

Social vices need to be curbed. Youths that engage in these dangerous acts need help advice and rehabilitation for the addicted ones. Women in academics can help in this regard by performing the roles which Parents ought to perform but failed when children were at home such as knowing their students' friends, status, and their academic performance and trying to follow them up. Women academia should be close to their female students for close monitoring. They should give time to teach the moral values and the word of God, as this might help as a solution.

Women academia should be firm and fair in dealing with female students. They should not allow themselves to be taken advantage of by students.

Women academia should sensitize and mobilize parents to see the value and relevance vocational skill acquisition education. This could enable parents to have positive view of their children education and strive to give financial and moral support.

Women in academia should educate female students on job creation and awareness as the standard of civil servants salary presently could not meet up with the present challenges of economic demands, hence the need to achieve a vocation.

Furthermore and in addition, Government should **organize forums** that will enlighten female students about the dangers associated with social vices, tell them stories of people who have

engaged in social vices and are reaping the gain of sorrow.

#### Conclusion

Lack of vocational and technical education skills may result to social vices for female students. With this, individual student should be self-reliant and involve in vocational skills in order to stand away from all social vices so that they can carry out responsibilities of their lives and families in future. Parents, especially women in academics, are usually considered the primary agents of socialization because their influence on a child begins so early in the life of the child. It is worthy of note that academic performance is affected when parents give positive reinforcement and a child is more likely to achieve higher educational success than the child who does not receive any reinforcement from parents.

#### Recommendations

Women in academics should be allowed to act as students' advisers at the departmental and school/faculty levels in tertiary institutions in order to inculcate right values into the students.

Women in academics should collaborate with parents in order to be sensitized and mobilized towards encouraging their children in having interest in vocational skill acquisition.

Parents should be sensitized through women programme and political campaign to see the value and relevance of education. This will enable parents to have positive view of their children education.

Female civil servants who are vocational workers should be encouraged by receiving special allowance in order to meet up with the present challenges of economic demands. This could inspire parents to support and encourage their female children to acquire vocational skills.

Individual parents should be encouraged to belong to organizations such as community development or any initiated programme which will foster social security such as access to job and skills acquisition, national poverty eradication programme (NAPEP), family support programme, agricultural loan scheme among others, that would provide financial support and job security.

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