

## **REASONS FOR LOW FEMALE ENROLMENT IN TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study was aimed at determining the reasons for low female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated. A survey research design was adopted. The population consisted of 358 teachers in post-primary institutions in Akwa Ibom State from which a sample of 185 respondents was selected through random sampling. A 10 item structured questionnaire was developed and used as instrument for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the t-test statistics was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that sex discrimination, sexual harassment, male dominance and practical oriented nature of technical subjects were some of the school related factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. The study also found societal factors such as sex roles, normal and abnormal occupations for males and females and the perception of females as home managers to have negative influences on female students enrolment in technical colleges. It was recommended that principals of technical colleges should adopt an administrative style that will keep the school related factors in check while technical teachers can assist by building up the self confidence of the female students while teaching in the classroom in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom state.

**Keywords:** Technical colleges, Female students, Enrolment

### **INTRODUCTION**

Technical education unlocks the door to modernization and socialisation. It facilitates social, economic, political, cultural and technological transformation of any nation

and the school as an agent of socialisation is the seat of the transformation (Ngadiukwu, 1996). Ukeje (1995) noted that for a country to develop economically and socially, it

must equip its citizenry with enough skills and attitude needed for its development through technical education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) defined Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. FRN pointed out that the goals of technical and vocational education and Training include, among others, provision of trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels as well as giving training and imparting the necessary skills to individuals for economic self reliance.

Ogwo and Oranu (2006) identified technical colleges as one of the six Technical and vocational educational institutions in Nigeria. According to Ayomike (2010), Technical colleges are institutions where scientific knowledge and practical skills required for employment in specific trades as professionals, craftsmen, technicians and technologists are taught and imparted. Technical colleges provide secondary level technical and vocational education for the production of skilled middle level technical manpower for Nigeria's emerging market economy (Ogwo and Oranu, 2006). In other words, technical colleges are equivalent to

secondary schools but they are designed to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills and basic attitudes required as craftsmen and technicians at the sub-professional level.

Subjects taught in technical colleges include auto-mechanics, plumbing, carpentry and joinery, furniture making, painting and decoration, welding, electronics/electrical installation, radio and television repairs and building construction. At the end of the approved period of study, technical college students take various examinations, particularly the National Technical certificate (NTC) and the National business Certificate (NBC) examinations. Thus,

Technical colleges provide students with full technical courses or subjects. They are therefore regarded as the principal technical and vocational training institution in Nigeria since they give full vocational training intended to prepare students for employment in various occupations (Okoro, 1993). In other words, they play prominent roles in equipping individuals and students with skills and attitudes for employment and self reliance in the society. Skills may be seen as essential tools needed to enter into gainful employment, earn a life-long living and contribute to the growth and development of the society (Okorie, 2000).

In view of the vital role of skills in the preparation of youths for self reliance, it is disheartening to note that most of the secondary school leavers lack employable skills (Okorie, 2000). This obviously

accounts for the high level of perennial unemployment in a society with abundant human and mineral resources. The unemployment situation is very critical among secondary school female graduates. Studies have shown that majority of female school leavers who got involved in prostitution, female and child trafficking, armed robbery and even drug pushing are without skills and unemployed (UNESCO, 2000, Ismaili, 2012). Most of these females are known to be victims of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome-HIV/AIDS and Vesico Vaginal Fistula-VVF. Some females end up blind, mad, incapacitated, in broken homes and even dead.

Unfortunately, most of these females are products of the senior secondary schools, who, upon graduation, should possess the skills with which to obtain employment, be self employed or even employ others. Majority of the female school leavers are products of grammar schools which are literary based in content against the technical colleges which are institutions known for skill acquisition. According to Cater and Mere (1984), non possession of skills by female school leavers could be attributed to many factors prominent among which is apathy to technical education. Technical colleges have been recording insignificant figures of female enrolment. The problem of low female enrolment is applicable to technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Records have shown

that between 2001 and 2010, not more than 17 percent of the total enrolment in technical colleges were females (Akwa Ibom State Government, AKSG, 2013).

Scholars like Alele-williams (1987) and Ilemona (2001) had attributed low enrolment figures of female students in technical colleges to societal factors such as sex roles, early marriages, home keeping and caring for siblings, interest in disciplines designated as feminine such as liberal arts, education and nursing. Another factor associated with low female enrolment in technical colleges is school related factors such as teachers' behaviour and attitude in the class, curriculum differences between sex, counselling in school and sexual harassment.

The above observations laid credence to the submission of Knudtson (1999) who maintained that low female enrolment in technical colleges could be as a result of the physical nature of technical college programmes such as long standing, hammering, welding, cutting and excavating. Knudtson concluded that for unemployment due to lack of skills amongst female school leavers to be curbed, efforts should be made to improve on female students enrolment in the technical colleges. The biting unemployment occasioned by lack of skills amongst the female school leavers in Akwa Ibom State calls for more ways of encouraging females to enrol in technical institutions with special reference to technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

The foregone challenges made this study very imperative.

### **THE PROBLEM**

Akwa Ibom State has witnessed unprecedented level of unemployment among youths, especially female school leavers since its creation in 1987. Efforts to reduce unemployment among youths, especially female school leavers by the government such as the establishment of National Directorate of Employment, Skills acquisition centres, poverty alleviation, integrated farmers scheme and the teaching of technical subjects in technical colleges has not yielded the required result.

The high level of unemployment is attributed to lack of employable skills among the youths, especially females (Ismaili, 2001). Most of the unemployed female s are products of the senior secondary schools (grammar schools) whose training have not equipped them with employable skills. Okoro (1993) and FRN (2004) contended that technical colleges are institutions designed to impart skills on her graduates. The above assertion is applicable to Akwa Ibom State with 6 technical colleges that could have equipped unemployed youths, especially females with desirable skills for gainful employment and self reliance. Data from the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education revealed that female students show little or no interest in technical college programmes. The result is

low female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

Studies by Okeke (1986), Alele-Williams (1987) and Aghenta (1989) have attributed low female enrolment to school-related factors, societal factors, female poor perception and attitude to technical education. Reasons for the observed low female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State have not been empirically investigated. The absence of such a research study has created a gap which needs to be bridged by carrying out a research study that will answer the question: What are the reasons for low female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of the study was to identify reasons for low female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study was aimed at identifying:

1. The school-related factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.
2. The societal factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the school-related factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the societal factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State ?

### **HYPOTHESES:**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers in post-primary institutions in Akwa Ibom State on school-related factors influencing female students enrolment in technical colleges.

HO 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers in post-primary institutions in Akwa Ibom State on societal factors influencing female students enrolment in technical colleges.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The survey research design was used in the study. It was executed in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. All the six technical colleges in the state were used. The population of the study consisted of 358 technical teachers in the six technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. In compliance with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling formula, a sample of 185 respondents made up of 100 male and 85 female teachers was selected through simple random sampling method. The instrument for data collection was a ten-item structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by 3 lecturers from the department of vocational teacher education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument established by cronbach alpha method was 0.89. The data collected was analysed with the mean, standard deviation and the t-test statistic.

### **RESULTS**

Research Question1: What are the school-related factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on school-related factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges (N = 185)**

Item no	Item statement	X	SD	Remark
	<b>Few females enrol in technical colleges because:</b>			
1	<b>Teachers focus attention more on males than female students in the classroom</b>	3.50	1.00	Agree
2	<b>Technical subjects are practical oriented</b>	3.85	0.30	Agree
3	<b>Male students take over workstations during practical work</b>	3.60	0.20	Agree
4	<b>Females suffer sex discrimination</b>	3.80	0.36	Agree
5	<b>Males sexually harass females in technical colleges</b>	3.60	0.70	Agree

The results on Table 1 showed that the mean responses of the five items exceeded the cutoff point of 3.50. This means that majority of the respondents in the study agreed on the five items as the school-

related factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 2: What are the societal factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State ?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on societal factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges (N = 185)**

Item no	Item statement	X	SD	Remark
	<b>Any female who attempt to acquire training in a male dominated field of study is likely to feel that persons offering the training think that:</b>			
6	<b>She would not like the working environment</b>	3.61	1.30	Agree
7	<b>Technical trades are abnormal for females to acquire training</b>	3.53	1.00	Agree
8	<b>The society will perceive the female with some ills if the female is trained</b>	3.62	0.63	Agree
9	<b>Majority of trainees are males who females do not prefer obtaining training with</b>	3.62	0.30	Agree
10	<b>Societal pressures like early marriage will not allow her to acquire the training</b>	3.74	0.73	Agree

The results on Table 2 showed that the mean responses of the five items exceeded the cutoff point of 3.50. This means that majority of the respondents in the study agreed on the five listed items as the societal factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

**HYPOTHESES 1 (HO 1):** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers in post-primary institutions in Akwa Ibom State on school-related factors influencing female students enrolment in technical colleges.

**Table 3: T-test analysis on differences between the mean responses of male and female teachers in post-primary institutions on school-related factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State ( $n_1 = 100, n_2 = 85, df = 183, t\text{-crit} = 2.02$ )**

Item no	Item statement	X <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>	SE	t-cal	Decision
	<b>Few females enrol in technical colleges because:</b>							
1	<b>Teachers focus attention more on males than female students in the classroom</b>	4.00	1.26	3.86	1.29	0.39	0.35	Ho accepted
2	<b>Technical subjects are practical oriented</b>	3.75	1.45	3.73	1.49	0.45	0.04	Ho accepted
3	<b>Male students take over workstations during practical work</b>	3.90	1.49	3.68	1.21	0.34	0.65	Ho accepted
4	<b>Females suffer sex discrimination</b>	4.00	1.08	3.64	1.36	0.38	0.96	Ho accepted
5	<b>Males sexually harass females in technical colleges</b>	3.80	3.55	1.11	1.26	0.37	0.68	Ho accepted

The result of the t-test analysis showed that the calculated t-value of the five items were less than the table t-value of 2.02. On this basis, the null hypothesis was accepted at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on school-related factors influencing female

students enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

**HYPOTHESES 2 (HO 2):** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers in post-primary institutions in Akwa Ibom State on societal factors influencing female students enrolment in technical colleges.

**Table 4: T-test analysis on differences between the mean responses of male and female teachers in post-primary institutions on societal factors influencing female enrolment in technical colleges (n<sub>1</sub> = 100, n<sub>2</sub> = 85, df = 183, t-crit = 2.02)**

Item no	Item statement	X <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>	SE	t-cal	Decision
	<b>Any female who attempt to acquire training in a male dominated field of study is likely to feel that persons offering the training think that:</b>							
6	She would not like the working environment	3.85	1.23	3.82	1.33	0.39	0.08	Ho accepted
7	Technical trades are abnormal for females to acquire training	3.70	1.49	3.77	1.41	0.45	-0.16	Ho accepted
8	The society will perceive the female with some ills if the female is trained	3.45	1.23	3.41	1.26	0.38	0.11	Ho accepted
9	Majority of trainees are males who females do not prefer obtaining training with	3.80	1.47	3.45	1.26	0.42	0.83	Ho accepted
10	Societal pressures like early marriage will not allow her to acquire the training	3.55	1.28	3.45	1.50	0.43	0.02	Ho accepted

The result of the t-test analysis showed that the calculated value of t (t-cal) for all the items were below the value of the table t (t-

crit) of 2.02. Based on this, the null hypothesis was upheld implying that there was no significant difference in the mean

responses of male and female teachers on school-related factors influencing female students' enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom state.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Data analysis indicated that female students' enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State was influenced by school-related factors such as sex discrimination, sexual harassment, male dominance, practical oriented nature of technical subjects and teachers focussing attention more on males than female students in the classroom while teaching in the technical colleges. These findings lend support to the ones earlier made by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) (1999), Romo (1998) and Byrne (1999) who reported similar findings from their separate studies. The AAUW (1999) specifically reported that teachers tend to focus more attention and give more encouragement to boys while girls are overlooked. This situation undoubtedly discourages girls from attending technical colleges. The cross time tabling of home economics for females and handicraft subjects for males tend to portray that females are not meant to offer pure technical subjects like metalwork, woodwork, electrical installation and auto-mechanics as reported by Byrne (1999).

The study also revealed societal factors such as considering technical trades as being abnormal for females, viewing females who attend technical colleges with disdain,

perceiving that females do not require other skills except those related to home management and considering technical training as unfit for females since it requires muscle power. The society thus, directly or indirectly influence female students enrolment into technical colleges. These findings are in line with Green (1979), Anuka (1995) and Byrne (1999). Green (1979) noted that the society assigns occupations to individuals based on their sex. Anuka (1995) reported that as a result of subject allotment, some subjects are branded normal or abnormal for either males or females.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that female students enrolment in technical colleges met a lot of hindrances. In the wake of the rapid rate of technological advancement and with Nigeria striving towards attaining an industrialized nation status, the eradication of the identified problems for improved female students enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State, for acquisition of the needed skills is therefore very imperative.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Principals of technical colleges should adopt an administrative style that will keep the school related factors influencing female enrolment in check in order to improve female enrolment in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State .

2. School administrators should ensure that sex appropriate enrolment prevention activities exist to combat those gender specific obstacles that females must overcome to enrol in technical colleges
3. Teachers and school administrators should provide a bias-free academic environment to ensure that female students achieve the same level of educational and economic opportunity as do their male colleagues

The career and guidance counsellors should counsel the female students on the advantages and employment opportunities that abound in technical/technology education for everybody.

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