

GENDER EQUITY PERCEPTION IN THE CLASSROOM AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN UGHELLI NORTH L.G.A. DELTA STATE, NIGERIA IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Students, and infant, all learners are taught to have full preparation in the communities of the world from education received overtime from the classroom. The twain that mark genders polarities are still experiencing inequality in representation in many educational occupations and areas of specializations. As a result, this study was mapped out to investigate males and females classrooms interaction as perceived by the teachers and the teachers' openness to equal experiences for these genders in terms of courses of study or vocations. Eight hundred and forty-two randomly selected teachers from the private and public co-educational schools in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State; participated in this study. A self-constructed instrument was validated and used to obtain data for this study by this researcher. Statistically, descriptive and Pearson's Chi-Square statistics were used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that the teachers perceived a disparity between the males and females classroom interactions in the schools. It was obvious from the findings that the teachers were not open to equal and diverse experiences of these students as far as occupations and courses of study are concerned. The implications for counselling were examined. In conclusion, this study had it that gender inequality exists in the classrooms. That this may affect negatively these males and females. As recommendation, gender equity education in teacher education curriculum in the colleges of education and universities was recommended in this study.

Keywords: Classroom, equity, gender, teachers, curriculum.

Numerous researchers see gender as concerning the woman and her activities. Far from it, gender and its study entails the relationship between the feminine and masculine people in specific society within time frame, as opined by Ani (2012 & Santrock 2001), were of the view that gender means the sociological dimension of being male and female human beings. In real truth, gender means what men and women, boys and girls have as responsibilities spelt out by the norms of their culture. In fact, such roles are learnt by the boys and girls determined by rites of passage as they grow year in year out.

On the other hand, gender equity means the equal valuing of both genders (males and females) by allotting them equal opportunities in life and work not minding who is who. In fact, while equity means equal access to resources and opportunities for the boy or girl child so as to cancel off the notion that one is weaker than the other, it also means these people seeing themselves as co-equals.

By the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, fundamental rule of human rights came to be recognized and gender equity in Nigeria was upheld till today. Before now, Nigeria and many African countries relegated women to the background and practice gender inequality. This empowered the males to dominate the women and intimidate them to feel they are second class citizens.

Globally, learners learn in an organized environment called school. In any other situation outside this is the social relationships, norms and values equally learnt here that may not be structured. Infacts, gender safety, equity and equality are promoted in the schools preparing the learners to effectively, participate in his/her wider environment and the principal agents that sustain or propagate these ideas are the teachers in the schools.

On the reverse, girls' right to high quality education is often denied even to those who reached the classroom for study, (UNICEF, 1999). Infact teachers treat boys and girls differently down playing the girls to instill in them inferiority complex. This makes boys' and girls' experiences different from each other in the same classroom let alone the wider schools environment. Again, the curricular children and official transmit messages that girls are less important than the boys from the schools' extra curricular activities. Above all boys get more attention from the teachers by praising them more often and giving them more academic support; and accept the boys ideas or opinions more than those of the girls (Jung and Chunk, 2005). Infant, Sadker and Sadker (1994) opined that girls are three times less likely to be praised by teachers than boys in the classroom environment.

Again, research reports severally showed that there are biases towards boys in teacher-student interaction in science subject classes and relationships. Infact, negative perceptions are the teachers' portion towards girls' participation in science subjects. It is even worst in Sciences, Technology and Mathematics (STM) concepts. Higher achievement levels are set for boys than girls hence, their low self-esteem debar them

from acquiring the needed skills and knowledge in these subjects (Nnaka and Anaekwe, 2005).

On the other side of the coin the boys are equally discriminated especially in terms of school punishments compare to girls (Skiba, Michael, Nardo and Peterson, 2002). Thus, the unconscious application of gender bias by teachers and students gives rise to gender inequalities in the classroom. In addition, vocational choices of males and females are equally affected with the belief that there are some occupations meant for boys and others for girls. In a study conducted by Eraikhuemen and Imogie (2008), on males and females admission in University of Benin, Nigeria; showed that fewer girls were admitted in the faculties of engineering, social sciences and medical sciences compared to those in faculties of Arts and Education. All these above go to show that there are gender inequalities created in the classroom by teachers and societal norms.

That fact that in recent years, genders' inequalities have improved tremendously, yet boys and girls still experience reasonable disparities in many social and educational areas. While many external factors contribute to the academic performance of students, school experiences way down their confidence and academic performance. Traditionally, some subject areas attract more of the gender than the other such as Technology, Science and Mathematics which attract more boys than girls. This consciousness is mostly brought to bear in the classroom situation by the teachers. As a result of these, this study therefore assessed the gender equity perception in the classroom with regard to the choice of occupation and courses of study by the students using Ughelli North Local Government Area, of Delta State of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. Are teachers generally open to equal experiences for both males and females regarding occupations/course of study?
2. Is there a disparity in boys' and girls' students-teacher classroom interaction as perceived by the teachers?

Hypotheses

The following Hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at .05 level of confidence.

1. There is no significant relationship between gender and teachers' openness to equal experiences for boys and girls regarding occupations/course of study
2. There is no significant relationship between gender and teachers' perception of boys and girls classroom interaction in the schools.

Method

Design

The survey research design was used for this study. The population for the study consists of all the teachers in the public and private co-educational schools in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. Ten mixed secondary schools each were selected out of the public and private secondary schools using the stratified random sampling technique. The instrument of the study was randomly administered to the teachers in these schools randomly selected. Eight hundred and fifty eight teachers (302 males and 556 females) who filled and returned the instruments were the sample of the study in this research work.

Instrument

A questionnaire tagged “Gender Equity Questionnaire” (GEQ) was used in collecting the data for the study. In the Faculty of Education, Niger Delta three experts in Guidance and Counselling and one in measurements and evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, validated the instrument. After a test-retest reliability measurement was employed, a coefficient of reliability of .83 was obtained. The used instrument consisted of three sections. The A section was for the respondents’ personal data information. The B section sought respondents’ opinion regarding choice of twelve courses of study based on gender. The C section has twelve statements which sought the respondents’ perception of gender relationships in learner-teacher interactions in the classroom. The occupations were listed for the respondents to give their opinions in regards to male/female and both genders. When an opinion or option (course) is selected for both, it indicates openness to equal experience for both genders. But when selection is for either gender, there is a bias expressed.

Data Analysis

The research questions were analyzed using the frequencies and percentages. The data collected for the hypotheses were analyzed using Chi-Square statistic.

Results

Research Question one: Are teachers generally open to equal experiences for both males and females regarding occupations/courses of study?

Table 1: Teachers Openness to Equal Experiences for Males and Females Regarding Occupations/ Course of Study

S/N	Course/occupation	Teachers Responses (f) N=858					
		Male		Female		Male/Female	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Architecture	578	(55.7%)	46	5.4%	234	(38.9%)
2	Auto Mechanic	576	(55.7%)	12	1.4%	170	(19.8%)
3	Beautician	14	(1.6)	442	(51.5%)	402	(46.9%)
4	Catering	08	(0.9)	530	(61.8%)	320	(37.3%)
5	Cobbling	724	(84.4%)	04	(0.4%)	130	(15.2%)
6	Home Economics	06	0.7	624	72.7	228	26.6
7	Mechanical Engineering	586	68.3	10	1.2	262	30.5
8	Military	564	65.7	18	2.1	278	32.2
9	Medicine	90	10.5	50	5.8	718	83.7
10	Nursing	28	3.3	510	59.4	320	37.3
11	Photography	398	46.4	38	4.4	422	49.2
12	Teaching	32	3.7	316	36.8	510	59.4

From table 1 above, it is obvious that teachers perceived mechanical Engineering (68.3%), Military (65.7%), Auto Mechanic (55.4%) and cobbling (84.4%) as courses/occupations for males while Home Economics (72.7%), Catering (61.8%) were generally perceived as courses/occupations of the females. And on the other hand, only Medicine (83.7%) and Teaching (59.4%) were duely perceived as occupation/courses for both males and females. From these results the teachers perceived most of the occupations/courses to be peculiar to a particular gender in the schools. Thus, teachers were not opened to equal experiences for males and females as far as the courses/occupations for the boys and girls were concerned.

Research Questions Two: Is there a disparity in boys' and girls' student-teacher classrooms interaction as perceived by the teachers?

Table 2: Teachers' Perception of Boys' and Girls' Student Teachers Classrooms Interactions

S/N	Items	Teachers Responses (f) N=858				No response
		Boys		Girls		
		N	%	N	%	
1	They were lead in group assignments	376	43.8	482	56.2	
2	They are more reserved and quiet	140	16.3	718	83.7	
3	They get teachers' praise more often	266	31.0	592	69.0	
4	They generally perform better academically	248	40.6	510	59.4	
5	They ask more questions	380	44.3	578	57.7	
6	They call out answers without teachers' permission	572	66.7	286	33.3	
7	They are more obedient to classroom rules	140	16.3	718	83.7	
8	They participate more actively in class	354	41.3	502	58.5	1(.2%)
9	They generally get more of teachers' attention	354	41.3	504	58.7	
10	They more noisy and distractive	714	83.2	70	16.3	2 (.5%)
11	They joke with teachers more often	548	63.9	310	36.1	
12	They get disciplined by the teacher more often.	188	21.9	670	78.1	

Table 2 above shows teachers' perception of classroom interactions of boys and girls. The result shows that more teachers perceived girls as being more reserved and quiet (83.7%), more obedient (83.7) and more active in class (58.5%). Again, the teachers in greater numbers also perceived that girls get more teachers praise (69%), perform better academically (59.4%) and that the girls get more of teachers' attention (58%) than boys. On the other hand, the boys were perceived to be more noisy and distractive (83.2%), call out answer without waiting for teachers permission (66.7%) and boys are more often disciplined by teachers (71.1) than girls. Thus, there was a large marginal disparity between the boys and the girls in classroom interaction.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between gender and teachers' openness to equal experiences for boys and girls regarding occupations/courses of study.

Table 3: Chi-Square Results of Teachers' Openness to Equal Experiences Regarding Courses of Study/Occupation by Gender

S/N Course		N=858					x ²	Sig.
	Gender	Male	Female	Male & Female				
1	Architecture	M	186	12	104	3.490	.175	
		F	292	34	230			
2	Auto-Mechanic	M	246	02	54	1.553	.460	
		F	430	10	116			
3	Beautician	M	02	170	130	3.095	.213	
		F	12	272	272			
4	Catering	M	06	208	88	8.838	.012	
		F	02	322	232			
5	Cobbling	M	262	04	36	5.443	.066	
		F	462	00	94			
6	Home Economics	M	02	236	64	3.485	.175	
		F	04	388	164			
7	Mechanical Engineering	M	224	04	74	4.005	.135	
		F	362	06	188			
8	Military	M	190	06	106	.918	.632	
		F	374	12	170			
9	Medicine	M	40	10	252	4.220	.121	
		F	50	40	466			
10	Nursing	M	10	202	90	5.685	.058	
		F	18	308	230			
11	Photography	M	136	20	146	2.657	.265	
		F	262	18	276			
12	Teaching	M	18	68	216	21.794	.000	
		F	14	248	294			

P<.05

From table 3 above, the data analysis show that the Chi-Square values for the relationship between teachers' gender and openness to equal experiences for males and females regarding ten out of the twelve occupations studied were not significant at P<.05. Infact, this shows that the differences in frequencies observed were chance occurrences and independent of gender contributions. But on the other hand, there was a significant relationship between gender and teachers' openness to equal experiences for both boys and girls as far as Teaching and Catering are concerned. The Chi-Square values for the two courses were found to be significant at P<.05 showing a significant relationship between gender and teachers openness to equal experiences for the males

and females. The study also show higher percentages of male teachers perceiving catering as a course for females and Teaching for both genders. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected because of these two courses-Catering and Teaching.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between gender and teachers' perception of boys and girls classroom interaction in the schools.

Table 4: Chi-Square Results of Teachers' Perception of Student-Teachers Classroom Interaction by Gender

		N=858				
S/N	Items	Gender	Boys	Girls	χ^2	Sig.
1	They lead in group assignments	M	144	158	1.410	.235
		F	232	324		
2	They are more reserved and quiet	M	50	252	.010	.921
		F	90	466		
3	They get teachers praise more often	M	94	208	.002	.967
		F	172	384		
4	They generally perform better academically.	M	140	162	3.249	.071
		F	208	348		
5	They ask more questions	M	178	124	.985	.321
		F	300	256		
6	They call out answers without teachers' permission to speak	M	192	110	1.002	.317
		F	380	176		
7	They are more obedient to classroom rules	M	52	250	1.39	.710
		F	88	468		
8	They participate more actively in the class	M	128	172	2.009	.366
		F	226	330		
9	They generally get more of teachers' attention	M	106	194	2.905	.101
		F	246	310		
10	They are more noisy and distractive	M	252	50	.010	.921
		F	466	90		
11	They joke with teachers more often	M	176	126	3.157	.076
		F	372	184		
12	They get disciplined by teachers more often	M	230	72	.507	.476
		F	440	116		

P<0.05

From table 4 above, it is obvious that the Chi-Square test results for teachers' perception of boys' and girls' classroom interaction by gender of the teachers regarding each of the items were not significant at P<.05. This means that teachers' perception of classroom interactions of boys and girls was independent of the gender of the teachers. Infact, it shows no significant difference between male and female teachers' perception

of classroom interaction of boys and girls in the schools. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion of Results

The results regarding teachers' openness to equal experiences for males and females reveal that many of the courses were perceived by the teachers as meant for males and others for females. But Teaching and Catering, out of the twelve courses have significant gender effect. Interestingly, male teachers massively perceived Teaching to be meant for both boys and girls and that Catering should be meant for the females.

Students' unbiased choices of occupation have been limited directly or indirectly by gender stereotyping of roles and behavior of significant other persons.

Bisong (2006) opined that there are known occupational segregation based on gender borne out of the traditional belief in the division of labour by gender, very peculiar in the Nigerian labour market demands. They believe that a particular task is either male or female oriented with few exceptions. Towards this direction, the teachers enter the classrooms with their learnt gender roles and expectations, therefore and consciously encouraging gender inequity in occupational choices.

Furthermore, from the results of this study, the teachers perceived that they are more reserved and quiet. Again, that they lead in group assignment, participate more actively in class, perform better academically and are praised more often by teachers. However, many NGOs promote the facts that girls are praised more by the teachers so as to promote and educate them about their human rights and how to reach their potentials, so that they can compare ideal above differently, that boys get more of teachers' attention by participating more actively in class and earn more praises. Some of these findings go to show that boys and girls are socialized into different roles from tender age in Nigerian society. More often, girls are verbally encouraged to be involved in quieter activities while the cases of the boys are directly opposite. It is like the culture of the people which is mostly irreversible. Infact, boys dominate more opportunities of interaction with teachers by calling out in class and also having more social interactions and receiving more disciplinary contacts from teachers than girls, (Jung & Chunk, 2005). On school punishment, result of this study shows that the perception of teachers was independent of gender of the teachers. Lastly, children's understanding of gender is influenced by their experiences with parents and significant others, culture, media lifestyles in the larger community (Tansey, 2009).

Implication for Counselling

Guidance and counseling is a double-edged service in the school system. First, it **GUIDES** both the students and any other members of the school community. Secondly, it **COUNSELS** those who are personally and or collectively interested in counselling, who will come to the counsellor out of his/her or their own volitions.

Hence, the counselling unit can organize programmes to draw teachers' attention to the need for gender equity and encourage them to monitor their own expectations and recommendations to students about courses of study. For school counselling units, while organizing career programmes for students, emphasis should be laid on males and females in non-traditional roles. Next, counsellors should assist teachers and other educators to avoid emphasis too on traditional gender roles.

Conclusion

This study reveals that traditional gender stereotypes are evident in the classrooms. These affect both boys and girls classroom interactions and may also limit their choices of occupations/courses of study.

Recommendations

Equity and quality of education and its contribution to national development is mainly determined by the teachers in the classroom situation in the schools. The fact that teachers are part of the society, they help in promoting gender bias. As a result, teachers-education curriculum should include "Gender Equity Education" which can stimulate the elimination of gender discrimination. This will help to integrate the experience and needs of both gender into all educational practices, enabling them to overcome traditional gender relations expectations through education. Infact, in-service training for teachers' awareness to gender inequities in the schools in Delta State is paramount. If these are done, positive gender equality will be fostered in the schools.

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