

Research Article

Gender Inequality among Secondary School Students in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State

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Abstract: This study investigated the educational implications of gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and the population consisted of all public secondary schools in Adamawa State. Four hundred respondents were selected using stratified random sampling technique. The instrument titled 'Gender Inequality Questionnaire (GIQ)' was validated by an expert in Guidance and Counselling from the Department of Science Education. The reliability value was calculated using Kuder Richardson formular (KR-21) which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.88. The researcher and two research assistants administered the questionnaires and collected them on the spot. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as simple percentages, frequency counts and t-test analysis. The study established that the causes of gender inequality among secondary school students include low income of parents, early and forced marriages, overburden of the girl-child with household work and labour, low motivation to girls, violence against women and children, teenage pregnancy, bullying or rape by sexual harassment by male students/teachers and lack of encouragement from the community to girl-child education. The study revealed that the strategies for curbing gender inequality include gender mainstreaming, changes of negative socio cultural believe norms, values attitudes and practice, equal access for enrolment, good school environment, government to be more committed to free education, guidance and counselling, formulation of policy to address gender inequality, improving school infrastructure and feeding programmes in schools. It was recommended that government (federal, state and local) should give financial assistance through scholarships or bursaries to female students and parents and the general public should be educated so as to bring about a change in attitude towards women education.

Keywords: Gender inequality, empowerment, enrolment, educational system, gender disparity.

INTRODUCTION

Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities (UNHCR, 2012). UNESCO (2004) gave the report on the state of the right to education worldwide. In the African traditional education, high values and conscious efforts were given to the instruction and the discipline of the young (girl-child inclusive). Though largely informal, African traditional education was an education for living. Functionalism was the guiding principle. Both boys and girls received education that emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, spiritual and moral values.

Although there were no fixed venues such as classrooms or laboratories, education could be found anywhere, in farms, the sacred shrines or even the market place. Every adult is a teacher although the more specialized forms of training are traditionally entrusted to older members of the family circle, the village elders, and the senior ranks of the secret societies, the craftsmen and the diviners. The boys were put through a series of vigorous exercises designed to improve their physical fitness as they had the responsibility of defending the community against external attack in addition to making provision for the household. Girls were given skill training in agriculture, crafts, weaving, plaiting, dyeing in addition to character development and wisdom geared towards making them good wives and mothers (Akinbi & Akinbi, 2015). Gender parity is a problem worldwide. The girl child seems to be

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:

<http://www.easpublisher.com/easjehl/>

Article History

Received: 25.06.2018

Accepted: 14.06.2019

Published: 29.07.2019

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disadvantaged compared to the boy child, more so in developing countries. Studies by UNESCO (2011) indicate that globally, about 39 million girls of lower secondary age are currently not enrolled in either primary or secondary education, while two thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate adults are women. Only about one third of countries have achieved gender parity at secondary level. This means that there is a crisis that should be addressed. The goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by the year 2005 was missed in 122 countries (Ngeno, Enose, & Ayodo, 2014). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2011) report reveals that globally some 39 million children of lower secondary age are not enrolled in either primary or lower secondary education, while two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate are women.

Only about one third of countries have achieved gender parity at secondary level, therefore with no reasons women lack access to education compared to men. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2018) report on gender inequality found that in developing countries in 2008, 78% of girls of primary school age were enrolled in primary education against 82% of boys. It further states that gender disparities in developing countries are more often more pronounced in secondary, technical and vocational than in primary education. The report further revealed that in South West Asia, along with Sub-Saharan Africa, girls accounted for 44% of students in secondary education in 2007, but just 27% and 39% in technical and vocational education respectively.

Gender continues to play a major role in determining who goes to school, how well they do, and how far they progress. Being female is negatively associated with enrolment, attainment and performance in the educational system. This low enrolment of girls in formal education is a pointer to the fact that majority of Nigerian women live in a state of extreme deprivation in spite of their important position in national development. Though the Federal Government of Nigeria launched universal basic education programme in 1999 and the programme became compulsory for all children of school age as from 28th of May 2004. Yet, there seems to be no concrete efforts of government to ensure equal access for girls' enrolment, retention and completion of basic education. This invariably has robbed most Nigerian women of the opportunity to contribute maximally to national development (Akinbi & Akinbi, 2015).

Discrepancies between males and females in access to schooling, school completion rates, and participation in employment opportunities are still more the norm in some regions of the world than others (Okoli, 2007). Closing the gender gap through access to education has become crucial. Education has become a

source of social stratification more than anything else. Brooks (2005) encapsulates the situation very vividly. He asserts that less than three decades ago, we had a society stratified by bloodlines. But now we live in a society stratified by education, and as the information economy matures, we are learning that it comes with its own brutal barriers to opportunity and ascent. In other words, a social chasm is opening up between those in educated society and those in uneducated society, between educated and uneducated individuals, and that vast behavioral differences reflect the different social norm between the two classes. Not everyone has equal opportunity and access to education, and women in general have less access than men (Okoli, 2007). This study will therefore investigate gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Gender refers to society's division of humanity, based on sex, into two distinctive categories. Gender guides how females and males think about themselves, how they interact with others, and what position they occupy in society as a whole. Thus gender also operates as a dimension of social inequality. This inequality, which has historically favoured males, is no simple matter of biological differences between the two sexes. Females and males do of course differ biologically, but these disparities are complex and inconsistent. The fact that despite the role women play both at home and in the society, they have remained unnoticed and even belittled. This is borne out of the notion that women's function of being homemakers and caring for children is not important.

Women therefore are to be seen and not heard. This has grossly affected women enrolment in education. History has revealed discrimination against women in education. There is still much gender inequality in Nigerian education in spite of all steps taken by the federal government to give equal gender opportunity to education such as the provision of the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and now, the Universal Basic Education (UBE). The female gender is still lacking behind in education and this has much implication in the social-economic status of the females in the nation. If drastic measures are not taken, tomorrow education in Nigeria may be all male affairs as the females dominate the markets, the farms and the homes to make more babies and increase poverty in the land. This study will therefore investigate gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the extent of gender inequalities among secondary school students of Maiha Local Government Area.
- ii. Identify the causes of gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area.
- iii. Examine the educational implications of such gender inequalities among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area.
- iv. Investigate the strategies to curb gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be answered by this study:

- i. What is the prevalence of gender inequalities among secondary school students of Maiha Local Government Area?
- ii. What are the causes of gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area?
- iii. What are the educational implications of such gender inequalities among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area?
- iv. What are the strategies to curb gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference between prevalence of gender inequality and students' academic achievement.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female secondary school students on causes of gender inequality.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and examines gender inequality among secondary school students Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State. This design is chosen because Fajonyomi(2003) says that survey is used for descriptive, explanatory an exploratory purpose, and of course this survey is descriptive in nature and therefore is more appropriate for this study. However, descriptive survey design is considered appropriate because it allows for collection of data from a group of people at the same time for the purpose of describing phenomena under study. Descriptive study also allows the investigator to discuss the phenomenon under study as it exists at the time of the study.

Population and Sample

The target population for the study comprised of senior secondary school students in Mubi North Local Government Area of Adamawa State. The sample size of 400 was chosen from four secondary schools by stratified sampling technique using age, sex and class as

strata. 100 students were chosen from each of the four schools.

Research Instrument

The research instrument titled "Gender Inequality Questionnaire" (GIQ) was structured by the researcher. The instrument comprised of 40 items divided into 4 sections. Section A contained the demographic characteristics of the respondents which constituted age, sex, class, name of school, local government and number in class. Section B contained 15 items that assessed causes of gender inequality among secondary school students, section C contained 10 items relating to the educational implications of gender inequality among secondary school students while section D contains 10 items relating to strategies in curbing gender inequality among secondary school students.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by the expert in Counselling Psychology in the Department of Science Education, Adamawa State University, Mubi. The reliability of the instrument was carried out in Government Day Secondary School, Mubi Two using test-retest reliability method. First test was administered on 30 students, while the second test was administered on the same set of students after two weeks. The reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher and two research assistants administered the questionnaires and collected them on the spot. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as percentages, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t- test analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of gender inequalities among secondary school students of Maiha Local Government Area?

Table 1: Distribution of enrolment in senior secondary school by sex, from 2014-2016

Year	M	%	F	%
2014	2,321,183	54.1	1,971,306	45.9
2015	2,629,526	53.5	2,281,418	46.5
2016	2,417,192	54	1,058,117	46

Source: Statistical Report on women and men, 2017

Table 1 shows the data on enrolment to senior secondary schools by gender. The data shows that in 2014, males students (54.1%) were enrolled more than their female counterparts. Same thing occurred in 2015 (53.5%) and 2016 (54%).

Table 2: Distribution of West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) May/June by Year and Sex

Year	Examination				Total
	Male	%	Female	%	
May/June 2014	921,637	55.1	752,187	44.9	1,673,824
May/June 2015	856,859	54.4	719,101	45.6	1,575,960
May/June 2016	818,302	53.7	706,585	46.3	1,524,887

Source: Statistical Report on women and men, 2017

Table 2 shows data for those who sat for WASSCE from 2014 to 2016 by sex. The results show that for three years the statistics of those who sat for WASSCE shows that male candidates are always more than the female candidates.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area?

Table 3: Causes of gender inequalities among secondary school students

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Low income of parents	102(34%)	98(32.67%)	48(16%)	52(17.33%)	300(100%)
Early and forced marriage	94(31.33%)	75(25%)	53(17.67%)	78(26%)	300(100%)
Overburden of the girl-child with household work and labour	120(40%)	91(30.33)	29(9.67%)	60(20%)	300(100%)
Inadequate lockers and chairs	34(11.33%)	79(26.33%)	97(32.33%)	90(30%)	300(100%)
Low motivation to girls	111(37%)	78(26%)	67(22.33%)	44(14.67%)	300(100%)
Violence against women and children	98(32.67%)	84(28%)	76(25.33%)	42(14%)	300(100%)
Teenage pregnancy	94(31.33%)	83(27.67%)	70(23.33%)	53(17.67%)	300(100%)
Bullying or rape by male partners	105(35%)	92(30.67%)	56(18.67%)	47(15.67%)	300(100)
Illiteracy and ignorance of parents to educate girl-child	143(47.67%)	74(24.67%)	48(16%)	35(11.67%)	300(100%)
Sexual harassment by male students/teachers	92(30.67%)	99(33%)	76(25.33%)	33(11%)	300(100%)
Far distance of school to home	54(18%)	42(14%)	89(29.67%)	115(38.33%)	300(100%)
Socio-cultural believe that girls education ends in the kitchen	121(40.33%)	86(28.67%)	44(14.67%)	49(16.33%)	300(100%)
Lack of qualified teachers	64(21.33%)	51(17%)	76(25.33%)	109(36.33%)	300(100%)
Poor gender awareness by teachers	76(25.33%)	88(29.33%)	64(21.33%)	72(24%)	300(100%)
Lack of encouragement from the community to girl-child education	95(31.67%)	79(26.33%)	69(23%)	57(19%)	300(100%)

Table 3 shows the responses of respondents on the causes of gender inequality among secondary school students. The results show that the causes of gender inequality include low income of parents 200 (66.67%), early and forced marriage 169 (56.33%), overburden of the girl-child with household work and labour 211 (70.33%), low motivation to girls 189 (63%), violence against women and children 182 (60.67%), teenage

pregnancy 177 (59%), bullying or rape by male partners 197 (65.67%), illiteracy and ignorance of parents to educate girl-child 217 (72.33%), sexual harassment by male students/teachers 191 (63.67%), socio-cultural believe that girls education ends in the kitchen 207 (69%), poor gender awareness by teachers 164 (54.67%) and lack of encouragement from the community to girl-child education 174 (58%).

Research Question 3: What are the implications of such gender inequalities among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area?

Table 4: Implications of Gender inequalities among secondary school students

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Gender inequality causes poverty	119(39.67%)	82(27.33%)	60(20%)	39(13%)	300(100%)
Having a lot of children one cannot cater for	89(29.67%)	77(25.67%)	70(23.33%)	64(21.33%)	300(100%)
It can lead to smuggling, child trafficking and robbery	80(26.67%)	54(18%)	75(25%)	91(30.33%)	300(100%)
Increase in the risk of HIV/AIDS infection	93(31%)	86(28.67%)	89(29.67%)	32(10.67%)	300(100%)
Increase of infancy and child mortality rates	122(40.67%)	90(30%)	52(17.33%)	36(12%)	300(100%)
Increase of girls drop out	132(44%)	85(28.33%)	63(21%)	20(6.67%)	300(100%)
Increase in illiteracy of girls	162(54%)	78(26%)	35(11.67%)	25(8.33%)	300(100%)
Growing rate of prostitution	146(48.67%)	71(23.67%)	56(18.67%)	27(9%)	300(100%)
Lack of education deprive women from having political programmes	157(52.33%)	81(27%)	42(14%)	20(6.67%)	300(100%)
Limit women's ability to enjoy rights and freedom on a basis of equality with men	149(49.67%)	83(27.67%)	44(14.67%)	24(8%)	300(100%)

Table 4 shows the responses relating to the implications of gender inequalities among secondary school students. The data shows that the implications of gender inequality are gender inequality causes poverty 201 (67%), having a lot of children one cannot carter for 166 (55.34%), increase in the risk of HIV/AIDS infection 179 (59.67%), increase in infancy and child

mortality rates 212 (70.67%), increase in girls drop out 217 (72.34%), increase in illiteracy of girls 240 (80%), growing rate of prostitution 217 (72.34%), women been debarred from having political programmes 238 (79.34%) and limiting women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedom on a basis of equality with men 232 (77.34%).

Research Question 4: What are the strategies that could be taken to curb gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area?

Table 5: Strategies in curbing gender inequality among secondary school students

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Gender mainstreaming and gender equality of boys and girls	119(39.67%)	82(27.33%)	60(20%)	39(13%)	300(100%)
Changes of negative socio cultural believe norms, values, attitudes and practice	89(29.67%)	77(25.67%)	70(23.33%)	64(21.33%)	300(100%)
School authorities and teachers to make school environment gender friendly	80(26.67%)	54(18%)	75(25%)	91(30.33%)	300(100%)
Equal access for enrolment	93(31%)	86(28.67%)	89(29.67%)	32(10.67%)	300(100%)
Good school environment	122(40.67%)	90(30%)	52(17.33%)	36(12%)	300(100%)
Government to be more committed to free education from primary to secondary level	132(44%)	85(28.33%)	63(21%)	20(6.67%)	300(100%)
Guidance and counselling programmes	162(54%)	78(26%)	35(11.67%)	25(8.33%)	300(100%)
Formulation of policy to address gender inequality	146(48.67%)	71(23.67%)	56(18.67%)	27(9%)	300(100%)
Improving school infrastructure	157(52.33%)	81(27%)	42(14%)	20(6.67%)	300(100%)
Feeding programmes in schools	149(49.67%)	83(27.67%)	44(14.67%)	24(8%)	300(100%)

Table 5 shows data relating to strategies in curbing gender inequality. Responds indicate the following as strategies for curbing gender inequality, gender mainstreaming and gender equality of boys and girls 201 (67%), changes of negative socio cultural believe norms, values attitudes and practice 166 (55.34%), equal access for enrolment 179 (59.67%),

good school environment 212 (70.67%), government to be more committed to free education from primary to secondary level 217 (72.34%), guidance and counselling programmes 240 (80%), formulation of policy to address gender inequality 217 (72.34%), improving school infrastructure 238 (79.34%) and feeding programmes in schools 232 (77.34%).

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between prevalence of gender inequality and students’ academic achievement

Table 6: Difference between prevalence of gender inequality and students’ academic achievement

Source of Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Decision
Between Groups	43.006	1	43.006	42.542	3.64	Rejected
Within Groups	293.661	299	.985			
Total	336.667	300				

*Significant: (P<0.05)

The F-value of 42.542 obtained as shown in Table 6 is higher than the critical F-value of 3.64at P > 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected, and the alternative accepted. This

implies that there is a significant relationship between prevalence of gender inequality and students’ academic achievement.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference on the perception of male and female secondary school students on causes of gender inequality.

Table 7: Difference on the perception of male and female secondary school students on Causes of gender inequality

	Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
Perception on causes of gender inequality	Male	179	1.56	0.49794		0.366	0.493	Accepted
	Female	121	1.54	0.50069				

* Not Significant: (P>0.05)

Table 7shows that the t-cal is0.366 which is lower than the critical t-critical of 0.493 at P<0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no difference on the perception of male and female secondary school

students on causes of gender inequality. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The overall purpose of the study is to investigate gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area, Adamawa State. The study investigated specifically the extent of gender inequalities among secondary school students. Based on the findings of the study, it was discovered that gender inequality was prevalent. This is seen in the number of enrolments for WASCCE and also into secondary school entirely. This is in consonance with Omoregie and Abraham (2009) whose study revealed that the available statistical data for primary, secondary and university enrolment showed higher percentage of male's enrolment at the different levels of education in Nigeria.

Research question one explored the causes of gender inequality among secondary school students. The data revealed that by the study is in consonance with Zacharia (2014) who posited that gender inequality is contributed by many and various factors including poverty, socio-cultural practices, inadequate school infrastructures such as hostels and dormitory, low motivation to girls as well as violence against women and girl child also identified as causes of gender equality in secondary schools. She further posited in consonance with this study that pregnancy and lack of sex education among students, domestic chores, parental education and occupation noted as reasons for inequality.

The research question three investigated the implication of gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area. Gender inequality led to poverty, high fertility rate, employment of girls in informal sectors such as house girls, bar made and food seller. Inequality education system also led to increase of infancy and child mortality rate, and furthermore placed girls in higher risk of affection by HIV/AIDS compared to boys and men. All these impacts do not speak to empower women in society. This results are in line with Zacharia (2014) and Omoregie and Abraham (2009) who insisted that society will be richer in high level manpower the more women have access to education, because educating a female (a girl child) is educating the nation. Nations where women are denied access to education will continue to wallow in poverty and poor health. It takes education to imbibe health-culture and good sanitization. These illiterate mothers will continue to perpetuate their ignoramus to their children both males and females.

In a bid to investigate the strategies to curb gender inequality among secondary school students in Maiha Local Government Area, the study found out that several strategies can be adopted to create equality in access education including gender mainstreaming in teacher training colleges and universities, change of negative socio-cultural beliefs, norms, values, attitudes

and practices through mass education. Also effective implantation existing policies, gender sensitization and social mobilization, improving school infrastructure like construction of hostels and dormitories. Furthermore, feeding programmes, guidance and counseling are very important to attract students especially girl's attendance to school. This is in agreement with Zacharia (2014).

The findings of the study showed that there is a significant difference between prevalence of gender inequality and students' academic achievement. This finding agrees with findings from Mwiigi (2014) who also found out that the academic performance of boys differs greatly from the girls. She posited that this could be caused by among other reasons lack of reading time for the girls.

The findings of the study also revealed that there is no significant difference on the perception of male and female secondary school students on causes of gender inequality. This finding is in consonance with Nkosi, and Mulaudzi (2017) who also found out that male students and female students both understand and have the same perception on the causes of gender inequality.

CONCLUSION

Education is the right of every citizen regardless of gender, colour or geographical location. Several factors including socio- economic and cultural factors, school context factors and home environment barriers pull girls away from education in Maiha Local government secondary schools. Inequality in education in schools led to poverty, high fertility rate, employment of girls in informal sectors like house girls, bar made and food seller. These affect not only social welfare of community but also the economic aspect of Maiha Local Government. Education of the girl child is one of the first steps in a process of enabling her to take control over her own life, participate on an equal basis in the society and freeing herself from economic exploitation and patriarchal oppression. In order to ensure community and economic development in the Local government, gender inequality in education should be addressed through mainstreaming gender in education in teacher colleges and universities, change of negative cultural practices such as early marriage, polygamy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- All cultural and traditional practices, which may tend to enhance gender inequality in education should be discouraged at all levels of education.
- Government (federal, state and local) should give financial assistance through scholarships or bursaries to female students.
- Educate the parents and the general public so as to bring about a change in attitude towards

women education. The non-governmental bodies (NGO) should be assigned to do this by the government.

- Finally, let there be a rule on quota system of 50:50 in admission of males and females to all institutions of learning from primary to tertiary level. That means ratio of admission should be 50 females to 50 males in all levels.

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