

CHAPTER SIX

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world. Accordingly, qualitative analysis becomes imperative, especially as I study the research phenomena in their natural setting (Blanche *et al.*, 2006:287). A central axiom of this chapter is to analyse and to synthesise the research participants' experiences in words and statements. Unlike chapter four where the data gathered from the field were transformed into numerical data (numbers), the data in this chapter remain at the level of words and statements. These words or statements are those of the research participants and, at some point, I used some words or statements of my own as a means of interpreting what the research participants have said. Such words or statements are used when necessary to further clarify and to add to those of the research participants (Hogan, Dolan & Donnelly, 2009:3–4).

The words or statements in italics are direct quotes of participants. The names of participants are also in italics. Importantly, the names of participants are pseudonyms.

For qualitative purposes, interviews were used to gather data. In this research, the interviews took place in two phases. Firstly, an interview protocol was completed, and secondly, the interview itself took the form of focus group conversations. For this reason, this chapter is divided into two sections: firstly, responses on interview protocol form and, secondly, focus group conversations.

6.2 Focus group conversations

In this section, the discussions/conversations leading to the stories of the research participants are presented.

Altogether twelve research participants took part in the focus group interview/conversation. Of these participants, six are married women and six are single women studying in higher education. The focus group conversation was held at two research sites: Lagos State University and the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. Three married women and three single women took part as research participants in the conversation at each of the sites.

Recording the conversation

As stated in chapter three of this study, I travelled to Nigeria. On the day of the focus group discussion/conversation I went to the research sites armed with a tape recorder to record the conversation. Unfortunately, when I arrived I found that no electricity was available. This meant that I was unable to record the discussion. As a solution I wrote detailed notes and tried, as far as possible, to capture the actual words of the participants. As a consequence, the discussion lasted much longer than anticipated, with each discussion lasting approximately two hours instead of the planned one hour. However, the participants were willing stay for spend the additional time.

6.3 Conversation at the college of education

As we commenced the discussion, one of the participants, Ronke said “I am very happy to be here, at least I now have the opportunity to speak to someone outside my friends about the problems and challenges I face studying at higher education institution”. Most of them were of the same opinion. At this point, the participants reminded me that it was their last year on campus; in fact they had just written their last examination paper entitled “Process of modernization”. At this juncture, I realised how lucky I was having

them all present for the interview/discussion and how eagerly they really wanted to discuss their experiences at a higher education institution. For many of them, discussing their experiences was fun, relieved them of emotional pain and constituted an avenue for other women students to learn from their experiences.

When the discussion started formally, I was amazed to hear a participant, Lola, a married woman student say that her primary reason for pursuing higher education is because of her husband. She said my husband always shut me up whenever we are discussing or having a debate at home; he believes I have nothing to contribute simply because I am not a graduate like him, she said. In her words *“Within me, it hurts especially when he says it in the presence of our children”*. She said further, *“I have a business that is doing very well and I support the family financial yet he abuses me because he is an NCE (national certificate of education) graduate”*. In anger, she said *“I even make more money than him. This was provoking and I can no longer take it because our children are growing up and I do not want them to see me as an illiterate as their father have always painted me.”* Another married women student, Funmilayo, stated that her reasons for choosing to study in higher education institution include *“a taste for knowledge; influencing my children; empowering myself so as to be able to contribute to the country’s development”*. The third of the married woman students, Ejiro, highlighted that *“being a graduate of higher education will help me become a better mother and wife that other women in the neighbourhood will want to emulate”*.

With respect to the support that women students get from their husbands, only one woman student acknowledged that the husband was supportive. Her name is Ejiro. According to her, *“my husband supports me financially, and in many other forms”*. She concludes that her husband’s support is total.

For the other two married women student – Lola and Funmilayo – their husbands are not supportive. With deep anger, Lola said, *“my husband is against my schooling; he complains all the time that I have neglected him and the children”*. The other married woman student –Funmilayo – complains that she *“finances my schooling from the little salary I earn as a teacher in a private nursery school”*.

Importantly, none of the married women students in this discussion ever spoke about support from their parents. When I asked, they said differently but in agreement that their parents do not support them financially in their schooling. As the conversation was going on, I observed that one of the participants (married woman student – *Lola*) had just given birth to a new baby and the babysitter was outside in the car with the baby. I only got to know this when the babysitter came into the discussion venue to ask the mother to come and breastfeed the crying baby. She left to breastfeed the baby but wasted no time in joining us again as soon as she had finished.

Despite the differences in the support they received from their husbands, they were all not happy with their academic performance. They all believed they could do better if they were single students with no marital responsibilities. They maintain that they have too many marital responsibilities and that they are very time consuming.

As I struggled with my emotion, one of the married woman participants, *Funmilayo* revealed that her biggest problem is her husband's second wife. According to her, the husband is a polygamist – married to two wives – and cannot afford to finance or support her schooling without doing same for the other woman. However, the other woman would not even support the idea.

The discussion took the form of an open discussion where I allowed every participant to speak freely. However, I allowed the married women participants to speak first. The reason for this was to allow for comprehension and synthesis on my own part as well as logical reporting; also my main focus in this study was the married women.

There were three single women participants (*Ronke*, *Amaka* and *Slyvia*) and they revealed that they get support from their parents. With regards to the question of why they chose to study at a higher education institution, *Ronke* and *Slyvia* said that they love teaching and wants to become teachers and they can only become qualified teachers if they obtain a national certificate of education, which is the minimum qualification for teaching. This can only be achieved by enrolling and graduating from a college of education or any other higher education institution that offers the same certificate or degree programme. The third single woman participant, *Amaka* said that her reason for

choosing to study in higher education is to empower herself, make herself relevant in society, to be able to contribute to nation building like some other prominent Nigerian women. She gave examples of women such as Prof. Dora Akinyuli (Minister of Information) among others, as being her mentor.

In response to the question of which category of women does better academically and which category is affected most by cultural practices, all the participants said that single women perform better academically and that married women students are affected most by cultural practices. Except for one (*Ronke*), the single women participants were satisfied with their academic performance. She said “*my parents are poor and cannot afford to support me financially the way I should be supported but they are trying in their little capacity*”. She believes that she could do better academically if she had more support.

At one point the discussion became very exciting. One of the single woman participants, Amaka attempted to hijack the discussion. She wanted to do all the talking and was not giving others the opportunity to talk; however, I was quick to notice this and I cautioned her by telling her to allow others to talk. Nevertheless, she was very instrumental as she voiced some previously unvoiced and vital issues. She said that she came from a polygamous home where there is academic competition between all her father’s children so she had no choice other than to do well at school because the father would only give them (children) the money needed for school once. Therefore, no one can afford to fail or not to do well because anyone who failed or did not do well would have to leave school.

Amaka said the following:

As I speak, I remember the stories of my sisters and brother. Two of my (Amaka) sisters, one older than me and the other younger than me who are not from the same mother are currently out of school because they did not perform well in two terms/semesters. My brother who is also from a different mother equally did not perform well academically for thereabout semesters (one or two semesters). My father regarded them as people with no brain and insisted that he cannot afford to spend

money that he does not even have on them. Upon the suggestion of my mother (third wife) and after pleading and persuading my father together with other wives to give my sisters further chance which failed, my sisters are now learning trade – tailoring and hairdressing. While my sisters were stopped schooling, to my (Amaka) dismay my brother was not stopped schooling. Can someone tell me why my brother was not stopped schooling given the fact that he did not equally perform well academically like my sisters? This is not fair!

As the discussion progressed, I allowed the participants to do more of the talking with me coming in at intervals to ask questions. At this juncture it was evident that the participants were more comfortable speaking to me than writing.

Here, other views voiced by the participants are included below:

- Two single respondents (Sylvia and Amaka) said that as long as they have chosen to engage in higher education they will not marry because they cannot see themselves combining education and marriage. For them the cultural practices affiliated to marriage are something they cannot live with whilst studying.
- One among the single participants Ronke said that she would like to get married before she proceeds to her higher degree programme at university. She argued that a husband is a woman's umbrella and crown; a woman commands respect when she is married. Furthermore, if a woman reads too much, men will not want to ask for her hand in marriage. Both Sylvia and Amaka agreed that a woman commands respect when she is married. They added that a woman in Nigeria is tag (regard) responsible only when she is married. Even though they agreed on this, they insisted that they would only get married when they had completed their studies, because of the task of combining marriage and schooling.
- One married woman participant, Lola said that her academic performance

was discouraging. If she had known the difficulty of combining marriage with schooling, she would not have got married.

- Another married woman, Funmilayo, said that one major problem they face is the lecturers. The lecturers seem not to understand married students' problems. *“They do not encourage us. They shout at us like babies and treat us like kids. Some lecturers use our weakness of not been able to do or submit assignments on time to ask money from us believing that our husbands have got the money to give us.”*

6.4 Conversation at the Lagos State University

The discussion at the University started with a question from one of the participants, Iyang, a married woman student. Her question to me was: *“Are you married?”* I replied “yes”. Another participant, Zainab, also married asked: *“Why you are interested in knowing about women academic performance?”* I then summarised the rational of the research or study and they seemed to be impressed.

After this question, the discussion proper started. First to speak was a married woman student who specifically requested me to address her as “mummy Bola”. Bola is her daughter’s name, and according to her, she is good at explaining herself in speech rather than writing. She realised that she was going to take much time because no one had spoken so she pleaded with others to kindly allow her narrate a short story about herself:

I (mummy Bola) was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone and grew up with my parents who showed me love and care. I never lack anything until the war in Sierra Leone that led to the death of my parents erupted. Thereafter I lived with my uncle for years. I could not complete my teacher training college due to lack of willingness of my uncle to pay my fees. When I was of age different men came for my hand in marriage but I refused because I was very scared of men especially when I

remember the way my uncle often beat and maltreat his wife. But I agreed to marry an ECOMOG soldier from Nigeria posted to Sierra Leone. I agreed to marry him thinking that men from outside my country would be better. He (my husband) initially agreed to send me to school when we get to Nigeria but it was a different song on getting to Nigeria. My husband's parents and family insisted that he has to train the younger brothers and sisters before training another person's daughter. According to her she persuaded and reminded her husband of his promise in Freetown but that did not change the situation.

In a more personal voice she concluded:

My husband does not support me in any way. In fact he does not care about my progress at school all he knows is that his wife is a student of a university. Even at this, my husband's family still gives me problems thinking that it is their son (my husband) that is paying my fees. Thank God for my little business that allows me time for studies and provides me money for my fees.

At the end, with smile she said: *"I am very happy with my academic performance."* At that point she revealed that her present cumulative grade point is above 3.50. She ascribed her good performance to hard work, determination and knowing what she wants in life as an adult. Despite the time she took to narrate her story, other participants never complained, rather it motivated them to speak out.

For another participant (Zainab – married woman) considers herself lucky to have a caring, loving and supportive husband. Having heard the story of "mummy Bola", she said that she works as a teacher but her husband would never allow her to pay fees and buy books from her salary. Her husband pays. She says that her husband helps with domestic work at times and frequently comes to the campus to pick her up after lectures. She called her husband "Mr Wonderful". She did complain, however, about the demands of her husband's family to attend extended family gatherings and social events. This is not helpful as most of these events clash with lectures. She said that her academic

performance is satisfactory but her husband believes that she can improve. In her revelation, she said the husband wants her to graduate with a second class upper division, possibly first class. This is motivational!

Third to speak was Evelyn, a single woman student. In her words, *“I am thirty five years of age, not married. If there is anything I really want in life now is to be married, have my own children and a home that I can call my own. Yes, it is good for a woman to have higher education but it should not take the place of marriage”* she said. *“In fact higher education should come after marriage.”* She further said that she envies participants and other course mates of hers who are married. For her, schooling is like going through hell. No one motivates her. It would have been better to have a husband who does not support her, but at least looking at him and the children would be inspirational for performance and help develop interest in studies. At this juncture I asked her about the motivation and support she gets from her parents and family since she is not married. She responded with anger and said *“I do not get any support from my parents and family. They believe and often say to me what do I want higher qualification for without a husband.”* According to her, *“the only support I get from them is preaching on marriage. The husband they clamour for is not forthcoming; should I kill myself?”* My last question for her was: Are you happy studying and how are you performing academically? Her response was *“no”*. According to her, she is in higher education institution simply because of the qualification to gain promotion at her place of work. For academic performance, she is not performing to her satisfaction but what can she do, she says.

Next to speak was Iyang, a married woman student. She started by thanking all the previous speakers. Furthermore, she acknowledged that in one form or the other their stories corroborated hers. She had mixed feelings about her husband. She wonders if her husband feels for her. *“All the time he (my husband) wants me to do one thing or the other for him even when it is not convenient for me; most annoying is when he comes back home late at night he still wants me to wake up to get his food for him and sit beside him, and watch him eat. This is very annoying although, I enjoy doing this when I am not tired. The only time my husband does not request of me to do anything for him or disturb me is when I am studying or doing assignments. This I have noticed and I now use that as*

an excuse. Most times I pretend to be studying especially when I am very weak or tired to do any domestic work. [However], thank God for his understanding on this ground. [Importantly] my husband pays my fees and provides all my educational needs. [To add to this] my parents, family and husband family has been very supportive. She concluded by revealing to me and the entire participants that it was her husband who actually purchased her application form for admission to the higher education institution where she is currently studying. With regards to her academic performance, she said that she is very happy and her husband is equally impressed. She acknowledged the occasional inspiration she gets from the noise her little children make around her when she studies at home.

After Iyang's narration, two participants were left to speak. These participants are both single women, Efe and Jumoke. In her low and soft spoken voice Efe said *"I have learnt a lot here today. This conversation has helped to change my thinking about marriage."* Marriage and cultural practices are almost universal, and require patience and determination on the part of women to be successful generally as indicated in the story of some of the married women participants. Nevertheless, Efe thinks it is ideal for every woman to be married. She added that higher education would help women become better managers of their homes when married. And for single women, it will help to prepare them for future challenges. Remarkably, she revealed that her primary reason for choosing to study at a higher education institution was to have a profession, develop a career and have a significant impact on her family especially her children when she gets married in the near future. She believes she is privileged to be the first daughter of a mother and father who are both averagely rich. The only problem she has with her father is his recent marriage to another woman because the mother gave birth to three of them who are all girls and her father now wants a male child. *"Even at this, my father still gives me and my sisters all the support we need for our studies"* In terms of academic performance, Efe said that she is very satisfied with her present performance. She is also optimistic that she will graduate with a very good grade point.

By this time the discussion/conversation had already taken more than the time I (the researcher) had envisaged. It appears that some of them really wanted to leave for home.

When I noticed of this I requested them to give me additional time so that the last participant (Jumoke) could speak, they agreed but *Jumoke* was quick to say “*I do not have anything new to say expect for my worries on my academic performance, my academic performance is very poor and dissatisfactory*”. She further revealed that she is currently on a cumulative grade point of less than 1.50.

6.5 Reflections and discussions on focus group conversation

What is the significance of the women’s story? Firstly, they illuminate the women response to the problems they face as students who are studying in higher education institutions. In the course of narrating their stories, they conceptualized their experiences in relation to their academic performance in higher education. As they narrate their stories, they stress on the dominant cultural practices that affect their academic performance the most. In their stories, they see these dominant cultural practices as educational challenges which in turn affect their academic performance in one way or the other. These challenges are regarded as critical determining factors for academic performance of women students in higher education. The challenges as revealed in the stories of the sampled participants are financial problem, cultural practices and psychological problems. Among these challenges, some participants both married and single spoke intensively on the practice of polygamy as one of the dominant cultural practices that affect the academic performance of women students in higher education. The single woman participant who mentioned polygamy in her story revealed that her father indulged in polygamy i.e married another woman because her mother gave birth to only girls and the father wants a male child; it was the search for a male child that prompted her father getting married to another wife. Even at this, she said that the father gives her all the educational support she needs. I consider her fortunate and equally assume that the father is rich and one of those men that believe in educating the girl child because, based on my experience there are very few men in polygamy that would do that. Another reason could be linked to my understanding that the marriage to the new wife is still fresh and the new wife has not given him yet the male child he wants. In their story,

participants showed how women want marriage. Although they narrated that marriage with regards to marital responsibilities influences their academic performance yet they said that it is ideal and compulsory for women to be married. Participants cherish marriage to the extent that single women participants envy their colleagues who are married. To this end, some single participants highlight that they will not pursue or enroll for higher qualifications degree in higher education except when they get married. While, single women participants spoke on the need to be compulsorily married, married women participants spoke mentioning their husbands, children and home frequently. Labov's model of narrative analysis helped me to understand how each sampled participant had conceptualized her experience individually. All participants express readiness and delightness in narrating their stories. For them, it appears to be fun and a relief from emotional pain and constituted an avenue for other women studying in higher education to learn from their experience.

The utilitarian value of education, challenges, opportunity cost i.e alternatives women forgone in order to enroll for higher education and issues concerning their academic performance predominate in their stories; little was made of the intrinsic value, and the joy of learning even when some participants claim that their reason for enrolling in higher education is knowledge oriented or acquisition. However, all women students (sampled participants) who are studying in higher education aspire to become higher education graduates because of the acquisition of higher education qualifications or higher education certificates needed for promotion at the place of work of women students who are working in corporate institutions. Most of the participants are teachers. Besides, some participants were of the opinion according to their story that higher education will help make them better mother and wives which other women in the neighborhood might want to emulate. To this end, they believe that it will have positive impact on their children. Higher education to some participants is an ambition and to some others, it a task that must be accomplished if they are to be relevant at home especially for those that their husbands often look down at because they are considered to be illiterate or not having higher education qualification.

The stories of the sampled participants illustrate that their success or failure in a terms of academic performance depend largely on the support they get from their husbands and parents. Women student participants who get support from their husbands appear to be performing better than their counterparts who are equally married but do not get support from their husbands. The same situation applies to single women student participants who get support from their parents. While they spoke about educational support, all married women student participants expect one spoke about support from their husband. This suggests that when women are married, the responsibility of providing educational needs or support is shifted from the parents to the husbands. In other words, parents of married women student participants did not support them in higher education. One major hallmark of the sampled participants' stories was recognizing the importance of higher education irrespective their different reasons for enrolling for higher education and their challenges. The stories of the sampled participants both married and single pin point that financial support and psychological support are the two common supports they get. Financial support is meant for paying fees and other educational needs while psychological support is in the form of words of encouragement and motivation for better performance. Sampled participants, who did not get support from their husbands and parents showed commitment and passion for higher education by paying school fees and providing for themselves educational needs. They paid their fees from their little salary and earnings from their businesses.

6.6 Interview protocol

In this section, data were gathered via the interview protocol. Research participants from the two research sites – Lagos State University and the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education – participated in the completion of the interview protocol. For the purpose of data organisation and classification, themes were generated. To generate themes, the subheadings of the reviewed literature for this study were considered and used as a yardstick. These themes included higher education, the academic performance of women students, and cultural practice in Nigeria (see chapter 2). In addition other themes include educational support and challenges. Educational support and challenges were considered as one theme because of its cognitive emphasis by participants.

In analysing data gathered from the interview protocol, all the completed interview protocols were read through several times to obtain an overall feeling for the opinions of the participants.

From each interview protocol, significant statements that pertain directly to the experience of women students studying in higher education, and which also relate to the generated themes, were identified. Meanings were then formulated or derived from the significant statements. I refer to these meanings as “deduced” meanings. The deduced meanings were later clustered allowing for the emergence of the common experiences of participants. Therefore, the experiences or results from the cluster were then integrated into an in-depth, exhaustive discussion or description of the research phenomenon so as to enable the researcher to provide answer(s) to the relevant research question(s)

Table 6.1:Higher Education

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT	DEDUCED MEANING
I chose to study in higher institution of learning so that I can influence my children positively and to contribute to the education system of my country.	Higher education is needed for the sake of children’s upbringing/training and nation building/national development.
To be self independent, self reliant and to partake in community service which can be better achieved through higher education.	Higher education is needed for self-reliance and independence.
To acquire more qualification and to be respected in the society	Qualification acquisition and respect from the public.
To have more knowledge in the teaching profession which I have chosen as a career.	Career oriented or based purpose
I want to become a teacher therefore, acquiring more knowledge in education is important. Also, higher Education will help me to become a better mother, role model and leader.	Higher education promotes effectiveness and efficiency in one’s chosen career. Higher education helps women to be better mothers and leaders.

6.7 Theme 1: Higher education for women students as a need.

Women students both married and single studying in higher education express their desire and passion for higher education when they completed the interview protocol. They cherish it and their quest for higher education seems to be on the increase. Their reasons for the increased quest are variegated among the sampled participants. These reasons led to the women students to enroll for higher education. They linked their reasons to self reliance and independence, nation building/national development, qualification acquisition, career oriented purposes, promotion of effectiveness and efficiency in their respective chosen career and qualification acquisition. Although, sampled participants gave different reasons why they chose to study at higher education institution, the reasons given by some is same with the ones given by others. In other words, there is some kind of uniformity in their reasons for choosing to study in higher education. As a means of summary, I gathered from the narrated stories of the participants that women students in higher education need higher education for different reasons. These reasons are individualized because they completed the interview protocol individually. Though, their reasons vary but the reasons for higher education according to the women students (sampled participants) are peculiar and common to the following. First, they need higher education to become better mothers and wives. They are of the opinion that higher education will broaden their knowledge on how to manage their homes and perhaps affect their children positively. Second, some women need or chose to study at higher education for the singular purpose of higher education qualification. These qualifications are needed at their place of work for promotion and continuous relevancy at their place of work. This opinion of theirs could be linked to the general believe that promotion at place work comes with additional remuneration via increase in salaries and fringe benefits. The need for higher education for the purpose of qualification acquisition was emphasis in the responses of women students who do not believe in women being full time house wives but co-bread winners of the family. In other words, they do not wish to depend on their husbands for all their needs.

Table 6.2: Academic Performance and Marital Status

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT	DEDUCED MEANING
Yes, I am married. I am not yet satisfied with my academic performance. I believe single women performance better academically. They are far more than us in number, and they tend to understand themselves and do things in common. This is what happens here.	Married woman. She is not satisfied with her academic performance perhaps because of poor performance. The number of women (enrolment rate) in higher education can influence the academic performance of women in higher education. Single women students perform better.
No, I am not married. I am not satisfied with my academic performance. In my opinion and my scores/grade points, my academic performance is poor in comparison to most other women students who are not married like me.	Single woman student. Good academic performance as shown by her academic grade point. She reveals that single women students perform better.
Yes, I am married. Honestly I am not satisfied with my academic performance. It is almost impossible to combine studying with marriage, children and all the work that goes into making all these possible. I am usually the last on my list, taking care of everyone in the family comes first and taking care of myself and studies comes after others are okay. I only have time for studies when I am exhausted.	Married woman. Not happy with performance. Poor academic performance. Combining marriage and studies is difficult. Marriage is a major reason for poor performance.
No, I am not married. I am very satisfied with my academic performance. I have no reason not to perform well. I have all my time to myself and my studies.	Single woman. Good performance. There is sufficient time for her studies.
Yes, I am married. My academic performance is satisfactory. I owe	Married woman. Satisfactory academic performance. Husband's

<p>my good performance to my husband's cooperation and assistance at home. My husband helps me with most of my assignments perhaps because he graduated in the same course that I am currently studying.</p>	<p>educational background and assistance at home played a major role in her satisfactory performance.</p>
<p>No, I am not married. I am satisfied with my academic performance. My interest in the course and adequate time for study is majority responsible for my good perform.</p>	<p>Single woman. Good and satisfactory academic performance. Interest in the course of study and sufficient time for studies resulted in good academic performance.</p>

6.8 Theme 2: The situation of academic performance of women students in higher education.

This theme reveals the academic performance of women students in higher education. The sampled participants related their academic performance to their marital status. The responses of the sampled participants indicate that academic performance of women students in higher education is influenced and determined by marital status of women students. In the responses of the sampled participants, the academic performance of married women students in higher education is generally not satisfactory. Although, one among the married women students, sampled participants did not say in terms that her academic performance is not satisfactory, she said that “ *her academic performance is not yet satisfactory*” given this statement, one could interpret that the participant hope to improve her academic performance in the future. Apart from married women participants who responded that their academic performance is not satisfactory, few married women participants affirm in their response that their academic performance is satisfactory. On this note, I write, given the number of married women students’ participants that the academic performance of married women is not satisfactory. In the case of single women academic performance in higher education, four of the six participants in both research sites responded that their academic performance is very satisfactory. They acknowledged adequate time for studies due to the absence of marital

responsibilities and interest in their course of study as a reason for their satisfactory academic performance. With regards to the question of which category of women students perform better academically in higher education, both married and single women students participants in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education said that single women students in higher education perform better academically. The responses of sampled participants differ from the responses of participants at the Lagos State University differ on this ground. All married women participants and some single women students said that married women students perform better academically in comparison to their single counterparts. They justified their claim on their academic grade points.

Table 6.3:Cultural Practices

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT	DEDUCED MEANING
It is true that cultural practice or belief affects the academic performance of women students in Higher Education. Cultural practices deprive women especially married women students from taking part in social activities on campus. These social activities on usually helpful in academic work or studies. Again, I believe that a lady should not expose her body but in some courses like physical education practical one need, to expose some part of her body which my own belief is against. I am a very cultured and religious woman.	Cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students in higher education. Cultural practices do not permit women students to participate in social activities and related courses. Some women support cultural practices and seem to see nothing wrong with them and their influence.
True, cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students. The cultural belief that women's education ends in the kitchen has a negative impact on the enrolment rate and academic performance of women students in higher Education. Cultural practices affect married women students most. The preference of men education over women education is not a good practice or belief	Cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students in higher education. The belief that women's education ends in the kitchen affects enrolment rate and academic performance of women students in higher education. Cultural practices affect married women students the most.
True, cultural practices affect women students in higher Education. I consider polygamy as one cultural practice that affects the academic performance of women students most.	Polygamy is one cultural practice that affects women students in higher education.

<p>It is true that cultural practice or belief affects the academic performance of women students in Higher Education. Culture practices affect married women students most. The cultural belief that a woman education ends in the kitchen affects the mindset of a women even if she dares to further her studies, she may not put in 100% effort knowing someday she'll be a man's property or responsibility.</p>	<p>Cultural practices affect the mindset of women students. Cultural practices inculcate the belief that women are property of men in the minds of women and men.</p>
<p>True, cultural practice affects women students' academic performance and possibly their enrolment number in higher education. The married woman is mostly affected. The cultural practice that the man is the breadwinner who takes care of everyone and come first at home is a problem. The women can only follow her dream of pursuing higher education after the husband has achieved his and gives her the permission and support to do so.</p>	<p>Cultural practices affect married women students most. Cultural practices or beliefs regard men as the bread winners and head of the family. Cultural practices require women to ask permission from men for anything they wish to do including education. Furthermore, the success of women in education depends on the support men or their husbands give to them.</p>

6.9 Theme 3: The impact of cultural practices on academic performance of women students in higher education.

According to all sampled participants who completed the interview protocol, cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students in higher education. Cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students because it affects their mind set. It inculcates in women the belief that they (women) are property of men. Cultural practices to women is a way of life that they can not separate themselves from but live with if they are to be regarded as true women. Based on this, cultural practices require women to live their lives in unique ways. It is for this reason that cultural practices do not permit women students to participate in social activities and related courses at higher education. Cultural practices are numerous and affect women students' academic performance in higher education institutions irrespective of their ethnicity given the fact that the sample participants are from different ethnicity or states of the federation of Nigeria. Although there are numerous cultural practices in Nigeria, the

sampled participants who include both married and single women students highlighted the belief that women education ends in the kitchen; polygamy; men are bread winners and head of the family; and domestic work for women as the most dominant cultural practices that affect the academic performance of women students in higher education. Despite, the effect and influences of cultural practices on academic performance of women in higher education as noted by sampled participants, most women students who were participants support cultural practices and seem to see nothing wrong with the existence of these practices. In short, they are of the opinion that cultural practices should be upheld not eradicated.

Table 6.4: Educational Support and Challenges

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT	DEDUCED MEANING
My husband supports me financially and through words of encouragement. My parents support me same way. My major challenge is that I stay very far from campus and a new development area for that matter where I don't have friends or colleagues that I can talk to when I have difficulties with school work. It is even worst because my husband cannot help. He is not highly educated.	Husband and parental support Financial and words of encouragement Distant place of residence and inaccessibility to colleagues is a problem The educational background of husband is a factor that influences academic performance of women students in higher education
My parents are poor I struggle to educate myself to this level. My major challenge is finance. Education is expensive. Despite my personal efforts, my parents are always disturbing me about marriage. This to me is another challenge. Strength from God is my support.	Preference of marriage over women's education Women's education is seen as a waste of time and resources.
The supports I get from my parents are emotional, spiritual and psychological support. My challenge is discouragement from friends who are married. They don't see me as a real or complete woman. This is disturbing especially when they try to exclude me from certain discussions. Besides, finance is another major challenge.	Gets psychological support from parents. Persuasion from parents for marriage A woman is not complete or regarded as a true woman if she is not married. Financial problem is a challenge.
My husband supports me financially and in every other way he knows will help me in my studies. He goes to the extent of	Financial and other necessary support from husband Combining motherhood and related

<p>praying for me each time I am coming to school to write a test or examination. Combining motherhood, taking care of the home, husband and children with studying is the greatest challenge I face.</p>	<p>responsibilities with studying is very difficult and a challenge.</p>
<p>My husband and parents don't support me I get my support from some members of my church. Although they are trying but it is not enough. Schooling without money is really difficult. I am married but it appears that I am not because of the many problems I face. Marriage is difficult; it is more difficult and frustrating when you combine it with studies. I try to put these problems aside or behind me when I engage in discussion with people perhaps I might get a solution but I discover that people are not really interested in other people problem. The guidance and counseling unit of my institution is not also helpful because it is under lock and key most cases. This I consider as a major challenge</p>	<p>There is no support from husband and parents. Gets support from members of the church. Combining marriage and studies is no easy task. Guidance and counselling units of higher education institution have a role to play in women's education.</p>

6.10 Theme 4: The educational support and challenges for women students in higher education.

The variance in the academic performance of women students in higher education is associated with the educational support women get and the challenges they face while they are studying. These challenges vary, differ and are in accordance with women students' marital responsibilities. Sampled participants admit that married women students have enormous responsibilities when compared to that of single women students. The sampled participants acknowledged and regarded marital responsibilities as an educational challenge for women students particularly for married women students. This challenge does not give married women student adequate time to study. Despite this Challenge, single women students are not without challenge. In short, both married and single women students in higher education are all faced with challenges whilst studying in higher education institution. These challenges according to the sampled participants

include financial problem, educational background or husband and parents; cultural practices, psychological problem; problem of combining motherhood and education, distance of their home to higher education institution where they are studying etc.

Without doubt, the degree to which these challenges affect the academic performance of married women students and single women students vary but certain. The degree, at which these challenges affect the academic performance of women students and the variance, is what could possibly account for difference in the academic performance of married women students and single students in higher education. Apart from the linkage of educational challenges to the academic performance of women students, sampled participants also mentioned that the support women students in higher education get from the husband if married and parents if single is of paramount importance to women students especially in the context of their academic performance. Financial support, words of encouragement from husbands and parents, psychological support and institutional support e.g guidance and counseling unit of the institution where women are studying were among the supports sampled participants mentioned as support that can help improve the academic performance of women students in higher education.

6.11 Responses to research questions

6.11.1 Introduction

In this section findings are made based on the above responses that emanated from the completed interview protocol; themes that emerged from the interview protocol; indepth discussions of the themes; narrated stories of participants and the reflection and discussions of the focus group conversation that followed thereafter. This section presents the responses to research questions of this study. The main research question of this study was what is the understanding of and explanation for the academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education? In an attempt to provide response(s) to the main research question, sub research questions were asked. The sub questions are:

- What are the dominant cultural practices that impact the education of married women in Nigeria?
- What are the key trends in the academic performance of married women students in higher education in Nigeria?
- What are the differences/similarities in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in Nigerian higher education?

The responses to the research questions are provided below and in accordance to the above questions.

6.11.2 What are the dominant cultural practices that impact the education of married women in Nigeria?

The current study agrees with recent studies (Bolarin, 2003; 2005; Okeke, 2001; Beck, 1999; 2005; Bamidele & Odunsola, 2006) that cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students in higher education. Beck (1999; 2005) goes further, saying that cultural practices hinder liberation and empowerment for women. However, the findings of recent studies have been limited to single women, the girl child and women in certain subject combinations. This study, on the other hand, affirms and reveals that married women as students are affected by cultural practices.

In this study, it is highlighted, as narrated by the sampled women participants themselves, that marriage, feminised domestication and the belief that women's education ends in the kitchen are cultural practices and beliefs that affect women students in higher education most because of the time that has to be put into the tasks and responsibilities associated with marriage. Married women complained about this and said that the enormous amounts of time spent on such tasks could be used to do assignments, for studying and for preparing for the examinations. Despite this, all the women in the study, including the single women, maintained that it is a good thing to be married, and that marriage is essential for women.

Few of the sampled single women students stated that their major problems in life were associated with the absence of a husband. Hence, they wanted to be married. Others not only saw marriage as a dream for women; they view it is a non-negotiable and irrevocable truth for women to be married. Sampled single women participants envy their married colleagues despite complaints of married women about marital and family responsibilities. The single women also said that women in Nigerian society are only regarded as responsible when they get married. In common with the findings of Chizea (1993) this study shows that women see themselves as the property and responsibility of their husbands to whom they have to be submissive and ask permission from for anything they wish to do in life. Further, the success of women in any sphere or endeavour, including higher education, requires the support of their husbands. Unlike married women students, the story of sampled single women connote that they need the support of their parents for them to be successful in what ever they do particularly higher education.

Finally, in the course of carrying out this study, polygamy was not considered a cultural practice that affected the academic performance of women students in higher education, perhaps because of its exclusion from the relevant literature reviewed. However, during the course of the study, the research participants (women students in higher education) narrated their experiences, and polygamy was frequently mentioned and referred to by both married and single women. Polygamy shifts the attention of husbands and father from their wives to the newly married wife thereby making them not to care and provide for their wives. In the context of this study, and according to some participants, polygamy is one factor that accounted for some men not providing support for their wives who are students in higher education. The mention and emphasis of polygamy was not limited to the stories of participants during the focus group conversation but to the responses on the completed interview protocol. On account of this, it makes sense to say that polygamy as a dominant cultural practice in Nigeria that plays a role in the academic performance of women students in higher education.

6.11.3 What are the key trends in the academic performance of married women students in higher education in Nigeria?

With regards to academic performance, some women were impressed with their performance while others were unhappy. The students who performed well owed it to their commitment, overcoming the challenges, their dedication to their studies and knowing what they want in life as adults. Some of the married women student participants pinpointed their husband's support and understanding as a key factor for good academic performance. Other married women students who were not happy with their academic performance gave the absence of their husband's support and the embracing of cultural practices by their husbands and families as a reason. Given the findings from the interview protocol and the focus group conversation, the key trend noticed in the academic performance of women students in higher education is the improvement in the academic performance of single women over the years of their study i.e as the year of study goes by using year 1 and year 2 the unit of comparison and analysis.

This trend is also evident in table 5.43, chapter 5 where the academic results of sampled participants are shown. The improvement in the academic performance via the academic results for year 1 and year 2 of their study was not only notice but said to be significantly different from the academic performance of married women student participants (see hypothesis 3) whose academic performance apparently remained the same. Indeed, most of the married women student participants directly said that their academic performance is not satisfactory. Very few married women student participants express satisfaction in their academic performance. Importantly, the academic performance trend noticed between married women student participants and single women participants in the University was not the same at the College of education. In the University there were more married women students than in the College of education (See appendix B; page 130). Also, there appear to be a trend of a better academic performance for married women student participants than their single counterparts in the University. Although, the University management did not release academic results of participants to me but the

stories of participants that emerged from the focus group conversation suggest that academic performance of married women students is better than that of single students.

6.11.4 What are the differences/similarities in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in Nigerian higher education?

The finding here indicate how women from different backgrounds constructed and gave meaning to their educational experiences in higher education. The finding reveals the readiness of women (married and single) to speak about their experiences, particularly in the context of cultural practices, higher education and academic performance. For most of the participants especially married women student participants, their experiences are not pleasant and frustrating but talking about them, according to the participants could be a relief from cultural bondage and a source of inspiration for them and other women who aspire to study at higher education. Studying in higher education for women students is by no means an easy task because almost all the sampled participants complained of one thing or the other. The experience of most participants is not without sacrifices. These sacrifices include them paying their school fees in the absence of anyone to pay it and juggling schooling, motherhood and other cultural practices that are compulsorily impose on them as women whether married or single. Interestingly, despite the unpleasant experience and unsatisfactory academic performance as expressed by most participants no one mentioned that she was withdrawing or quitting higher education. A finding from question 2 above (see 6.2.3) provides me with a further insight with regard to the comparison of the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education. In this study, the academic performance of single women participants was found to be satisfactory, as indicated by the qualitative research instruments used (interview protocol and focus group conversation), and improved given their academic results as recorded in table 5.43, chapter 5. In short, hypothesis 3 reveals that there is a significant difference between the academic performance of married women student participants and single women student participants at college of education. The significant difference between married women student participants and

single women participants as comparison parameter could be linked to the college of education directly because of the inaccessibility of academic results of participants studying at the University.

6.12 Conclusion

Given the findings from the research questions, it is evident that responses have been provided to research questions of this study thereby making the purpose of the study achieved. These findings together with findings with respect to hypothesis in chapter 5 were useful in the next chapter as analysis, conclusions and recommendations are made.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I firstly summarise the main findings arising from the analysis of the data. I then offer a more substantive theoretical analysis that arises from one of the findings, namely, that women students in Nigerian higher education, whether married or not, believe that marriage is an important cultural construct to which they aspire. Further, they do not believe that marriage and higher education are mutually exclusive nor are they incompatible aspirations. I examine this finding in relation to the theoretical framework described in chapter three. I argue that Beck's theory of the individualised individual, while valuable, is inadequate for understanding the educational and cultural aspirations of women in Nigerian higher education. I suggest instead that Beck's theory, which focuses on the empowerment and liberation of women, be expanded to include elements of fulfilment, a concept that the women in this study identify as being central to their aspirations. Therefore, the new knowledge from this study centres on the concept of fulfilment. Fulfilment, as revealed in this study, is pivotal to the development of the individual. Fulfilment for women is about, *inter alia*, being married. The women participants want higher education and they want to work (career development), but they also want marriage. This suggests that even if the women in this study are provided with equal opportunities by society, as advocated by feminists, they would still regard themselves as being unfulfilled without marriage.

Fulfilment therefore is self-defined. Neither Beck's individualised individual theory, nor the reviewed literature, makes significant reference to these aspirations, which the participants identified as being central to their fulfilment. Given the participants' narratives, only women themselves are able to identify the aspirations that sum up their fulfilment. The individual, as illuminated by the participants, is fulfilled when his or her deepest desires or aspirations are brought to fruition. According to the narratives of the

participants, aspirations for higher education and marriage seem to be fundamental to fulfilment. This point is strengthened further by the finding that even though the participants complained about cultural practices and the pressures these placed on women, they did not advocate the eradication of such practice. Fulfilment therefore takes on a complex dimension that includes a desire for marriage, dissatisfaction with cultural practice yet an unwillingness to distance themselves from such practice.

7.2 Summary and analysis of the data

In section 6.2.1, I examine the findings that reveal explicit links to the literature review. Here I identify three findings as being significant. These include the links between cultural practices and the participation of women in higher education; the increasing interest of women in higher education; and the dwindling numbers of women students as they climb the educational ladder.

In section 6.2.2, I focus on data which are not indicated in the literature I reviewed, but which my participants identified as being significant. These include polygamy, the link between cultural practice and academic performance, and the fact that participants in the study were not as concerned about academic performance as they were about obtaining a qualification.

I then link sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 to Frieze's expanded achievement attributional model, which served as a compass point in terms of the academic performance of adult students, who in this case are women students in higher education. It was found that this involves a process, and depends on numerous factors which are interconnected.

7.2.1 Findings that reveal explicit links to the literature review

The first finding of relevance is the link between cultural practices and the participation of women in higher education. Specifically, the finding indicates that cultural practices confine women to specific responsibilities and tasks. This finding concurs with Bolarin's

(2005:160) statement that Nigeria as a traditional society holds various cultural views about the status, capability and roles of women. She states further that these cultural views are usually beliefs and practices that set up barriers to women's participation in education especially at the higher education level. Participants in this study clearly illuminated the perception that culture and tradition together restrict and confine women to specific roles particularly within the home. Cultural practices require women to concentrate on their homes and take care of their husbands and children, and not to participate in higher education.

Lola, a married woman participant, said with deep anger that her husband is against her schooling. According to her, he complains all the time about her neglecting him and the children when she is away at school. At the time of the research, Lola had just given birth to a baby and took the baby with her to school. Despite this, her husband did not cease to complain. I suggest that Lola's husband complains because he sees the home as the place where the wife should be at all times, not the school. His belief could possibly have emerged as a result of the cultural practice or belief in Nigeria that women's education ends in the kitchen. This means that his wife does not need education but should be at home to attend to her domestic responsibilities which culture and tradition have assigned to her. Lola's husband's belief that women's education ends in the kitchen parallels one of the reasons given to women to return to their homes after the Second World War. Liberal feminists note that during the Second World War women worked and earned income to take care of the family while their husbands were away on the battleground. Although women enjoyed working at this time, they were asked to return home when the men came back from the war, which may suggest that as long as men were available, women could not work outside the home.

Lola's complaint is similar to that of Iyang who wonders if her husband cares about her. *"All the time he (my husband) wants me to do one thing or the other for him even when it is not convenient for me; most annoying is when he comes back home late at night ..."* In both instances, the husbands expect the women to observe cultural practices that define the behaviour of women.

Falola's (2001) writings concur with the above finding, especially when related to Lola's and Iyang's narratives. Falola asserts that cultural practices in Nigeria expect women to be managers of the home, whose responsibilities are mainly domestic – washing, cleaning, cooking, taking children to school, fetching them from school and attending to the needs of their husbands among others. Above all, Falola mentions that these responsibilities are extended to extended families and that married women must abide by the cultural practices or norms if they are to stay in their husband's house. According to the participants, it is these responsibilities that deprive women students of the time needed to adequately prepare for their studies and academic tasks, thereby affecting their academic performance. Zainab's narrative seems to agree with Falola's view when she complains about the demands of her husband's family to attend extended family gatherings and social events. In these instances the wives are expected to perform domestic roles or responsibilities such as cooking the meals for guests and others. This is not helpful as many of these events clash with lectures. It is arguable therefore that this study confirms the views of Bolarin (2005) and Falola (2001) that cultural practices restrict and restrain the participation of women in higher education in Nigeria.

The second finding, which reveals explicit links to the literature review, indicates an increasing interest in higher education by women in Nigeria. Odejide (2003) notes that such interest in higher education has increased over the years because of the post-militarism democratisation programme in the country. This programme encourages women to be involved in nation building and has actually helped to develop and increase the number of women in political office and industry across the country. Women's interest in higher education increases as they see others who are contributing to nation building, particularly in politics, and they become role models. In this study, Amaka, a single woman participant, said that she wants to be like Prof. Dora Akinyuli (Minister of Information) and other prominent women. In short, she referred to these women as her mentors. Amaka's view is similar to that of some of the other participants. All participants in this study claimed that they need higher education. It is this feeling of need that is possibly responsible for the increased demand for higher education by women in Nigeria.

According to the participants, women's interest in higher education is tied to numerous reasons which include the acquisition of higher education certificate/degrees that will enable them gain promotion at their place of work. In addition, many of the participants in this study felt that higher education would help them to become better wives and mothers, which would influence their children positively and, perhaps, help them to be more useful at home and in the country. Participants also suggested that higher education would earn them respect, that is, they would be able to command respect from their husbands and neighbours. Furthermore, participants mentioned that higher education would foster and enable them to contribute meaningfully to society and national development. The reasons given here by participants can be summed up and linked to liberal feminists' ideology that women need to revalue, resocialise and redefine themselves, and give themselves a new identity that differs from "housewives and mothers". Apart from the post militarism democratisation programme in the country mentioned above, it is possible that these participants, especially the ones involved in polygamous marriages (a dominant cultural practice in Nigeria revealed by this study), either as a child or wife, want to earn their own income, and own their own property now or in the near future so as to take care of themselves and their children, since resources in polygamous families are often shared among all the wives and the children. My reasoning here is based on the historical and political accounts of understanding feminism in Nigeria, particularly on women's ownership of property and the fact that they served in many cases as heads of communities prior to colonisation (see page 69). Examples of such women include the late Mrs Funmilayo Ransome Kuti – the mother of Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the Afro beat music legend. Mrs Funmilayo Kuti was famous for owning property and being politically active, and was the first woman in Nigeria to drive a car, something that up to that time has only been done by men (Johnson-Odim & Mba, 1997).

The third finding that is linked to the literature is that the number of women students dwindles as they climb the educational ladder. Although I did not research the enrolment of women students in the sampled institutions, data collected for this study confirm (Bolarin, 2003; 2005; Akande, 2001; Okeke, 2001) that the number of women students dwindles as they climb the educational ladder, given the number of women student participants in colleges of education and the number of women students at universities. In

this study, the total number of women students at the college of education amounted to 66, while 22 were at university. Bolarin, Akande and Okeke all ascribe the influence of cultural practices on higher education to this enrolment pattern. Similarly, most single participants in this study who are studying at the college of education disclosed that they would not proceed to university if they remain unmarried, because cultural practices require them to be married. Besides, according to them, marriage is a personal desire. This suggests further that the number of women willing to pursue higher education may increase with an increase in the number of married women.

7.2.2 Findings not indicated in the literature

The first finding not evidenced in the literature was that of polygamy and its influence on higher education for women. Some participants, both married and single women, wrote in the interview protocol and narrated in their stories that polygamy influences their academic performance and women students' access to higher education. They said that polygamy is one factor that deprives them of support, especially financial support, from their husbands and fathers.

Although I did not specifically ask them about polygamy, a number of participants felt strongly enough to raise it themselves. Some participants felt that if they were the product of a polygamous marriage, that is, if their father was the man in a polygamous marriage, then their chances of access to higher education decreased given the large number of children that had to share the family's resources. Furthermore, they felt that it was often the children of the newest wife and the male children who received most of the attention and the financial resources, and that they were often disadvantaged because of this. Indeed, Amaka, a single woman participant from a polygamous home where there is "academic competition" between all the father's children, said that her sisters had dropped out of school because of the father's limited financial resources. According to Amaka, the academic performance of two of her sisters and her brother dropped for two terms/semesters and her father used it as an excuse to stop the sisters' schooling, saying that he did not have the money to waste considering there were other children who

needed the money equally. The father suggested that the sisters learn a trade (tailoring or hairdressing) but the brother was not stopped from schooling. Amaka gave no reason for this.

Similarly, Efe, another single women participant, mentioned that the only problem she has with her father is his recent marriage to another woman because the mother (Efe's mother) had three girls. She added, however, that her father supports her and her sisters in terms of their educational needs such as paying school fees, buying books and other needs for studies. She considers herself and her sisters lucky to still have their father's support which usually is not the case with polygamous men. I presume that the father still supports Efe and her sisters because the new wife is yet to have a child, the male child that the father wants. In my understanding, if the new wife gives birth to a male child the attention of the father will most likely shift from the girls (Efe and sisters), as most men prioritise male education over female education.

In addition to the single women participants who talked about polygamy, married women participants had similar opinions on the topic. Funmilayo, a married woman participant who is one of the wives in a polygamous marriage, revealed in her narrative that her biggest problem is her husband's second wife. Her story indicates that her husband did not support her studies because whatever is done for one of the wives must be done for the other. I gathered that the other wife is not in school or the husband does not have the financial means to support both of them, hence he decided not to support either of them financially to avoid complaints from any of the wives. These assumptions support the Funmilayo's belief that the other women would not support her husband financing her schooling and this affects her academic performance. According to her, her academic performance is unsatisfactory.

In addition to the problem of women students' access to higher education resulting from polygamy, as reflected in the narratives of the participants, another important issue is that polygamy in all probability favours male students and disadvantages female students with respect to access to education. This is underlined by Amaka's story which illustrates how

her father did not stop her brother's schooling but stopped her sisters schooling using the polygamous situation as an excuse.

While the narratives of single women participants indicate that polygamy is a problem in accessing higher education, married women participants who spoke about polygamy indicated that polygamy not only affects women's access to education but also influences their academic performance owing to their husbands not supporting them financially. In my understanding polygamy could possibly be a cause for the absence of psychological support that some participants complained about.

The second finding not indicated in the literature is that participants were not as concerned about their level of academic performance as about obtaining a higher education qualification. The majority of the participants focused on obtaining a certificate/degree more than on their actual academic performance. For instance, Evelyn, a 35-year old single woman participant, disclosed that she is in higher education because she needs a qualification to gain promotion at her place of work. She is not performing well academically, but she seems not to see that as a problem. Ronke's and Sylvia's views support Evelyn's quest for a higher education qualification. These participants mention that their primary reason for higher education was to obtain a national certificate of education, a higher education certificate issued at the college of education. In their stories they did not emphasise their academic performance as much as obtaining a certificate. They linked their desire for a higher education qualification to their career. In short, they said that the national certificate of education is the minimum qualification they need to be in the teaching profession, their dream career.

Apart from promotion at the place of work and gaining entrance to a career as a reason for obtaining a qualification, other participants suggested that a higher education qualification would earn them the respect of their husbands and neighbours. The high priority women participants accorded to qualifications over academic performance itself could possibly have influenced the academic performance of women students in higher education.

The third finding from the data but not evidenced in the literature centres on the relationship between cultural practices and academic performance. This study illustrates via tested the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between cultural practices and academic performance. By relationship I mean an interdependency of cultural practice as a variable and academic performance as a variable. Furthermore, this means that the academic performance of women students in this study depends largely on the extent to which cultural practices affect them and, in turn, affect their academic performance. In other words, with respect to this study, students with more obligations with regard to cultural practices were affected most in terms of the influence of cultural practices on their academic performance and vice versa. In this study, it is evident that this relationship was noticeable and important and it cannot be ignored if the academic performance of women students in higher education is to be understood. The significant relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students suggests that cultural practices are a core factor that influence or affect the academic performance of women students.

Furthermore, this study shows that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education. In the reviewed literature, it was clear that cultural practices influence the academic performance of women students in higher education (Hontoundji, 2000; Poon Wai-Yee, 2004). Poon Wai-Yee asserts in his study that home background and cultural practices influence women students' academic performance more than the fixed material and economic conditions of society.

In a different study, Bamidele and Odunsola (2006) identified parental influence and support as being a key factor in the academic performance of women students. In their study of academic performance of female students in an undergraduate economics programme at Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, Bamidele and Odunsola relate parental influence and support to a slight improvement in the academic performance of these students. The literature findings appear to be limited to single women students or in general to women students, but the findings in this study show that cultural practices not only affect women students' academic performance but also affect it differently. This

means that the way cultural practices affect the academic performance of married women students in higher education differs from the way it affects single women students' academic performance in higher education. The reasons for the difference in academic performance include the marital responsibilities for married women which are absent for single women and the high expectations in terms of cultural practices in general placed on married women in comparison to single women students. This leaves married women with limited time for studies.

All participants at the university and college of education responded that married women students are affected most when asked which category of women student (married or single) cultural practices affect most (see appendix G, question 9). In addition, when asked to say whether married women students or single women students performed better in higher education (see appendix G, question 13), all participants, both married and single, at the college of education said that single women students in higher education performed better academically. The academic results of participants for year 1 and year 2 of study obtained from their institution of learning (Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education) correlate with the responses of participants on which category of women students perform better academically. In terms of participants' academic results, it was evident that the cumulative grade points for semester results for two years of study were higher and better for single women students.

7.2.2.1 Findings that reveal explicit links to the literature review and findings not indicated in the literature linked to Frieze *et al.* expanded achievement attributional model

In this section, I link 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 to Frieze *et al.*'s (1983) expanded achievement attributional model. Frieze *et al.* emphasise that societal and subcultural success values in the achievement event are key and fundamental to actual success or failure in the academic performance of an individual. This process forms a link between the different stages of the entire academic performance evaluation cycle (Frieze *et al.*, 1983:15). Data in this study reveal the emphasis participants place on cultural values in relation to

societal expectations. All married participants and the majority of single women participants view their academic performance as being linked to cultural practices. Although the opinion(s) of participants in this study are individual they appear similar collectively in terms of behaviour and attitude towards higher education.

This concurs with the view of Frieze *et al.* (1983) and Doolittle (2007), who reveal that the attribution process focuses on what happens to a person in terms of achievement behaviour: based on the responses of participants on cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education it would seem that there is a relationship between cultural practices and academic performance. This study suggests that the attributional, in this case, cultural practices, plays an important role in the achievement behaviour and performance of participants in higher education.

Furthermore, Frieze *et al.* and Doolittle argue that once the achievement behaviour occurs, information about the performance is used to immediately infer why the outcome occurred. This is what happened in this study when participants used their semester academic results to ascertain their satisfaction and dissatisfaction about academic performance. Satisfactory academic performance for some participants and dissatisfactory academic performance for others led to participants identifying and disclosing to the researcher factors that influence their academic performance. Through this, participants provided explanations for their academic performance, whether satisfactory or not.

Another significant point in the expanded attributional model that links with this study is the participants' attitude. This study reveals that the majority of the participants are more interested in higher education certificate/degrees than academic performance. This agrees with the writings of expanded achievement attributional model experts, Frieze *et al.* (1983) and Maehr and Nicholls (1974) that the association between internal attributions and perceptions of success and failure may depend on the specific value system of the culture, for example our cultural practices or cultural value efforts. This study therefore suggests that the cultural belief that women's education ends in the kitchen could

possibly be responsible for the attitude of participants in terms of being less interested in academic performance and more interested in a higher education certificate/degree.

7.3 Theoretical development of this study

In this section I discuss the singular important theoretical development that this study signals: that the women in this study indicate that marriage is a social condition to which they aspire and that they do not see this aspiration and higher education as being mutually exclusive or incompatible. Participants in this study are clear that women desire marriage and are committed to sustaining their marriages. Evelyn, a single woman participant, narrated that what she really wanted in life now is to be married, have her own children and a home she can call her own. She went on to say that it is good for a woman to have higher education but it should not take the place of marriage. In the course of narrating her story, Evelyn mentioned that she envies other participants and course mates who are married. Evelyn is so keen to get married that she said, following the complaints of some married women participants about their husbands, that she does not care whether the husband supports her or not in her studies. According to her, it would be better to have a husband who does not support her than not to have a husband, at least looking after him and the children would be inspirational.

Efe agrees with Evelyn and suggests that it would be ideal for every woman to be married. Having listened calmly to the stories of married women participants who illustrated how they cherish and strive to sustain their marriages and their challenges in marriage, Efe said simply that marriage and cultural practices are almost universal, and require patience and determination on the part of women. In addition to Evelyn and Efe, Sylvia, Amaka and Ronke all students at a college of education, also expressed their desire for marriage. Ronke emphasised that she would like to get married before she proceeds to higher degree programme at the university. She said that a husband is a woman's umbrella and crown; a woman commands respect when she is married. Sylvia and Amaka as well as other participants both married and single agreed with Ronke that a woman commands respect when she is married. Both Sylvia and Amaka added that a

woman in Nigeria is regarded as responsible only when she is married. This suggests that even after having had some higher education women are still not perceived to be fully responsible individuals.

Apart from single women participants who spoke about marriage and higher education, married women participants are not without stories or experiences concerning marriage and higher education. Most married women participants complain about the attitude of their husbands with regard to their schooling. Almost all the married women participants highlighted that combining marriage and higher education is a difficult task if not almost impossible. For instance, Lola, a married woman, referred to her academic performance as discouraging and said that if she had known the difficulties of combining marriage with schooling, she would not have got married. Despite complaints such as these, married women participants aim to protect their marriages in several ways. Firstly, none of them opted out of their marriage for higher education or said that she wanted to quit her marriage because of the responsibilities or challenges. Secondly, some married participants like Iyang indicated that they enjoyed seeing their children running round the house, making a noise even when they are studying and the support provided by their husbands.

Zainab cherishes her marriage and calls her husband “Mr Wonderful” because he provides her with financial support for her schooling, renders domestic assistance when necessary, drives her to school and picks her up from school. Thirdly, married women participants do things and sacrifice their time for their husbands so as to sustain and protect their marriage. For example, Iyang indicated in her story how she often wakes up late at night to give the husband food when he comes home late. In addition, she sits near and watches him eat even when she is tired and sleepy. According to her, waking up late at night, giving her husband food and sitting beside him as he eats is annoying, yet she does it. I guess this is to sustain the marriage among other things.

In my effort to understand and analyse this strong assertion for the value of marriage, I turned to Clark’s (2006) view that contradictory relationships with culture are to be expected, given its authority in shaping how women give meaning to their lives and how

they perceive themselves and imagine themselves to be perceived by the community in which they live.

While the participants in this study noted complaints from their husbands about them being engaged in studying, or that their husbands did not support them financially, the women's valuing of marriage appears to reside in the social protection and respect that marriage offers. To me, it seemed that marriage still wielded for more power and authority than higher education could, in the current context of these women's lives. Using ideas gleaned from Shope (2006), it is possible to argue that should their social and economic contexts experience a radical change, the views of these women may shift. At this point, the dissonance between the rhetoric and their experience is not strong enough for them to accept the questioning voice that Pereira (2002) and Oyewumi (2002) call for. Taking this line of argument further, I suggest that the articulations against polygamy are perhaps the beginning of an expression against a particular cultural practice. In this study, the experience of polygamy is largely negative and offers the women little protection or respect. In fact, it serves to remove their dignity and denies them support, both financial and emotional, that they otherwise may have had. It is possible that the systemic devaluation of their dignity through polygamy is noticeable. Marriage, however, is still perceived to offer them protection and dignity.

In an attempt to extend and advance the singular important theoretical underpinnings of this study, I link this important finding to Beck's theory of the individualised individual. According to Beck (1992), the individualised individual theory states that women's liberation is not only rewarding to people as individuals but also to societies, and depends largely on the empowerment of individuals. This theory further explains the interplay between social actors and the desires of women in a contemporary society. Here Beck refers to social actors, such as culture and tradition, which Freize *et al.* (1983) refer to as societal and subcultural success values that play an important role in what women want in life. Participants in this study demonstrated this interplay (social actors vs the desires of women in a contemporary society) in their stories when they linked their experiences and challenges in higher education to marriage and cultural practices especially as they relate to their husbands, children and home. Furthermore, Beck reveals that social actors

necessitate changes in the attitude, behaviour, and perceptions of women towards marriage, education and general life style. Cultural practices, marriage to be precise, as a social actor necessitate changes in the attitude of participants towards higher education. Cultural practices are responsible for participants believing that marriage is a top priority in their lives, as Efe, Ronke, Sylvia and Amaka agree that marriage is ideal for every woman and that a husband is the umbrella and crown of a woman. Also, cultural practices inculcate, in the minds of people and the public, that only when a woman is married can she be seen as a responsible woman. This belief has led some participants to see their academic performance as less important in comparison to their marriage. This belief has also led some participants to say that they will suspend their higher education until they are married. This suggests that some women will not enrol for higher education if they are not married.

In the individualised individual theory, Beck refers to empowerment and liberation together. His theory suggests that empowerment leads to liberation for an individual. Furthermore, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002:202) identify women's liberation as the release from "compulsory housework and support by husband". In this study, given participants' responses on reasons why women need higher education, participants agree with Beck's theory that women want higher education to empower themselves but it is not enough. For these participants, empowerment and liberation will not give them fulfilment. Fulfilment for them is the addition of marriage to the empowerment and liberation that Beck's individualised individual theory emphasises.

Beck and liberal feminists make strong reference to the liberalisation of women through increased opportunities and education. Beck's theory of the individualised individual and the liberal feminists' stance regard education for women as a pathway to liberation. In other words, liberation creates the possibility for women to become authors of their own life or biographies. In this study, the participants see education as a central means to their own development and, to borrow Beck's word, liberation. To them liberation implies the ability to make decisions about their future, decisions that take them out of the home and the kitchen into public spaces. In my reading, this has resonance with the stance of both liberal feminists and of Beck. To this end, Beck's theory of the individualised individual

and the liberal feminist theorists promote self-reflexivity (1992). According to Beck and some other scholars like Giddens, in the theorisation of identity, reflexivity – self awareness – provides the individual with the opportunity to construct self-identity without the shackles of tradition and culture, which creates relatively rigid boundaries to the options for one’s self-understanding. Understanding one’s self is a reflexive project for everyone – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future (Giddens 1992:30). In simple terms, reflexivity is a burgeoning capability of individuals, offering themselves the opportunity to construct the self and the self-relationship (*ibid.*). In this study, the participants demonstrated self-reflexivity through their narrated stories. Their stories were a “reflexive project” through which they interrogated and illuminated their past and present experiences, which could have an impact on their future experience. As a means of self-reflexivity the participants in this study revealed their present identity and constructed their future self-identities for themselves.

Beck’s individualised individual theory suggests that a new age of modernity has replaced the old predictabilities and certainties of societies, bringing with it new risks and opportunities (Buchmann, 1989; Giddens 1991; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; 2002). According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, the new risks and opportunities are changes that have fundamentally altered the experience of love, sexuality and family life, placing intimacy at the heart of detraditionalised life. The process of individualisation weakens and challenges traditional and social ties of kinship and marriage (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; 2002). Participants in this study consciously sought ties of kinship through marriage and family connections. It was clear that they wanted to maintain these family ties and social and some cultural connections. Kinship and family ties for these participants are needed for the preservation of their identity as married women and single women, as well as the prospect of marriage in the future. In this context it is arguable that they demonstrate a dissonance with Beck’s theory of the individualised individual. To this extent, Beck’s theory does not fully fit into the findings in this study. Therefore it is suggested that for women to reinvent, redefine and find their own social setting (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995:170) marriage should be seen as a central pivot that gives women’s lives meaning, on the ground that the participants in this study sought more after marriage.

I entered the research sites knowing that cultural practices is one among the numerous factors that influence the academic performance of women students in Nigerian higher education, but I did not expect the extent or level of significance to which it influences academic performance. Further, I expected participants to complain about cultural practices and possibly call for their eradication so as to help promote higher education for women. My expectation with respect to the complaints was met, as almost all the participants complained in one form or another about the effects or influences cultural practices had on their academic performance. Despite their complaints, both the married and single participants in this study support cultural practices. They said that such practices make women truly responsible. In short, while Beck in agreement with liberal feminists' theorists identifies empowerment and liberation as being central to women's aspirations, the women in this study suggest that fulfilment is also an important dimension of their aspirations. They identify marriage as part of this sense of fulfilment as it is both personal and culturally familiar. In an effort to extend Beck's theory of the individualised individual as being founded on empowerment and liberation, I would argue that the element of fulfilment as identified in this study would be an added dimension to this theory. In other words empowerment, liberation and fulfilment are all important to the aspirations of women. In this study, participants complained about cultural practices yet they did not advocate the eradication of such practices. This is contrary to the expectations of Beck's theory and recent studies conducted by Bolarin (2005; 2006). Bolarin (2005:161) advocates for the eradication of cultural practices affecting women's education when she states that women's enrolment and participation in higher education would improve greatly if the current traditional and cultural practices that prevent women from having equal access to education were to be phased out or reduced. Married women participants in this study cherish their marriage. Also, single women participants want to be married despite the responsibilities attached. This point is significant, especially when one compares it to the cardinal focus of Beck's individualised individual theory which pinpoints that women should be empowered and liberalised in order to attain fulfilment in life and enable them contribute to national development. In his theory, Beck posits that the empowerment and liberation of women will help to take women out of their homes and their confined roles. Yet for women in

this study empowerment is not about liberation from the home and conventional chores, but to some extent the attainment of them. What the study seems to suggest is that the eradication of cultural practice is not necessarily what they seek. Instead the study points to the integration of cultural practice into the aspiration and attainment of higher education.

Importantly, as a means of achieving empowerment and liberation for women, the individualised individual theory postulates education, particularly higher education for women, as a means of empowerment and a key to achieving liberation. Participants' views in this study concur with Beck's theory that the empowerment of women via higher education could possibly enable women to contribute to national development. All participants, both married and single, said that they need higher education. This suggests that they need something in addition to their homes, husbands and children.

Many felt that higher education would help them to increase their knowledge and acquire higher education certificates/degrees, thereby making it possible for them to get a career outside their home, and to contribute better to their homes and to national development. This in itself is what I consider to be liberation and empowerment as emphasised by Beck's individualised individual theory. It is empowerment because knowledge is power (Beck, 2005). It is liberation because power in the form of education makes it possible for women to develop a career and be taken away from "compulsory housework" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:202). This is evident in this study, as the majority of the participants linked their reasons for studying in higher education to career development, promotion and national development. In other words, education for these women is not just about themselves but also about their contribution to the society in which they live. Given this, I propose that these women's (participants) attitudes and aspirations for higher education fit with Beck's theory.

In summary, participants felt strongly that they wanted to be married. They argued that the sense of fulfilment that marriage gave them was important to them. While they desired liberation and empowerment through higher education, they also wanted personal and cultural fulfilment. One implication of this view is the theoretical assertion that

marriage for these participants is an “achievement”. Likewise, academic performance is revealed in the literature to be an achievement (see page 48). Academic performance can be classified as an educational achievement, thereby associating it with social achievement, while marriage is essentially a personal and cultural achievement. Both educational and personal/cultural achievements are key to the manifestation of social and personal fulfilment. In summary, for the participants in this study, marriage is an achievement that is as important as academic performance. I suggest that Beck’s assertions regarding liberation and empowerment are important, but not enough. What this study suggests is that Beck’s theory of the individualised individual may be expanded to include elements of personal and cultural fulfilment. In short, liberation and empowerment without fulfilment are inadequate in terms of understanding the theory of the individualised individual.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I showed that three findings in this study concurred with those identified in the literature reviewed. These were, first, the link between cultural practices and the participation of women in higher education, which indicates that cultural practices confine women to specific responsibilities and tasks. Second is the increasing interest by women in higher education. Third, is the dwindling number of women students as they climb the educational ladder.

I also argued that the study revealed some important elements not covered in the literature reviewed with respect to women in higher education. These were, firstly, polygamy and its influence on higher education; secondly, the fact that participants are not as concerned about their level of academic performance as about obtaining a higher education qualification; and lastly, the relationship between cultural practices and academic performance, that is, there is a significant relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students. Most importantly, however, this study attempted to develop Beck’s theory of the individualised individual, which suggests that women seek liberation and empowerment and that higher education is an

important mechanism for doing so. While I do not dispute this, I argue that the element of fulfilment, which the women in this study identified as being important to them, be used to expand Beck's theory of the individualised individual. In short, although this study affirms the view that cultural practices can be barriers to women's advancement and liberation, such practices may also embody the desire and means for fulfilment. Put another way, academic achievements, in this instance the attainment of higher education, and personal achievements, for example the desire to be married, are not seen to be mutually exclusive.

Apart from using the findings of this study for the extension of Beck's theory of the individualised individual, the element of fulfilment as expressed in the form of aspiration to and desire for marriage serves as an antenna for a deeper understanding of self-reflexivity and feminist aspirations. The findings of this study on elements of fulfilment reveal a major challenge for feminism. While some feminists are reluctant to advocate marriage, these women say clearly that they want marriage. The challenge for feminism would then be how it would draw the views, aspirations and feelings of these women into its fold.

Finally, I posit that the wider social contexts in which women live play an important role in their academic performance. It is simply not about how hard they study. Their performance is closely linked to the social understanding of higher education for women. For as long as the society in which they live sees their primary function as being that of wives and mothers, their academic performance will matter little.

7.5 Recommendations

The recommendations from this study are based on the reviewed literature, the empirical data analysis in chapter four and interpretations from narrated stories and deduced meanings, as well as the emergent themes in chapter five of this thesis. The following are the recommendations from this study. It is important to highlight that the recommendations of this study are classified under three headings: policy/government level initiation; institutional/organisational level; and cultural beliefs disengagement.

Policy/government level initiative

The reviewed literature reveals that no Nigerian higher education institution offers courses in women studies; therefore it is recommended in this study that higher education institutions in Nigeria should introduce courses in women studies and related courses. This would help to further increase the interest of women students in higher education, thereby increasing their enrolment and possibly improving their academic performance. It would be valuable if the National Universities Commission and the Federal Ministry of Education were to develop policies that would encourage higher education institutions across the country to introduce women's studies courses.

Institutional/organisational level initiative:

A woman (participant) in this study complained of maltreatment. She revealed that some lecturers ask them for money for assignments and tests, yet they could only complain among themselves and to friends. There is the possibility that other women students on campus suffer from this form of maltreatment. On this note, I recommend that higher education institutions should set up support structures for women students studying at higher education institutions. For instance, women's centres for complaints, and guidance and counselling units; these structures would provide motivation and equip women with coping strategies for studying in higher education. Support structures for women students studying in higher education would also increase the confidence of men/husbands to allow their wives or sisters to study in such institutions, knowing that social justice for women would be available. This is particularly important in a society like Nigeria where men see the issue of maltreatment, extortion and sexual harassment of their wives by another man on any grounds as a serious issue.

I propose that higher education institutions should set up a unit within the student affairs division to be headed by a woman academic knowledgeable in women's studies/gender studies or educational studies. A woman heading this unit would make it easier for

women students to relate to, and discuss their problems with, her rather than with a man, who might at times want to cover up for culprits or perpetrators of crime/violence against women who are usually male staff of the institution or male students. The main responsibility of this unit would be listening to the complaints of women students on campus, and investigating and acting as quickly as possible through the dean. The head of the unit should report to the dean of the student affairs division. This proposed unit cannot be overlooked because the student affairs division is vested with numerous responsibilities – students’ results, accommodation, national youth service corps for graduating students and research exchange programmes, among others, which often leave the division with little or no time to look at the specific problems faced by women students on campus such as the ones mentioned above. Setting up this unit with the student affairs division would be an important support for women students in higher education institutions.

Cultural beliefs disengagement

Men should discard the belief that women’s education ends in the kitchen and that men are the breadwinners of the family. Men should regard their wives as co-breadwinners; by so doing, they will not deprive them of higher education, but support them in it. While it is recommended that men should discard this belief, men should also consider the possibility of losing their jobs or being retired. In such an event, women emerge as the breadwinners, either temporarily or otherwise. This is a position that women are more than able to fill if they are not deprived of higher education.

7.6 Further research directions

Future researchers may select more than one state or different states of the federation of Nigeria other than the one this study focused on. In addition, this study defined higher education to include universities, polytechnics, monotronics, colleges of education and non-conventional institutions of higher learning, such as professional bodies; however,

this study is delimited to universities and colleges of education. There are several underlying differences between higher education institutions that the research instruments used for this study might have omitted that researchers could consider in the future. In light of this, I recommend that future researchers should consider carrying out similar or related research on other higher education institutions in Nigeria.

7.7 Limitations to the study

The constraints or limitations of this study are shown under the headings that follow:

Limitations linked to standardised research instruments: Designing a questionnaire and interview protocol was no easy task because of the complexity of the cultural practices in Nigeria and their impact on the married women, on the one hand, and the single women, on the other, who make up the respondents/participants. In the course of designing the questionnaire and formulating the questions (interview protocol) that would be at least minimally appropriate for all the respondents, I may have missed what is most appropriate to some of the respondents.

Limitations linked to generalisation: There is no one research design or method that is free from critique of a lack of generalisation (Coolican, 2004; Vaus, 2004). The survey data collection method I used is argued to be comparatively weak in external validity (Whitley, 2002), hence, weakness in external validity can be said to be one limitation of the study. Nevertheless, the mixed method research design employed is believed to increase external and internal validity because it relates to metaphysical concepts of truth and reality and it is a practical approach to research (Moon & Moon, 2004).

Researcher/respondents personal relationship limitation: This study focuses on women with a particular emphasis on married women. In such research male researchers are few, if not absent. In this study, in view of the fact that I am a male doing research in Nigeria on a culturally sensitive issue, I faced problems while working with women students with regard to interaction, motivation and getting their attention. On account of this, I had to seek the voluntary help of research assistants. These assistants were needed in order to

comply with the cultural practice that requires the presence of a third party as a witness whenever there is a conversation or similar issue between a man and a woman who is not his wife.

Lastly, while the focus group conversations were written down as quickly as possible and in detail due to electricity problems, I am aware that this may have affected the content of the conversations. This was unavoidable because at the time the study was carried out I was not residing in the country and I had to travel back to South Africa (University of Pretoria). Nevertheless, it is believed that the limitations have not adversely affected the quality or outcome of the study given the degree of the validity and reliability of the research instruments used in the study.

7.8 Significance of the study

This part of the thesis explains the importance and the benefits that will be derived from this study.

This study, being PhD research, is not an end itself (Wisker, 2008:13). It actually served as a training ground for me as a researcher (Potter, 2009:207) and as human capital development. Significantly, it helped me to establish sound practices and I hope to transfer these to future research for the benefit of my country particularly in the academic environment.

Importantly, the significance of this study includes the following:

Usefulness to tertiary institutions of learning: This study will make a contribution to the sparse literature base on married women students and academic performance in Nigerian higher education. Universities in particular are charged with some basic responsibilities which include conducting research. It is believed that the findings of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge. Although data gathered by this study reflect the situation at two Nigerian higher education institutions, the analysis is likely to be valuable to higher education institutions broadly. Hence, it would be useful to a large

number of scholars and stakeholders within universities, and across faculties and departments. In a nutshell, this study can help to shape educational policy for women and higher education. In other words, the findings of this study may help tertiary institutions of learning develop support structures to assist married women students in higher education.