

## **FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST PARTICIPATION OF FEMALES WITH DISABILITIES IN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Despite efforts made by the Government to provide equal educational opportunities for all citizens, the level of women with disabilities participation in education is still low. This paper made an attempt to examine the factors militating against participation of females with disabilities in open distance learning with a view to finding out what can be done to redress the imbalance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and a purposive sampling technique was employed to select 60 female students with disabilities in Federal college of education Oyo special. Three research questions guided the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire tagged "Socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting females' education questionnaire (SCREFAFEQ)" with a reliability coefficient of 0.71. The data collected were analyzed using simple mean and standard deviation.

The results revealed that socio-cultural affect the participation of females with disabilities as parent believe the education of females as a waste since they will end up in the kitchen. Lack of religious knowledge and issues of poverty also constitute their lower participation. Based on these findings, it was recommended that Enactment of legal policy against parents refusing educating of females with disabilities enrolment in schools to certification level; Religions should not be seen as a barrier to educate females with disabilities in any respect to cultural endowments in our society.

**Keywords:** Socio-cultural factors, religious factors, economic factors, females with disabilities, women with disabilities, open distance learning.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of education to human beings cannot be over emphasized. Education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human.

The relationship between education and development is well established such that education is a key index of development.

It has been documented that schooling improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life such as child labor as well as bringing about empowerment (Abu et al 2012). This is why there has been a lot of emphasis particularly in recent times for all citizens of the world to have access to education.

It is in recognition of this importance that the international community and governments all over the world have made commitments for citizens to have access to education.

**In Nigeria, despite its free education policy (FGN, 2013) at some levels of schooling, access to education for all remains unattainable more so for girls and women with disabilities UNICEF: (2004).**

**Education for the women with disabilities through Open Distance education remains beyond the grasp of Nigeria and many developing countries of the world.**

**The concept of Open and Distance Learning meets the Capability Approach Theory which stresses any form of learning in which the provider enables the recipient to exercise choice of what they learn, how and where they learn and how quickly they learn to have their learning assessed.**

**It emphasizes freedom to carry on working and schooling as long as one is capable. UNESCO (2000), open distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web presenting approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners.**

**One of the constitutive aspects of open distance learning is essentially access to instruction and learning material by all students including those with disabilities and the disadvantaged. Issues of access and equity in open and distance education are critical in justifying the openness of distance education and the inclusion of students with disabilities (Sherry, 1996).**

**Thus, given that Open and Distance education has, historically, been advanced as both a major means of upgrading the quality of education and succor for those who missed access to the conventional schools in Nigeria, the revised National Policy on Education (2013) detailed that the goal of DE should be to:**

- **Provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied;**
- **Meet disabilities of employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employees at their work place;**
- **Encourage internationalization especially of tertiary education curricula;**
- **Ameliorate the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing Nigerian experts as teachers regardless of their locations or places of work.**

**However, Education for women is very important and even more important for women with disabilities. It is generally accepted that women and girls with disabilities have less access to education, social services and employment opportunities than non-disabled women. For example, USAID reports that women with disabilities are at increased risk of being sicker, poorer and more socially isolated than man with disabilities or able-bodied women.**

**In terms of accessing education the UNDP reports the literacy rate for women with disabilities may be as low as 1% and UNICEF reports that women and children with disabilities receive 20% less rehabilitation services.**

**Finally in terms of access to employment opportunities studies on women with disabilities in rural areas of many countries have found that more than 80 percent of women with disabilities have no independent means of livelihood, and are totally dependent on others for their very existence.**

**Women with disabilities who are educated are more likely to apply their knowledge in other areas of their personal lives, such as making informed decisions about marriage relationships, and participation in employment and politics (Stromquist, 2006). Poverty remains the major reason for non-attendance to school for most people with disabilities. Education is expensive; families of children with disabilities may send their children to acquire basic education (primary school level), which may be free.**

**Although primary school is very important, it is not enough for self-sustenance of an individual. Secondary and tertiary levels or education are needed for empowerment of women with disabilities.**

**Most women with disabilities do not have family members that can support them financially for secondary and tertiary education. People with disabilities and their families remain the poorest of the poor in the Nigerian society.**

**The traditional practice that denies women with disabilities inheritance and property rights is one of the harmful traditional practices that disempowered and keep them in poverty (Veronica and Debra, 2014).**

**Cultural beliefs in Nigeria affect every aspects of the life of women with disabilities. Cultural beliefs and practices affect the interaction of the child with disability and her family. Families understand disability from their cultural worldview.**

**Therefore, culture affects the way girls and women with disabilities interact with their family and whether or not they participate in the community. The extended family system practice in Nigeria provides support for the welfare of the members of the family. Primarily, people with disabilities are supported by their families while the government does little in providing for them. Disability presents a burden on the family, thus, access to education is determined by resources of the family, and by literacy level of family members.**

**The likelihood that a woman with disabilities will be educated increases if the members of her immediate family are educated (Oniye, 2004 cited in Veronica and Debra, 2014). Women with disabilities are treated with pity and as unfortunate ones. Expectations on the ability of a person with disability to accomplish great things are very low (Veronica and Debra, 2014).**

**A woman with disability suffers more discrimination because traditionally women are given low status. Women with disabilities remained the poorest of the poor in Nigeria, because of the unprecedented level of poverty among this group, women with disabilities often become street beggars.**

**Ironically, since Nigerian society sees people with disabilities as objects of pity and charity, the society is comfortable with people with disabilities in this role and prefers giving them money on the streets to giving them jobs and shelter (Celine, 2010).**

**Religion can be seen as a contributing factor to the inequalities between men factor to the inequalities between men and women. Grace (2003), emphasized that the institution of Pudah, symbolized by the veil alienates Muslim women from the public eyes and reduces them to complete subordination therefore, as a result cultural and traditional environment Women with disabilities are deprived of basic rights using culture and tradition to justify the abuse with such practices.**

Women and, especially those with disabilities in Nigeria find themselves victimized by social, cultural, religion, environmental, and economic disadvantages that diminish their chances of realizing their maximum potential and of participating fully in education. Therefore, this study will investigate the factors militating against females with disabilities participation in Open Distance Learning Oyo State, Nigeria.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study includes;

- The socio-cultural factors affecting participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning.
- The economic factors affecting participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning
- The religion factors affecting participation of women with disabilities in open distance learning.
- Research Questions
- What are the socio-cultural factors affecting participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning Oyo State?
- What are the economic factors affecting participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning Oyo State?
- Does a religious factor affect participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning in Oyo State?

## METHOD

### Research Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research type.

This design is suitable for the study because the study attempted a survey and description of the opinions of a large number of people on the factors affecting the participation of females with special need in Oyo state of Nigeria.

### Participants

The population for the study comprised all female students with disabilities in Federal College of education Oyo, out of which sixty (60) students were randomly selected from level one to three.

A simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting twenty (20) respondents from each level.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers.

The research instrument tagged "Socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting females' education questionnaire (SCREFAFEQ)" is designed by the researchers to get information from participants.

The reliability of the research instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and found to be reliable at 0.71.

### Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics of simple mean and standard deviation; any item with a mean value of 2.5 and above was regarded as agreed while those items with a mean value below 2.5 were considered to be disagreed.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1:

What are the socio-cultural factors affecting participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning Oyo State?

**Table 1.**  
**Socio-cultural factors perception of females with disabilities**

S/N	Items	Number	Mean(X)	StD	Decision
1	Females with disabilities are culturally meant for domestic works in that area	60	2.52	1.09	Agree
2	Lack of education among parents of females with disabilities	60	2.17	1.01	Disagree
3	Poor enforcement of social laws on females students with disabilities right	60	2.40	1.09	Disagree
4	Criticism of parents who support females education with disabilities	60	2.75	1.06	Agree
5	Negative attitude towards females education with disabilities	60	2.52	1.15	Agree
6	Cultural condemnation of mixing boys and girls with disabilities	60	2.18	0.89	Disagree
7	Poor family influence on females' education of students with disabilities	60	2.38	1.15	Disagree
8	Females with disabilities right abuses among parents	60	2.31	1.20	Disagree

Table I shows that some respondents tend to agree with the issues raised about socio-cultural factor as evident with the mean score above the 2.5 as the decision point which shows positive perception of socio-cultural while the majority of the respondents disagree with items 2,3,6,7, and 8 with a mean scored of less than 2.5.

This is an indication that majority of the participants believed that five out eight items identified does not significantly affect the participation of the females with disabilities in open distance learning in the Oyo state of Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:**

**What are the economic factors affecting participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning Oyo State?**

The Table 2. below says us that for economics factor perception on females with disabilities towards Open distance learning.

**Table 2.  
Economics factor perception on females with disabilities towards Open distance learning**

S/N	Items	Number	Mean(X)	StD	Decision
1	Parents of females with disabilities see school fees payment as a burden	60	2.43	1.04	Disagree
2	Often, females with disabilities are made to act/guides as beggars thereby generating income	60	2.53	1.04	Agree
3	Schooling of females with disabilities are seen as non-money making venture	60	2.57	1.10	Agree
4	Schooling is seen as a venture that does not yield immediate benefit for parents of females with disabilities.	60	2.52	1.15	Agree
5	Socio-economic status of families inhibit females education with disabilities	60	2.51	1.08	Agree
6	Assigning of domestic work by parents often discourage the education of Females with disabilities	60	2.55	1.11	Agree
7	Lack of total free education discourages education of females with disabilities	60	2.54	1.03	Agree
8	The believe of parents that females with disabilities can't generate money for the family	60	2.25	.93	Disagree

Table 2. shows that majority of the participants agreed that all the economic factors identified affect the participation of females with disabilities in open distance learning. However, items 2 and 8 were disagreed with mean scored less than 2.5 as decision rule.

This implies that economic factors are one of the pivotal reasons while many families cannot afford educating their females' students with disabilities through open distance learning.

**Research Question 3:**

**Does religious factors affect participation of women with disabilities in Open distance learning in Oyo State? Table 3. revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that Western education is not religiously building on adherents of Islam and Christianity and Fear of exposure of girls to the public.**

**Table 3.**  
**Religious factor perception on females with disabilities towards Open distance learning**

S/N	Items	Number	Mean(X)	StD	Decision
1	Western education is not religiously building on adherents of Islam and Christianity	60	2.60	1.09	Agreed
2	Fear of exposure of girls to the public	60	2.36	1.10	Agreed
3	Lack of religious obligation to western education of females with disabilities	60	2.45	1.17	Disagreed
4	Lack of religious obligation to western education of females with disabilities	60	2.31	1.08	Agreed
5	Females education with disabilities is morally condemned	60	2.38	.97	Disagreed
6	Lack of religious legal action against females education with disabilities	60	2.25	1.03	Disagreed
7	Absence of religious guidance on females education with disabilities	60	2.53	1.09	Agreed
8	Parents seem to be more committed to marital orientation of girls with disabilities	60	2.55	1.15	Agreed

They also agreed Lack of religious obligation to western education of females with disabilities and Absence of religious guidance on females' education with disabilities as well as parent seems to be more committed to marital orientation of girls.

The respondents disagreed Lack of religious legal action against females' education with disabilities and the morally condemnation of females education with disabilities. This means that religion is one of the strongest factors affecting participation of females' students with disabilities in open distance learning.

## DISCUSSION

### Table 1:

The finding of the study on the socio-cultural factors revealed that participants rated some of the socio-cultural items high.

This implies that participation of females with disabilities was very low as result of socio-cultural imbalance in our educational system. The above findings corroborated the conclusion of Federal Government of Nigeria (2006), World Bank (2001), UNESCO (2001), Abubakar (2003) and Eweniyi & Usman (2013), that there is a lot of disinterest and ignorance concerning the education of girls. They observed that many Nigerian girls suffer the society's neglect of their right to education; such children have become vulnerable to various ills in the society and mania jobs. A female with disabilities suffers more discrimination because traditionally women are given low status.

Women with disabilities are the poorest of the poor in Nigeria. Because of the unprecedented level of poverty among this group, oftentimes, becoming street beggars become an alternative.

**Table 2:**

Revealed that economic factors seriously affect the participation of females with disabilities in open distance learning as all participants agreed with majority of the items. However, among these items, females with disabilities are made to act/guides as beggars thereby generating income, Schooling also is seen as a venture that does not yield immediate benefit for parent of females with disabilities, Socio-economic status of families inhibit females education with disabilities, Assigning of domestic work by parents often discourage the education of Females with disabilities, Lack of total free education discourages education of females with disabilities and schooling of females with disabilities seem to be a money non-making venture.

The finding is in consonance with Abubakar (2003), Badejo (1991) that poverty remains the major reason for non-attendance to school for most people with disabilities. Education is expensive; families of women with disabilities may send their children to acquire basic education (primary school level), which may be free.

Although primary school is very important, it is not enough for self-sustenance of women with disabilities. Secondary and tertiary levels or education are needed for empowerment of women with disabilities.

Most females with disabilities do not have family members that can support them financially for secondary and tertiary education.

The traditional practice that deprives women with disabilities' inheritance and property rights is one of the harmful traditional practices that disempowered and keep them in poverty.

**Table 3:**

The study found out how religious factors grossly affect the participation of females with disabilities in open distance learning. All items were agreed on by respondents. The finding confirms with Grace (2013) and Eweniyi & Usman (2013) that many Muslim parents of females with disabilities in Nigeria do fear that the involvement of females in education might bring moral decadence.

Such may include females' promiscuity, exposure of female bodies, inducement by opposite sex, pre-marital pregnancy, and abortion or illegitimate children.

They also observed that females' education will threaten females' chances of legitimate, cultural and religious marriage which the parents believe should they were to be educated, their right will be known and this will deprive females' Islamic moral training and orientation.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenges faced by women with disabilities in Nigeria are multiple, including social isolation, discrimination and stigma, denial of their human rights and chronic poverty.

Lack of access to education leads to disempowerment of women and affects personal and societal developmental efforts.

The government of Nigeria has done very little to address the needs of this population (Women with disabilities).

The Nigerian educational system requires a reform that will take into account the needs of people with disabilities, especially females with special needs. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made;

- Enactment of legal policy against parents refusing educating of females with disabilities enrolment in schools (to certification level).
- Professional counselors and social workers should be use to create national awareness on females education with disabilities (including adult education) through public awareness campaigns, rallies, and seminars on importance of education of females with disabilities
- Education of female students with disabilities should be made free at all level of education system in Nigeria so as to serve as a yardstick for education for all.
- Religion should not be seen as a barrier to educate females with disabilities in any respect to cultural endowments in our society.
- Parents of females with disabilities should be encouraged to send girls to school so as to be educated, certificated, be skilful and have sources of income for sustainability and development.

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