

**CULTURAL OBSTACLES TO BASIC FORMAL EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING OF WOMEN IN SOKOTO STATE, NORTHERN NIGERIA**

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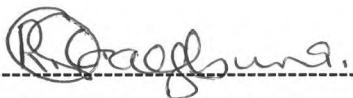
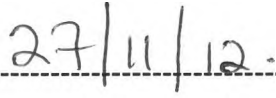
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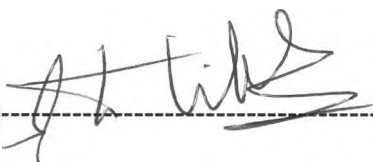
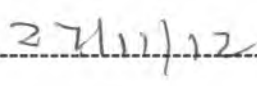
## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this project is my original work and has not been presented for any academic degree in any other University or Institution.

Signature---------- Date----------

Regina Chioma Oraegbuna

I confirm that the Candidate, under my supervision, carried out the work reported in this project and has been submitted for examination for the degree of Masters of Arts in Gender and Development Studies of the University of Nairobi with my approval as the University Supervisor.

Signature---------- Date----------

Prof. Simiyu Wandibba

## **DEDICATION**

To all Women who have been denied access to basic formal education due to cultural reasons and negative practices.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement .....	iv
Abstract .....	v
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>BACKGROUND TO STUDY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	4
1.3 Objectives of the study .....	5
1.3.1 Overall objective .....	5
1.3.2 Specific objectives .....	5
1.4 Assumptions .....	6
1.5 Justification of the study.....	6
1.6 Scope of the study .....	6
1.7 Limitations of the study.....	6
1.8 Definition of key terms.....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 Education and training in Northern Nigeria .....	9
2.2 Status of women and education in Nigeria.....	11
2.3 Socialization .....	12
2.4 Sex roles expectations .....	12
2.5 Theoretical framework .....	13
2.6 Relevance of the theory to the study .....	13
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	15

3.2 Research site .....	15
3.3 Research design .....	17
3.4 Study population and unit of analysis .....	17
3.5 Sampling procedure and sample size .....	17
3.6. Data collection methods .....	18
3.6.1 Semi- structured interviews .....	18
3.6.2. Key informant interviews .....	18
3.6.3 Case narratives .....	18
3.6.4 Secondary data .....	18
3.7 Data analysis .....	19
3.8 Ethical considerations .....	19
3.9 Problems encountered in the field and how they were resolved.....	19
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE BASIC FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN IN SOKOTO STATE .....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	21
4.2 Cultural issues influencing basic women’s formal education and training.....	21
4.3 Nomadic pastoralism.....	23
4.4 Patriarchy.....	23
4.5 Negative attitudes.....	23
4.6 Prescribed sex roles.....	25
4.7 Early or forced marriages .....	26
4.8 Socialization .....	29
4.9 Political environment .....	30
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>31</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	31
5.2 Summary.....	31
5.3 Conclusion.....	32
5.4 Recommendations.....	32

5.5 Recommendations for further research .....	33
References .....	34
APPENDICES .....	37
Appendix 1: Semi - structured questionnaire .....	37
Appendix 2: Key informant interview guide.....	42
Appendix 3: Case narratives schedule .....	43
Appendix 4: Statement of consent .....	44

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## ABSTRACT

This study set out to explore the cultural obstacles to formal basic education and training of women in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. The objectives of the study were, first, to investigate the extent to which cultural obstacles constitute denial of formal basic education and training of women in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. The second objective was to find out how early marriage practices hinder girls/women from obtaining formal basic education and training in that State of Northern Nigeria.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews, case narratives and secondary data. The resultant data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis.

The findings suggest that cultural obstacles and early marriages are the leading factors to the access of basic formal education and training of women, which in turn portrays gender discrimination as some of the key drawbacks to women's basic formal education and training.

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations are made: Change of attitude by sensitizing men, women and children through mass media campaigns on the importance of girls and women in the society. Also, governments must recognize, embrace and demonstrate gender aware policies.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

FGN- Federal Government of Nigeria

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Education Fund

FAWE- Forum of African Women Educationalists

CEDAW-Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

NCCE- National Commission for Colleges of Education

NUC- National Universities Commission

IDRC- International Development Research Centre

# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND TO STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Formal education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. A right to formal education has been created and recognised by some jurisdictions. Since 1952, Article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights obliges all signatory parties to guarantee the right to formal education. At the global level, the United Nations' International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 guarantees this right under its article 13 (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/international-covenant-on-economic,-social-and-cultural\_rights*). Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society.

Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.

Nigeria as a nation has adopted formal education as an instrument for social and economic transformation. This was spelt out in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998), National Policy on Education that every Nigerian child should have a right to equal educational opportunities.

However, efforts of the Government in education have not yielded significant positive results on girls' and women's education. This is because the girl-child's and women's formal educational attainment is still low as records have shown that fewer girls go to school than boys. Female enrolment dwindles as the girls move up the educational hierarchy (Onuabunwa, 2003). The increasing cost of schooling is another reason why many parents cannot send their children particularly girls to school. Observations have shown that poverty is widespread and parents could not meet the private or individual cost of education. It was also observed that most poor parents from rural house-holds send their daughters into domestic labour market as a source of income. This draws many promising young girls away from school.

In Northern Nigeria, once a girl is six-years old, families expect her to take on adult household duties such as caring for siblings, cooking and cleaning (Ladan, 1998). Societies such as that found in Sokoto State, view domestic responsibilities as the best education for girls and consider formal education as a waste of time. In fact, once married, a girl has a duty under Sharia to become a good housewife, wife and mother since her husband technically owns her. When girls do not marry early and opt to continue with their education, societies such as this often penalize parents by increasing the bride wealth they must pay or by decreasing what they would usually receive.

During the introduction of formal education in Nigeria, efforts were made to ensure women did not attend formal school. Cultural practices dictate that girls should stay at home to help their mothers rather than individuals who should be allowed to map out their destiny. Traditionally, a girl is viewed as an economic asset.

Culture also dictates that girls should be withdrawn from school or should not attend at all for early marriage. This was common in Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto state of Northern Nigeria.

According to the 2006 census figures, Northern Nigeria accounts for more than 50 % of the country's population and has more than 60% share in Nigeria's landmass with abundant natural endowment mostly in agriculture and solid minerals. However, Northern Nigeria has the highest levels of illiteracy and resistance to formal education for women. This could have been due to longstanding feudal culture that favours only that class as well as what could be a culture of violence and destruction (Niles, 1999).

Recent developments in Northern Nigeria show that within its territory are armies ready to threaten and destroy the lives and properties of those within it at the slightest provocation. Since anybody can be caught in the ensuing cross-fire particularly Christians (who are predominantly foreign to the region) in the case of religious violence or Southerners in political violence, the place has become very unattractive. These are clearly anti-development signals and have the potential to widen the economic and educational gaps even more (Babangida, 1989).

Women are central to socio-economic development through their productive and community management responsibilities. They make a major contribution to the production of food and the provision of energy, water, healthcare and family income in developing countries. Efforts should be made to ensure that girls and women receive formal education and training, so that they can apply the knowledge in performance of these tasks and roles.

In many communities in developing countries, like Nigeria, women are primary holders of indigenous knowledge and know-how on sustainable environmental use and management. It is, therefore, important that governments involve women in the decision-making process (Euler, 1999).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The right to formal education is a right for every human being and of children in particular, as provided under most statutes and other international instruments. However, with all the provisions in place, a gender bias in access to formal education is still thriving. Statistics show that although enrolment of boys and girls in primary schools is at par, a small number of girls continue to secondary school and other institutions of higher learning.

Education for females lags behind that of males and as the level of school increases, the representation of girls decreases. Gender disparities in education result from policies and ideologies that systematically discriminate against girls. These restraints and ideologies may be cultural, statutory or other factors that hinder formal education and training prospects for girls and women (Euler, 1990).

Typically, Africa's traditional societies are patriarchal in nature. Patriarchy is a belief that condones male supremacy and dominion over women. Under this belief, it is acceptable for women and girls to be oppressed and subjugated. When a girl or woman shows signs of independence of character, she is snubbed by her peers and constantly reminded that "every woman is inferior to a man".

Feminists and others who advocate for human rights and gender equity have blamed patriarchy as the main culprit for the continuous oppression of women which, in particular, hinders their access to formal education and training. Liberal feminists argue that if gender equality is to be effectively achieved in education, then one has to focus on fighting patriarchy and existing legal standards that discriminate against women (Mc Fadden, 1994).

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do early marriages prevent women from pursuing formal education and training in Sokoto State?
2. How does patriarchy and negative attitudes affect formal education and training in Sokoto State?

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

#### **1.3.1 Overall objective**

To explore the extent to which culture acts as an impediment to education and training of women in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

1. To identify and evaluate how early marriages prevent women from pursuing basic formal education and training in Sokoto State.
2. To describe how patriarchy and negative practices are obstacles that stand in the way of women and prevent them from pursuing basic formal education and training in Sokoto State.

#### **1.4 Assumptions**

1. Cultural practices such as early marriage of girls leads to limited formal education for women.
2. Patriarchal practices and socially prescribed roles are leading factors which hinder women's access to formal education.

#### **1.5 Justification of the study**

Sustainable development demands that genders of both men and women are involved in the participation and development of the country. A research of this nature creates awareness with regards to gender equality and will, hopefully, influence future laws and policies to incorporate women in decision-making in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria through basic formal education and training. Secondly, by making a case for a major shift in management and political participation, this research has raised awareness for the need for reform of factors that play a role in the marginalization of women. Women's inclusion in development processes is paramount since women are the majority and are as productive members of society as men.

#### **1.6 Scope of the study**

Many studies may have been done on women and formal education in Nigeria in the past but this research focussed on the cultural obstacles to the basic formal education and training of women in Sokoto State. This research mainly targeted women as opposed to men.

#### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

Despite the need for exploring the whole of Nigeria, the research was limited to Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria due to limited time and funds to cover a larger area. The study examined



the issues mentioned in the statement of the problem with the aim of obtaining the specific objectives.

### 1.8 Definition of key terms

**Culture:** Is the people's ways of life. It is the whole that is beliefs, norms, practices, rituals, knowledge, arts, traditions and customs. It is also belief about family, food and behaviour. It also includes practices, what we do in our daily lives like eating, talking, knowledge, that is, what we know and what we seek to know.

**Attitude:** Is the expression of thoughts, feelings, events, and situation.

**Customs and practices:** The way things are or have habitually been done in a society.

**Patriarchy:** A societal system which practises domination of males over females.

**Education:** Refers to long-term teaching and learning activities aimed at preparing individuals for a variety of roles in a society as citizens, workers, and members of family groups.

**Formal education:** Is a system of training and instruction obtained in institutions such as schools, which enables a person to acquire necessary knowledge and skills in the contemporary world of development.

**Policy:** Is a role or guideline, which clearly states an intended contact or a statement of aims, objectives, setting out what is to be achieved.

**Gender:** Refers to the socially constructed differences between men and women, as distinct from "sex" which refers to their biological differences. The fact that

one is born female or male in all human and non-human primates in societies carries with it a specific behavioural assignment. These characteristics include gender-based division of labour whereby duties are allocated on the basis of one's sex.

**Gender roles:** In this study gender roles refer to roles that are learned and vary widely within and between cultures and can change. They help to determine women's access to rights, resources and opportunities.

**Gender relations:** Refers specifically to those dimensions of social relations that create differences in the positioning of men and women in social processes. Gender relations are characterised by discriminatory and inequitable practices against women.

**Gender equality:** Refers to equal treatment of women, boys, girls and men so that they can enjoy the benefits of development, including equal access to and control of opportunities and resources.

**Gender equity:** Refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities. It should be the goal of empowerment and change. Equity also means "having a stake in" or "having a share of". It is therefore an important component of equality.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the research problem. The review is done using the following headings: Education and training in Northern Nigeria; status of women and education in Nigeria; gender equity in education; constraints, impediments and ideologies behind women's and girls' marginalization in the formal education and training sector; fundamental barriers to development and enhancement of women in education and training; and, lastly, women's empowerment. The chapter ends with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the study.

#### **2.2 Education and Training in Northern Nigeria**

There was a time when formal education and training were regarded as luxury, inevitable and confined to few men. However, it is recognised now as a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. It gives women the knowledge, skills and the confidence to take care of themselves in a competitive world (IDRC, 1995:8). Moreover, education and training contributes directly to the general improvement of health and living standards. Disturbingly, education is one of the girls' and women's rights, which have been interfered with. There is very little talk and effort to protect and promote formal education for the girl-child, who is expected to grow up into womanhood and, therefore, be granted equal recognition and opportunity as granted to men (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004).

There is a fundamental cultural bias in favour of boys and men. Women and girls are in theory given legal rights to participate fully in affairs of the society. The Nigerian Constitution accords girls and women fundamental rights as any other human being.

They have equal rights of marriage, education, and work, the right to own and inherit property. Despite this provision, girls and women have experienced continued discrimination and have been denied the opportunity and rights to fully access and control resources. Women's and girls' status can be seen to be subordinate to men's for the most part, women everywhere generally lack recognized law and culturally valued authority.

Illiteracy among females is still high while traditional cultures still discriminate girls in education leading to a wide gap between females and males in the education sector. There is no special educational policy initiative for girls (Harding, 1980). Girls continue to drop out of school due to early marriages. For example, in Nigeria, it is argued that at independence, the nation's objective was to achieve equality in education. This was done by enacting of the Education Act of 1968. However, this objective has not been achieved to date. The Act, just like many other statutes, is gender neutral. It talks much about streamlining the management and administration of the education system, rather than protecting and promoting children's education. The Children's Act provides the right to education of every child, but the enrolment of girls remains lower than that of boys. Most often, girls' formal education is terminated at the primary level. Thus very few girls proceeded to secondary school.

In many African countries, gender disparities in education are evident, and there are many reasons for this, including cultural factors such as early marriages and negative attitudes (patriarchy) towards female schooling. When children drop out of school very early in life, they are likely to relapse into functional illiteracy. Hence, young girls who drop out of school early get married and often relapse into functional illiteracy and ultimately there is more damage to the entire nation when there is an illiterate mother.

In some cases, where decision has to be made about which children to send to school, parents decide to invest in their sons' education rather than their daughters' (Boserap, 1970). This leads to gender power imbalance when it comes to employment where education and training is required. So far, the Nigerian Government is cognizant of the possible ill effects of gender discrimination against girls and women in formal education, and policy documents articulate the position that women are important elements in the development process. Therefore, for women to be able to utilize their full potential, wisdom and talents for their own development and that of their nation, they need instruments to cut these chains of bondage off them (Nagees, 1995).

## **2.2 Status of women and education in Nigeria**

The home is ideally the first and the last school of the child and the foundation of his/her socialization with the mother serving as the first teacher. Information in Nigeria reveals that women constitute about half the total population of the country and are the most vulnerable group to diseases and economic frustration (FGN/UNICEF, 2001). The 1991 census gave the proportion of women as 49.7 per cent of this group being illiterate. Masha (1994) attributed this high level of illiteracy to culture, early marriage, economy and the general unfavourable attitude expressed towards the formal education of women and girls in the country, among other factors.

It could be said that, at the moment, the situation is unhealthy bearing in mind the wide national disparity in the ratio of male and female enrolment in school. For example, the statistical report for 1997-2001 (Federal Government of Nigeria and United Nations Children's Fund, 2001) shows that at the national level, primary school enrolment ratio for boys and girls was 94: 75.

The ratio was almost twice in the northern states where formal female education is accorded less value (Agbakwuru, 2000). There is also serious problem in terms of completion rates for female students. In the opinion of Agbakwuru (2002), this is particularly low in eight states in the north. According to Oladunni (1999), in Nigeria, primary school enrolment ratio at the end of the past century was 67 per cent boys and 52 per cent girls, while primary literacy rate for those aged 15 years and above was 67 per cent and 47 per cent for males and females, respectively. Socialization and sex roles play an important role in all these.

### **2.3 Socialization**

Socialization is the process by which a child learns to respond to socially approved values in the society through the guidance of adults. In the Nigerian culture, especially those of Northern Nigeria, female children who later grow into womanhood are reared differently from males. While girls are protected and discouraged from explorative and risky activities boys are encouraged to be assertive and challenge their mental powers. This socialisation process leads to certain personality and characteristics regarded as masculine or feminine: independent qualities, initiative and assertiveness for boys, and dependency, submissiveness and complacency for girls. These personality characteristics affect the attitude of girls as they grow into adults and women.

### **2.4 Sex Roles Expectations**

The sex of a child to a large extent determines the choice of obtaining formal education in many cultures in Nigeria especially that of the North. Before the advent of western education, boys received training from their fathers in farming, blacksmithing and other masculine activities, while girls stayed at home to prepare food, washed utensils and took care of little children.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by the social relations framework propounded by Kabeer (1994), which is explicitly rooted in structural feminism. This approach shows how gender and other social inequalities are created and reproduced within structural institutional factors, and then designed policies that can enable women to work to change those factors that constrain them from participating in the development processes of their countries.

The social relations approach asserts, among other things, that one, the operation of institutions reflects different policies and that gender policies differ according to the extent they recognize and address gender issues, like gender-blind policies, gender-aware policies, gender-neutral policies, gender specific policies, and gender-redistributive policies. Two, analysis for planning should examine whether immediate, underlying, and/or structural factors are responsible for the problems and their effects on those involved.

## **2.6 Relevance of the Theory to the Study**

The social relations approach does not take as its starting point efficiency arguments about women's contribution to development. Instead, development agencies, in this case are urged to take a more gender-aware approach to development on the grounds that it will help to improve development policy and practice. The social relations approach begins from the premise that development planning needs to take account of both the relations of production and the interrelated range of relations through which needs are met (Pearson and Elson, 1981).

In view of the importance that the social relations approach attributes to power relations, further attention needs to be given to the process through which more equitable power-

sharing between the genders is to be achieved. There is consensus among proponents of the social relations approach that redistributing resources between the genders will involve conflict, losses for some and gains for others. If this is the case, how will men be convinced to re-negotiate power relations, given the pervasiveness of the gender system so well documented by the social relations approach? As the approach attempts to demonstrate, the conflicts and collaborative aspect of gender relations involves men and women in a constant process of negotiation and re-negotiation. The priority for those interested in improving women's status, therefore, must be to provide women with greater bargaining power within this process, for example, through education and training.



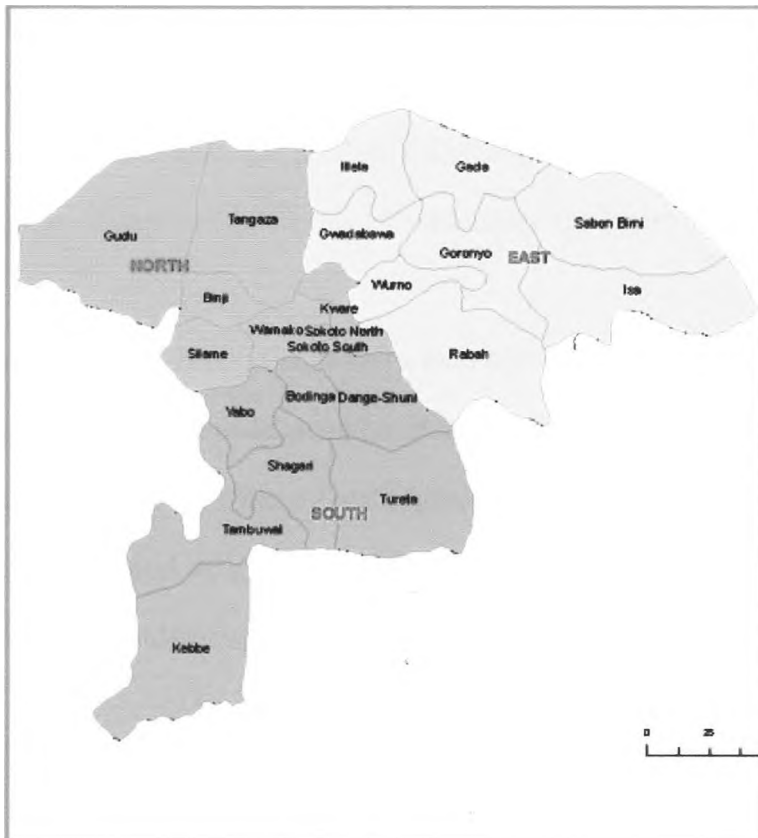
## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a description of the research site, research design, study population, sample population, data collection methods and data analysis methods. The chapter finally looks at ethical considerations and problems which were encountered in the field and how they were solved in the course of the study .This research was done in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. Sokoto State is a core northern state located at the top north western corner of Nigeria. The State is made up of 23 local government areas.

#### 3.2 Research Site



**Map 3.1 Map of Nigeria showing Sokoto State and Wurno Local Government Area of Northern Nigeria**

This research was done in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. Sokoto State is a core northern state located at the top north western corner of Nigeria. The State is made up of 23 local government areas (Map 3.1). Sokoto is more arid and less populated than the South. It covers a larger arid region as one proceeds to Niger Republic with a few dessert shrubs and sand dunes. The people are Muslim and many are of Hausa ethnic group.

The Hausa states or Hausa Kingdoms were a collection of independent city states situated in what became Northern Nigeria (Amana Online Hausa land and the Hausa ([http://www.amanaonline.com/Sokoto\\_1.htm](http://www.amanaonline.com/Sokoto_1.htm)).The Economic activities include farming alongside Bakolori Dam and Rima Basin. In the early 1970s, an artificial dam was built in Wurno Local Government Area of Sokoto State to cater for rice production which forms the staple food of the people. Sokoto State has a popular and longstanding University named after the Head of Sokoto Caliphate that is, Usman Dan Fodio University. There is also the popular Sokoto College of Arts and Science and 17 secondary and 10 primary schools.

In Sokoto State, just like in any other Islamic State, marriage is consummated by the father of the bride and the bridegroom with male members of his family after which the bride is led to her husband's house. Often times, when a female child is born, she is betrothed at birth to a known or favoured family and as soon as she attains the age of nine, she is taken to her husband's house where an elderly wife tutors her like her daughter until she reaches the age of puberty.

### **3.3 Research Design**

This study utilized a cross-sectional and descriptive research design. It collected ethnographic accounts of life experiences using in-depth interviews, case narratives and key informant interviews, on the cultural obstacles to formal basic education and training of women in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. The collected data were analysed thematically and the findings presented in verbatim quotes, narratives and selected anecdotes.

### **3.4 Study Population and Unit of Analysis**

The target population consisted of men and women in Wurno Local Government Area of Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria, aged 18 years and above. Women and men of this age group are old enough to understand cultural issues regarding formal education and training. Among them were Emirs within and around sub-locations, local Government Council Area Administrators, religious leaders, members of women groups, some school head-teachers and members of the Welfare Board in the community (Jamaa). The unit of analysis was an individual adult male or female.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of the Study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Purposive sampling was used to select 5 villages, with 20 people from each village consisting of 10 women and 10 men. This was done by obtaining a register from the Village Head (Emir) and then using the simple random sampling method to select 20 people from each village. In all, therefore, 100 people were involved in the study.

## **3.6. Data Collection Methods**

### **3.6.1 Semi- structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted amongst the 65 respondents. This method was used to provide richly detailed descriptive information of individuals' own accounts of their cultural practices and effects on accessing basic formal education and training. A semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 1) was used to guide and obtain the information which enabled the study enough space for detailed qualitative data.

### **3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews**

Key informants are those people who occupy and play influential roles in the society. The research identified six informants who included two leaders of women groups, two Emirs and two wives of entrepreneurs. A key informant interview guide (Appendix 2) was used to collect the necessary data.

### **3.6.3 Case Narratives**

A narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event or action or a series of events chronologically connected. These were used to source information from six females who were denied access to formal basic education and training who were willing to share their life experiences. A case narrative schedule (Appendix 3) was used to collect the data.

### **3.6.4 Secondary Data**

Secondary sources of data included published books, journals, papers, periodicals, reports and unpublished works, as well as Government documents, including policy documents and the Charter/Constitution.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involved taking a look into consistencies and inconsistencies obtained from the responses. The study then captured insights and practical experiences. In order to get insights into the position of the women who were denied access to formal basic education and training, behaviour concepts that articulated their attitude were also examined.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

Appropriate permission was sought from the Ministry of Education in Nigeria. On getting to the field, the chairman and the Local Government Area Administrators including the Emirs were presented with the letter of introduction for the researcher to proceed with the research. Prior to conducting the interviews, a statement of consent was read to everybody in the sample population and each was asked for their informed consent to participate in the study. Those who agreed signed or thumb printed the consent form. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained throughout data collection, analysis and dissemination stages. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the research study (Appendix 4).

### **3.9 Problems encountered in the field and how they were resolved**

Being in a place of a predominantly Muslim population, the researcher was subjected to dress like the women by veiling herself or else she could not obtain access to most of her respondents. Some of the respondents were in fear of being punished or penalized by the society. This is because of the socialization process that is obtained in such communities, for instance, when a girl or woman shows independence of character, she is snubbed by her peers and reinforced desired behaviour is imposed on her by the group through unkind words and consistently reminded that “every woman is inferior to a man” (negative sanctions).

Such participants were interviewed in another part of the compound and confidentiality was maintained and pseudonyms were used throughout the data collection, analysis and dissemination stages.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE BASIC FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN IN SOKOTO STATE

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the socio-cultural factors influencing the basic formal education and training of women in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. These factors are seen to impact negatively on the access to basic formal education and training of women. Of particular interest to this study were such issues as culture, patriarchy, negative attitudes, prescribed sex roles, early or forced marriages, socialization processes in the community and political instability.

#### 4.2 Cultural issues Influencing Basic Women's Formal Education and Training

Culturally, women are perceived as having a lower social status, which has further worsened their opportunity and consideration for education. Women and girls find themselves in conflict with statutory and customary laws. African customary laws have provisions that are conducive to the subjugation of women while statutory laws discriminate against women.

A major factor impeding the elimination of gender constraints in education is the lack of empowerment of the girls and women themselves to challenge and effectively fight the forces of their oppression, discrimination and unequal treatment. Brought up in structures, systems, values, attitudes and practices in which they are always the underdogs, women often internalize their inferiority and accept it as given, even if they may be suffering gravely.

Many women display characteristics of disempowerment which include lack of self-confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem, inability or reluctance to make decisions, fear to challenge injustices, helplessness in fighting the injustices meted out to them and lack of courage to fight for their rights or to speak out.

Unfortunately, the female gender continues to take a passive role in matters of decision-making at household level. In this research it was found that in the household of Alhaji Dan Baba, aged 45, a railway technician with four wives, namely, Asmau aged 25, Sa'adatu aged 20, Rekiya aged 18 and Maryam, the youngest wife, had a female child aged 2 who was very sick with malaria. The young wife with her mates were helpless until their bread winner who is the head of the family returned from work and weighed his pocket before taking the child to hospital. Had these four wives been empowered through formal education and training, they would have been able to take the sick child to the nearest hospital, without waiting for the head of the family to return from work before any action can be taken.

Several authorities have discussed at varying lengths, the cultural constraints that operate to limit basic formal education for women (girls) in the world. Table 4.1 below portrays the community's perception of education of women compared to men.

**Table 4.1: Community's perception of education of women compared to men**

	Frequency	Percentage
Men Preference	40	80
Women Preference	10	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>



### **4.3 Nomadic Pastoralism**

Nomadic pastoralism based on the rearing of cattle deprives women and girls access to basic formal education and training because these women and girls are expected to roam about with members of their families and communities to milk the cows. In spite of the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Ministry of Education, has set up nomadic schools in each Local Government Area, it is only the male children who are allowed to attend these evening nomadic schools as found out in this study, for instance:

Case 1: A key informant Hausa/Fulani cattle owner, Alhaji Baba aged 50 had this say: *“How can I send my daughters or my wives to attend these westernized schools? Will I feed them with books? They have to remain with us to cook our meals, take care of the children and milk the cows to augment our feeding”*.

### **4.4 Patriarchy**

This is a system of beliefs and practices and one of the dominating categories that, together with race, ethnicity and social class, have for century’s persistently marginalised women. It is a tool used to legitimize male domination and female discrimination for the continued privilege of male. Right from birth, power is vested upon men in terms of access and control over resources. A practice such as a father marrying off a daughter to an old man for dowry is normal in patriarchal societies ([www.patriarchy.org](http://www.patriarchy.org)). This study found that:

Case 2: Bintu aged 15 was forced by her father Alhaji Dangote aged 40, a small-scale entrepreneur, to marry Alhaji Mukailah aged 70.

### **4.5 Negative Attitudes**

In addition, parental and familial attitudes have a strong influence on the decision to invest in children’s education. Men/boys are more favoured in human capital investment decisions as

they are prime beneficiaries of family assets (Davidson, 1993). Parents worry about wasting money on the education of girls who are likely to get pregnant or marry before completing school (Kapakapa, 1992). There is a strong belief that once married, girls become part of another family, and the parental investment is lost (Poultry, 1991). Parents are reluctant to invest in women's education for they do not perceive the value of education for girls/women and also because of the perceptions about the position of women in society (Kapakapa, 1992). These impacts negatively on girls'/women's access to basic formal education and training.

At the family level, for example, in many cases, women are hardly consulted on issues that affect the community. It is felt that husbands provide enough representation for the family and there is therefore no necessity to hear the wives' views concerning community matters. Furthermore, women are hardly involved or represented in community institutions and organs where decisions that affect the community are taken. Reasons for the exclusion are very much linked to the perceived psychological deficiencies of women.

A number of factors as well as some complicated and sensitive problems have in various ways interacted to delay or frustrate women's aspiration for education. Consequent upon the scenarios painted earlier on, it is postulated that owing to the high level of illiteracy among women, especially in developing countries (like in Sokoto State of Nigeria), opportunities extended to them become meaningless since they are not adequately enlightened to understand simple issues concerning them such as voting rights among other things (Ugbede, 1997). The case of an uneducated woman is like that of *an ignorant poor farmer who in ignorance sold his farm land situated on a large deposit of gold to an estate developer.*

*However, upon its discovery, the estate developer eventually employed the poor ignorant farmer as a labourer on the gold-mine.* Thus, it is presumable that the innate potential of the

uneducated woman would remain untapped thereby making her to become intellectually, socially, economically, psychologically and politically crippled by her ignorance.

In many places and cultures of the world, there seems to be a preference for the male child. This preference is still largely the case in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. A woman who is unable to bear a male child has diminished status. This has been one of the factors that lead some men into polygamous marriages. In Hausa parlance, the common phrase dictating the general attitude towards birth of a girl child is “ba ayi komai ba, macce ta haifi mace”, meaning that “nothing is gained by a female giving birth to a female”. The preference for the male child is also ostensibly linked to competition over inheritance as the male child’s share of inheritance is double that of a female’s. As found in this study in Case 3: Kamfut aged 25 and Fatu aged 27 were the children of late Alhaji Aliu and Hajia Asmau. After the death of their parents Fatu, the female child who was not equipped with basic formal education, could only inherit the clothes of her late mother while Kamfut was given charge of all the herd of cattle and lands owned by that family. Fatu narrated in tears, “You cannot believe that because I am a woman, I could only inherit my late mother’s clothes, while my younger brother inherited all other meaningful properties.”

#### **4.6 Prescribed Sex Roles**

Socially prescribed roles are one of the leading obstacles to women’s acquisition of basic formal education and training in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. Sex-based discrimination derives largely from the arbitrary division of male and female roles as culturally defined in all known African Societies. All societies prescribe different attitudes and activities to men and women and most of them try to rationalize this prescription in terms of the physiological differences between the sexes or their different roles in reproduction. When it comes to

teaching, the father teaches boys various things in the field, while the mothers take the responsibility of teaching the daughters all things concerning domestic duties of a wife, in managing and harmonizing the affairs of a homestead. This job stereotyping is not only among Nigerian communities but in almost all African societies.

Our socialization at the same time confines women to certain roles for example, cooking, baby-making, baby nursing, home keeping and other chores. This state of affairs is definitely a negation of the scientific discovery that women are intellectually inferior to men. This is because of the fact that both males and females have 42 chromosomes in their genes. Furthermore, science has revealed that there are no innate biological or psychological reasons why girls should not do as well as boys or men and women if given the opportunity and if provided with adequate motivation (Onyinye 1999). However, girls who eventually grow into women are pulled out of school for family reasons such as fetching water, firewood, taking care of the sick, participating in the rites of passage and leading families in case both parents are deceased, especially with the prevalence of the HIV/AIDS scourge.

#### **4.7 Early or Forced Marriages**

In this area of Northern Nigeria, girls are often married off at age ten but are not expected to cook or have a sexual relationship with the husband until puberty begins. However, they go to the homesteads of their future husbands and in the process lose the freedom associated with childhood. From marriage until after child bearing age, a woman has virtually no freedom of movement or association. This means she has few opportunities to raise her experiences or expectations. As this study found out:

Case 4: Rukkayat had this to say: I was only 9 years old when I was married off and kept under the tutelage of Hajiya Worigida my husband's

first and eldest wife, while I am the fourth wife. She tutored me until when I was thirteen years and experienced my first menstruation, after which I was led to my husband and he broke my virginity.

Girls are frequently married off at an early age when they are not mature enough to take up the responsibility of being wives or effective mothers. In most cases, they are not physically, psychologically or morally matured enough to shoulder such responsibilities. Related to this is the practice of forced marriage, perpetuated by adult male members of the family. Pala and Awori (1975) observe that the cultural expectation and patterns are such that if highly educated, a girl may find it difficult to get a husband or be a good wife. They argue that women shy away from much education in order to remain marriageable. They avoid fields that are less prestigious and compatible with demands for family life. This makes them have a low self-image.

Education is undesirable for women such as found in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria as it interferes with the cultural authenticity and to the dismay of men. Parents feel that education can only ruin girls/women from what they were expected to be by tradition.

Traditional initiations, circumcision, payment of bride wealth and early marriages, have been observed to adversely affect the retention of girls in school (FAWE, 1998). It is alleged that circumcised girls become undisciplined and when they return to school, assert negative influence on their uncircumcised peers and are rude to their teachers. Women who have undergone initiation view themselves as adults and in most cases, give up their academics for an easier option of marriage. It is also seen as a prestige to be married as one gains a higher social status.

Despite the increasing role of women in house keeping, some men rarely assist their wives with simple domestic chores, neither to relieve them of the work nor to express appreciation. Some marriages may have problems because of, for example, the failure of a wife to finish cooking on time. The very few men who attempt to assist their wives are often ridiculed. In fact, a woman living happily with her husband may have the husband branded, “A piece of cloth that is always tied by a woman”, in the community. So, in order not to be ridiculed or branded as such, a man treats his wife as a servant, rather than a partner to be consulted and treated with respect as Uthman Ibn Fudi (1997) noted. Consequently, in Northern Muslim communities, there is frequently a general lack of close relationship between husband and wife as prescribed in the holy Qur’ an.

There are sad stories of women complaining of hard labour, marriage of young daughters against their will, child brides brought into the household, or forced cohabitation at puberty regardless of mental or emotional development. There are endless deaths of females and infants. This study found out that:

Case 5: Sefiya had this to say: I was brought to this household at age 10. When I reached puberty at 13 years, I was ordered into our old husband’s bedroom who is old enough to be my grandfather (aged 63). Up till now that I am 20 years old he has not been able to put me in the family way and I dare not say a word of it to anybody. Rather, the heap of blame of misfortune is placed on me and I have to endure and take it as God given and my destiny.

#### 4.8 Socialization

In some parts of Northern Nigeria, children walk 2-10 kilometres to school. Most parents are reluctant to send their daughters to schools because they fear exposing them to moral or physical peril. For example, in Wurno Local Government Area of Sokoto State, where widespread seasonal flooding renders transport inoperative, girls may find it more difficult to reach school than boys. In some rural areas, there can be danger from wild animals and hoodlums who can attack such children and harm them. This study found out that:

Case 6: Misitura aged 45 and the mother of Hidaya, had this to say: Eh! School? What! No! I can not think of how my Hidaya will be sent to school and as such break her virginity, before marriage! That is a taboo. I will direct you to my mother aged 57 who is her grandmother; let her also tell you that it is a tradition for a girl to retain her virginity until marriage. This practice has been on from generation to generation. Her father and his kinsmen dare not hear this! Thoughtless of us women!

The home is ideally the first and the last school of the child and the foundation of his/her socialization with the mother serving as the first teacher.

The structure of educational opportunities has contributed to the present day attitude towards women as less intelligent as or as less value to their families than men. Girls are often treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last thus undermining their self-esteem.

Women acquire the status of disempowerment very early in life. From a very early age, the socialization processes raise the girl child to be subservient to boys and men, to leave decision-making to the boys and men, not to speak out or to challenge them or the status quo. This is reinforced in the home, in school, religious institutions and by the society at large. By

the time the girls have reached teenage, the socialization processes have put them in an inferior place to boys and men and have disempowered them to accept the situation as given. It has become clear to those engaged in gender transformation that there cannot be meaningful gender transformation unless the efforts to eliminate gender inequalities include the empowerment of women from the time they are young girls.

#### **4.9 Political Environment**

Not surprisingly, policies aimed at enhancing female participation in education have a poor history (Subbaroa, 1994). The political instability of a country, as evidenced by civil strife and war, has destabilized education in areas where schools are destroyed.

Case7: Hajiya Malama aged 25 had this to say: How can you be talking about women basic formal education in these days of Boko Haram Revolution in Nigeria? Please do not mention these words in a large gathering because you will become a victim yourself and get harmed. Even if I dream of going to that kind of school, I dare not voice it out because, my husband's family and mine will even hand me over for torture!



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

Formal education leads to greater choices, formal education and training especially for women has social and economic benefits for the society as a whole. Education does not only open opportunities for women, but also empowers them to stand up against gender discrimination.

The findings indicate that culture plays an important role in obstruction of Women's access to formal education as early as young girls in life. There is also the perception that negative attitudes, early marriages, prescribed roles in the society, socialization and societal instability are all part of cultural obstacles to formal basic education in Nigeria and indeed in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria.

#### 5.2 Summary

The reasons given above have caused some women affected in the rural areas of that state, some depressions and torture such as not allowing the girl child to go through the experience of girl childhood before transformation to adulthood. From the tender age of five, girls are assigned domestic roles, and by age six they are dressed in imitation of adult women and begin to be viewed as future wives. They go out only for specific reasons, for example, running errands for their mothers, selling food and handcrafts from bowls or baskets on top of their heads and delivering messages.

Though young, these females are allowed to leave their houses for naming ceremonies, marriages, funerals and medical care. If they go out, it is usually at night and an older woman accompanies them as escort and they must cover their heads. Young women and men are not allowed to mix and form relationships, instead arranged marriages are done with girls being married younger and boys older. Women are secluded in separate and distinct worlds, which have profound psychological effects. These different orientations to life make both sex interests different, thus the authority of men is quite precarious.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The women of Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria need transformative change in their lives and incentives for access to formal basic education and training. Public education should go hand in hand with the creation of public awareness or the need to observe equal access to formal basic education and training of women especially in that state. Most of the discrimination against women stem from cultural and social attitudes society has towards women. Public education and public awareness should play a great role in changing societal attitudes that discrimination against girls and women.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

Arising from the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Change of Attitude

Women's self-esteem should be restored through sensitization of men, women and children through mass media campaigns of the importance of girls and women in society.

- **Role of Policies**

Governments must recognise and demonstrate through gender responsive policies that tangible accomplishments can only be attained when girls and women's talents, capabilities, abilities and intelligence, are utilized. Gender aware policies recognize gender and social inequalities and plans to bridge these inequalities. Governments should also focus on girls and boys, men and women and recognize the differential impacts of policy on men and women, boys and girls.

- **Affirmative Action**

Due to the historical and cultural ideologies of sex discrimination and exclusion as seen in the past discussion, an approach to secure equal opportunity and participation by women in vital areas of development is necessary. Affirmative action is therefore a valuable policy instrument in the advancement of women's concerns and is required to increase their access to major sectors of the society such as formal education.

### **5.5 Recommendations for further research**

Research should be carried out in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria on opportunities and challenges facing women in attaining formal education and training.

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If no, how has it negatively affected women's positions?

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## OBSTACLES FACED BY WOMEN PURSUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

How much do you agree with the following statements?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Government supports women in pursuing education				
Policies related to women participation in education and training in Northern Nigeria are adequate				
All public officials are committed to supporting and enabling women in pursuing education and training				
Capacity and expertise exist among women in the education and training sector				
More internal support for women is needed to support them with regard to education and training				

## HOW TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN PURSUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. What kind of support would women require to better enhance their education and training

( Use the table below to answer this question, and tick where appropriate)

Assistance required	Short- term	Medium-term	Long-term

### SUMMARY

1. Are women involved in education and training?

i) .....

.....

ii) .....

.....

iii) .....

.....

2. If women have been involved in education and training, what are their major failures?

Why explain.

i) -----  
-----

ii) -----  
-----

iii) -----  
-----

3. What strategies and approaches do you think may be used to involve and allow women to pursue education and training?

i) -----  
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ii) -----  
-----

iii) -----  
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4. What are other problems/obstacles faced by women in pursuing education and training

i) -----  
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## **Appendix 2: Key Informant Interview Guide**

Hello, my name is Regina Oraegbuna, a Masters Degree Student of Gender and Development, in University of Nairobi, Kenya. I am conducting a research on Cultural Obstacles to Basic Formal Education and Training of Women in Sokoto State Of Northern Nigeria. You have been selected to participate in the study. I want to assure you that all of your answers will be kept strictly in secret. I will not keep a record of your name or address. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, or skip any questions that you do not want to answer. There are no wrong or right answers in this research. Some of the questions may be difficult for you to answer, but many of you have found it useful with the opportunity to talk. Your participation is completely voluntary and your experiences will be used to remedy the situation in the near future. The interview takes approximately 50 minutes to complete. Do you agree to be interviewed? Thank you for your co-operation.

1. What are the cultural obstacles that prevent women from pursuing basic formal education and training?
2. To what extent do you think early marriages have played a part in preventing women from pursuing basic formal education and training in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria?
3. To what extent do you think women have been given opportunities in pursuing basic formal education and training?
4. What other factors do you think are responsible for preventing women from pursuing basic formal education and training?

Thank you.

### **Appendix 3: Case Narratives Schedule**

Hello, my name is Regina Oraegbuna, a Masters Degree Student of Gender and Development, in University of Nairobi, Kenya. I am conducting a research on Cultural Obstacles to Basic Formal Education and Training of Women in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria. You have been selected to participate in the study. I want to assure you that all of your answers will be kept strictly in secret. I will not keep a record of your name or address. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, or skip any questions that you do not want to answer. There are no wrong or right answers in this research. Some of the questions may be difficult for you to answer, but many of you have found it useful with the opportunity to talk. Your participation is completely voluntary and your experiences will be used to remedy the situation in the near future. The interview takes approximately 50 minutes to complete. Do you agree to be interviewed? Thank you for your co-operation.

- i. What is your experience of not having been to a primary School?
- ii. What are the common causes of you not being able to attend primary school?
- iii. What are the cultural factors which denied you access to attend a primary school?
- iv. How does the community cope with illiteracy of women especially in the present days of civilization?
- v. How do your family members perceive non-female attendance of primary school?
- vi. What are your life experiences without attending primary school?

Thank you.

#### Appendix 4: Statement of Consent

I am conducting a research project as a student of Gender Studies, University of Nairobi. During our research we will receive no personal benefit from being part of the study. However, your participation will help us understand cultural obstacles to basic formal education and training of women in Sokoto State. We require about 50 minutes of your time. We will be recording your answer to our questions on a tape recorder. Any information you may provide will be confidential. This means that while we may publish and share the information you provide for research purposes, your name and identity will be not be provided. You can stop being a part of the study at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no compensation made for your participation in the study. If you wish not to be a part of this study, please inform us so.

.....

Participant's Name (Written by the Researcher)

.....

Place

.....

Signature

.....

Date and Time