

MANAGING GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES FOR BETTER PRODUCTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the management of girl-child education in Nigeria tertiary institutions following the complaints by some female students and their parents on various unexpected problems confronting the female students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. . The questionnaire titled University Gender Management Inventory (UGMI) was used to collect the data. The validity of the questionnaire was done by experts in Educational Management. Test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. A Z-Test and common percent were the statistics used to analyze the data. The major finding was that the female students are highly sexually harassed and this has highly affected many female students from unlocking their great potentials. Based on this finding, it was recommended that university management should put a mechanism in place to control the ugly situation.

Introduction.

Before the International Women Conference held in Beijing in 1995, Nigerian women were denied access to education and meaningful contribution to national development. The Nigerian women were stalled by culture, which made them vulnerable when they came forward to join work force. They were denied access to education because the traditional men and women believed that it would make women proud, arrogant, independent and disobedient to their husbands (Ifedili, 1997). This in summary would bring marital disharmony because women were supposed to obey their husbands and take care of them and their children. Men were highly favoured by culture. The Beijing declaration of 1995 which Nigerian government was a signatory states:

“Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making process and access to power, were fundamental for the advancement of equality development and peace”.

Before the international conference, Nigerian women were always seen as docile beings that were completely dependent on their husbands. This was confirmed by Agbese (2000) when he states:

“The picture of a Nigerian woman as a docile being, forever looking up to, obedient and dependent on her man, is a false picture of Nigerian women, created and sustained by Nigerian men for purposes. The Nigerian women appreciates the undeniable fact that women have a role outside kitchen too as in meaningful contribution to social, economic and political development of Nigerian society”.

The assessment of Beijing 1995 by Ifedili (2009) showed that the conference has brought a big change in the lot of women in Nigeria. From the findings of the research study by Ifedili (2009), a number of observations can be made. Beijing Declaration has made some impact on the position of women in Nigeria in the areas of access to education for girl-child, girl-children daring into areas previously conceived as for men like engineering, medicine, architecture, law, pharmacy etc in the universities, more women are now in politics and they are doing very well. Girl-children have also dared into sports which were initially exclusive to men like foot ball, wrestling etc. However, Nigeria being a developing nation and with high rate of illiteracy, still experiences to a greater extent, the perceptions and situations opined by Awe, 1990; Schwartz, 1992; Akande, 1996; Ifedili, 1997 and Williams, 1978 on the attitude of rural women to women’s education and It is apparent that females are treated differently than males in both appointment and promotion to certain positions. Female administrators had more qualifications than their male counterparts before they were appointed to positions. Female administrators also stayed longer in service before being appointed as compared to their male counterparts. Female administrators have also indicated a desire for career growth. They have become more enlightened than in the past when many women were reluctant to aspire. Many female teachers who have appropriate qualifications, positive attitude to work are seeking to be recognized and appointed. It will be a credit to those in management to

help these ones achieve their ambitions. This is because; Nigeria is a developing country that needs human resources who are capable of making positive impact in her developmental struggle, irrespective of gender. There is a great need for all to work cooperatively for the betterment of the country. Qualified and able-bodied women, who make themselves available for national services should not be seen as enemies, rather, they should be encouraged and seen as partners in progress. Organizations should try to motivate and challenge both genders to perform better. The male administrators who asserted in Ifedili's study that female workers would find it difficult to face the challenges in some work places originally reserved for men and so should not be appointed, should know that strength is neither a thing of sex or physical appearance but a thing of the mind. Nigerians should learn to live beyond gender bigotry so that the country can move forward. The politics of violence should be controlled so that more women can venture into higher decision-making positions.

As the girl-child forges ahead in a competitive world with men in both university education and preparation for future career, there seems to be many challenges facing her. Some have complained of sex abuse, some complained of discrimination, others complained of violence, some complained of discouragement, others have complained of inadequate finance for their education etc. These challenges facing a girl-child may hinder her from unlocking her potentials. The slogan emphasizing on the importance of a girl-child which says that if she is trained, the nation is trained cannot be under rated. The actualization of this goal can only be made possible if all the challenges facing the girl-child are reduced to minimum. Musa (2008) in his review of gender violence advised that these ordeals which are highly peculiar to girl-child could only be eliminated through education and empowerment. Some girls have proved that they could be the best if given a chance. A good example is Tolulope Falokun from Ondo State, Nigeria who was an overall best student in Senior Secondary School Examination in 2011.in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of achieving the goals in educating girl-child is being beclouded with so many challenges facing girl-child in the Nigerian universities. The issues of sex abuse, sexual harassment, violence, discouragements, discriminations etc have to a greater extent seem to be a barrier to a girl-child unlocking her potentials. These challenges if allowed to continue will create obstacles to the achievement of Beijing declaration and the laudable agenda of Education for All (EFA) which is supposed to close the gap between boys and girls education. There is need to investigate the true situation of things and if found to be true, useful recommendations should be made to minimize the occurrence of these challenges.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study: -

1. Do female students have challenges in Nigerian universities?
2. Are there rules and regulations guiding the conduct of individuals within Nigerian university system?
3. Are there 24-hour counseling services available for students who need them?
4. Are female workers' associations in various universities play specific roles in protecting girl-child education in their various universities?

5. Do lecturers treat all students alike?
6. Is there any dress code for the students?
7. Do students have constituted body they can report their challenges to?
8. Do students report their challenges?
9. What types of challenges are faced by female students in Nigerian universities?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are raised from research questions: -

HO1 There will be no significant difference in the responses of female and male students that female students have challenges.

HO2 There will be no significant difference in the responses of lecturers and students that female students have challenges.

HO3 There will be no significant difference in the responses of students and lecturers on the availability of enough machineries put in place by university administration to protect students.

Significance of the Study

This study will create a public awareness on the part of the government that her articulated policies to close the gap between boys and girls education is efficiently and effectively being pursued. Various universities will put in place all mechanism to protect and encourage the girl-child. The university lecturers will encourage both males and female students to excel..The female university workers would make themselves available to help female students who are in need. The female students will have peace while pursuing their education and will try to unlock their potentials which were inhibited by fear.

Methodology

The research study is a survey with ex post facto design. The population of the study was 27 federal universities in Nigeria. A stratified random sampling method was used to select 6 federal universities from the Nigerian six geo-political zones. From each of the selected university, a stratified random sampling method was used to select 150 students (75 males and 75 females) and forty lecturers (20 males and 20 females). A total of 900 students (450 males and 450 females) and 240 lecturers (120 males and 120 females) participated in the study.

The data of the study was collected using a questionnaire titled University Girl-Child Management Inventory (UGMI). The questionnaire was made up of two parts. Part A contained demographic variables. Part B contained 10 questions bothering on type of challenges facing girl-child, whether the universities are aware of the challenges, the machineries put in place by the universities to deal with the challenges, etc. . The validity of the instrument was done by both experts in educational management. Test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. A Z-Test and common percent were the statistics used to analyze the data. The scores were rated in such a way that in such that 0 – 1.00 is poor, 1.01-2.00 is average, 2.01 -3.00 is high while 3.01 – 4.00 is very high.

Results

Table 1: Answer to Research Questions

Questions	YES	NO	
1.Do female students have challenges in Nigerian universities?	100%	00%	100%
2.Are there rules and regulations guiding the conduct of individuals within Nigerian university system?	100%	00%	100%
3.Are there 24-hour counseling services available for students who need counseling help?	89%	11%	100%
4.Are female workers' associations in various universities play specific roles in protecting girl-child education in their various universities?	35%	65%	100%
5.Do lecturers treat all students alike?	56%	44%	100%
6.Is there any dress code for the students?	68%	32%	100%
7.Do students have constituted body they can report their challenges to?	88%	12%	100%
8. Do students report their challenges?	54%	46%	100%
9.What type of challenges are faced by female students in Nigerian universities?	threats, sexual abuse, extortion of money, embarrassment, discrimination, rape etc		

Hypotheses Tested

HO1 The first null hypothesis which states, that there will be no significant difference in the responses of female and male students that female students have challenges was tested with the data collected from the questionnaire and the result is stated on Table 2.

Table 2 Test of Significant Difference Between the Responses of Male and Female Students as to Whether Female Students have Challenges in the University

Statistics	Male Students	Female Students	Calculated Z-Value	Table Value	
Number	450	450			
Mean	2.87	3.06	-7.04	1.96	
SD	.42	.39			

From Table 2, the calculated Z-Value at 0,05-Confidence Level is -7.04 while the Table Value is 1.96, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in the responses of female and male students that female students have challenges is therefore rejected. All respondents agreed that female students have challenges. However, the male respondents rated female students challenges in the universities as high with the average score of 2.87 while their female students average score was 3.06 which means very high challenges. However, statistically, there was no significant difference

HO2 The second null hypothesis that states that there will be no significant difference in the responses of lecturers and students that female students have challenges was analyzed with the data

collected from the questionnaire and the result is on Table 3.

Table 3 Test of Significant Difference between Lecturers and Students as to if Female Students have Challenges in the University

Statistics	Lecturers	Students	Calculated Z-Value	Table Z-Value
Number	240	900		
Mean	2.93	2.97	-1.25	1.96
SD	.45	.41		

From Table 3, the Z-Value at 0.05-Confidence level is – 1.25 while the Table Value is 1.96. The null hypothesis that states that there will be no significant difference in the responses of lecturers and students that female students have challenges was therefore rejected. Both the lecturers and the students agreed that the challenges facing female students were high. The lecturers had an average rating of 2.93 while the students' average was 2.97. However, there was no significant difference.

HO3 The third null hypothesis that states that there will be no significant difference in the responses of students and lecturers on the availability of enough machineries put in place to protect students was calculated and analyzed with the data collected from the questionnaire. The result is on Table 4. .

Table 4 Test of Significant Difference between the Lecturers and Students on the Availability of Mechanism to Protect Students

Statistics	Lecturers	Students	Calculated Z-Value	Table Value
Number	240	900		
Mean	3.10	2.87	7.19	1.96
SD	.44	.41		

From Table 4, the calculated Z – Value is 7.19 at 0.05-Confidence Level while the Table Value is 1.96. The null hypothesis that there is therefore rejected. There is a significant difference in the responses of the lecturers and students as to the adequacy of the machineries put in place to protect students by the university administration. The lecturers with the mean score of 3.10 agreed that there were machineries put in place by the university administration were very highly adequate for the protection of students. The students on the other hand with a mean score of 2.87 agreed that the machineries put in the university were highly adequate. However, the analysis of students' data based on gender showed that female students agreed that the machineries were of average while the male students agreed that the machineries were high.

Discussion

From the analysis of data, all respondents agreed that female students have challenges in the Nigerian university. Some of these are rape, sexual harassment, insensitivity of some lecturers in attending to students, extortion of money, terrorism by some male students etc. This is in agreement with Musa (2008). Although the respondents agreed that there were rules and regulations guiding

the conduct of individuals within the university; only 43% indicated that there was 24-hour counseling service in the university while 57% indicated otherwise. The researcher found out that no university really had 24-hour counseling service but the university health centers and university securities were always on duty 24 hours and are supposed to help students who needed their services. The female staff was rated low in playing various roles in promoting girl-child education. The researcher randomly interviewed the respondents on this issue. They all explained that the universities had Center for Gender Studies but there had been really no focus on the girl-child in the university campus. This assertion was counteracted by the lecturer who indicated that some students did not like to report their challenges but they were always willing to help those who needed their help.

With regard to the question on whether lecturers treat all students alike, only 56% of the respondents were positive in their answers while 44% had negative responses. A further interview on randomly selected students revealed that female lecturers treat every student alike but only few male lecturers do. Also there is no really dress code in the universities. Only two universities had two faculties that had dress code.

Conclusion

From the investigation on girl-child challenges in Nigerian universities, it is clear that girl-child has challenges. The machineries put in place at the present are inadequate for minimizing girl-child challenges. This calls for more attention to be giving to the challenges in order to enable the girl-child to be more focused and greatly unlock her potentials. Girl-child needs to be encouraged. They are competing well with male students. The challenges of threats, sexual harassment etc should be curtailed. The girl-child does not report some of their challenges for fear of being molested. Many have dropped out of the universities because of the challenges such as unwanted pregnancy, molestation and victimization. The institution must have conducive environment for all students to meet their goals.

Recommendations

- Seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for all students and staff in order to create awareness on the challenges facing students especially a girl-child in Nigerian universities and the inevitable consequences.
- A 24-hour counseling services should be provided for the students.
- Locked suggestion boxes with small holes at the top should be put at the strategic corners of the university campus so that those who are shy or afraid of reporting their challenges physically can write their challenges and put them in the suggestion boxes. These boxes can only be opened by the university counselor or an administrator. The identity of the reporter should be concealed.
- Center for Gender Studies should do more than just organizing seminars for adults but should interact more with girl-child in their various universities to know where they could be of help.
- Committees should be set up in various universities to handle girl-child problems which may not have to do with security.
- Government should make student loans available for those who need it, this will prevent a girl-child who cannot pay her school fees from prostituting in order to make ends meet.
- Work study opportunities should be given to poor students.
- University administration should tighten its security by putting all machineries in place to minimize the problems of molestation and victimization in the university campus.