

CHALLENGES FACED BY ADULT FEMALE STUDENTS IN SOME FACULTIES: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

All over the world today, learning has become the vehicle of welfare and prosperity and the access to it becomes crucial for economic and social inclusion. Like everywhere else in the world, the female adults in Nigeria are confronted with a lot of complex problems which has a continuous effect on our nation economically, socially and culturally. The purpose of this study was to explore the concerns of adult female Students in some faculties in Nigeria. The population included in the study was a convenient sample (N=200) of women who attended part time programmes in five higher institutions in Ogun State. Upon consent, participants were

asked to complete the “Adult Female Students’ Concerns Scale” (AFCS). Data was analyzed using simple percentage, multiple regression. The participants demonstrated a mean value of 57.3 (SD 18.9) representing a strong conviction to academically improve themselves and a mean value of 69.7 representing a strong conviction on motivational factors. The results indicated that there is a meaningful difference between individual and environmental barriers to female education and order of effectiveness of barriers based on their age and marital status.

Key Words: *female education, adult female students, concerns, educational motivator, individual and environmental barriers*

INTRODUCTION

Education has been the bedrock of developments all the world over. Education is therefore valued all over the world for its contribution to national development through provision of an appropriate human resource that helps to spur productivity and eliminate, series of bondages plaguing the society, poverty and ignorance. Education of girls, in particular, contributes to various aspects of their lives such as increased productivity, family health and nutrition, reduced fertility rates and related child mortality rates (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2002). Olaniyonu, Adekoya & Gbenu, (2008) affirm that the educational standards set up for the school must be challenging to meet the needs of the students and the society at large.

Education enables individuals to fix themselves up in the society into which they have found themselves. It equips individuals with the ability that will enable them explore the world, manipulate it for their survival and establish themselves. Potentials deposited in individuals are exposed through education so that individuals can acquire training and knowledge in a profession and earn a living (which is a continuous exercise) and education enables individuals cultivate good habits and develop the right attitude to work and life as good citizens (Gbenu, 2012). Gender involves the psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of being male or female. A gender role is a set of expectations that prescribes how females or males should think, act, and feel. The concept of gender-role classification involves a personality-trait-like categorization of a person (Santrock, 2005). The importance of considering gender in context is nowhere more apparent than when examining what is culturally prescribed behaviour for females and males in different countries around the world (Gibbons, 2000). In the social roles view, women have less

power and status than men do and control fewer resources. The social cognitive theory of gender emphasizes that individual's gender development influenced by their observation and imitation of others' gender behaviour, as well as by rewards and punishments of gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behaviour. Our society, education industry as well influences gender roles.

The communiqué of Gender Budgeting Initiative (2003) highlights the importance of access to quality education as both a basic need (one which is necessary to the fulfillment of individual's personhood) and also a strategic need (that which will yield access to other opportunities such as health, employment and political awareness). It also sees access to quality education by all regardless of class or gender as a critical element of development as education helps to nurture democracy and promote peace. Adult females come back to school in Nigeria and most developing countries is that they want to adapt better to their environment, be more successful in the developed economy and failed to be regarded as second citizen or liability in the kingdom of men. Thus, the emphasis on education may be seen in the context of the development of a knowledge economy or a learning society, where learning and development of a new qualification is the mean for maintaining and developing individual and social welfare and wealth (Field 2006). Desjardins (2006) cited in Papa-Gusho (2012) "As learning becomes the vehicle of welfare and prosperity the access to learning becomes crucial for economic and social inclusion".

However, work conflicts and home and family responsibilities (which typically don't affect traditional-age students to the same extent) and financial difficulties in paying tuition are some reasons commonly given by adult students for dropping out of school (Wlodkowski, Mauldin, & Campbell, 2002). In one study of persistence of degree-seeking adult students, factors found to be related to academic persistence for adult learners were perceived stress, social integration, cumulative GPA, intent to persist, gender, hours employed, unmet financial need, and commuting time (Sandler, 2001). Other reviews of adult students found increased persistence related to a higher number of transfer credits, higher GPAs, being non-minority, and having greater financial aid (Wiggam, 2004; Wlodkowski, Mauldin, and Gahn, 2001). Finally, most researchers have found that retention of undergraduate degree-seeking adult students is below that of traditional-age students (Wiggam, 2004).

Egenti & Omoruyi (2011) in their study on the 'Challenges of Women Participation in Continuing Higher Education Program: Implications for Adult Women Counselling and Education' showed that the major constraints or challenges of women participants in the educational program include time constraints, increasing marital demand, poor economic or financial base, poor learning environment, lack of encouragement from employers and spouse, increasing social pressure and poor psychological disposition. Research from the findings of Abu & Fabunmi (2005) revealed that all the independent variables (i.e. teacher's qualification, age, experience and teacher-learners ratio) had significant and positive relationship with adult

learners' academic performance. In view of the above, this study investigated the concerns of adult female students' part-time program in some faculties in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following researcher questions were generated

1. Do adult females in higher education actually face any challenges in the course of their learning in faculties?
2. Do adult females have strong conviction to academically improve themselves?
3. What would be the contribution of the predictor variables (environmental and individual barriers) on adult females' conviction to academically learn and improve themselves?
4. Would there be any statistical significant difference between individual and environmental barriers to female education and order of effectiveness of barriers based on their age and marital status?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is ex-post-facto. It looked at the facts as they had already occurred and there was no manipulation of variables.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population was all the students studying various programmes on part-time (Sandwich) in Nigerian higher institutions during the 2009/10 to 2011/2012 academic session. The study sample for the study comprised 200 students randomly selected from five (5) higher institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. This was made up of 120 students from three universities (Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-iwoye; Tai Solarin University of Education; and University of Agriculture, Abeokuta) and 80 students two Polytechnics (Federal Polytechnic Ilaro and Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta) respectively.

Instrumentation

A 30-item self-developed questionnaire was used to explore the opinion adult females on the challenges they face in their faculties. The instrument titled "Adult Female Students' Concerns Scale" (AFCS) adopted the Likert rating scale pattern. In this regard, the respondents were requested to record their responses on a six-point continuum of the scale ranging from strongly agree to 'strongly disagree', with a weighted point of 6 to 1 respectively. The instrument has four sections: Section A, B, C and D. The section A focused on demographic data of the respondents such as age, department, course of study, level among others, section B deals with issues relating to environmental barriers such as sexual harassment, victimization, and exploitation, while items in section C deals with individual barriers such as marital challenges, and financial problem. The section D of the questionnaire explores the participants' conviction to academically learn and improve themselves.

Administration of the Instruments

The researchers and two (2) other colleagues administered the measuring scales, which guarantee confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. The researchers explained all aspects of the questionnaire to the respondents. The researchers through the help of one officer or the other in the institutions were able to administer the questionnaire with ease.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaires was analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts for demographic information about the respondents, while research questions were tested using Multiple Regression. However, all the research questions generated for the study were tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1: Data on whether female adults face Challenges or not

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
Female adults and challenges	200	18.00	43.00	31.617	17.897

Table 1 reveals that adult females in higher education actually face some challenges in the course of their learning in faculties with a mean score of 31.617 (73.527%), while less than 27% (26.472%) of the participants were satisfied with their educational experiences. It could then be deduced generally that adult females are not without some challenges in their academic endeavour as a part student. This result is in line with the findings of Egenti & Omoruyi (2011) which shows that adult females are in the educational program always faced some challenges which include time constraints, increasing marital demand, poor economic or financial base, poor learning environment, lack of encouragement from employers and spouse, increasing social pressure and poor psychological disposition.

Table 2: Summary of One-way Analysis of variance on participants' willingness to academically improve themselves

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between group	307.456	1	307.456		
Within group	4276.998	198	21.601	14.233	.000
Total	4584.454	199			

The calculated value of $f = 14.233$ indicates that a strong conviction of adult females in higher education to academically improve themselves. The participants also demonstrated a mean value of 57.3 (SD 18.9) which is also a strong conviction to academically improve themselves. It could then be deduced that in spite of the challenges faced by the female adults in their various faculties they are determined to learn and better their lots. The implication of this finding is that

adult females come back to school in Nigeria as they want to adapt better to their environment, be more successful in the developed economy and failed to be regarded as second citizen or liability in the kingdom of men. This finding confirms the findings of Osunde & Omoruyi (2003) on a remarkable increase in the participation of young girls and married women in educational pursuit and had continued to exhibit their desire or yearning for higher education, their efforts have continued to be limited by social norms and dictates. This is also supported by Papa-Gusho (2012) that as learning becomes the vehicle of welfare and prosperity, the access to learning becomes crucial for economic and social inclusion.

Table 3: Regression Analysis on the effect of the predictor variables on the criterion

Regression	Analysis of Variance					
Analysis	Source	SS	MS	DF	Beta	F
R = 0.489	Regression	417.359	835.077	2		
R ² = 0.457	Residual	6582.952	33.419	197	0.269	24.988
SE = 17.201	Total	7000.308		199		

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Results presented in Table 3 show the contribution of the predictor variables (environmental and individual barriers) on adult females’ conviction to academically learn and improve themselves. The total variance accounted for by the predictor variables on criterion variable is 45.7% (R² = 0.457). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant (F = 24.988, P > .05). Therefore, 45.7% of the total variability in adult females’ conviction to academically learn and improve themselves is accounted for by environmental and individual barriers. This study lends credence to the findings of Egenti & Omoruyi (2011) on the challenges of women participation in continuing higher education program.

Table 4: Regression Analysis on the effect of the predictor variables on the criterion based on age and marital status

Regression	Analysis of Variance					
Analysis	Source	SS	MS	DF	Beta	F
R = 0.377	Regression	1924.936	481.234	4		
R ² = 0.377	Residual	7778.160	39.888	195	0.193	12.065
SE = 21.400	Total	9703.096		199		

Significant at 0.05 alpha level

Results presented in Table 4 revealed a significant difference between individual and environmental barriers to female education and order of effectiveness of barriers based on their age and marital status. The total variance accounted for by the predictor variables on criterion variable is 37.7% (R² = 0.377). Analysis of variance shows that this value is significant (F = 12.065, P > .05). Therefore, 37.7% of the total variability in adult females’ education and

learning in their faculties is accounted for by environmental barriers, individual barriers, and the demographics. This finding confirms the findings of Abu & Fabunmi (2005) that to large extent demographic variables significantly influence female students' challenges.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has examined female adult part-time students' challenges associated with completion of their programs. Adult learners cited personal and school related concerns as factors affecting their ability to continue their education. The results however, have helped to throw light on the challenges of women in continuing higher education. The implication of this is that the program should only be refocused and strengthened for better performance and patronage, but must be tailored towards meeting the needs and aspirations of the students irrespective of age, gender, or socio-economic status. Future research can build on these findings by using longitudinal research, and interviews to identify other variables linked to the challenges facing by the female adult students in higher institutions.

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