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## Perceived Causes and Consequences of Gender Inequality in Education by Married Undergraduate Students in University of Lagos, Nigeria

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**Fausta MANAFA PhD**

Faculty of Education

National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja.

Email: fausymanafa@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

**T**he study employed survey method of research to study the perceptions of married undergraduates in University of Lagos on the causes and consequences of gender equality in Nigerian system of education. The researcher sampled a total of 364 respondents these included 191 married female and 173 married male undergraduates. The sample was purposively sampled from the entire population of undergraduates in the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The needed data were collected personally using a questionnaire named Gender Equality in Education Questionnaire (GEEQ). The questionnaire was validated using content validity approach which involved given the copies of the questionnaire to two experts in measurement and evaluation. Using test- retest approach, a reliability co-efficient of  $r = 0.73$  was derived for the instrument. Data were analysed using percentages. As expressed in the findings of the study, it was in the opinion of 36.2% male and 39% female of the sampled undergraduates that cultural sentiments such as gender preference in birth and educational sponsorship are the main cause of gender inequality in Nigerian system of education. Only small percentages of respondents believed marital responsibilities (34.3% of male and 37.4% of female) and policy inadequacies (25.5% of male and 31.3% of female) were causative factors of gender inequality in Nigerian education. However, 40.4% of male and 44.8% of female married undergraduate students agreed that the phenomenon can encourage further deprivations in other aspects of life. Also, 38.7% of male and 47.3% of female respondents agreed that gender inequality in education promote poverty among the deprived. More importantly, for equality in educational opportunities in Nigeria, 31.6% of male and 49.7% of female respondents agreed that there should be cultural reorientation in every segment of the society.

*Keywords: Perceived causes and consequences of gender, Married undergraduates, Inequality in education*

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is a lifelong process and an instrument of personal and collective development that has been identified nationally and internationally as worthy of investment. Nations have come to see education as what must be made available, affordable and attractive to all citizens irrespective of their gender, age religion and residence. As a result of this countries have always come up with policies and principles with which to make school education, particularly accessible and affordable. For this reason, nations enacted policies such as the Education for All (EFA), and the Universal Basic Education (UBE). The motive is to make sure every citizen acquire basic education that can make them survive socially economically in almost all forms of society around the globe.

Emphasizing the importance of education to all, Edward (2003) opined that a country's investment in education is a life- saving endeavour in which the investor the (government) and the beneficiaries (citizens) all win or gain. He maintains that making education available to all ensures state security, reduces poverty and averts health catastrophes. Poverty is one of the most serious problems in Nigeria today. Despite the various efforts of governments from independence to date poverty among the people of Nigeria has been on the increase (Ugwu, 2016). Brain and Moris (2015) opined that poverty is the major hurdle that must be overcome in the pursuit of sustainable socio-economic growth. Thus to ensure a principle of "live and let us live" a functioning government will make education available and affordable. This is because education is the only way through which a nation can be crisis-free and governable (Yulusik and Mento, 2011). Certainly, availability and accessibility of education is a sure way of ensuring safety in all segments of the society, be it a mini segment like family or a mega segment like government institutions.

Family is the smallest social unit in any society. Being the foundation of all other segments, family requires education to flourish and to perform its primary role of socialization its members and making them become good citizens while at the same time preparing them for other levels of formal learning in the wider society. No doubt, family is the unit where every member should have access to education, unfortunately, past researcher have proved that it is at the family level that the most obstructive variables emanate to make equal access to education complex and almost unrealizable (Razor, 2000). Hills and Benjamin, (2002) argued that

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almost all forms of experiences of discrimination in education start at home. They found out that the core variables of inequality in educational aspirations and attainment include gender, Religion, age and resources. Unfortunately, all these variables have to do with the family. In a similar study George and Prinzali (2011) found out that family experiences are the foundation of all forms of educational aspirations. They maintain that educational aspirations will wobble if family experience is negative but will be straightened if the experiences are positive. On the other hand, Raheem and Aba (2013) maintains that the problem of gender inequality in education often get complicated when home or family variables are negatively aligned. Thus, gender inequality can be referred to as the primary creation of home experiences.

Gender inequality in education is an obstructive phenomenon that has made attainment of success in education policies difficult of most developing nations (Eric, 2013). Technically, gender inequality in education mans all form of unfavourable incidences of differential opportunities in male and female educational endeavours. It is said that inequality occurred when beneficiaries have unequal social opportunities. In most developing nations, gender inequality occurs as a form of deprivation of one category of gender against the other in terms of accessibility and attainment in educational endeavours. Most time, however, women or the girl child is always on the disadvantage (Eric, 2013; Giddens, 2001). This is why discussants and researchers always seem to focus on gender inequality in terms of a situation of the deprived women folk.

Gender inequality in education can therefore be better understood when one imagine a situation when the male-child have access to school education than the girl-child, or when the women folks are unable to advance in education as compared to their male counterparts. Gender inequality is an age-long phenomenon. Despite that there are series of policies or modern legislations on women's rights, many women are still deprived (George & Darion, 2013). There are definitely policies and programmes such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEAFDAW), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (which endorsed the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the Human Right Covenant), and the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which empathically make education a

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social commodity that must be available and accessible to all irrespective of gender. But it is one thing to have legislation it is another to have them implemented adequately.

Specifically, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) succinctly highlights the fundamental human rights to which all persons are entitled. These are the usual civil and political rights contained in most modern constitutions (Ilumoka, 1994). The Chapter 4, Section 39, of the Nigerian Constitution provides that:

1. A citizen of Nigeria of any particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, gender, religion, or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person
  - a. Be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government to disabilities or discriminations.
  - b. Be accorded either expressly by, or in the application of any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places or origin, sex, religion or political opinions.
2. No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstance of his birth.
3. Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law imposes restrictions with respect to the appointment of any person to any office under the state or as a member of the armed forces of the Federation or a member of the Nigeria Police or to an office in the service of a body corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria.

Section 39 renders all laws, including customary and religious laws, subsidiary legislation, regulations, and official government practice that permit discrimination against women unconstitutional, null, and void. Thus, no woman can be discriminated against in the country, for any reason. Every citizen of Nigeria therefore has the right to education irrespective of age, gender and religion.

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For certain reasons however, discriminations still occur in Nigeria societies. Men and women do experience one form of discrimination or the other. Basically, experiences of discrimination will differ as people's opinion on the causes and consequences of such discrimination will also differ. In this study, the researcher finds out the dynamics of gender discrimination in education among married students of University of Lagos. The study is designed to find out the type of discrimination experienced, the reasons for experiencing the discrimination and their perceived consequences for such discrimination. Above all, the study finds out what the respondents perceived to be the causes and consequences of gender equality in Nigerian education system.

**Research Questions:**

1. What in the opinion of married undergraduates are the causes of gender inequality in Nigerian education?
2. What in the opinion of married undergraduates are the consequences of gender inequalities in Nigeria education?
3. What in the opinions of married undergraduates are the strategies for gender equality in Nigerian education?

**2.0 METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** The study adopted the descriptive survey design. This design is often used because it involves large population. Descriptive survey describes and interprets “what is happening”. It is concerned with conditions that exist; practices that prevail, beliefs and attitudes that are held, processes that are on-going and trends that are developing (Ilogu, 2008; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Descriptive survey design provided the much-needed understanding of the intricacies involved in the perceptions of Sandwich married undergraduate students in University of Lagos on the causes, consequences and strategies of gender inequality in Nigerian system of education.

**Population of the study:** The target population for the study comprised all male and female married undergraduate students of University of Lagos. The reason for married undergraduate student was as a result of unfavorable incidences of differential opportunities in male and female educational endeavour. The accessible population however, comprised

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all male and female fourth year sandwich married undergraduate students of University of Lagos. In the opinion of the researcher, the population for the study is considered appropriate because they are free from external examination pressures.

**Sample and Sampling Procedure:** Purposive sampling technique was used to select initial sample of 384 fourth year Sandwich undergraduates married students. The respondents included 201 married female and 183 married male undergraduates. After the questionnaires were distributed to the participants, 364 completed and returned the questionnaire (191 married female and 173 married male undergraduates).

### **Instrumentation**

Gender Equality in Education Questionnaire (GEEQ) consists of 13-items. It is designed to measure three sub areas of gender inequalities in education which were causes, strategies and consequences.

### **Validity and Reliability of Instruments**

A pilot study was carried out before the main study to have a try-out of the instrument and to determine their psychometric properties. The questionnaire was validated using construct validity. Lagos State University, Ojo was randomly selected among the higher institutions in Lagos state through simple random sampling. Thirty (30) married undergraduate students consisting of 15 males and 15 females were randomly selected to participate in the exercise. While, Gender Equality in Education Questionnaire (GEEQ) was administered to a set of fourth year married undergraduate sandwich and part-time students and after two weeks it was re-administered to the same set of students. The results of the tests were collated and analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics to estimate the test-retest reliability coefficient. The test-retest reliability indices obtained was 0.73.

## **3.0 ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA**

Item 1-2 in the questionnaire answered questions on the demography of the respondents.

### **Table 1: Participants Response Based on Gender**

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<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	173	47.5
Female	191	52.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table above, 173 respondents (47.5%) out of 364 are male, while 191 respondents (52.5%) are female. This therefore shows that majority of the pupils were female.

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## Research Questions Analysis

1. What in the opinion of married undergraduates are the causes of gender inequality in Nigeria education?

**Table 1: Married undergraduates perceived causes of gender inequality in education.**

	AGREED		DISADGREED		Total
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	
Cultural sentiments	132 (36.2)	142 (39)	41(11.3)	49 (13.5)	364
Marital responsibilities	125 (34.3)	136 (37.4)	48(13.2)	55 (15.1)	364
Policy inadequacies	93 (25.5)	114(31.3)	80 (22)	77 (21.2)	364

Evidence from Table 1, shows that 132 (36.2%) male married participants and 142 (39%) female married agreed that cultural sentiments is one of the causes of gender inequalities in education, while 41(11.3) male and 49(13.5%) female participants disagreed that cultural sentiment contributed to causes of gender inequalities in education. In respect of marital responsibilities, 125(34.3%) male married participants and 136 (37.4%) female married participants agreed that marital responsibilities is one of the causes of gender inequalities. While, 41 male married participants and 49 female participants disagreed that marital responsibilities is a cause of gender inequalities. 93 male married participants and 114 female married participants agreed that policy inadequacy is one of the causes of gender inequalities while 80 male married participants and 77 female married participants disagreed that it does not cause gender inequalities in education. From the above data, it shows that majority of married participants agreed that cultural sentiments, Marital responsibilities and Policy Inadequacies are the causes of gender inequalities in education.

2. What in the opinions of married undergraduate are the consequences of gender inequality in Nigeria education?

**Table 2: Expressed Consequences of gender inequality in education**

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	AGREED		DISADGREED		Total
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	
Further Deprivations	147 (40.4)	163 (44.8)	26 (7.1)	28 (7.7)	364
Gender-based molestation	142 (39)	176 (48.4)	31 (8.5)	15 (4.1)	364
Poverty	141 (38.7)	172 (47.3)	32 (8.8)	19 (5.2)	364
Extended segregation	31 (8.5)	54 (14.8)	142 (39)	137 (37.6)	364
Career difficulties	134 (36.8)	125 (34.3)	39 (10.7)	66 (18.1)	364

Table 2 shows that out of 364 participants, 147 male married participants and 163 female married participants agreed that further Deprivation is one of the consequences of gender inequalities in education while 26 male participants and 28 female participants disagreed that further deprivation is one of the consequences of gender inequalities in education. Again, 142 married male participants and 176 female married participants agreed that gender-based molestation is one of the consequences of gender inequalities in education. However, 31 male participants and 15 female married participants disagreed that gender-based molestation is one of the consequences of gender inequalities in education. Moreover, 141 male married participants and 172 female married participants disagreed. In terms of poverty, 141 male married participants and 172 female married participants agreed that poverty is one of the consequences of gender inequalities in education while 32 males married and 19 female married participants disagreed. In respect of extended segregation, 31 males married and 54 female married participants agreed that extended segregation is one of the implications of gender inequalities in education while 142 males married and 137 disagreed. In terms of career difficulties, 134 males married and 125 female married participants agreed that career difficulties is one of the consequences of gender inequalities in education. However, 39 male married and 66 female married participants disagreed. From the above data, it shows that majority of participants agreed that further deprivation, gender based molestation,

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poverty and career difficulties were consequences of gender inequalities while majority disagreed that extended segregation could be one of the consequences of gender inequalities.

3. What in the opinions of married undergraduates are the strategies for gender equality in Nigeria?

**Table 3: Strategies for gender equalities in education**

	AGREED		DISADGreed		Total
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	
Cultural reorientation	115 (31.6)	181 (49.7)	58 (15.9)	10 (2.7)	364
Functional policies	148 (40.7)	178 (48.9)	25 (6.9)	13 (3.8)	364
Regulatory Institutions	129 (35.4)	127(34.9)	44 (12.1)	64 (17.6)	364
Accessible educational facilities	158( 43.4)	172(47.3)	15 (4.1)	19 (5.2)	364
Communal Engagements	97 (26.6)	102 (28)	76(20.9)	89(24.5)	364

The data in Table 3 shows that out of 364 married participants, 115 male and 181 female participants agreed that cultural reorientation is one of the strategies of gender inequalities while 58 male and 10 female disagreed. Again 148 male and 178 female participants agreed that functional policies is one of the strategies for gender inequalities in education. However, 25 male and 13 female participants disagreed. In terms of Regulatory institutions, 129 male and 127 female participants agreed that regulatory institution is one of the strategies for gender inequalities while 44 male and 64 female disagreed. Moreover, 158 male and 172 female participants agreed that accessible educational facilities is one of the strategies for gender inequalities while 15 male and 19 female participants disagreed. In respect of community engagement, 97 male and 102 female participants agreed that community engagement is one of the strategies of gender inequalities while 76 male and 89 female disagreed. From the above table, it shows that majority of the participants agreed that cultural orientation, functional policies, Regulatory institutions, Accessible educational

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facilities and community engagement were strategies to gender inequalities.

#### **4.0 DISCUSSION**

For centuries, gender has been a cultural construct that creates distinction in roles, behaviours, mental and emotional characteristics between male and female. It is a social construct that develops and gets defined by societies (Mbara, 2014). Corroborating this, Maisamari (2012) remarked that gender inequality stems from traditional, cultural, religious, and social beliefs. For example, it is cultural in Nigerian societies that male and female children are socialized differently. In most cases, while the male are educated on their father's roles such as wine-tapping and animal rearing, the females are educated in domestic roles, mainly with the motive of helping their mothers in home management.

Although physical sex difference appears to be less important as factors in modern days but across ages it has been proved to affect educational opportunities among people (Giddens, 2001). Physical sex differences are a gender-based descriptor of human beings that has effects in the aspect of vocational choice and in the aspect of human psychological and social needs. It is already known that gender plays an important role in individual's vocational choice (Daniel, 2014). It is not a farfetched fact that girls prefer occupation and professions which are traditionally female oriented. People tend to frown at occupational choices made by women when such vocation is supposed to have been a man's job. For example, people don't seem to expect a girl going to university to read engineering, surveying, geology etc. Similarly, people frown at men who choose home economics, nursing, and food and nutrition sciences as a profession. (Daniel, 2014).

While all these are already known, there seems not to be adequate researches on what undergraduates perceived as educational inequality or researches on the experiences of undergraduate on the issue of inequality. This is the research gap that this study intend to fill. Through this study, it was discovered that the married undergraduates of University of Lagos have varied opinions on causes and consequences of equality in the country's system of education. For example, findings of this study pointed to the fact that cultural sentiment is one of the main perceived causes of educational inequality in the country. In the opinion of 36.2% of male and 39% of female participants in this study agreed that cultural practices such as preference for male

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child, relegation of women folks in community affairs and the resultant effects of gender-bases parenting can be summed up as cultural sentiments that result in an unequal opportunities and outcomes for female and male beneficiaries of education in the country.

Cultural sentiments can cause serious setbacks for government's efforts at achieving equal access, retention and completion of education. Generally, a society where cultural beliefs and practices are high and where the male domination of public and private lives persists tend to drift towards promotion of gender inequalities in all spheres of life. Unfortunately, this can't be good for societal development. The causative pang of cultural sentiments in situations of educational inequality was seen as very strong by the sampled undergraduates so much that only 25.5% of male and 31.3% of female participants believed that policy inadequacies could be another possible cause of educational inequality. More specifically, cultural sentiment was seen as the main problem and not other phenomenon such as marital responsibilities.

Unequal access to education has consequence for individuals and the public. As indicated among the findings of this study, inequality in education can result to further deprivations. This implies that gender differences in educational opportunities can bring about deprivations in other social segments such as in employment and political opportunities. A good percentage of the respondents 40.4% of male and 44.8% of female, were of the opinion that an occurrence of gender inequality can make the victim experience other life-threatening inadequacies even at the marital level. Giddens, (2001) maintains that a disadvantaged woman must have been segregated earlier in other key aspects of life. In cultural societies for example, gender-based deprivations at home tend to bring about setbacks for women as they grow up and aspire for opportunities in life. No doubt when a woman enter into marriage earlier than expected, it is certain that setbacks in educational aspiration and attainment will occur.

In addition to this, the sampled respondents believed that inequality in education can make women experience poverty. Poverty is a negative socio-economic experience that is capable of derailing all forms of development and growth in human and national life. Thus, when a woman is deprived of acquiring education, there is certainty that such woman cannot have the socio-economic power to make ends meet. Poverty is linked to extensive hunger and lack of employment gains. For

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instance unequal educational opportunities can lead to financial inadequacies which can further result in depression and subsequently lead to criminal behaviour.

The relationship between inequality, poverty and personal or social problem is very complex. For example, studies of mothers on welfare reveal that those with multiple problems – such as depression, substance abuse, and being a victim of domestic violence – are much less likely to find work and escape poverty. This can extend to situation of malnutrition. Malnutrition is one of the most common effects of poverty. In developing countries, it can be expected that inequalities in education will lead to series other social and health problems among which is inability to cater for self and the children. An educationally deprived women can have difficulties that would affects her offspring and render them victims of further social difficulties.

No doubt, government of Nigeria has been campaigning for equal educational opportunities. Through series of educational and social programs and policies, the country has been trying to make education available and accessible to all. Definitely, since inequality is a product of social interaction (Giddens, 2001), people would need to be re-orientated to stop cultural beliefs and practices that promote inequality. Reorientation will include educating women of their rights and the men of the need to stop underrating women. Beyond this, the reorientation will require that there are policies to keep people informed of the consequences of encouraging inequality, particularly in education.

Reorientation needed is to be a concerted effort to be a success. Cultural reorientation that will therefore sustain educational equality will be a grass root one. It has to be a grassroots orientation because activities of cultural sentiments earlier discussed as the main cause of educational inequality often start with persons of lower level of social opportunities and exposures (Giddens, 2001). Thus, it is important when reorientation focus on addressing the beliefs and practices of less education and privileged members of societies. This will address their cultural orientation particularly as it relates to the development of the girl-child.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Educational inequality is a social phenomenon that can hinder social development of individuals and societies. Being an age-long cultural phenomenon, it is not

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surprising that part of the findings of the study identified cultural sentiments as the main cause of inequality in the Nigerian system of education. With this, it was concluded that the experience of inequality in Nigerian system of education relate to the cultural practices of people of the country. Thus, as suggested by the sampled respondents, to sustain equality in the country system of education, when attained, there would be the need to re-orientate citizens of the country on the need to adjust their cultural perception and practices, particularly as related to social opportunities for women and men in Nigeria.

#### Recommendations

The following are recommended:

1. Gender equality must be sustained. There should be equal accessibility to education for both male and female.
2. Government of Nigeria should promote gender equality in education for all citizens.
3. Families should avoid gender discrimination in providing educational opportunities for their children.

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