

**FEMALE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF WOMEN NATURE AS HINDERANCE
TO LIFELONG LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION ABEOKUTA**

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Abstract

The study examined the female students' perception of women nature as hindrance to lifelong learning experiences in Federal College of Education Abeokuta, Nigeria. Survey research design of ex post facto type was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of one hundred and fifty (150) students which were randomly selected from two (2) Departments in the three (3) schools of the college. Three research questions were raised for the study. Three instruments titled Female Students' Perception of Rigour of Pregnancy/Birth Scale (FSPRPBS), Female Students' Perception of Menstrual Pain Scale (FSPMPS), Female Students' Perception of Menopausal Syndrome Scale (FSPMSS) were used to gather information on female students' perception of women nature. Data collected were collated and the research questions raised were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation statistics. Findings revealed that the rigour of pregnancy/birth, menstrual pains and menopausal syndrome have greatly hindered the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that adult education teachers, social and health workers should make effort to educate women about their nature. Also, women should be encouraged to seek help from medical practitioners and counselors in order to overcome health related issues that are peculiar to women nature which can hinder their lifelong learning experiences.

Keywords: Women nature, Rigour of pregnancy/birth, Menstrual pain, Menopausal syndrome

Introduction

Learning commences immediately a child is born and it continues throughout one's existence till death. Learning is of varying types of which lifelong learning is one. Lifelong learning is a natural based learning which can be achieved through one's determination. Department of Education and Science (DES) (2000) argued that lifelong learning is ongoing, voluntary and self-motivated. This form of education paves way for personal development and self-reliance which are hallmarks of progressive learning.

Lifelong learning is basically geared towards pursuit of knowledge and personnel or professional reasons. Commission of the European Communities (COM) (2006) supported this assertion by stating that lifelong learning does not only enhance social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development but also self-sustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability. As a result, both male and female individuals are left with no other option than to pass through the learning. Although, their aims may be similar but the rate, pace and ways of achieving the learning are different. In this course of lifelong learning, the female folk encounter series of problems which often disrupt the smooth running of lifelong experiences

In spite of the fact that women are assumed to be naturally weaker than men, they still perform some tasks that require muscular and intellectual development. In addition, women are also subjected to the rigour of childbearing and rearing, home management, menstrual cycle experiences, menopausal syndrome, trauma arising from inequality and a host of other experiences that can easily hinder smooth achievement of learning. Chinyoka & Naidu (2014) posited that girls are losing out on education because they are needed more to support their household with labour.

Lifelong learning starts from the years of childhood education. Knowledge is gained through the accumulation and transformation of wealth of experiences overtime. Commission of the European communities (COM) (2001) submitted that lifelong learning encompasses all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences with a personal, civic, social and/or employment related perspective.

Lifelong learning is seen as a continuous process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their life time and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all roles circumstances and environment. According to Skolverket (2000), lifelong learning is seen as a holistic view of education that recognizes learning from different environments. Skolverket (2000) further identified these environments or dimensions as recognizing that individuals learn throughout a life time and that learning can be from the formal, non-formal and informal settings. Lifelong learning may be broadly seen as a kind of learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places. It promotes learning beyond traditional schooling and it is an experience that runs throughout one's life time.

Many women with higher degrees tend to give birth to few children. The reason behind this may be attributed to the fact that women experience series of difficulties

during gestation and birth time. Mokgalabone (1999) maintained that pregnancy is among the most serious cause of school disruption, particularly at secondary school level. After birth, the rigour of child nursing tends to double those of gestation and labour periods. Nursing mothers who double as learners find academic work more stressful and as such, some of them may disengage and bid bye-bye to schooling. In reality, there are factors that determine whether or not a mother is able to continue her schooling after the birth of the baby.

However, these factors largely depend on the mother's ability to manage logistics and finances associated with acting in the capacity of a mother and a learner. Mothers who return to school after the birth of their babies face of challenges and this makes it extremely difficult for them to succeed in their academics (UNESCO, 1995). UNESCO (1995) further reported that women represent over half of the world's out of school population. Mothers who find themselves in this situation may also receive very little support from people around them.

The onset of menstruation is a landmark event in the life a young woman hence many complications and challenges accompany such an event. Female adult learners of productive ages in schools and training institutes are susceptible to pains and discomfort associated with menstrual cycle. There is qualitative evidence that, at least in the past, the beginning of menses was a reason for female school dropout, since young women were encouraged to marry soon after menarche (Kallipeni, 1997). The onset of menstruation may have negative effect on learning achievement of female learners as it promotes absenteeism and obstructs ability to learn. Kirk & Sommers (2006) argued that menstruation creates a set of physical, socio-cultural and economic challenges that may interfere with a young woman's ability to attend school or to participate fully in classroom activities.

In an ideal situation where learning is scheduled, female adult learners may find it difficult to be present in school at all time and this will automatically constitute a kind of setback to their learning. Oster & Thornton (2011) opined that girls are significantly more likely to be absent from school on days when they experienced their menstrual periods relative to other school days. Female adult learners' attendance in school, training and other skill acquisition facilities is disrupted by the physical discomfort of menstruation, including menstrual cramps, headaches, backache, nausea and diarrhea. Pharmacological treatments such as pain killers may not be that effective especially when one is passing through a severe menstrual discomfort.

More so, lack of adequate sanitary materials may be one barrier to school attendance for girls of reproductive age. Commercially produced products may be unavailable in rural areas or too expensive for most families. For examples, multiple studies in Nigeria found that fewer than one third of urban adolescent girls used commercially produced sanitary materials (Abioye 2000; Adinma & Adinma, 2008; Kanyike, Akankwasa & Karungi, 2003). Reliance on cloth rags may restrict physical mobility, as girls may not have adequate supplies to prevent leaks or maintain hygiene. Cloth menstruation materials must be regularly washed, and becomes problematic for

females who cannot afford soap and the additional time devoted to homework and studying (Kirk & Sommers, 2006).

Menopause is an occurrence in the life of women as they age. It is an experience after the years of their child birth. It is a natural phenomenon which occurs in women's lives when menstrual periods stop permanently and they are no longer able to bear children (Takahashi and Johnson, 2015). Takahashi and Johnson (2015) further stressed that menopause occurs between 49 and 52 years. The impact of menopause on lifelong learning experience could be devastating in view of the fact that it is often associated with some painful symptoms which include joint soreness, lack of energy, back pain, breast pain, breast enlargement, heart palpitation, headache, vaginal dryness, dizziness, dry itchy skin, thinning, tingling skin, weight gain, urinary incontinence, painful intercourse, urinary urgency and heavy night sweat (Hoffman, 2012).

According to Hoffman (2012), other psychological symptoms include anxiety, poor memory, inability to concentrate, depressive mood, mood swing, irritability and less interest in sexual activity while increased risk of atherosclerosis, acute myocardial infarction and other cardiovascular diseases and increased risk of osteopenia, osteoporosis and accelerated lung function decline dominate the long term effects (Finkelstein, Brockwell, Mehta, Greendale, Soweris, Ettinger, Lo, Johnson, Cauley, Danielson and Neer, 2008).

It is worthy to note that lifelong learning can only be achieved where and when learners (women) have stable free minds, good disposition and sound health. Mangal (2007) affirmed that certain problems like malnutrition, fatigue, bodily weakness and bad health are great hindrances to learning. Besides, lifelong learning may be very difficult to achieve in a situation where women are uncomfortable. Most often, the uneasiness posed by menopause makes them lose concentration hence they pay little attention to the task at hand. Mangal (2002) argued that if effective learning should take place attention is essential. In the same vein, Konkel (2013) reported in a study that pre and post-menopausal women performed worse on tests of memory and cognition in the year after they had the last period than in the time leading up to menopause. Konkel (2013) further stressed that cognitive decline and memory problems associated with menopause are real and they may be linked to fluctuating level of hormones in the brain.

Generally, human nature is the same everywhere but the difference in the mode of activities carried out by women within their body system distinct them from their male counterpart. Aside normal characteristics exhibited by men and women, women still carry out extra obligations which take their time. In this work, the researchers wish to analyze the concepts of rigour of pregnancy / birth, menstrual pain, and menopausal syndrome as variables of women nature in relation to lifelong learning.

The purpose of the study is to investigate female students' perception of women nature as hindrance to lifelong learning experience in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Specifically, the study found out the extent to which female students' perception of how rigour of pregnancy/birth and menstrual pain and menopausal syndrome hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women.

Research Questions

- (i) To what extent does female students' perception of rigour of pregnancy/ birth hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women?
- (ii) To what extent does female students' perception of menstrual pain hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women?
- (iii) To what extent does female students' perception of menopausal syndrome hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the female students in Federal College of Education Abeokuta, Nigeria. The sample of the study was made up of one hundred and fifty (150) female students randomly selected from three (3) schools in Federal College of Education Abeokuta. The instruments adapted for the study were scales titled "Female Students' Perception of Pregnancy / Birth Scale (FSPPBS), Female Students' Perception of Menstrual Pain Scale (FSPMPS) and Female Students' Perception of Menstrual Syndrome Scale (FSPMSS). Face and content validity of the instruments were established by experts in measurement and evaluation in the School of Education, Federal College of Education Abeokuta. To establish the reliability of the instruments, 20 copies of each of the instruments was administered on respondents drawn from other colleges that were not part of the real study. Split – half reliability method was used. The two sets of score of each the three instruments were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. FSPPBS yielded 0.72, FSPMPS has 0.74 coefficient while FSPMSS has reliability index of 0.76.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does female students perception of rigour of pregnancy/ birth hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women?

Table 1: Table showing female students' perception of how rigour of pregnancy/birth hinders the smooth running of lifelong experience among women

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N = 150	
						\bar{X}	SD
1.	Women often experience difficulties during gestation and birth time.	99	51	-	-	3.660	.475
2.	The stress associated with pregnancy may disrupt female learner academic work.	83	52	15	-	3.453	.671
3.	Nursing mothers may drop their academic pursuit due to the magnitude of stress experienced.	72	66	12	-	3.400	.635
4.	It is always difficult for nursing mother to return to school.	48	62	26	14	2.960	.933
5.	Women nature is responsible for the large number of dropouts among female learners.	11	17	59	63	1.840	.898
6.	Nursing mothers find it difficult to combine nursing of babies with any other task.	78	64	8	-	3.467	.598

Grand mean = 3.13

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the female students' perception of rigour of pregnancy / birth as hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. The result revealed that; with grand mean of 3.13, all the items in table 1 are pointers to the female students' perception of rigour of pregnancy / birth as hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. Specifically, items 1 (Women often experience difficulties during gestation and birth time); 2 (The stress associated with pregnancy may disrupt female learner academic work). 3 (Nursing mothers may drop their academic pursuit due to the magnitude of stress experienced and 6 (Nursing mothers find it difficult to combine nursing of babies with any other task) have mean rating of 3.660, 3.453, 3.400 and 3.467 respectively and were therefore strongly agreed on as the situations that greatly hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women.

More so, respondents agreed on item 4 (It is always difficult for nursing mothers to return to school) with mean of 2.960 and 5 (Women nature is responsible for the large number of dropouts among female learners) with mean of 1.840 as situations that hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women.

Research Question Two: To what extent does female students' perception of menstrual pain hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women?

Table 1: Table showing female students’ perception of how menstrual pain hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	N = 150
1.	Many complications and challenges accompany menstrual cycle.	56	71	18	5	3.187	.772	
2.	Every woman experiences pain during menstrual cycle.	22	35	58	35	2.293	.987	
3.	During menstrual cycle, many women excuse themselves from school.	9	20	98	23	2.100	.721	
4.	Physical discomfort of menstrual pains makes learning difficult for women.	47	92	9	2	3.227	.615	
5.	Commercially produced sanitary materials are sometimes expensive for women to buy.	49	89	9	3	3.227	.647	
6.	Additional time devoted for learning is problematic for women.	60	75	10	5	3.267	.730	

Grand mean = 2.88

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the female students’ perception of menstrual pain as hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. The result showed that; with grand mean of 2.88, all the items in table 2 are pointers to the female students’ perception of menstrual pains as hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. Specifically, items 1 (Many complications and challenges accompany menstrual cycle); 4 (Physical discomfort of menstrual pains makes learning difficult for women); 5 (Commercially produced sanitary materials are sometimes expensive for women to buy) and 6 (Additional time devoted for learning is problematic for women) have mean rating of 3.187, 3.227, 3.227 and 3.267 respectively and were therefore strongly agreed on as the situations that greatly hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women.

Consequently, respondents agreed on items 2 (Every woman experiences pain during menstrual cycle) with mean of 2.293; 3 (During menstrual cycle, many women excuse themselves from school) with mean of 2.100 as the situations that hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women.

Research Question Three: To what extent does female students’ perception of menopausal syndrome hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women?

Table 3: Table showing female students' perception of how menopausal syndrome hinders the smooth running of lifelong experience among women

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD
1.	Menopause occurs in women when menstrual cycle stops permanently,	58	88	3	1	3.353	.557
2.	Menopause is often associated with painful symptoms.	62	74	13	1	3.313	.657
3.	Menopausal syndrome obstructs stable mind, good disposition and sound health.	62	73	10	5	3.280	.734
4.	Post-menopausal women often lose concentration in class.	58	72	15	5	3.220	.759
5.	Menopause is characterized by cognitive decline and memory problems.	64	73	9	4	3.313	.706
6.	The long term effects of menopause could make life unbearable for female learners.	41	48	42	19	2.740	.1000

Grand mean = 3.20

Table 3 reveals the mean and standard deviation of the female students' perception of menopausal syndrome as hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. The result showed that; with grand mean of 3.20, all the items in table 3 are pointers to the female students' perception of menopausal syndrome as hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. Specifically, items 1 (Menopause occurs in women when menstrual cycle stops permanently; 2 (Menopause is often associated with painful symptoms; 3 (Menopausal syndrome obstructs stable mind, good disposition and sound health); 4 (Post-menopausal women often lose concentration in class) and 5 (Menopause is characterized by cognitive decline and memory problems) have mean rating of 3.353, 3.313, 3.280, 3.220 and 3.313 respectively and were therefore strongly agreed on as the situations that greatly hinder the smooth running of lifelong experience among women.

Consequently, respondents agreed on item 6 (The long term effects of menopause could make life unbearable for female learners) with mean of 2.740 as a situation that hinders the smooth running of lifelong experience among women.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that female students of Federal College of Education Abeokuta perceived rigour of pregnancy / birth as a great hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. This finding supports the view of Mokgalabone (1999) which argued that pregnancy is among the most serious cause of school disruption, particularly at secondary level. Also, UNESCO (1995) reported that mothers who returned to school after the birth of their babies face a lot of challenges and this makes it extremely difficult for them to succeed in their academics.

Result from the finding equally indicated that female students of Federal College of Abeokuta perceived menstrual pains as great hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. This finding is in agreement with the assertion of Kallipeni (1997) which maintained that there is qualitative evidence that, at least in the past, the beginning of menses was a reason for female school dropout since young women were encouraged to marry soon after menarche. The finding also aligns with the view of Kirk & Sommers (2006) that menstruation creates a set of physical, socio – cultural and economic challenges that may interfere with a young woman’s ability to attend school or to participate fully in classroom activities. Likewise, the finding is in line with the view of Oster and Thornton (2011) that girls are significantly more likely to be absent from school on the days when they experience their menstrual period relative to other school days.

Consequently, the findings revealed that female students of Federal College of Education Abeokuta perceived menopausal syndrome as a great hindrance in the smooth running of lifelong experience among women. This finding agreed with the findings of Konkel (2013) which affirmed that cognitive decline and memory problems associated with menopause are real and they may be linked to fluctuating level of hormones in the brain. The finding also supported the view of Mangal (2007) that certain problems like fatigue bodily weakness and bad health care are great deterrents to learning.

Conclusion

Women’s nature is so sensitive that it requires serious attention especially when there is an added task to perform. The smooth running of lifelong experience is easily disrupted by many factors. These factors often deny them the favourable atmosphere needed for optimizing their lifelong learning experiences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that

- Adult education teachers, social and health workers should make effort to educate women about their nature and as well encourage to seek help from medical practitioners and counselors in order to overcome health related issues that are peculiar to women nature which can hinder their lifelong learning experiences.
- Government should be more proactive towards providing modern and adequate medical drugs cum facilities to cater for the ever increasing number of pregnant women and to also reduce the pains associated with pregnancy, pain of labour, and that of birth.
- Women should endeavour to visit medical personnel regularly for checkup and counseling on menstrual cycle, menopausal syndrome and other related reproductive health issues associated with pains and discomfort.
- Women should try as much as possible to eat diets containing all the required nutrients needed for the proper functioning of the brain, as this will make learning achievable with little effort.

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