

FACTORS AFFECTING FEMALE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYIGBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This study examined the factors that affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey. The target population for the study consisted of all the teachers and parents in Oyigbo Local Government Area, Purposive sampling method was used to select 10 secondary schools, of which 13 teachers were randomly chosen from each school and 7 parents within the school environment. The sampling size thereby constituted 200 respondents. The data collected were analyzed with frequency distribution, descriptive statistics and Independent sample test (IST). Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels. The findings revealed that many factors affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government area of Rivers State. The challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State are numerous. There are many ways of reducing the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State. The results also show that there is no significant difference between male and female and between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government Area, Rivers State. It was recommended among others that Government should provide the enabling environment for learning. Facilities like laboratories, libraries, sporting equipment, adequate number of teachers, academic requirements among others. School counsellors should invite and visit parents regularly to foster their interest in children education.

Keywords: Female students, academic performance, secondary schools.

Introduction

Education is an apparatus that enables people to actively contribute in the development process. Education is a basic human right to everyone regardless of their gender, race or economic standing as it is the means to sustainable social, economic and political development (Engin-Demir, 2009). The input of females in socio-economic growth programs depends on their educational backgrounds. Female education is significant not just to attain personal benefits but also for the improvement in the areas of human resource development of the society (Egenti & Omoruyi, 2011).

Cary, et.al (2008) cited in Tadesse (2009) defines academic achievement as performance on task with measures including comprehension, quality and accuracy of answers of tests,

quality and accuracy of problem solving, frequency and quantity of desired outcome, level of reasoning and critical thinking, creativity, recall and retention, and transfer of tasks. The social and economic development of the country is directly linked with students' academic performance. Poor educational achievements may be a barrier to overcome the vicious circle of poverty among humankind, especially among women (OECD, 2011).

The stakeholders' major concern in education is poor performance. This is because it leads to tragic wastage of human, social and economic potentials of countries worldwide. Many factors such as lack of facilities in school, lack of teachers, indiscipline, unfavourable home environment, absenteeism and repetition, low intelligence and anxiety do cause poor academic achievement (Ndirangu, 2007). Demeke and Ashagrie (2017) observed that age, gender and socio-economic background were responsible for difference performance. It was also observed that negative attitude of both male and female teachers towards female students' affect their ability to perform well in various subjects (Aragaw, 2016) and the quality of teachers has a greater impact on girls education than boys. On the other hand, tasks like homework, tutoring, punishment, sex ratio, and class size have slightly different effects on girls than boys (Mensch & Lloyd in USAID, 2008).

Moreover, Yisak, Workneh and Asham (2009) added that a scarcity of schools, qualified teachers and conducive learning environments are contributory factors. Schools often have shortages of girl-friendly facilities, such as clean latrines and clean water. Besides, long distances to schools and insecure roads makes parents keep their daughters at home to defend them from sexual abuse and other violence. Yisak et al (2009) cited in Abduljelil (2010) stated the major influencing factors for female students are social and cultural factors. Factors like early marriage, abduction and rape are the foremost reasons for girls not going to school or for dropout as well as their low academic performance. Parental and societal attitudes towards education for girls, and traditional practices are amongst the other reasons.

Inequalities in education between males and females extend across a wide range of dimensions including enrolment, completion and performance. Studies on gender disparities in academic performance have pointed to genetic differences (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Also, poverty and family background account for the difference in academic performance between boys and girls (Chessman et al, 2006). Scholars such as Desai et al (2008) cited in Abduljelil (2010) stated poor academic performance, retention, lack of teacher support and guidance, disliking school or teachers, and taking on adult responsibilities such as work and childcare have been found to contribute to female lower achievement and dropping out of school. Parental educational attainment, parental involvement, household income and household wealth have informed family contributions to educational attainment.

Establishing the determinants of academic performance is pivotal in reducing the broader inequalities in society which reflect the fact that women are lagging behind men in educational attainment and outcomes (UNESCO, 2003).

In spite of interventions of various stakeholders including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) amidst religious bodies to achieve gender equity in education, females education has continued to fall short of males at all levels

of schooling especially at secondary level (Kassa, 2006). Although studies in developed countries have established some factors that are responsible for poor performance of females in schools, specific research remains to be done region by region considering the uniqueness in culture, social and economies. This research therefore sought to find out the factors affecting females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria like other west-Africa countries; economic, social, cultural, school related and institutional factors affect females' academic achievement. Some of the socio-economic and socio-cultural factors are; family structure, parental occupation, parental education, parental attitude and parental support. Despite the fact that the Rivers state government introduced free education in secondary schools, female students performance is upsetting despite increase in access. Females constituted higher percentage of out of school number in Nigeria, greater number of hawkers, significant number of child labour, victim of early marriage and unwanted pregnancy.

All hands should be on deck to find out the factors that affect female education and their low academic achievement. This research therefore examined the factors that affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What factors affect females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state?
2. What are the challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state?
3. How can the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area be reduced?

Hypotheses

H₁. There is no significant difference between male and female on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state.

H₂. There is no significant difference between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary school in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state.

Method

The research design adopted was descriptive survey. It is a precursor to quantitative research designs as it provides the general overview giving some valuable pointers as to what variables are worth testing quantitatively. The target population for the study consisted of all the teachers and parents in Oyigbo Local Government area of Rivers State. Purposive sampling method was used to select 10 secondary schools, of which 13 teachers were randomly chosen from each school and 7 parents from within the school environment. The sampling size thereby constituted 200 respondents.

The major research instrument(s) adopted in the study was the questionnaire titled: Factor that Affect Female Education Inventory (FAFEI). It was constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, Section A sought to find out the bio-data of the respondents, B (Factors that affect female education), Section C addressed the challenges militating against female education while section D dwells on ways to ameliorate the challenges. The 4 likert type scale of strongly agreed [SA] 4 points, agreed [A] 3points, strongly disagreed [AD] 2 points and disagreed [D] 1point were used to rate the reaction of the respondents to the items contained in the questionnaires. 2.5 weighted marks was used to assess the outcome of analysis.

The researcher constructed the questionnaire and gave it to research expert in the Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria to determine the validity. Professional corrections and comments were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument to ensure that it had content of validity.

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, pilot study was conducted by administering it on a sample of 30 respondents in Etche local government area of Rivers state, which was not part of the original sample population. The exercise was repeated in two weeks interval and the data from both tests were analysed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. The coefficient of reliability has been estimated at 0.81 which was suitable for the studies.

The research instrument was administered and collected from the respondents by the researcher. After distribution of the questionnaire, respondents were given a week to fill out the questionnaire. This time frame was given in order to give enough time to the respondents to reflect on the items on the questionnaire and ensure valid responses. All the 200 copies of the questionnaires were administered to the respondents, 187 were correctly filled and retrieved, which constituted 93% success. The data collected were analyzed with frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, one way ANOVA and Independent sample test (IST). Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels. The statistics were chosen for the analysis because of their robust nature of comparing both the variances and means of two independent samples.

Results

Research Question 1: What factors affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the factors that affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state

S/N	Factors that actually affect females' academic achievement	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Q1	School location	187	581.00	3.11	.74	Agreed
Q2	Parental education	187	591.00	3.18	.64	Agreed
Q3	Parental economic status	187	591.00	3.16	.68	Agreed
Q4	Parental social class	187	587.00	3.14	.59	Agreed
Q5	Parental income	187	609.00	3.26	.57	Agreed
Q6	Peer pressure	187	595.00	3.12	.60	Agreed
Q7	Youthful disposition	187	613.00	3.28	.59	Agreed
Q8	Early marriage	187	571.00	3.05	.68	Agreed
Q9	School phobia	187	519.00	2.78	.83	Agreed
Q10	Environmental factors	187	513.00	2.74	.87	Agreed
	Total	187	5770	3.08	.68	Agreed

Table 1 revealed the descriptive statistics on the factors that affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state. The analysis indicated a total sum of 5770, an average mean of 3.08 and standard deviation of .68. The average mean of 3.08 is higher than bench mean was above 2.5. The implication is that many factors that affect females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state..

Research Question 2: What are the challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government, Rivers state?

Table 2: Mean rating on the challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in Oyigbo local government, Rivers state

S/N	Challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Q11	Child labour	187	555.00	2.97	.74	Agreed
Q12	Single parent homes	187	589.00	3.15	.57	Agreed
Q13	Poverty	187	575.00	3.07	.64	Agreed
Q14	Religious belief	187	525.00	2.81	.83	Agreed
Q15	First child in the family	187	535.00	2.86	.79	Agreed
Q16	Parental indiscipline status	187	497.00	2.66	.89	Agreed
Q17	Cultural beliefs	187	479.00	2.56	.79	Agreed
Q18	Fear of academic failure	187	481.00	2.57	.78	Agreed
Q19	Gender preference	187	479.00	2.56	.73	Agreed
Q20	Unwanted pregnancy	187	636.00	3.40	.79	Agreed
	Total	1870	5351	2.86	.76	Agreed

Table 2 revealed the Mean rating on the challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state. Unwanted pregnancy top the list with an average mean of 3.40, following by single parent homes (3.15), poverty, (3.07), child labour (2.97) and lastly by gender preference as shown in the above table with mean scores of 2.86. . The average mean of 2.86 is higher than bench mean was above 2.5.The implication is that the challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state are numerous.

Research Question 3: How can the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state be reduced?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on how the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state be reduced

S/N	How the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools can be reduced	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Q21	Establishment of schools nearness to the people	187	621.00	3.32	.74	Agreed
Q22	Parental motivation for females	187	641.00	3.43	.74	Agreed
Q23	Providing academic materials for students	187	628.00	3.36	.72	Agreed
Q24	Encouraging female children to imitate good models	187	638.00	3.41	.70	Agreed
Q25	Proper discipline of children	187	631.00	3.37	.78	Agreed
Q26	Good upbringing	187	622.00	3.33	.75	Agreed
Q27	Youthful disposition	187	605.00	3.26	.78	Agreed
Q28	Preventing early marriage for female children	187	647.00	3.46	.65	Agreed
Q29	Ensuring gender equality	187	619.00	3.31	.76	Agreed
Q30	Improvement of school environment	187	626.00	3.35	.70	Agreed
	Total	1870	6278	3.36	0.73	Agreed

Table 3 revealed the descriptive statistics on how the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state could be reduced. The analysis indicated a total sum of 6278, an average mean of 3.36 and standard deviation of .73. The average mean of 3.36 is higher than bench mean was above 2.5. The implication is that there are many ways of reducing the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis1: There is no significant difference between male and female on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government, Rivers state.

Table 4: T-test Statistics on the difference between male and female on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government, Rivers state

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Df	t	Sig.
Male	108	1.29	.45449	.04373			
Female	79	1.38	.48842	.05495	1.134	185	0.135

At 0.05 confidence level

The result in Table 4 revealed a t-test statistics on the difference between male and female on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state, at t (1.134), df= 185, P>05. Hypothesis 1 which states that there is no significant difference between male and female on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government of Rivers state was accepted. The implication is that there is no significant difference between male and female on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state as indicated in their mean scores differences of 1.29 and 1.38.

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government, Rivers state.

Table 5: T-test statistics on the difference between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo Local Government Area, Rivers State

Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Df	t	Sig.
Public school	126	1.39	.49	.04			
Private school	61	1.49	.50	.06	1.32	185	0.80

At .05 significant level

The result in Table 5 revealed a t-test statistics on the difference between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state, at t 1.32, df= 185, P>05. Hypothesis 2 which states that there is no significant difference between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state was accepted. The implication is that there is no significant difference between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government, Rivers state as indicated in their mean scores differences of 1.39 and 1.49.

Discussion of findings

Research question one sought to determine the factors that affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state. The outcome was that many factors that affect females' academic achievement in government

secondary schools Oyigbo local government area. The outcome of the study agreed with Ndirangu (2007) who uncovered that many factors such as lack of facilities in school, lack of teachers, indiscipline, unfavourable home environment, absenteeism and repetition, low intelligence and anxiety do cause poor academic achievement.

Research question two sought to evaluate the challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state. The study revealed that challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state are numerous. The outcome of the study agreed with Yisak, Workneh, and Asham (2009) who added that school related factors like scarcity of good schools, qualified teachers and conducive learning environments are challenging factors.

Research question three was: How can the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government, Rivers state be reduced? The finding was that there are many ways of reducing the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government, Rivers state. UNESCO (2003) asserted that class size, conducive classroom environments, levels of teachers' qualification, continuing support for student-centred learning, ongoing professional development, teachers' working conditions, and student access to languages used at school and the likes play a great role on females' academic performance.

Hypothesis one analysis revealed a non significant difference between male and female on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area, Rivers state. The finding agreed with Mensch and Lloyd (2008) who expressed that tasks like homework, tutoring, punishment, sex ratio, and class size have slightly different effects on girls than boys. On the contrary, Aragaw (2016) noted that negative attitudes of both male and female teachers towards girls' abilities to perform well in different subjects and the quality of teachers have a greater impact on girls education than boys. Demeke and Ashagrie (2017) observed that pupil age, gender and socio-economic background were responsible for difference in pupil performance. In spite of interventions of various governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious bodies to achieve gender equity in education, girls education has continued to fall short of boys at all levels of schooling more so at secondary level (Kassa, 2006).

Implication of the Study to counsellors

The outcome of the study would help school counsellors be equipped with the information that would adequately encourage female education. School counsellors would organize individual and group counselling for female students where the importance of education to their well-being will be emphasized. This no doubt will reduce female dropout rate and encourage their academic achievements.

Conclusion

This study examined the factors that actually affect females' academic achievement in government secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state. The findings revealed that many factors affect females' academic achievement in government secondary

schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state. The challenges faced by females in their pursuit of education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state are numerous. There are many ways of reducing the factors militating against females' education in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government area of Rivers state. There is no significant difference between male and female and between teachers and parents on the factors affecting females' academic achievement in secondary schools in Oyigbo local government of Rivers state. However, government should vigorously pursue and enlighten the public adequately on the importance of female education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the research findings:

1. Government should vigorously pursue and enlighten the public adequately on the importance of female education.
1. Government should provide the enabling environment for learning. Facilities like laboratories, libraries, sporting equipment, adequate number of teachers etc.
2. Government should provide employment opportunities to enable parents meet their children academic requirements.
3. School counsellors should invite and visit parents regularly to foster their interest in children education.

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