

Gender and Socio-Economic Factors as Determinants of Pupils' Academic Performance in Primary Schools in Ogbomoso South Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria

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Gender and socio-economic background of pupils have been linked to access to school opportunities and academic performance. This study thus examined the relationship among gender, socio-economic factors and primary school pupils' academic performance Ogbomoso South Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Relevant data were collected through self designed questionnaire and were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between gender and pupils' academic performance, and there was also a significant relationship between socio- economic factor and pupils' academic performance in Ogbomoso South Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study recommends that governments, non-governmental organisations and philanthropists should support primary education in Ogbomoso South Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria through provision of educational resources and scholarships as it was found that poor socio- economic background was a basic deterrent to pupils' academic performance. Girl-children should be enlightened by all stakeholders about their fundamental human rights such as rights to education, and reject all conditions that seek to make them inferior, subjugate them, oppress and deny them equal access to educational policy and decision-making positions.

Key words: Gender, socio-economic factors, primary education, academic performance, determinants.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and impact of socio-economic differences in provision of learning opportunities remain some of the major concerns in education development in many developing countries. According to the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education, many countries are faced with main challenges of eliminating gender disparities in basic education and achieving gender equality in education by

2015, with specific focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to, and achievement in basic education of good quality (UNESCO, 2004).

To achieve these targets, countries have to develop feasible and informed strategies to improve participation of both male and female citizens in various socio-economic activities including education. In most developing countries, gender differentials in education

appear to be more pronounced both in terms of participation and internal efficiency and in cognitive performance with girls being the most affected (IMF, 2005). However, specific empirical analysis remains to be done, especially at lower levels giving cognizance to regional socio-economic characteristics. Consistent with the international goals on education, Nigeria is committed to ensuring quality provision of Education for All by 2020 and universal basic education by 2015. Some of the policy initiatives relevant to the achievement of this goal include making primary education affordable to all households through abolishing of user charges in public primary schools.

Obi (2009), in Okemakinde (2014), asserts that the educated girl-child is very valuable to the nation in that she would be able to contribute meaningfully to national issues which may lead to the resolution of conflicts at home and in the nation. Her contributions could lead to a healthier nation since she will bring up her family in a healthy environment. The healthy family can result in a nation's healthy manpower which will lead to higher productivity and a wealthier nation. Boadu (2000) found that boys from wealthier households had enrolment rates 34 percentage points higher than boys from poor households; the gap in favour of girls from rich background compared with girls from low-income background was 55.4 percentage points. His findings revealed that allocation of scarce household resources affects girls more than boys.

Early domestic responsibilities especially among young girls conflict with the pursuit of education. Retrogressive cultural practices such as early marriages prevent the advancement of girls in education. The willingness of parents to educate girls is reduced by socio-economic and cultural effects such as their expected change of allegiance after marriage to the husband's family. Another factor that affects learning achievements is the health of pupils. Poor health, which is a consequence of socio-economic factor, was found to be a constraint on academic performance (Boadu, 2000). However, Miako (1998) analyzed gender issues based on socio-economic status and established that there was no significant gender difference in socio-economic groups and primary school pupils' academic performance.

In the words of Eldah, Onsomu, Kosimbei and Ngware (2005), cultural practices lead to differentiated outcomes in school enrolments and performance for girls and boys. The most important is the existence of gendered division of labour within the household, which can probably lead to higher opportunity costs being associated with the schooling of girls relative to boys. Factors related to cultural norms, traditional beliefs and practices have a strong influence on girls' enrollment, persistence and performance in school. For example, pregnancy before marriage is considered stigmatizing in many societies. To avoid embarrassment, parents in some rural areas may

give their daughters in marriage as soon as they reach the age of puberty.

Households expectations of gender roles associated with the traditional image of women as home-makers (wives and mothers) may also be an explanation for negative parental attitudes to girl's schooling. In general, negative attitudes towards girls' schooling relative to that of boys remain. On the other hand, children who do not attend primary school are overwhelmingly from poor households. The majority of such non-attendees are girls (Eldah, Onsomu, Kosimbei & Ngware, 2005).

Gendered roles in society change the balance of incentives for girls and boys to attend school. In societies where the main leadership roles in local and national life are occupied by males, where marriage of girls occurs at a much younger age than boys, where religious or customary belief discourage social interaction between the sexes, or where conventional opinion encourages women to see their future as being centered on the home and the family, the incentives for girls to attend and to perform well in school are less than those for boys (Ilahi, 2001). Chimombo (2000) observes that cultural beliefs that erroneously see girls as having less ability than boys if brought to the classroom may lead to the marginalization of girls and further de-motivate them in their academic performance.

In the words of Boadu (2000), the allocation of scarce household resources affects girls more than boys. Early domestic responsibilities, especially among young girls, conflict with the pursuit of education. Retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages prevent the advancement of girls in education. The willingness of parents to educate girls is reduced by socio-economic and cultural effects such as their expected change of allegiance after marriage to the husband's family. Girls are shy of approaching male teachers, where consequently male teachers advising girls on sex education may be taken as sexual provocation (Boadu, 2000).

Nzomo (2001) established a positive correlation between the socio-economic status of standard 6 pupils and the level of their learning achievements in Kenya. The results show that as the socio-economic status of the sample pupils improved, the mean scores in the learning achievement also tended to increase. Families with higher socio-economic status were found to have the ability to provide their children with necessary facilities and materials pertinent in improving performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the impressive access gains, issues of gender equality both in participation, progression and performance at the primary education level require further analysis. To some extent, custom and circumstance lead

to a range of cultural practices, which cause differences in the outcomes of schooling between boys and girls. Education of male children is usually considered more important than that of girls based on economic and socio-cultural factors in Nigeria. Girl children are socially, psychologically and economically deficient and exploited by adults. They are denied equal education as their male counterpart, and this would not augur well for national development as empowering girls has been seen as the best investment in a country's development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this paper is to provide empirical evidence on the effect of gender and socio-economic background of pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Ogbomoso South Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Research Questions

- 1 What is the combined effect of gender and socio-economic factors on pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Ogbomoso South local government area of Oyo State?
- 2 What is the relative contribution of gender and socio-economic factors to pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Ogbomoso South local government area of Oyo State?

Significance of the study

This study is considered significant as findings would provide empirical basis for assessing underlying factors influencing pupils' academic performance in relation to gender and socio-economic factors, and to provide reliable data for effective policy formulation. Its findings would also assist in providing relevant information needed by governments, individuals and civil societies on how girl-children can be empowered in Nigeria.

This study would also help families to develop a good sense of justice and equity in training children without bias for their gender. By giving children equal opportunities to educational facilities, harmonious family living would also be achieved. In most cases, boys have been perceived to perform better than girls academically; this study would be able to establish empirically whether gender difference has any significant influence on pupils' academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the

study. The population of the study consists of all primary schools pupils in Ogbomoso South local government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Twenty primary schools were randomly selected in the local government area and ten primary school teachers were also randomly selected, making a total of two hundred (200) respondents used for the study. The instrument used to carry out the study was a structured questionnaire titled Gender and Socio-Economic Factors and Pupils' Academic Performance Questionnaire (GSEFPAPQ). The reliability of the instrument was established through test re-test method, and a reliability index of 0.86 obtained shows that the instrument was reliable. Data collected were analysed using the multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

The first research question sought to ascertain the joint effect of gender and socio-economic factors on pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Ogbomoso South local government area of Oyo State. The result is presented below.

Table 1 indicates the joint effect of gender and socio-economic factors on pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Ogbomoso South local government area of Oyo State. The two independent variables (gender and socio-economic factors) produced a significant result: $F = 4.45$; $R\text{-Squared} = .244$; $\text{Adjusted } R\text{-Squared} = .402$; $P = 0.03$. The independent predictive variables compositely accounted for a variation of about 24% of the total variance in academic achievement while the rest 76% could be traced to other variables outside the jurisdiction of this study. The significant result would have not been due to chance.

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to ascertain the relative contribution of gender and socio-economic factors on pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Ogbomoso South local government area of Oyo State.

Table 2 indicates the relative significant contribution of gender and socio-economic factors on pupils' academic performance. The two independent variables (gender and socio-economic factors) made relative contribution to the prediction of pupils' academic performance. The predictive values of Gender ($\text{Beta} = .047$, $T = 2.52$) and Socio-Economic factor ($\text{Beta} = .150$; $T = 2.14$) are significant at 0.05 level of significance. Comparing the two independent variables, it could be deduced from the table that gender factor is more potent in predicting pupils' academic performance than socio-economic factor.

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Gender and Socio-Economic Factors on Pupils' Academic Performance

R-Squared = .244					
Adjusted R-Squared = .402					
SE of Estimate = 4.72					
Analysis of Variance					
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Regression	101.92	2	101.92	4.45	0.03
Residual	452.33	198	22.788		
Total	4622.46	199			

Table 2: Contribution of each of the independent variables (Gender and Socio-Economic Factors) to the prediction of pupils' academic performance

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	P
	B	Std Error			
Gender Factor	.343	.134	.047	2.52	<0.05
Socio-Economic Factor	.254	.196	.150	2.14	<0.05

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the result in Table 1, it is evident that gender and socio-economic factors account for 40.2% of the observed variance in pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Ogbomoso South local government area of Oyo State. The F-value of 4.72, which is significant at 0.05 further, gives support to the fact that the predictive capacity of the independent variables was not due to chance factor. This finding is consistent with previous works in this area. Nzomo et al. (2001) for instance, established a positive correlation between the socio-economic status of primary school pupils and the level of their learning achievements in Kenya. The results show that as the socio-economic status of the sample pupils improved, the mean scores in the learning achievement also tended to increase. Families with higher socio-economic status were found to have the ability to provide their children with necessary facilities and materials pertinent in improving academic performance.

However, cross country analysis by Miako (2004) on differences in achievement scores based on gender by primary school pupils revealed that girls scored significantly higher than boys. On socio-economic background and academic performance, his findings revealed that girls were from higher socio-economic

background than boys. However, although these girls were expected to perform better than their male counterparts, they repeated more frequently and scored significantly lower scores.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The importance of primary education to national development can never be over emphasized. It reduces illiteracy level, crime rates and enables the recipients to be aware of their rights and obey civic orders. Education is important for the girl-child especially now that the nation is striving to achieve high level development in all spheres of life. This study analysed the impact of gender and socio-economic factors on primary school pupils' academic performance. It was established that primary school pupils' academic performance were significantly influenced by gender and socio-economic factors in Ogbomoso South area of Oyo State.

This situation therefore calls for collaborative efforts from all stakeholders in education to take adequate steps to eradicate these factors in order to achieve the stated educational objectives for this level of education in order to make it possible for them to be integrated into the development process. This study offers helpful insights on schooling performance of both boys and girls in

primary education. This implies that despite the various policies already in place to address gender gaps and socio- economic factors in basic education provision, the interventions need to be reviewed with particular focus on academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations and philanthropists should support primary education in Ogbomoso South Local Government area of Oyo State through provision of educational resources and scholarships as it was found that poor socio- economic background was a basic deterrent to pupils' academic performance.

Girl-children should be sensitized about their rights by all stakeholders in education. Many of them do not know their fundamental human rights such as rights to education, right that could allow them to challenge and reject all conditions that seek to make them inferior, subjugate them, oppress and deny them equal access to educational policy and decision-making positions.

Oyo State government should ensure that all education laws regarding girl-children are religiously implemented and anybody who goes against such laws should be sanctioned irrespective of their positions in the society. Parents, community leaders and village heads should be aware that the world is dynamic and that there are certain socio- cultural beliefs and traditions that are detrimental to educational development that should be modified or totally do away with to accelerate national development.

There is the need to create a sustainable awareness on girl-child education and increase political and financial commitment through advocacy and sensitization by Oyo State government, educational policy makers, educational managers, parents, school authorities, women leaders and other concerned agencies.

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