

The Dilemma of Gender Equality: Women, Education, and Empowerment in Yobe State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The paper examined the dilemma of gender equality: women, Education, and empowerment in Yobe state. Women in the northern region are underrepresented in governmental and nongovernmental services this is because of power educational enrollment. Because of this, the article examined the factors affecting female's girl's enrollment in education. The research is qualitative in nature, data were obtained through the primary and secondary source and analyzed thematically using NVIVO 12. The study found that there are several factors affecting women enrollment in education in Yobe state, these comprise of cultural and economic factors. It is noted that these factors have continually posed a serious threat or set back to women education and empowerment in the state. To support the study empowerment theory was used, the postulation of the theory centered on the gender gap and gender equality. Therefore, the research recommends that government should provide the women with free education, and different kinds of skills acquisition programmes, to empower them like the men counterpart in the state. Religion leaders and parents should enlighten the women the importance of women education and empowerment from Islamic and parental perspectives.

Keywords: Dilemma; Education; Equality; Empowerment; Gender; Women

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historically education in African and Asia countries was initially available for male gender, this shows that women were from the onset disadvantaged in education and formal employment in public sectors since jobs in these sectors are mostly accessible through education and skill acquisition. Therefore, education is the bedrock for national development. Though, in the Nigerian context the question of unequal access to women education it seems to be a worldwide phenomenon in the third world nations. Though, females in Nigeria precisely in the northern region appear to suffer more discrimination in relation to accessibility to western education. Obviously, there was a consensus among policymakers both nationally and internationally that empowering women is a way towards achieving fairness equity and justice in the society. Empowerment means involvement, participation and having the ability to speak in what is happening in the society. However, the males have forgotten that "male and female are born to complement one another. It is known that no any nation can prosper positively if half of its resources (women) are not properly used in the national development. How then can a nation afford to under-equip and underutilize half of its resources (Women)? To accomplish this there is need for women empowerment and education in all the society because women are the mothers of all generations. [1a].

Gender inequality among men and women is a universal issue that needs to be overcome with a high sense of belonging. Though the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been meeting on how to enhance human development because of this annual index is established. The current 2015 Human Development Report disclosed the gender imbalance in work with men controlling the world's paid work and women triumph in the world's free work [2].

The continuous struggle for women empowerment by women, civil society organizations and other advocacy groups has compelled successive governments to adopt policies towards mainstreaming women into the core economic and political sectors. These policies include: Aid programmes like Family Support Programmes, woman empower schemes and affirmative action among others. Despite this policy and programmes little is relatively achieved in women participation in decision making in Nigeria in general [3].

Therefore, the purpose of the gender policy is to bring a gender perspective into all aspects of planning policy, developing legislation and transformation activities in Nigeria. Thus, the gender policy addresses the systematic inequalities between women and men in our society without ignoring the fundamental differences between them. More importantly, the gender policy prioritizes the empowerment of women as an entry point to

achieving gender equality and seek a balance of power relations between men and women for the optimum benefit of both parties [4]. This paper examined the gender imbalance in educational enrollment between women and men in northern Nigeria with reference to Yobe state and reflect on its causes and repercussions.

Objectives of the Study

- i. examines the cultural factors that affect women education and empowerment in Yobe state.
- ii. investigate the economic factors that affect women education and empowerment in Yobe state
- iii. identify the religion factors that deter women education and empowerment in Yobe state

Hypotheses

This paper is guided by the following hypotheses: -

Ho1. There is a significant relationship between cultural factors and gender disparity to women in education and empowerment in Yobe state.

Ho2. There is a significant correlation between economic factors and gender inequality in education and empowerment in Yobe state.

Ho3. There is a significant relationship between religious factors and gender differences to women in education and empowerment in Yobe state.

The Significance of the Study

The study is very significant in many ways because it will help women organizations to identify and understand that women are not adequately enrolled in education and empowered in the northern region more especially in Yobe state. Henceforth, the knowledge will help in making future decisions on matters related to women in education and revealed the gender disparity in education in the northern region with reference to Yobe state. This study would serve as a reference point to scholars conducting research on gender issues, as well as policy and decision-makers in all sectors.

Theoretical Framework

Empowerment theory was advocated by Sara Longwe, in 1990. She was a consultant on gender and development in Lusaka, Zambia. Basically, the supposition of this theory resides on empowering women's and gender fairness. The goal of the theory is to evaluate the level of women empowerment in all the societal activities. She believes that women's empowerment simply means permitting women to take part equally like men counterpart in every society, to participate equally in the process of national development, and to have power on the factors of production like every individual in all the society. Based on this the paper is investigating the level of women education and empowerment in Yobe state. Therefore, the theory centered on gender equity in all human endeavor in all the society.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature where data were acquired from some selected schools in the state. The data used in the paper was obtained through interview of 14 informants from two secondary schools and two tertiary institutions. All the data collected were analyzed thematically using NVIVO 12 software. The applicability was positively confirmed and authenticated through survey data.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW/CONCEPTUALIZATION

Empowerment refers to the processes by which those individuals who have been deprived of the ability to make choices and obtain such a skill. Thus, the notion of empowerment can be discovered through three faithfully interconnected magnitudes: these comprise resources, agency, achievements. The Agency signifies the processes by which choices are made and put into effect. It is hence central to the concept of Resources are the medium empowerment. through which agency is exercised; and achievements refer to the outcomes of agency [5].

Empowerment through education is ideally seen as a "continuous process with cognitive economic, political and psychological dimensions in order to achieve emancipation. Given the complexity of societal, political and international inter-rations" [6].

Gender is the proof of identity of the sexes mostly inclined by cultural factors such as religion, politics, social factors and education [7]. Similarly, [8], postulates that gender is the distribution of functions between men and women on the belief of societal perception of sex differences. In another word, it can be viewed as underlying factors that influence behavioral inclinations of male and female [9,10].

Women in Education

In many years back, several researchers have stressed the significance of women in social activities, but unfortunately, the most significant component for achieving these is through education. To support the

assumption [11a,12], reported that investing in women and girl's child education will upsurge output in the nation and will help in sustaining economic development harmony and goodness for all.

A study by [13], revealed that International Seminar on Women's Education and Empowerment was organized, and relevant issues related to women education was discussed in order to enhance the women situations in education in the short term, and improving the situation of women, in the short term, and in liberating women, in the long run. Moreover, the Seminar took place during a critical time at the UNESCO Institute for Education, where women's non-formal education was the major target.

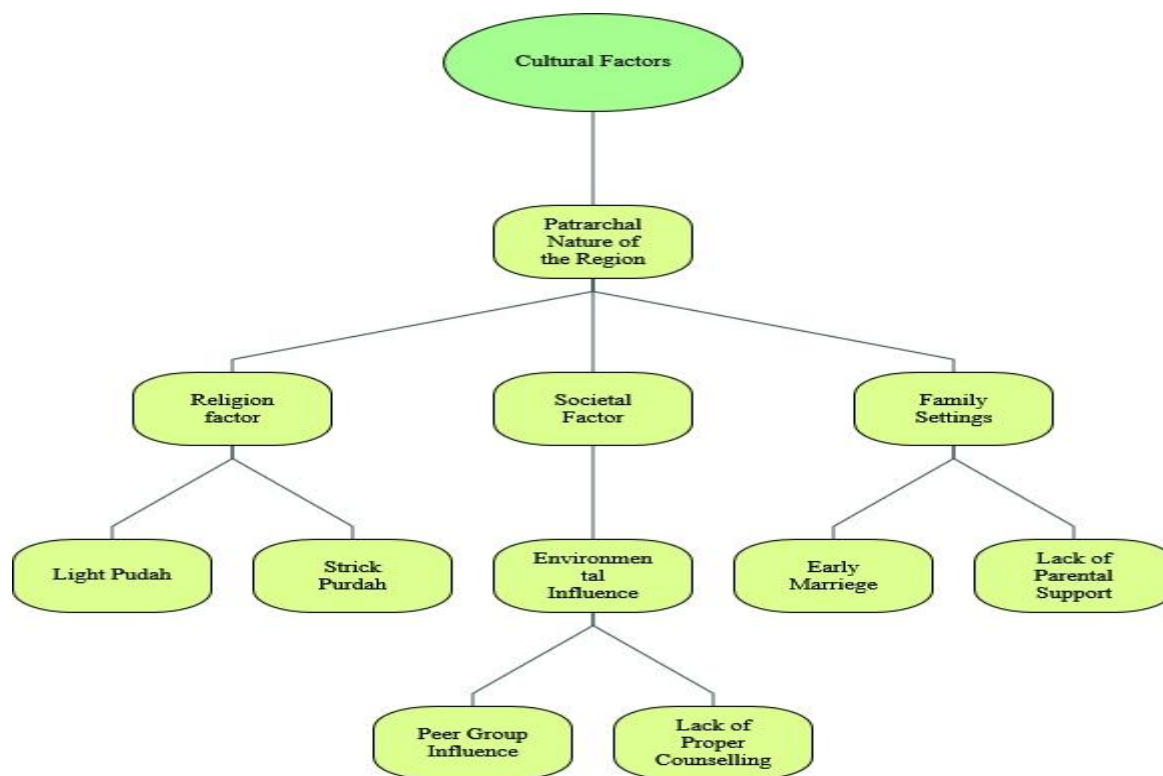
A study by [14a,15], disclosed that in the developing countries such as Nigeria, there is gender disparity at all stages of the education system. This is a replication of the gender label in the world, which people believe so much in male children as managers of genealogical sustenance. Similarly [16,14b,17], believe this stereotype has affected access to women education in general and precisely tertiary education.

Gender inequality is more pronounced in the northern region this corresponds with the view of [18,19], in their opinion gender disparity is as a result of many factors such as high level of illiteracy, religious factor, male domination, lack of men supports to women, economic dependency, misrepresentation by media and in literature and little or no presence in male-dominated professions are observed to be factors to gender disparity and women in education. In a related development [14c,20], emphasized that there is a wide gap between genders in all level of education, but is mostly found in women enrolment in tertiary schools. For instance, it is understood that women are very few in the science-based course, because of proper guidance and counseling by the parents and school's teachers right from secondary schools where students are expected to be guided on what to study after secondary school education.

However, it is noted that the level of women girls in primary schools is encouraging. This tally with British council report, which reported that much has been accomplished in the primary school's level in Nigeria context. For instance, in 2017, the ratio of girls and boy's enrolment in primary education was 40 to 60. While in the secondary schools the enrolment ratio is 35 to 65. In line with this a study by [21], pinpointed that a lot needs to be done in relation to women education, to them women need to be given special consideration at all level of education, to educate them to contribute their quota in national economic development of the nation. Not only that women are the mothers of the new generation, producers, home managers, social activist, home builders, life partners, and home keepers [1b].

Because of this, the National Universities Commission (NUC) in its annual reports disclosed that there is substantial rise in the female enrollment figures in Nigerian Universities as against the previous year's records. In line with this revelation it is understood that girls and women enrolment in post-primary schools in the Southern part of the country has virtually caught up with male counterpart. Education is the key for national development and a tool for impacting skills and attitudes relevant to the contribution of the individual concerned in the country [11b].

The study found that the economic situation has heightened this problem of women education and empowerment. It is noted that very few women have the economic power to sponsor themselves in education, though most of them depend on their husbands or close family relations to sponsor them to further their education, because of this it is observed that few women are opportune to further their education after secondary education, this is because of the economic factor.



Sources: NVIVO 12

Illustrating interviewees opinions or views on cultural challenges to women in education

Figure 1 above illustrating the views or perceptions of the interviewees on gender inequality in the education of the northern region particularly Yobe state. It is observed that women in the northern region are been dominated by culture and tradition that make men have power over women and restrict them to the domestic assignment. A study by [22,1c], unveiled that northern region is patriarchal in outlook, this is because of the religion, social, and family background that gave more power to men over women in the northern region at large and Yobe state in particular.

In view of the above revelation, the usual practices of various modern societies are unfair by overpowering women to men and disheartenment their self-esteem. The general effect of gender unfairness, cultural values practice and norms has rooted a sense of subordination in women and place them at a difficulty concerning their male counterpart in the socio-political division even in urban centers[23a].

Religion Factor

The study found that religion is one of the barriers to women education and empowerment in northern Nigeria A study by [24], disclosed that women in the northern region are been controlled by religion doctrine that denied most of the women from attending western education. Though there are some that allow their wives and female children to acquire education, they don't allow them to work in any organization because of Purdah, and there are some that do not allow their wives and females children to attend western education. This category of people falls under strict purdah, while those that allow their wives and females children to acquire western education falls under the light purdah.

In line with the above assumption a study by [25], unveiled that women have equal right and opportunities in all the society, and in turn, they depend on their complete contribution in all aspects of lives and workplace. Any attempts to confine women's right to knowledge, education, and training must be seen as not acceptable. Does and actions should be taken to overcome them.

Societal Factors

The society where people are living also contribute to women education and empowerment, for instance, people living in a place where most of them are not educated you hardly convince them to enroll their wives and female children into schools to acquire education or to send the matured women for any skills acquisition programs. However, the influence of the immediate environment also contributes to women education and empowerment. If the environment where they are born and brought up are not educated they would not have the vision and mission to enroll their wives and female's children to school because they all

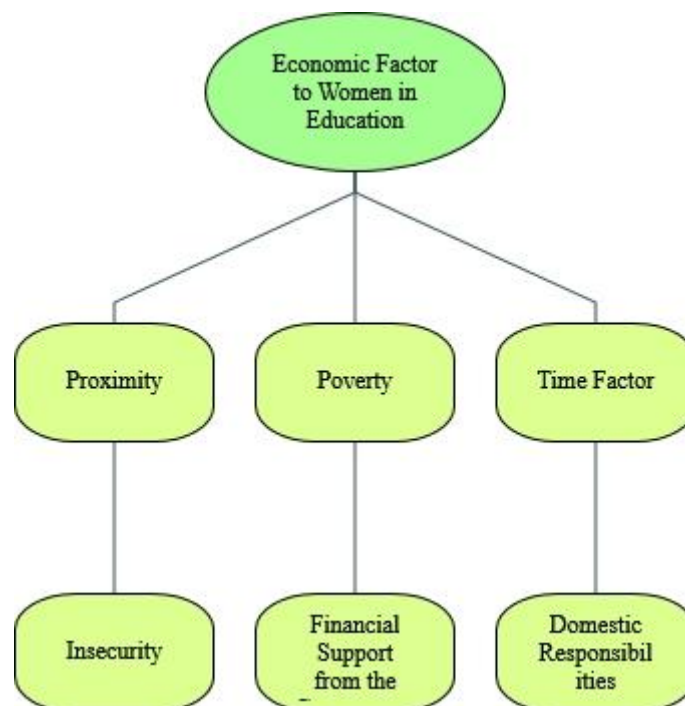
believe is a waste of time and resources. All these are because of peer group influence and lack of proper guidance and counseling.

From a practical viewpoint, it makes undisputable sense to educate the child who is most likely to make use of the asset, to secure a paid professional maturity, and secondly it would help in guaranteeing the security of the family memberships, as well as old parentages. It is understood that education is a major tool for growth and promoting development; connections between the family and educational levels as well as the welfare of the family [26].

Family Settings or Background

The study further found that the family setting or background also affects women education and empowerment in the northern region precisely Yobe state. It is observed that most of the people living in the old settlement together with their great ancestors do not want to enroll their wives and daughters to school because of the influence of the family, and if they are they must seek permission from the grandparents before they enroll them, which is very hard for these grandparents to accept the request. The study then found that most of the female girls are not sent to schools because the parents used to marry them out at an early age which is between 14-16 at most. And some parents are not willing and ready to sponsor a girl's education which they believe is time and resources wastage. The parent has forgotten that if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a nation, and when girls are educated the nation become strong and prosperous. The parents prepare to educate the boys not the girls because they believe that they would soon marry out the girls, but the boys will remain at home to maintain the family lineage, that is why some parents don't want to support women education and empowerment. Presently, there is pressure on nations undergoing structural adjustment programmes is growing the real factors for children of both genders getting an education. For instance, there is pressure on the family to find money to educate children by enrolling in school to complete their primary education [27].

Similarly, [23b], disclosed that in 1979, the United Nations General Assembly accepted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This resolution has variously been defined as the "Bible of women empowerment" and "Women's International Bill of Rights." Since its implementation, it has become a reference point for the women's movement in the request for gender parity



Sources: NVIVO 12

Illustrating interviewees perception on challenges to women education. The above map indicates the economic factor to women empowerment and education, these factors include but not limited to proximity, poverty and time constraint.

The study found that women are not actively enrolled in schools because of economic factors which include poverty, proximity, time constraint, lack of financial backing and domestic responsibility. From the

available information obtained from the informant it is observed that most women girls are not enrolled in education because of poverty, most of the parents are financially poor, so they cannot afford to sponsor boys and girl's education, because the belief is that the girls will be married to another family, while the boys will remain at home to maintain the family lineage.

The time factor, time is observed to be one of the barriers to women in education this was disclosed by the informant at the interviews session that most of the girl's times are spent at home in discharging domestic activities like taking care of the young ones and helping their mothers with the related domestic assignment. It is observed that most of their time is spent at home. Most of the women in the northern region believe that women are born as help made and assigned to domestic responsibilities.

Proximity, the informant disclosed that most of the girls are not enrolled in the school because of distance and insecurity in the state, they all explained that most of the schools are located in the outskirts especially in the rural areas, this discourages many parents from sending their daughters to schools. The above-mentioned factors manifest in the creation of some special schools for women and girl's education department in the ministry of education in many states in across the nation. Despite all government efforts women still lag considerably behind men in education [11c].

Findings

The paper found evidence of gender inequality in education and empowerment in northern Nigeria specifically northern region (Yobe state) where women are being dominated by culture, religion, poverty and other social vices. In precise, the three geopolitical zones in the state have lower education accomplishment as well as higher education compared to the rest of the states in the country. The study found evidence on gender inequalities in educational attainment in Yobe state, with women contributing proportionally more inequality section of the education. The paper also found a significant relation and correlation between poverty rate and education disparity among men and women in the northern states specifically Yobe state.

Research limitations

Every study has its own limitations, because there are few studies that absolutely assured or seen as dependable perfect this study is not different in spite of its results this study is limited to Yobe state only, the study cannot rule out contrary opinions from the other states in the northern region it would have been better if the study was extended to the northern region [28]. The paper found that there is a positive correlation between the poverty rate and education inequality.

Practical Implications

This paper recommends and call for the proper strategies and application of these strategies not to address gender parity in education in the northern region precisely Yobe state, and to tackle gender inequalities of all kind. This positive correlation between poverty rate, culture, religion, time and education disparity, the paper suggests the necessity to make better, fairness in educational opportunities across the state.

Social Implications

The necessity of changes in behaviors, standards, religions, and cultural and traditional practices that hindered girls when it comes to education. And, to counsel women on the significance of women in education and representation in social activities in all the work of lives.

Originality

One significant and new finding of this article is the existence of gender disparity in education in northern Nigeria and the realization of gender equality precisely in Yobe state.

Recommendations

- ✓ The found that poverty is a problem for women education and empowerment, it suggests that there is a need for women empowerment through education and other skills acquisition programmes that will help them to sustain a living.
- ✓ The state government should create a means of economic empowerment to enhance women education and participation in policy and decision making at all levels.
- ✓ There is a need for proper implementation of poverty alleviation programmes at both state and local governments and should implement in such a way that it will have a positive impact on women.
- ✓ The state and local government should keep on enlightening people on the importance of women education and empowerment because women are the mothers and home keepers.

- ✓ Religion leaders should also preach on the significance of women education and empowerment in the society.
- ✓ The state government should build training centers for both men and women, but with special treatment for women. Where they will be undergoing some skills acquisition training in order to empower them in the society.
- ✓ The government should establish more schools and equip them very well in both rural and urban centers to encourage women education at all levels.
- ✓ The existing schools should be rehabilitated and furnished with adequate modern facilities, like computer centers, laboratories, recreational services etc.
- ✓ There is a need for proper orientation and reorientation in both rural and urban centers to educate women on the importance of women education and empowerment.
- ✓ The government should encourage the few educated women by employing them in various governmental organizations this will encourage the many women to enroll themselves or children in schools.
- ✓ The government should provide adequate security in all the learning institutions to protect the lives and properties in the schools.
- ✓ The government should provide free and compulsory education for females at primary and secondary institutions

IV. CONCLUSION

The issue of women education and women empowerment has been the main attention of this paper. The paper discussed the concept of empowerment and the factors that affect women education and empowerment in Yobe state. Several factors were found as an obstacle to women education and empowerment. It discussed how and why women are not adequately enrolled in schools to acquire knowledge in the state. The study recommends that government need to make a policy in line with women education and empowerment to encourage women education as well as empowerment across the state.

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