

Security Challenges as a Socio Economic Factor Engendering Gender Disparity of Access to University Education: Towards Full Utilization of Open and Distance Education in Curving Gender Disparity among Potential University Students in Nigeria

By

Ahmed Iliyasu, PhD, SSHE, Mcasson, Mbera

Head of Open and Distance Learning Department

Institute of Continuing Education

Bayero University, Kano- Nigeria

P.M.B. 3011

Abstract

The paper is about the issue of insecurity in security challenged states as one of the socio economic forces which serves as constraints to access to university education most especially to girls and women. Girls and women are in disadvantaged position coming out to seek knowledge where there is insecurity. They therefore, deserved to be encouraged and protected under normal circumstances for them to pursue their constitutional right (education).It is based on this, that Open and Distance Learning() is found to be one of the suitable avenues of curving gender disparity in respect of access to education most especially university education in Nigeria. Four thousand and seventy nine (4079) faculty of education undergraduate students of Bayero University is the population of the study out of which four hundred and eight (408) were drawn to serve as a sample size of the research. Five research objectives were raised and corresponding research questions and three hypotheses were formulated and tested using a Chi Square Statistics. Conclusions were arrived at and recommendations were made on the relevance of DLS in curving educational disparity among girls and women in Nigeria.

Key Words: Insecurity, Access, Engender

Introduction

Open and Distance Learning at this critical moment of insecurity in Nigeria and specifically in some of the North-Eastern and North- Western states of Nigeria remain an important avenue of which if fully utilized can address some of the difficult situations many women and girls are facing in respect of access to university education. It is a common knowledge to many Nigerians that in term of education and other political rights many women in this country are lagging behind. This is not because, Nigerian women do not have the requirements, abilities or potentials of undertaking university education but because of so many reasons that tantamount to gender disparity in terms of access to education. One of such factors is insecurity situation which many

northern states found themselves. Women are grossly affected with this development, just because they are the custodians of the family affairs and shouldering a lot of responsibilities of caring and rearing younger members of the society. Lack of access to equal educational opportunity is considered as one of the yard stick of measuring insecurity in a nation as succinctly pointed out by Nwolise (2006) as cited by Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim (2013) saying security is an all- encompassing condition which suggests that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces; that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves; that the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution cum socio-economic injustice.

In difficult times like this, they have limited opportunities of going out of their matrimonial homes to seek for knowledge. Majority of them stay indoors in order to allow men to go out and seek for education and other commercial engagements that cannot be pursued at ease under peaceful situation. Open and Distance learning (ODL) if fully utilized can bridge the gap to a large extent between men and women in respect of access to education.

Distance learning is a new development in education which provides opportunity for everyone to learn better and provide options under the constructivist approach. Technological devices like DVDs, CD ROMs, radio stations, CCTV, audio cassette, video cassette, telephone, compact disc, chat rooms, etc. become major ingredients for distance learning. Students have a more flexible education opportunity because of distance learning. Even though, sometimes lack of face-to-face contact with teachers may result in a loss of motivation (Dabaj, 2013).

According to Galusha (1997) distance learning gives people (students) greatest possible control over the time, place and pace in education; however, it has problems due to loss of student motivations since there is no face-to-face contact, startup cost and lack of faculty support. Such problems are categorized into three main groups as student barriers, faculty barriers, and organizational barriers. Problems and barriers encountered by students are costs and motivators, the feedback and teacher contact, the student support and services, the alienation and isolation, the lack of experience, and training related.

Recent UN statistics report that around 75 million girls in the developing world are not in school and that the transition to secondary and tertiary education among girls is limited. Similarly, 64% of the adult illiterate in the developing world are women affecting agriculture, health and formal/informal sectors. Closing the gender gap is not only a matter of human rights and equity; it is also one of efficiency and economic productivity. ODL offers part of the solution to address the huge challenge (PCF, 2013).

1.1 Objectives of the Study:

The study is guided by the following objectives. The study intends to find out:

- a) The extent to which government intervention measures in security challenged states reduce affects to girl and women education in Nigerian Universities.
- b) How open and distance learning in security challenged states increases access of girls and women to University education.
- c) If there is difference on the opinions of the university students that insecurity engendered gender disparity on access to university education.
- d) If there is difference on the opinions of male and female university students about the relevance of open and distance learning in enhancing access to university education.
- e) If there is difference on the opinions of married and unmarried university students on the relevance of open and distance learning in increasing access to girls and women education in Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions: Five research questions guided the outcome of this research, they are:

- a) To which extent government intervention measures in security challenged states affects access to girl and women education in Nigerian Universities?
- b) How open and distance learning in security challenged states increases access of girls and women to University education?
- c) Is there a difference on the opinions of the university students that insecurity engendered gender disparity on access to university education?
- d) Is there a significant difference on the opinions of male and female university students about the relevance of open and distance learning in enhancing access to university education?

e) Is there a significant difference on the opinions of married and unmarried university students on the relevance of open and distance learning in increasing access to girls and women education in Nigeria?

1.3 Hypotheses: Three hypotheses were tested and analysed

1. There is no significant difference on the opinions of the university students that insecurity engendered gender disparity on access to university education.
2. There is no significant difference on the opinions of male and female university students about the relevance of open and distance learning in enhancing access to university education.
3. There is no significant difference on the opinions of married and unmarried university students on the relevance of open and distance learning in increasing access to girls and women education in Nigeria.

2.0 Review of Related Literature:

This section of the paper review related issues on open and distance learning as an alternative in providing access to girls and women in respect of acquiring western education in crisis situation.

2.1 Widening access to learning opportunities

Overcoming barriers to learning at both individual and institutional levels is a crucial factor. An important condition is that education and training systems and stakeholders have to find a more effective and positive articulation with each other. Barriers to learning are not only found in the education and training system but also in other systems like organizations, labour and product markets, industrial relations, innovation policy, social structures, social security systems, etc. Besides these organizational barriers for education providers and relevant stakeholders, motivation to learn starts from individual and social reasons (Research Voor Belied, 2013).

2.2 Etiologies of Insecurity in Nigeria

Taking from existing literature on insecurity in Nigeria, Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim (2013) identified ten etiologies of insecurity within Nigeria which was generally classified in twofold: remote and proximate causes. The remote factors include such causes as follows:

2.2.1 Absence of Institutional Capacity Resulting in Government Failure:

The foundations of institutional framework in Nigeria are very shaky and have provoked a deterioration of state governance and democratic accountability, thus, paralysing the existing formal and legitimate rules nested in the hierarchy of social order (Achumba, et al, 2013). The

entrenched culture of corruption in public service has resulted in the dearth of basic necessities, leading to what Hazen & Horner (2007) call a “Paradox of Plenty”.

2.2.2 The Gaping Chasm of Inequality and Absence of Fairness and Justice

Egwu (2000) contends, the security of the Nigerian nation-state has been reduced to that of the ruler and his immediate supporters, thus, the security calculus of the Nigerian state has failed because it does not include vital aspects of social and national development supported by the provision of basic social, economic or even military conditions necessary for effective national security.

2.2.3 Ethno-Religious Conflicts

Ethno-religious conflicts have been identified as a major source of insecurity in Nigeria (Ibrahim & Igbuzor, 2002; Hazen & Horner, 2007; Salawu, 2010; Igbuzor, 2011). Ethno-religious conflicts exist when the social relations between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi- ethnic and multi-religious society is characterised by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontations to settle grievances.

2.2.4 Disconnect between the People and Government

Over the years, there has been a growing disconnect between the people and government. Governments, whether military or civilian, have not tried to bridge this chasm, thus creating misunderstanding, mistrust and resentment. Consequently, because people do not understand government or have a perception that government does not care about their welfare, they become easy prey to centrifugal forces who co-opt/incite them to vent their anger on perceived enemies of the people and sometimes go to the extent of destroying national totems.

2.2.5 Weak and Poorly Funded Military Establishments

In spite of the high security vote state governments receive on a monthly basis, there is greater insecurity in many states. Some of these monies find their way into the pockets of some highly-placed private citizens and the Chief Executives of the states, leaving the hapless citizens to the mercy of criminals and sociopaths. Also the armed forces, paramilitary establishments and the police under federal control are weak institutionally.

2.2.6 Interagency Rivalry

The failure of security agencies such as the police, the military, state security services and paramilitary units to share intelligence information has been identified as one of the factors

negating the quick apprehension of culprits (Omede, 2011). When the armed forces and paramilitary agencies are not well-tooled with modern fighting and security gadgets and their welfare is not given priority attention, they may not want to make any sacrifices for the nation.

2.2.8 Non-Prosecution of Perpetrators of Violence in Nigeria

The lack of arrest and prosecution of perpetrators and sponsors of violence has encouraged many more social deviants and their godfathers to throw caution to the wind to perpetrate evil in the land. The Nigerian society has become a rigout of powerful fiefdoms controlled by feudal lords who are almost as powerful as the state and maintain a rental economy within the larger national economy.

2.2.9 Loss of Socio-Cultural and Communal Value System

The collapse of moral values within Nigeria is one critical factor to the continued security challenges that the country is faced with. The disintegration of communal value system which placed high premium on human life and despised greed, oppression and exploitation of the weak, among others, has also contributed to the unpleasant security environment in the country.

2.2.10 Immediate and Proximate Factors

According to (Achumba et al, 2013) the proximate factors that have contributed to the state of insecurity in the country are porous borders, rural-urban drift, social irresponsibility of companies resulting in negative externalities which provoke social unrest within their host communities, unemployment and poverty and terrorism, among others.

3.0 Methodology

The research design that was adopted for this study was descriptive survey design method. According to Ali, Bitrus & Umar (2011) in Ofo (2001), survey design generally involves collection of data from a defined population to describe the present condition of the population using the variables under survey.

3.1 Population and Sample:

Four thousand and seventy nine (4079) faculty of education undergraduate students of Bayero University, Kano-Nigeria constitute the population of the study out of which four hundred and eight (408) were sampled.

4.0 Results:

R.Q. 1 To which extent government intervention measures in security challenged states affect access to girl and women education in Nigerian Universities?

Table 4.1 Engendering access to university education via intervention measures

S/N	ITEMS	Agree	Disagree	Total
1	Curfews imposed by governments made girls and women reluctant to apply for admissions into Nigerian Universities.	278(68.12)	130(31.9)	408(100)
2	Ban of Okada as a source of transportation prevent many girls and women for having difficulties in attending their classes in universities.	265(64.95)	143(35.04)	408(100)
3	Rushed hour drives threaten girls and women in applying or attending conventional university classes.	263(64.46)	145(35.53)	408(100)
4	Delays in check points in most cases compelled girls and women to prefer staying at home than applying or attending conventional classes in a university.	258(63.23)	150(36.76)	408(100)
5	Many husbands and guardians in compliance with government rules do not allow their wives and wards to attend traditional university classes.	283(69.36)	125(30.63)	408(100)

Source: Field Trip

Key: Figures in brackets indicate percentages

The above table indicates the extent to which intervention measures in security challenged states affects access of girls and women to university education. The outcome of the frequencies of respondents shown on the five areas namely: curfews, ban of Okada riders, rushed hours syndrome, check points and compliance to those states rules indicates more than 60% of the respondents are of the opinions the these intervention measures engendered access to university education of girls and women in Nigeria.

R.Q. 2 How open and distance learning (ODL) in security challenged states increases access of girls and women to University education?

Table 4.2 Increasing Access to University Education via ODL

S/N	ITEMS	Agree	Disagree	Total
1	ODL provides girls with an opportunity of getting access to knowledge regardless of their location.	359(87.99)	49(12.00)	408 (100%)
2	ODL cater for girls and women peculiarities of shouldering domestic responsibilities in the course of knowledge seeking.	346(84.8)	62(15.2)	408 (100%)
3	Parents and Husbands find ODL as an alternative of increasing access to girls and women education.	354(86.8)	54(13.2)	408 (100%)
4	ODL provides women with an opportunity to get access to course materials even in a security threatened situations.	325(79.7)	83(20.3)	408 (100%)
5	ODL provides girls and women with an opportunity to maintain their jobs and attain higher qualification.	357(87.5)	51(12.5)	408 (100%)

Source: Field Trip

Key: Figures in brackets indicate percentages

The table above shows how ODL if fully utilized can increase access to university education for girls and women in Nigeria. All the five items asked in the table show high percentage of the respondents' views on getting access regardless of location, women peculiarities of shouldering domestic responsibilities, parents and husbands' consideration of ODL as an alternative means of increasing access to university education, accessing course materials in crisis situation, and providing opportunity for continuing education of employed women are of high percentage.

Ho 1: There is no significant difference on the opinions of the university students that insecurity engendered gender disparity on access to university education.

Table 4.3 New and Old Students Opinions on the Insecurity Engendered Gender Disparity on Access to University Education

Students	Robbery	Gangs	Religious Crisis	Government Intervention Measures	Total
New	35(40.8)	61(59.3)	55(58.2)	71(63.7)	222
Old	40(34.2)	48(49.7)	52(48.8)	46(53.3)	186
Total	75	109	107	117	408

Source: Field Trip

$X = 4.17$, $df = 3$, $P = 0.05$, $X_{critical} = 7.815$

Key: Figures in brackets indicate expected frequencies

The above table shows the chi square value of 4.17 with 3 degree of freedom and the alpha level of 0.05 while the critical value stands at 7.815. The result shows we can accept the null hypothesis of no significant difference on the opinions of old and new students of the faculty of education with regards to insecurity engendered girls and women access to university education in Nigeria.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference on the opinions of male and female university students about the relevance of open and distance learning in enhancing access to university education.

Table 4.4 Opinions of Male and Female Students on the Relevance of ODL in Enhancing Access to University Education

Students	Robbery	Gangs	Religious Crisis	Government Intervention Measures	Total
Male	42(46.5)	58(58.8)	62(65.2)	56(47.6)	218
Female	44(40.5)	52(51.2)	60(56.8)	34(41.4)	190
Total	86	110	122	89	408

Source: Field Trip

$X = 3.88$, $P = 0.05$, $df = 3$, $X_{critical} = 7.815$

Key: Figures in brackets indicate expected frequencies

The above table shows opinions of male and female students of the faculty of education, Bayero University, Kano the table value of chi square stands at 3.88 with 3 degrees of freedom at the alpha level of 0.05 shows the critical value of 7.815 signify accepting the null hypothesis of no significant differences on the relevance of ODL in enhancing access to university education of girls and women in Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant difference on the opinions of married and unmarried university students on the relevance of open and distance learning in increasing access to girls and women education in Nigeria.

Table 4.5 Opinions of Married and Unmarried Students on the Relevance of ODL in Increasing Access to Girls and Women University Education

Students	Robbery	Gangs	Religious Crisis	Government Intervention Measures	Total
Married	40 (47.5)	54(58.8)	60(66.9)	66(46.9)	220
Unmarried	48(40.5)	55(50.2)	64(57.1)	21(40.1)	188
Total	88	109	124	87	408

Source: Field Trip

$X = 21.8$, $P = 0.05$, $df = 3$, $X_{critical} = 7.815$

Key: Figures in brackets indicate expected frequencies

The above table presents the chi square value of 21.8 with 3 degrees of freedom, is larger than the critical value of 7.815, so we can reject the null hypothesis and affirm the claim that married and unmarried undergraduates students of the faculty of education of Bayero University, Kano differ in their opinions on the relevance of ODL in increasing access to university education of girls and women in Nigeria.

5.0 Discussions:

Open and Distance learning is one of the teaching and learning techniques that, gives individuals opportunity to learn and gain knowledge in respective of their gender orientation. Significant number of the respondents are of the opinion that government intervention measures in security challenged states of Nigeria made it difficult for girls and women to go out and pursue university education as such they are put in a disadvantage position compared to their males counterparts who can withstand such measures.

Another important issue which needs to be taken into consideration is the issue of transportation that must be addressed for one to have access to place of learning most especially university education. In recent past we are all aware of the relevance of Okada business that was cheaply relied upon as means of transportation in most of the northern Nigerian states. It is now a history, this business which many youths resorted to, in order to

complement efforts of many citizens most especially those that are in the lower socio economic status.

A significant number of respondents all are of the opinion that rushed hour drive also made many women reluctant to apply to university education because many a times they find themselves in conflict with their husbands. It is made abundantly clear that, distance learning becomes more relevant in providing women with access to university education in a friendly environment that they can study and handle their domestic responsibilities without necessary going out all the time.

Another important issue which is worth discussing is that of check points and delays which many women faced when they are going out coming back to their homes and this made the whole learning and teaching process very stressful. Many women cannot cope with the mental and physical stress that is related with such check points. This to a large extent affects the readiness of most girls and women to go back to schools (universities) except with an alternative of getting access to it through other means on of which is the distance learning.

It is also clear distance learning gives women that working an opportunity to have more access to university education by virtue of its nature in getting course materials and tutorials at distance that is not necessarily leaving your place of work. Many women find it difficult when they want to further their education because of pressure from parents, boss or parents.

There were mixed differences of opinions of new and old, male and female, married and married students with regards to the relevance of the ODL in increasing access to girls and women in regards to university education taking into cognizance some socio economic indices used during the research.

6.0 Conclusions and recommendations

- Distance learning is found to be an effective means of addressing lack of access to university education for girls and women in security challenged states.
- Government intervention measures to a large extent engendered access to university education for both girls and women in security challenged states.
- Distance Learning procedures are found to be very appealing of overriding time and space in promoting access to university education of girls and women.
- Distance learning should be given high priority by parents, husbands and guardians to encourage girls and women to pursue university education because of its relevance in catering for peculiarities and accessibility at convenient situation.

References

- Achumba, I. C., Ighomereho, O. S. & Akpor-Robaro, M. O. M. (2013). "Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development." *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, Vol.4, No.2, pp. 79- 99
- Ali, M., Bitrus, G.A. & Umar, A. (2011). Constraints to Counselling Services in Colleges of Education in Borno State, Nigeria. Paper presented at 35th CASSON Annual International Conference, Kano, Nigeria.
- Egwu, S. G. (2001). *Ethnic and Religious Violence in Nigeria*. Jos: St. Stephen Book House.
- Galusha, Jill M. (1997). *Barriers to Learning in Distance Education*. University of Southern Mississippi. [http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/ouln/Barriers to Learning in Distance Education.htm](http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/ouln/Barriers%20to%20Learning%20in%20Distance%20Education.htm)
- Hazen, J.M. and Horner, J (2007). *Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Niger Delta in Perspective*, Switzerland: Small Arms Survey.
- Ibrahim, J. & Igbuzor, O. (2002) "Memorandum submitted to the Presidential Committee on National Security in Nigeria."
- Igbuzor, O. (2011). Peace and Security Education: A Critical Factor for Sustainable Peace and National Development, *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies* Vol. 2(1), 1-7, January.
- Omede, A. J. (2011). "Nigeria: Analysing the Security Challenges of the Goodluck Jonathan Administration." *Canadian Social Science*, Vol. 7, No. 5, 2011, pp. 90-102.
- Onifade, C., Imhonopi D., & Urim U.M.(2013). Addressing the Insecurity Challenge in Nigeria: The Imperative of Moral Values and Virtue Ethics.*Global Journal of Human Social Science Political Science. Global Journals Inc. (USA)*, Vol. 13 No. 2, 1.0, pp. 1-3.
- PCF 7(2013). www.col.org/pcf7. Retrieved 20th June, 2013.
- Research Voor Belied (2013). www.col.org/publicationdocuments/pub_ps_teachered_web.pdf. Retrieved 20th June, 2013
- Salawu, B. (2010). Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies, *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 13, Number 3, 345-353.