

Factors Affecting Social Integration of Female Students in Taraba State University Jalingo: Implication for Counselling

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Abstract

This study determines factors affecting social integration of female students in Taraba State University, Jalingo. The study focuses on the socio-economic factors that affect social integration of the female students in Taraba State University, looking at its implications for counselling. While target population is all female students (5460), a sample of 971 is used. The work adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire as the method of data gathering. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to analyse respondents' responses. T-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were used to test the hypothesis. Findings revealed that tradition, insecurity, religious misconception, sexual harassment are factors impinging on the social integration of the female students. Guidance implication is that psychosocial theory of counselling be employed and programmes that are both preventive and curative in nature be planned for the female students and other stake holders to ensure proper social integration of female students in the University.

Keywords: Counselling, Female students, Social integration and University

Introduction

In every successful community and nation in the world, women are found to be the catalysts for social transformation at different levels. Women's salient participation in human endeavour, either at grassroots or higher levels cannot be overestimated. Recently, the global imbalance in women participation and function in affairs of nations, especially in terms of issues that pertain national development and governance is very glaring.

Education is one of the social environments whereby gender disparity is reflected. There is a corresponding decrease in the number of female students as the grade level of education increases. For instance, the higher education remains the level females are less represented both as students and staff. Even the very few women that are fortunate enough to join higher institutions put up lower academic performance, and with higher withdrawals (Mersha, Alemayehu and Firew, 2013).

Generally, and traditionally, women are subjected to lesser role than men, and are often also considered secondary to men, and even treated differently in the classroom environment

(Morales, 2008). Researchers have noted that women have experienced a “chilly climate” on university campuses noting a “significant educational disadvantage” when compared to their male counterparts (Morris and Daniel, 2008). Despite these assertions, a number of coping mechanisms for women have surfaced in order to help them to move beyond the disparaging societal hindrances and move forward into a place of empowerment through healthy identity development.

Social integration is the process of building the values, relations and institutions essential for the creation of such an equitable and dynamic society, where all individuals, regardless of their race, sex, language or religion, can fully exercise their rights and responsibilities on an equal basis with others and contribute to development of the society.

Women and children, especially those living in poverty, are identified as particularly vulnerable groups who experience marginalization and social exclusion. Indeed, being female is a barrier to social integration. Gender inequality, gender stereotyping, male domination, patriarchal attitudes or abusive cultural practices were reported as barriers to social integration.

Religious misconceptions, faulty traditional values, economic constraints, violence of difference kinds have been repeatedly common factors impinging on Nigerian women most especially the ones found in the northern part of Nigeria. These factors have been the reason for women dysfunction right from the pre-colonial period till date. This factors manifest in different dimensions.

Women are harassed, stigmatised and demoralised in many ways and are living in fear of the unknown. These factors have tempered with their social integration in all sectors of life, and robbed them of the opportunities to fully participate in activities of national development (Lenshie, 2013; Akipu and Agbu, 2014). When the world of women is gripped with these evils, fruitful participation in nation-building becomes very minimal. This calls for social transformation for the purpose of meaningful integration of women in all human endeavour for the attainment of national development.

Participation in social life encompasses abilities and opportunities to recognise social reality and at the same time to be recognised by members of other community groups. The integral social action of an individual is a dialectical self-realisation process that takes place in a known social context that provides appropriate means for meaningful social action. This means covers positions and opportunities that are necessary to individuals and groups to act according to their dispositions, i.e. according to incorporated knowledge of social life (Kamali, 1999).

The researchers observed that as a sector of student body, female students of Taraba State University, Jalingo do not seem fully integrated in the social activities of the university. Could it be that they are victims of some of the factors that militate against Nigerian women generally? The types of factors that militate against female students in tertiary institutions may wear different faces, but if unclothed, they may easily be part of the general factors.

Problem of the study.

Most female students of Taraba State University, Jalingo, seem to be coping poorly with academic and other social activities on campus. There seems to be some elements of fear and reservation among them. This is observed in how they go about their academic activities. If,

therefore, the female students are being traumatised by any of the general factors that militate against women, there is a need for social integration, emotional healing, spiritual stabilisation among them through psychosocial counselling that could lead to social transformation and restoration of woman dignity.

The question of equality in education should not be measured only by the number of enrolment and by the school inputs because some inputs may be of greater importance to certain groups of students. The new definition of equality is stipulated in such a way that the students are equal when the educational outcomes of these students are essentially the same for both males and females. Therefore, it is unwise to think gender equality in education by simply counting the number of female students enrolled in higher education institutions.

Equality of sexes can be ensured if the schools identify and solve the factors that affect females' academic performance and thereby minimize female attritions. However, schools and universities, because of their biased treatments and some other external factors, become centres of gender disparity. The study will focus on the socio-economic factors that affect social integration of the female students looking at its implication for counselling.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that affect female social integration in Taraba State University, Jalingo. Specifically, the following variables for social integration was surveyed:

- a. Effects of traditional values on female students' social integration.
- b. Effects of misconceived religious belief on social integration of female students.
- c. Effects of economic constraints on female students' social integration.
- d. Effects of domestic violence on female students' social integration.
- e. Effects of sexual harassment on female students' social integration.
- f. Effects of insecurity on female students' social integration.

Research Questions.

- a. What are the effects of traditional values on female students' social integration in Taraba State University, Jalingo?
- b. What are the effects of misconceived religious belief on social integration of female students in Taraba State University, Jalingo?
- c. What are the effects of economic constraints on female students' social integration in Taraba State University, Jalingo?
- d. What are the effects of domestic violence on female students' social integration in Taraba State University, Jalingo?
- e. What are the effects of sexual harassment on female students' social integration in Taraba State University, Jalingo?
- f. What are the effects of insecurity on female students' social integration in Taraba State University, Jalingo?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁. Traditional values have no significant effects on female students' social integration in Taraba State University, Jalingo.

HO₂. Misconceived religion belief has no significant effect on female students' social integration in Taraba State University.

HO₃. Economic constraints have no significant effects on female students' social integration in Taraba State University.

HO₄. Domestic violence has no significant effects on social integration of female students in Taraba State.

HO₅. Sexual harassment has no significant effects on social integration of female students of Taraba State University.

HO₆. Insecurity has no significant effects on female students' social integration in Taraba State University.

Methodology.

The research design for this study is survey method. Target population for this study comprises of all female students of the Taraba State University, Jalingo. Stratified purposeful sampling was employed to select one thousand (1000) female students across all academic levels and faculties. However, of the questionnaire administered, only nine hundred and seventy one (971) was analysed.

The Multistage sampling method was used for the purpose of this study. Multistage sampling refers to sampling plans where the sampling is carried out in stages using smaller and smaller sampling units at each stage. In a two-stage sampling design, a sample of primary units is selected and then a sample of secondary units is selected within each primary unit (Koul, 1984).

Research instrument titled "University female students social integrations questionnaire (UFSSIQ) was developed by the researchers to collect data on variables under investigation. The instrument was validated by specialists in the Departments of Guidance and Counselling, Religion, and Sociology of the Taraba State University, Jalingo.

In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, test, - retest method of reliability was conducted at College of Agriculture, a tertiary institution in Taraba State. The result was analysed using Pearson moment product correction coefficient. A reliability of 0.79 was obtained. The instrument proved reliable for the conduct of the study.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Frequency counts and simple percentage were used to analyse respondents' responses. t test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were used to test the hypotheses.

Results presentation and discussion

Table 1: Socio demographic variables of respondents

Variable	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Marital status of respondents		
Single	515	53
Married	406	41.8
Divorced/Separated	33	3.4
Widowed	17	1.8
Total	971	100
Respondents 'religious affiliation		
Christianity	554	57
Islam	395	40.7
Traditional	22	2.3
Total	971	100
Academic Level of Respondents		
100 Level	223	23
200 Level	208	21.4
300 Level	248	25.5
400 Level	243	25
500 Level	49	5.1
Total	971	100

Source: Field work 2019

A total of 971 female students who were sampled with the sole aim of getting their reaction on if 'being just a female' puts them at a disadvantage position against their male counterparts in terms of social-integration. Their responses were startling showing that the socioeconomic environment was working against the female folk. That many of them think of their present situation as if it is the default setting. The men are quick to remind them that they are women, and there seems no equal opportunity given to them, making it look as if it is misnomer to be a female.

Taking a look on the marital status of respondents from table 1 above, it reveals single female students stand at 515, corresponding with 53%. Married female students are 406, representing 41.8%. Female students who are divorced or separated are 33, representing 3.4%, while the widowed are 17, representing 1.8%. Taking a cursory look at these figures when a cross tabulation of marital status of respondents and respondents' religious affiliation was carried out the table above was the result. Academic Level of Respondents' as shown in the same table 1 above indicates that female students who are in 100 Level are 223 respondents, representing (23%), 200 Level 208 respondents, corresponding to 21.4%, while 248 respondents, which represents 25.5% are 300 level students. 400 Level had 243 respondents (25%) and lastly 500 Level about 49 respondents (5.1%). This shows some even spread among the levels in the University.

Table 2: Cross tabulation of marital status of respondents and respondents' religious affiliation

Marital status	Respondents' religious affiliation			Total
	Christianity	Muslim	Traditional	
Single	302	204	9	515
Married	212	181	13	406
Divorced	23	10	0	33
Widowed	17	0	0	17
Total	554	395	22	971

Source: Field work 2019

Table 2 shows the respondents' religious affiliation putting female students who are Christians at 554, representing 57%. Islam is 395 respondents (40.7%) and Traditional religion stands at 22 respondents (2.3%). The interpretation of these data simply means that there are more Christian female students in the University. This could be due to religious misconception and traditional norms that do not support the girl-child access to western education. Early and forced marriage as practiced in some parts of Taraba State lead girls between the ages of 12 – 14 to marry older men thereby denying them the opportunity to be educated or further their education. In Nigeria, early marriage is predominant in the Northern part of the country where North-west and North-East geopolitical zones account for over 45 % of child marriages as well as the highest levels of illiteracy amongst females in the nation. The cases continue to occur in spite of the Nigerian constitution frowning at early marriages. The recent cases of Alhaji Ahmed Bakura, former Governor of Zamfara and Ese Oruru in Bayelsa state are clear examples that these practices continue to be practiced (Onyido & Bramaifa, 2018).

Religious beliefs have played a key role in girl-child marriage, as some religious beliefs do not condemn marriage to under aged girl. This has thereby encouraged the perpetuation of such acts. In addition, as a result of religious misconception, parents force their daughters to marry whomever they get pregnant for.

The foregoing means that female students are less likely to receive social support for their higher education studies from their family and hometown friends as compared to their male counterparts. Female students are less likely to receive informational support from their parents because their parents may not usually have any personal experience of the higher education system or are so tied to religious beliefs and culture that they really don't want to support the girl-child.

Africa is a continent that is still developing and, as such, most countries have a significant population that lack educational qualification and form of training. This therefore exposes them to a lot of societal superstitions and misinterpretations of marriage. As a result, it makes them gullible to any superstition or misconceptions that have been passed down from generation to generation regarding early-child marriage.

Table 3: Socio-economic challenges of the female student

Variables/Options	SA	UD	SD	Total
Traditional/values do not permit female students to partake in social activities?	728	92	151	971
Religious teachings forbids female education.	766	68	173	971
There is a great misconception of religious teaching in regard to female social integration.	437	124	410	971
Female students suffer domestic violence at home	358	116	497	971
Women are physically sexually abused at home.	391	148	432	971
Female students are sexually harassed outside their homes.	481	188	302	971
Female students are vulnerable to attack.	722	167	82	971
Tricycle riders abuse female students.	550	169	252	971
Male students harass female students.	826	86	58	971
Most female students are victimised by male lecturers.	843	85	43	971
Economic constraints affects female students social integration	390	147	434	971

Source: Field work 2019

KEY: SA = Strongly Agreed UD = Undecided SD = Strongly Disagreed

Table 3 shows that respondents strongly agree that traditional values, insecurity, religious teachings and misconceptions, sexual harassment outside home and at school are challenges of female students in Taraba State University. Despite the fact that Taraba is claiming to be in the Middle Belt, it does not negate the fact that it comes from the Northern part of the country. There is therefore a likelihood of some form of cultural diffusion that relegate women to the background by making them second class citizens. The culture does not permit the mingling of boys and girls. From the religious perspectives, Islam promotes the purdah system that makes women remain indoors and some traditions disallow women participation in some social issues.

In most communities of Northern Nigeria (if not all over Nigeria), women are not allowed to own landed properties. They do not have right to inheritance of property from either their parents or husbands. This act alone puts the women at an economic disadvantage position in the society. It makes them to be economically and socially irrelevant being that Nigeria is a class society. This act greatly affects their level of social integration in school with their male counterparts. This is because most times, their male counterparts who always brandish wealth are tended toward drawing to themselves more friends, and that also makes them sociable and highly integrated.

Cases of domestic violence against women are on the rise daily. The hard times or the economic crunch that Nigeria is passing through have balkanise homes leaving them in the state of limbo. Men raise their voices and sometimes their hands at the slightest provocation by their wives. Most women are house wives and hardly in any way contribute to the family's financial needs. That has also made the women to be dependent on the men. This has subjected the women to all sorts of verbal attacks and sometimes physical attacks. Women are sometimes abused both at home and outside the home, these abuses are either physical, emotional, psychological, or

economical. By implication, it shows that even while on campus they are prone to rape and other forms of abuses by their male counterparts, and sometimes even their male lecturers. Some male lecturers do demand sex or money or both from the female students. Their refusal can sometimes lead to their being victimized.

Tricycle riders are another nightmare to the female students. They rape and extort their valuables. Female students are bedevilled with high rate of insecurity from these riders. They are as weaker beings that can be intimidated at all times for no just cause other than she is a **FEMALE**. The aforementioned array of problems have great adverse effects on the female students and have some to stay away from some lecturers so as to avoid that 'predator' lecturers, male students and many school social involvement. Many female students are afraid of going to the library or cyber café at night for the fear of them being molested. While even in class, pestering lecturers or male students come around even without talking to them, make them lose concentration and consequently affect their level of social integration.

Testing of hypotheses

The ANOVA was used in testing the hypotheses at .05 significance level which implies that 95% confidence was used. When all the hypotheses stated were tested, the study arrived at the following results.

HO₁. Traditional values have no significant effects on female students' social integration in Taraba State University.

The calculated value of .907 was arrived at as against the table value of .098. Based on the result and the decision rule which states that when the calculated value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that traditional values significantly affect the female students' social integration. As a result of cultural expectation, values and norms, young girls are lured into early marriages in order to fit into the expectations of their community. Societal expectations pressurize parents to allow their girls under the age of 18 years get married. As failure to conform with these expectations can lead to ridicule and disapproval, a number of traditional practices contribute to early girl-child marriage, for instance, practices such as female genital circumcision (FGC) where part of the female genital is removed for cultural reasons. It is believed that the process improves the health of the girl child, hygiene, prospects of marriage and fertility. The socio-cultural expectation of girls and the priority accorded to their future roles as mothers and wives have a strong negative bearing on their social integration and formal education. The girl-child is discriminated by virtue of her sex, the structure of the society, its values, traditions and institutions all have an in-built discrimination against girl-child and university female students of today.

HO₂. Misconceived religious belief has no significant effect on female students' social integration in Taraba State University.

The result for this hypothesis puts the calculated value at .764 and the P value at .474. This simply means that misconceived religious belief has significant effect on female students' social integration in Taraba State University.

Parents hide under the cloak of “religion” to unjustly deny the girl-child her right to education and restriction on what extent the female child could participate in social aspect of education because to such parents, western education is synonymous with Christianity. However, it is worth noting that, Islam as a complete way of life for Muslims has spelt out everything as it relates to the well-being of every Muslim, both male and female. More so, as rightly observed by many, the position of women under Islam has been the subject of repeated controversy among Muslims ever since they came under the influence of Western civilization and education.

HO₃. Economic constraints have no significant effects on female students’ social integration in Taraba State University.

The calculated value arrived at is .041, while the table value is 3.211. In this circumstance, we will fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means that economic constraints have no significant effects on female students’ social integration in Taraba State University. However, owing to the economic stagnation of the northern region, it is common to find school age girls engaged in street hawking rather than attending school. Poverty and the impoverished condition of the citizenry serve as a barrier to girl-child education. Most mothers prefer street hawking and early marriage than sending their female wards to school. In the same vein, family background of the girl determines her chance of attending school. The more educated a parent, the more favourable his/her attitudes to education. This could be the case of most privileged female students in Taraba State University.

HO₄. Domestic violence has no significant effects on social integration of female students in Taraba State.

The calculated value stood at .099, while the table value is .293. In this circumstance, we will fail to reject the null hypotheses. This implies that domestic violence has no significant effects on social integration of female students in Taraba State. It equally means that the home from where most female students of the University come are free from violence.

HO₅. Sexual harassment has no significant effects on social integration of female students in Taraba State University.

The result for this test gave a calculated value of .994 and the critical value at .279. This simply means that sexual harassment has significant effects on social integration of female students of Taraba State University. Though most of the students have safe home, outside their homes they encounter sexual harassment.

HO₆. Insecurity has no significant effects on female students’ social integration in Taraba State University.

The calculated value of .677 was arrived at and the critical value at .556. From this, it can be concluded that, insecurity has significant effects on female students’ social integration in Taraba State University. The rising case of insecurity in Africa, particularly Nigeria, has seen the rise of kidnapping and other criminal vices. A number of young girls have been kidnapped on their ways to school or at school premises and thereafter forced into marriage by their captors. The case of abduction and eventual forceful marriage and impregnation of some of the Chibok girls in the northern part of Nigeria is a typical example of this (Maiangwa & Amao, 2015). This has created

fear in most school and university female students in Northern part of Nigeria, limiting social activities in their lives.

Counselling Implication

Education is central to the enhancement and improvement of the welfare of any nation because it reduces the impacts of poverty, improves health and nutrition, reduces the gap of inequality and increases the participation of women in the labour market. The research shows that traditional values, religious beliefs and misconception, sexual harassment from male students, lecturers, tricycle riders and insecurity generally pose problems of social integration among Taraba state female students in Taraba State University.

The counselling implication is that psycho-social counselling strategies should be put in place with programmes that aim at reducing the problems that militate against the female students. Programmes should be holistic and both preventive and curative in nature. The guideline for developing the programmes should be based on the facts of the findings which will also determine the type of theories, counselling strategies and educational programmes needed.

Programmes will be all encompassing and stake-holders and victims will benefit. Lectures, teaching and advocacies will be employed for the purposes of reaching out to all that need to contribute in overcoming the female students' problems. Individual, group counselling and seminars on critical issues should be embarked upon by counsellors in liaison with the University.

In conclusion, psychosocial counselling which employs the services of traditional stakeholders, religious leaders and security services should be properly planned by the Counsellors. Seminars, workshops and other social activities related to the problems of the female students should be part of the remedial programmes.

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