

# Cultural Inhibitions and Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies in Colleges of Education in Cross River State, Nigeria

ESSIEN, ESSIEN EKPENYONG<sup>1</sup> ESSIEN, CECILIA KORI<sup>2</sup> OBOT, IMO MARTIN<sup>3</sup>

1. Department of Curriculum and Teaching, University of Calabar, Calabar

2. Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Calabar, Calabar

3. Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, University of Calabar, Calabar

## Abstract

The experience of the researchers as classroom teachers in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria and as lecturers and researchers over the years, where they observed that students' academic achievement in Social Studies is relatively poor. The little output in education does not give much hope for the expected national and individual development. It is this poor achievement in the subject that necessitated this present study which sought to examine the influence of cultural inhibitions and students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Colleges of Education in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study one hypothesis was formulated to direct the study. Literature review was done according to the variable under study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of seven hundred and fifty-three (753) students were randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through simple random sampling technique. The main instruments for data collection were the cultural inhibitions questionnaire (CIQ) and Social Studies Achievement Test (SOSAT) developed by the researchers. The instruments were subjected to face validation by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability estimate of the instruments were established through split half reliability method. The reliability co-efficient was corrected with Spearman Brown prophesy formular. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was the statistical technique adopted to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance with 751 degree of freedom. The result of the analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between cultural inhibitions and students' academic achievement in Social Studies. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that cultural practices such as male child preference, male inheritance etc should be relaxed in order to give room for our girls to compete favourably in all aspect of life with their male counterpart in order to bring about the desired national development, since education is the bedrock of every viable society.

## 1. Introduction/literature review

Cultural inhibitions are those cultural factors, practices or barriers which affect academic achievement of students in Cross River State in particular and Nigeria in general.

Culture is the whole way of life of a people, their cultural heritage and what they possess both physically and non-physically as well as what they are Mutokonyi (1989) Cultural phenomena embody social patterns, economic systems, ethical codes, traditions, customs, language etc.

Kaller (1991) defined gender as a cultural construct that distinguishes the emotional characteristics roles and behaviour between males and females as considered by the society. However, to low-income families, girls can be a source of wealth (Dorsey, 1989, Stromquist 1989) as these girls are needed as available extra labourers in the home who act as child minders, house keepers or even as assistant income earners (Stromquist, 1989). It becomes evident that the low-income families attitude to girl child's education can affect the female secondary school learner's academic achievement (Vander Westhuizen, Montelth & Steyn, 1989; Ward, 1996).

Furthermore, Graham-Brown (1991) observed that, children have chores to do and are likely involved in family enterprises. He stressed that they may care for younger children in the compound, draw and haul water to the compound, weed fields, hawk peanut oil or snacks produced by their mother, or collect sheep. All of these are essential to the economic survival of the family and thus affects academic achievement. In the same vein Esu (2006) stressed that, in the Islamic culture females are not sent to school but remain in pudah and are restricted from public appearance. While their male counterpart are sent to school. Rather the females are given out for marriage at early age. Nwagbara (2003) contended that, both the school curriculum and socialization pattern that makes girls passive and submissive which made them see their vocation as merely that of marriage and childbearing. Thus, they tend to go for subjects that are only compatible with their social outlook. Allele-Williams (1986) maintained that girls are constantly being reminded by male teachers and even career guidance counselors that to achieve is unfeminine, these factors have been referred to as the hidden curriculum sending out messages to girls to conform with role expectation. Bullock, Whitt and Beebe (1991) found that sometimes female secondary learner is at a disadvantage when the family is poor because girls may marry to escape poverty at home. Moreover, as the Young men marry women who are younger than them, some women may forgo high

school for marriage, thereby retarding female academic achievement to some degree. Flanagan (1993) maintained that female secondary school adolescents from lower working class families have lower aspiration. He stressed that this is often the case because the sons from the lower working class families are regarded as future breadwinners and so financial support is given to the sons resulting in female learners giving up the desire to work hard. Female adolescent learners from lower working class do well in school only when the school itself takes up much of the burden of encouraging the female to succeed (Flanagan, 1993; Graham-Brown, 1996). Steinberg, Elmen and Mounts (1989) asserted that Asian and Jewish female learner's benefit a lot from the family income, but the female learners are said to achieve more on account of the high standard set by the cultural values. They further stressed that, the collective motives enable the female learners to share and cooperate among the peer groups. Washington and Newman (1991) found that black females have higher participation rates than black males in high school graduation, college enrolments, college matriculation, graduate school enrolment and degree attainment because of the family and child-rearing practices that make Black mothers powerful and strong disciplinarians with regard to daughters as they expect more responsibility from girls. Dorsey, Matshazi and Nyangura (1991) found out that, in Zimbabwe Girls are thought to initially acquire an image of themselves and of their sex roles in society as adults in the family. They further, stated that family child-rearing practices are sex-stereotyped in nature wherein boys and girls are expected to be brought up differently from each other. The boys are regarded as the future breadwinners and family jewels, whereas girls are seen as servants. Parents would rather spend money on the boys than on girls. Therefore, girls are conditioned from an early age to believe that they are inferior to males. This may negatively affect academic achievement of the female child.

Niles (1995) believed that differing child-rearing practices and eco-cultural forces are likely to produce kinds of socialization practices that instill varying levels of achievement in boys and girls. In this case child-rearing practices that separate children of different sex in the same family may be linked to the eco-cultural forces that are primitive and not to the enlightened societies. What Niles (1995) considered above was confirmed by Birenbaum and Kraemer (1995) who also observed that different child-rearing practices can affect the academic achievement of the female adolescent learner negatively, especially with regard to the gender role socialization pattern. For example, the Arabs consider the male child to be an asset while the girl child is of less importance, apart from her role as a future mother. The female learners in such cultures often attain low school grades because they have acquired negative self images. Young and Fraser (1994) accused the school and the attitudes of parents in failing to encourage female learners to take up science subjects. Thus the school has become an extension of the child-rearing process for the female adolescent learners, especially if sex stereotyping of subjects in school is still evidence. However, Basola (1991) warned readers that, the school as a formal agent of sex-role socialization can also transmit predominant sex-role social values. Thus differential sex-roles through formal school subjects can be a big disadvantage for the female adolescent learners in any school. Stromquist (1989) decries the cultural norms and the division of labour which function within the home to the detriment of the girl child because girls are defined primarily as just future mothers whose academic achievement is of less importance. Most adolescent female learners are needed to do some domestic work in the homes at the expense of their academics. Boys are often thought to attain higher grades in physical sciences than female learners (Levin, Sabar & Libman, 1991) because of the unequal science related experiences and cultural stereotyping of the female role combined with a non-science career orientation (Levin et al 1991). In this instance, it looks like both the school and the home child-rearing practices are to blame for the girl child's relative academic in school in some cultures.

However, Brophy and Good in Convington (1998) reported that sexual appropriateness of tasks affects performance as well as attitudes and also negatively influence academic achievement of learners when cultural sex-roles are applied. However, Gumede (1989) noted that in Africa sex differences are bound to be great because the African culture gives more importance to male children. The above assertion is also supported by (Nnachi, 2008) when he observed that gender differential treatment have been extended to the classroom lesson. He stressed that while the boys are expected to do better in mathematics and sciences, the girls are expected to do better in home economics and certain art subjects. In the same light Eisenhart and Halland (1983) opined that some schools have sex-segregated activities such as physical education, home economics, classroom sweeping etc for the female learners. This sex biased activities influence the achievement of female learners. Furthermore, (Nnachi, 2008) stressed that Nigerian schools have also considered some courses as feminine courses. For instance, some disciplines such as nursing, language, home economics and teaching have been considered feminine. More girls have been traditionally encouraged into, them. Although this encouragement for males and females in respect of disciplines vary. This goes along way as a cultural factor to inhibit academic achievement.

## **2. Theoretical background**

It is necessary that one has an in sight into the background of theories that support a particular study and from where the problem may be identified and hypothesis formulated. The researchers examined the social system

theory since the study dealt with relationships and interactions between variables within a social system (in this context, the tertiary institutions). According to Kinbrough and Nunnery (1983) scholars in the late 1950s who were concerned with the organization of complex organizations began to view organization as a system. The underlying thesis was that, to understand the phenomenon, the whole must be recognized as being greater than the sum of the parts. Hall and Fegen (1968) defined a system as a set of objects together with relationship between the objects and between their attributes, whereas Choforas (1965) view a system as a group of interdependent element acting together to accomplish a predetermined goal.

Educational institutions according to Peretomode (1999) are formulations of systems and sub-systems in which the components among others include people. A system is made up of inputs and the external environment. These inputs include raw materials, human resources and capital that may transform them into outputs. The external environment reacts on these outputs through a feedback loop and this becomes an input for the cycle of the system. Although the system theory has some limitations as opined by Silver (1983) and Lipham and Hoeh (1974), its implication for this study is very important because it concerns the efficiency and effectiveness of input and process and these are the areas in which this study is focused.

Given the system theory, it sounds logical to expect variations in the inputs to be reflected in variations in output. Specifically, does input variable such as cultural inhibitions relate to system output such as students' academic achievement?

### 3. Hypothesis

The under stated hypothesis was formulated in pursuance of the objective of this study. There is no significant relationship between cultural inhibitions and students' academic achievement.

### 4. Design and methodology

The design adopted for this study was ex-post facto because the researchers had no direct control of the independent variable as their manifestations had already occurred. The study was carried out in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population was made up on NCE 2 students in the College of Education, Akamkpa and the Federal College of Education, Obudu offering social studies totaling 1,343. The sample drawn from the study consisted of 753 students from the 2 tertiary institutions a breakdown shows 480 representing 60% from Obudu while 273 students were selected from Akamkpa representing 50% through simple random sampling technique. The instruments for data collection comprised a set of questionnaire and social studies achievement test designed by the researchers.

In terms of validity three experts in educational measurement and evaluation and psychology, affirmed with 94% agreement that the entire instruments were suitable for measuring what it purported to measure. Using the split-half reliability method and it associate Spearman Brown. The reliability index of the instrument was found to be 0.94.

### 5. Data analysis/discussion

The data collected were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance and 751 degree of freedom.

**TABLE 1**  
**Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between cultural inhibitions and students' academic achievement in Social Studies (N=753)**

Variable	X	SD	r-value
cultural inhibitions	21.54	1.58	0.14*
Academic achievement	21.27	1.83	

\* Significant at .05, critical  $r = .062$ ,  $df = 751$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.14 is higher than the critical r-value of .062 at .05 level of significance with 751 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between cultural inhibitions and students' academic achievement in Social Studies was rejected. This result implied that, cultural inhibitions has a significant positive relationship with students' academic achievement in Social Studies. The positive r implied that the higher the cultural inhibitions, the higher their academic achievement tends to be and vice versa.

### 6. Discussion of findings

#### **Cultural inhibitions and students' academic achievement in Social Studies**

The result of this hypothesis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between cultural inhibitions and students' academic achievement in Social Studies. The finding of this hypothesis is in agreement with the findings of Graham-Brown (1991) who observed that, children have chores to do and are likely involved in

family enterprises. He stressed that they may care for younger children in the compound, draw and haul water to the compound, weed fields, hawk peanut oil or snacks produced by their mother, or collect sheep. All of these are essential to the economic survival of the family and thus affects academic achievement. The finding of this study is consistent with Esu (2006) who stressed that, in the Islamic culture females are not sent to school but remain in pudah and are restricted from public appearance. While their male counterpart are sent to school. Rather the females are given out for marriage at early age.

The finding agreed with Nwagbara (2003) who contended that, both the school curriculum and socialization pattern that makes girls passive and submissive which made them see their vocation as merely that of marriage and childbearing. Thus, they tend to go for subjects that are only compatible with their social outlook. This is in line with the view of Allele-Williams (1986) who maintained that girls are constantly being reminded by male teachers and even career guidance counselors that to achieve is unfeminine, these factors have been referred to as the hidden curriculum sending out messages to girls to conform with role expectation. This finding is in line with Bullock, Whitt and Beebe (1991) who found that sometimes female secondary learner is at a disadvantage when the family is poor because girls may marry to escape poverty at home. Moreover, as the Young men marry women who are younger than them, some women may forgo high school for marriage, thereby retarding female academic achievement to some degree. It is of interest to note that female students whose parental education is high tend to have high aspirations.

The result is also in line with the view of Flanagan (1993) who maintained that female secondary school adolescents from lower working class families have lower aspiration. He stressed that this is often the case because the sons from the lower working class families are regarded as future breadwinners and so financial support is given to the sons resulting in female learners giving up the desire to work hard. Female adolescent learners from lower working class do well in school only when the school itself takes up much of the burden of encouraging the female to succeed. The finding is consistent with Steinberg, Elmen and Mounts (1989) who asserted that Asian and Jewish female learners benefit a lot from the family income, but the female learners are said to achieve more on account of the high standard set by the cultural values. They further stressed that, the collective motives enable the female learners to share and cooperate among the peer groups. This is in line with Washington and Newman (1991) who found that black females have higher participation rates than black males in high school graduation, college enrolments, college matriculation, graduate school enrolment and degree attainment because of the family and child-rearing practices that make Black mothers powerful and strong disciplinarians with regard to daughters as they expect more responsibility from girls.

The finding is in line with Dorsey, Matshazi and Nyangura (1991) who found out that, in Zimbabwe Girls are thought to initially acquire an image of themselves and of their sex roles in society as adults in the family. The further, stated that family child-rearing practices are sex-stereotyped in nature wherein boys and girls are expected to be brought up differently from each other. The boys are regarded as the future breadwinners and family jewels, whereas girls are seen as servants. Parents would rather spend money on the boys than on girls. Therefore, girls are conditioned from an early age to believe that they are inferior to males. This may negatively affect academic achievement of the female child. From the finding one can infer that certain cultural practices such as house chores, school curriculum, male child preference etc. can inhibit academic achievement.

## 7. Conclusion/recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that cultural inhibitions in significantly relates to students' academic achievement in Social Studies. Based on the conclusion of the study, it was recommended that cultural practices such as male child preference, male inheritance etc should be relaxed in order to give room for our girls to compete favourably in all aspect of life with their male counterpart in order to bring about the desired national development. That curriculum implementers in the classroom should encourage girls to go for all the subjects depending on their mental ability rather than making some subjects an exclusive preserve for males while others are reserved for girls only. As this encouragement will lead to national development. This work will help researcher in environmental adult education to know how to handled issues of this nature both at home and in school.

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