

Societal Perception of Gender Enrolment in Vocational Education Courses: A Case Study of Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State

Shuaibu Nafeesah O*, Bolajoko Rukayah Y*, & Tijani Lami Z.*

* Business Education Department, Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State, Nigeria.

Highlights

- Education prepares individuals for complete living
- Vocational education fosters self-reliance
- Gender inequality in education still exists in Nigeria
- Socio-economic development can only be achieved through education devoid of gender inequality.

Abstract

Education is a process of preparing an individual for complete living with oneself and society. It equips individuals with all the skills required to confront the challenges the environment or society presents. Vocational education prepares an individual to acquire the right knowledge, skills, competences, attitudes and habits in specialized areas for gainful employment and self-reliance. The issue of gender inequality in education still exists in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this paper investigated the "Societal perception of gender enrolment in vocational education courses in Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State". The researchers used an ex-post-facto research design and a population of 957 registered students in the School of Vocational Education for the 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 session. The study involved five research purposes, questions and null hypotheses respectively. It was discovered that there was no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in the Business Education Department, Fine and Applied Arts Department and School of Vocational Education, while there was a significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in the Agricultural Education Department. The researchers concluded that socio-economic development can only be achieved through education devoid of gender inequality. They recommended that all forms of cultural and negative stereotyping in gender enrolment in education should be abolished.

Keywords: Enrolment, Gender, Perception, Societal, Vocational Education.

*Correspondence

Shuaibu Nafeesah O., shuaibunafeesahoyiza@gmail.com

Received: 15 May 2024;

Accepted: 30 May 2024;

Published: 4 June 2024.

Citation: Shuaibu Nafeesah O., Bolajoko Rukayah Y. & Tijani Lami Z. (2024). Societal Perception of Gender Enrolment in Vocational Education Courses: A Case Study of Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State. *Journal of Education, Science and Technology* 2024, (1) 1.13-22.

COPYRIGHT © 2024 Nafeesah Shuaibu, Rukayah Bolajoko & Lami Tijani. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

1.0 Introduction

Education is a process of bringing about changes in the behaviour and dispositions of socially acceptable individuals. Education is a process that brings a change not only in the amount of knowledge gained but also in the abilities to think and to acquire habits, skills, interests and attitudes, which characterize a person who is socially accepted, personally adjusted and responsible (Umar, 2012). It is the aggregate of all processes by which a person acquires abilities, attitudes, skills and other forms of behaviours that are positive in the society in which he lives.

Vocational education is a form of education that equips the recipients with saleable skills and competencies that make them self-reliant, self-actualized, and functional in various human endeavours. According to Agbaje and Ibikunle (2011) [2], vocational education is designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation, encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a valuable and productive basis.

In most developing nations, and Nigeria in particular, the girl-child seems to be at a disadvantage in terms of access to education. This is usually because of societal norms and cultural practices. Traditional Nigerian society holds the view that the male child preserves the family names and perpetuates the ancestral lineage, as opposed to the female child. Based on this view, many families prefer male children to female ones. This has led to giving preferential treatment to the male child right from birth, such as more excellent education and economic and social upliftment opportunities.

Yusuf (2014) [10] described gender as a cultural construct that distinguishes the roles, behaviour, mental and emotional characteristics between females and males developed by society. Gender role is a psychological term describing behaviour and attributes expected by individuals based on being born either female or male. Gender roles are, therefore, not inherited or biological but are rather made. The female gender role is quite distinct from that of the male, originating from the traditional division of labour.

Alegbemi (2008) [3] said that though some schools of thought have used biological differences between males and females to explain why males have certain roles and responsibilities distinct from those of females in most societies, it could also be observed in some parts of Nigeria that the prevailing environmental and economic conditions, as well as the culture of an area, rather than biological differences, determine what males and females are able to do. The focus on gender is not on biological differences between males and females but rather on their experiences as members of the society.

In their contribution, Epumepu and Igbiniedion (2014) [5] claimed that gender has been articulated differently but can be seen to relate to socially defined sex, roles, attitudes and values which are acquired through socialization and ascribed by a given community as appropriate for one sex or another; it affects power sharing, decision making and division of labour. They argued that due to this social classification of gender, which has to do with sex, power sharing among others, disparity in enrolment and academic performance will continue to be a subject of research. This is not because a particular sex has an advantage over the other in access to education, but because the society has intently or otherwise created this boundary due to cultural and religious affiliation.

Agali and Bello (2008) [1] stated that gender should be seen beyond the biological differences based on sex but to include behavioural differences of an individual irrespective of biological differences. They opined that gender refers to certain aspects of males and females which are defined by social forces. This shows that gender is not determined by the sex of an individual alone but also by factors such as behaviour, gesture, mode of dressing, occupation, social network and roles played by the sexes in a given society.

Gender stereotypes against female education have been identified as one of the causes of poor access of females to education. Ovasa and Adabara (2011) [7] identified a number of factors that authors, educators and researchers have advanced to be responsible for the disparity in access to formal education, which include, among others:

- (i) Child-rearing practices: The typical African man, like Nigerians, rears their daughters differently from their sons for various reasons. The play activities of boys compel them to exert their physical strength and challenge their mental powers, their power of imagination and ingenuity.
- (ii) Socialization pattern: Traditionally, Nigerian women's roles were childbearing, agricultural production, and housekeeping. However, with the coming of Western education, boys were enrolled in school, and girls remained at home to care for the younger ones and perform domestic work.
- (iii) Parental perception of female education: Parents tend to invest more money in their male child's education than their female child, giving such reasons as female education ends in another man's kitchen. In contrast, the male child is considered as the child that is going to propagate the name of the family. Other factors such as unwanted pregnancy, early marriage, household heads and community leaders have been identified to limit the scope of women's education.
- (iv) Gender stereotype occupation: Certain professions are erroneously believed to be gender-linked. Such professions, like engineering, medicine, pharmacy, technology, and mathematics, are believed to be exclusively for men. As such, women dare not aspire to offer courses that can lead them into science-based professions.
- (v) Gender stereotype in the educational system: In the school system, there are subjects tagged 'masculine' such as science, technology and mathematics, while subjects such as Home Economics, Literature and Secretarial Studies are tagged 'feminine'. Classroom interaction between teachers and pupils also favour boys to the detriment of girls.

The need for using education to achieve development was recognized by the National Policy on Education, which stressed that Nigeria's education aims to prepare learners for effective and productive life in the society (Yusuf, 2014) [10]. The policy acknowledges that the Nigerian education system would equip learners with the necessary skills and competencies which would enable them to respond positively to the changing world in which they live and work. Ovansa and Adabara (2011) [7] asserted that the human resources of a nation are considered to be the engine of growth and development of the country. To achieve this statement, equal educational opportunity should be given to both male and female children because sustainable human development cannot be effective if half of the human race remains ignorant, marginalized and discriminated against.

In agreement with the above assertion, Umar (2012) [9] stated that women constitute half of the world's (more than half of Nigeria's population. She claimed that women are the main custodians of a society's social, cultural and fundamental values, that permanent change is often best achieved through them, and that full community development is impossible without their understanding, cooperation and effective participation. Umar maintained that to have a complete functional system, both male and female should have equal opportunities in all spheres of life. It is only on such instance that both genders can contribute positively towards national development.

Mohammed and Garba (2014) [6] posited that it is evident that education is a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child. Also, girl's and women's education in strategic development/investment – evidence shows that countries with greater gender equality are more likely to have higher economic growth. They also said that over the past years, the United Nations has worked towards the promotion of girls and women in every field of life; as a result, diverse activities have been undertaken in that framework to implement the decisions made and recommendations formulated during various conferences and summit meetings on girls and women.

According to Ovansa and Adabara (2011) [7], between 1977 and 1985, the United Nations (UN) adopted various resolutions to ensure equal educational opportunity for both men and women. The UN organized a series of conferences on women, and declarations and programmes were embarked upon to redress the gender imbalance and set up an international agenda to promote gender equality in all spheres of life. Prominent among the conventions and declarations were:

- (a) Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1985.
- (b) The Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- (c) The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995.

The government similarly recognizes education as a fundamental human right of all citizens. It asserts the need for equal educational opportunities for all Nigerian children, irrespective of any real or imagined bias. This commitment is further strengthened by the country's membership of many international protocols and conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and her membership with many international organizations such as the UNICEF and UNESCO [1]. Other conferences held in Nigeria include the 1989 conference in Abuja, which produced the Abuja Declaration on Women Participation in Development and the Role of Women in Africa in the 1990s.

According to Agali and Bello (2008) [1], despite Nigeria's membership and commitment to these and many similar organizations, events have shown that there is much to be desired regarding gender balance in educational opportunities. This disequilibrium is manifest in general school academic and physical environments, leading to low female enrolment, especially in the northern part of the country. In the same vein, Ovansa and Adabara (2011) [7] lamented that disparity in access to formal education continues to exist in favour of men, while the corresponding high illiteracy rate persists amongst women in Nigeria.

According to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) requirements, countries are supposed to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, complete a full course of primary education and eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015. However, the issue of gender disparity in enrolment and academic performance is yet to be addressed substantially [4]. Hence, it has continued as an ongoing debate [5]. Similarly, Umar (2012) reported that the National Commission for Colleges of Education noted deliberate efforts are being made to improve gender participation in teacher education as a strategy towards achieving gender gap reduction in literacy rate and enhancing women's participation in the nation's educational reforms.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Education can be described as providing all kinds of learning opportunities necessary for an individual to realize his or her potential, growth, expectations and abilities in life. It is regarded as a general engine that propels human development in any endeavour. Since the advent of Western education in many third-world countries, including Nigeria, negative stereotyping has played a major role in the educational disparity between males and females.

Gender disparity still abounds at all levels of our educational system despite the fact that the Nigerian policy on education's broad objective, viz. the hope of building a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens, and her membership in many international organizations. The researchers expect that all students of vocational education, irrespective of gender, would be prepared and interested in any of the vocational education courses, but that is usually not the case.

2. 1 Purpose of the Study

The study's general objective is to investigate the 'Societal perception of gender enrolment in vocational education courses: A case study of Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State for five years (2017/2018 to 2021/2022). Specifically, this study is to:

- i. determine the enrolment of gender into Agricultural Education Department.
- ii. determine the enrolment of gender into the Business Education Department.
- iii. determine the enrolment of gender into the Fine and Applied Arts Department.
- iv. determine the enrolment of gender into the Home Economics Department.
- v. determine the total enrolment of gender in the School of Vocational Education

1. 3 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

- i. What is the difference between male and female enrolment in the Agricultural Education Department?
- ii. What is the difference between male and female enrolment in the Business Education Department?
- iii. What is the difference between male and female enrolment in the Fine and Applied Arts Department?

- iv. What is the difference between male and female enrolment in the Home Economics Department?
- v. What is the difference in the overall male and female enrolment in the School of Vocational Education?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in the Agricultural Education Department between the 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.
- ii. There is no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in the Business Education Department between the 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.
- iii. There is no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in the Fine and Applied Arts Department between the 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.
- iv. There is no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in the Home Economics Department between the 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.
- v. There is no significant difference in the overall gender enrolment of males and females in the School of Vocational Education between 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it will raise awareness on the extent to which both genders (male/female) have accepted and pursued vocational education courses in tertiary institutions. It will also benefit educational planners to focus on vocational education courses and direct or divert attention to courses that are highly gender-sensitive.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Structural Functionalism Theory, also referred to as Social Action Theory, propounded by Talcott Parson (1902-1979) [8]. According to the theory, the structure of the society is shaped by its functions and the social roles that individuals adopt are shaped by how their roles support the society as a whole. He argued that gender roles are functional for society, with men assuming instrumental roles/leaders while women complete and contribute to social stability and smooth functioning of society.

This theory is relevant to this study—societal Perception of Gender Enrolment in Vocational Education Courses. The theory encouraged boys to pursue fields of study like Science and Engineering. At the same time, girls were directed towards fields like Humanities and Social Sciences, aligning with their perceived nurturing and expressive capacities. Similarly, Vocational Education is associated with fields such as Agricultural Education, Business Education, Fine and Applied Arts and Home Economics. The societal perception being influenced by norms and expectations regarding gender roles puts more emphasis on males dominating Agricultural Science Education and Fine and Applied Arts. In contrast, females traditionally dominate in Business Education and Home Economics.

2.0 Methodology

The researchers made use of ex-post-facto research design for this study. The design was adopted because the study is centred on gender enrolment, in which case the data or information on students' enrolment already existed in the College under study. The population comprised 957 students who enrolled into the four departments of Vocational Education for five academic years (2017/2018-2021/2022). The total population was arrived at from the lists of matriculated students for the periods under review, which were made available to the researchers by the Admission Officer of the College. The entire population of 957 matriculated students was used for the study; hence, there was no sample size because it was not too large for the researchers to handle.

The researchers applied for students' enrolment data from the college through the admission office, which is the custodian of students' admission records. The lists were released on the understanding that the data were for academic research purposes. The researchers made use of the chi-square test for data analysis.

3.0 Findings/Results

Table 1: Students' Enrolment by Gender in School of Vocational Education

YEAR	AGE		BED		FAA		HEC	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
2017/2018	32	20	63	141	20	06	01	39
2018/2019	21	29	46	86	07	04	00	15
2019/2020	24	15	26	71	15	03	00	16
2020/2021	19	19	26	85	12	03	00	15
2021/2022	03	13	21	31	00	00	00	10
TOTAL	99	96	182	414	54	16	01	95

Key:

AGE - Agricultural Education

BED - Business Education

FAA - Fine and Applied Arts

HEC - Home Economics

M - Male

F - Female

Note - Total: Male - 336 (35.1%)
 Female - 621 (64.9%)
 Grand Total 957

4.0 Discussion of Findings

In discussing the findings, the researchers were guided by the research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the difference in the enrolment of males and females in the Agricultural Education Department?

YEAR	M	F	TOTAL
2017/2018	32 (26.4)	20 (25.6)	52
2018/2019	21 (25.4)	29 (24.6)	50
2019/2020	24 (19.8)	15 (19.2)	39
2020/2021	19 (19.3)	19 (18.7)	38
2021/2022	3 (8.1)	13 (7.9)	16
TOTAL	99	96	195

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \sum \frac{O_i - E_j}{E_j}$$

$$\chi^2_{tab} = (R - 1)(C - 1) = (5 - 1)(2 - 1) = 4$$

At 95% the level of significance, $\chi^2_{tab} = 9.488$ while $\chi^2_{cal} = 12.33$

Since $\chi^2_{tab} < \chi^2_{cal}$ we conclude that there is a significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in Agricultural Education between 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the enrolment of males and females in the Business Education Department?

YEAR	M	F	TOTAL
2017/2018	63 (62.3)	141 (141.7)	204
2018/2019	46 (40.3)	86 (91.7)	132
2019/2020	26 (29.6)	71 (67.4)	97
2020/2021	26 (33.9)	85 (77.1)	111
2021/2022	21 (15.9)	31 (36.1)	52
TOTAL	182	414	596

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \sum \frac{O_i - E_j}{E_j}$$

$$\chi^2_{tab} = (R - 1)(C - 1) = (5 - 1)(2 - 1) = 4$$

At 95% the level of significance, $\chi^2_{tab} = 9.488$ while $\chi^2_{cal} = 6.83$

Since $\chi^2_{tab} > \chi^2_{cal}$, we conclude that there is no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in Business Education between 2017/2018 – 2021/2022 academic sessions.

Research Question 3: What is the difference in the enrolment of males and females in the Fine and Applied Arts Department?

YEAR	M	F	TOTAL
2017/2018	20 (20.1)	6 (5.9)	26
2018/2019	7 (8.5)	4 (2.5)	11
2019/2020	15 (13.9)	3 (4.1)	18
2020/2021	12 (11.6)	3 (3.4)	15
TOTAL	54	16	70

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \sum \frac{O_i - E_j}{E_j}$$

$$\chi^2_{tab} = (R - 1)(C - 1) = (4 - 1)(2 - 1) = 3$$

At 95% the level of significance, $\chi^2_{tab} = 7.815$ while $\chi^2_{cal} = 1.60$

Since $\chi^2_{tab} > \chi^2_{cal}$, we conclude that there is no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in Fine and Applied Art between 2017/2018 – 2021/2022 academic sessions. There is no student enrolment in the 2021/2022 session.

Research Question 4: What is the difference in the enrolment of males and females in the Home Economics Department?

YEAR	M	F	TOTAL
2017/2018	1 (0.4)	39 (39.6)	40
2018/2019	0 (0.2)	15 (14.8)	15
2019/2020	0 (0.2)	16 (15.8)	16
2020/2021	0 (0.2)	15 (14.8)	15
2021/2022	0 (0.1)	10 (9.9)	10
TOTAL	1	95	96

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \sum \frac{O_i - E_j}{E_j}$$

$$\chi^2_{tab} = (R - 1)(C - 1) = (5 - 1)(2 - 1) = 4$$

At 95% the level of significance, $\chi^2_{tab} = 9.488$ while $\chi^2_{cal} = 1.41$

Since $\chi^2_{tab} > \chi^2_{cal}$, we conclude that there is no significant difference on gender enrolment of males and females in Home Economics between 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.

Research Question 5: What is the difference in the overall enrolment of males and females in the School of Vocational Education?

YEAR	M	F	TOTAL
2017/2018	116 (113.1)	206 (208.9)	322
2018/2019	74 (73)	134 (135)	208
2019/2020	65 (59.7)	105 (110.3)	170
2020/2021	57 (62.8)	122 (116.8)	179
2021/2022	24 (27.4)	54 (50.6)	78
TOTAL	336	621	957

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \sum \frac{O_i - E_j}{E_j}$$

$$\chi^2_{tab} = (R - 1)(C - 1) = (5 - 1)(2 - 1) = 4$$

At 95% the level of significance, $\chi^2_{tab} = 9.488$ while $\chi^2_{cal} = 2.35$

Since $\chi^2_{tab} > \chi^2_{cal}$, we conclude that there is no significant difference in gender enrolment of males and females in Vocational Education between 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions.

The outcome of this research agreed with Ovansa and Adabara (2011) [7], who said there is a gender stereotype in the educational system, where subjects like Science, Technology, and Mathematics are tagged masculine, while subjects like Home Economics, Literature, and Secretarial Studies are tagged 'feminine'.

4.0 Conclusion

There is no ginsaying that vocational education training will not only create the much-desired human resources but also move Nigeria to the next level in the committee of nations. Every government in Nigeria strives to achieve some

measures of socio-economic growth and development. This can only be achieved through a balanced educational system devoid of gender disparity, which presently characterizes students' enrolment in vocational education.

5.0 Recommendations

The researchers hereby advance suggestive measures towards solving the problems associated with gender disparity in the educational system.

1. All forms of cultural beliefs and negative stereotyping that create gaps in gender enrolment in education should be abolished in this era of technology and globalization.
2. Relevant bodies or stakeholders in education should create awareness or campaign on the need to stamp out gender discrimination in education.
3. functional guidance and counselling services should be established in secondary schools and tertiary institutions to address the issue of career choice.
4. The government should provide incentives such as scholarships or automatic employment in certain courses of study to encourage gender equality in education.

6.0 Ethical Considerations

This study on gender enrolment in vocational education at the Federal College of Education, Okene, followed strict ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing data. Participation was voluntary, with no coercion. We minimized potential risks to ensure participant well-being and complied with all relevant ethical guidelines throughout the research.

7.0 Limitations

This study is limited by its focus on a single institution, which may not represent the broader population. Additionally, the reliance on existing enrolment data may not capture all factors influencing gender enrolment decisions. The study's timeframe (2017/2018 to 2021/2022) may also limit the generalizability of the findings to other periods.

8.0 References

1. Agali, P. O. and Bello, A. Y. (2008). Gender inequality in education: Problems, prospects and panacea. *Okene Journal of Education (OJED)*, 1(1), 225-234.
2. Agbaje, E. M. and Ibikunle, B. (2011). Vocational education: A panacea for self-actualization and sustainability in Nigeria. *Okene Vocational Education Journal (OVEJ)*, 1(1), 78-82.
3. Alegbemi, M. T. (2008). Gender based analysis of performance of students in chemistry education: A case study of Chemistry Department of Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State. *Okene Journal of Education (OJED)*, 1(1), 1-6.
4. Conqer, D. & Long, A. C. (2010). Why are men falling behind? Gender gaps in college performance and persistence. *The Anal of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 629(1), 184–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716209348751>
5. Epumepu, E. A. and Igbiniedion, V. I. (2014). Gender differences in enrolment and students' academic performance trend in Business Studies in public junior secondary schools certificate examinations. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 2(1), 76-84.
6. Mohammed, A. & Garba, M. K. (2014). The influence of gender on career choice in Technical and Vocational Education. *Nigerian Journal of Technology Teacher Education (NIJOTTE)*, 4(1).
7. Ovansa, J. U. and Adabara, I. (2011). Current enrolment trends of science students according to sex in Federal College of Education, Okene. *Okene Journal of Education (OJED)*, 4(1), 19-27.
8. Talcott Parson (Dec. 13, 1902-May 8, 1979). The social system theory Understanding human behaviour. www.sweducarebd.com Retrieved 07/05/2024.
9. Umar, R. T. (2012). Influence of gender on choice of option in business teacher education programme in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. *Vocational Business Education*, 1(2), 112–116.
10. Yusuf, F. (2014). Gender issues in home economics education in Nigeria: The implication for quality assurance for teacher education. *Bichi Journal of Education*, 12(1), 220–226.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

Funding

The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

There is no Conflict of Interest.