

## FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR FEMALE ENROLMENT FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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### **Abstract**

*Despite the recent advances made by women in various domain of public life, the numbers of women who seek for postgraduate programme in Nigerian Universities are on the decrease. Though many started the programme but were unable to complete them due to some cultural, religious, economic and manmade factors. This paper is examining factors affecting female participation in postgraduate studies. The study adopted the descriptive survey research method using questionnaire. The study population is from eight faculties out of thirteen faculties in the University of Ibadan. The University of Ibadan is chosen because of her dynamic policy of becoming a postgraduate institution. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 480 female postgraduate students purposively. This was to ensure easy accessibility of sample and true representation in the university. Descriptive statistics of mean, simple percentage and standard deviation was used to analyze the data collected. The finding revealed that economic factors such as spouses' poor encouragement constitutes barrier to female participation in postgraduate studies with a mean score of 2.32 which represents 95.2%. Other factors that affected female participation in postgraduate studies include; material resources, cultural/social factors and students' attitudes/knowledge on research work. The paper concludes by stating that females in Nigeria should wake from their slumber and become active towards becoming highly educated citizens' as well champion critical development in building female capacities in all fields of life. Recommendations were made based on the finding of the study.*

**Keywords:** Postgraduate, female, students, factors and participation

**Introduction**

Education in many societies is designed mainly by government to serve as a social mechanism through which individual differences emanating from cognitive and socio-economic incapacities can be managed and adjusted to achieve social equality. For example, societies design and implement educational policies to help illiterates acquire social and economic skills which enables them survive in their societies (Masanya 2007). This is why right from the creation of man, education was structured formally or informally to uplift every member of the society from the state of ignorance and discrimination. In Nigeria, education was identified as the main instrument for achieving the objectives of her National Development Plans through series of educational principles and policies aimed at becoming a self-reliant nation where the economy is diversified and citizens have full opportunities to develop their potentials (NPE, 2008).

Conversely, the girl child in Nigeria has had various challenges in order to obtain equal education as their male counterpart. Several advances made by women in various areas of public life in the past two decades, are still a long way from participating on the same footing in academia as men. The factors that affect their (females) participation in higher education particularly in postgraduate studies vary from one country to another. But education remains the only crucial means to empower a woman to participate fully in the development of their individual countries and as well improve their well being (Okeke, 2013). The foregoing seem to imply that the acquisition of postgraduate qualification by females is seen as an appropriate avenue for personal and national growth. By description, postgraduate education means the education pursued after the first degree award (Saint, 2009).

Postgraduate education consists of two levels; Master and Doctorial levels. It is a growth process by which students need to develop as scholars under the thoughtful support and guidance of the institution's experts. At the postgraduate (PG) level of education, research skills are acquired and new knowledge is produced (Saint, 2009). According to the Council on Higher Education, (2009), the proportion of female postgraduate enrolment increased significantly for doctoral degree, from 47% in 2006 to about 54% in 2007. But the number of graduates produced by higher education was fewer than should be, especially among female gender.

The reason for the stumpy participation of females in PG studies according to Nkinyang (2009), is principally economic in nature. The submission of Nkinyang, (2009), was that since 70% of Nigerians are poor, most parents who have limited resources only invest in male education due to high cost of education. Also, Okeke, (2013), also noted that the gap in access to postgraduate education in Nigeria indicated that where there are financial stress, males were usually given preference over female in progressing their education or schooling. Another serious factor that affects female education in Nigeria is religion, custom and beliefs by some societies. For instance, the eastern, northern and some other parts of the country believe that educating females is wasteful because it benefits the family to which the female will get married to rather than her own family. Aside these, Glazer (2007), considered other factors as inadequate physical infrastructure, poor accommodation facilities, supervisors relationship/interpersonal conflicts which affect female participation to education. Unless these challenges are addressed and policies put in place to change most of the adverse conditions, the quality of education will continue to suffer and would likely be followed by increase in drop-out rate and loss of interest in female postgraduate studies.

#### **Statement of Problem**

The problem women education reveals that fewer women than men are being educated giving stakeholders some issues to worry about. Despite the fact that women account for almost half of Nigeria's total population, their educational enrolment in comparison with the male child have been and is still being neglected to a large extent. Some factors further affect women which include; family responsibilities, role and duties of womanhood which is wife, child breeder etc consequently affecting their performances in postgraduate studies. In most cases, looking at the foregoing, most women consider it a big achievement haven attained the first degree status. Several female students on postgraduate studies in Nigeria have dropped their research projects along the way as their progress wane. The reasons being; unkind relationship with supervisors, poor research preparation, poor research skills/academic writing, uncomfortable events both within and outside academics that hindered the progress of their study and delay caused

by constant changes on research topic. Another core issue is sexual harassment.

The gender difference issue is another problem. Though several researches have been carried out on these issues, the problem also seem to improve with each passing phase of research and generations. The gender and wage gap between male and female later in life can partly be traced to disparities in the amount of schooling they received from childhood according to some researchers. However, the gap needs to be bridged hence this study as new factors are emerging. This study therefore, examined factors responsible for poor female participation in postgraduate studies in Nigeria using University of Ibadan as a case.

### **Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of this study is to examine factors responsible for poor female participation in postgraduate studies in the University of Ibadan. Specifically this study intends to investigate;

- i. The contributions of economic factors to female gender participation in postgraduate studies at the university of Ibadan.
- ii. if any relationship exist among the contributions of social and cultural factors to female students participation in PG studies at the university of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does economic factors affect female participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?
2. What impact does availability of material resources have on female participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?
3. Do cultural and social factors influence female participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?
4. What are the effects of female students' knowledge and attitude to research in their participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan?

### Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted to generate data on factors responsible for female poor participation in postgraduate studies in Nigerian universities. The study adopted the Stratified random sampling technique to select eight out of the thirteen faculties in the university with a population of 3,253 postgraduate female students. A purposive sampling technique was then used to select four hundred and eighty (480) students from the eighty faculties. The faculties include: Science, Education, Art, Social Sciences, Pharmacy, Law, Agriculture and Forestry and Technology. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire that elicited responses on respondents biodata and items on female participation in PG studies at the University of Ibadan (UI). The instrument was validated by colleagues in the institute of education of the university of Ibadan and Nigerian Social and Economic Research (NISER) for face and content validities before administration. Instrument consistency was established through a trial test on similar subjects outside the target population using the Crombach Alpha statistic that yielded 'r-0.87' considered high enough. The data collected for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### Findings

The findings of the study are shown below.

#### Research Question 1

To what extent do economic factors affect female participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Effect of economic factors on female participation in postgraduate studies**

S/N	Item	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	- X	Std. dev.
1	I receive encouragement and financial support from my spouse.	170 35.4	144 30.0	100 20.8	66 13.8	2.87	1.049
2	The financial commitment in my family affects my studies	20 4.2	94 19.6	206 42.9	160 33.3	1.95	0.834

3	My home environment is not conducive and encouraging	36 7.5	92 19.2	202 42.0	150 31.3	2.03	0.898
4	The organization i work gave me the permission to further my study	96 20.0	148 30.8	152 31.7	84 17.5	2.53	1.002
5	The distance from my home does not encourage me to further my study.	54 11.3	118 24.6	170 35.4	138 28.7	2.18	0.977
Average Mean Score		2.316 (95.2%)					

The responses on the effect of economic factors on female participation in postgraduate studies reveal that 65.4% with a mean of 2.87 agree that they receive encouragement from their spouses to complete their research work, 23.8% representing a mean of 1.95 agreed that their financial commitment in the family affected their research work, 26.7% with a mean of 2.03 agreed with the statement that their home environment is not conducive and encouraging for their research work activities, on the other hand, 50.8% which is an average of the respondents also agreed with fact that their organization of work gave them the support and encouragement to run their postgraduate programme, while 35.9% of the respondents was confident that the distance from their home to their place of programme does not affect their studies.

All these show that economic factors such as encouragement from spouses, finance, home environment, organization's support et cetera, have positive impact on female participation in postgraduate studies in Nigerian Universities. This is revealed as represented in the table above with an average mean score of 2.316 representing 95.2%.

**Research Question 2**

What impact does availability of material resources have on female participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Impact of material Resources on Female Participation in Postgraduate Studies**

S/N	Item	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	– X	Std. dev.
1	The university library is well equipped	86 17.9	208 43.4	132 27.6	54 11.3	2.89	0.897
2	I have access to internet facility in the school	100 20.8	160 33.3	156 32.5	64 13.3	2.62	0.961
3	There is stable power supply in the school	36 7.5	192 40.0	202 41.7	52 10.8	2.45	0.785
4	The accommodation facility in the school is inadequate	38 7.9	124 25.9	266 55.4	52 10.8	2.31	0.769
5	The lecture halls are not conducive enough for academic activities	42 8.8	104 21.7	244 50.7	90 18.8	2.20	0.846
<b>Average Mean Score</b>				2.45 (85.2%)			

The result in Table 2 reveal that 61.3% representing a mean of 2.89 agreed that the university library was well equipped and have the facilities that cannot hinder or delay the completion of their research work. On the second item on the table, 54.2% of the respondents (mean= 2.62) agreed that the students have access to internet facilities any time they need to check for information on-line for their research work. Accordingly, the table further revealed the chronicle of poor power supply in the country as it also affects the academic system as only 47.5% of the respondents (mean = 2.44) agreed on the item that

there is stable power supply within the university community. The table further reveals that 33.8% (mean = 2.31) agreed that the accommodation facility in the school is inadequate such that intending female student who are not comfortable with the facilities may decide to turn down the admission. This is in line with (Donald and Lazarus, 2008) position that the main responsibility of these institutions is to ensure that the services and facilities provided are always in appropriate manner. They further expressed that this is to enable female students to work and study in a conducive and comfortable environment. According to them the benefit of having good resource (accommodation) is that it can be a factor in students choosing the institution to pursue their study at the postgraduate education. The situation where the existing infrastructures (lecture theatres, electricity, laboratories, toilet system, accommodation etc.) are bad, such will discourage and even make study difficult for the female students and those intending to pursue their programmes in the university. Similarly, less than 30.5% of the respondents agreed that the lecture halls are not conducive for learning and as such cannot enhance their research work. The average mean score of the impact of availability of material (2.45) which translates to 85.2% is an indication that resource availability has positive impact on female participation in postgraduate studies.

### Research Question 3

Do cultural and social factors influence female participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Effect of cultural and social factor on female participation in postgraduate studies**

S/N	Item	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	– X	Std. dev.
1	Early marriage discourages female participation in postgraduate studies	56 11.6	212 44.2	168 35.0	44 9.2	2.58	0.814
2	Societal perception about female education hinders their participation in	38 7.9	152 31.7	230 47.9	60 12.5	2.35	0.799



S/N	Item	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	– X	Std. dev.
	postgraduate studies.						
3	Negative religious practices discourage female quest for postgraduate programmes	80 16.7	202 42.1	162 33.8	36 7.5	2.68	0.839
4	Some religious doctrine affects female participation in postgraduate studies	38 7.9	100 20.8	216 45.0	126 26.3	2.10	0.883
5	Parental gender preference affect my participation in postgraduate studies	32 6.7	82 17.1	236 49.2	130 27.1	2.03	0.843
<b>Average Mean Score</b>		<b>2.43 (83.6%)</b>					

Table 3 shows that early marriage with a (mean = 2.58) leads to motherhood which do not allow female students participate fully in postgraduate studies. It also revealed that the communities' belief that the tendency of female postgraduate education will have negative influence on the dignity and morality of female's as shown by 60.4% of the respondents who disagreed with the statement. Consequently, 39.6% (mean=2.35) of the respondents agreed that negative religious practice such as seclusion after marriage disallow female participation in postgraduate studies. In the same manner, 58.8% of the respondents also agreed that some other religious doctrine do not encourage most of the females to participate in postgraduate studies. Contrary to general perception of gender preference by parents, over three quarter of the respondents disagreed that parental gender preference affects female participation in postgraduate programmes. In general the table shows that majority of the respondents agreed that culture and social factors have various degree of effect on female participation in

postgraduate studies. The average mean of this is given as 2.43 which translate to 83.6%.

#### Research Question 4

What are the effects of female students' knowledge and attitude to research in their participation in postgraduate studies at the University of Ibadan?

**Table 4: Effect of Female Students Knowledge and Attitude in Postgraduate Studies.**

S/N	Item	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	- X	Std. dev.
1	I find it difficult at times to get information needed from the internet	38 7.9	96 20.0	218 45.4	128 26.7	2.09	0.882
2	I don't have enough knowledge required in writing research project	38 7.9	148 30.8	194 40.4	100 20.8	2.51	2.934
3	I have negative attitude to research work	32 6.7	92 19.2	230 47.9	126 26.3	2.06	0.848
4	There is no much time set aside for my research work	38 7.9	148 30.8	204 42.5	90 18.8	2.28	0.859
5	My family is responsible for my negative attitude towards research work	26 5.4	34 7.1	158 32.9	262 54.6	1.63	0.838
<b>Average Mean Score</b>		<b>2.11</b>					

The above table shows the effect of female students' knowledge and attitude and how it affects their participation in postgraduate studies. It was observed that over 47% of the respondents have difficulty in searching the internet for needed information on their project work. Item two on the table revealed that over 38% of the respondents also

do not have enough knowledge required in conducting a research project. It was evident that about 25.9% of the respondents who are female postgraduate students agreed to have negative attitude to research work due to its time consuming nature. It was also apparent on the table that about 38.8% of the respondents had limited time set aside for their research work. On how the family constitutes barrier to female student research work, most of the respondents (three quarter) disagree that their families constitute a negative attitude towards their research work. The average mean score for the above table is given as 2.11 which indicate that female students knowledge and attitude towards research work, has no positive effect on female participation in postgraduate studies.

### **Conclusion**

From the findings of the study, it was evident that several factors hindered women participation in postgraduate studies. Difficulties in sponsorship seemed to be the main hindrance. Other barriers include child bearing and family responsibilities, these factors lead mostly to poor performance among female postgraduate students. The perception of the society about women who leave their supposed family roles to further their studies is yet another big challenge on women who crave for postgraduate studies. Hence, from the findings of the study one can infer that in the course of female higher degree studies, female postgraduate students face many problems and difficulties which lead to their poor participation in postgraduate studies when compared to their male counterparts. This corresponds with Cross (2005) position, who stated that so many other things can interfere with women commitment to further their education. These according to him include; marriage, pregnancy, moving away with her husband and custom of the land.

It is therefore, not out of place to say that female low participation in academia, public services, politics and heavy entrepreneurial activities are due to these myriad of factors that inhibit their progress to be at parity or even close to the male dominance. Thus, these have been identified to be responsible for the persistent low number of females in education. Except urgent actions are taken to address this ugly situation by unraveling most of the religious, cultural and economic slavery placed on women, the nation will continue to

have a dwindling fortune as a result of their neglect. Accordingly, females in Nigeria should awake from their slumber and become active towards becoming highly educated citizens' as well champion critical development in building female capacities in all fields of life.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations are derived from the findings of the study which are intended to mitigate the barriers and improve female students' participation in postgraduate studies.

1. The resource allocation to universities should be reviewed yearly to meet the resource requirements of the university towards meeting quality education standards.
2. Government at all levels should provide grants for research and scholarship to postgraduate students.
3. Standard academic infrastructures that will enhance quality education should be provided in the universities and adequate arrangements made for their routine servicing and general maintenance.
4. Accommodation should be provided on the campus for all research supervisors and postgraduate students (on request) so as to improve the interaction between students and their supervisors.
5. Standard libraries, laboratories and workshops with their attendant staff and stock should be provided.
6. Effort should be made by the government and various NGOs to create awareness among women on how to get full sponsorship for postgraduate studies as well as making sure that the available sponsorship planned for women reaches target group.
7. Cultural and Religious practices whereby females are withdrawn from postgraduate studies or any educational programme because of marriage should be discouraged.
8. Daycare centres should be provided within the university environment in order to put a stop to the practice of female students having to stay at home after delivery for so long to look after their children.
9. There should be provision of adequate educational facilities to encourage the female participation in postgraduate studies.

It is the belief of the researcher that if these recommendations are implemented, female participation in postgraduate studies will improve.

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