

Barriers to Women Academic Development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract: *Women academic are poorly represented in the Nigerian tertiary institutions as a result of many barriers which many people could not comprehend at a glance. So, the purpose of this review paper is to offer a synoptic stance or view on barriers to women academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions and to make suggestions to improve their representation in the higher education in Nigeria. The researcher entirely relies on published secondary data from reputable sources including review of published articles from reputable international journals such as SAGE, JSTOR, Springer, IEEE, CEON, Hindawi, Nebraska, LearnTechlib and Elsevier amongst others. Content Analysis has been used in planning the subject of this research and analyzing the whole data collected from the relevant secondary sources. During this appraisal, majorities of the online journals and reports on the subject matter were reviewed. The result obtained showed that women academic are underrepresented in the tertiary institutions and the factors responsible includes; cultural and societal factors, poor implementation of gender policy, early marriage, economic factor, religions factor, foundational enrolment problems, career demand and limited access to leadership positions as barriers to women academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions. In this context, measures to address these barriers includes full implementation of gender policies; employment of more women in academic tertiary institutions; provision of work environment that is gender friendly and implementation of public awareness sensitization on woman empower in the societies.*

Keywords: *Tertiary education, Women academic.*

1.0 Introduction

Tertiary education as the post-secondary school education designed for the production of manpower. Higher education is an education that awards certificates after the completion of the programme. Tertiary education is education that deals with teaching programmes, research programmes and community service programmes. Higher education is the peak of educational institutions and it is an organized educational system that is meant to support the social, economic and political development of the country (Ogunode, 2020). Federal Republic of Nigeria's national policy on education (2013), observed tertiary education is an education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI).

The realization of the tertiary institutions' goals and objectives depends on the quality of human resources which are grouped into men academic and women academic. Women Academic according to Ogunode, Imam and Olatunde-Aiyedun, (2023) are professional female folks working in tertiary institutions. Women Academic are professional female employed to work in tertiary and their functions include teaching, researching and provision of community services. Women academic are found in every

programme of the tertiary institutions. Women Academic are found in the sciences, arts and social science. Women Academic are also been found in leadership position of tertiary institutions. Women Academic have been appointed as vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors and DEAN's and head of departments. The contribution of women academic to the development and transformation of tertiary institutions cannot be underestimated. These women academic are underrepresented in the tertiary institutions due to gender discrimination.

Gender discrimination is in every society but problematization is common in Africa with its patriarchal system having absolute dangerous implications manifesting in institutions of higher learning. While a number of efforts have been underway to rectify gender imbalance, much still remains to be done across all educational sectors. There seem to be a natural gender role distinction all over the world, which has created gap opportunities between men and women (Nwajiuba, in Amadi, 2019). Over the past decades, the widespread 'unequal' power relations between men and women has continued to generate discussions and has turned out to be a crucial scholarly debate in developmental and academic discourses. One of the major foci of the 1975 UN Nigeria Assembly Conference was a critical examination of the problems and challenges that impede active participation of women in education, socio-political and economic development. Intellectuals and policy makers brainstormed on the problems militating against active participation of women in the global development agenda.

The Millennium declaration overtly recognises the equal rights and opportunities for men and women (Adebayo and Akanle, 2015). This trend has recently become of great concern to many who are agitating that women should be given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to development and be part of policy-making bodies. Thus, women have become the focus of international programmes and conferences aimed at integrating them into the development process on an equal basis with men. Within the past three decades, the United Nations organized World Conferences on Women in Mexico City (in 1975), Copehagen (in 1980), Nairobi (in 1985) and Beijing, China (in 1995). The deliberations at these conferences include how to provide gender equity in areas of development, among other issues as evidences abound that several negative gender relations such as gender-based divisions of labour, disparities between males and females access to power and resources, gender biases in rights and entitlements, remain pervasive in Nigeria (Ogunode, et al 2023).

Some of the conventions that Nigeria signed and ratified include ,The United Nations International Declaration of Human Rights (1948), The Convention on Economic , Social and Cultural Rights (1966) , The Convention On the Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), Beijing Declaration and Platform for United Nations. (1995), SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and its Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against United Nations (1997), the Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2004) (Gberevbie et. al. 2015). All these were designed to help eradicate gender inequality in the society. Anyalebechi (2016) and British Council (2015) observed that the 1999 constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria amended in 2011 maintains that every Nigerian citizen who has the qualities provided in chapter VI, part 1 can be voted into any leadership position of the country. This implies the freedom of every Nigerian citizen to participate in politics, including the electoral rights of voting and being voted for. Candidates can only be disqualified according to the provisions of chapter VI, part 2 of this same constitutions. Despite being enshrined in the Nigerian Constitutions; the reality is a far cry from the ideal.

For instance, the academic profession, like any other profession at the beginning of time was a single sex profession (Singh, in Olaogun, Adebayo, & Oluyemo,2015). But the World War II had actually opened the gateway to women emancipation in Europe and the USA before any University was introduced to Africa. Under the colonial imperialism, whatever operated in UK became law in Nigeria. Today in the Commonwealth nations, the situation of women in academics has improved. The

percentage of women employed as full time academic staff ranges from the highest of 50% in Jamaica to the least of 9.5% in Ghana, with a Commonwealth average of 24%. The smallest percentages were found in Ghana 9.5%, Nigeria 13.6%, Tanzania 11.0%, Zambia 10.9% and Zimbabwe 9.8% all in Africa, for example, University of Ilorin, also showed female/male ratio of 11.6% to 88.4% (Egunjobi, in Olaogun et al 2015). According to Egunjobi in Adegun, (2015), women academics in Nigeria were denied maternity leave under the University Law and in some cases they were not allowed to get married or have children. Some women were even refused employment despite the fact that they were qualified because it was felt that the women would be a distractive influence in the laboratory working in an all male career.

Like any other sector, the ability of the Nigerian universities to achieve their goals and objectives is a function of its ability to attract competent workforce irrespective of whether they are males or females (Gberevbie, in Olaogun et al 2015). Workers in an organization, irrespective of their gender, are classified into management/senior employees and others. The management/senior employees are responsible for the overall administration of the organization for enhanced performance. These categories of employees provide the direction through effective leadership to achieve the overall goals of the organization; and this is where discrimination against women is mostly pronounced in Nigerian universities (Gberevbie, et. al. 2015).

Institutions	Male	Female	Total
UNN	1,017 (73%)	367 (27%)	1,387
FOTO	452 (83%)	93 (17%)	545
ESUT	210 (66%)	110 (34%)	320
IMSU	314 (87%)	47 (13%)	361
Ibadan	1,091 (82%)	243 (18%)	1,334
Colabar	460 (82%)	102 (18%)	562
Port-Harcourt	416 (88%)	57 (12%)	473

Source: Nwajiuba, 2011; Adebayo & Akanle, 2015.

Table 1 reveals that in the selected Universities under consideration, the proportion of female lecturers to male lecturers is abysmally low. The female gender continues to occupy the back bench in the academia. Also, Arubayi's in Olaogun et al (2015) did an extensive study that unveils a concerning scenario within Federal and State Colleges of Education, revealing a pronounced gender imbalance among lecturers. The distribution of lecturers by sex emphasizes a bottom-heavy structure, with 50% holding first degrees, and 38% possessing professional first degrees, of which only 24% are females. The study further discloses that 29% of lecturers have postgraduate professional degrees, with female representation at 22%. Based on the above low representation of women academia in the Nigerian tertiary institutions, this chapter seeks to find out the barriers to women Academic Development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions.

2.0 Method

This paper is a position paper with the aims of exploring how capacity building programme will help improve the capacity of personnel in the crime management department of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper employed systematic literature review-based report method. It has collected and reviewed the related previous literature from various online sources. It has collected secondary information to generate knowledge on this topic. It has followed the qualitative narrative design. The researcher has visited different online sites to collect the previous literature and analyze universal basic education literature in Nigeria Adapted from Ogunode, 2025).

3.0 Result and Discussion

1. What are the barriers to women Academic Development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions?

The research question explored in this study is focused on understanding the barriers to women academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Through a meta-analysis of studies from Scopus indexed journals, this research provides insights into the barriers to women academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

The findings indicate that there are many barriers to women academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Several key themes emerged from the analysis, highlighting the barriers as follows:

Cultural and Societal Factors.

Women's development in the Nigerian tertiary institutions is limited by the various cultural practices in the country. Gberevbie, et. al. (2015) and Christianne Corbett and Catherine Hill (2015) agreed that discrimination against women in Nigeria is rooted in traditional beliefs and practices that regard the man as superior to his female counterpart. Socialization of children into specific roles by parents and relations in conformity with prescribed gender stereotypes is a contributory factor in the marginalization of the female gender in the formal labour sector. Dada, Ogunode, and Ajayi, (2022); Ikwuegbu, (2022); Posselt, Porter, and Kamimura (2018) and World Bank (2015) maintained that customary practices across Nigeria generally hold that the man is the head of the house and has the absolute control in the decision making process of the home. That is, a patriarchal society reinforces a norm that views men as leaders and women as followers. Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of women's lives. Women are in the subordinate position and male children are preferred over the female. This has contributed in no small measure to the repression of the aspirations of women, as permission would have to be taken from her 'owner' before she embarks on pursuing any endeavour in life, academics inclusive. It is on record that many husbands have stopped their wives (properties) from working or seeking employment. Nigeria is gender stratified. There is severe imbalance in the educational, workforce and leadership opportunities in the country. Enough women are not empowered educationally and given opportunity in the labour market and worse still, in the area of leadership. A statistics conducted in 1990 revealed that a very minimal percentage of women were professors, about 1.8% of all the professors in Nigeria, furthermore, only 11% of women participate in the Nigerian economy as against 30% of men (Olonade, et al: 2021). One of the main barriers to women's academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions is cultural norms and traditions. In many Nigerian communities, women are still expected to prioritize their domestic roles over their education and career aspirations. This often leads to limited opportunities for women to pursue higher education and advance in their academic careers.

Poor implementation of gender policy

Poor implementation of various gender policies in Nigerian educational institutions especially the tertiary institutions has accounted for poor development of women's academic in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Edinoh, Odili, and Nwafor (2023) and specifically, Ogunode and Salman, (2022) acknowledged poor implementation of gender policy on admission, recruitment and in the selection of academic leaders has resulted in gender imbalance in most tertiary institutions. Poor implementation of gender policy on recruitment is responsible for more males among the staff of the universities in Nigerian than the females and the poor implementation of gender policy on the appointment of universities manager and administrators gave males the upper hands in the occupation of leadership positions of the universities than the female folks (Ogunode et al 2022). According to Anyalebechi, (2016) and Ogunode and Ahmed (2021) one of the important reasons why women have not received adequate benefits from years of planning and development is their inadequate representation can be linked to the non-implementation of the gender acts and policies in Nigeria. Most gender policies designed and formulated

to ensure gender equality in recruitment are poorly implemented in higher institutions. African Union Commission, (2015); Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2016) and African Women (2022) concluded that the poor implementation of the Child Rights Act which was passed at the Federal level in 2003 has accounted for gender inequality in the schools.

Early marriage

Girls are usually overwhelmed with family and peer according to Onyeocha, Ukwuoma, and Onyeocha, (2023), pressure to marry early and raise families, as women are assumed to be valued by the number of children they have. Practice of early marriage is further perpetuated by the fear of pregnancy before marriage, which parents consider as a disgrace and lowers the bride price. Girls are also lured into early marriage in some cultures by promise of economic incentives such as cattle and cash dowries. The practice of early marriage surely limits a female's chances of participating in TVET or STEM as she is preoccupied with raising a family thereafter. Male-dominated TVET or STEM workforce results in these fields perpetuating inflexible, exclusionary, male-dominated designs that are not supportive of women and minorities. Early marriage practices, particularly prevalent in the Northern part of Nigeria, stand as a significant barrier to the adequate representation of women in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Ogunode eta (2023) and Olonade et al, (2021) asserted that these practices contribute to the underrepresentation of female individuals within the university system. The vulnerability of women and girls to poverty, coupled with cultural and societal vices, is exacerbated by empirical evidence showcasing gender disparities in enrollment, retention, and completion across all educational levels—primary, secondary, and tertiary. Gargiulo (2017) noted a distressing aspect of early marriage—the perception of it as a desirable alternative for many low-income families. Beyond social considerations, early marriage is seen as a means of expanding social networks and gaining financial benefits through the customary "bride price" paid by the groom's family to the wife's family. This economic aspect inadvertently perpetuates the cycle of gender imbalance in education. Alarming statistics from Nigeria indicate that 43% of girls are married before their 18th birthday, with a substantial regional disparity favoring boys, particularly in the Northern states. In the South-East, where boys engage in income-generating activities, the disparity shifts in favor of girls. Disturbingly, the survey conducted in 2008 revealed that 28% of young women aged 15-19 were already married, compared to a mere 1% of young men. Early marriage is further compounded by polygamous unions, affecting 26% of these young women.

Economic Factor

Poor economic status of many parents in Nigeria may have appear to a have contributed to the poor representation of women in the workforce of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. British Council (2015) and African Union Commission, (2015) concluded that the high rate of poverty in Nigeria has forced many girls and women out of school. Many parents are unable to provide their children especially the girl child the necessary support to be in school. Many research studies have established the detrimental effects of tuition charges on girls' attendance and progression. Net Attendance Rates for girls increase drastically as household wealth increases indicating a strong correlation between school attendance and income. Recent research corroborates this association with 46% of girls who had withdrawn from school indicating that they dropped out for economic reasons (UNICEF, 2015; Mittal 2022). Also, Ogunode et al (2023d) and Amadi, (2019) opined that the economic status of many Nigerian parents has accounted for the gender imbalance in some Nigerian universities. With over 60% of Nigerians (almost 100 million people) living in poverty, on less than US\$1 per day, girls are often sent to work in markets or hawk wares on the street.

The study found that women's access to education is often hindered by financial constraints, limiting their opportunities for advancement within the academic sphere. Additionally, economic factors such as job availability and income level also impact women's ability to pursue higher education and advance their academic careers. Financial constraints also pose a major barrier to women's academic development

in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Many women in Nigeria come from low-income families and are unable to afford the high cost of tuition and other academic expenses. This significantly limits their access to quality education and hinders their academic progress.

Religions factor

The various religions institutions in Nigeria believed that women should submit and obey their husband and limited women' freedom to the man even in the area of purposing career. This hindered the development of women in the Nigerian' tertiary institutions. Gbadamosi, (2015); Mehta, Yam, Krief, Hopf, and Matlin, (2018) and Ogunode, Lawan and Yusuf (2021) opined that the various religions in Nigeria subscribe to the idea that the man is head of the family and has greater control and decision making powers. Almost all religions in Nigeria actually preach in favour of women absolute domestic role. That is women should be absolutely at home to care for their children and husband without external engagements. The religious teachings most hold that the woman is the weaker vessel and plays the second fiddle in marriage partnership. As such, the woman is taught to be subservient to the man. American Chemical Society (2018) and Ogunode (2020) concluded that religion plays a crucial role in shaping the educational goals and aspirations of women in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This is evident in the strong emphasis placed on education in various religious doctrines and teachings. As a result, women who are deeply rooted in their religious beliefs tend to be more motivated and focused in their academic pursuits.

Foundational Enrolment Problems

Foundational enrolment problem of girls from the basic schools to junior secondary schools and senior secondary schools to tertiary institutions is a major factor that has contributed to poor representation of women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria resulting to low development of women academic. The enrolment and completion rate of girl's child keeping drop in on every form of education till the universities level. British Council, 2014); James (2014) and Edinoh, Odili & Nwafor (2023) noted that many girls fail to make the transition to junior secondary school for a range of educational, economic and socio-cultural reasons. An over-age starts to school, the onset of puberty or increased costs of secondary education may all put an early end to girls' education. Girls' low levels of transition and retention in junior secondary schools are becoming an increasing concern because it implies that girls will continue to fail to acquire fundamental life skills, including literacy and numeracy. In a study conducted by Bello and Oluwadare (2013) and Omoregie and Abraham (2019) on the statistics of male and female genders enrolled for studies at every level of education, it was discovered that there is persistent gender inequality in the education sector of Nigeria favoring male.

Career Demand

Another factor that has contributed immensely to underdevelopment of the women academic in the various institutions in Nigeria is career demand. Career progression within tertiary institutions presents a substantial challenge for women, contributing to their underrepresentation in academic roles. In tertiary education, the trajectory toward career advancement typically demands individuals to attain multiple degrees to reach the pinnacle of their academic careers. This rigorous academic journey, although essential for professional growth, places women at a disadvantage, particularly in the context of marital demands. The demand for advanced degrees poses a significant hurdle for women who may be navigating the complexities of balancing academic pursuits with family life. This challenge is exemplified by the fact that many women opt out of academia due to the demanding nature of career growth, promotion requirements, and the pursuit of the highest echelons of the academic ladder. Research by Álvarez, and Olatunde-Aiyedun, (2023) in sustainability underscores the importance of acknowledging and addressing these challenges, especially in fields such as Renewable and Sustainable Energy Education. The case study on the development of the Electric Vehicle EOLO highlights the need

for inclusive policies that consider the unique challenges faced by women in academia. Also, Olatunde-Aiyedun, and Adams, (2022) contribute to this discourse in their study on the Effect of blended learning models on students' academic achievement and retention in Science Education. While focusing on student outcomes, this research indirectly emphasizes the importance of creating an academic environment that supports the diverse needs of educators, particularly women striving for career advancement.

Limited access to leadership positions

The low representation of women in leadership positions in Nigerian tertiary institutions is a complex issue that has been attributed to various factors and barriers. These factors and barriers hinder the academic development of women and hinder their progress in achieving leadership positions. Women in Nigerian tertiary institutions also face limited access to leadership positions. This is partly due to gender stereotypes and biases that portray women as less competent and capable of holding leadership positions. As a result, women are often overlooked for leadership opportunities and are unable to gain the necessary experience and skills to advance in their academic careers.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, there has been a growing interest on barriers to women academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This has been a topic of great importance as Nigeria strives to improve its education system and promote gender equality in higher education. In this study, we aim to explore the various factors that directly contributed to the barrier to women academic development in the institutions.

Our research methodology involved a comprehensive review of existing literature on the topic, as well as conducting interviews with female students and faculty members from different religious backgrounds. Through this, we were able to identify cultural and societal factors, poor implementation of gender policy, early marriage, economic factor, religions factor, foundational enrolment Problems, career demand and limited access to leadership positions as barriers to women academic development in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

To overcome these barriers, it is crucial to address the root causes and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This includes promoting gender equality and challenging traditional gender roles, providing financial support and scholarships for women, and implementing policies that promote equal opportunities for women in leadership positions.

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