

Repositioning Gender Challenges and Knowledge Production in Public Universities in Kwara State

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Abstract

Knowledge production deals with application of acquired knowledge in dealing with real life issues meanwhile there are challenges that deter knowledge production which hinges on gender challenge. Based on this background examined the relationship between repositioning gender challenges and knowledge production in Kwara State universities. The population of the study comprised 545 lecturers out of which 137 were sampled. Five research questions were raised to guide the study while hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey of correlational type in order to describe the existing condition without manipulation. Two validated research questionnaires titled Repositioning Gender Challenges Knowledge Production Questionnaire (RGCKPQ) and Gender Challenges Knowledge Production Questionnaire (GCKPQ) Reliability of the instruments was carried out with the use of Cronbach Alpha and the result was 0.75 and 0.78 respectively. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis. The findings revealed that there are gender challenges; more males are involved in knowledge production and solutions were identified. The study concluded that knowledge production requires contribution from both gender and it was recommended among others that causes of gender challenges should be reduced to the barest minimum.

Keywords: Gender, Challenges, Knowledge Production, Discrimination

Introduction

The growth and development of communities, regions and nations is determined by the level of knowledge the populace possess. This promotes innovation, creativity and technological advancement. However, there are challenges that deter knowledge production which hinges on gender. Several times, there are either more male or more female in a particular field of study. In the field of sciences for example, there seems to be more male than female and even in education where more female are found at the lower level of education, it is different when studied at the tertiary level of education (Leo, 2019). Akande (2011) asserted that gender is a key factor in enhancing or

disrupting the process of growth and development in any nation. The direction of progress in any society is determined by gender perspective that is germane to its growth. It is noted that all actors in gender issues are significant and none can be done away with due to their complementary responsibilities. Each gender is saddled with certain activities that must be executed and each gender is important and their ability to work together improves the nation at large.

The Beijing conference of 1995 that brought about the millennium development goal as well as sustainable development goal that established significant improvement in the aspect of girl child enrollment in schools at various levels of education in developing nations (Collymore, 2015). This has brought about reduction in the disparity between the numbers of boy to girl attendance in schools. However this has led to another challenge of gender inequality in the aspect of employment and discrimination which is not limited to employment alone but also extends to managerial positions for women.

Gender inequalities have also impacted the extent of knowledge generation in developing countries. Knowledge generation involves applying acquired knowledge to address real-life challenges. In the words of Domingos (2015) knowledge production refers to various actions that are similar in a tertiary level of education and requires the contribution and input of both genders. The challenges of gender impede the progress and involvement of female gender in knowledge production. Gender challenges include gender inequality and discrimination in various work places. Severally positions meant for female are given to male based on gender and belief that men perform better than women. In knowledge production many of the grants that should be awarded are done due to biasness of management. According to Nina (2022) many women perform lower than men due to the fact that women are not given the same privilege as their male counterpart also Leo (2019) asserted that the pains of gender inequality is usually borne by a specific person which can affect the larger society. It is based on this premise that this study examined how gender challenges can be repositioned in order to increase women participation in knowledge production which is the gap filled by the study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship that exists between repositioning gender challenges and knowledge production in public Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. Other purposes are to:

- i. Find out gender challenges involved in knowledge production in Kwara State universities
- ii. Determine causes of gender challenges involved in knowledge production in Kwara State universities
- iii. Examine the level of involvement of male lecturers in knowledge production in Kwara State universities
- iv. Examine the level of involvement of female lecturers in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities
- v. Determine the solutions to gender challenges in Kwara State universities

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. What are the gender challenges in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the causes of gender challenges in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the level of male lecturers' involvement in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?

- iv. What is the level of female lecturers' involvement in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?
- v. What are the solutions to gender challenges in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

One main hypothesis was formulated to guide the study.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between repositioning gender challenges and knowledge production in Kwara State Universities

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories relating to gender and some of it includes functionality approach, conflict theory in gender, and symbolic interaction theory in gender. These theories deal with how gender issues are handled by the society. Thus, for this study, the most appropriate theory is functionality theory. It is a policy that establishes community with reliance on various aspects that enact the entirety. Therefore, gender in this policy provides in a very utilitarian path which constituted in the emergence of human chronicle. In the time past, there was serviceable and thorough division of work between male and female in the work place for actualizing organizational, goals and objectives. According to functionality theories, before industrial revolution, determined responsibilities male and female gotten from their chromosomes differences. However, the present dispensation of communities, those special responsibilities are not going to receive much attention. This theory emphasizes the importance of individuals functioning effectively in assigned responsibility irrespective of the gender. Gender is something through which the society makes progress, by allowing men and women to participate in special responsibilities (Baligar, 2018).

Gender Challenges in the Universities

Gender is a key factor in enhancing or disrupting the process of growth and development in any nation. All the authors in gender issues are significant and none can be and done away with due to their complementary responsibilities (Ojalanni, 2011). It is established that without objective gender equality, no nation can grow no matter the level of existing justice and political reforms due to the fact that an aircraft cannot fly with a single engine: hence, for the achievement of gender equality by any nation, it is not only important but sacred to aim for that aspires to assist individuals, that is men and women to remove their difficulties in an understandable way and it promotes standard living (Akande, 2011).

The challenge of gender equality has been argued for a long time and its argument for or against is a discussion that has lingered in the passage of world debate. Some years back, some literatures were of the belief that gender unfairness is likely to actually lead to an increase in economic growth (Worsdale and Wright, 2020). Moreover, other scholars like Hegewich (2018) stated that gender inequality has negative effect on the state of economy. Gender inequality is a problematic case as it reduces the wellness and is known as a type of unfair treatment in the very act of equity (Klasen, 2008; UNDP, 2015; Rewhorn, 2020). Some gender challenges faced are gender-based violence and harassment where female staffs are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault on campus, with inequality reporting and support systems. There is also gender stereotyping in academic fields where women are underrepresented in science technology engineering and Mathematics. While men are often fewer in care-related and education fields, due to persistent gender norms.

Worsdale and Wright (2020) asserted that gender bias in recruitment and promotion of female faculty may face discrimination in hiring and promotion processes, with fewer opportunities for career advancement compared to their male counterparts. However, Nina (2022) argued that there is improvement in this aspect as women are beginning to rise in their various fields and academics

inclusive. Thus, work-life balance is another major challenge especially for women with families. They often struggle to balance academic responsibilities with care giving duties, which can affect academic career progression

Gender Inequality in the Universities

Gender inequality spread through the world. In considering the various aspects of economic inequalities, women still make less than men in the formal work sector, it is clear that women are more likely to live in penury; they are less likely to be involved in the formal work sector, in fact they do more at home than men (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009). The dimensions of political gender inequality include women's lower representation in elected office and lower representation politically as well as in corporate organizations (Joyce, 2011).

Gender inequality occurs in every nation and in every areas of livelihood, and is pronounced in aspect that deals with both men and women in their accessibility, management and advantage of employment, promotion and progress. The access gained by both gender differ (Leo, 2019). Meanwhile both genders need equal access to function within the society, institutions and the communities. The working of each gender is based on the need of the organization and the society at large.

Gender Discrimination in the Universities

Gender discrimination refers to acting on the intuition about a particular gender. It should be clearly stated that gender is different from sex; this is because sex is based on genital and chromosomes an individual has from birth while gender deals with the cultural and societal expectation of a particular sex. Hence, gender discrimination happens in workplace environment when people apply for jobs or different treatments accorded staff due to their gender (Nina et al., 2022).

According to Berta (2004) women involvement in employment outside the home is viewed as out of place, it is seen as very wrong; and definitely hazardous to their morality and womanly character. When a family comes out of an economic situation or tries to increase its social status, women may be restricted at home to show that the family have great chastity and as a sign of financial strength and security. Affluent and educated homes may allow their daughters to be educated but they are buoyant enough to restrict female at home after completing their education.

When women confer with employers and government staff, they are often excluded by men in the society. It should be noted that gender discrimination against women in the work place reduce the available talent in the nation's economy, and it has a negative economic impacts. Gender discrimination occurs in different types. Several activities perceives as normal viewing it from both religious and cultural viewpoints make women no to be functional in the nation's economy and knowledge production. It has negative impact due to the fact that many talents to be utilized by the institutions are not discovered not to talk of utilizing them (Berta, 2004).

Causes of Gender Inequality in the University

Patriarchal cultural norm is a contributory factor to gender inequality. In many countries, including Nigeria, cultural beliefs is rooted in patriarchy influence perceptions of gender roles, limiting women's participation in academic leadership and decision-making roles (Ogbogu, 2011). Another cause is discriminatory recruitment and promotion practices. Gender bias often affects hiring and promotion, where women may be overlooked for positions or delayed in their career progression compared to male colleagues (Airini et al., 2011).

Sexual harassment and hostile work environment where gender inequality is exacerbated when female lecturers are subject to harassment or work in environments that do not support their safety and dignity (Afiola and Uzodika, 2018). Likewise limited access to mentorship and networking

opportunities has been a cause for inequality. Women in academia may have fewer mentors and role models, affecting their professional development and opportunities for collaboration (Morley, 2006).

Knowledge Production in the Universities

Knowledge production refers to problems and issues in real life through the application of acquired knowledge. It is a cluster of activities related in a higher education institution, a center for research or the entrepreneurial centers that has the potentials of producing new knowledge (Domigos, 2015). Knowledge production has many dimensions. Having knowledge of something would require learning or the use of research to provide solution. Whatever is found out will require value in the aspect of utility. It can produce satisfaction when properly utilized and can also produce economic returns when invested. Knowledge as know-how involves having practical knowledge of how to do something as in subduing ones environment, exploiting natural resource and adding value to them by processing them. Since knowledge is a product, it can be produced and production involves the input of certain factors as in this case -personnel, ideas, money and managerial acumen or ability (Charles et al., 2013). The lecturers' promote knowledge production in line with organizational requirements that is not limited to the male folks alone but incorporate women for a balanced society (Ogbodo, 2013).

University education globally is in the process of knowledge production. It plays an important responsibility in balancing societal, communal and economic progress as well as increases quality of life. Ogbodo (2013) asserted that it is in university system that we have the highest concentration of specialized knowledge staff with the right measure of notions that can be processed with appropriate material and of monetary investments to produce knowledge that would continue to promote the course of human advancement. It must be noted however that university system is also related with asymmetric information including imperfect quality information (Dill and Soo, 2004). If knowledge is produced and it has no value, it is useless. It is the application of knowledge that distinguishes a knowledgeable person from a wise person, a developed nation from undeveloped nation. Knowledge production for its own sake is therefore not enough and it cannot be produce by the male gender only; women must be allowed to contribute and make significant impact. University system therefore produce knowledge that is problem specific, custom produced as it were to address our peculiar problems and circumstances. As a nation, we cannot afford the luxury of deploying resources to just be recycling and distributing existing or extant knowledge. We cannot afford to think in terms of analogous in the digital world. We must ask the question "why" before the "what", when it comes to knowledge production.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey of correlational type; it involved collection of extensive data from representative sample of the population for the purpose of describing and interpreting the existing situation under study. The population of the study comprised of lecturers' and heads of department at Faculty of Education in all public universities in Kwara State. The population of lecturers was 545 and 137 was sampled. The sample was considered appropriate, purposive sampling technique was used to select the two public universities based on their year of establishment and similar standard of administration by both State and Federal government.

Data for the study was gathered with the use of two questionnaires, one was filled by the heads of department and the second by lecturers. The first instrument was tagged "Repositioning Gender Challenges and Knowledge Production Questionnaire (RGCKPQ) and the second was tagged "Gender Challenges Knowledge Production Questionnaire; (GCKPQ). The instrument was divided into two sections; the first section elicited information on the personal data of the respondents while the second section elicited information on the sub-constructs. The instrument was validated and reliability coefficient was 0.75 and 0.78 respectively.

The instrument for the research work was administered by the researcher and through the use of Google form. This is to expedite speed in the process of data gathering as a result of time constraint. The Google form was forwarded to various platforms of the lecturers and they were encouraged to forward to others who may not be on the platforms in order to get required information. The submitted questionnaires were collated for analysis.

The data gathered during the cause of this study was analyzed with descriptive statistics of percentages, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions in order to give more specific explanation to the research questions. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis.

Findings of the Study

Research Question 1: What are the gender challenges in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?

Table 1: Gender challenges in Knowledge Production Kwara State Universities, Nigeria

S/N	Statements	X	SD	Decision
1	There is discrimination in recruitment process.	2.70	.98	Agreed
2	I find it difficult to balance my family life and career.	3.03	0.98	Agreed
3	There are more men than women in science education programs.	3.03	0.87	Agreed
4	Women face harassment in the cause of discharging their duties	2.44	0.95	Disagreed
5	Gender challenges are real in academics.	2.72	1.01	Agreed
6	Grand Total	2.78		

Benchmark = 2.50

Table 1 shows the mean ratings on gender challenges. The highest mean ratings revealed was 3.03 establishing inability to balance work and family life as well as having more men in science programs than women. The lowest mean rating was 2.44 revealing that women do not encounter harassment in discharging their duties.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of gender challenges in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?

Table 2: Causes of gender challenges in Kwara State Universities

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
1	Patriarchal cultural norm is preeminent.	3.28	0.72	Agreed
2	Discrimination at the process of recruitment.	3.20	0.71	Agreed
3	The work environment is hostile.	3.39	0.91	Agreed
4	There is limited access to mentorship.	2.17	0.74	Disagreed
5	Inability to balance work and family life.	2.72	1.18	Agreed
6	Grand Total	2.95		

Bench mark: 2.50

Table 2 shows the mean ratings on the causes of gender challenges. The highest mean ratings was 3.39 showing that patriarchal cultural norm is preeminent. The lowest mean score was 2.17 which affirmed that there is limited access to mentorship.

Research question 3: What is the level of male lecturers' involvement in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?

Table 3: Level of male lecturer's involvement in knowledge production

S/N	Male involvement in knowledge production	X	SD	Decision
1	Males are better than females in knowledge production	2.17	0.74	Disagreed
2	Workplace discrimination exist especially for women	2.72	1.18	Agreed
3	Males are more involved in knowledge production	3.29	0.73	Agreed
4	There is equal opportunity for both gender in knowledge production	2.31	0.95	Disagreed
5	Individuals functionality is affected by gender discrimination	2.79	1.20	Agreed
6	Grand Total	2.66		

Bench mark: 2.50

Table 3 shows the mean ratings on the male lecturer's involvement in knowledge production. The mean ratings revealed that all have their mean score above 2.50 except moderate support for equal opportunities which was 2.31, male are better than female in knowledge production was revealed with a mean score of 2.72, males dominance was 3.29, and the functionality of individuals are affected by gender discrimination was established with a mean score of 2.79.

Research Question 4: What is the level of female lecturers' involvement in knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?

Table 4: Level of female lecturers' involvement in knowledge production

S/N	Female involvement in Knowledge production	X	SD	Decision
1	Creativity is promoted by knowledge production through women	2.10	0.96	Disagreed
2	New knowledge is discovered through knowledge production by women than men	2.31	1.20	Disagreed
3	More females are involved in knowledge production	1.89	0.82	Disagreed
4	Females contribute little or nothing to knowledge production	2.17	0.74	Disagreed
5	Gender inequality affect women in knowledge production	2.58	1.06	Agreed
6	Grand Total	2.14		

Benchmark: 2.50

Table 4 revealed the result of female involvement in knowledge production. All the mean scores were below the benchmark of 2.50 except for gender inequality that affects women in knowledge production and was established with a mean score of 2.58, females involvement in knowledge production was affirmed with mean score of 1.89, the creativity of women in knowledge production shows a mean score of 2.10, knowledge discovery by women had a mean score of 2.31 and female contribution to knowledge had a mean score of 2.17.

Research Question 5: What are the solutions to gender challenges in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria?

S/N	Solutions to Gender Challenges	X	SD	Decision
1	There should be equal privilege for both gender	2.81	1.42	Agreed
2	No gender should be seen as superior to another	2.62	1.23	Agreed
3	Both gender should work together to improve knowledge production	3.02	2.01	Agreed
4	Functionality of each gender should be allowed	2.54	1.04	Agreed
5	Gender discrimination should reduce to the barest minimum	3.03	2.01	Agreed
6	Grand Total	2.80		

Benchmark: 2.50

The result on table five revealed that all responses were above the benchmark of 2.50, with the highest mean rating of 3.03 that showed that discrimination should reduce to the barest minimum. The lowest mean rating was 2.54 which affirmed that functionality of gender should be allowed.

Hypotheses

One main hypothesis was tested by the study.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between repositioning gender challenges and knowledge production in Kwara State Universities, Nigeria

Table 6: Repositioning Gender Challenges and Knowledge Production

	X	SD	Pearson r	Sig 2-tailed	Decision
Repositioning Gender Challenges	57.79	7.45	0.116	0.281	Not Significant
Knowledge Production	92.06	6.72			

P<0.05

Table 6 showed that $r = 0.116$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.281 > 0.05$. This shows that there is significant relationship between repositioning gender challenges and knowledge production in Kwara State universities. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Result of research question one showed that some salient points that should be addressed by the Universities. Some of these points include how lecturers' should balance their work and family life; there should be no discrimination in the process of recruitment; harassment no matter how minute should not be allowed in the system; also more women should be employed into science programs in the institutions. This study aligns with (Klasen and Lamanna 2009, Joyce, 2011 and Leo, 2019) who stated that gender inequality spread through the world. In considering the various aspects of economic inequalities, women still make less than men in the formal work sector, it is clear that contribution to knowledge by female is still required for an institution that is free of gender challenges.

Research question two revealed the causes of gender challenges in which hostile work environment is prominent. The balance between work and family life is another cause while recruitment process is not excluded. Therefore, the study is in concord with (Ogbogu, 2011; Airini

et al., 2011; and Afiola and Nzodia 2018) who asserted that gender challenges are caused by discriminatory recruitment and promotion practices. Gender bias often affects hiring and promotion, where women may be overlooked for positions or delayed in their career progression compared to male colleagues.

Result of research question three established that more male are involved in knowledge production than women. This should not be because knowledge is not one sided it should be allowed to flow from both gender. The study is in support of (Dull and Soo 2004) who stated that Knowledge production for its own sake is therefore not enough and it cannot be produced by the male gender only; women must be allowed to contribute and make significant impact. The fourth research findings affirmed that women are not dully involved in knowledge production like men. Meanwhile the university system is to ensure that new knowledge is produced and integrated into the community. However, without contribution from the female lecturers' it would be one sided and this is in consonance with the study carried out by (Ogbodo, 2013) where it was asserted that the lecturers' promote knowledge production in line with organizational requirements that is not limited to the male folks alone but incorporate women for a balanced society.

The findings of the fifth research question established the solutions required to reposition gender challenges for knowledge production to improve in our universities. Part of the solutions proffer is to remove discrimination in the process of recruitment; there should be equal privilege to both gender and no gender is superior to the other. Thus this agrees with Nina (2022) who argued that there is improvement in women participation in knowledge production and leadership positions as women are beginning to rise in their various fields and academics inclusive. The only hypothesis tested for the study established a relationship between repositioning gender challenges and knowledge production. This reveals that both genders can do better in producing knowledge that will benefit the society. The study aligns with Ogbodo (2013) who asserted that it is in university system that we have the highest concentration of specialized knowledge staff with the right measure of notions that can be processed with appropriate material and of monetary investments to produce knowledge that would continue to promote the course of human advancement.

Conclusion

The study evidently established gender challenges faced by women lecturers' in the university system; causes; levels of involvement in knowledge production and solutions to the challenges. It has been affirmed that gender challenges do occur especially for women and it can be traced to patriarchal cultural belief. The study revealed that to reposition the challenges to improve knowledge production means dealing with identified challenges. The implication of this study is that without repositioning gender challenges the knowledge provided by the university will have lope holes that can affect its implementation and the society at large.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need to urgently address gender challenges in academia.
2. Minimize cultural and institutional causes of inequality.
3. Promote gender-balanced participation in knowledge production.
4. Offer more opportunities to women in academia research and leadership.
5. Combat gender marginalization to enhance national development.

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