

Impact of Economic Depression on the Education of Male and Female Undergraduates in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study was carried out to examine the challenges of economic depression on the education of male and female undergraduates in Nigeria. As a descriptive research design, it made use of some indicators for measuring the state of the Nigerian economy such as exchange rate, inflation rate, GDP per capital growth rate, foreign direct investment and consumer price index. Four public universities were selected through simple random sampling for the study. The participants were made up of 225 male and 225 female undergraduates, while reliability coefficient of the validated instrument was found to be 0.75. Data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics tools. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the effects of economic hardship on male and female undergraduates in Nigeria ($t\text{-cal } 0.249 < t\text{-value} = 0.819; df = 6, p > 0.05$). The implication of this study proved that gender discrimination in the country was not tied to economic hardship, but ecosystemic thinking of the society, which is presently decreasing with reference to tertiary institutions enrolment.

Key words: Under funding, economic disequilibrium, ecosystemic thinking, budgetary allocations, education

INTRODUCTION

Nations all over the world are striving at reaching an economic equilibrium. The attainment of equal weights on a scale of measurement has been the thinking on economic development of nations all over the world. Hence, it is necessary to note that whenever, there is an increase in the annual output of an economy does not however mean that there is necessarily development in the economy.

The analysis between the position, which a person or an economic entity regards as the best possible attainable position under a given circumstance and does not want to deviate from it is, the stable position and any deviation from such position leads to a disequilibrium.

Economic depression is a disequilibrium position, which dates back to the 1930 world economic instability when supply could no longer create demand. Hence, Neo-Keynesian economists since then assumed that the level of economic disequilibrium below an acceptable economic growth of nations is regarded as economic depression. Akande and Azike (2001) note that West Africa's economic and social problems emanated in the 1970s when per capital Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates began to fall. It is pertinent to note that to a great degree, West Africa's present problems are the result of external economic conditions from the more industrialized area of the world.

The cost of living in an interdependent world are: persistent recession, several decline in commodity prices, increasing protectionism, high real interest rates and decreasing net capital flows from the international economic environment.

These global economic forces have placed the Nigerian economy in a position of wrestling with her internal economic distortions.

The most helpless victims in the scheme of things appear to be the children and students; they are the people most quickly in physical terms affected than millions of human beings that are living, literally, on the margin of life. Whatever, the argument over the appropriateness or inappropriateness of expressions such as economic depression, underdeveloped poor and backward nations expressed in the standard of living of citizens, it is incontrovertible that poverty, hunger unemployment and corruption are features of the Nigerian economy.

Thus, the rectification of this abnormal or undesirable socio-economic situation is so cardinal to the hardship of male and female undergraduates in the country.

Human development is the bedrock of any nation and the ultimate desire to develop stock of skills in the country; it entails job-creating, participatory, sustainable growth, egalitarianism and the one that enriches the culture of the people (Oguntoye and Alani, 1998).

Economic challenges on undergraduates: The monumental increase in student enrolments at the primary and secondary levels of education, have consequently put a lot of economic, political and social pressure on the tertiary education level with the resultant financial consequences for students, governments and the economy generally. Nwangwu (2001) states that when parents and their children exercise their right to choose the types of higher education to pursue, it should be understood that higher education is not free or universal or compulsory, they have the duty to provide financial support for such students.

The various avenues that are available for the funding of higher institutions in Nigeria, such as the Federation Account, the Education Tax Fund, Budgetary Allocations, Internally and externally generated funds still radiates amidst economic woes of corruption and mismanagement of funds are responsible for the apparent under funding and shortages in our institutions.

The above mentioned economic woes have placed the undergraduates in the Nigeria universities in a crucial position of sourcing for more funds in panel beating the inadequacy, which has culminated into an increase in private cost of attending university.

The cost of procuring textbooks and stationeries, accommodation, transportation, feeding and clothing over the years have increased due to the rising inflation rate and consumer price index in the country. Central Bank of Nigeria (2005) report revealed that the inflation rate are 6.6, 6.9, 18.9, 12.9, 11.3 and 17.6% in 1999-2004, respectively.

The economic hardship faced by the undergraduates does not occur among genders. The attitude of both traditional and modern societies on gender discrimination in the enrolment pattern is revealed by the data in Table 1.

In 2001, the percentage difference between male and female undergraduates was 16.55%, while those recorded for 2002-2005 were 21.12, 25.17, 13.64 and 13.82%, respectively compared to the high percentage difference of 84.6% in 1960, 70% (1970), 58% (1980) and 46% in 1990. According to Ohiri-Aniche (1998), in the education system, gender is important as it influences the curriculum, instructional materials, career choice and general behaviour of students and teachers alike.

Also, gender stereotyping permeates the school system, manifesting in both direct and subtle ways that are capable of influencing funds required by individuals and this to a large extent, could mean different costs to different gender.

Problem of the study: There are indications that the economic situation in Nigeria at the moment has put much

Table 1: Male/female enrolment in tertiary institutions

Years	Male		Female		Total	Male (%)	Female (%)
	enrolment	enrolment	enrolment	enrolment			
1960	2.349	196	2545	92.30	7.70		
1970	25.500	4.500	30.000	85.00	15.00		
1980	58.056	16.275	74.331	78.00	21.00		
1990	132.016	48.855	180.871	73.00	27.00		
University enrolment figures in Nigeria by gender							
2001	26665	19101	45766	58.26	41.73		
2002	54972	35797	90769	60.56	39.44		
2003	31942	19903	51845	61.61	38.39		
2004	59742	45415	105157	56.82	43.18		
2005	69715	52777	122492	56.91	43.09		

Fieldwork

pressure on the finances of parents who have children in tertiary institutions. Some of their children and wards have therefore resorted to unwholesome practices such as prostitution, cyber-crime and armed robbery in order to make up for what their parents are unable to provide. Some of those who have decided to live within their means find it difficult to make ends meet.

Purpose of the study: Although, a lot of research has been done in the area of gender differentials, it is necessary to ascertain the effect of current economic depression on the undergraduates with reference to gender so as to inform all education stakeholders on the effect of economic hardship on both male and female undergraduates in order to draw conclusion on who is more at the receiving end of the state of the Nigerian economy.

In doing this, the questions that are necessarily answered in carrying out a study of this nature are:

- What is the present state of the Nigerian economy?
- Does economic depression have any impact on undergraduate's gender status in Nigeria?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the effect of economic hardship on male and female undergraduates in Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study. Stratified sampling technique was used to sample four public universities, while purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants from two pools of male and female undergraduates across disciplines and year of study. A sample of 225 males and 225 females' undergraduate formed the sample of the study.

A questionnaire with fourteen items was used to gather information. Section A of the questionnaire dealt with demographic details, while section B contains items

for testing the variables. Two senior colleagues ascertained the validity of the instruction and the test of reliability proved sufficient with a result of 0.75 calculated with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: What is the present state of the Nigerian Economy?

Table 2 reveals the instability in the state of the Nigerian economy. GDP per capital growth was 1.0% annual average from 1961-1970. But, it recorded -6.5% in the annual average of 1980-84. Also, it was 1.3% in 1996 but reduces to -0.8, -0.8 and -1.4% in 1997-1999, respectively. The foreign direct investment as a percentage of the GRP also reduces from 4.51 in 1996 to 4.25, 3.27, 2.89 and 2.63 in 1997-2000, respectively.

Table 3 also depicts the fluctuating state of the Nigerian economy.

Research question 2: Does economic depression have impact on undergraduates?

Table 4 reveals that 58.33% male undergraduate strongly agree that economic hardship has much impact on them, while 41.67% female undergraduates strongly agreed.

These views were subjected to t-test statistic in order to test the hypothesis that there is no significant effect of economic hardship between the male and female undergraduates in Nigeria.

Table 5 revealed that there is no significant effect of economic hardship between male and female undergraduates in Nigeria ($t = 0.249$, $df = 448$, $p > 0.5$). Thus, the hypothesis is not rejected.

The study revealed that Nigerian economy GDP per capital growth rate was fluctuating over the years. Indicators for measuring the state of Nigerian economy such as exchange rate, inflation rate, interest rate of commercial banks and consumer price index depict instability and economic depression. This corroborates the submission of Akande and Azike (2001), Odebunmi and Onayemi (2004) and Bolarin (2006).

However, this study reveals that there is no significant difference of the impact of economic hardship between the male and female undergraduate Nigeria. According to Nwaubani (2000), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1995 included gender in equality in the measurement of development. It has been observed that counties that have raised the status of their woman educationally, socially, politically, economically generally enjoy a high standard of living. On the other hand, countries, where woman remain largely

Table 2: Nigeria Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates (Annual average in percentage)

Years	GDP growth	GDP per capital growth	Real GDP growth	Foreign direct Inv. as a % of GDP
1960-70	-	1.0	-	-
1971-79	-	2.6	-	-
1980-84	-	-6.5	-	-
1991	4.7	1.8	3.9	2.61
1992	2.9	-0.1	3.9	2.74
1993	2.1	-0.7	3.9	6.30
1994	0.1	-2.7	3.9	8.28
1995	2.5	-0.5	2.4	3.84
1996	4.3	1.3	6.5	4.51
1997	2.7	-0.8	3.1	4.25
1998	1.9	-0.8	1.6	3.27
1999	1.1	-1.4	3.1	2.89
2000	3.7	1.3	3.9	2.63

Akande and Azike (2001): 285

Table 3: Some indicators for measuring the state of the Nigerian economy

Years	Exchange rate (N/US\$1.00)	Inflation rate (%)	Interest rate commercial of banks (%)	Consumer index price (Annual average)
1995	81.0228	72.9	20.18	2040.9
1996	81.2528	29.3	19.74	2638.1
1997	81.6494	8.5	13.54	2863.2
1998	83.8072	10.0	18.29	3149.2
1999	92.3428	6.6	21.32	3357.6
2000	100.8016	6.9	NA	3923.8
2001	111.4921	18.9	18.29	4268.1
2002	120.4700	12.9	24.41	5151.5

Fieldwork

Table 4: Responses from the sampled undergraduates

Response	Frequency	Frequency of male (%)	Frequency of female (%)	Total
Strongly agree	1080	58.33	41.67	100
Agree	1470	55.10	44.90	100
Disagree	1935	48.84	51.16	100
Strongly disagree	1665	41.44	58.56	100

Table 5: Summary of t-test of economic hardship or undergraduates

Source	Mean	N	SD	SEM	df	t-cal	Sig.
Female undergraduates	50.9275	225	7.45156	3.72578	448	0.249	0.819
Male undergraduates	49.0725	225	7.45156	3.72578	-	-	-

illiterate and confined to the home front, have a low standard of living. This fact is substantiated by the age-long gender inequalities in Nigeria as upheld by Ohiri-Aniche (1998) and Nwaubani (2001). However, the increasing female enrolments raise hope for increased standard of living in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to make a preliminary investigation into the current state of economic depression in Nigeria. In the course of the study, attempts were made at finding out whether or not gender status of undergraduates is affected by this economic hardship in the country. The reason being that the researchers intend to see whether or not economic depression could be responsible for gender discrimination.

However, gender discrimination was not due to economic hardship of Nigeria, but the age-long ecosystemic thinking of Nigerians towards gender discrimination on access to tertiary education, which is gradually heading for extraction as the gender gap is closing up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore, recommended that the economic policies of the country should be geared towards bringing relief to the students in the Nigerian Universities who are experiencing hardship, so as to guarantee the internal and external efficiency of the university educational system.

There should also, be provision of subsidized books and other materials needed by the undergraduates.

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