

THE SINGLE-SEX VIEW OF GENDER AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN A NIGERIAN IVORY TOWER

EBOIYEHI FRIDAY ASIAZOBOR

Centre for Gender & Social Policy Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

© 2024 Eboiyehi Friday Asiazobor

This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivs license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>)

DOI: 10.2478/eras-2024-0011

Abstract

This paper examines gender inequality in a female dominated academic unit in a purposefully selected university in south-western Nigeria. It examines the participants' understanding of the terms "gender", "men doing gender", establishes how these perceptions affect male staff and students doing gender, and suggests what can be done to encourage men to participate in gender studies. One of the federal universities in Nigeria that has a Gender Studies Unit was purposively selected. In all, 256 semi structure questionnaires were administered. Out of these numbers, 200 questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed. The results showed that less than 50% (49%) of the respondents defined gender study as the study of men and women. Others (2%) understood gender be the study of men, while 10% had no clear understanding of what gender means. Also, 45% of the respondents said gender is about women and men, 44% stated it was about women, 4% had no clear idea of what gender implies, and 1% of them affirmed that gender is about men. On the perceptions about "men doing gender", 22% of the respondents were of the view that a negative perception about "men doing gender" would make them lose confidence in themselves, 21.5% stated it would limit their capacity to develop their full potential, and 21% believed it might have adverse effects on men's career progression. About 20.5% of the respondents affirmed that such a perception would create a lack of interest in this field of study, while 15% affirmed that it would limit their interest in pursuing a career in gender studies. The policy implications of the study were also highlighted and discussed.

Keywords

single sex view; gender inequality; men; academia; Nigeria

Introduction

The recognition that gender inequality harms all genders is an important one, but it requires a mindset shift, or even a generational shift (Forbes, 2019).

In recent decades, the concept of gender has become a contentious issue in international forums as well as in the academic circles. In many of the developing countries, gender studies as a discipline are relatively new. Much of the earlier research interests and discourses in gender studies usually focus on the inequalities that disadvantaged women and girls, highlighting their social vulnerabilities, and seeking to address the patriarchal structures and power dynamics that perpetuated gender-based discrimination and oppression. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is believed that women and girls are also generally more vulnerable to social, economic and health disadvantages than their male counterparts (Sen et al., 2007). It is therefore not amazing that discussions involving gender refer mainly to women and girls and emphasize their potential disadvantage.

In Nigeria, many people including those in academia still believe that gender is about women, and so gender issues are women issues. I could recall quite plainly the eight haunting nicknames I was given by my friends and colleagues as I made my academic journey into gender studies as a man. While some of them humorously called me “the genderised man”, “the only man-standing”, “the only “he” among “shes”, “the only man in the midst of women”, others consistently asked: “what are you doing in gender studies?” “Are you now a woman?”, “Why can’t you go to the mainstream department?”, “Do you think there is a prospect for you in gender studies?” Yet, others taunted: “don’t worry, we shall soon sew skirt and blouse for you”. Their basic argument is that a man is not supposed to do gender or take up an employment at any gender unit in the university or elsewhere. According to them, there are some many areas for me to excel such as the departments of anthropology, sociology, social work and social gerontology and certainly not gender studies, which in their view is not an important area for men. According to this school of thought, the discipline is just about women and any man who ventures into this academic arena is a “collaborator”, who is either working for women or working against male-dominated reality, thereby destroying the most important social structures.

As witty or ludicrous as the above labelling and connotations may seem, they cannot be dismissed with an academic wave of hands, as this labelling may profoundly affect the future of men and boys doing gender in females dominated unit in the university. Experience has shown that the way a concept is used and perceived by people may also have positive or negative impacts on the person being so addressed or labelled. Consequently, the misconception of people about the term “gender”, and the views they hold about the concept, may also have ways of affecting the male gender (particularly those that are being wrongly labelled as women or girls), either as employees or as students. This is true, particularly as it relates to decision making process, employment and career progression as a staff or in enrollment and retention as a student. Looking at the above from this incompatible angle, one would not be surprised why gender studies as an academic discipline are being avoided by men and dominated by women in many African universities, including those in Nigeria. No doubt that the discipline attracts more females than males due to the way the term gender is being used. Furthermore, labelling a man a woman may not only be harmful, but may also be capable of limiting his capacity to develop his full potentials, pursue his career or make his choice. As a male who has been doing gender studies for almost three decades, I would like to argue that gender studies have informed and enriched my experience, both in class and outside the classroom, and seemed like a natural fit for me because of my strong belief in gender equity and equal opportunity for all (whether male or female). However, certain actions changed this belief as I later began to ask: who is actually discriminating against who?

My preliminary investigations into the staff strength and student enrollment in the purposively selected institutions in southwestern Nigeria revealed that men are grossly underrepresented. Out of the seven academic staff currently in the Centre, only two are males and of the 68 postgraduate students that have so far enrolled for postgraduate studies between 2014 and 2022, only 14 are males. Out of this number, only two have successfully completed their studies as of December 2022. While three are still on the program, 9 had withdrawn either to pursue other courses in other universities, travelled abroad or completely abandoned their studies after securing a job. Gender disparity in the deployment of administrative staff to the Centre is also a common phenomenon as more female non-academic staff are often deployed. Gender disparity in leadership is particularly glaring and restricted. Of all the 8 directors of the Centre since its inception in 1996, none is a male. In other words, between 1996 and December 2022, no male has been appointed a director of the Centre. In spite of the fact that the document that established the Centre did not stipulate that its directorship or headship shall be female

only, rather it states clearly “a male or female” in a professorial cadre. Thus, despite the fact that some of the men have worked in the Centre for close to three decades, they are denied the opportunity to head the unit. This renunciation may be linked to the fact that gender is still seen as women issue in the university. Little wonder therefore, that when the term gender is being mentioned, what comes to mind is women. Thus, within the gender equality discourse, men are also under-represented as they participate less in events and projects related to gender equality. It is not surprising therefore that Rumana Hashem, while responding to a question during an in-depth interview with the United Nations’ team in 2008 in Bangladesh, affirmed that “the group of men who are working in the alliances for gender equality, equal health care, and education, equity at work or in decision making was too small in numbers” (UN, 2008). This finding may be attributed to the fact that men participate less in gender issues because of the way gender is misconceived as a synonym for women in many developing societies. This was clearly demonstrated recently in Nigeria when the Gender Equality Bill failed to scale through in the Senate because men believe that passing such a bill would favor women and reduce their power.

The main objective of this study, therefore, is to clear this misconception by examining the perception of staff and students about men doing gender in a purposively selected university using one of the foremost universities in southwestern Nigeria, as a reference point. The specific objectives are to:

- a. examine how staff and students understand the concept of “gender” in the selected University;
- b. find out their perception about men doing gender in the institution;
- c. establish how these perceptions affect male staff and students doing gender;
- d. suggest what can be done to encourage men to do gender in Nigeria.

In the next section, attempts have been made to clarify some of the key concepts that have been misconceived by many people in the study institution. Some of the concepts are “gender,” “gender equality” and “gender equity.” The purpose is to enlighten the readers on what these terms actually mean and not what they are being presumed. In other words, these concepts need necessary clarifications because “the gender question is not just about women and men and how they interact (The gender question, Human development report, 2000), but understanding these concepts would help in sensitizing people about curbing the gender biases prevailing in the society and aid in empowering men and boys, women and girls to achieve their goals.

Some conceptual issues

The questions this section will like to address are: What is gender? Does gender mean femaleness or maleness or both? What is gender equality? What is gender inequality? Are these concepts only applicable to women and girls? What is gender equity? Does it mean being fair to only the female gender and unfair to the male gender?

Gender

People are born female or male, but they learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men (WHO, 2002). The term “gender” is a concept that is widely used but often misunderstood in our wider society (Nyalunga, 2007). The term has come into common usage particularly as a synonym for sex (femininity and masculinity). In other words, the term is misused as a synonym for “women” or “female” or “sex.” On the contrary, gender is neither a synonym for sex, nor it is applicable to women only. In its definition, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 1997) describes gender as “the relationship between men and women, both perceptual and material”. This definition indicates that “gender is not determined as a result of the biological make-up of both men and women but it is socially constructed”. According to

the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2005), gender refers to the “economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being a male or female”. It went ahead to state that gender is different from sex in that it is social and cultural in nature, rather than biological. Put differently, being a male or female is not simply a matter of different biological and physical characteristics.

For Carolyn Hannan (2000), the term gender “relates to the attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, and the socio-cultural relationships between men and women, and boys and girls”. In other words, gender is the relationship between women and men, girls and boys, and how this is socially constructed. Despite the above definitions, gender is often misunderstood as being the promotion of women only. Consequently, gender is still seen as a women’s issue, even though the strict definition of gender encompasses male, female and other gender identities. That is why Noarlunga (2007) argues that this usage of gender has been clouded with discrepancies which can lead to confusion, lack of understanding and misconception. The basic argument here therefore, is that the definition of gender does not in any way advocate only the interest of women, nor it is a synonym for women. At this juncture, we feel that the first step is to clarify that gender studies as a discipline involves the study of both men and women, boys and girls. In conformity with this line of argument, Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) states that “labelling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender—not science—can define our sex”. She concludes that “our beliefs about gender affect what kind of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place”.

Gender equality

Historically, gender equality policies have been contextualized as a “women issue” - as women have been the driving force behind gender equality strategies and struggles (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Equality between men and women is recognized as a principle in international law, articulated in many United Nations documents from 1948 Universal of Human Rights onwards. Gender equality is a basic human right. It means the absence of discrimination on grounds of a person’s sex in the allocation of resources or benefits, or in the access to services such as education, employment, decision making or leadership position. It refers to the equal treatment of men and women with respect to their rights. Therefore, equality between women and men is seen both as human rights issue as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people- Centred development (UNFPA, 2005). In other words, gender equality implies that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will depend on whether they are born male or female.

However, in the pursuit of achieving gender equality, the focus has often been on women and girls: how to remove barriers for their inclusion, how to empower them and ensure that they gain access to health, economic, education and other opportunities (Amaya et al., 2019). The General Assembly resolution 45/164 of the Beijing Platform for Action plan also advocates “the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (UN Women, 2002). Above all, all the statements in the document either stress the particular vulnerability of women with respect to virtually every major aspect of wellbeing, or advocate that particular attention be given to women in programs and policies directed towards improving the lot of this population segment. The reason for this is that women are believed to be disadvantaged by the main patterns of gender inequality. According to the United Nations (2003) “this logic is so strong that gender issues have been widely regarded as ‘women’s business and of no concern to men and boys’”. According to the United Nations (2003), “that belief can no longer be held because men and boys are unavoidably involved in gender issues”. Gender equality is therefore not only women’s issue but also men’s issue. Thus, greater gender equality can enhance

productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representatives. It is therefore not surprising that the roles of men and boys in relation to gender equality emerged as an issue in international discussions and crystalized at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. Paragraph 25 of the *Beijing Declaration* committed participating government to “encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality” (United Nations, 2003).

What this simply implies is that development cannot be achieved if one gender is sidelined or neglected in favor of the other. As the saying goes “no person can walk far or very fast with one leg”. In other words, a bird cannot fly with one wing. One gender cannot bring about development alone as it takes two to tango. Thus, the overall objective of gender equality is to create a society or organization in which men and women enjoy the same opportunities (UNFPA, 2005). That is, men and women, boys and girls, should have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potentials, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefiting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. Put differently, not only women and girls, but also men and boys should benefit from gender equality. That is, the interests, needs and priorities of women and men, boys and girls, need to be taken into account by recognizing the diversity of different groups and that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without limitation set by the stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles.

Gender equity

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men, boys and girls (UNFPA, 2005). It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles, norms or differences between the sexes. Gender equity is therefore a means to ensure that women and men, girls and boys, have an equal chance not only at the starting point, but also when reaching the finishing line. It is about the fair and the just treatment of both sexes that takes into account the different needs of men and women, cultural barriers and (past) discrimination of specific groups. The above definitions indicate that gender equity cannot happen without men and boys. Therefore, understanding the drivers behind the motivations and behaviors of boys and men can help identify and address unspoken societal barriers to gender equity thereby using their power to be effective advocates (Amaya et al., 2019).

However, in spite of these conceptual clarifications by scholars and experts in the field of gender studies, many people still use these terms inaccurately and misconceive gender as a women issue. It is against this background that this study was designed to examine the perception of staff and students about the concept of gender in the selected University in southwestern Nigeria, and its implication for gender and development in Nigeria.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study was conducted in one of the purposively selected universities in south-west Nigeria. For ethical reason, the university would remain anonymous and its actual name would not be disclosed in this study. In this study, the university is tagged ‘University of Gender Studies’ (UGS). The University was purposively chosen because it is the one of the foremost university that started gender studies in Nigeria. In addition, the actual names of the in-depth interviewees or participants in the study were also presented in pseudonym. The study was cross-sectional, and employed mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative data sources). Eight out of the thirteen faculties in the selected university, namely Faculty of Arts, Administration, Agriculture, Science, Social Sciences, Pharmacy, Technology and Basic Health Science, were randomly selected. In each of the

selected faculties, two departments were also randomly selected. A total of 256 semi-structured questionnaires were administered in all the randomly selected faculties and departments. Of these, data provided by the respondents that were currently working or studying in the selected university were analyzed and discarded those that did not reach the end of the survey. Twenty-five questionnaires were retrieved from each of the selected departments from the randomly selected male and female students (final year undergraduate and postgraduate students), male and female academic staff, and male and female non-teaching staff) while 56 questionnaires that did not reach the end of the survey were discarded. The qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs). Altogether, 16 in-depth interviews were conducted with 4 students (2 males and 2 females), 4 lecturers (2 females and 2 males), 4 non-teaching staff (2 males and 2 females) and 4 heads of department (2 males and 2 females across the selected faculties). All the in-depth interviews were conducted in English, because of the high literacy level of the interviewees. The researchers engaged the service of two research assistants who assisted in the administration of the questionnaires and in taking notes during the in-depth interviews. All responses from the in-depth interviews were also tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees. They were later transcribed for further analysis. The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, while the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Research ethics

The data in this study were analyzed anonymously. At the commencement of the survey, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the anonymization of their data. Responses were obtained between June 8, 2023 and September 16th, 2023. Participants were given the option of not responding to each question. Data from participants that are final year students, postgraduate students (who did their undergraduate in the selected university) and the academic and non-academic staff are only included in the study.

Results

The data presented and interpreted here offer an insight into the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents: their age distribution and academic status. The study also presented and interpreted data on respondents' definition of gender, their perception about gender and men doing gender; the effects of these perceptions on male staff and students doing gender and the suggestions what could be done to encourage men to do gender studies in Nigeria.

Table 1 below shows the percentage distribution of respondents by their socio-demographic characteristics. The table indicates that both genders are equally represented (50% each). The ages of the respondents are grouped into six categories. The data however show that more than one-fifth of the respondents (22%) fall within a wide range of age 31 to 40 years. This can be explained by the fact that many of the respondents could have been doing their postgraduate studies or working in a university. A total of 21% of the respondents falls within 41 to 50 and respectively 51 to 60 years. This age category could be more critical in terms of experiences garnered over the years on gender issues. The table also indicates that 16% of the respondents are within the age category of 20-30 years, while 15% falls within the 61-70 age range. Ages 20-30 years are when most students are likely to be in their final year in the university or about starting their Master's Degree program, while ages 61-70 years are when university workers usually prepare for their retirement. Only 5% of the respondents are less than 20 years. This is not surprising, because in most of Nigeria's public universities only a few students are in their final year before age 20. The statuses of the respondents are also equally represented as shown in the table. In other words, 25% of the respondents are academic staff,

non-academic staff, postgraduate, and respectively undergraduate students in their final years. These categories of respondents having spent many years in the university are expected to have heard about gender and gender studies in the study area.

Table 1. Demographic and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	100	50.0
Female	100	50.0
Total	200	100.0
Age in years		
< 20	10	5.0
20-30	32	16.0
31-40	44	22.0
41-50	42	21.0
51-60	42	21.0
61-70	30	15.0
Total	200	100.0
Status		
Academic staff	50	25.0
Non-teaching staff	50	25.0
Postgraduate student	50	25.0
Undergraduate student	50	25.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 indicates that nearly half of the respondents (49%) define gender as the study of both males and females. Unexpectedly, 40% of them define gender as the study of women. This result is quite surprising because one would not have expected a university that has been running programs in gender studies and has been carrying out a lot of sensitization and workshops in gender concepts that could still define gender as the study of women. While a total number of 20 respondents (10%) have no clear idea of what gender entails, 2% define gender as the study of men. On why he defined gender as the study of men, one of the interviewees, a male student in the Department of Religious Studies, said: “in my discipline, the use of man in this context takes into consideration both men and women”.

Table 2. Respondents’ definition gender

Study of women	80	40.0
Study of men	2	1.0
Study of both males and females	98	49.0
No idea	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The respondents’ perceptions about gender are not different from the way they defined the concept of gender as shown in **Table 3**. An overwhelming 45% of the respondents remarked that gender is all about women. Although the majority of the respondents (45%) said gender is about men and women, this figure or percentage is very low in a university that has been championing for practically three decades. While 4% has no clear idea of what gender is, only 1% of the respondents perceive that gender is about men. There was no response from one (1%)

of the respondents.

During the in-depth interview, a male non-academic staff substantiated the above finding and said: *“Whenever one attends programs organized by the Centre it is women’s issues that are always resonated. There everything you hear about gender is “women, women and women”. Just go there, you will find that virtually all of its students are females. That is why many people in this university see gender as a women issue and this reflects in everything they do. For instance, women constitute the largest proportion of the Centre’s staff. Not only that, the head of the unit has always been a woman”*.

No wonder, a female Professor during the in-depth interview flippantly said: *“Yes, the Centre is about us. It is about women because we have been disadvantaged in all areas of this university. I see that place as a place where women’s voices can be heard. That is why all the directors (both past and present) are women. No man will ever become a direct there because the place is not meant for them. Yes, they cannot be head here. We do not struggle with them in other departments. How many women are heads of departments or deans of faculties in this university? Do we struggle with them? No! There is no space for them here”*. She went further: *“Men want to be everywhere. Outside the University they are the heads of all the Ministries, Parastatals and are in charge of Administration. They are the President, Governors, Local Government Chairmen and Counselors. They are the one occupying the most important positions in this country. Even at home they are the head. They should leave this Centre for us”*.

With these comments the interviewee had equated gender studies with women studies and for her, gender unit should remain specifically the domain of women, where only women could work or study. However, what the interviewee had failed to realize is that even in the developed countries men do work to become heads of Centres for Women Studies, and that in all the universities in Nigeria, female professors also do participate fully in virtually all the departments and even rise through the ranks and files to become dean of their faculties and provosts of colleges. However, another interviewee (a male academic staff) stated: *“The way the Centre is being run suggests that it is established for women. No wonder many people see gender as something that has to do with women only. Since its inception, all its programs and activities have been focusing on women alone. The only time men are mentioned is when they want to talk about sexual harassment. They see men as harassers and when women harass men, such a case is swept under the carpet. That is not how to do gender in other climes. But gender issues are not only about women. I may be wrong but that is the truth. The Centre has never organized a program to talk about vulnerable men and boys or their situation. What we do here is not gender studies, but women’s studies. Even in civilized nations, women studies have gone beyond women issues”*.

Yet, another male academic staff retorted thus: *“Yes, why wouldn’t gender be defined as the study of women? All its activities are centered on women and girls. That shouldn’t be. For instance, how many men benefit from the Centre’s fellowships, scholarships and grants? All the fellowships and scholarships at the Centre go to females only. No man has ever benefited from these fellowships and scholarships. In other departments, fellowships and scholarships and even grants are thrown open and evenly given. Both males and females are allowed to benefit. How many men have headed that unit? How many men are employed there, compared to women? That is why many staff and students see the Centre as a women’s Centre. One thing we fail to realize is that gender studies are not women’s studies. Until the university corrects this impression, people will continue to see gender as a women’s issue.*

Table 3. Perception of respondents about gender

Gender is about women	88	44.0
Gender is about men	2	1.0
Gender is about both men and women	90	45.0
No clear idea of what gender is	8	4.0
No response	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

As shown in **Table 4**, the respondents' perceptions about men doing gender were sought. This was with a view to understanding how they feel about men taking gender as their profession. While 20% of the respondents are of the view that they are just like other scholars in the field, 17.5% see them as those who think like women and as such not different from women. Furthermore, 16.5% of the respondents believe that men doing gender are very objective in gender issues, 16% are of the opinion that they behave and think like women. Others (15%) are of the view that they work against men's interests and gender inequality. During the in-depth interview, a male non-academic staff stated: *"I wouldn't take gender studies because I am a man. I don't recognize gender studies as being a very important discipline for men. The course for me should be taken by women because they are the ones that fight for equality"*.

Yet, one of the academic staff in the Faculty of Basic Health Science said: *"Two major reasons why most men do not want to involve themselves in gender studies are first, women have taken over the course, and second, they understand gender as something that concerns women only"*.

Table 4. Respondents' perception about men doing gender

They are not different from women	35	17.5
They work against men's interest	30	15.0
They are like any other scholars	40	20.0
They behave and think like women	32	16.0
They are very objective	33	16.5
They work against gender inequality	30	15.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Following from the above, **Table 5** shows the effects of respondents' perception on male doing gender. 22% are of the view that such perception about men would make them lose confidence in themselves, 21.5% stated it would limit their capacity to develop their full potential, while 21% believe it would have negative effects on their career progression. About 20.5% of the respondents were of the view that such perception would create a lack of interest in the course, while 15% of them opined that it would limit their interest in pursuing a career in gender studies.

Table 5. Effects of perceptions on male staff and students doing gender

Lack of confidence in themselves	44	22.0
Negative effects on career progression	42	21.0
Lack of interest in the course	41	20.5
Limit capacity to develop full potentials	43	21.5
Limit interest to pursue a career of choice	30	15.0

Total	200	100.0
--------------	------------	--------------

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The results presented in **Table 6** shows respondents' suggestions on what should be done to encourage men to do gender studies. The majority of the respondents (24%) suggest that women should be left alone to do gender. This category of respondents strongly believes that since gender is all about women, they (women) should only be allowed to focus on gender issues, while men should concentrate on male-dominated courses. In her statement, a female non-academic staff in the in-depth interview said: *"Let men concentrate on male courses like Medicine, Engineering, Science and Technology, Pharmacy and other Science courses and leave women alone to do courses in gender/women studies, nursing, and education"*.

However, 16% of the respondents proposed that men should be given scholarships or fellowships to do gender studies. Others (15%) suggest that men should be engaged in a supportive partnership with women and another 15% recommend that there should be capacity building and awareness creation for boys from primary school on gender issues. While 11% of the respondents mention that members of staff and students of the university communities should be sensitized on gender issues with particular emphasis on gender concept, others (10%) suggest that pieces of training and workshops should be organized for staff and students on regular basis. About 9% of them advise that men and boys should not be marginalized or discriminated against when there are opportunities or openings in gender issues.

Table 6. Respondents' suggestions on what can be done to encourage men to do gender studies

Men and boys should not be marginalized or discriminated against in gender programmes.	18	9.0
Men should leave women alone to do gender studies	48	24.0
Men should be engaged in a supportive partnership with women.	30	15.0
More men should be given scholarships or fellowships to do gender studies.	32	16.0
Capacity building and awareness creation about gender issues should start from Primary school.	30	15.0
Members of the university communities should be sensitized to staff and students on gender issues and what gender entails.	22	11.0
Workshops on gender issues should always be organized for staff and students.	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Discussions

Many studies on gender inequality mainly focus on women and girls, with little or no attention being paid to their male counterparts. This study is an attempt to fill this gap. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to demystify the misconceptions about gender so as to effectively work on issues pertaining to gender inequality in the workplace. In Nigeria, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended to 2011 ensures that men and women are placed into mainstream leadership. Although the constitution is founded within the framework of gender equality which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex (Odiaka,

2017), this study argues that gender inequality (discriminations against men) exists in units where women are dominant and hold sway. This finding is attributed to the fact that participants still see gender as a women's issue, even though the strict definition of gender encompasses male and female and other gender identities. The basic arguments of the paper are (1) gender is not all about women and girls, but it also about men and boys; (2) gender equality is not only women and girls' issue. It is everyone's issue. (3) Gender equality cannot happen without men and boys, and therefore both males and females should enjoy equal opportunities whether in the economy, politics, education, school enrolment, employment or in decision-making process and (4) gender studies as a discipline is not only for women, but men should develop interests in gender studies and be allowed to pursue their dreams too. This concern has prompted us to refine our perspective on what gender is or should be and how to bring it about efficiently if our society should develop. No man or woman can stand on one leg. According to an African proverb, "a person does not walk very far or very fast with one leg". For a society to develop and for an institution or organization to grow, we need women as we need men. Thus, this study makes a unique contribution to the extant literature in the field of gender studies, in situations where only women and girls form the focus of gender studies negate the purpose of gender equality and the founding fathers and mothers of the University whose main objective was to design appropriate development policies and programs towards sustainable development with improved quality of life for men, women and children.

Much of what have been said in the in-depth interview about gender and gender issues was at the level of unconscious bias, as the table seems to be gradually turning against men, in female-dominated organizations like gender centres. Before, it was discrimination against women and girls, but now it is discrimination against men and boys. However, what we have failed to realize is that gender equity cannot happen without men. As someone who has worked in a gender centre all my life, I would say that gender has not only held me back compared to my colleagues in the departments, but my talent has also been "wasted" by a system that does not allow men to grow in their careers. As a man in a female-dominated unit in the university, I was in one spot for over twelve years (2010 to 2022), when my colleagues in the departments were getting their promotions as and when due. It was not because I was not hardworking, but because I am a man. They never wanted a man to head my unit. I want to borrow from Mary Beard's words (2017), as she said: "throughout my journey in gender studies, it has sometimes been a case of feeling in a foreign land" and quoting from Sarah Franklin (1997), "gender studies is very female-dominated and the more senior I become, the more clearly I have understood how deeply gendered it is".

If what one of the interviewees had stated in the in-depth interview is anything to go by, that, *"women will protest if a man is appointed head of gender unit in the university, it will be completely astounding that gender inequality, which women have been fighting for several decades, which now exists on their doorstep, in a unit that have been established on the foundation of gender equality, is also being used wrongly against their male counterparts. It should also be realized that the unequal gender system being practiced in the unit may also have disadvantage consequences for men. These negative consequences need to be acknowledged as well like their female counterparts. Effectively addressing these issues will at least, build or reinforce gender equality in the work place, particularly in the academia"*.

Conclusion

The paper has clearly shown that discrimination against men in female-dominated work organizations also exist. However, it is not in any way suggesting that special needs for women and girls be ignored, nor it is denying the fact that women and girls have been disadvantaged in more ways than men and boys. Rather it argues that in reality men should also benefit from

gender equality, as they too face gender-specific issues. It therefore suggests that a gender-sensitive approach should consider the special needs of both sexes and also recognize that gender is not always about women or a compelling marker of disadvantage for the female gender. Gender issues affecting men and boys should be tackled so as to give room for national development. This study concludes that gender is not all about women and girls. It is also about men and boys.

Recommendations

To help solve the problem of gender inequality in work organizations or educational institutions, the following recommendations are proffered:

- The study believes that introducing gender sensitization and creating gender awareness programs from the primary school level would facilitate inculcating values of equality, inclusivity and diversity, which are essential for building a healthy society among adolescent boys and girls.
- This study also recommends that staff, students and members of the university communities should be sensitized on gender issues and what gender entails.
- As the world works towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the current indicators ignore men and boys. It is therefore suggested that there should be a more inclusive approach to the measurement required to ensure that gender equality can be attained by 2030.
- There is also a need to introduce Gender Studies Elective for undergraduate studies. This will enable them to learn and understand the basic gender concepts.
- Men should always be engaged in a supportive partnership with women.
- Men should be given scholarships or fellowships to pursue a career in gender studies.
- Capacity building and awareness creation on gender issues should start from primary schools and should involve boys.
- Workshops on gender issues should always be reorganized for both staff and students.
- All the unions e.g. National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) should also be sensitized and trained.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

REFERENCES

- Amaya, L., Schroder, C., Medrano, S., & Geertz A. (2019). *Gender Equality is Not Just a Women's Issue*. Accessed on December 17, 2021 at: <https://www.fsg.org/blog/gender-equality-not-just-women%E2%80%99s-issue>
- Anne Fausto-Sterling A. (2000). *Commentary, Sexing the Body, Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. Basic Book, New York
- Beard, M. (2017). *Women & Power: A Manifesto*. Liveright Publishing Corporation.
- Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) Chapter IV subsection 42.
- Eboiyehi, F.A. (2015). Perception of Old Age: Its Implications for Care and Support for the Aged among the Esan of South-South Nigeria. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 8(36), 340 - 356.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (2021). *Men and Gender Equality. Gender equality is also a men's issue*. Accessed on December, 13, 2021 at: <https://eige.europa.eu/men-and-gender-equality>
- Forbes (2019). *Gender Inequality Harms Not Only Women and Girls, But Also Men and Boys*. Accessed on December 20, 2021, and available at: www.Forbes.comsite2019/05/28
- Franklin, S. (1997). *Embodied Progress: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception*. Routledge.

- Hannan, C. (2000). *Gender mainstreaming in economic development in the United Nations. Session on Gender Mainstreaming in International and Regional Organizations at the ministerial level conference Gender Mainstreaming, Competitiveness and Growth*. OECD, Paris, 23-24 November.
- Nyalunga, D. (2007). Dispelling the misconceptions and myths about gender. *International NGO Journal*, 2(1) 001-005. Available online at <http://www.academicjournals.org/INGOJ>
- Odiaka, N. (2017). Women's Rights in Nigeria: What's holding Nigeria's Women back? *WPR World Politics Review*. Retrieved on June 29, 2021 from: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/insights/20822/womens-rights-in-nigeria-what-s-holding-nigeria-s-women-back>
- Sen, G., Ostlin, P. & George, A (2007). Unequal, Unfair, Ineffective and Inefficient Gender Inequity in Health: Why it exists and how we can change it. *Final Report to the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health*, September 2007.
- UNFPA (2005). *Frequently asked questions about gender equality*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-gender-equality>
- United Nations Development Programme (2000). *Human Development Report 2000: Human Rights and Human Development*. <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2000>
- United Nations (2003). *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality*. A Paper prepared by Connell, R.W. for United Nations in 2003, Brasilia, Brazil
- UNFPA (2005). *State of World Population 2005. The Promise of Equality Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals*. Accessed on December 13, 2021 at: <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/state-world-population-2005>
- United Nations Women (2000). *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality. Women 2000 and beyond*.
- World Health Organization (WHO, 2002). *Gender: definitions*. Accessed on December 13, 2021 and available at: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/gender-definitions>