

Low Enrolment of Female Students in Tertiary Educational Institutions in Sokoto State, Nigeria: Cause, Challenges and Way Forward

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Abstract

This study examined the low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. The study employed a descriptive survey research, where the samples size of 373 and 585 from the population of 12,301 female students and cluster population were drawn respectively. Two self-designed instruments tagged: Challenges of Female Students in Tertiary Educational Institutions Questionnaire (CFSTEIQ) and Factors Causes Low Enrolment of female Students in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (FCLEMFSTIQ) were used for the study. The instruments were validated by experts based on face and content validities. The reliability indices of 0.82 and 0.75 were obtained respectively. The findings of the study revealed that female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State are faced with challenges of inadequate accommodation, low incomes, lack of proper counselling, inadequate toilet and sanitation facilities, and un-conducive learning environment among others. The study further revealed that widespread of poverty, fear of profound negative change of female students by parents, high cost of education, socio-cultural beliefs are some of the causes of low enrolment of female students. The study recommended among others that, there should be financial aid programmes for females at higher educational institutions to improve their enrolment, there should be conducive learning environment for female students, adequate and appropriate facilities should be provided; and there should be rigorous campaign against religious misinterpretations to enhance the credibility of gender norms and change perceptions and attitudes of people towards females' education.

Keywords: Female Students, Low Enrolment, Female education, and Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

Female education is the catalyst for the development of social, economic, and technological advancement. Educated women are less likely to die in childbirth and more likely to have healthy and well-nourished children than their non-educated counterparts (Ogunode, Ahmed & Muhammad, 2021). According to British Council (2012) a child born to a literate mother is 50% more likely to survive and past the age of five. In Nigeria, 66% of mothers with secondary education gave birth in a health facility compared to 11% with no education. A

survey of the recent census results reveals that women constitute about fifty percent (50%) of the population in Nigeria (Okoje, 2001). By implication, women are not a negligible few that can be discarded with a wave of the finger.

The enrolment of females into tertiary education has a strong relation with girls' education today, since the prerequisite requirements for continuation of females' education into tertiary institution is largely depends on the successful completion of girls' education. Therefore, for women to carry out their responsibilities judiciously as mothers, house wives, family and society members, as well as to face current life challenges they need to be educated (United Nations Education Social and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2014; Oluyemi & Yinusa, 2016). Education is important foundation for improving the status of women and has also been recognised as the fundamental strategies for development (Silas, Shagari & Innocent, 2018). According to the British Council (2014) educating girls contributes significantly to the development of stable, prosperous and healthy nation, the state which citizens are active, productive and empowered. Yet the data indicated that in Nigeria: Over 5.5 million girls are out of school in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2014); 40% of women and 28% of men have never attended school (National Population Commission Nigeria [NPC], 2009); Nearly two third women in the North West and North East regions have no education compared to less than 15% in the South-South (NPC, 2009); The enrolment rate at primary level is 39% for girls and 61% for boys (UNESCO, 2014). According to a report in the year 2017 27,092 students completed their secondary education in Sokoto State, out of which 8,498 are girls with 31.4%, while 18,594 are boys with 68.6% (National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria. 2019).

The evidence from other researchers indicates that there is a disparity in the enrolment and performance of females in tertiary educational institutions in North West, Nigeria among which are Sokoto State. Such disparity will affect the contribution of females in National development and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria and Sokoto State in particular. This may be linked to the various challenges facing female students and factors influencing low enrolment of female students in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. A study by Ogunode et al. (2021) showed that inadequate funding of universities, inadequate female hotels, classrooms, and poor implementation of policies protecting female students from sexual harassment are challenges affecting woman education at the university level while in the demand side; poverty, cultural factors,

early marriage, fear of insecurity, high cost of university education are the factors preventing woman education at the university level in Nigeria. Similarly, the study of Mvendag, Ifeanyichikwu and Apine (2014) revealed that, the problems facing female child education in Kebbi State was not far from poverty, early marriage, cultural and religious misconceptions. A germane study by Iro-Idoro et al. (2014) indicated that there is a meaningful difference between individual and environmental barriers to female education and order of effectiveness of barriers based on their age and marital status. In addition, Muthoni (2007) found that poverty, low distances to school, negative attitude, time wastage by teachers, drug and substance abuse, security, household chores, boy preference, pregnancies and early marriages were the factors established to influence enrolment and retention of girls in schools. Thus, in order to improve the situation, we need to know the challenges of female students and factors causes low enrolment of female students in tertiary educational institutions in Sokoto State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. Thus, the specific objectives of this study are to:

1. find out the challenges of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State; and
2. investigate the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State.

Research Questions

Based on the statement of the problem of the study, the following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the challenges of female students in Tertiary Institutions in Sokoto State?
2. What are the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State?

Review of Related Empirical Studies

A lot of related literatures on the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institution were written. A related study by

Mvendag, Ifeanyichikwu and Apine (2014) investigated the problems and challenges of girl child education in Nigeria: the situation in Kalgo Local Government Area, Kebbi State. The study revealed that, the problems facing girl child education in Kebbi State was not far from poverty, early marriage, cultural and religious misconceptions. The study recommended among others things that, government, non-governmental organisations, parents and traditional rulers should join hands in the enlightenment campaign for changing the trend.

A similar study by Ogunode et al. (2021) examined the perception of undergraduate female students on the challenges facing women's education at the university level. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The result collected and analysed showed that inadequate funding of universities, inadequate female hotels, classrooms, and poor implementation of policies protecting female students from sexual harassment, and strike action by different unions groups in the universities are challenges on the supply side affecting the woman education at the university level while in the demand side; poverty, cultural factors, early marriage, fear of insecurity, high cost of university education are the factors preventing woman education at the university level in Nigeria.

Similarly, Noori and Orfan (2021) study investigated the challenges of undergraduate married female students in higher education of Afghanistan. It also explored whether the participants' demographic variables such as class, age and residential areas had any effect on their responses. The study employed a quantitative research design. Using survey questionnaire with 29 items was used to collect the data from 100 purposefully selected respondents at Takhar University. The study found that Afghan married female students faced different problems during their studies at the university and the challenges had a significant effect on them. It also revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the responses of the students by their class, age and residential areas.

Muthoni (2007) investigated the factors that influenced low enrolment and retention rates of girls with disabilities in integrated primary schools. It further explored possible intervention measures that may be employed to mitigate the situation. The study was conducted in selected schools in Runyenjes (Embu East) and Manyatta (Embu North) sub-counties in Embu County. Poverty, low distances to school, negative attitude, time wastage by teachers, drug and substance abuse, security, household chores, boy preference,

pregnancies and early marriages were the factors established to influence enrolment and retention of girls with disabilities in school. Similarly, a germane study by Iro-Idoro et al. (2014) studied Challenges faced by adult female students in some faculties: The Nigerian experience. The results indicated that there is a meaningful difference between individual and environmental barriers to female education and order of effectiveness of barriers based on their age and marital status.

From all the related reviewed literature presently, there is no significant body of evidences that examines the enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. This study therefore, is unique from all the reviewed studies in terms of scope of the study, methodology, time, and geographical location.

Methodology

A descriptive survey was used for this study, the population of this study comprises all female students of selected institutions, religious leaders, parents/guardians and public members in Sokoto State. A convenient sampling technique was used to select five tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. Proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used for selection of female students in tertiary institutions, based on their enrolment proportion of 2019/2020 academic session, using Research Advisors' (2006). The cluster sampling technique was used in selection of participants from three senatorial zones where five religious leaders, 40 parents/guardians of female(s) school going age (18 and above) and 20 public members selected from each three selected local governments in three senatorial zones as depicted table 1 and 2:

Table 1: Sample of Female Students in Selected Tertiary Institutions in Sokoto State, 2019/2020 Academic Session

S/N	Selected Institutions	Population	Sample
1	Sokoto State University, Sokoto (SSU)	1,586	48
2	Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (UDUS)	7,105	216
3	Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto (SSCOE)	638	20
4	Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic, Sokoto (UASPS)	2,466	74
5	Sultan Addur-Rahman College of Health Technology, Gwadabawa (SACHTG)	506	15
	Total	12,301	373

Source: Survey Field, 2020

Table 2: Sample of Public Members in Selected Local Governments in Sokoto Senatorial Zones

S/N	Local	Senatorial	Religious	Parents	Community	Total
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	Government	Zone	Leaders		Members	Sample Size
1	Sokoto North	Sokoto Central	5	40	20	65
2	Wamakko	Sokoto Central	5	40	20	65
3	Silame	Sokoto Central	5	40	20	65
4	Yabo	Sokoto West	5	40	20	65
5	Tambuwal	Sokoto West	5	40	20	65
6	Dange Shuni	Sokoto West	5	40	20	65
7	Illela	Sokoto East	5	40	20	65
8	Sabon Birni	Sokoto East	5	40	20	65
9	Gwadabawa	Sokoto East	5	40	20	65
Total			45	360	180	585

Source: Field work, 2020

Two self-designed questionnaires were used as instruments for data collection: one for female students tagged: Challenges of Female Students in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (CFSTIQ); and second for religious leaders, parent and public individuals tagged: Causes of Low Enrolment of female Students in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (CLEFSTIQ), with ten item statements each. Thus, the questionnaires were designed based on a 4-point Likert scale in such a way that respondents are to tick SA = Strongly Agree (4 point); A = Agree (3 point); D = Disagree (2 points); and SD = Strongly Disagree (1 point).

The items of the questionnaires were validated by the experts in Education, their observations and corrections were strictly harmonized for final draft of the instruments which ensured the face and content validity of the instruments. Face validity refers to researchers' subjective assessments of the presentation and relevance of the measuring instrument as to whether the items in the instrument appear to be relevant, reasonable, unambiguous and clear (Oluwatayo, 2012). Content validity is a qualitative type of validity where the domain of the concept is made clear and the analyst judges whether the measures fully represent the domain (Kubai, 2019).

The reliability of the instrument refers to consistency of measure, Ghazali (2016) opined that reliability only concerns with the consistency of scores. Reliability is also concerned with repeatability, a scale or test is said to be reliable if repeat measurement made by it under constant conditions will give the same result (Moser & Kalton, 1989). Thus, a test retest method with an interval of two weeks was done to determine the reliability of the research instruments using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, where reliability indices of 0.82 and 0.75 at 0.05 level of significance were established for CFSTIQ and CLEFSTIQ respectively. These were considered high enough to judge the instruments as reliable for the study.

In order to achieve the objective of the study, all data collected from the field of study were subjected to statistical analysis for appropriate interpretations. Therefore, simple frequencies of responses percentages gathered from the questionnaire were used to obtain average mean and standard deviation of the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The mean score of 2.50 was used as cut off point for decision rules, therefore any item with 2.50 and above was considered positive and below 2.50 was considered negative.

Results

The data obtained from research field were presented in tabular forms which were then used to convey the findings of the analysis. two research questions were answered and presented in table 3 – 4 to derive the findings.

RQ1: what are the challenges of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State?

This research question was answered and presented in table 3.

Table 3: Responses of Female Students on the Challenges Faced by Female Students in Tertiary Educational Institutions in Sokoto State

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Inadequate accommodation is a challenge for females in the school	373	3.09	0.57	Challenging
2	Associating with bad friends and negative change in the attitudes of student is a challenge for female students in the school	373	3.05	0.51	Challenging
3	Lack of proper counselling on academic activities is a challenge for female students in the school	373	2.81	0.67	Challenging
4	Inadequate nutritional and prayer spaces is a challenge for female students in the school	373	2.04	0.75	Not Challenging
5	Inadequate toilet and sanitation facilities are challenges for female students in the school	373	3.14	0.62	Challenging
6	Poor communication skills is a challenge for female students in the school	373	2.90	0.70	Challenging
7	Low income of student is a challenge for female students in the school	373	3.02	0.51	Challenging
8	There is verbal and sexual harassment for female students in the school	372	2.31	0.65	Not Challenging
9	School environment is not friendly and conducive for female students in the school	373	2.86	0.77	Challenging
10	pregnancy for married female students is a challenge	373	3.51	0.53	Challenging

With use of a 4-point Likert scale type, the expected average mean of responses per item should be 2.50 either in favour or disfavour of what is being measured.

Source: Research field (2020)

In order to address the first research question on the challenges of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State, the table 3

illustrates the mean and standard deviation of responses of female students from item 1 to 10 with their mean scores ranging from 2.04 to 3.51. The result indicated that eight items out of ten were considered as challenging for female students these include: Item 1 which says inadequate accommodation is a challenge for females in the school with mean score of 3.09; Item 2 which says Associating with bad friends and negative change in the attitudes of student is a challenge for female students in the school with mean score 3.05; Item 3 which says lack of proper counselling on academic activities is a challenge for female students in the school with mean score 2.81; Item 5 which says inadequate toilet and sanitation facilities are challenges for female students in the school with mean score 3.14; Item 6 which says Poor communication skills is a challenge for some female students in the school with mean score 2.90; Item 9 which says School environment is not friendly and conducive for female students in the school with mean score 2.86; and Item 10 which says pregnancy for married female students is a challenge with mean score 3.51.

The result also indicated that two items out of ten were not considered to be challenging for female students in the tertiary institutions in Sokoto State, these include: item 4 which says inadequate nutritional and prayer spaces is a challenge for female students in the school with mean score 2.04; and item 8 which says there is verbal and sexual harassment for female students in the school with mean score 2.31.

RQ2: what are the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State?

This research question was answered and presented in the table 4.

Table 4: Responses of Public Members on the causes of Low Enrolment of Female Students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Widespread of poverty is one of the factors causes low enrolment of females in tertiary institutions	568	3.32	0.47	Causing
2	Fear of Profound negative change in attitudes of female students discourages parents/guardians to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions	568	3.09	0.96	Causing
3	Lack/inadequate security for female students discourages parents/guardians to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions	568	2.34	0.97	Not Causing
4	High cost of female education makes parents/guardians not enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions	568	2.71	0.94	Causing
5	Socio-cultural beliefs discourages parents/guardians to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions	568	2.82	1.09	Causing

6	Patriarchal of females by men and their impotent cause low enrolment of females in tertiary institutions	568	3.19	0.69	Causing
7	Lack of espouse to women western education from religious leaders causes low enrolment of females in tertiary institutions	568	3.52	0.64	Causing
8	Unawareness of parents regarding the significance of female education makes parents/guardians not enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions	568	2.86	1.10	Causing
9	Men preparedness of uneducated females than educated females makes parents/guardians sceptical to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions	568	2.34	0.93	Not Causing
10	Investing in females education is seen as wasteful since she is going to married off to other family	568	2.30	0.94	Not Causing

With use of a 4-point Likert scale type, the expected average mean of responses per item should be 2.50 either in favour or disfavour of what is being measured.

Source: Research field (2020)

In order to address the research question two on the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State, the table 4 illustrates the mean and standard deviation of responses of parents, religious leaders and public members of item 1 to 10 with their mean scores ranging from 1.09 to 3.52. The result indicated that seven items out ten were considered to be the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State, these include: Item 1 which says widespread of poverty is one of the factors cause low enrolment of females in tertiary institutions with mean score of 3.32; Item 2 which says fear of profound negative change in attitudes of female students discourages parents/guardians to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions with mean score 3.09; Item 4 which says high cost of female education parents/guardians find it difficult to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions with mean score 2.71; Item 5 which says socio-cultural beliefs discourages parents/guardians to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions with mean score 2.82; Item 6 which says Patriarchal of females by men and their impotent cause low enrolment of females in tertiary institutions with mean score 3.19; Item 7 which says lack of espouse to women western education from religious leaders causes low enrolment of females in tertiary institutions with mean score 3.52; and Item 8 which says Unawareness regarding the significance of female education makes parents/guardians not enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions with mean score 2.86.

Consequently, the result indicates that three items out of ten were not considered to be causes of low enrolment of females in the tertiary institutions in Sokoto State, these include: item 3 which says lack/inadequate security for female students discourages parents/guardians to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions

with mean score 2.34; item 9 which says men preparedness of uneducated females than educated females makes parents/guardians sceptical to enrol their daughters in tertiary institutions with mean score 2.34; and item 10 which says investing in females education is seen as wasteful since she is going to married off to other family with mean score 2.30.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State are faced with various challenges which include: inadequate accommodation, associating with bad friends, lack of proper counselling, inadequate toilet and sanitation facilities, poor communication skills, low income, un-conducive school environment and pregnancy during studies. These findings are consistent with the findings of Nasir and Al-Amin (2010) which established that when private spaces on campus are not accessible, female students have described uneasiness and nervousness. It also concurs with the finding of Lasodea and Awotedua (2013) and Chen, Tabassum and Saeed (2019) which found that the need for counselling intervention to reduce the effect of the challenges faced by married female students, international students are lacking proper counselling in campuses, counselling may assist the students in coping with adjustment issues. Similarly, Muthoni (2007) found that there are no adequate toilet facilities for the female students in tertiary institutions. Jama and Barre (2019), Noori and Orfan (2021) found out that Poor English language skills are increasingly becoming a barrier to women education, it is also associated with cultural restrictions on women to circulate in public spaces. Egenti and Omoruyi (2011) and Ogunode et al. (2021) also found that poor economic or poverty is a strong factor preventing female education at the tertiary level. Lasode and Awotedua (2013) study found that pregnancy and homework is a challenge faced by married female students in Ogun State, Nigeria. Silas et al. (2018) also confirmed that overall, marital factor is seen as contributing to the low enrolment of female students in science subjects.

The study further revealed that the causes of low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State are widespread of poverty, fear of profound negative change of female students, high cost of female education, socio-cultural beliefs and lack of espouse to women western education from religious leaders. These findings are corroborated with the finding of Ogunode et al. (2021) which found

out that poverty is a strong factor preventing female education at the university level. Similarly, James (2014) investigated the causes for decreasing enrolments of female students in secondary schools in Niger State and found that preference for private schools and the socioeconomic status of parents/guardians were significant factors. ILO Ability Asia, (2004) found that the woman's place in Asia was in the home and therefore, education for girls and women was seen as a distant dream, because they could not be wives, mothers and homemakers. Jama and Barre (2019) study found that most parents/caregivers cannot afford fees, transportation, textbooks and stationery and those facing economic difficulties often prefer to send their sons to school. Similarly, Bello and Oluwadare (2013) found out that the female is seen as being weaker in all fields of endeavours. In addition, Egenti & Omoruyi (2011) found that adult females in the educational program always faced some challenges which include time constraints, increasing marital demand, poor economic or financial base, poor learning environment, lack of encouragement from employers and spouse, increasing social pressure and poor psychological disposition. This study also conforms with the study of Wasagu (2007) which identified parental factor as restricting girls' access to education.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study it can be concluded that female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State are facing numerous challenges among which are: inadequate accommodation, profound negative change of attitudes, lack of proper counselling, un-conducive school environment and pregnancy during studies. The low enrolment of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State was influenced by widespread of poverty, fear of profound negative change of female students, high cost of female education, socio-cultural beliefs and lack of espouse to women western education from religious leaders. Thus to improve females' enrolment in tertiary institutions for better women education and national development drastic measures should be taken to improve the situation by the government and school managers in collaboration with parents, religious/community leaders, community members, non-governmental organizations.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions the study forwards the following recommendations:

1. Adequate and appropriate facilities such as hostels facilities, toilets facilities, classrooms and lecture halls facilities, transport facilities and health facilities should be provided to ensure conducive and friendly environment for female students.
2. To improve females' enrolment there should be financial aid programmes (scholarships, free or subsidise education, etc.) where only female studying or planning to study at higher education institutions will be eligible to apply. The government, local communities and NGOs should send out clear messages against religious misinterpretations to enhance the credibility and acceptance of new gender norms and to help change perceptions and attitudes towards girls and women's education. Enlightenment of parents on the importance of women education to national development.

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