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Unbiased Gender Education as a Remedy for Social Inequality in Nigeria

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Abstract- Gender biases exist in form of laws and customs that continue to impede female access to make imputes into developmental process. Economic and domestic workloads also impose severe time burden on the feminine gender. Educationally, feminine gender have mostly affected by these negative factors as the National literacy rate for female is lower compared to that of males. In certain states of the federation, the female literacy enrolment and achievement rates are much lower. This is against the fact that education is a basic and fundamental right of all citizens. This study examines whether or not gender roles assigned to feminine gender affect their school performance; the extent gender is used to discriminate feminine gender for access to school. Findings from this study include: Assisting in rearing the going ones is time consuming and it affects educationally performance of girl child or no payment of school fees and sexual harassment. For gender social equality to be achieved and sustained, there is the need for female education to fill the gap. Negative cultures should be adjusted; teachers should stop devaluing girls by and gender equality should be adhered to in any society. ridiculing them and enhancement of women education.

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Unbiased Gender Education as a Remedy for Social Inequality in Nigeria

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Abstract - Gender biases exist in form of laws and customs that continue to impede female access to make imputes into developmental process. Economic and domestic workloads also impose severe time burden on the feminine gender. Educationally, feminine gender have mostly affected by these negative factors as the National literacy rate for female is lower compared to that of males. In certain states of the federation, the female literacy enrolment and achievement rates are much lower. This is against the fact that education is a basic and fundamental right of all citizens. This study examines whether or not gender roles assigned to feminine gender affect their school performance; the extent gender is used to discriminate feminine gender for access to school. Findings from this study include: Assisting in rearing the going ones is time consuming and it affects educationally performance of girl child or no payment of school fees and sexual harassment. For gender social equality to be achieved and sustained, there is the need for female education to fill the gap. Negative cultures should be adjusted; teachers should stop devaluing girls by and gender equality should be adhered to in any society. ridiculing them and enhancement of women education.

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I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The issue of gender biases according to Orimogunje (2012) could be traced to the traditional African society that creates disparity between men and women. The believe is that, men are more superior than women which invariably allow men to have dominion in every aspects of the community. The issue of gender refers also to the private status of men, the weight they carry, the struggle to assert their masculinity, their fears and concerns and the redressing of imbalance based as male – female relations. Gender as a concept interact with other social classification to affect the degree to which disparity or marginalisation can be evidence in society, such other forms of social identification include racism, sexism, class, caste and other types of prejudices that are built into many institutions all over the world (Ochudo 2010).

According to Kabeer (1994) cited by Ochudo (2010) submitted that gender relation simultaneously

“dominate natural equality between sexes and exacerbate the differences”. Gender relations therefore reinforces pattern of character traits and dubbed masculine/feminine. Gender is a range of physical, mental and behavioural characteristics distinguishing between masculinity and femininity (Eleanor, 1996, Graham 2001 and WHO 2009). Depending on the context, the term may refer to biological sex (i.e the state of being male, female or inter-sex) social roles (as in gender roles), or gender identity, sexologist. John money introduced the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955. Before his work, it was uncommon to use the word “gender” to refer to anything but grammatical categories (Eleanor 1996 and Graham 2001). Gender identity is the gender a person self-identifies as one’s biological sex that is directly tied to specific social roles and expectations. Butler (1990) considers the concept of being a woman to have more challenges, owing not only to society’s viewing women as a social category but also as a felt sense of self, a culturally conditioned or constructed subjective identity (Fausto-Sterling 2000).

The term “Women” according to Fausto-Sterling (2000) has chronically been used as a reference to and for the female body, this usage has been viewed as controversial by feminist in the definition of “woman”. There are qualitative analyses that explore and present the representations of gender feminist. WHO (2009) challenge the dominant ideologies concerning gender roles and sex. Social identity refers to the common identification with a collectively or social category that creates a common culture among participants concerned (Hofstede 2001).

Categorizing males and females into social roles creates binaries in which individuals feel they have to be at one end of a linear spectrum and must identify themselves as man or woman. Globally, communities interpret biological differences between men and women to create a set of social expectations that defines the behaviours that appropriate for men and women and determine women’s and men’s different access to rights, resources, power in society and even health behaviours (Fenstermaker,2002).

Although the specific nature and degree of these differences vary from one society to the next, they typically favour men, creating an imbalance power and gender inequalities in all countries. Gender bias on the other hand is separation of gender in a way which

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prefers one sex over the other. Discrimination is seen where girls are less valued than boys. They are given less educational employment, recreational opportunities. They are exposed to sexual harassment, subjected to violence and abuse. Women have been marginalised, this involves the experience of being rejected, omitted, isolated, segregated and discriminated against because one is a woman. To be marginalized is to be limited in scope, space and freedom of operation, to be restricted in what one can or cannot do under threat of penalty and taboo. Zwalchir, Jurmang & Yaro (2001) opined that there is technology gender gap and gender bias: technology should be equally accessible to male and female students, however gender gap should not exist between males and females in the use of technology and this will bridge social inequality among males and females in the society.

Education which is seen as the main text for liberation is not made available to all, because of gender bias. Corroborating this view, Oguomu (2008) cited by Orimogunje (2012) submitted that, Nigeria like any other developing countries, a notable difference exists in the way men and women participate in community development activities, even though women play a significant role in nation building. In Nigeria for instance according to Orimogunje (2012) submitted that, the national literacy rate for male is 56% compared to 72% for female in certain states of federation, the female's literacy, enrolment and achievement rate are much lower against the back drop of education as a basic and fundamental right of all citizens. As stipulate by Orimogunje (2012) citing national policy on education (2004) made it clear that education is a tool per excellence and a fundamental right to all human person's as enshrined in the United Nations charter (and charter of associated continental and regional bodies) but in particular as in the Nigeria successive constitutions, however, existing evidence indicates that access to education for female has been hampered by several factors (Herz, 1991, Filson and Indabawa, 1991.; UNESCO 1993 and Indabawa 1994 and 1995) Oni (2006), indicated that two-third of the world illiterates are females and the rate of employment of women is also two-thirds to that of men. Importantly, in Nigeria, women are not enjoying the same privilege as men.

Few women go to school, hardly participate in politics and they have no voice in issue relating to development. Filson & Indabawa (1991) in their research findings indicated that where schooling opportunities exists for girls, their participation significantly lag behind to that of boys by 20% at the primary level and dropping again at the secondary and tertiary levels (UNICEF 2003) cited in (Orimogunje 2012).

To ensure gender equality for boys and girls means that they have equal opportunities to enter school as well as to participate in and benefit from the range of subjects or other learning experienced given in

the classroom and schools. Curricular for gender, teaching aids and teaching leaning process, girls and boys become equal, equipped with life skills and attitudes that they will need to achieve their fullest potential within and outside of the educational system, regardless of their sex (Orimogunje 2012).

To achieve social equality in the society, there should be equal accessibility to education without gender bias. In order to also achieve overall development in every sector of every nation, there is need for gender equality. Every Nigerian women and men, young and old must be made to participate in the nations journey to greatness. Woman education in this regard becomes the tool for such equality and participation (Orimogunje 2012). In view of the above, this paper assessed unbiased gender education as a remedy for social inequality in Nigeria.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to:

1. Find whether gender roles traditionally assigned to girl children affect their academic performance.
2. Find if gender is being used to discriminate the girl child in terms of access to education.
3. Find if gender issues result in violence against the girl child in education.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do gender roles traditionally assigned to girl children affect their academic performance?
2. Is gender being used to discriminate the girl child in terms of access to educational opportunity?
3. Do gender issues result in violence against the girl child in education?

IV. METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is descriptive survey. The population of this study was the teachers in secondary schools within Odeda local government area of Ogun state. Simple random sampling method was used to select 120 teachers who have better judgement over the issue since they have more opportunity to observe the girl child, boy child in school and interact with the parents. The instrument was a questionnaire with sections "A" and "B". In section "A" 77 (64%) of the respondents were males while 43 (35%) were females. The age range of the respondents showed that: 18-21 years were 71 (59%); 21-30 years were 33 (27%); 31-40 years were 15 (12%) and 41-50 were 1 (0.84). The educational background of the respondents were as follows: NCE = 80 (68%), BA/BED/BSC = 32 (26%) and MED 7= (5%).

Section "B" of the questionnaire consists of the ten items. Each item was analyzed using mean score. Opinions on the questionnaire were rated based on the intensity of the responses as follows: Strongly agreed

(SA) = 5 points, Agreed (A) = 4 points, Undecided (UD) = 3 points. The decision making therefore is that when the mean is 3 or > 3 the statement in the questionnaire is accepted. When the mean is found to be < 3, the statement in the questionnaire is rejected.

Items 1,2,3 and 4 in the questionnaire are linked to research question one, while items 5,6,7 and 8 in the questionnaire took care of research question two, item 9

and 10 in the questionnaire are for research question three.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question 1: Do gender roles traditionally assigned to girl child affect academic performance? (Item 1,2,3 and 4).

Table 1: Traditionally Assigned Gender Roles

S/N	Gender Roles	Mean	Remark
1	Girl child helping taking care of the younger ones	4.5	Highly negatively affecting girl child education
2	Girl child fetching water and dusting household chore	3.8	Negatively affecting girl child education
3	Girls sweeping offices	4.3	Highly negatively affecting girl child education
4	Boys doing more work in the school	3.7	Negatively affecting boy child education.

The four questions above were all accepted. Therefore, the research question which sought to find out whether gender roles traditionally assigned to girl child affect academic performance is found to be true.

The respondents agreed that some girls are assigned with enough work like caring for their younger ones, they scarcely have time to read and this in turn affects them academically. The duties of girl child looking after their younger ones, sweeping, doing house chores etc. are considered female gender roles in Odeda Local government area of Ogun state and Nigeria in general. The girls are usually not only exhausted but their precious time for studying are usually being wasted. The mean score of 4.5, which is the girl role of helping to rear the young ones. This is followed by sweeping the offices, especially when the lessons have began, it has less mean score of 4.4, girl child fetching water and doing house chores has a mean score of 3.8, which is accepted as intersecting with the girl child's school work. On boys working more than girls in school, the mean score is 3.7. This is

presenting the girl child negatively. This is in support that, since the girl child scarcely have time to study due to so many works that has been assigned for her to do, but her gender counterpart which is the boy child who has all time to himself and his studies performs better and is noted to be more duty bound than the girl child. This view is in support of the opinions of Orimogunje (2012), Filson & Incabawa (1991), UNICEF (2003) which indicated that where schooling opportunities exist for girls, their participation significantly lag behind than that of boys by 20% at the primary level and dropping again at the secondary and tertiary level. UN (1995) cited by Zwalchir, Jurmang & Yaro (2011) reveal that when girls start to undertake heavy domestic chores at a very early age and are expected to manage both educational and domestic responsibilities, it often results in poor scholastic performance and an early dropout from school.

Research question 2: Is gender being used to discriminate the girl child in terms of access to educational opportunity.

Table 2: Discrimination in girl child access to school.

S/N	How girls are denied access to school	Mean	Remark
5	Paying school fees of boys before that of girls	4.16	This is highly negatively affecting girl child education
6	That preferring girls to go to coeducational school	3.67	Negatively affecting the girl child in terms of coeducation
7	Girls are less involved in practical subject.	3.86	Negatively affecting the girl child.
8	The position of head boy is higher than that of head girl	3.60	Negatively affecting the girl child by placing her to an inferior position to the boy child.

The four questionnaire items (5,6,7 and 8) drawn from research question two which ask: To what extent can gender be used to discriminate the girl child in terms of access to educational opportunities are all accepted.

This is in agreement that, gender is used against the girl child in terms of access to educational opportunities. The boy child is given priority over the girl in terms of paying their school fees.

The issue that girl child suffers most is in terms of lack of paying their school fees. This has a mean score of 4.18. Many girl children have been discriminated upon and their fees were not paid especially when money cannot go round to support the education of all children in the family. Some parents at times prefer their children to attend only girl schools. They don't like girl child to go to mixed schools. The mean score for this statement is 3.96. Often times girls are spoiled in terms of sexually abused and also do practice lesbianism among themselves. According to UN (1995) cited by Zwalchir, Jurmang & Yaro (2011)

discrimination and gender neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream. Many factors have also been indicated for girl child not to have access to education. Some of these factors can be traced to traditional believe that the place of woman is in her husband's kitchen and bearing of children (Herz, 1991, UNESCO, 1993, Indabawa 1994 & 1995 and Zwalchir Jurmang and Yaro 2011).

Research question 3: Do gender issues result in violence against girl child in school?

Table 3: Gender issues resulting to violence against girls.

S/N	Issues resulting to violence against girl	Mean	Remark
9	Girls are more ridiculed than boys	3.27	Negatively affecting the girl child
10	Girls are more sexually harassed than boys.	4.11	Highly negative affecting the girl child

The two questionnaire items (9 and 10) on whether gender issues result in violence against girl child in school are all accepted. The mean score for this is 3.28. This affect the girl child negatively. As to whether girls are more sexually harassed than boys, it has a mean score of 4.11. This is highly negatively affecting the girl child. This is in consonance with the statement that gender is used against the girl child in terms of being ridiculed or harassed sexually at school.

World vision (2007) states that, girls can experience violence physically, psychologically or sexually. Such violence damages health and can prevent education and give scar to girl child for ever, spiritually, psychologically and emotional well being.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper focused on the need to educate girl/woman so as to ensure gender unbiased in educational opportunity in order to avoid social inequality among males and females gender. This study has 64% of the respondents as males, and 35% females, most of them fall within the young ages of 18 to 20 years (59%) and none was above 40years. Most of them also are NCE holders (68%).

The respondents were unanimous in accepting that the traditionally assigned roles to the girl child like being assigned much work with caring for their younger ones, sweeping offices, fetching water and doing the house chores affects their readiness for academic work and easily affecting their overall performances. The study also revealed that many girl children have been discriminated against in term of payment of school fees and some parents prefer their girl child to attend girl's school only. This has made many of them to be involved in the practising of lesbianism. Also girl child has been affected negatively through sexually harassment, this

has left a long negative experience in many girl children. Finally, the paper revealed that, if women are given better education, they would only be useful in their husband's kitchen and not to better the lots of the societal development.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study and the revelations given by this paper concerning negative effect of woman education in general. The paper therefore recommends among other things that

- There is need for gender equality legislation by the national assembly.
- Scholarship and waiver of school fees should be provided for women to pursue education to any level.
- The aspects of cultures that are negative to the development of the girl child should be changed or adjusted positively.
- Traditions and beliefs that hinder gender equity and discriminate against the girl child should be changed.
- At school, teachers should be educated to prevent them from devaluing girls by ridiculing them through negative language.
- Early marriage should be discouraged and there should be a law to discourage the early withdrawal of girls from schools.
- There should be child abuse code of conduct signed by every adult in places of work especially in schools and communities.

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