ISSUES AND CAHALLENGES CONFRONTING STUDENT-MOTHERS ENROLLED FOR NCE PROGRAMME; CASE STUDY OF GOMBE STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, BILLIRI

IDRIS ABUBAKAR
DEPARTMENT OF MORAL AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES, GOMBE STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION BILLIRI,
idrisabubakarr@gmail.com

ABUBAKAR BALA, PHD
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY

ABDULLAHI AHMED
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, BILLIRI

KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

The intertwining nature of academic is quite challenging and this is escalated with motherhood responsibilities. The academic community mainly focuses on success, development, and never-ending competition without providing necessary support. This study will investigate the issues and challenges confronting student-mothers in College of Education Billiri. It also aimed at identifying available support system for their inclusion in higher education and also provide proper solution to such challenges so as to support and encourage student-mothers enrolled in such programmed for the betterment of women in the college. The study will adopt a qualitative approach and use purposeful sampling techniques to select 22 student-mothers age 21-40 years, Drown from college of education Billiri. Data will be collected through focus group discussion and semi-structure interview. Data generated will be analyze using qualitative content analysis. Which include Personal and educational need experiences of student-mothers at both school and home settings. The length of the survey should be question that will cover personal, marital, parental and educational information. Quantic survey data is to be analyst thematically in order to arrive at a description of student-mothers' educational needs and experience. Relatively this research will investigate inclusive education measures for the student-mothers in the college. The current paper aims to address this issue. The research will be of paramount important to stakeholders like: Student-mothers, lecturers, parents, husband, and government at large in providing support services such as childcare and counselling for mothers to ensure their academic success.

Introduction

Education is believed to provide knowledge and resources that is capable for economic empowerment for betterment of life among all genders. Education is considered as the most important tool for development, poverty alleviation, improving health outcomes and quality of life, reducing gender and social disparities and enhancing economic productivity (Patricia and Esther, 2015). It also contributes to economic growth and productivity as well as sustained livelihood for national development (Rogers, 1997). The need for women to further their education especially in tertiary education must be continued to be nurtured. This will enable them to maximize the benefit of societal participation.

However, the involvement of women in continuing higher education is a new development in African communities with reference to Nigeria and specifically Gombe State. It is only small number of female were granted access to tertiary education.in developing nations. This make the number of uneducated women to be increasing since they had no access to formal education. Rather, they were subjected to all forms of discrimination and marginalization by the existing cultural and social practice, especially traditional African culture and belief. Although, during forty-first session of fourth world conference held in Beijing, the United Nation Commission on the status of women recommended further action to be taken to improve women access to education, including the mainstreaming of gender perspective in all policies and programs in the educational sector. This was aimed to improved women participation in education. However, despite this effort student-mothers are facing numerous challenges arising from child-care and balancing studies, financial difficulties, inadequate support from the school, lack of family support etc. these challenges has pose a serious threat to student-mothers in Gombe state college of education Billiri. It is against this background that the study intended to examine the issues and challenges confronting student-mothers enrolled for NCE Program in Gombe State College of Education Billiri.

Problem Statement

Married women suffer from both conflicting demands between family, motherhood and academic work. For example, child bearing and nursing time, pregnancy and academic work, which means the progress of academic work is stopped or slowed down, similarly must of the students-mothers do not have time to study because when they return from school. Their relative who voluntarily serve as baby-sitters want to be free of child odd jobs. In addition to that, the babies also want their mother's attention. This suggested that mothers who do not have full day childcare services face challenges in trying to balance childcare with academic work. Also, many educators or institutions do not give academic support to students-mothers who are in school it is suggested that the institution need knowledge regarding the problem of mother. According to Moreu and Kerner (2012), academic programs disregard the need of women during pregnancy, childbirth, maternity leave, etc. ignoring this create an atmosphere of condemnation, hence students-mothers feel their issues has not been given attention. This study is therefore relevant due to the need for inclusive education for all including student-mothers and student with special needs forming strata to encourage full participation in tertiary education for sustainable development.

Objectives

The goal of this study is to explore and determine the scholastic experience of students-mothers who were enrolled in NCE program, specifically:

i. To explore how the student-mothers take their dual role

ii. To identify the significant experience of student-mother's worth of sharing

iii. To examine the Scholastic experience of student-mothers

Literature review

The belief that education provide knowledge and skills that holds potentials for economic empowerment, better livelihood and social development has stimulated individual both male and female to enrol in tertiary institutions (**Uwakwe, 2021**). Interestingly, women can embrace the dual role of mother and student, but undertaking this two role, even in ideal condition can pull one-person in dual direction, (**Springer, Parker, and Leviten-Reid, 2009**). So,

it is important to note that combining academics and motherhood without compromising the activities of the other one is a great dilemma for student-mothers. If a student mother pays more attention to academic may affect her traditional role of motherhood, (**Visick, 2009**). Furthermore, literature has suggested that

Students-mothers face a lot of challenges which include juggling their temporal demands of being both a student and a parent of a young child. Similarly, government support in respect of student mothers in Gombe state is relatively low. Moreover, rate of dropout of such students in our tertiary institutions is high. Those that had manage to survive, their performance is relatively low too. So, balancing between study and parental role among student mothers has become a serious challenge and problem that need to be address. Springer et al. (**2009**) found that student-mothers experience unpleasant emotional pressures and receive feedback from the academic setting, implying that education is the first priority. Moreover, prejudice towards student mothers and the labelling of them as non-productive stimulate avoidance behaviours and a discriminatory allocation of educational resources to other student. Therefore, some student avoids bringing their child to school while others hide their parenting roles (**Williams, Alon, and Bornstein, 2006**) From an academic stand point bringing their child to school indicate that the student-mothers does not have the required academic drive and steps for proper development. (**Adofo, 2013**). it is against this background and problems that the current study purposed to investigate and explore the challenges confronting student-mothers in tertiary institution particularly the Gombe state colleges of education.

Methodology

The population of this study will consist of students-mothers of Gombe State College of Education Billiri.

The study will adopt a qualitative approach using purposeful sampling technique to select 22 student-mothers from the college, the participants were selected to investigate the experience of student mothers, support system and inclusiveness in colleges of education in the state. from a group of student- mothers in all the colleges of education of Gombe state. The questionnaire will be administered to a group of 22 student-mothers for statistical analysis. Question will be design base on the challenges confronting student-mothers enrolled in NCE program to elicit detail responses enabling the researcher to understand and identify key view of respondents about their need in NCE-seeking endeavors.

Data generated will be analyze using qualitative content analysis. Which include Personal and educational need experiences of student-mothers at both school and home settings. The length of the survey should be question that will cover personal, marital, parental and educational information. Qualtric survey data is to be analyst thematically in order to arrive at a description of student-mothers' educational needs and experience. The issues and Challenges Confronting student-mothers of tertiary institution of Gombe state particularly the Colleges of Education Billiri, will be examine, analyst, observed and recorded within the period of twenty-six (26) weeks. The central question during the interview will include the following;

i. What were the academic challenges you experienced as a student-mother in the college?

ii. What do you recommend should be done to address this challenges?

Result

Among the married women contacted in this study, 10% of them were between the ages of 21 and 25 years, 13.3% of them were between the ages of 26 and 30 years and 20% of them were between the ages of 31 and 36 years. Muhammad 13 Another 33.3% of the respondents were between the ages of 36 and 40 years and 16.7% of them were found to be between the ages of 41 and 45 years while 6.7% of them Were above 46 years. This indicates that majority (53.3%) of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40 years. Also, 20% of them are married for a period of 1 to 5 years, 50% of them had married for 6 to 10 years and 23.3% of them married for 11 to 15 years. Only 6.7% of them are married for 16 years or more. This shows that majority (73.3%) of the respondents are married for a period of 6 to 15 years. Again, 60% of the respondents have 1 to 4 children while the remaining 40% had 5 to 7 Children.

Domestic Challenges that Student-Mothers Encounter in their College Life

The married women indicated that they encounter domestic challenges as students and married women. They indicated that these challenges include the inability to do cleaning, cooking and washing for the members of their families due to the academic demands and the time that they had to spend at school. Others also mentioned the fact that there is always some misunderstanding with their husbands in connection with the time they spend with them and the children. While others mentioned that their problems are with their house mates and in-laws in connection with childcare responsibilities. Others also mentioned the way some scholars misinterpreted the effort of married women to further their education as the major problem. Here are excerpts:

- "Inability to cook and do washing for my children is my major challenge, not being able to do washing and cleaning for the children and my husband are among my major problems".

- "Lack of time to nurture the children to become disciplined individuals is my major challenge. Difficulty in taking care of the children due to my absence from home for learning activities is my major problem,"

- "There is always a misunderstanding between my husband and I on the time I spend at school instead of attending to my duties at home".

- When I come to school I do not need to think about my baby. I only stay with my baby during the night and weekends. I could leave my baby with the nanny to go to the library to study.

- There is no balance between the two roles, I play fewer roles in parenting because I am studying and my mother is the one doing more parenting. I do not see her often because of the distance. I can only see her like once every month.

- Sometimes I can be restless and do not have time to study, not in the mood for people, sometimes I have an appointment to see the doctor and end up skipping lectures. The queues were always long.

- Pregnancy did affect me, more especially in its first week, I did not attend the lectures, I was just in the hostel. I was not feeling well; I was always feeling weak. I failed some of my courses at the end. I failed some courses that are related with calculations and technology because other students made a practical task that I did not do.

Academic Challenges that Student-Mothers Encounter in the College

The responses that were obtained revealed that all the respondents had academic challenges in one way or the other. Majority noted that they had loaded academic work, inadequate time, and loaded household chores. For instance, some of them noted:

- "Loaded academic work that had to be completed within a short period of time is my major challenge" "Inadequate time to study at home was my major academic challenge". "My activities at home lead to my lateness to lectures most of the time" "I cannot concentrate during lectures due to the way I leave my home with a lot of house activities undone". One of the victims identified the challenges facing student-mothers in playing their dual roles of parenting and studying. She related how difficult it is to be a mother at one hand and student on the other hand:

- "It is not easy, sometimes when I want to plan during my SBS (School-Based Studies) the baby is crying or I need to change the nappy. I do not have much time to perform my role as a mother because I leave for home late".

- "It is not easy to be a student mother; you start to lose some friends but you just need to focus on your study. It is not that you lose them but they will not want to walk with you. When you walk alone and people are looking at you it is not easy. I am lonely and it is not easy. She further revealed that she somehow manages to find the balance with the support of her baby's nanny, her boyfriend and her father who help meeting her half way.

Causes of the Challenges that they Encounter as Student-Mothers in the College

Some of the causes of these challenges mentioned by the married students were finances, childbearing, lack of support from the spouse, societal mistreatment, lack of relatives' supports etc. For example, some students mentioned:

- - "I face the challenges due to financial constraints". Another noted: "childbearing responsibilities was the cause of my challenges". A similar thing was reported by another respondent where she said:

- - "Childbearing activities such as post- and antenatal visits to the health center were the cause of my challenges". Another said, "The spending of more time out of the home due to academic work at the school is my major challenge".

- - The other responses include: "Lack of support from my husband", "insecurity of leaving my husband alone at home who may take another woman in my absence",

- "Lack of time to care for my husband and children at home and also travelling from home to campus everyday".

- As students of a tertiary institution, the student mothers in tertiary institutions were expected to study hard to achieve their goals as the prophet encouraged s

- To seek for knowledge from time of birth to their grave. A substantial number of them stated that they do not get enough time to study, a few mentioned low academic performance, and lateness or absence from lectures. These are examples of some respondents:

- - "I do not get enough time to study on my own"

- - "Low academic performance is the way the challenges affected me academically"

- - "Low concentration during lectures, irregular attendance to lectures are my problems"

Solutions to Domestic and Academic Issues and Challenges Faced by Student-Mothers

From the responses given by the students, most of them solve their academic and domestic issues by engaging their mothers, aunties or house helps in the house to take care of their children and other domestic activities. In the case of school, they believe most of the solutions are beyond them so asked that the assignments should be

Reduced and weekend lectures should be stopped, early morning and night lectures should be shifted and student mothers should be considered. They mentioned the fact that they make some arrangements and adjustment on some house chores to make way for academic work; here are some excerpts:

- - "I had to ignore some of the house activities and problems in order to make way for school work". Others engage in group discussions to curb their academic lapses;

- - "I engage in group discussions with my friends to catch up with my lessons". Other students also get help from husbands and relatives;

- - "I ask my husband to support me and do some of the work at home when I leave for school"

- - "I get help from my husband to take care of the home in my absence"

- -"I ask my mother in-law to assist me on childcare when I had to be in the school"

- Others get support from religious leaders:

- - "I was supported by my community religious leaders to come and study medicine in the college";

- -"I will ask for help from my family members such as my mother to handle my young children during my lecture hours and ask my Islamic teacher to convince my husband in order to support me";

- - "I will tell one of my siblings to do some of the work for me in my absence at home";

- - "I will ask my husband's widowed aunt to give a
- Helping hand on my house chores"
- - "There should be an introduction of distance learning for the whole difficult courses"
- - "There should be no assignments for students on weekends so we can get sufficient time to perform our house duties"
- - "We (married women) always advice ourselves to plan to complete our secondary education before bearing children so that we can have enough time to study in tertiary level and not face similar challenges"
- - "There should be a counseling session at school to help married women cope with the stressful college life".

Discusion

Student-mothers' participation in higher education is a means of ensuring career enhancement, personal enrichment and a medium of transformation for them, their family and relatives as well as the entire humanity and promotes their liberation and empowerment in the society (Khadija, 2020). Student-mothers' involvement in education in various universities or pursuing further education is not achieved without series of challenges. The study revealed that the respondents encountered various types of challenges as they combined education with home responsibilities. It was observed that difficulty in having time to care for the members of the family, lack of time to nurture children to become disciplined individuals and difficulty in taking care of the needs of the children and husbands were among the major challenges that the respondents encountered. These challenges led to low academic performance for some of the respondents and not getting enough time to study was the challenge of others. The stress that they had to go through made other respondents to exhibit low concentration during lectures. Family problems create imbalances for the student-mothers so much that it makes their emotional state so fragile which leads to depression and distracted attention (poor concentration) at home and at their academic work. It was also observed in the study that the combination of marital responsibilities with tertiary education programs led to irregular attendance and lateness to lectures.

Lateness to and missing classes or lectures was one of the major challenges that generally mothers in tertiary institutions faced (Amina, 2020). According to Amina (2020), when a child is sick, the mother gives attention to the care of the child at the expense of her academic work. Most of the respondents have children under their care as mothers; they were bothered with the needs of their children while they pursued their tertiary education at the college. Some had to contend with childbearing situations which include pregnancy, post and antenatal visits to the hospital. Family responsibilities which include childbearing affect not only the participation in college education, but also career and professional development of student-mothers, thus preventing them in showing up their capacity and contribution to development.

Results of this study reveal that being a student mother makes it difficult to find enough time to navigate between studying and parenting. The significant difficulty for

Mothers who are students is lack of time to spend with their children, partners, extended families and friends, and to study and complete assignments. Despite all these, it is evident from the results that participants have their friends and family members supporting them to manage their dual roles. Those supporting them in this respect include extended family members, religious scholars, friends and partners.

Recommendations

In view of the above, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Financial constraint was identified to be one of the causes of the challenges of some of the Student-mothers in the college. Therefore, the three arms of government should as matter of necessity introduce a program to support student-mothers in academic life, as the main challenges experienced by female

married students is difficulty in acquiring sponsorship for their education.

2. As the student-mothers encounter so many challenges in the course of their programs, the management of the universities should restructure the content of the college programs so that they can allocate enough time for specific subjects in order to accommodate students with overburdened and too much work in a short period of time.

3. Lecturers should adopt the use of modern technological innovations by presenting some of their lectures and reading materials online so that student mothers can access them at their various locations instead of having to converge at the campus. This will enable those with marital responsibilities to cope with both the home and school activities.

4. The guidance and counseling department of the universities should intensify their activities and have special sessions to help student-mothers find ways of coping with school work and marital responsibilities. This can enable them to succeed in their academic pursuits.

It would be recommended among others that future research will take a look at challenges of student fathers in the universities and further examine it in our polytechnics and colleges of education.

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