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Poverty and Women Education in Abak Local Government Area Akwa Ibom State Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was a survey conducted to determine the relationship between poverty and women education in Abak Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. In a cross sectional survey design, 1360 simple randomly selected women in Abak local government area were administered a questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.76. Simple percentage was used for data analysis. The research found out that the major problems of women's education includes: household poverty, gender discrimination and low social economic status. As a result, the study recommends that free and compulsory education should be given to girls at all level, this will help substitute for poor parents' financial burden and effort of poverty alleviation by the government should be intensified to reach the very poor person at the local level. Seminars and conference should be organized to parents and women on the value of education for the future development.

Keywords: Women Education, Gender Discrimination, Poverty and Education, Free Education, Gender Disparity in Education

Introduction

A number of people are slipping unnoticeably into situation in which their incomes are no longer adequate to cater for their basic needs and those of their dependants. This is referred to as poverty. In the International standard any family that cannot boast of an income of 2.5 dollars a day is poor (World Bank, 2013).

According to Townsend (1992) poverty is lack of resources to obtain basic needs namely food, clothing, housing education etc and is a major problem of our time which goes along with environmental threats, weighting heavily on our planet. In Nigeria, studies by Akikpo (1995) revealed that the portion of household living below the poverty line in the four cities of Lagos, Ibadan, Kano and Onitsha where. Poverty is closely linked with shortage of certain vital resources. It often results from an enduring harsh and inhospitable environment, but more often than not, from the breakdown of economic demographic, ecological, cultural and social system. Joseph (1993) observed that poverty emerges when distortion becomes too pronounced among people, groups and nations. They lost their capacity to adapt to changes for survival.

According to Olayemi (1995) poverty is also closely linked with insecurity about the present and future. This often leads to tension and sometimes to violence and conflict. And as Ebele (1991) have shown relatively deprived people may exhibit certain attitudes and behavior which further compound their poverty.

Poverty can be classified as absolute, relative and subjective poverty. Absolute poverty usually involves a absence of basic human needs and is measured in terms of the resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency. Townsend (1992) argued that individuals, families, and group in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diets, participate in activities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in societies to which they belong. The argument on relative poverty rests on the observation that for practical purposes, standard become higher by the day and are difficult to satisfy in the ever changing expectations of modern life. Therefore relative poverty suggests whether or not individuals or group live up to expected standard of the day (Onyishi, 1994).

A third conceptualization of poverty is subjective poverty, which refers to whether or not individuals or groups feel they are poor. Subjective poverty as noted by Ayeuma (1993) is closely related to relative poverty since those who are defined as poor in terms of the standards of the day will see themselves and feel themselves to be poor. For example, a formally wealthy individual reduce by circumstances to a modest lower middle class income and lifestyle may feel poor but other member of the society may not regard him as such.

Conversely, individual and group judged in term of majority standards poor may not see themselves as poor. The concept of subjective poverty is important since, to some degree, people act in terms of the way they perceive and define themselves. Therefore, Bradley (1993) observed that subjective poverty suggests whether or not individuals or group feel they are poor. This is determined by the prevailing standard. Diane (1993) observed that unequal gender relationship are sustained and legitimize through ideas of difference and inequalities that express widely held beliefs and values about the nature of masculinity and feminist. Education among other needs is a response to the socio-economic situation of the individuals or group, the women education are traced to the families socio-economic situation in which they have grown (Bockelt & Cornels, 1996).

Generally, countries with high GNP have greater educational quality for male and female, unlike most poor countries, there is considerable variation both in overall enrolment ratios. Collaboratively, Graham-Browne(1991) noted that financial considerations leads families to subordinate the education of women. Low income level of most household, makes it difficult for their children to go to school. Poverty at household level discourage parents from enrolling their female children in school or withdrawing them once the demand for school fees. It is interesting to note that quite a large number of people are below the poverty line in spite of plenty in some countries. The condition of poverty caused families to struggle with malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, infant mortality and short life span.

African governments have made tremendous efforts to increase access to education. However women education has remained considerably low. Poverty and persistence high demographic pressure on education system have resulted in stagnation in environment and decline in quality, (UNESCO/ UNICEF 1993; World Bank (1997, 2013). Others pressing education concerns include poor students' participation, high dropout and repetition level, low academic achievement and

low teaching morale and attendance to lesson. This project intends to look into poverty and women education in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Female Education is considered to be the greatest asset any individual can require. But its acquisition is limited largely by poverty. Women appear disadvantaged group when choice is to be made in educating one in a poor family. Thus they tend to experience educational challenges more than men in a poor family. Against this backdrop, this study is poised to find out how poverty affects women education.

Research Questions

- 1 The following questions will guide the formation of this study:
- 2 How does gender discrimination affect women education?
- 3 What does poverty have on women education?
- 4 How does poor home affect women education?

Research Hypotheses

- 1 There is no relationship between poverty and women education.
- 2 There is no significant relationship between gender discrimination and women education.
- 3 There is no significant relationship between poor home and women education.

Research Method

The survey method is used for this study. The area of the study was Abak which is one of the thirty-one Local Government Area that make up Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The Population of this study consisted of all women in Abak urban/rural in a total of 12,250 women (Source :Ministry of Women Affairs Abak Council). From this , 1360 women were selected to participate in the study using simple random sampling technique.

The instrument used in collecting data for this study was the questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed in two parts, section "A" and "B". Section A dealt with the bio-data of the respondents, while the "B" contained the questions that will aid in providing answers to the research questions. The questionnaire was randomly distributed to the various women.

The questionnaire was validated by experts in Test and Measurement. In designing the questionnaire, the Likert style was adopted, thus, the style and its scoring was done in the following ways below; Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D)

The researcher assistants administered the questionnaire and provided all the required explanation needed by the respondents. The statistical method used to analyze the data collected by the researcher was Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results

Table 1: Responses on poverty and women education

S/N	Items	Agreed		Disagreed	
		F	%	F	%
1	My parents do not have money to pay for my school fees.	180	13.4	75	5.51
2	I cannot go to higher institution because of low social economic status	126	9.3	126	9.26
3	I have withdrawn from school because my parents are jobless.	29	20.46	38	2.8
4	I don't have money to sponsor myself.	153	11.23	62	4.6
5	I hope education is not for poor	290	21.3	29	2.1
	Total	1030	75.7	330	24.3

As shown in the table above, a total of 1,030 responses representing 75.7% respondents who agreed that poverty influences women education while only total 330 responses representing a total of 24.3% respondents who disagreed that it does not influence.

Therefore, poverty influences women education in Abak Local Government Area.

Table 2: Responses on how gender discrimination affect women education

S/N	Items	Agreed		Disagreed	
		F	%	F	%
6	I don't have opportunity to go to school because I am a girl.	280	17.8	32	2.0
7	I believe girls' education ends in the kitchen.	243	13.4	70	4.4
8	My parents believes that female education is more costly than male counterparts.	294	18.7	38	2.4
9	My mother is not educated.	250	15.9	50	3.2
10	I like to learn trade because I am a girl.	278	17.6	41	2.6
	Total	1,345	85.32	231	14.6

As shown in the table 2 the total number of 1,345 responses representing 85.34% of the respondents agreed that gender discriminate affect women education in Abak Local Government Area while only 231 responses representing 14.6% of the respondents disagreed that gender discrimination do not affect women education.

Table 3: Responses on the influence of poor home affects women education

S/ N	Items	Agreed		Disagreed	
		F	%	F	%
11	I can't pay my school fees because of my parents income is low.	260	18.99	29	2.1
12	I am derived of academic opportunity.	274	20.0	40	2.9
13	I hope my parents cannot provide for the family.	210	15.3	63	4.6
14	My parents lack resources.	170	12.4	63	4.6
15	I am feeling inferior before educated friends because of poverty.	185	13.2	75	5.5
	Total	1099	80.3	270	19.7

As shown in Table 3 above, a total of 1099 responses representing a total of 80.3% of the respondent who agreed that poor home affect women education in Abak Local Government Area while only a total of 270 responses representing 19.7% of the respondent disagreed. Therefore, this implies that there is significant influence of poor home in women education.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of poverty and women education

Variables	X Y	X ² Y ²	df	Σxy	r _{cal}	r _{crit}
Poverty (x)	1030	746	98	59950	0.71	0.195
Women education (y)	330	27630				

As shown in table 4 above, since the calculated correlation coefficient of 0.71 was greater than the table value of 0.195 and 0.05 significant level. The null hypothesis which state that there's no significant relationship between poverty and women education has rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between poverty and women education in Abak Local Government Area.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis of gender discrimination and women education

Variables	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	df	$\sum xy$	r_{cal}	r_{crit}
Gender discrimination	1345	363669	98	61040	0.29	0.195
Women education (y)	231	11549				

As shown in table 5 above, since the calculated correlation coefficient of 0.29 was greater than the table value of 0.195 and at the degree of freedom of 98 and 0.05 significant level, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between poverty and women education was rejected. This implies that there is significant influence of poverty on women education.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis of poor home and women education

Variables	X_1	X_2	df	$\sum xy$	r_{cal}	r_{crit}
Poor home (x)	1099	249901	98	56315	1	1
Women education (y)	270	16004			0.85	0.195

As shown in table 6 above, since the calculated correlation coefficient of 0.85 was greater than the table value of 0.195 and at the degree of freedom of 98 and 0.05 significant level, the null hypothesis which state that there's no significant relationship between poverty and women education has rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between poor home and women education.

Discussion

The result which revealed that there is significant relationship between poverty and women education is in line with the observation of Townsend (1992) who sees poverty as the lack of material resources to a certain duration and to such an extent that participation in normal activities and possession of amenities and living conditions become impossible or very limited. Also Ebele (1991) who conducted a study on poverty and women education found out a significant relationship between poverty and women education. In this study, it was observed that poverty was the greatest barrier to women education in the area, this was due to the fact that only those who were rich enough where able to afford formal education. Collaborating this Joseph (1993) noted that family who were poor could only use their little resources to sent their male children to school given that they did not find significant contribution of the women education to their family heritage. Contrary to this view Olayemi (1995) also conducted a study on the influence of poverty on women education, he observed that women who had intrinsic motive to be educated always strive to break their family belief and ideology about female education.

This result that there is relationship between gender discrimination on women education is in consonant with the findings of Diane & Victoria(1993) who carried out research on gender discrimination and women education and found out that gender discrimination has significant relationship with women education. Females are usually given free primary school education while boys were schooled even though the parents were leaving in starvation. The society treats the male child as wealth, whereas the uneducated women becoming a working woman at home. Women education was always considered as extra obligation to the society.

The result of the finding in this study also revealed that there is significant relationship between poor home and women education. This is related to the view of Akikpo (1995) who found out that women education were not considered important since women were regarded as slave who will be married out without being useful, for they were for the family they were given birth to.

Conclusion

The research found out that the major problems of women's education includes: household poverty, gender discrimination and low social economic status. In conclusion, women education is based on the level of social economic status of parents, the investigation reinforces the nation, government and stakeholders of education to stand up and treat women with important regards, provide them equal opportunity without any sense of gender bias. Also free and compulsory education can encourage parents to send their female children to school. Finally both male and female should be given equal opportunity in the education system.

Recommendations

- 1) Government as well as the stakeholders in education should sensitize all and sundry on the importance of women education.
- 2) That everyone has equal right to social services including education thus; discriminating male and female children should be abolished.
- 3) Free and compulsory education should be given to girls.
- 4) Efforts at poverty alleviation by the government should be intensified to reach the grassroots. It should be extended to the poor person at the local level.
- 5) Seminars, conferences and symposia should be periodically organized to parents; the women themselves should know the value of education for their future development and those of the society at large.

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