

**THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MARRIED  
WOMEN STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

**BY  
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**SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)**

**IN  
MANAGEMENT AND POLICY STUDIES**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND POLICY  
STUDIES**

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**2011**

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to all my teachers and all those who cherish unity, peace, progress and prosperity for Nigeria.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is made possible with the assistance and contributions of a number of unique people. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following:

My Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, for the unmerited, endless favour and grace that sustained me throughout the PhD journey. Truly, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”.

My precious wife for wonderful support and love regardless the many sacrifices she made in order for me to accomplish this task and dream. Thank you ‘honey’! Thank you, Adanna (Onome). Also a big thank you to my children Great and Nuvie especially, Nuvie whom I left behind at home to commence and complete my PhD studies when she was still a baby. You greatly inspired me.

My parents, Chief Michael O. and Chief Margaret E. Potokri for their care, love, encouragement and support (financial and moral). They kept my dream of studying for a PhD alive. You are wonderful parents. God bless you with long life, prosperity and good health.

My supervisor/promoter, Professor Venitha Pillay, for her expert guidance and intellectual stimulation. Venitha, you are a sister, aunty, friend and a mentor. Words in print are not enough to express my appreciation. I am privileged to have you as my supervisor. Thank you. God bless you and your family.

My sisters and brothers – Ufuoma Peace Ekah, Eseoghene Bridjet Obiorah, Uvietobore Joy Ajibola, Ejiroghene Maureen Potokri, Obukwho Nelson Potokri, Akpofure Stanley Potokri, Oghenetega Comfort Potokri, Efemine Prince Potokri and Favour Potokri. I am taking this opportunity to thank you for all for your support and prayers over the years. God bless you all.

My in-laws and uncles – Pastor Michael Ekah, Pastor George Ojegba and his wife, Mr and Mrs Obiakor, Mr Obiora, Mr Ajibola, Uncle Eddy, Uncle Alex Oyenike, Chief Ogefere, Prophet James Edenaughe and Prophet Diamond. Special thanks to

Pastor Ekah and Pastor George Ojegba for taking the time and trouble to convince my parents to agree to sponsor me for the PhD programme when they initially refused. This thesis would not have been written without you. Thanks to you all for being wonderful people. Your prayers and support saw me through the PhD journey.

Mr AJJ Botha, Principal, and Mr Collin and Mrs Helena Aikkens, Directors of Dansa International College, Pretoria, for all their assistance and making me feel at home in Pretoria. They treated me like a son. Knowing them and working with them was like having a home away from home. Thank you. God bless you all with long life, good health and prosperity. Mr Botha, I owe you so much that I can not pay but God Almighty will reward you for the entire good things you have done for me. I use this medium to say thank you to all members of staff of Dansa international College for their cooperation and understanding. Special thanks to Mrs van Rensburg, who is always concerned about my wellbeing and Mrs Helena Aikens for her un-endless understanding and support.

Special thanks to Atibioke Kikelomo Loveth. You are one in a million. You are a good friend with the heart of Christ. Thank you for all your support and assistance especially in running errands and typing some of my manuscripts amongst others. God's mercy and favour will never depart from you. Once again, thank you!

Thanks to my colleagues – Kim, Marius, Mary, Thru, Twanda, Rose, Chester and Ijeh Sunday, who graciously gave support in and outside the lecture room in the form of transport (giving me lift home after lectures and research support sessions) and providing me with some study materials. My thanks also go to my friends who came from different universities in the United States of America and Europe for a research exchange programme at the University of Pretoria.

I acknowledge with great gratitude all my lecturers at the University of Pretoria who in some way or other contributed significantly to the success and completion of this thesis. These include Professor Jonathan Jansen (currently Vice Chancellor, University of the Free State, South Africa), Prof. Nkomo, Prof. Eloff (Dean Faculty of Education, UP), Prof. Chika Schoole (Head of Department, Management and

Policy Studies), Prof. Jan Nieuwenhuis, Prof. J.G Maree, Prof. FW Frazer, Prof. Simeon Maile (HSRC), Dr. Chaya, Prof. Sarah Howie, Prof. Fazal Rizvi (University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign, USA), Prof. J.W Creswell (Illinois University USA), Prof. Johan Beckmann, Dr. S Prinsloo, Dr Andre Keet and Prof. Gilbert Onwu (Department of Science Education). Special thanks to Prof. Frazer for his support and the warm reception he gave to me on my first day on the Groenkloof campus of the University of Pretoria.

I am greatly indebted to Professor JW Creswell (Illinois University USA), Prof. TA Bolarin (Department Of Education Foundations, Faculty of Education, Lagos State University, Nigeria), Dr Sola Aina (Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Lagos State University, Nigeria), Dr Mike Linde and Mrs Rene (both of the Department of Statistics, UP), for their time, expert knowledge and contributions made in the form of suggestions, review and editing of my research questionnaires and interview questions. Their inputs played a very important role in the validity and reliability of my research questionnaire and interview questions.

Also, thanks to the management and staff of Lagos State University, Nigeria and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin Lagos. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Mr Ajose Adeogun H.O, Provost of the College (AOCED); Dr Farayola, J.A, Dean School of Education (AOCED); Mr Oyasope, A.A, School Officer, School of Education (AOCED); Mr Awofisayo A.O, Department of History (AOCED); Mr Oluwaiye Henry, Library Department (AOCED); Mr Adekunle O.A, School of Vocational Studies (AOCED); Mr Fowowe S, School of Education (AOCED); Mr Adebessin, O.T, School of Education (AOCED); Mr Anagwu Dominic Obi, PES Dept. (AOCED); Mr Ebenener Obidare (AOCED) ; Mr Bolaji Apejoye; Dr Akhigbe, Assistant Director School of Part Time Studies (LASU); Prof. Olaniyonu, Dean, Faculty of Education (LASU); Dr Abari O.A, Head of department, educational management (LASU); Mr Babajide Abidogun (LASU and UP), Shonubi Kazeem (LASU and UP), Dr MOB (Assistant Director, Sandwich Degrees Programme, LASU); Mr Campbell O. O, educational management (LASU); Mr Jide Gbenu, educational management (LASU); Mrs Philips, educational management (LASU); Mr

Dosumu OA (Faculty of Science, LASU); Mr Idowu (Sandwich degree Office, Lasu);  
Mr Dosumu AG (Tai Solarin University of Education and UP).

Special thanks to Mrs Olorunfemi and Mrs Ayo Shobowale of Lagos State University  
who supervised my bachelor's degree and master dissertation respectively.

Thank you to my friends and neighbours in Pretoria. You helped to alleviate the  
academic stress when I most needed it. Thank you Niyi alias "Esado", Kamal, Ayo,  
Amos, Taoffek, Femi (black), Femi (white), Yomi (Korea), Jide, Michael (Baba),  
Rotimi, Oyinbo, Keji, David, Sister Margaret, Mr and Mrs Adeyemo (Daddy Dammy  
and Mummy Dammy), Tunji and James.

Thank you to Paulina Thabisile Mathabela, a caring friend who never ceases to  
encourage me.

My gratitude goes to all the respondents and the research assistants, Mrs Chineyere  
Robert and Mrs Kikelomo Olufemi.

## ABSTRACT

My aim in this study was to understand and explain the academic performance of married women students in higher education. The study was conducted on married women students who are studying at higher institutions in Nigeria. A mixed research method was used. The study population was drawn from two higher education institutions – a university and a college of education. Focus group conversations and interview protocol were used to gather qualitative data, while a questionnaire and the academic results of participants were used to gather quantitative data. Data were analysed using constant comparative approach – the reported stories that emanated from the conversations with the research participants; the deduced meanings from the interview protocol; and the statistical testing of the generated hypothesis via *t*-test statistics and Pearson product moment correlation. The findings include the readiness of women students to narrate their experiences, and the hindrances cultural practices impose on their academic performance, amongst other things. This study uniquely reveals that the academic performance of women students in higher education in Nigeria differs between married women students and single women students. However, some women students in this study were satisfied with their academic performance while others were not. They blamed their academic performance on several factors including cultural practices, marital status, financial constraint and so forth. Apart from women students in higher education who were not satisfied with their academic performance, all women students who formed the sample, including those who considered their academic performance to be satisfactory, complained about cultural practices and their effect on academic performance. Despite their complaints, however, the majority of the women student participants in this study, both married and single, continue to support cultural practices. They said that cultural practices, including the ones that are considered harmful to higher education for women and their academic performance, should not be eradicated or changed, as they maintain that these practices make women truly responsible.

**KEY TERMS:** Married women students, higher education, academic performance, cultural practices, single women students, gender, and feminism.

## DECLARATION

I declare that THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MARRIED WOMEN STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION is my original work. All sources that have been used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Onoriode Collins Potokri

24 September 2011



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAU:	Association of African Universities
AOCED:	Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education
ASUP:	Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics
ASUU:	Academic Staff Union of Universities
CBN:	Central Bank OF Nigeria
CGPA:	Cumulative Grade Point Accumulated
ECOMOG:	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
FAWE:	Forum for African Women Educationists
FRN:	Federal Republic of Nigeria
IGWS:	Institute for Gender and Women Studies
JAMB:	Joint Admission and Matriculation Board
LASU:	Lagos State University
NDHS:	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey
NPC:	National Population Commission
NUC:	National Universities Commission
UME:	Universities Matriculation Examination
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund
UP:	University of Pretoria
USAID:	United State Agency for International Development
WHO:	World Health Organisation

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## CHAPTER ONE

### OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 Introduction

Education is one of the major linchpins for both the economic and political wellbeing of a society. This study focuses on the education of women in Nigeria and is premised on the belief that women's education and national development are fundamental to development in the 21st century. The study seeks to describe and explain the performance of married women students in Nigeria higher education. Bolarin (2005) argues that measures should be put in place to combat barriers to women's access to higher education in Nigeria. She believes that this will help to increase their enrolment rate and participation, and improve their academic achievement in higher education.

The Nigerian Policy on Education (2004) refers to higher education as education offered at the tertiary level. In this study, higher education in Nigeria refers to institutions that are post secondary and offer qualifications such as diplomas, bachelor's degrees and postgraduate degrees such as masters and doctorates. From a global perspective, economic, social and political development is increasingly being driven by the advancement and application of knowledge, which is anchored, powered, propelled and determined largely by the type of higher education found in a country. Higher education in particular is fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations (World Bank, 1999; 2000). On account of this, higher education for women should be a critical aspect of national interest, especially in the context of accessibility, enrolment and academic performance. This study assumes that we cannot restrict women from participating in or benefiting from higher education because of their tasks and roles at home and in the larger society. Furthermore, higher education for women should not be merely optional if they are expected to make a positive and meaningful input and impact on society. According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004), higher

education for women will help to foster and cement national unity, given their roles and contributions at home which will reflect in them, their husbands and children.

In recent years, there has been a global endeavour to prioritise women's education as a foundation for further development. Lips (1999) reveals that women's access to university-level education has increased in New Zealand and the United States of America, as well as most of the other countries in the world. In this context, most of the women in her study regard higher education as a major route for getting to the top or holding key, sensitive and powerful positions in a country.

In countries like Nigeria and other developing countries, there is still cause for concern as the percentage of female participation in higher education is still very low compared with developed countries (Osisanya-Olumuyiwa, 1998; Lips, 1999; Bolarin, 2001; 2005). In this regard, remarkable efforts have been made by government and other stakeholders to help improve the situation. Such efforts are a response to a variety of complex social issues and economic trends. They include, but are not limited to, societal changes resulting from industrialisation, globalisation, the population explosion, political instability, democracy, women's emancipation and liberation strategies. These efforts, especially as they concern women's education in tertiary institutions, are greatly determined, influenced and constrained by tradition and cultural practices.

Nigeria, like most African countries, is vastly culturally endowed and is multicultural. This explains and determines to a large extent the knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and habits acquired by the people of a society (Owolabi & Olatunde, 2004). Culture is a package, which draws from the beliefs, taboos, superstitions, customs and traditions of a society or nation. Culture in Africa is knowledge-based and includes and influences what we teach, how we learn, and our history and values in all spheres of our environment, be it at home, in the workplace or at school. Evidence abounds (Aikenhead, 1999; Owolabi & Olatunde, 2004) that indigenous groups have their own knowledge – African knowledge – which could mirror significantly the attitudes of women themselves towards higher education. For married women, the pressure to conform to traditional and cultural practices is powerful and has a profound effect on how they live their lives. As

such, the study aims to document and understand the influence these cultural factors may have on the performance of women students, with particular reference to married women in Nigeria.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

The population of the world is estimated to be 6.8 billion (Population Reference Bureau, 2009). Women constitute more than half of this number and more than 70 per cent of them are illiterate and poor (Haese & Kirsten, 2006). The ones who are receiving schooling at various levels, especially at the tertiary level, are constrained or handicapped in various ways, making successful academic performance far from the reach of many. Many experience a life that is a complex web of many roles and many tasks, which require the average women to perform “different roles” at different times in a bid to fulfil her family’s needs. These roles have been theoretically characterised as reproductive, productive and community roles (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003:10; Haese & Kirsten, 2006). Bakare-Yusuf, like many other feminist scholars, argues that women, both now and in the past, play pivotal reproductive and productive roles that facilitate patriarchal economic and productive dominance.

The role of women across the world is changing but not always to their advantage. The most visible example of this is their contribution to economic development, but owing to the limitations arising from stagnancy or little progress being made in women’s education, that is, enrolment rate and academic performance in tertiary institutions of learning, women and, in particular, married women have yet to reach self-fulfilment and to achieve in all aspects of life. In this regards, Ossat (2005) views higher education for women as an achievement and a task.

In May 2002, the federal government of Nigeria, in a joint venture with UNICEF, published the findings on an analysis of the situation of women and children in Nigeria. Education and women’s development were key issues on which the searchlight was focused and these were discussed intensively. Both are regarded as being inseparable and

complementary. In a different study conducted in South Africa, a further assessment shows that higher education – any type, not excluding women – has come under considerable pressure to be more responsive to the marketplace and to produce new kinds of knowledge workers (Jansen, 2001).

Women are workers at home, although most of them are not remunerated for the services they render there. In addition, poorly remunerated in their various places of work, women in Nigeria are among the poorest in Africa and the developing world. Also, they are less empowered, thereby making it difficult for them to perform their tasks and roles at home (Potokri, 2010), in the workplace and in the larger society efficiently and effectively because of the improperly connected variables: women, education and development. To be precise, higher education for a married woman cannot be neglected, quantified or overemphasised.

Arguably, there is no African country that does not want to increase the educational participation of woman at tertiary institutions of learning, or, better still, enhance their academic performance, given its importance as highlighted above. Higher education for women is worth prioritising, hence it cannot be overemphasised. Although most countries consider higher education for women a desirable instrument for development, its current under provision is a major stumbling block to economic, social, mental and political development. On account of this, the low participation and low enrolment of women in higher education has been viewed as being synonymous with low economic productivity, the prevalence of preventable diseases, malnutrition, the population explosion and mass poverty (Bolarin, 2005). Similarly, Dike (2002) reveals that higher education for women gives them a greater sense of how to reduce risks in life and change their behaviour.

The barriers to women's participation, enrolment and academic performance, as well as to completing their education are numerous and have been documented by several studies (Howard, 2001; Jamil, 2003). These barriers are related to policy, infrastructure, household and family resources and community beliefs and practices. Jamil (2003) articulates that many notable barriers to women's education are not by law within the limits or responsibility of the government or the education sector. Household

circumstances and community beliefs and practices are examples of the types of barrier that may not be affected by government leadership and action, but that seriously affect women's education. He further states that the relationship is indirect and subject more to influence than control. On the other hand, while policy, school-related infrastructure, and schooling and instruction may be difficult to change, they are within government's mandate and organisational control (Jamil, 2003; USAID, 2000).

Buttressing the opinion of Jamil, Administrator J Brandy at the USAID Symposium on Girls' Education (2000:7) stated: "It is apparent to say that these barriers affect female students' enrolment and completion rates; and each is related to the others, comprising parts of an interlocking social system that includes national and local, private and public, and group and individual dimensions."

In addition, Noah (1997) rightly states that these barriers or problems could be attributed to three broad factors: the mode of introduction of Western education to most African countries, the absence of critical research and the dearth of essential political will on the part of African leaders and the elite. Lips (1999) suggests that if we are to grapple successfully with the problems of women's education and economic development, of preparing women to take their rightful place in society, there are a number of issues on which to focus, one of them being indispensable higher education for women. In addition, she affirms that pay equity, the "glass ceiling", work and family balance and the feminisation of poverty, among other things, must be addressed in order to promote and encourage women to pursue higher education.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Marriage is an important cultural, traditional and religious event in Nigerian society, particularly for women and young girls. Statistics in the CBN (2000) survey show that 86.6 per cent of women in Nigeria are married, while 3.7 per cent are widowed and 5.2 per cent are divorced or separated. In addition, cultural practices distance a huge number of women from higher education.

In Nigeria there is a popular saying that states “women’s education ends in the kitchen”, implying that education is not useful to them; in other words, education is not meant for them. The situation is exacerbated when they get married. At that point the chances of women furthering their education are very slim. Women, especially married women, in Nigeria are relegated to the kitchen and their major role is childbearing (Abe, 1987; Okeke, 2001). As such, right from early childhood, the Nigerian female child is psychologically attuned to see herself as a future homemaker and mother of children. In a nutshell, married women are restricted to the home, primarily because it is believed that their husbands will provide for all their needs. Thus, higher education for women is seen as useless and a waste of time, money and resources generally. In addition, elders and traditional chiefs regard it as a gateway for prostitution and non-submissiveness in women, and the forfeiting of their marriage prospects. Simply put, some traditional chiefs maintain that it takes women beyond the shores of tradition and culture, thereby making them behave and live contrary to existing customs, norms and beliefs. On this basis, it is largely believed that once they are married and in their husband’s house, they have no need for more education and can cope with whatever form or type of education they had before marriage. Elders and traditional chiefs (male) maintain that primary and secondary education at most is enough for a married woman to run the affairs of her home as expected of her (Falola, 2001).

Higher education, especially university, is in theory an area of equal opportunity today. A century ago this was not the case, and anyone who argued for a university education for women, not to speak of married women, was regarded as eccentric. It was widely believed that higher education for women would lead to brain fever, sterility and even death; suggesting that they could not cope with studies at that level.

With regard to the above, most married women made little or no effort to enrol in higher education; this was made even more difficult for them as admission policies and programmes did not favour them and some universities and tertiary institutions of learning did not admit married women. For example, the Ewha Women’s University in South Korea banned married female undergraduates from attending for 57 years until the

ban was lifted recently (Breder, 2003). In Makerere University, Uganda, women were only allowed to enter in 1945 (Morley, 2004).

Equal educational opportunity at all levels is one aspect of the Millennium Development Goals that one cannot lose sight of if women are to be truly empowered. The Nigerian government has tried to move towards the attainment of this goal, but cultural practices and religion, among other things, have jeopardised their efforts immensely. At this juncture, it becomes not only necessary to take a look at the participation of married women in higher education, but also to look at how those studying are achieving academically.

Therefore, in summary, this research seeks to understand the experiences of married women students in higher education in Nigeria.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the study**

Through this study, I wish to show the experiences of women students in higher education and how their experiences influence their academic performance. The fundamental purpose of this study is to understand and explain the academic performance of married women students in higher education in Nigeria. It is my contention that there may be a relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education; that there may be differences in the academic performance of married women students as they progress from one year or level of study to another; and that there is the possibility of differences in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

#### **1.5 Rationale for the study**

My love for education and my quest for knowledge have known no bounds. This may be attributed to my family background, a family that sees education as a pinnacle, a family for whom a large part of the family business is education, as my mother is the proprietor

of a group of schools. I have been lucky enough to have had the encouragement and support of my parents especially my mother and this has spurred me on to pursue a career in education. Steiner (1998) argues that, in the educational process, interest in academic subjects is related to passion for knowledge for its own sake and for the forms in which knowledge is represented. Where this passion is present, it leads to discovery and learning, occurring not only as an end in itself, but as a necessary means to mastering a field of study in which the student has a strong and personal interest.

As a teacher who has taught in secondary schools and at tertiary level for over ten years; I have noticed with keen interest that there seems to be an increase in the number of women willing to participate in higher education given the number of female students that I taught at the Polytechnic. Furthermore, my interactions with female students as a principal of a college, when registering them for senior secondary certificate examinations, have given me an indication of their interest in higher education. In addition, the campaign for women's empowerment, gender equality, education for all and the like in recent times could also account for their interest. In sum, women are truly interested in higher education, but for some reason many who complete secondary school do not proceed to tertiary institutions (Bolarin, 2003; Okeke, 2001).

This observation on female secondary school students and a curiosity about female students' academic performance at the Polytechnic prompted my interest in women students' academic performance in higher education. To know about this, I started to read more on related issues in the various literatures locally and internationally. It was interesting to note that there have been quite a number of related and similar studies on higher education for women in connection with access, participation, enrolment rate, dropout rate, and so on. I have noted and appreciated the work of other researchers in this regard, and their call for further research left me with no option but to take up the challenge of carrying out this study. However, there seems to be little, if any, literature on the academic performance of married women students in higher education in Nigeria. This further increased my interest and curiosity on the subject.



More importantly, and in addition to the above, is my wife. After I got married in 2005, I became convinced that this study was worth carrying out. I am married to a woman from Owerri, in the Imo State of Nigeria, an area that demonstrates a number of cultural differences compared with Kokori in the Delta State of Nigeria where I hail from. I taught her in her final year at high school and I married her when she was in her first year at university. While she was at high school, she was known for her high academic performance as reflected by her internal examinations, tests and continuous assessment scores. Her final academic performance, given her grades in the senior school certificate examination (SSCE) conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), speaks for and confirms her high academic performance on aggregate.

At the end of the first academic year at university, I observed from her results that her academic performance was not as impressive as it had been. This was worrisome and I began to consider what might be wrong. What factor(s) could be responsible for such a performance? Besides these, other questions arose like why, how and the extent to which these factors could affect married women students in tertiary institutions of learning when compared to single women students in the same institutions, were all on my mind begging for answers. Considering these issues was difficult and meaningless without hearing from her. So, I had to initiate a discussion with her.

I started the discussion by saying to her: “Honey, I know you to be a very brilliant and intelligent woman, but it appears something is wrong because your academic performance, as you can see yourself, is not impressive. This is not you,” It took some persuasion for her to say a word. Then she burst into tears and told me about the pressure from my parents, especially my mother, to live up to the traditions and cultural practices of my people. She said that she was confused and did not know how to deal with these pressures. “This is killing!” she said. “It creates some kind of imbalance in me that I cannot explain,” she emphasised. She further said that it did not give her room to enjoy studying anymore. In fact, she felt the marriage to be frustrating, “I feel like quitting my studies,” she said. Suddenly, the magnitude of the problem dawned on me. It is a problem she has tried to live and cope with. As I listened to her, emotion overwhelmed me. I did

not know what to do at that moment but at least I managed to encourage her a little the best way I could then.

As I write this, the words of Betty Freidan “the problem with no name” in her book titled *Feminine mystique*, published in 1963, and those of Patricia Hill Collins “the problem women live with” in her *Black feminist thought*, published in 1991, kept ringing a bell. To my understanding, the problem is concerned with liberation and empowerment bottled in cultural practices. Cultural practices take on different facets. With regard to my wife’s story, it is difficult to find a name in the literature for the problem she is faced with.

The cultural practice at work here is what I refer to as “ceremonial husband and real husband”, a cultural practice in Nigeria where the husband’s parents are the real husband who decide, instruct, manage and run the affairs and activities of the woman (wife), using traditions and customs as an instrument or vehicle. Here, the husband is ceremonial because he is only known by the immediate community to have performed the marital rites on a particular day. Thereafter, the parents take total control of the woman’s (wife) home and her world. They decide for and regulate the woman in terms of what she should do, how and when she should do such things, also where she should be at any given time. Preferably, she must live with them, do all the domestic work, and carry the in-law’s bags wherever they go. She is on standby for errands and her personal programme is not considered. Her husband’s house is seen as her second home where she can only go with their permission. This scenario is exacerbated if all the brothers and sisters of the husband are grown up and are no longer living with the parents or if the husband is the only child or the first son. She must listen to and obey every word without question. In fact, she is no different to a robot that can be remote controlled. In terms of this practice, the husband is voiceless, as his parents still treat him like the baby they gave birth to, who cannot think and do things on his own without their permission. When the husband tries to speak out, the parents frustrate him and the wife in different ways. This leaves me in no doubt that there must be other married women students studying in higher education with similar problems and experiences.

However, on reading the existing related literature, I became increasingly unhappy because of the lack of attention given to higher education for women in developing countries; the neglect; and the huge attention and emphasis on cultural practices, particularly their applicability to women. At this time, my quest to know more about the problem had increased tremendously. The reasons given above, together with the emotions I experienced, are the motivation for my decision concerning the study. I understood that my decision to carry out the study on the academic performance of married women students in higher education has been greatly influenced by the relationship between emotions, knowledge and decision making (Damasio, 1999; Thagard, 2000; Thagard, 2006; Jansen, 2005). Emotion has often been theorised as a “private”, “natural”, and “individual” experience that is “essentially” located in the individual (Boler, 1999).

Jansen (2005) in “Black dean: race, reconciliation and the emotions of deanship” reveals the relationship between emotion, knowledge and decision. Through this study, he was able to understand and describe the complex and difficult process of institutional transformation from records of personal observation and through the lens of human emotion. This understanding and being able to describe his experiences as a black dean in a formerly all-white university in South Africa (the University of Pretoria) helped to transform his knowledge about deanship. As the dean of a faculty, vested with authority and numerous responsibilities, including decision making on balancing tensions of affirmation and inclusion, retention and restitution, caring and correction, accommodation and assertion, and racial reconciliation and social justice, his decisions had to be tailored or were influenced from time to time by the knowledge given birth to by his emotions. This study, too, seeks to explore, and agrees with Boler (1999) and Thagard (2006), who argue that emotions allow us to explore the revealed “space” between ideology and internalised feeling.

Conclusively, and deduced from the above, it is evident that my experience reveals that there might be a strong link between culture and the academic performance of married women students, as was the case with my wife. It is on this note that I engage in research that seeks to understand and explain whether this link is at all significant.

## 1.6 Research questions

What is the understanding of and explanation for the academic performance of married women students in Nigeria?

### Sub questions

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

## 1.7 Research hypotheses

Before conducting an empirical investigation to determine relationships and differences between variables, I deem it necessary to formulate hypotheses. Hypotheses are educated “guesses about how the social world works” (Neuman, 1997:128). Tredoux and Durrheim (2002) state that a hypothesis is a tentative statement of a relationship between two variables. In order for the research questions to be answered, I formulated hypotheses, which helped me to remain focused as I conducted and wrote the study (Knight, 2002:15).

For the purpose of this study, the hypotheses were stated in null form. A null hypothesis is a statement in which it is maintained that there is no difference or relationship between groups or variables (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). I opt to state the hypotheses in the null form because I do not know the level of significant difference or the relationship between the research question variables. Therefore the following hypotheses were formulated:

Ho1: There is no relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students in year 1 and in year 2 of study.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

**NOTE:** Year 2 has been chosen as a comparison with the entry point (year 1) because I believe that in year 2 the students are no longer new to the higher education environment. Also, they would have seen their results for year 1, which would motivate those who probably did not do well to improve and those who did do well to remain on track or improve on their performance.

## **1.9 Philosophical assumptions**

By philosophical assumptions I mean my research entry perspectives. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) write that every researcher has his or her own perspective before carrying out any research. A research entry perspective is referred to as a “basic set of beliefs that guide research actions” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mertens, 1998). These sets of beliefs are the fundamental model or frame of reference that helped me in organising my data and reasoning (Babbie, 2001:42). On account of this, I reveal that, as a researcher, I am aware that I speak from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective. In common with Machawira (2008), I entered the research scene or site with my own interpretive frame of reference, my own belief system or worldview (paradigmatic perspective).

My paradigmatic perspective was necessary and important because it guided me through the entire research process especially in the context of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Besides, and given the cultural sensitivity of my research site, the status and gender of the research participants/respondents, I also considered and went into the research with my own axiology and rhetoric.

My ontology – my philosophy of reality and how I got to know that reality (epistemology) – was an important factor that guided and led me in the way in which I went about finding out what I believe should be known (methodology). Ontologically, I believe that reality is subjective and that there are multiple realities as demonstrated or shown by the participants/respondents in this study. My epistemological view is that knowledge is a creation of the interaction between the researcher and the researched. Moreover, knowledge is achieved, attained or unveiled when the voices of research respondents/participants are heard either through writing or speaking. In this study, I identified myself with pragmatic paradigms which focus on the outcomes of the research – the actions, situations and consequences of inquiry rather than antecedent conditions (Creswell, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003; Cherryholmes, 1992; Patton, 1990). My identification with a pragmatic paradigm is linked to the assumptions discussed in the paragraphs that follow (Cherryholmes, 1992; Rossman & Wilson, 1985).

Firstly, I do not see the need to use only one method or approach for collecting and analysing research data. Secondly, I agree that research always occurs in a social, cultural, historical, political and other context, which is subject to continuous change. Hence, it can be best researched using a pragmatic lens instead of positivism or constructionism, which take a narrow, static and traditional view at research phenomena. Thirdly, I believe in the realities of happenings in the larger society that are independent of the mind as well as those lodged in the minds of individuals. Lastly, from personal observation I have noted that the world is not an absolute unity. Therefore, one meaning and one approach would not be ideal for my research.

In this study, the pragmatic paradigm provides me with a pervasive lens for all aspects of a mixed method research; the research method I employed in this study (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005; Creswell, 2007). Creswell emphasises that the problems explored, viewed through pragmatism, are concerned and aimed at disadvantage and include individuals or culture, and include hierarchy, hegemony, racism, sexism, unequal power relations, identity or inequalities in our society. The intellectual puzzle of this study lies in the aforementioned. In an attempt to specifically ascertain my speaking or reporting position – whether I would speak for participants/respondents or speak about them – I

found parallels with the feminist lens (one among many pragmatic paradigms), particularly in the domain of women's studies concerned with women's experiences and lives, how gender is constructed, and how and why gender roles are developed and perpetuated in terms of dominant culture and power issues.

Based on the above, I align my belief to that of Machawira (2008), that speaking about others (participants/respondents) would be an act of representation while speaking for others would be a process of appropriation. I maintain that my philosophical assumptions have, to a large extent, helped me to achieve what I wanted to achieve in this study in terms of the purpose of the study and answering the research questions. In short, I speak about women students in higher education in Nigeria in this study as a matter of representation.

### **1.10 Organisation of this thesis**

This study centres on the academic performance of married women students in Nigeria, particularly in terms of the context in which their academic performance in higher education can be understood and explained. In this study, I seek to find out what cultural practices are dominant with regard to women and pervasive in their academic performance. Also, I seek to understand their experiences and the key trends in their academic performance. Lastly, I seek to compare the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

This thesis comprises seven chapters and its organisation is discussed below:

In chapter 1, I introduce the study and provide some background to it. Here, the purpose of the study and the problem statement are clearly stated, and the research questions and hypotheses are identified. I provide the intellectual rationale for the study and I sum up the chapter with an outline of the organisation of the thesis.

In chapter 2, I offer a critical synthesis of the literature on the topic of study. To do this, I focus on a review of the literature related to married women's academic performance in

higher education. This includes research done locally and internationally on the research topic and related topics. My aim here is to articulate the strengths and shortcomings in the existing literature base. I highlight the fact that there is little evidence of empirical research on married women students' academic performance in higher education at national or local level. Moreover, I argue that, by focusing on married women's academic performance in higher education, my research will address a gap in the literature, and possibly motivate scholars to carry out further research.

Chapter 3 illuminates the theoretical framework: Expanded achievement attribution model and standpoint theory. In this chapter, I demonstrate how and why the theoretical framework fits into my study.

In chapter 4, the research methodology used in this study is described and discussed. I provide a detailed discussion on the journey I took in the entire research process, as well as identifying my personal research beliefs and thereafter discussing their connections or links to the research process.

Chapter 5 deals with the quantitative data analysis. It provides a brief introduction to the chapter, included in which are the frequencies procedure and the outputs derived from research questionnaires that were administered. The chapter discusses the way in which the derived frequencies procedure and outputs were statistically computed to test the research hypotheses, as well as the decisions the researcher made regarding the research hypothesis on the basis of the results that emanated from the statistics computations.

Chapter 6 centres on the qualitative data analysis. This chapter discusses the process during which the researcher engaged the research participants in conversation/discussion, during which they narrated their experiences as students studying in higher education institutions. In addition to the conversation/discussion, I requested research participants to complete an interview protocol, which was intended to create an understanding of the additional experiences of research participants. The findings in this chapter were discussed.



Chapter 7 is the final chapter and discusses the analysis and conclusion. In this chapter, conclusions for the entire study were drawn based on the findings of the study. These findings were extensively analysed, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made. Besides the conclusions and recommendations provided, this chapter also highlighted the significance of the study, the future research direction, and the limitations of the study. Importantly, this chapter illustrates the extension and advancement of the theoretical framework that informs this study. The references and appendices appear at the end of the document.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*Education is not, at root, about the transmission of specific bodies of knowledge and skills. Rather, it is about the development of understanding and the formation of minds and identities: minds that are robust enough and smart enough to engage with the uncertain demands of the future, whatever they may be, and identities that are attuned to the changing communities of which they are members, and able and willing to participate effectively and responsibly in their activities and thus to contribute to, and benefit from, their transformation (Wells & Claxton, 2002:78).*

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the systematic presentations of literature that are relevant to the topic under study are outlined. This involves reviewing what other researchers have done on related topics.

The review of the related literature is aimed at contributing towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that I have identified, which will help to reduce the chances of selecting irrelevant or outdated data or information (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2007; Flick, 2009). A critical assessment of the work of other scholars served as the springboard to this study (Potter, 2009:158).

After reviewing the literature in depth, I considered the research hypotheses already formulated (Ho1, Ho2, and Ho3) in order to construct or organise the headings/themes (Mouton, 2001:91). This will enhance clarity, and the logical and sequential presentation of the final research report.

For clarity of presentation/discussion, the literature review is split into a number of subheadings:

- 2.2 Higher education and women in Africa
- 2.3 Higher education in Nigeria
- 2.4 Enrolment of female students in higher education
- 2.5 Women students' academic performance in higher education
- 2.6 Gender and Culture
- 2.7 Culture and women: an African view
- 2.8 Historical and political accounts of culture in Nigeria
- 2.9 Cultural practices in Nigeria
- 2.10 Summary of the literature

## **2.2 Higher education and women in Africa**

### **2.2.1 Introduction and background**

In this section, I trace the history of higher education in Africa. I also review the literature on the transformation of higher education in Africa vis-à-vis the integration of women in the sector.

Africa remains the poorest continent (Iyoha, 2005; World Bank, 2000). Numerous factors contribute to this situation, but arguably the main reason is the failure to assert education as a relevant and fundamental requisite for poverty alleviation. The basic problem according to Mazonde (2008) is that educational structures were formulated by colonialists who had a cultural background different from that of African countries. To solve this problem, African countries should rank education as a top priority, especially in budgetary allocations. In so doing, education systems that suit African developmental plans should be promoted, and not necessarily those that are compatible with European and colonialist structures. Mazonde (2008) notes further that years of self-governance and independence have not resulted in empowerment for Africans. Independence has apparently not helped to transcend and reshape educational philosophies and frameworks. In the opinion of Mazonde (2008), this arises, amongst other reasons, from continued economic and social ties between African countries and their former colonial masters. This suggests that African countries still look up to their colonial masters as models in

every sphere of life. To break away from these ties, African countries need to realize the extent of the social, cultural and traditional differentials which are evident between Africa and Europe/America. Also, as a necessary means towards empowerment, African countries must probe into the gains afforded by higher education for their citizens in relation to the needs of Africa. Global awareness of the gains of higher education necessitates the broadening of participation in higher education.

The debate on widening participation in education, particularly higher education, currently extends beyond national boundaries (David, 2007). Research findings, particularly in South Africa, suggest redress and transformation of African higher education as a vehicle for widening higher education participation in the continent (Boughy, 2003; Naidoo, 1998). Beyond the African continent, for instance in the USA, affirmative action previously enjoyed attention and priority; however in recent times the emphasis has moved to diversity policies (Hurtado, 2007). Despite evidence of redress and transformation in higher education policies, many African countries, being low-income countries and developing societies, have identified and recognized the influence of socio-economic constraints and enablers (Kwesiga, 2002; Quddus, 1999). Social constraints in many African countries include sanitation, health and obsolete infrastructure; while enablers include human rights, freedom and well-structured political institutions, among others. Further, countries on the African continent are now becoming more aware of the need to develop the skills of the working population – including both men and women (Hong, 2004). People are the most important resource of any given country; therefore the extent to which a country can advance in terms of development and sustainable growth depends on skills acquired by her people. And higher education is the prerequisite for developing skills, especially medium and high-level skills.

### **2.2.2 African higher education – a historical perspective**

Higher education systems and institutions in Africa have developed during different periods – many were established at the end of the period of colonization and at the beginning of independence. Referring to the work of Teferra and Altbach (2004), higher

education institutions across Africa were established to serve as centres intended for, and responsible for the provision of technical knowledge for practical purposes.

Teferra and Altbach (2004) note further that colleges such as Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum (Sudan), Makerere Government College in Kampala (Uganda), Yaba Higher College in Lagos (Nigeria), the Princess of Wales School and College in Achimota (Ghana), and Fourah Bay College in Freetown (Sierra Leone), were created between the end of the nineteenth century and the period between the First and Second World Wars in British colonies. These institutions formed the foundation of the higher education sector in former British colonies. France established higher education institutions towards the formal end of colonization, with centres in Dakar (Senegal), Tananarive (Madagascar) and Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), as did the Belgians in the Congo.

Besides the institutions already mentioned, many others were established during the 1960s. This was the period when many African countries gained independence and experienced an economic boom (Mabokela, 2000). At this point in time, the colonial masters' policies on gender equality had not yet been conceptualized, even in their own countries. I suggest this may have been responsible, in part, for the gender gap in educational institutions in Africa, given the ties that continued to exist between African countries and their former colonial masters. To date, little has changed in terms of education organization and curriculum; neither have the philosophies with regard to the gender dimension changed meaningfully in education institutions ranging from primary to higher institutions of learning (Lewis, 2002).

Looking back in history, Teferra and Altbach (2004:23) write that “higher education in Africa is as old as the pyramids of Egypt, the obelisks of Ethiopia and the kingdom of Timbuktu”. These authors claim that the oldest university still existing in the world today is Egypt's Al-AZhar, which was founded as, and is still a major seat of Islamic learning. Indeed, Al-AZhar is the only major higher education institution in the world that is still organized according to its original Islamic model. In contrast, all other universities in Africa and the world at large, have embraced the western model of higher education

organization. Although Africa can claim an ancient higher education tradition, the fact is that traditional institutions of higher education in Africa have all faded, following the impact of colonialism (*ibid.*:23). Based on this fact, it may be argued that African institutions of higher learning are underpinned and shaped by colonialism and its legacies, in particular a European model of higher education (Altbach & Sevaratnan, 1989; Lulat, 2003).

Colonial policies play themselves out in different ways in various African institutions of higher learning. For instance, higher education institutions in francophone – French speaking – countries are shaped predominately by the policy of assimilation (aimed at making African people become French people, that is, behaving, dressing, speaking, and doing things generally like French people); while the policy of association (involving a much more authoritarian approach to governance, and supporting indirect rule in Africa) directs and shapes higher education institutions in Anglophone – English speaking – countries. Teferra and Altbach (2004) report that Britain and France were the most dominating colonial masters and left the greatest lasting impact on African higher education, not only in terms of the organization of academe and continuing links to the metropole, but also in the language of instruction and communication.

Further, Teferra and Altbach (2004) write that colonial education policies across Africa had some common elements, including limited access, language, limited curriculum, and limited freedom. According to Mabokela (2000) colonial authorities feared widespread access to higher education; they were interested in training only limited numbers of African nationals to assist in administering the colonies. For this reason, the number of Africans from the French, Portuguese and Spanish colonies, who were sent to study overseas, was kept very small (*ibid.*). This suggests that at the time of independence, the enrolment rates at higher education institutions both inside and outside Africa, was relatively small.

With the passing of time, enrolments in higher education institutions on the African continent have increased in number, particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In South Africa,

Mabokela (2004) writes that higher education developed along racial and ethnic lines, with separate universities for Africans, Coloured people, Indians, English-speaking white people and Afrikaans-speaking white people. On these grounds, Mabokela classifies higher education institutions in South Africa into black universities, coastline universities and rural universities. Drawing on the research of Subotzky (1997), Gwala (1988), and Christie & Collis (1984), Mabokela (2004:62) writes that “the creation of black universities fulfilled three primary goals: first to legitimate and solidify the idea of separate racial and ethnic groups promoted by the National Party government; second, to provide personnel to administer and support structures in the newly created homelands; and third, to maintain and reproduce the subordinate and economic position of black people”.

In Nigeria, higher education institutions are broadly divided into three categories based on ownership and funding: federal government, state government and private institutions. All higher education institutions were established to promote national economic development. Such institutions are also expected to teach, conduct research, and promote the African heritage. For this reason, many Africa institutions of higher learning can be regarded as ‘black’ institutions. Unlike South Africa, universities in Nigeria were not founded on ethnic or racial lines.

As illustrated in the writings of the above authors, it is evident that the legacy of colonialism remains a cardinal factor affecting African higher education. While many countries on the African continent were regarded as being independent and sovereign states by the 1960s and thereafter, higher education on the continent is still far from attaining independence or sovereignty. This explains why the language of instruction in most African higher education institutions remains the same as that of the colonisers. This is ultimately an important and relevant factor to consider in the understanding and analysis of African higher education.

### **2.2.3 Transformation of African higher education: integration of women**

The global move to massification, a process that has its origins from the 1960s onwards, has been one of the most significant aspects of transformation in higher education systems (Dunne & Sayed, 2002). Governments, in a variety of national contexts, have made public commitments to increase gross enrolments. This has been evident, for example, in South Africa, where calls have been made for a 40 per cent participation rate of the eligible higher education cohort (Sayed, 1998). Significantly for Sub-Saharan African countries, higher education has recently re-emerged as an important dimension in the development efforts of donor agencies (See for example, UNESCO, 1998a; ACU, 2000; DFID, 2000; World Bank, 2000a; 2000b). The massification of higher education systems has been associated with increasing access and participation for those who have traditionally been absent or excluded (Dunne & Sayed, 2002). In most contexts, “this has been realised by increasing female participation, alongside increasing access for minority groups, the disabled, mature and non-residential students” (*ibid.*:2).

Transformation is a pre-condition for achieving overall development that is ‘centered’ on people (Bazilli, 2010); it is aimed at eradicating class and segregation of any kind between people. Following this line of thinking, I suggest transformation is linked to widening participation in higher education. Widening participation policies link ‘individual choices’, ‘institutional responsiveness’, and ‘national and universal salvation’ (Morley, Leach & Lugg, 2009). Within the discourse of widening participation, the balance between the individual and the collective good is complex (Ball, 1998). Neoliberalism conceptualizes the individual as following her/his interests as an autonomous entrepreneur. This implies that women as individuals pursuing their educational ‘self-interests’, will enlarge economic benefits for the ‘self’, ‘family’ and society at large. Underpinning policy priorities is the assumption that macro and micro level aspirations will overlap and that governments and citizens will choose the most appropriate providers and programmes, which result in developmental strategies (Naidoo, 2006). Kenway, Bullen and Robb (2004) suggest that knowledge has become a tradeable



asset and that the production of the industrial and commercial focus is equated with future prosperity.

One major and significant aspect of transformation in African higher education is connected to the participation of women, either as academic staff or as students. In this study my emphasis is on women students. It has been documented that women's participation as students in higher education in Africa is showing an increasing trend (UNESCO, 2006; Bradley, 2000; Leathwood & Read, 2009). Despite this trend, Morley *et al.* (2009) and others note that women's enrolment rates in higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa are by far the lowest in the world (Morley, Leach & Lugg, 2009; Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2005). Similarly the 2003/04 EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2004) claims that, in general, Sub-Saharan Africa has low enrolment rates and strong gender disparities and inequalities.

The enrolment of women students in institutions of higher learning has shown a remarkable increase following the establishment of private higher education institutions, and part-time studies in both public and private institutions (Osuji, 2001; Ngome, 2003; Aderinto, Akande & Aderinto, 2006; UNESCO, 2007; Effah & Senadza, 2008). Osuji (2001) points out that the advantage of the part-time degree course as an adult or continuing education programme, is that people continue to acquire new knowledge and skills, irrespective of their age and status. In the same vein, Fasokun (2000) asserts that no school system, however efficient, can fully prepare people for lifelong and higher educational participation in any society today. Hence, part-time degree courses in the form of continuing education are promoted within the Nigerian educational system and in many other parts of Africa (Aderinto, Akande & Aderinto, 2006), in order to reach out to those who would not otherwise enjoy the privilege of higher education, especially women. The research of Aderinto, Akande and Aderinto (2006) provides evidence of a symbiotic relationship between women's participation in higher education through a part-time degree programme, and socio-economic empowerment. I suggest that this symbiotic relationship creates an enabling condition for improvement in the enrolment rate of women students in higher education. Ngome (2003:4) observes that while there is some

improvement in the enrolment rate of female students in private higher education institutions, female representation in public institutions is still low, with only “about 30 per cent of total enrolments in the public universities”.

According to Kamlongera (2007:14) “the increase of women’s participation in all sectors of life is not only needed for the development of African countries – it is also crucial to ensuring that both women and men can fully exercise their rights and emancipation”. Beck (1992; 2002) suggests that education, particularly higher education, should be seen as the main channel towards emancipation or liberation. In order for women to be able to meaningfully contribute to societal development and perhaps not to be seen as ‘political outsiders’ or ‘second class citizens’ (Hassim, 2005; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004), they are required to be competent in their respective field of endeavour. This will aid their emancipation and lead to advancement of the “independent woman” (Hassim, 2005:12). The emancipation of women relies on their absorption into the mainstream of society through the creation of expanded and inclusive national machinery, which opens the possibility that traditional deadlocks barring women access to power, such as higher education, need to be broken (Hassim, 2003).

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, countries around the world, including African countries – except for the newly-created state South Sudan – aimed to attain parity in women’s participation in both the public and private spheres. The incorporation of women into public institutions, particularly the labour market, has been described as a major requirement for attaining parity between women and men in political and social life (Bradley, 2000). In addition, the same author notes that household labour is typically uncompensated; therefore participation in the labour force is an important way for women to accrue resources that can shift the balance of power between men and women. The research of Bradley (*ibid.*) shows that occupational success is highly correlated with educational attainment in both developed and developing countries; hence the incorporation of women into educational systems, particularly higher education, is widely believed to be an effective strategy for increasing gender parity in occupational structures and public spheres in general.

A higher education qualification eliminates, to some extent, one of the ‘reasons’ for the exclusion of women from leadership and political offices (the public sphere) in Africa. Statistics indicate that there are more women in public offices in African countries where there is a higher level of awareness of the gains provided by higher education for women by women (Kamlongera, 2007). The number of women in parliament, according to the UNDP (2009), is as follows: South Africa, 49%; Uganda, 30.9%; and Rwanda 56% (above parity, with 36% in cabinet). In Nigeria, the figures are 6.7% and 2.8% for the lower and upper houses of parliament respectively (Erinosho, 2005). Bunyi (2003) and Alele (1993) claim that African societies, being traditional with many derogatory cultural practices and ideologies about the status, capabilities and roles of women, among other factors, account for the low number of women in parliament.

Kamlongera (2007) suggests that women in leadership positions should make a concerted effort to help women understand some of the fundamental causes of gender disparity in higher education, and in so doing, younger women will be committed to different ways of envisioning their lives. Fraser (1995) observes that it was the commitment to different ways of ‘seeing’ that drove the intellectual and political energy of feminism. If women see issues of higher education differently from their mothers, then they will be prepared to face the challenges and obstacles that bar them from remarkable achievements. Against this background, the AHEC (2008) argues in favour of the need to increase equity and access in higher education in Africa. Its position centers on the premise that “increased access to higher education increases the capacity of the African continent to create future prosperity, improve public health, advance sustainability, and much more” (*ibid.*:14).

The call for an increase in equality and access to higher education has resulted in increases in the number of women students in higher education in Africa and beyond (World Bank 2002). The higher education sector is changing, with evidence that undergraduate students are no longer within the traditional age bracket of 18 to 25 years old and living on campuses (Mbilinyi, 2006; Corder, 2011). Both these authors maintain

that the demographic characteristics of higher education have shifted, with women constituting the fastest-growing segment in higher education institutions. Mbilinyi (2006) reveals that in recent years, 49% of adult women verses 47% of adult men are more likely to return to school after the age of 25 years. Benshoff and Lewis (1992), Hayes *et al.* (2000) and Corder (2011) show that many women enter or re-enter higher education because of their wish to complete the education pursuits they began when they were younger. A large number of them may have dropped out of school due to a number of reasons, including financial difficulties, competing responsibilities, and a lack of focus, motivation and maturity (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992).

The study by Hayes *et al.* (2000) indicates that the 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought changing social norms and roles for women, which accounts for the tremendous growth in the number of women participating in higher education globally. Similarly, Rice (2003) asserts that women's interest in higher education has grown over the years on the grounds that they consider it as an individual need to help them achieve their desire to become financially self-supporting. It is therefore no surprise that the women in Reay's (2003) study related their motivation for higher education to returns they could expect from education. Accordingly, the motivations revealed in Reay's (2003) study reflect the complexities and contradictions of reflexive modernization; and the changing role of women, where projection of the 'self' can be associated with a strong sense of commitment and the desire to 'give back' to family and society. In simple terms, this perspective points to the changing roles of women in modern societies, which in turn motivate them to seek higher education. These findings serve as a pointer to understanding women's need for higher education as a foundation for accessing and acquiring the kind of knowledge they require for their transformative roles. Furthermore, Badoo (2011) acknowledges that the influence of the Millennium Development Goal 3 is equally instrumental in understanding the transformation of higher education in Africa, especially as it concerns women.

### 2.2.4 Millennium Development goal 3

*Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women*

One hundred and eighty nine United Nations member states convened and adopted the Millennium Declaration in the year 2000; the meeting distilled the core goals and targets agreed to at international conferences and world summits during the 1990s. Built on the Declaration, the United Nations, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development compiled eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are interrelated and essential for the development and growth of countries (UNDP 2008). In the same year as the Millennium Summit and Declaration, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution embracing the interactions between women's empowerment, gender equality, and the peace and security agenda (*ibid.*). Together, the Millennium Declaration and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a promise and memorandum of understanding by the governments of the 189 countries to achieve social justice for all. More so, they offer a collective vision for a just and equal world (Badoo, 2011).

Since the Millennium Summit in 2000, numerous initiatives have been put in place to understand the gender equality dimensions of the MDGs. These initiatives separately and collectively noted the commitments to achieve women's emancipation. These initiatives include: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by 186 member states, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, and Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 on women, peace and security, and sexual violence in conflict. In addition, government commitments to take action are illuminated in regional treaties such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and in an increasing number of national legal and constitutional gender equality guarantees (UNIFEM report 2010).

The third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3) has a special place among the MDGs. Not only is it a key development goal in its own right, but it is also an important means to unlocking and achieving other MDGs. According to Badoo (2011:38), improving gender equality is necessary for the achievement of all the MDGs: “acting on MDG3 has a catalytic effect on all MDGs and makes their attainment more feasible”. Badoo stresses further that as governments continue to shift towards MDG-based planning, the UNDP assists them in building the institutional capacities, policies and programmes needed to achieve the MDGs. The UNDP also supports governments in monitoring and channeling the MDGs to local communities. From a gender standpoint, the UNDP works to ensure that policies, programmes and budgets respond to the needs of both women and men, while helping women to better influence and shape these policies (UNDP, 2008).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have dominated the UN development agenda since their inception. They have become the most visible expression of international commitment and a framework aimed at sustainable development; hence initiatives and policies on development and gender equality in many countries of the world are based on the MDGs. Apart from international compliance, the MDGs align with the local and national philosophies of many developing countries, especially newly independent countries or those where civil war or regimes such as apartheid have recently ended. Such countries see the MDGs as a yardstick for accessing and evaluating nation building and development. The MDGs largely correspond with states’ obligations under international human rights law. Therefore, most states have existing, immediate, and binding duties regarding the issues covered by the MDGs. Despite the third goal’s central tenet of gender equality and the empowerment of women, its target appears to focus more on eliminating gender disparity in primary education, than on any other level of education, in particular higher education.

Based on the above discussion, it is indeed logical to agree with Dejene (2007), that the Millennium Development Goal 3 is recognized not only as a goal in itself, but also as an essential step for achieving all other goals (Dejene, 2007). Further, and given the comments in this section, Badoo’s acknowledgment that the influence of Millennium

goal 3 is equally instrumental to the understanding of transformation of higher education in Africa is noteworthy (see page 29).

### **2.2.5 Challenges for African higher education transformation**

In an attempt to offer knowledge as a power base for women and to fully integrate women into the higher education sector, higher education should not be seen as a sole space but central to the acquisition and production of knowledge that shapes the contemporary world (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). “In African states, social institutions of higher learning are still mostly being organized according to the parameters of colonial legacies with regards to the nature of the institutions, and the criteria of access to them” (*ibid.*:9). Furthermore, there are societal factors and values, such as the pressure on girls to marry and other obstacles in educational institutions, that lead to gender disparity. Farzaneh and Moghadam (2003) and Carr (1994) note that pressure on girls to marry, a factor that causes gender disparity in Africa, is dominant in Sahelian/Islamic countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. To buttress this observation, Rathgeber (2003) points out that compared to their male counterparts, young African women in Tanzania, even with their academic achievements and potential, tend to leave school earlier to marry, in compliance with social norms. Nevertheless, the gender gap in Tanzania is narrower than in many developing countries because of its socialist legacy (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Given global discussions on women and higher education, gender has become more integrated into the mainstream discourse on higher education in industrialized countries. However, studies on gender issues are still scarce in African countries (Morley, 2003). Morley (2003:9) found that even the more economically advanced countries, for instance, “confirm the difficulties at the policy, institutional, organisational, and micro-political level of putting in place strategies for social inclusion in higher education”.

I have searched the literature from the north to south of Africa extensively, as a means of understanding the gender discourse, particularly in the context of women in higher education in Africa. From my reading, I understand that higher education in Africa

remains mostly synonymous with men. Pereira (2002:1), in her analysis of higher education in Nigeria, notes that “although the university system tends to be spoken of in gender neutral terms, the effects of their workings are far from gender neutral as shown by the proportion of women students and academics”. In a study in Zimbabwe, Gaidzanwa (2007) observed a similar situation and notes that the University of Zimbabwe is an unfriendly and overtly gender-based, hostile environment for both female students and staff members. In response to the views of writers on gender neutrality in higher education institutions in Africa, Ngome (2003) admits that the situation concerning gender neutrality and male dominance is no different in Kenya. By extension to northern Africa, Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi and Valentine M. Moghadam in their work ‘*Empowering women, developing society: female education in the Middle East and North Africa*’ show that issues relating to ‘maleness’ in institutions of learning remain a major challenge. According to Farzaneh and Moghadam (2003), many girls and women are still excluded from education and many of those in schools are learning too little to prepare them for the 21st century labour market.

To simplify and summarize the writings of these authors, I align my view with that of Mluma (1998; 2001), whose research focuses on gender and higher education in Africa, that higher education is overwhelmingly characterized by ‘maleness’. Assie-Lumumba (2006) stresses that like many other social factors, gender does not constitute a variable that acts alone. It is indeed the interface with other socially significant factors that constitute solid obstacles to higher education for women (*ibid.*:20).

### **2.2.6 Women’s role in higher education development in Africa**

Despite the many challenges that mitigate against women’s success in higher education, such as colonization legacies and the gendered dichotomy or disequilibrium of higher education, African women seek higher education passionately, realizing that it is a major means of liberating themselves (Mama & Barnes, 2007). The antecedents to the energy that women pour into Africa’s educational and intellectual development are evident in the memoirs of early women educators like Charlotte Maxeke of South Africa, Constance



Cummings-John of Liberia, Mrs Ekpo and Funmilayo Kuti both of Nigeria, amongst others, who all contributed immensely towards the development of higher education across the continent (Mama & Barnes, 2007). Accordingly, Mama and Barnes reveal that in the pre-independence years (1940s-1960s) these women established educational institutions in their respective countries. These institutions included the vocational schools for young ladies set up by Constance Cummings-John on her return to Freetown (where she later became Africa's first woman mayor); Mrs Ekpo's educational initiatives for women in the Calabar area of southeast Nigeria; Funmilayo Kuti's workshops for illiterate market women; and other non-formal education initiatives carried out by African women in a spirit of charitability (Mama & Barnes, 2007).

Mama and Barnes (2007) also document that before the early 1900s, education among Muslim African women was carried out by *mallamas*, in the tradition of the 19th century scholar and teacher Nana Asma'u, daughter of Usman 'Dan Fodio (*ibid.*:2). On this note, the same authors opine that Africa's colonial-era universities began as extensions of elitist metropolitan institutions. Although Mama and Barnes were writing about universities in particular, their conclusion suggests that at no time have women been formally excluded from Africa's post-independence higher education sector, which is something women can take pride in.

It is documented that the contributions of women to the development of higher education in Africa, such as those illuminated above, carried no monetary reward (Mama & Barnes, 2007). Yet many women, in collaboration with governments, attempted to foster the transformation or development of higher education through initiatives that led to the formulation of policies favouring women's participation in higher education. For example, in South Africa, initiatives such as the Commission on Gender Equality, the National Gender Forum, and the Office on the Status of Women continue to support efforts by higher education institutions to be more inclusive and equitable (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

## 2.2.7 Conclusion

The first challenge for women in higher education is to increase access for women to higher education opportunities. Improved access to higher education is linked to the opening of increased employment possibilities and poverty reduction in Africa. In summary, women's education forms part of the fundamental requirements for poverty reduction and development of the continent. The second challenge to women's higher education on the African continent is to provide gender-fair education to all citizens. According to Banerjere (2010), gender-fair education involves an aggressive move away from an emphasis on separate and complementary spheres for men and women and gender stereotyped careers, to expanded options and outcomes. The attainment of such, in collaboration with women's emancipation as a means towards their empowerment and liberation, should not simply be an offshoot of a good education but rather an explicit, overarching goal in a healthy social environment. Although Banerjee's (2010) work entitled '*Restructuring Indian higher education: strategies for women's empowerment*' focuses on India, her findings and conclusion appear to be useful in the context of this study, especially if one considers that India is a developing country as are many countries on the African continent.

Improved higher education opportunities for women will enable them to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For women to make personal strides forward in satisfying their quest and growing need for higher education (Corder, 2011), African countries should make concerted efforts through policies which include the above-mentioned gender-fair education instruments (see Banerjere, 2010). As the literature reveals, higher education offers women the opportunity to be trained as leaders with decision making capacities to achieve the best for themselves and their countries, and to represent womenfolk in general.

## 2.3 Higher education in Nigeria

Nigeria is a federation of 36 states; the capital is situated in Abuja. The population of Nigeria is pegged at approximately at 137 million, making it the most populous nation in

Africa and the largest black nation in the world. The large population is one reason why higher education in the country is significant and from time to time visited by researchers from across the world. Higher education in Nigeria is inevitable given the human, natural, physical, material and other forms of resources available. It is pointless to define higher education in detail (see background to the study). However, it does make sense to say here that higher education is that aspect of education (dissemination and receipt of knowledge) that is offered to or acquired by students after the completion of their secondary school education.

In Nigeria, higher education is generally referred to as tertiary education. This term is expanded to include universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and monotechnics. There are in addition other non-conventional higher education institutions. These are usually professional bodies known for the promotion and regulation of professionalism in certain areas of endeavour, but do not usually have a particular place or centre of their own for teaching and learning like other conventional higher education institutions (universities, polytechnics etc). Examples of non-conventional higher education institutions are the Institute of Chartered Accountants Nigeria (ICAN), the Chartered Institute of Administration (CIA), the Nigeria Institute of Management (NIM), and the Chartered Institute of Bankers (CIB).

The difference in conventional higher education lies mainly in the types of programme they run, the skill they develop, and the duration of their programmes and qualifications or certificates offered on completion of the programmes. Universities are meant for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation. Universities award degrees, and polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education develop middle-level manpower and award diplomas (ordinary national and higher national diplomas). Recently, most polytechnics have been upgraded, following the discrimination of the Higher National Diploma (HND) and the bachelor's degree from the university by employers of labour. Colleges of Education award the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE).

Irrespective of their classification, institutions of higher education are charged collectively with the task of attaining certain objectives. These objectives are clearly stated in the national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004:36) as the following: (1) the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society; (2) the development of the intellectual capacity of the individual to understand and appreciate the environment; (3) the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; and (4) the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environment. In a global context, Griswold (1962), Wegner (1978) and Roosovsky (1990) note that higher education is commonly associated with at least five purposes:

- to prepare students to understand, conduct or apply research of various kinds
- to instruct students in the rational traditions and academic disciplines associated with liberal or advanced learning
- to provide vocational training that will enable students to enter the workforce, earn a living, and engage in productive and satisfying labour
- to initiate students into the study of substantive visions of the good
- to foster the dispositions and skills required for democratic citizenship

Put together, in terms of national and international perspectives, higher education is thus meant to be development oriented, whether in physical or psychological dimensions (Yaqub, 2001).

The history of higher education in Nigeria can be traced back to the 1890s when Sierra Leonean re-captives took the initiative (though unsuccessful) to establish a higher education institution by making land available somewhere between Yaba and Ebute Metta in Lagos (Fafunwa, 1975). In 1896, some individuals attempted to establish the Lagos Training and Industrial Institute but also failed. In 1934, the first institution of

higher learning, Yaba Higher College, was established. The name has, however, since been changed, as between the 1960s and the present day it became known as the Yaba College of Technology. It is still in operation as a polytechnic and awards its graduates an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) for a two-year programme plus one year's industrial attachment, and a Higher National Diploma (HND) for a four-year programme and a one-year industrial attachment programme. Today, there is a strong move from the public sector and from students and members of staff of the institution for it to be upgraded to the status of a university and the name changed to the University of Technology, Yaba.

It is pertinent to reveal that before the establishment of Yaba Higher College, some training schools and institutions had already been established. For example, schools which can now be regarded as monotechs in Oyo State started in Lagos in 1908. Following the high dropout rate and higher numbers of Nigerians studying overseas, in 1943 the government set up a commission (the Elliot Commission) to advise on higher education needs. One major outcome was the establishment of the University College in Ibadan in 1948. The university college offered degrees to graduates jointly with the University of London on completion of their programmes. This was the only university in the country until 1960 when Nigeria gained its independence.

Independence made way for more universities because of the demand for higher education (Jubril, 2003). In addition, few people saw the need for overseas universities. This view was fuelled by increasing job opportunities for Nigerians. In 1962, the Federal Government established the University of Lagos in Lagos (then the capital city) on the recommendation of the Ashby Commission. This Commission was set up by the government in April 1959 to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-secondary school certificate and higher education over the next twenty years (1960–1980). On the recommendation of the Commission the federal government deemed it necessary to establish at least one university in each region of the federation: the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (East); the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (North); the University of Ile-Ife, Osun (West); and the University of Benin, Edo (Mid-West). This group of universities is often referred to as the first-generation universities.

In the 1970s, the petroleum boom led to an increase in the number of higher education institutions in Nigeria. In 1976, seven universities were established in the following locations: Calabar, Jos, Ilorin, Kano, Port Harcourt, Sokoto and Maiduguri. These universities are referred to as the second-generation universities. These were mainly specialised universities of technology and agriculture and consist of the Universities of Owerri, Minna, Yola, Bauchi, Akure, Abeokuta, Umudike and Makurdi. During this period, the Nigerian Military Academy was upgraded to the status of a university. Today it is known as the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), the premier military university in Nigeria.

In the 1980s, enrolment in higher education, particularly at universities across the country, rose tremendously. Existing universities could no longer admit all the prospective students and, for this reason, more higher education institutions including polytechnics and colleges of education were established by the federal and state governments. During this period, state governments prioritised the establishment of universities in their respective states to accommodate the increased numbers of students demanding higher education. Universities established during this period are referred to as third-generation universities. In recent times, the number of higher institutions of learning has increased as the government alone can no longer manage or provide higher education for all Nigerians as well as students from neighbouring countries. This has left the government of the country with no option but to give approval for the establishment of private universities.

Private individuals and Christian missionaries are at the forefront of private higher education establishments in Nigeria. Admission to all tertiary institutions in Nigeria is conducted by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board. This examination board was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1978 to conduct entrance examinations (UME) for students seeking admission into different tertiary institutions. It is important to note that the board conducts examinations for full-time studies and placement for direct-entry students only. The respective institutions conduct entry examinations for other modes of study, such as part time, distance learning and correspondence. The admission and

entrance examination requirements for all modes of study (full time, part time and distance) are uniform.

Between 2000 and 2001, Nigeria's entire tertiary education system (federal, state and private) comprised 220 institutions: 17 federal universities, four federal universities of technology, three federal universities of agriculture, one national open university, four national centres for specialised tertiary instruction, 16 state universities, seven private universities, one military university, 17 federal polytechnics, 27 state polytechnics, seven private polytechnics, 22 federal teacher training colleges, 38 state teacher training colleges, four private teacher training colleges, 36 colleges of agriculture, 12 specialised training institutes, and four parastatal supervisory agencies (NUC, 2002b). Today, Nigeria is the country with the highest number of tertiary institutions (higher education) on the African continent (NUC, 2002b; Jubril, 2003).

## **2.4 Enrolment of women students to higher education**

Enrolment numbers is a major factor that determines access and participation of women in higher education. Women students' access in particular is determined by many factors that are mutually reinforcing. These include favourable admission policies, physical access to institutions, availability of financial resources, and prior access to secondary school education, as well as the quality of the institutional culture. Kethusigile, Kwaramba and Lopi (2000) argue that all the factors are interrelated and all affect women's enrolment and participation in higher education. Examining the interrelationship of all these factors is beyond the scope of the proposed study, nevertheless, some will be briefly examined and analysed. Kethusigile *et al.* (2000) indicate that a myriad of sociocultural, political and economic factors determine or constrain the enrolment of women in higher levels of education. The factors that influence women's access and enrolment vary across the continent. However, tradition and culture are unique and are issues that the continent will struggle with for a long time to come because of its vast traditional and cultural heritage. Cultural practice in Nigeria is

identified as a major obstacle for women students attempting to enrol in higher education (Bolarin, 2001; 2004).

Since the 1990 World Conference on Education for All held in Jometein, Thailand, various governments, non-government organisations and United Nations agencies have committed themselves to eliminating the gender gap in children's access to primary school education. This they believe is fundamental to tackling the problem of higher education from the "grassroots". Declarations such as the one made at Jometein focused attention sharply on the importance of female education (Rufa'i 2001). This awareness is essential if human resources in Nigeria are to be optimally developed. In addition, higher education for women should not be seen as a privilege but a right. It is for this reason that gender issues and equalities have been at the forefront of international summits since 1990. Some of these summits include the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD, 1995), Copenhagen; the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW, 1995), Beijing and Beijing plus 5 (2005), New York. These summits are manifestations of the world's commitment to gender equality as it is increasingly obvious that women's enrolment and participation in education is a requirement for countries on the way to empowerment and development. Yet the call to ensure access for women to education is not enough; the goal should be considered a minimum requirement, rather than an end itself. It is impressive to see experts in seminars, summits and conferences coming up with strategies to increase the female enrolment rate in higher education, but it would be even better to see governments of countries put them into use.

In March 2002, at a national summit on higher education held to examine specific policy issues arising from the government's higher education autonomy policy, the Nigerian government took a step in the right direction. As reported, 1,200 stakeholders attended this summit including students, parents, academic staff, management, government and employers. Topics addressed included management, funding, access/enrolment, curriculum relevance and social problems (Federal Ministry of Education, 2002). Access and enrolment were debated because they are seen as a major problem by parents; to others they are a challenge that needs immediate attention given the population growth rate of the country. The issue is exacerbated by the influx of students in Higher education



in Nigeria from neighbouring countries such as Republic of Benin, Togo, Liberia, and other West African countries who have enrolled for higher education in the country (Saint, Hartnett & Strassner, 2002).

An indicator of enrolment growth in higher institutions of learning is the high number of new intakes applying for higher education every year. Yaqub (2001) stresses that not all prospective students who qualify for higher education in Nigeria are offered admission; a large number of them are constrained by financial issues, the inability to pass the entrance examination, and insufficient facilities and classrooms for students. In the light of this, Yaqub acknowledges that two main issues are relevant to accessing higher education in Nigeria: firstly, the financial ability of the prospective student to pay their way through the system; and secondly, the extent to which they qualify academically. However, Adeyemo (2000) reveals that higher education in Nigeria, especially in institutions owned by the federal government, is about the cheapest in terms of tuition fees on the continent. Despite this, the access and enrolment of students to higher education institutions in the country is still at a low ebb in comparison with international trends.

In Africa, Nigeria boasts the largest number of higher education institutions, but South Africa has the highest number of student enrolments (Saint, Hartnett & Strassner, 2002). A constant increase in the number of students migrating from Nigeria to other countries across the world for higher education is a major reason for this (Saint *et al.*, 2002), and can be traced back to the numerous problems in the higher education system in the past, especially during the military era. At that time, higher education was ridiculed because the military administration did not regard higher education (universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education) as valuable, but rather as a threat. Its focus was on in the Nigerian Defence Academy as a training ground for senior military officers. This could be the reason why Rtd. Brigadier General David Mark once said that the least ranked soldier is better than a university graduate (*The Punch*, 2006). This situation, as well as frequent strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and other academic unions, paved the way for instability in the country's education system. Following this, came the closure of

most tertiary institutions of learning for several years. Another outcome of this was a brain drain among academic staff, making it, together with other problems, impossible for most tertiary institutions of learning to admit or increase their enrolment numbers. A holistic view helps to see access and enrolment of women students in higher education institutions as something that has suffered, is suffering and will continue to suffer setbacks if drastic and continuous measures are not put in place to check them. Thus, it is imperative to take a look at the enrolment and access to higher education in recent past in order to help substantiate arguments on enrolment trends and rates especially as they concern women students in higher education. The table below show figures for enrolment in higher education in Nigeria.

**Table 2.1:** Male/female enrolment in tertiary institutions

Year	Male enrolment	Female enrolment	Total	Male (%)	Female (%)
1960	2,349	<b>196</b>	2545	92.30	7.70
1970	25,500	<b>4,500</b>	30,000	85.00	15.00
1980	58,056	<b>16,275</b>	74,331	78.00	21.00
1990	132,016	48,855	180,871	73.00	27.00
<b>University enrolment figures in Nigeria by gender</b>					
2001	26665	19101	45766	58.26	41.73
2002	54972	35797	90769	60.56	39.44
2003	31942	19903	51845	61.61	38.39
2004	59742	45415	105157	56.82	43.18
2005	69715	52777	122492	56.91	43.09

Source: Field work – Aina, Oyetaki & Oshun (2009).

Table 2.1 above shows enrolment rates and trends for male and female students in higher education from 1960, the year Nigeria gained independence to 2005. From the table, it can be seen that the percentage of female students enrolled for higher education for 1960 to 1990 was very low in comparison to their male counterparts. In a recent study, Aina *et al.* (2009), the number of women students increased from 41.73 per cent in 2001 to 43.09 per cent in 2005 (see table above). Despite the increase, there was a decrease in between the years. On the account of this, I regard the increase in women student enrolment as a ‘decreasing increase’. In 2002, a decrease to 39.44 per cent from 41.73 per cent in 2001 was recorded and a further decrease to 38.39 per cent in 2003 was recorded. 2004 and

2005 record 43.18 and 43.09 per cent women enrolment increase respectively. However, given the figures in the table above, I observe that there is an infinitesimal decrease in the enrolment of women students in Nigerian Higher education. Aina *et al.* in their study – “impact of economic depression on the education of male and female undergraduates in Nigeria” (2009) aimed at investigating the current state of economic depression in Nigeria revealed interesting findings that could be useful in the understanding of recent trends of women student enrolment and likely courses. In the course of their study, an attempt was made at finding out whether or not gender status of undergraduates is affected by the economic hardship. Their findings revealed that there was no significant difference between the effect of economic hardship on male and female undergraduates in Nigeria. Also, revealed was a finding on gender discrimination. The study proved that gender discrimination in the country was not tied to the hardship, but ecosystemic thinking of the society, which the authors believe is presently decreasing with reference to tertiary institutions enrolment. In my understanding, ecosystemic thinking of the society comprises social, economical, political, religious and cultural practices.

While gender equity campaigners, scholars and writers and feminists celebrate this ‘decreasing increase’ in women enrolment rate in higher education, it is worthy to pin point for the purpose of the literature that enrolment of women in higher education has remarkably increased from independence till date, although fluctuating. The fluctuation in the number of women enrolment in higher education suggests that there is still a lot to be done to avoid fluctuations but persistent increase; and to attain the united nation’s millennium goal on gender equity especially as it applies to higher education in Nigeria.

As I seek to understand and explain the academic performance of married women students in higher education, a look at the enrolment rate/trends is very important because I believe that an increase or equity in gender in enrolment can promote academic competition among women thereby helping to improve their academic performance. Better still, persistent increase in enrolment of women students in higher education will motivate or encourage better performance. Maslow’s (1954) theory of motivation is fundamental to my belief.

In practice, however, the higher education system in Nigeria developed less rationally than anticipated. That is, there is still a gap between application for higher education admission and those offered admission (Yaqub, 2001). Application with intention to enrol in tertiary institutions of learning has grown rapidly. Enrolment growth has been the highest in the South Region, followed by the North-East Region (NUC 2002b). Even in light of the impressive remark by the National Universities Commission, about the zeal, willingness and clamour for higher education in Nigeria, the Commission emphasises that overall growth has far exceeded government policy guideline or provisions.

Prior to 1999, the state of enrolment in higher education in Nigeria was such that one out of every three persons in every home who wished to enrol for higher education was denied access. The year 1999 brought a democratically elected government to Nigeria for the first time in 15 years of military administration. With it came the political will to tackle the nation's long-standing higher education difficulties. Indeed, the Obasanjo administration between 1999 and 2007 introduced more policy and institutional reforms in higher education than the combined government of the previous two decades. Many believe that the present administration of Yar'Adua and Goodluck is a continuation and hope that the same policy and reforms will be kept on track if not improved upon. Most notable as regards tackling the problem of enrolment accessibility to higher education is the licensing of private tertiary institutions of learning to accommodate prospective students who are unable to gain access to or enrol at government-owned tertiary institutions of learning, and the revocation of vice-chancellors' former privilege of personally selecting 10 per cent of each year's student intake. Others include institutional audits of all tertiary institutions and associated parastatal bodies, the reconstitution of all universities' governing councils with broader representation, the exemption of higher education institution staff from public service salary scales and regulation, and a 180 per cent increase in funding applicable only to federal universities (FRN, 2001).

Today, with the development and increase in the number of private tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria, it is believed that accessibility to higher education will improve and reciprocally improve enrolment. This might be difficult to realise in the short term, as the tuition fees at these institutions are very expensive and unaffordable for most Nigerians.

In addition, private higher education institutions have yet to gain national and international recognition.

However, efforts to expand enrolment in higher education in Nigeria have not yielded tangible results in comparison with what has been obtainable in most countries of the world (Yaqub, 2001). Nevertheless, there has been a slight improvement in enrolment rates in terms of academic disciplines. The highest rates of enrolment growth occurred in science and engineering. As a result, the share of science and engineering in total enrolment rose from 54 per cent in 1989 to 59 per cent in 2000, consistent with national policy targets (NUC, 2002). Much of this expansion centred on the South-East Region, where a combined annual growth rate of 26.4 per cent in science and engineering led the nation. With particular reference to women students' enrolment in Nigerian higher education, their numbers increased in the humanities, education and science but considerably less in social science and technology (NUC, 2002).

A general review of enrolment and accessibility to higher education in Nigeria is essential, but the scope of this study infers an intensive focus on women students' enrolment in higher education with respect to trends and comparison. Ohiri-Aniche (2003) reports that, in Nigeria, women constituted only 13.5 per cent of gross enrolment numbers for ages 18 to 29 years at tertiary institutions of learning between 1993 and 1994. Suara (1999) indicates that in most African countries, the female literacy rate is disturbing and that it is always significantly lower than that of males. Akande Jadesola, the only female vice-chancellor of the Lagos State University since its inception, noted in 2001 that low enrolment for female students in higher education institutions arises from a high dropout rate as they move up the educational ladder and also when they are in the system (tertiary institutions). The dropout and completion rate of women students in higher education is a major challenge that one should not lose sight of in an attempt to understand women students' participation in higher education.

One focus of this study is women's enrolment in higher education in Nigeria. Hence, the background information on female enrolment at primary and secondary school level is of paramount importance and provides traces and links which in turn help in understanding

some of the major factors responsible for the upward, downward or stagnancy trends of enrolment rate. Furthermore, the background information serves as a necessary instrument and guide for provocative inquiry into women student's enrolment in higher education. The enrolment of female students in primary schools is encouraging and usually higher than that of secondary schools (Okebukola, 1999). The enrolment patterns so far observed are that, as females move higher up the education ladder, their number dwindles (Akande, 2001; Okeke, 2002; Bolarin, 2004). Following this, by the time they are ready to go into higher education (tertiary level of education); their numbers have declined significantly (Bolarin, 2005; 2006).

In my view, the increase in female student enrolment is arithmetical (1, 2, 3, 4 ...) as opposed to the geometrical (1, 2, 4, 16 ...) male students' enrolment. This concurs with observations on the above tables. For international comparison purposes, Mukangara and Koda (1997) reveal that the situation of Tanzanian women in tertiary education is slightly better than for Nigerian and Ghanaian women, with women constituting 17 per cent of all tertiary level students.

However, the gender disparity is still more pronounced at this level (higher education) than it is at the primary and secondary level (Ukoha, 2005; Okebukola, 1999; Bolarin, 2001). Mukangara and Koda (1997) argue that a gender bias in favour of men's access to higher education institutions has been naturalised. This is revealed in the limited effect that affirmative action policy has had on women's enrolment numbers. In South Africa, women's enrolment in tertiary education constitutes 47.8 per cent of total enrolment, and is amongst the highest on the continent (Statistics South Africa, 2002). This increase can be ascribed to policymakers' deliberate efforts to correct the racial and gender injustices of the past. After 1994, the doors of learning were opened to disadvantaged South African groups (blacks and women) in response to the racially exclusive and heavily male-biased policies of the past. By 2003, women constituted 53 per cent of total enrolment at higher education in South Africa (South Africa Department of education, 2003).

Despite the higher enrolments in South Africa, most women still focus on traditional female-dominated disciplines such as social work, teaching and nursing. It is envisaged that women enter these low-paying areas because they want to do so. Margolis and Fisher (2002) assert that women do not get the support for science and quantitative courses that might pique their interest in male-dominated fields like engineering and computer science hence they enter low-paying areas. Different from the view of Margolis and Fisher, Odejide (2003) reveals that no Nigerian university runs a degree in women's studies; rather, courses on women's issues are taught as part of the undergraduate programmes in certain disciplines like sociology, literature, education and psychology. He argues that the introduction of a women's studies degree programme would help increase women student enrolment in higher education.

Unterhalter (2001) and Salo (2001) strongly believe that the gender gap in enrolment rates at a tertiary level of education has been narrowed only in those countries where gender-sensitive policies have been formulated and implemented. Ukoha (2005) and Bolarin (2001; 2003; 2005; 2006) emphasise that women's enrolment in higher education would greatly improve if the current traditional and cultural practices that prevent women from having equal access to education were phased out. Policy drivers for gender equity have varied across countries. The literature reveals that It has been driven by post -militarism democratisation programmes in Nigeria (Odejide, 2003); by post -apartheid reconstruction in South Africa (de la Rey, 1998); by socialist aspiration in Tanzania and by a range of internationally backed programmes in Uganda (Gunawarden, 2003).

## **2.5 Women's academic performance in higher education**

Student academic performance is the outcome or result of a student's study at the end of a given period. In addition, it is said to be the achievements obtained by students in relation to ability or level of understanding, representing the academic inputs in terms of skills, knowledge and technical knowhow that have been assimilated (Datar, Sturm & Magnabosco, 2004; McCarthy, Lindgren, Mengeling, Tsulikian & Engvall, 2003). It is measured or shown in grade points and class of degree. Having said that, the educational

process is complex; it makes sense to highlight that ascertaining or determining student academic performance is done through evaluation. Evaluation is often said by psychologists and test and measurement experts (e.g. Adewolu, 1998; Poplam, 2002) to be sensitive, significant and critical, and without it academic performance would be unknown. The outcome of students' evaluation largely reveals "academic performance". It is for this reason that academic performance of students is greatly relied on as an indicator for academic achievement. In other words, it is believed that it shows how much in terms of content (impacted knowledge) the students have learnt, retained, utilised and can apply in the present and in the future. In a nutshell, student academic performance, according to Cuttance (1998), is the learning outcomes of schooling in terms of the cognitive and affective outcomes that students acquire as a result of their schooling. In addition, a number of social outcomes are derived from schooling; these are socialisation and social control functions. Because the latter outcomes relate to schools as institutions, measures of them are usually described at the level of the school. This is the reason why most tertiary institutions in Nigeria award certificates on the basis of academic requirements and character worthiness.

For the purpose of clarity, the broad set of outcomes from schooling is categorised into cognitive outcomes, affective outcomes and social outcomes. I am aware, as emphasised by Cuttance (1998), that assessment of performance focuses on three types of analysis of student learning outcome data: the level of achievement of students in relation to externally established standards, the relative change over time in cohort difference in student achievement and the difference in achievement among groups of students, as well as, finally, the progress made over time by students attending school. In this case, concentration is on higher education with regard to data on the last two learning outcomes. Also, in the proposed study, the cognitive learning outcomes will be the major focus as I assess the academic performance of married women students in higher education.

With regard to the effectiveness of educational institutions and students, the cognitive learning outcome is often used because it is centred on the core curriculum of literacy and numeracy. When taking a look at the academic performance of women students in higher



education, it is of paramount importance to consider cognitive learning outcomes as a major yardstick because they involve curriculum-based knowledge and skills. To explicate, this entails the acquisition of proportional knowledge, knowledge application, higher-order problem-solving skills and the development of the capacity to construct knowledge from constituent elements and contexts; specifically, at the higher education level of science, social and human systems, technology, the arts and health. It makes sense to look at women students' academic performance from this perspective because other academic or learning outcomes depend greatly on cognitive learning outcomes (Shield, 2001).

Academic success is, without doubt, the main focus of all educational activities and has received tremendous attention from educationists across the world. However, prediction or determination of academic performance is still not clear to many people. Once again, the assessment of academic performance is a complex and by no means easy task. There are several ways in which students' academic performance in higher education is assessed. They include examinations, tests, continuous assessment tasks and projects. In Nigeria today, examinations are still the most popular mode for assessing students (Gbenu, 2004; Levine & Wang, 1983). Examinations are an educational activity that has been well organised to evaluate, test, measure and consequently evaluate the cumulative knowledge of students in their academic endeavours (Sanni, 1998; Kelly, Kelly & Clanton, 2001). Academic performance in its true context should be seen as a process, not merely a once-off situation (Freize, Francis & Hanusa, 1983). In my view, Gbenu's argument and Sanni's definition are acceptable and for this reason it makes sense to use examination reports/scores of women students studying in higher education institutions as I look at the academic performance of these students as a group.

A number of authors in the recent past (e.g. Okebukola, 1999; 2002; Makhubu, 2003) have discussed female issues in higher education. It has been reported that female students do not perform as brilliantly as male students in subjects or courses that are quantitatively oriented. It has also been revealed by a number of authors (e.g. Crowl, 1997; Poon Wai-Yee, 2000; Bolarin, 2005) that female students perform better in the arts or language-related courses.

In agreement with Poplam (2002), I am more interested and concerned with the extent of demonstrated ability in school courses as is observable in the results of semester/seasonal examinations of the students. The duration of course completion is eight semesters (four years) for those admitted through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), except for engineering, law and medicine courses, which are between five to seven years. Course completion time for those admitted for part-time studies directly by the schools is ten semesters or twelve semesters (five or six years) depending on the course of study. Courses like medicine and law are mainly full-time studies.

At this juncture, it is important to acknowledge that admission requirements for both male and female students are the same irrespective of the mode of entry, implying that no one has an advantage in this respect. Judgement of academic performance is usually based on the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of the students. This ranges from 0 to 5, where 0 to 0.99 is a fail (could mean probation or withdrawal); 1.00 to 1.49 is a pass; 1.50 to 2.39 is third class, 2.40 to 3.49 is second class lower division; 3.50 to 4.49 is second class upper division and 4.50 to 5.00 is first class.

With the increasing number of women in higher education (Aina *et al.*, 2009) and the diversity of women students attending higher education today there is undoubtedly interest in knowing their academic performance. Mckenzie and Schweitzer (2001) write that knowing academic performance of students in higher education will make sense if the factors predicting academic performance are examined. Mckenzie and Schweitzer (2001) study was a prospective investigation of the academic, psychosocial, cognitive, and demographic predictors of academic performance of first year Australian University students. In their study, Mckenzie and Schweitzer used questionnaire and collected semesters' academic grade points for analysis. Their study identified previous academic performance of students as the most significant predictor. In other relevant literatures, Poon Wai-Yee (2002) argues that women students' academic performance in higher institutions of learning has increased in Hong Kong compared with the recent past; while Bamidele and Odusola (2006) state that the academic performance of women students in Nigeria has improved slightly. They emphasise that women students' academic performance declines as they move from one academic session to another (see tables 2.1

and 2.3 below). In common, both studies, Poo Wai-Yee (2002) and Bamidele and Odusola (2006) assert that educational support for women who are studying seem to be on the increase. Bamdele and Odunsola in the same study specifically identified parental influence and support to be a key factor in the slight improvement in the academic performance of female students in undergraduate economics programme in higher education. However, their academic performance is still very low when compared to male students in tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria. While the reviewed studies are limited to single women students my research focus is on married women students. Bamidele and Odusola (2006) use the tables below to show the academic performance of women/female students in undergraduate economics programmes at Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria.

From the following table, it can be noted that academic performance of male students for the session is better than their female counterparts. Importantly, higher numbers of male students fall into the first class, second class (upper division) and second class (lower division) categories, while more female students are to be found in the lower levels (third class and pass category). Despite the higher number of female students in the lower categories, there are more male students on probation. Even at the impressive remark of female students on probation, the table reveals that there are more female students who withdrew or dropped out of the academic programme.

**Table 2.2:** Academic performance of students by level and CGPA (2002/2003 session)

Session	Part I		Part II		Part III		Part IV		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
First class: 4.50–5.00	4	1	3	-	-	2	-	-	7	3
Second class: (upper div.) 3.50–4.49	11	5	6	5	21	13	9	6	47	29
Second class: (lower div.) 2.50–3.49	47	23	14	13	40	16	36	11	137	63
Third class: 1.50–2.49	13	17	16	12	18	19	15	33	62	81
Pass: 1.00–1.49	14	33	6	17	11	9	14	6	45	65
0–0.099 (probation)	3	1	3	4	2	3	6	4	14	12
0–0.99 (withdrawal)	-	2	1	2	-	1	1	2	2	7
Total	92	82	49	53	92	63	81	62	314	260

Source: Bamidele and Odusola (2006)

KEY:

*M = Male*

*F = Female*

*4.50 – 5.00 refer to academic grade point for first class.*

*3.50 – 4.49 refers to academic grade point for second class upper division.*

*2.50 – 3.49 refers to academic grade point for second class lower division.*

*1.00 – 1.49 refer to pass.*

*Part I indicate year 1 of study*

*Part II indicates year 2 of study.*

*Part III indicates year 3 of study*

*Part IV indicates year 4 of study*

The table on the following page clearly indicates that 30 per cent of female students and 70 per cent of male students achieved a first class academic performance rating at the end of the academic session. While 38.16, 31.50, 50.90, and 59.09 per cent of female students made second class upper (2.1), second class lower (2.2), third class (3) and pass respectively, male students had a higher percentage except for the category of third class and pass, where 43.36 per cent and 40.91 per cent were recorded respectively. This means that male students academically performed better than female students. On aggregate, a higher percentage (54.29%) of female students failed. On the basis of the findings of tables 2.1 and 2.2, it becomes important to take a look at female students' academic performance for more than one academic session.

**Table 2.3:** Male and female students by class of degree (2002/2003 session)

<b>Class of degrees</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10
2.1	47 (61.84%)	29 (38.16%)	76
2.2	137 (68.50%)	63 (31.50%)	200
3	62 (43.36%)	81 (50.90%)	143
Pass	45 (40.91%)	65 (59.09%)	110
Fail*	16 (45.71%)	19 (54.29%)	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>574</b>

Source: Bamidele and Odusola (2006)

\*Note:

*The figures for probation and withdrawal have been combined and classified as fail.*

*Table 2.4 shows the percentage conversion or extract of table 2.3 in order to interpret and analyse male and female student academic performance.*

*1 = First class*

*2.1 = Second class upper division.*

*2.2 = Second class lower division.*

*3 = Third class.*

Table 2.4 reveals that neither male students nor female students made first class. This implies that the academic performance of both sexes dropped given the figures and comparing table 2.5 with tables 2.3 and 2.4. However, it is important to acknowledge that male students still dominated academic performance with reference to the number of male students that ‘bag’ a second class lower at the end of the two sessions. The same academic performance situation is observed in the case of third class.

**Table 2.4:** Graduation figures by class of degree and gender for two sessions

Class of degree	2002/2003		2001/2002	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
First class	-	-	-	-
Second class (upper)	-	-	4	-
Second class (lower)	5	2	8	7
Third class	5	2	8	4
Pass	-	-	-	1
Total	10	4	20	12

Source: Bamidele and Odusola (2006).

Hard work, great motivation and support from family members and determination emanating from interest could have helped immensely in improving female academic performance. It is also possible that they learned to adjust to higher education environment by second academic session. Beck (2005) and Beck–Gernsheim (2002) stress that support from husbands and family members can help women a great deal. For instance, “release them from compulsory domestic work and help them to become liberalised” (Becks, 2005: 9). This is likely to change their attitude and behaviour

towards higher education and probably improve their academic performance. Nevertheless, AAU/FAWE (1998), Davies (1999), and Bolarin (2005) highlight the fact that, on aggregate, women's academic performance is still at a low ebb as underperformance is recorded in most disciplines, including science, engineering, social science and technology. These studies and related literature show there are many intricately related factors that make academic performance (at best) situational. The following factors affect women students' academic performance in one way or another:

- Student factors – attitudes, individual differences, physical health and readiness, and expectations (Bamidele & Odunsola, 2006; Weiner *et al.*, 1983).
- Teachers/instructional/curriculum factors – teachers' attitudes to students, type of classroom, learning environment, teacher adequacy as regards professional qualifications and instructional content and presentation, use of relevant instructional material (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004; Koetsier, 2006)
- Home, cultural and parental factors (Hontoundji, 2000; Bolarin, 2003; 2005; Poon Wai-Yee, 2004), as well as home background and cultural practices, have been found to influence students' academic performance more than the fixed material and economic conditions of society.
- Institutional factors – type of school, population, control, discipline, personnel interactions and examination or evaluation policies (Schuetze & Slowey, 2000; Odejide, 2003).

The educational research literature is replete with findings that indicate that the academic performance of women students in higher education is difficult to predict as a result of the many factors operating on it.

## 2.6 Gender and Culture

In this section, I engage with existing literature on the historical and political accounts of culture in relation to gender and feminism. While I do not claim to be a feminist and cannot unequivocally align myself to a feminist stance, I respond to the feminist imperative for fairness from an experiential point of view. To do this I make a tentative alignment with a liberal feminist view.

Accordingly to my understanding following the reviewed literature, feminism as a field of study began as a fundamental critique of the social world underpinning the ignorance of women's life situation and with men's dominance as its central focus. Harding (1991) asserts that feminism originated in "eighteen century England" as a social movement that promoted equality between sexes and as a system of thought that challenged mainstream science. It spread to other parts of the world and has been critiqued from various perspectives, and in particular as part of the colonisation of knowledge in the third world aided by the methods of social anthropology (Parpart, 1996).

The origins of feminism are diverse – ranging from resistance to oppressive practices in the third world, to struggles for equality in the first world (Friedman, Metelkamp & Posel, 1987:3). Friedman *et al.* (1987) stress further that while women have fought on their own behalf for centuries all over the world, feminism as a political movement really developed in the twentieth century. Importantly, feminism has been influenced by socialist thought and practice, and anti-imperialist and nationalist struggles in the third world. Ussher (1999:99) writes that feminist scholars or researchers focus on a "critical analysis of gender relationships in research and theory ... and recognition of the need for social change to improve the lives of women". This I believe is a methodological means of listening to the voices of women and attempting to respond in a way that will navigate their lives towards prosperity.

The 1960s saw the rise of movements for the liberation of women in every country in the West. Equally so, the 1960s was a "time of prosperity in the West yet a time when young people especially women challenged the capitalist value they found around them – values

such as competition, inequality and consumerism” (Friedman *et al.*, 1987: 4). Friedman *et al.* assert further that they not only challenged the exploitative aspect of capitalist society, that is, aspects which led to wealth on the one hand and poverty on the other, but they also challenged associated characteristics of the capitalist society in which they lived, as well as racism and imperialist foreign policy. At that time (1960s) capitalism was undergoing transformations which affected women’s roles generally. Capitalism as noticed by concerned scholars and reported by Friedman *et al.* (1987) significantly affected the role of women in the labour force. As revealed by the literature, before the 1960s during the Second World War, women were enticed into wage labour but at the end of the war they were encouraged to go back into the home to make way for men returning from the war front. The post-war period mirrored and emphasised feminised domestication, women as consumers, motherhood. The return of many women to the home after the Second World War created a new identity for women who were known and identified as working class. This created tension between the reality of women’s lives and the ideal image of family life. This tension caused women to think and question their lives especially when they examined women’s lives in the era prior to the Second World War, during the Second World War and after the Second World War. The actual genesis or springboard of the feminist movement can therefore be said to have been in the thinking and questioning about women’s lives and experiences.

This next section focuses on understanding culture from a gender standpoint; culture as an important element of feminism, feminist theorists, and historical and political accounts of culture in Nigeria.

### **2.6.1 Understanding Culture from a Gender Standpoint**

“Sex brought us together, but gender drove us apart”  
(Barbara Smaller, 2001 adopted from cartoonbank.com)

Gender is often defined as the socio-cultural meaning attributed to the physical and biological differences between the sexes, and how such meanings are manifested both symbolically and materially in societies (Mascia-Lees & Black, 2000). Accordingly,



gender is considered to be more complex than sex. Wood (2009) writes that there is nothing a person does to acquire her or his sex; it is a classification that society makes based on genetic and biological factors and, for most people, it endures throughout their lives. On the other hand, she emphasises that gender is neither innate nor necessarily stable. It is the main point of entry into people's lives (Harrison, 2009), defined by society and expressed by individuals as they interact with others in the society (Wood 2009). For this singular reason, thinkers and inquirers of gender propose that gender changes over time. For instance, Wood pinpoints the fact that we are born male or female (sex), but we learn to act in masculine and/or feminine ways (gender). Based on this, gender is commonly described as a social construct that varies across culture, over time within a given culture, and over the course of individual life spans.

Drawing upon the understanding of culture as “fluid” (see page 64 and 69) and the stance or perspective of gender scholars above, I would say that gender is culture itself and vice versa. The basis of my opinion here is connected to the writing of Wood (2009). She says:

... what gender means and how we express it depends on a society's values, beliefs and preferred ways of organizing collective life (*ibid.*:23). When these values and beliefs are put into action by people in any society, it is simply culture in practice (cultural practices). These practices vary from one society to another depending on their historical, political development, experience, religion and traditions etc. Built on this understanding, it is logical to say that gender grows out of cultural ideas that stipulate the social meaning and expectation of each sex (Wood, 2009:24).

Culture and its practices are assumed to be the masculine and feminine meanings that societies bestow on people either as individuals or as a group. These meanings are not stable but are expected to change with changes in age and status, thereby leading to change in roles (gender roles). For example, the roles or gender expectations of a young girl will change when she becomes a woman and further change when she gets married.

Her roles do not cease to change when she is married; they continue to change as she gives birth to children and advances in age. This situation is same for a boy growing up to become a man, a married man and a father.

Kimmel (2000a; 2005) and Spencer and Bucker (2000) articulate that gender roles and expectations are what categorises people into “real men” and “real women”. Kimmel draws on the example that “real men” don’t cry in public and are successful and powerful in their professional and public lives, while Spencer and Bucker exemplify “real women” as being tied to femininity. Furthermore, according to these authors, to be feminine is to be physically attractive, deferential, emotionally expressive, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. This suggests the rationale for linking women’s roles to the home and children and the roles of men to career and providing for the family, that is, gender differentials. In line with the gender differentials illustrated above, society tends to see them – gender differentials – as normal, natural and right; therefore attempts by anyone be it man or woman to operate or behave outside these expectations are seen as a serious violation or taboo.

## **2.7 Culture and women: an African view**

My purpose in this section is to set the tone for a deeper understanding of my data with respect to culture and its implications for women in higher education. To do this, I examine the experiences of women in Africa, with some focus on the practice of ‘lobola’ in South Africa. I chose ‘lobola’ as a symbol that epitomises a powerful cultural practice in which women’s experiences of ‘lobola’ do not necessarily resonate with its avowed purpose. In focussing on ‘lobola’ I draw a distinction between the rhetoric of culture and the experiences of women with respect to culture.

### **2.7.1 Lobola and culture**

Ratele (2007:65) writes that “culture is a non-generic, changeable and permanently incomplete system of lessons and acts we get to learn over time and use to navigate our worlds”. In many studies, African women have illuminated that culture plays a dominant role in their lives and thus shapes their lives (Wilson-Tagoe, 2003; Badoe, 2005).

Importantly, women express much concern about culture as it relates to marriage (Reddy, 2011). Many young women understand “marriage as an unquestionable expectation that is embedded in culture and tradition” (Reddy, 2011:39). For this reason, many women often discuss and analyse culture from a marriage entry point of view, in particular the practice of ‘lobola’ or ‘bride price’. “Lobola is an enduring custom that offers insight into past and present gender and power relations” (Shope, 2006:65). Mandela (1991) defines ‘lobola’ as ‘bride price’ in European lore, where the bride is converted into a sort of feudal slave purchased from her father by the husband's family.

As a means of understanding the impact or influence of culture on women with respect to ‘lobola’, I examine recent studies of Jude Clark, Janet Hinson Shope, Lydia Magwaza and Konjit Kifetew, among others. Clark (2006) explores how the concept ‘culture’ is mobilized to produce and represent women in relation to different temporalities (‘then’ and ‘now’) within the national project, and the particular constructions of ‘transition’ that emerge in and through such processes. Clark (2006) and Shope (2006) write that culture, as a conceptual and practical phenomenon, has conflicting meanings for women.

In Clark’s (2006) study, that sought perceptions on culture from both urban and rural women in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, she reasons that contradictions displayed in women’s views are to be expected, since ‘culture is a changing site of contestation that is open to multiple interpretations’ (*ibid.*). Her study reveals that most women are aware of restrictions placed upon them by culture. Despite this, they uphold culture as a given past that shapes their identities. One of the respondents in Clark’s study noted that the dominant understanding and categorization of ‘culture’ as specific acts, events and objects, conceals its role as a system of meaning, one that simultaneously produces and regulates what women do and how they understand themselves. These specific acts and objects are important, but are only part of the many ways in which they (women) draw on cultural resources to understand and perform what it means to be a woman (*ibid.*:9). The narratives of participants indicate that in the lives of women, culture gains specific meaning when considered at different times (‘then’ and ‘now’), given the apartheid and post-apartheid eras in South Africa. According to Clark (2006), when we consider together excerpts of narratives by women from rural and urban contexts, we see how they

raise certain ambivalences in articulating the link between the notion of time and the construction of identity.

Shope's (2006) study *'Lobola is here to stay: rural black women and the contradictory meanings of 'lobola' in post-apartheid South Africa'* focuses on the contradictory meanings of 'lobola' – bride price – and the internal power struggles that emerge over its interpretation and practice. She used interviews with six hundred black women in rural and urban communities in South Africa to draw findings and conclusions. Her findings reveal an increasing commodification of 'lobola' which has a tremendous influence on its meaning and process. She writes that in South Africa's rural communities, black women seek to maintain the relational facets of the tradition, but object to the ways some men appropriate the custom to maximize their own interests. Shope (2006) discusses contradictory meanings of 'lobola', noting that the practice has invited numerous doubts, with some dubbing it as a practice that is discriminatory towards women. In her study, she stresses that in the past, 'lobola' forged a relational bond among families, and as the older women in the research site recall, it celebrated the addition of the woman into the husband's family. The study depicts that women value 'lobola'; it is a symbol of respect for them. Some of the participants argued that 'lobola' acts as a woman's charter of liberty, upholding the worthiness of women. Through the negotiation of 'lobola', families are brought together and united; thus the transfer of 'lobola' creates a web of affiliations (Ansell, 2000).

Women in South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana cling to 'lobola'/bride price for the respect and dignity it confers, and for the relational interdependence it cultivates among families (see Shope, 2006; Falola, 2001; Falola & Salm, 2002). Their defence of the practice draws on the same logic invoked in the support of human rights as entrenched in the constitutions of their respective countries, that is, to uphold one's dignity as a right (Shope, 2006). In short, "while women simultaneously reaffirm the relational value of cultural practices, their potential to be full participants in post-apartheid and post-colonial African societies rests on their ability to redefine tradition in ways that expand women's opportunities and reflect their interest" (*ibid.*:71). One major exposition of the views of women concerning 'lobola' as reported by the authors mentioned above is its centrality to

marriage. It is indeed, in many African societies, the entrance point for men and women into marriage.

In an attempt to summarize the work of Shope (2006), Magwaza (2006) writes that the acclaimed value of 'lobola' is viewed differently by men and women – whilst men employ it to enforce their power, women appreciate its role in bringing families together, as well as its contribution as a base for 'appropriate' gender relations. Referring to and relying on Lydia Mugambe's (2006) study '*Rethinking culture in the face of HIV/AIDS*', a similar but different study in East Africa, Magwaza (2006) reveals that 'lobola' is a traditional cultural practice that contributes significantly to placing women in vulnerable positions – exposing them to all forms of risk, including diseases. She asserts that 'lobola' permits polygamy in all East African cultures, that is, it allows a man to have more than one wife or partner, provided the man pays the bride price to the parents or elders of the woman's family. It then becomes difficult for the woman (and an insult for the man) to refuse to sleep with her husband. As reported (Mugambe, 2006), the women participants usually fear the threat of being returned to their parents' homes and the bride price being returned. According to the writing of Reddy (2011), they (women participants) remain in the marriage and become vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Speaking to this situation, Hey (2003:326) uses the metaphor of leaving home: the 'outsiders' within the new family risk "revealing a self that is thought stupid in the host culture and pretentious in your original culture". In effect, this perception paralyses women into remaining within the confines of the family into which they have married.

In Ethiopia, Kifetew (2006) writes about and decries women's downgraded status, particularly within the domestic sphere. In her view, the role of culture in downplaying women as 'objects', being good only for reproductive purposes, is worrisome. Hartsock (1981) considers the role of reproduction and suggests that the concept of 'production' is insufficient as a description of a woman's role as mother, domestic worker and wage earner (see Harding, 2004). Thus, for Hartsock, women's experiences in childbirth and childrearing contribute to a distinctly female way of experiencing culture and the world at large. On this note, I suggest that questioning culture is a means of allowing women's

voice(s) to be heard and a path that leads to women locating themselves in any societal or environmental site.

### **2.7.2 The rhetoric of culture and the experience of culture**

My purpose in distinguishing between the rhetoric of culture and the experience of culture is a means toward adopting a questioning rather than an accepting/acquiescent approach to culture. Put simply, my assertion is that women's experience of cultural practices often does not resonate with the articulation of the value of such practices. In short, while agencies of power, for example, chiefs, elders and governments, may argue that cultural practices are good for the community, women's experience of such practices is not necessarily so. However, as I seek deeper understanding of the rhetoric of culture and the experience of culture, I acknowledge the multiplicity of realities and experience(s) as underpinned by the standpoints of various theorists (Harding, 2004; Arnot, 2006; Hartsock, 1981).

Culture affects women differently at different points in their lives. For instance, cultural expectations and responsibilities for women change if they are married, single mothers, aged, or divorced. This suggests that African women re-imagine themselves "as members of different groups, in several places, and being citizens of the world, all at the same time" (Ratele, 2007:66). Krijay Govender's (2001) work '*Subverting identity after 1994: the South African Indian woman as playwright*' illuminates culture as portraying the identity of people. In her work, she argues that South African Indians' constructed notions of identity are located in history and place. This indicates that the identities of people change on account of their history and place of habitation. With respect to the Indian South African woman, their culture, as well as their identity, are constantly shifting according to the political, social and economic environment. This arguably applies to all women across the world. In the words of Govender, "the so-called Indian South African woman's identity has experienced shifts in both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras" (*ibid.*:34).

In many West African countries and others where the military ruled from the 1980s to the late 1990s, the culture and identities of both men and women shifted between the pre-colonial period, the military regime, and the infant democracy era in the 2000s. During these periods, women who used to be housewives could no longer stay at home to perform domestic work, but looked for work or engaged in petty trade following the austerity measures brought about as a result of harsh economic policies favoured by military rulers (see Ezeilo, 1999; 2000). These circumstances, together with other aspects of lifestyle adjustment, such as friendly co-existence among women and men of all ethnicities and race, suggest that culture is learnt, and is fluid. To this end, it can be said that the success or failure of an individual or institution depends, to a reasonable extent, on the acceptance of the notion of a changing culture.

The writing of Mabokela (2004), and the narratives of participant(s) in her research, highlight the use of culture by societies as a political tool. A ‘society’s cultural symbols, performance traditions and expressive art can be used as tools through which subjugated groups exert political agency, especially when other forms of activism and movement participation are blocked’ (Kuumba, 2006). These expressions of cultural politics, according to Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar (1998), can be defined as the process enacted when sets of social actors, shaped by and embodying different cultural meanings and practices, come into conflict with each other. This definition of cultural politics assumes that meanings and practices – primarily those theorised as marginal, oppositional, minority, residual, emergent, alternative, dissident and the like, all of them conceived in relation to a given dominant cultural order, can be the source of processes that are political.

The lifestyle and achievements of women in Africa have been characterized or influenced by evolution in terms of changes from the pre-colonial, colonial, military and democracy periods in different countries. To be able to evaluate or assess the rhetoric of culture and cultural experiences of women, it is ideal that we should ‘question culture’. According to Ratele (2007), ‘cultivating a questioning attitude to culture is an estimable goal of critical inquiry and practice’. Questioning culture is also needed when ‘subverting the closed discourse about culture that rules the worlds of women and men and is thought to be a

critical gender issue'. While I understand that questioning culture will prompt better understanding of its impact on men and women, Bodoë's (2005) work in Gambaga, Ghana, indicates that women who question culture and seek freedom for themselves are sometimes viewed as witches. Similarly, in South Africa, Shope (2006) notes that when women challenge patriarchal definitions of tradition and introduce gender equity, they are accused of 'ruining' culture. This suggests that many African men consider it 'culturally improper' for women to question culture.

Through 'culture questioning', African women are able to understand themselves, and thereafter to re-define and re-construct themselves beyond the 'clutches of state-invoked culture – as more than just women' (Wilson-Tagoe, 2003; Acker & Webber, 2006). Questioning culture is a major prerequisite for the liberation of women. This is evident in Desiree Lewis's conversation with Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie (Lewis, 2002). In that conversation, it seems that Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie questions cultural practices that are handed down through generations:

We must remember that there were radical outlets for women in indigenous African cultures, and in our colonial societies, contact with Europe brought with it the inheritors of the British suffragette movements in Nigeria, while my mother, a teacher's college professor, was a practitioner of many radical ideas about women of the Victorian period. I was raised with male siblings, as well as female and male wards... (Lewis, 2002:132).

As evident in the extended quotation above, Ogundipe-Leslie is concerned about the dilution of African cultures with colonial/European cultures. Her consciousness was stirred by her mother's radical ideas aimed at challenging culture at that time, which paved the way for Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's inquisition and perhaps questioning of culture and gender politics. Later in life, with her consciousness about culture and African politics, Ogundipe-Leslie, in her book *'Recreating ourselves'* called herself a 'stiwaniist', a word coined from 'stiwa' and 'womanism'. The term 'stiwaniist' emanates from Ogundipe-Leslie who basically approached life from a Marxist standpoint. It denotes a worldview in which women are given the opportunity to play an active part in



transformation (Adebayo, 1996). ‘Stiwa’ means ‘social transformation’ while ‘womanism’ is black centred. The term ‘stiwaniist’ applies to someone who believes in the freedom and independence of women (*ibid.*:5). According to her, ‘stiwaniist’ points to her position within feminism, which she defined as a “cluster of ideologies or as a movement for gender equity and democracy” (Lewis, 2002:138).

To her (Ogundipe-Leslie), ‘stiwaniist’ is a viewpoint which serves as a rallying-point for women of African ancestry in their struggle to effectively assert their humanity in the face of the malevolent attitude of menfolk towards their self-fulfilment in life (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Further, she suggests the need to move away from defining feminism in relation to Euro-America or elsewhere, and to locate it within the African context. Her argument is based on a genuine interest in and focus on African areas of concerns, culturally, socially and geographically. It is no surprise therefore, that her work has “consistently stressed the importance of exploring issues such as identity, culture and language in relation to gender” (Lewis, 2002:143). The works of Lewis and Ogundipe-Leslie, among other African scholars, indicate that questioning and analysing culture unveil “the complexities introduced into our cultural understandings of our identities by history, ethnicity and social stratifications...” (*ibid.*:143).

The act of questioning culture identifies the limitations and imperfections of culture and its influence on people; thus cultures that fail to acknowledge their own imperfections and limits are harmful to their members (Ratele, 2007). Concomitantly, ‘questioning culture’ as evident in the writing of many gender and feminist scholars, necessitated the need for shaping and re-shaping their thinking (for example, Pereira, 2002; Oyewumi, 2002; Amadiume, 1987; Odejide, 2003; Hooks, 2000). This partly explains why many radical feminist writers today consistently affirm new ways of thinking and speaking, and pursue what is ‘visionary’ and ‘imaginative’ – these new ways of thinking and speaking challenge gender and feminist scholars to transcend neo-imperial and patriarchal boundaries (Lewis, 2005). Such feminists, according to Lewis (2005), suggest that “it may be in imaginative expression that we can find the most abundant sources to resist the coercive powers of our present discursive context” (*ibid.*:76). It is therefore vital that women speak for themselves, and question for themselves. Simultaneously, as a man, it is

crucial that I too question culture, for without questioning the anxiety that my wife expressed (see page 9-10) her voice will fall on deaf ears. In summary, I realize that my silence mutes the voices of the women in my community.

As a means of consolidating the writings and views of the writers mentioned above, Ratele (2005) notes that we need to constantly distinguish a positive cultural feeling from an exclusionary ‘us-only’ tendency. Hence, an African feminist’s questioning of culture will always be an attempt to show that the cultural world is made up of many stories, in which gendered power figures prominently alongside state, economic and racial forces (Ratele, 2007; Harding, 2004; 1993). Accordingly, such an approach shows that society does not begin and end with one’s own culture, however hegemonic, and that any single individual’s consciousness is only one minor part of culture. Furthermore, the ability and desire to question received views, including those of one’s avowed culture, is one of the greatest gifts a culture can nourish in its members (Ratele, 2007). And, in a world that demands us to love our culture, to teach a child to approach what they get from the world with a questioning attitude sets up that child for an open, interested and productive life (*ibid.*:75). Furthermore, it relaxes restrictions around culture, and establishes conditions to allow it to flourish.

### **2.7.3 Conclusion**

Culture is still viewed in terms of “practices and policies that are male-dominated and privilege the male way of doing things” Mabokela (2004:67). The voice of a participant in Mabokela’s (2004) research study ‘*Walking the tightrope: the intersection of race, gender and culture in higher education*’ reveals that: “Culture is very patriarchal ... Women are treated as if they cannot think for themselves, yet they are expected to do all the hard work. They are the ones that maintain the family. They are usually the pillars of the community but all their hard work is not appreciated...The African community is also oppressive in terms of traditional belief systems and Christianity” (*ibid.*:68). When women challenge male interpretations of tradition, they encounter male resistance. Men cling tightly to the privileges afforded to them by patriarchal definitions of culture and

resist attempts to redefine tradition because they don't want to (Shope, 2006). Their resistance, framed as a defence against an attack on African culture (Nhlapo, 2000), exposes the close relationship between power relations and cultural practices (Yuval Davis, 1997).

This section has shown that over time, African women have persistently questioned the ways in which understandings of culture have both valued and devalued them. In summary, cultural practices, as shown in the foregoing discussion, are deeply contextualized and highly contested. As such, their transformability, through questioning, is fundamental to a better life for women, and indeed, for men.

## **2.8 Historical and Political Accounts of Culture in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, as in other developing societies in Africa, feminist scholars and anthropologists alike write that the historical and political account of culture explains how a legacy of colonial administration, cultural nationalism and patriarchal postcolonial nation building have largely contributed to the rigidification of Africa culture (Afonja, 2005; Amadiume, 1987; Harrison, 2009; Oyewumi, 2002). This provides an explanation as to why culture is sometimes connoted to be the fixed traditions and customs of people of the same society by sociologists. Feminists view culture as a “fluid” practice, meaning that it possesses the quality of being able to change. In short, culture from the standpoint of feminists and anthropologists suggests that culture, gender and women's lives are regulated by ever-changing political agitations, movements and institutions, thereby leading to fluidity of culture. The fluidity of culture, as argued by anthropologists and feminist scholars, is supported by legislation, official myth-making and dominant ideology promoted as beneficial either by persons or institutions in male-dominant spheres. Amadiume (1987) and Oyewumi (2002) both argue, but in different times, that pre-colonial cultural practices were far more flexible and, in some cases, supported women's intellectual and political empowerment. In their respective studies, Amadiume and Oyewumi emphasise that, before colonisation, women in Nigeria enjoyed some degree of autonomy and operated autonomous institutions. Oyewumi limits her

discussion to the realities of the Yoruba tribe. For example, according to her, before colonisation women – elderly women in some communities – served as the head of the community and were known as “Baale”. In addition, women’s ownership of property was not seen as a problem. In an attempt to comprehend Oyewumi’s argument I remember the stories of my grandfather (my mother’s father) once told me about the property his mother “Inine” (meaning grandmother) owned. He also told me about the advice, assistance and contribution “Inine” gave people both old and young in her town – Kokori, one of towns of the Urhobo tribe in Delta State of Nigeria. This story, though not documented, corroborates the argument of Oyewumi. Colonisation was accompanied by the stripping off or depriving of women of the autonomy in all forms that they enjoyed prior to colonisation. Many of these women and the younger generations who were aware of these histories or were told stories like I was told saw justification in the struggle of feminists.

Both Amadiume and Oyewumi, respectively and as well as Nzegwu (2001:30–32), hold that gender was not an organising principle in African societies before colonisation, even though there might have been other forms of social inequalities. According to these authors, the systematic patriarchalisation of African societies has occurred through colonialism, the introduction of Christianity and Islam, and the process of state formation. Other scholars argue that the cultural discourses on power and empowerment run counter to colonial representation of women’s access to power (Tamala, 1999; Becker, 2000). Furthermore, Amadiume and Oyewumi, from the Igbo and Yoruba tribe in Nigeria respectively, present provocative challenges to Western feminist constructions of African women and gender systems. Drawing upon historiographical, ethnohistorical and ethnographic evidence, they argue that western notions of women and gender are premised on a “bio-logic” inappropriate for understanding the gendered histories of African societies. They claim that the very notion of “woman” as a fundamental category indexing shared interests, desires, and social positions, was introduced by colonialism and the biologically determinist ideology it imposed on West African societies. The writers here are concerned with women’s ownership of property in the same way as men and the equal opportunity to participate in community affairs, leadership, power and

empowerment. Given this I would say that the views expressed by these writers are aligned with liberal and Marxist feminist theorists.

Literature emanating from women of other third world or developing nations focuses on the relationship between feminism and nationalism. In *Feminism and nationalism in the third world*, Jayawardena reminds her readers that many men in the third world reject western feminism because they see it as mainly Eurocentric. She argues that given the rejection of western feminism by men, in particular in the third world, and the Eurocentric view that the women's movement is, in any case, a Western European and North American phenomenon occasionally exported to or imitated in the third world, it is necessary to show that

... feminism is not imposed on the third world by the west, but rather that historical circumstances produced important material and ideological changes that affected women, even though the impact of imperialism and Western thought was admittedly among significant elements in these historical circumstances (Jayawardena, 1986:2).

Jayawardena goes on to examine the history of women's struggles in twelve Asian and Middle Eastern countries, highlighting not only the struggles and organisation which arose in response to foreign domination and the nationalist thrust, important though she says these were, but also the struggles around gender relations that preceded them and the role of great or exceptional women in the respective histories of her chosen case studies. She discusses, for example, Raden Kartini, who lived in Indonesia between 1879 and 1904 and struggled for the right to an education normally denied women; or the warrior-queen Lakashmi Bai the Rani of Jhanis, who in India during the war against the British in 1857 led her troops on horseback, indistinguishable in dress and behaviour from men and died in combat (Jayawardena, 1986:140, 78). In my interpretation, all these women stood for the cause of womanhood. For them, the promotion of women's welfare and interests, particularly through freedom from male domination and gender equality, is not limited to speaking, that is, making the voices of women heard, but can be demonstrated in the forms of action and leadership exhibited by the likes of Lakashmi Bai the Jhanis.

The historical and political accounts of culture in Nigeria, Asia and the Middle East, as reflected above, are similar given the narration and the reviewed literature. The scholars who presented the cases or happenings that led to the understanding of the feminists' struggle and different dimensions of feminism wrote from different places yet their narrations coincide. Nigeria, Asia and the Middle East are all developing nations, therefore the reviewed literature here could serve as a means of understanding the historical and political accounts or development of feminism in other developing nations, especially during and after colonisation.

### **2.8.1 Conclusion**

Culture is made up of structures, primarily institutions, and practices that reflect and uphold a particular social order. Culture is manifested by defining certain social groups, values, expectations, meanings and patterns of behaviour as natural to cultural life; society's views of gender are reflected in and promoted by a range of social structures and practices (Wood, 2009:30). In this section, the literature reveals that every one of us, irrespective of sex, age, class, status, nationality and background, is a gendered being. As gendered beings we are therefore required to live in societies where a system of how we should live is collectively organised or structured through masculinity and femininity. On this note I subscribe to the common writings of gender scholars, anthropologists and feminists which state that gender is a significant issue in our culture because it prescribes and defines the identities of people in any given society. Therefore, understanding gender is a prerequisite for understanding culture. Similarly, gender issues are of unique importance to feminists.

The interests of the liberal feminists lie in the promotion of gender equality through vigorous advocacy or campaigning for equal opportunities for both men and women. Having said this, I am not a feminist, given my very little knowledge of feminism, but will respond to the feminist imperative for fairness from an experiential point of view. I reveal here that I align to liberal feminist views on the promotion of gender equality. I am of the same view that gender equality is achievable through equal opportunities. For me

equal educational opportunity at all levels for both men and women is a major requirement for the attainment of gender equality. This view tallies with one of the strategies suggested by liberal feminists.

For the purposes of this study I consider an approach that incorporates a liberal feminist view. However, I am aware that this approach is not well received by feminists in the developing world. Given that my feminist understanding is still in its infancy, a liberal feminist view is the one I can embrace for now.

## **2.9 Cultural practices in Nigeria**

In this section, I seek to understand and discuss cultural practices in Nigeria. To do this, I shall:

- Identify and discuss the main types/forms of cultural practice in Nigeria.
- Identify the most pervasive cultural practices on the academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education.
- Summarise the section.

### **2.9.1 Introduction and background**

“For many years in the minds of women has been dissatisfaction. This they suffer individually, difficult to voice out; not knowing that it affects a lot more of them. Within is the problem yet they struggle to do most of the domestic work: cleaning the kitchen, the sitting room, washing clothes, taking the children to school and bringing them back from school. They enjoy seeing the children playing around them; also see their husbands go to work and come back. While, they do this routine, most of them see themselves and would refer to themselves as "housewives". The major occupation then in the women world; because it was the only perfect dream of young girls growing up to be wives and

mothers; the highest ambition is to have children and a beautiful house, their only fight is to get and keep their husbands. All they did for years was just that” (Friedan, 1963).

Despite the ‘expanse’ of time, there is the possibility that life for some women, especially in the Nigerian society, has not change ‘compared’ to the lives of women Friedan describes above. From my experience as a teacher, discussions with female/women student(s) in the classroom, interactions at social gatherings or functions with other women and the views of women on national television talk shows, it appears that the major difference can be linked to their wishes or dreams. Today, most women, including young girls, no longer dream of just becoming housewives but of becoming women who can contribute to the home, while support their husbands as co-providers for the family and making their impact felt in the larger society. In fact, they dream of being career women and not just housewives, as they believe this will be more fulfilling than just being a housewife confined to the home. To make their dreams reality, they clamour for education, knowing that this is the only way. This dream is far from the reach of many women owing to certain constraints or stumbling blocks that stand their way, thereby making participation in higher education a mirage for many. These same stumbling blocks or constraints militate against the overall schooling of the ones schooling in various higher education institutions in Nigeria (Abe, 1987; Bolarin, 2004).

In this study, I am particularly concerned with the academic performance of married women students in higher education. In the past, Bolarin (2001; 2003; 2005) and Okeke (2001; 2002) identified numerous factors that affected the academic performance of female students in education. These authors argue that cultural practice is cardinal in Nigerian higher education. This links up with what I am researching: I seek to understand how these cultural practices affect women. Although Bolarin and other scholars cited above state that these practices do affect women, but their study did not focus on married women in particular. In this study I want to see the specific application of cultural practices to the academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education. One can explore the relationship between cultural practices, learning and academic performance at any level one chooses, from the global, to the directly interpersonal, to the single individual trying to make sense of some cultural practices.



The momentary interaction between a lecturer and a student, for instance, is imbued with influences from the classroom culture, from the culture of the subject discipline, from the school, from the community, from the nation and ultimately from the changing nature of international politics and economics, as well as from the home cultures, traditions and histories of the individual student concerned. Well and Claxton (2002) reveal that cultural practice in relation to people's traditions have a way of playing out, be it in the classroom, the school environment, the community or the society at large.

Given the centrality of issues of cultural practices to so much gender studies and policy and sociology research in education, reasonable attention has been devoted to exploring what is meant, or ought to be meant, when cultural practice is discussed. If we want to understand the extent of and ways in which cultural practices contribute to, or detract from, the promotion of women's education and their academic performance in higher education, then we need to be clear about the definition of culture, traditions and cultural practices we are using.

Culture comes from the Latin word *cultus*, meaning ritual cult of the ethos, affirmation of the bonds of society which invest with values, one's pursuits and thereby one's life (Fadeyi, 1995; Owolabi & Olatunde, 2005). Ortner (1974:72) defines culture as "the notion of human consciousness ... the products of human consciousness (i.e., systems of thought and technology), by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature". Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007:240) define culture as the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human works and thought characteristic of a community or population which provides them with a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality. That which is cultural and subject to human manipulation is assigned more worth than that which is natural; hence, women and women's roles are denigrated or devalued, whether "explicitly or implicitly" (Brettell & Sargent, 2005:185).

Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007) pinpoint the fact that culture includes behaviours, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies and practices peculiar to a particular group of people. Culture can ordinarily be defined as a way of

doing things. Every culture has a worldview that it uses in order to evaluate its own experiences (Sobel, 1979). For Nigerians, in my understanding, this view originates in the indigenous ideas of classical West African history, supported and sustained by monarch institutions. Culture is not limited to things, events, community and environment, but can be extended to religion, tradition, sport, schooling and many more. In this study, I am concerned with the day-to-day cultural practices in the name of beliefs, norms and taboos enveloped in traditions and how they affect or influence married women students' academic performance in higher education.

Ordinarily, cultural practice can be defined as a pattern of behaviour accepted by a society. Scholastically, cultural practice has been defined in different ways and by different authors, scholars and publishers. Among these definitions is that of Fadeyi (1995) and Mbiti (1969). According to Fadeyi, cultural practice is the application to life of the totality of what is learned in the form of modes of thinking, acting and feeling by individuals as members of society. In the broadest sense, this term can apply to any culture at any time. Besides, Mbiti regards cultural practices as the traditional practices developed within specific norms, or beliefs and protected in many jurisdictions for indigenous people.

Furthermore, Fadeyi (1995) and Mbiti (1969) agree that cultural practices include religious and spiritual practices; medical treatment practices; forms of artistic expression; dietary and culinary preferences; cultural institutions; natural resources management; housing and construction practices; childcare practices, governance, leadership and conflict resolution; power relationships; and “everyday life” including household relationships. Despite the large expanse of time between the writings of Mbiti (1969) and Beckman *et al.* (2007) there appear to be a lot of commonalities in their definitions. Equally so, there is a significant difference in terms of their view and language usage. While Mbiti included and highlighted traditional practices and norms in his definition, Beckman *et al.* emphases were on the components of culture. Norms as included in the definition of Mbiti are taboos. These taboos are what make it more difficult for people to distance themselves from cultural practices. In this study, Mbiti's definition is upheld because of its broadness. In my view, the definition encompasses all the major concepts

and the scope of cultural practices. Hence, it serves as a working definition. A look at cultural practices and women students' experiences and academic performance in institutions of higher learning is necessary and germane to my study, especially when the writings of Glele (1991) and UNESCO (1976) are considered together with the rationale for this study. Both Glele and UNESCO write that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to separate people from culture given their history. This is a clear case of what happens in Nigeria where my study is carried out (Falola, 2001). Accordingly, there is the myth that the traditions and cultural practices in Nigeria, as in most parts of the world, represent the pinnacle of human activities, career and achievement (Benard, 1975; Beck, 1994; Dryden, 1999). Cultural practices as norms, taboos and so on (traditions) are highly responsible for the "making and unmaking" of personhood (Brettell & Sargent, 2005; Rosaldo, 1974; Lamb, 2005). Stated differently, Okeke (2001; 2002) maintains that the future and destiny of women rest greatly on the traditions of the land. Traditional attitudes dictate that women are the physical property of their husbands and deprive them of any authority over marital issues and relations (Unifem, 2005). In a nutshell, it can be premised that womanhood is at the mercy of various cultural practices; could this be the reason why Ron Miller said that "women live in a disintegrating culture? In the words of Ron Miller (1997)

Culture does not nourish that which is best or noblest in the human Spirit. It does not cultivate vision, imagination, or aesthetic or spiritual Sensitivity. It does not encourage gentleness, generosity, caring, or compassion. Increasingly in the late 20th century, the economic technocratic – statist world view has become a monstrous destroyer of what is loving and life-affirming in the human soul (p.6).

On account of the above, I see and would simply describe cultural practice as the fusion of culture and tradition. Using the working definition, culture is simply "everyday life", that is, a way of life – how things are done on a daily basis, while tradition encompasses the norms, beliefs, taboos and suchlike that are embraced or respected.

According to Oriche-Aniche (1998), researchers, educators and development workers appear eager to point to tradition as the reason for African women's lack of agency and progress. Meanwhile, Bolarin (2002; 2004; 2006) and Okeke (2002) point to tradition and cultural practices as the reason for the under-representation of Nigerian women in all facets of life. Broadly speaking, cultural practice in the context of tradition has been collectively seen as a bottleneck for women in Nigeria and on the Africa continent. For example, the statement issued by a recent international summit convened to address the economic crisis in Africa show that.

In Africa, the gender gap is even wider and the situation is more complex due to the cultural and traditional context which is anchored in beliefs, norms and practices which breed discrimination, incapacities and feminized poverty (Conclusion of the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the African partnership forum, Germany, May 2007).

There is growing evidence that the number of women in Nigeria living in poverty, who are denied education and who are less equipped for peak performance in their schooling and career on account of cultural practices has increased disproportionately to that of men (Bamidele & Odunsola, 2001; Okebukola, 1999; 2000; Mukangara & Koda, 1997). Okebukola in particular states that the gender disparity is more pronounced at higher education level than at the primary and secondary levels of education. Mukangara and Koda (1997) argue that a gender bias in favour of men's access to higher education has been naturalised by culture. In a nutshell, tradition bottled in cultural practice can be blamed for Nigerian women's education and economic predicament because cultural or traditional beliefs constitute part of an ancient, unchanging way of life, not easily amenable to change in terms of the ever-changing social world that is fast being overtaken by globalisation and globalised citizenship. The reality too often is that researchers assume that the existence of tradition through cultural practices make Nigerian women incapable of acting as the authors of their lives (Oriche-Aniche, 1998). The fusion of culture and tradition seems to have blinded the "intellect and reasoning eyes and ears" of women. In fact, it has made them dogmatic; they can do very little on their own without first referring to culture and its implications or consequences. Simply

put, culture defines people and subjects them to control. As is beautifully observed and expressed by Audre Lorde (1984:45), “it is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others for their use and to our detriment”. This is what cultural practice does to women. Similarly, men in particular use cultural practices and tradition to control the thinking of women to their own advantage. This could be an explanation for Carter G Wood’s (1933:84) observation: "If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action."

Men are able to control the thinking of women because women have not been able to realise who they are; hence they have failed to define themselves for themselves against the hurdle of culture (Friedan, 1963; Collins, 1991). No wonder Pillay (2007:4) writes that to question yourself is to know yourself. She further states: "It is not surprising that men's thinking about women has not changed, and that women about women's thinking is showing little sign of change is frightening" (2007:2). In agreement with Pillay, it is this bifurcation of self, complicated by tradition or cultural practices, which is so destructive for women in general. In traditional Nigerian society, men used traditions, implementing them as cultural practices to “colonise” women, making them see themselves as inferior to men. In addition, making them see themselves as biological destined for and confined to a specific role and dependant on men. In recent times, such thinking still exists. I see this as a conspiracy against women, aimed at discouraging and preventing them from attaining equality with men in all spheres of life. For this reason, their education, especially at the higher education level, as a gateway to their success in life has not been given serious attention.

However, while some researchers and educators condemn cultural practices and regard them as “evil” in terms of women’s education, other studies (Wells & Claxton, 2002; Noble, 1998; Wong, 1988; Vogel, 1967; Davis, 1948) emphasis that tradition and culture are, in a way, helpful to students, including women who are schooling or studying cross-cultural and interdisciplinary courses at institutions of higher learning. They argue that culture plays a large role in shaping the development of individual minds, and individuals’ thoughts and deeds serve to maintain or to alter the cultural milieu. Wells and Claxton (2002) are of the opinion that, as people live, play, work and solve problems

together as husband and wife, friends, family members, relatives and community members, so their spontaneous ways of thinking, talking, acting and coexisting – the ideas that come to mind, the words they choose and the tools they make use of – embody an accumulated set of cultural values and beliefs that have been constructed and refined over the years if not generations. And, as they get things done collectively, they learn from the habits and attitude of the more experienced friends, relatives, parents, teachers and colleagues. It is through taking part in such joint activities that individual members of a society are inducted into these “ways of knowing” and take over and make their own values, skills and knowledge that are enacted in the process.

### **2.9.2 Types of cultural practice**

In Nigeria, cultural practices vary from one ethnic group to another. These practices largely depend on the tradition of the people and perhaps blend with their religion. Nigeria is a country where different religions are practised, with Christianity, Islam and traditional worship being well established. These religions are scattered across the country, with Islam dominating in the North, Christianity dominating in the South and traditional worship cutting across the country. It is important to note that some religious beliefs are imbedded in the culture of the people, thereby reflecting in the aggregate or exact cultural practices in different parts of the country. As previously discussed, there appears to be some similarities in cultural practices across ethnic groups in Nigeria (Falola, 2001). Nevertheless, culture in Nigeria requires men and women to play different roles, as do young and older members. To be precise, very often different families, clans and lineages have their own specialised stories, songs, dances, crafts, designs and history that together form their culture. According to Glele (1991), Collins (1991) and Beatie (1982), it is thus true that culture creates a division of labour for different ages, sexes, marital status and so on. Thus one can see that members of the community or society share a set of beliefs, values, habits and practices. In the literature reviewed, I have shown that there is wide acceptance that there is a link between culture, marriage and higher education for women. In Nigeria, there are numerous cultural practices associated with marriage. These include the following:

**Early childhood marriage:** This can be defined as a situation where girls get married before the statutory age for marriage. The minimum age of marriage for girls, as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is 18 years. In Nigeria, the number of girls married at below 18 years is relatively high (CBN, 2000). This practice is more common among the Hausa people (Northern part of Nigeria). In Nigeria, some parents prefer to marry their daughters at an early age because they believe that girls are an economic liability. They substantiate their argument with an Asian proverb which states “bringing up girls is like watering the neighbour’s garden”. Early childhood marriage often involves girls being withdrawn from school and early pregnancy. Early maternity lessens the life expectancy of girls and adversely affects their health, nutrition, education and employment opportunities.

**Female genital mutilation:** This is sometimes referred to as female circumcision and is a practice which involves the cutting away of all or part of the external female genitalia or all other procedures involving other injury to the female genital organs (WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA. 1997:5). Female genital mutilation is a common cultural practice in many ethnic societies in Nigeria, particularly in the southern parts and rural communities (Mama, 1996; NDHS, 2003). The rationale behind this act is to reduce female promiscuity before and after marriage (OZO-Eson, 1987). In Delta State, among the Urhobo people, women must be circumcised before marriage. This is similar to what obtains in the Esan community of Edo State Nigeria. According to (OZO-Eson, 1987) young women who are mature enough for circumcision are usually not told nor have prior knowledge of the day the circumcision (operation) will take place. She further states that they are deceived and lured to the place of the operation where they are held down by their elders and forced to have the operation without any pain killers.

**Purdah:** The word “purdah” literally refers to a curtain. Fabric is used to conceal a woman’s body usually including her face. This implies a division between the male and the female domain and also the seclusion of women (Abid, 2009). According to Andrewes (2005) and Abid (2009), purdah may be considered as a cultural denomination of the English word “veil”, which, besides meaning curtain and to hide or to conceal,

refers to Muslim women's head and body coverings. Purdah is symbolic of a form of religiosity that claims modesty (Abid, 2009). The practice of purdah requires the wearer of the "veil" to act in a culturally appropriate manner. In Nigeria, the practice of purdah is only found among the Hausas, the Yoruba Muslims and a few other Muslims, for example the Auchi people in South Nigeria. This cultural practice confines women to the home and denies women socialisation, educational opportunity and economic participation.

***Son preference:*** The practice of son preference is the preferential treatment by parents of male children. This often manifests itself in the neglect, deprivation or discriminatory treatment of girls to the detriment of their physical and mental health. In traditional Nigerian society, son preference is perpetuated by the traditional role of men in agriculture and as property owners. According to United Nations (1994), son preference manifests itself in a number of ways, all of which have negative repercussions for girls and women. The United Nations reveals that discriminatory treatment of girls and women can arise in different areas, which include the following:

*Education:* Families with higher income may send both boys and girls to school, but low income families choose to send the boy rather than the girl.

*Family nutrition:* Girls will be breastfed for a shorter period than boys in order to hasten conception to produce a boy. In families where food is scarce, the most nutritious food is reserved for boys and men.

### **2.9.3 Other cultural practices**

Apart from the cultural practices discussed in the previous section, there are numerous other cultural practices in Nigeria that affect women socially, economically and politically, and in their general life style. These cultural practices include the following:



### **2.9.3.1 40 days stay at home for post-natal women**

This practice compels women who have given birth to stay at home for 40 days after delivery. This is to ensure that they are given adequate care. During this period, the woman's mother or mother-in-law comes to stay with her and helps her with domestic work and takes care of the new baby, especially bathing the baby.

### **2.9.3.2 Widowhood practices**

Widowhood is the state or period of being a widow or widower. When the husband dies, the wife is referred to as a widow. When the woman or wife dies, the husband is known as a widower. A survey in the United States of America reveals that widowhood is more common among women than men (Smith, 2003). A similar situation exists in Nigeria, according to the CBN (2000) survey and the World's Women (2000). In a study in Imo state, Nigeria, interviews and discussions were held with traditional rulers, leaders of women's organisations and widows. Five factors that impact on the health and economic status of widows were identified: a long period of incarceration during mourning; an obligatory poor standard of hygiene; deprivation of the husband's property and maltreatment by his relatives; the enforcement of persistent wailing; and the practice of demanding that a widow sit in the same room with her husband's body until burial (WHO, 1998). The death of a husband or spouse often means not just the loss of a life companion but also the end of a whole way of life (Benokraitis, 2005:506; Smith, 2003). Benokraitis emphasises that unfamiliar tasks – managing finances, cooking meals, fixing the faucet – suddenly fall on the surviving spouse. Cultural practice in Nigeria strongly supports the woman remaining a widow after the death of her husband in order to take care of the children. Besides, many women feel comfortable remaining a widow because of the love that existed between them and their deceased husband, finding it difficult to transfer their love to someone else. In the practice of widowhood as it applied to women, a woman is not seen in the public for months after the husband dies. According to Agnes Ushang Ingwu, a feminist and advocate of women's empowerment and liberation in the Bette community, Cross river state in Nigeria, widowhood in reference to community's mourning laws requires women to stay in seclusion for six to 12 months (it was originally up to two years). During this period the woman wears only black clothes. Widowed men

and women exhibit depressive symptoms such as sadness, insomnia, appetite loss, weight loss and self-dissatisfaction. Some longitudinal studies report that men and women experience similar physical and emotional difficulties initially and, with time, do not differ much in their ability to cope with the loss of a spouse (Brubaker, 1991; Van Baarsen & Van Groenou, 2001).

### **2.9.3.3 Wife inheritance practice**

This is a cultural practice that entails a brother or relative of the deceased marrying the widow to sustain and carry on the family name. The practice is very popular among many ethnic groups in Nigeria. Bond (2005) testifies that wife inheritance is not only limited to one country in Africa but is common to many countries in Africa. According to her, the practice is known as *chokolo* in Malawi; in Ngoni, Ndebele and Zuhi it is called *ukungena*. While in Shona it is called *kugara nhaka*.

### **2.9.3.4 Wife beating**

Nigerian culture and tradition tolerate wife beating as long as the wife is not beaten by a stranger. In other words the husband is free to beat his wife. The Nigerian penal code of the North supports wife beating. According to this penal code a wife can be beaten with “a stick not bigger than the husband’s thumb” (cited in OZO-Eson, 2008). On the other hand, as noted by Okojie (1960), culture and tradition forbid women to hit their husbands if in a fight. In Urhobo land, in the event of a fight between a husband and wife, the wife is not expected to hit the man. If she does and the man falls to the ground in the course of the fight, the wife is sent back to her parent’s home. To come back to the house or to be reconciled requires the presence of elderly people and family members. Also the woman (wife) has to buy/kill a goat for sacrifice and to appeal to the gods of the land.

### **2.9.4 Marriage in Nigeria**

Marriage itself can be regarded as a major cultural practice in Nigeria. As in Ghana, marriage in Nigeria is seen as requisite life stage, rather than an option, and it remains the

most important social institution and a major cultural practice (Salm & Falola, 2002:133). Cultural practice in Nigeria mandates marriage for men and women. It is only when people are married that they can be said to be “responsible” in society. Defined broadly, marriage is a socially approved mating relationship that is expected to be stable and enduring (Benokraitis, 2005). Marriage is a critical rite of passage for both men and women, but the effect of this rite on the two sexes is very different (Watson, 2005).

The forms of marriage vary within the different groups in Nigeria because the members of a society construct its norms or culturally defined rules for behaviour. Norms that define marriage include formal laws and traditional and religious doctrines. According to Bierstedt (1957), norms refer to ways of "doing" as opposed to ways of "thinking". Marriage in Nigeria is therefore synonymous with the existence of norms, although one is seldom aware of them until they are violated or until an attempt is made to enter a new environment where one is trying to establish oneself. This ties up with the point made earlier that culture is responsible for the "making or unmaking" of people especially women. Women cherish marriage more in Nigeria (CBN, 2000) and thus put in much to sustain it. It is quite interesting to know as I have observed that the success of marriage and other forms of cultural practice depend on the role women play; they are instrumental in conceiving, practising and sustaining cultural practices yet they are the most affected by them.

Culturally, marriage in Nigeria takes place only when the dowry has been paid. In other words, there is no marriage without the payment of dowry. This is therefore the starting point and a compulsory requirement for marriage. Dowry is a socially legitimised payment normally given by the groom’s family to the bride’s family and is the same as bride price. Mandela (1991) refers to bride price as ‘*lobola*’, and defines it as bride price in European lore, where the "bride" is converted into a sort of feudal slave purchased from the father by the husband's family. In Nigeria, dowry usually takes the form of money. The amount payable as dowry varies from one ethnic group to another. Some families and ethnic groups use the level of a woman’s education as a parameter for determining dowry. The practice of using women’s education for ‘hiking’ dowry is dominant among the Ibos in the eastern part of Nigeria.

Despite some cultural variations, marriage in most western industrialised countries and on the African continent of which Nigeria is part has some common characteristics (Benocraits, 2005; Lamb, 2005). In sum, married couples are expected to share economic responsibilities, to engage in sexual activity with their spouses, and to bear and raise children. However, this is not true for many parts of the world because marriage is seen to be female dependence on men – both social and economic (Mandela, 1991). This certainly pertains to Nigeria and many other countries in Africa where cultural practices paint marriage for women as economic dependence on men and agree on the issue of child bearing and raising and the continuation of the family from generation to generation (Falola, 1999; 2001; Falola & Salm, 2002). Falola (2001) emphasises that cultural practices associated with marriage in all parts of Nigeria view the raising of children, especially in the context of taking care of them (domestically), to be solely the woman's job. These beliefs and practices have helped to confine many Nigerian women to the home and to exclude them from involvement in society.

### **2.9.5 Feminised domestication**

Feminised domestication is coined from the words “feminine” and “domestic”. Literally, “feminine” is described as any institution(s) or person having the qualities or appearance considered to be typical of women and “domestic” as a term that connects people or persons to the home or family – a servant who works in the house. In this study, the view of Rosaldo (1974) is upheld, given her broad view on feminised domestication and its relevancy to Nigerian society. By feminised domestication Rosaldo means “those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organized immediately around one or more mothers and their children”. She argues that women are associated with a “domestic orientation”, while men are primarily associated with extra-domestic, political and military spheres of activity. In my opinion, feminised domestication restricts domestic work to women. Aina (1998) and Chodorow (1974), who also wrote essays on women, culture and society, both insist that women’s domestic orientation is structurally and culturally constructed and “ insofar as woman is universally defined in terms of largely

maternal and domestic role, we can account for her universal subordination” (Rosaldo, 1974:7).

Feminised domestication comprises domestic activities such as cooking, washing, cleaning the home, bathing and dressing the children for school, among many others tasks. Feminised domestication is a prevailing cultural practice that instils in women the belief that they are solely responsible for all domestic work in the home (Silberschmidt, 1999). In this culture, women are made to believe that it is not proper for their husbands to do such work. For instance, in Nigeria, married men are prevented from entering the kitchen to prepare food for themselves. Their wives must prepare and have their food ready at all time; wash their clothes and those of the children. Domestic activities for women are highly demanding and time consuming. Feminised domestication keeps women busy at all times within the home and does not allow them do anything personal for themselves Benokraitis (2005) and Haese & Kirsten (2002) emphasise that domestic work confines women to the home; denies many paid employment; jeopardises their ambitions for further education or continuing schooling for those who drop out of school; and denies them empowerment and self-actualisation.

Furthermore, feminised domestication is a core cultural practice in Nigeria which largely determines the success of a women’s marriage (Asiyanbola, 2005). It adds to the value or worth of women whether married or not if embraced. It is for this reason that mothers inculcate in their girl child early in life the concept and practice of domestication. By this, the girl child is expected by her mother to master the art of sweeping, cleaning, washing, bathing her younger siblings and cooking. She is made to believe that her success and happiness in life depend on how effectively and efficiently she can manage her home. The father’s house is simply seen as her father’s house and not her home – she gets a home of her own only when she is married and then she can be regarded as a true, responsible woman.

Chodorow (1974) developed a theory linking adult sex role behaviour to the fact that children’s early involvement is with their female parent. Chodorow contends that girls are integrated through ties with female kin into the world of domestic work. Age and sex,

rather than achievement, may define their status, while boys must “learn” to be men. Unlike girls, boys have few responsibilities in childhood and are free to establish peer groups that create “public” ties. To become an adult male a boy is often obliged to dissociate himself from the home and from female kin but for a girl to become a woman she is made to associate herself with the home and to master domestic work (Oyebola, 2004).

Womanhood and domestication are so culturally integrated that it is apparently impossible to remove domestication from Nigerian women in respect of their family, age, educational background and civilisation. Moran’s study of civilised women (1990) explores the historical beginnings and present-day construction of the category “civilised” which confines educated women among the Glebo of south-eastern Liberia to a “domestic sphere”. Brettel and Sargent (2005) reveal that the dichotomy between “civilised” and “native” (or even tribal or country) is a result of missionisation and has created a status hierarchy differentially applied to men and to women. Men once educated and with a history of paid wage work, never lose their status as “civilised”, while women, even though married to “a civilised man,” may lose their status if they do not dress correctly, keep house in specific ways and refrain from farming and marketing (p.91).

The above is no different from what exists in Nigeria, where many if not all see domestication as a compulsory task for women. It is upon this belief of imbibed feminised domestication that girls or young women are recruited and employed by civilised and aging women to their households to assist and possibly carry out the more elaborate household routines and to train their daughters to become competent in domestication.

While I affirm that the above is not an exhaustive descriptive of cultural practices in Nigeria, I have highlighted those that are most dominant across the country.

### **2.9.6 Conclusion**

In response to and in order to tackle the problems women face as a result of cultural practices, the Nigerian government formulated a national policy on women, which was

approved by the 1999 democratic administration. The policy is an attempt to incorporate women fully into national development as “equal partners”, decision makers and beneficiaries of Nigeria, through the removal of gender-based inequalities. The policy aspires to the inclusion of women in all spheres of life, including education, health care, employment, agriculture, industry, environment, social services, legal justice and so forth. It aspires to eliminate the negative aspects of Nigerian culture, which serve only to harm women, and to challenge the patriarchal status quo. Tangible evidence of any improvement is slow to appear. Few would argue that the development of women in Nigeria – in particular the status and participation of women in education and other sectors – has shown little improvement (Akande, 2001; Kethusigile *et al.* 2000). While, Kethusigile *et al.* argue that cultural practices combined with other factors – social, economic and political – affect women student’s participation in higher education, Akande Jadesola, the first and only female vice-chancellor of the Lagos State University, notes that even as female students’ participation improves in higher education, the number decreases as they move up the educational ladder. In my opinion, the cultural practices attached to marriage establish that women should and can only exist for and through their husband and children.

Chizea (1993) writes that over the generations, society has conned women into believing that they were created only to be the disposable vassals of humanity and they have been conditioned to believe that a woman is only worthy when she is owned by a man as a daughter, wife or mother. The first is a consequence of her birth, but the second and third are the status she must attain before she can claim to have lived a "useful life". Chizea (1993) summarises the plight of the woman as follows:

She is made to understand that there must be a significant man in her life as father, husband or son before she can have rights and privileges ... she cannot own property because she is a property herself of her father, who gives her first identity and who will give her out in marriage. And until that time she must be obedient to him as an absolute lord and master. On being given away to another man as a

wife, she acquires a new absolute lord and master whom she must obey until death do them part (p. 23).

The above plight is experienced by women as a result of the cultural practices attached to marriage and the quote aptly describes the fate of the Nigerian woman. Despite the effort of the Nigerian government by means of policy and women's empowerment campaigns towards the eradication or minimisation of women's repression in relation to cultural practices, no significant success has been achieved especially in the context of the limitations and restrictions that cultural practice impose on the roles and general life style of women.

My experience, together with the existing literature, aids a reasonable understanding of cultural practices in Nigeria. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that as a male and relatively new to marriage, I may not have an intimate knowledge of the cultural practices that work so negatively on women. I suggest that the data collect during this study will help to reveal cultural practices not accounted for in the reviewed literature.

## **2.10 Summary of the literature**

The literature is largely in agreement that academic performance favours male students and that it is discouraging for women students on aggregate in higher education (Okebukola, 1999; 2002; Makhubu, 2003; Poon Wai-Yee, 2000; Bolarin, 2003, 2005). However, the scholarship on women students shows that their performance is tied to multi-attributional factors, both in the short term and the long term. These are classified as internal and external factors. In other words, they are controllable and uncontrollable factors. These attributes or factors have varying impacts on different categories of women student (married and single) and therefore account for differentials in academic performance. This differentiation is crucial, especially in the light of my own experience and the existing literature, for improving married women students' academic performance in higher education.



To a large extent, the literature reveals that uncontrollable factors, such as culture, affect women students' performance and enrolment more than they do males, especially in Africa where cultural practices and traditional beliefs and customs are still very dominant (Bolarin, 2002; 2003; 2005; Ukoha, 2005). Intellectually, most scholars argue that cultural practice is a cardinal problem linked to the academic performance of women and as a result jeopardises their empowerment potential and liberation (Beck, 1999; 2002; 2005; Bamidele & Odunsola, 2006; Aikenhead, 1997).

Apart from checks on and the eradication of cultural practices that impede women's academic performance and participation in higher education, various authors and publication (Unterhalter, 2004; Salo, 2001; Mukangare & Koda, 1997) believe that policy makers could come to the rescue of higher education for women with gender-sensitive policies. The use of gender-sensitive policies have proven to be helpful in encouraging and promoting higher education for women in countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom (Lips, 1999; Jamil, 2000).

Interestingly, the literature reveals that the participation and academic performance of women students can be enhanced if degree courses in women's studies are introduced in higher education; similarly, courses meant for women only should be established in countries on the Africa continent as has been done in developed countries. The literature also establishes the premise that performance perceptions are important determinants of behaviour and hence are related. In other works, examination scores or results are said to be the best and most common means of evaluating academic performance in institutions of learning (Gbenu, 2004; Kelly, Kelly & Clanton, 2001; Levine & Wang, 1983).

Lastly, there has been no focused study on academic performance, cultural practices and married women students in Nigerian. Much of the 'knowledge' in this area is intuitive and experiential. To this end the literature reveals that culture and gender are significant means to the understanding of women's lives and experiences given the perspectives of gender scholars and feminists. In the light of this, the literature reveals that culture and gender are important elements of feminism.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of the study is anchored by and draws on Freize *et al.*'s (1983) expanded achievement attributional model and Ulrich Beck's (1992) individualised individual theory. The expanded achievement attributional model is used to show, understand and explain academic performance as a variable in the research question and hypotheses, while Beck's (1992) individualised individual theory is used in understanding and explaining the behaviour and attitude of married women towards higher education. This 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 people.

The expanded achievement attribution model (Freize *et al.*, 1983) was proposed to consider the individual definitions people have for achievement, success and failure. Achievement and performance are used interchangeably by researchers in the field of education and social science. The model is an expansion of the original achievement attribution model (Weiner *et al.*, 1971), the criticism of which was based on neglect of prior judgement of success on which the attribution process depends, insensitivity to the impact of causal attributions on affective, cognitive or emotional factors, reaction to success and failure, and lack of in-depth integration of internal and controllable determinants of performance and attribution in relation to external and uncontrollable factors such as culture.

The expanded achievement attribution model (Freize *et al.*, 1983) explicitly allows for the determination of the subjective level of academic success before an attribution is made; which is what I propose to do in this study. The Frieze *et al.* (1983) expanded achievement attributional model pinpoints the fact that the academic performance of adult students involves a process and is interconnected. This process forms a link between the different stages of the entire performance evaluation cycle. In addition, the expanded achievement attributional model is concerned with the values people have with regard to appropriate areas where achievement is strived for, and it relates these values to

the cognitive and affective responses to success or failure. Furthermore, as it is typical of performance or achievement-driven research (Weiner *et al.*, 1971), the expanded model of attribution requires an understanding of the “attribution process” (Frieze *et al.*, 1983; Doolittle, 2007).

Frieze *et al.* (1983) and Doolittle (2007) reveal that the attribution process focuses on what happens to a person in achievement behaviour. They argue by means of the expanded achievement attributional model that, once achievement behaviour occurs, information about the performance is used immediately to infer why the outcome occurred. In terms of the model, before the determination of the level of success or failure is made, a more complex sequence of initial information processing is required. The initial information includes task, self and social standards which are categorised into controllable and uncontrollable. In a different but similar tone, Maehr and Nicholls (1974) show that the association between internal attributions and perceptions of success and failure may depend on the specific value system of the culture (e.g. our cultural practice or cultural value efforts). Weiner *et al.*'s (1971) work shows that pride and shame are not the only, or even necessarily the dominant, emotions associated with academic achievement outcomes; a wide variety of emotions such as surprise, frustration, anger and gratitude occur as a result of achievement-oriented behaviour. This seems to agree with the opinion of Beck when he explains the obstacles to women's liberalisation in the context of culture, self and identity.

However, other work indicates that attributions affect the judgement of success. For example, Maehr and Nicholls (1974) suggest that a person does not feel successful doing a task unless there is a sense that the outcome is the result of internal, controllable factors. I add to this: a person will feel successful and fulfilled if he/she knows that people or the community believe in or support what he/she is doing. Unfortunately for women, culture often does not allow society to see any good in their education because of their confined roles and duties (Haese & Kirsten, 2002). Also, the marginalisation of females in decision making on the institutional and national contemporary political scene, where women are regulated or denied participation in the decision-making process, further legitimises the situation. For instance, in Nigeria, women are not given the space to operate or express

themselves in the political arena like their male counterparts in institutions in the country, including higher education institutions. At all levels of government women are under-represented. Even the seemingly gender consciousness of Nigerian society aroused by the Better Life Programme, the Family Support Programme and the Beijing Conference has not improved women's political participation. The gender profile of the National Constitutional Conference mandated by the late General Abacha to draft a new constitution to be promulgated into law by the Provisional Ruling Council is 361 males to eight females. However, this is an improvement on the Constitutional Drafting Committee set up by the Obasanjo Military Regime in 1978, which did not appoint one woman among the 40 men charged with the responsibility for drafting a new constitution (Ezeilo, 1999). Recently, in this fourth republic, out of a total of 11,881 positions open for election, only 631 women contested and only 181 won, representing a mere 1.62% (Ezeilo, 2000).

Outside elected positions, women's participation in politics and national decision making is usually at the peripheral level. That is, at the level of the women's wing of their political parties or the first ladies of their states, local government areas or the federation, depending on the political office their husband occupies. This situation attests to the under-representation of women in decision making and national affairs.

Moreover, in agreement with Pereira (2003), Odejide (2004:453) states in his recent study title *What can a woman do? Being women in a Nigerian university*, that Nigerian universities, like other similar institutions in the country, function as major sites for the production and reproduction of contemporary gender identities and gender inequalities. "Part of the lived experience of being female on a Nigerian university campus is being portrayed and treated as subordinate ostensibly because of 'traditional culture' and social and familial factors which view women as fragile and dependant on male protection ..." (Odejide *et al.*, 2005). This corroborates the arguments of those who point to the influence of contemporary politics on gender inequalities in Nigeria and in other developing countries (Nzegwu, 2001; Oyewumi, 2002; Bennett, 2002; Mama, 2003). These scholars note that women experience higher education differently and that social

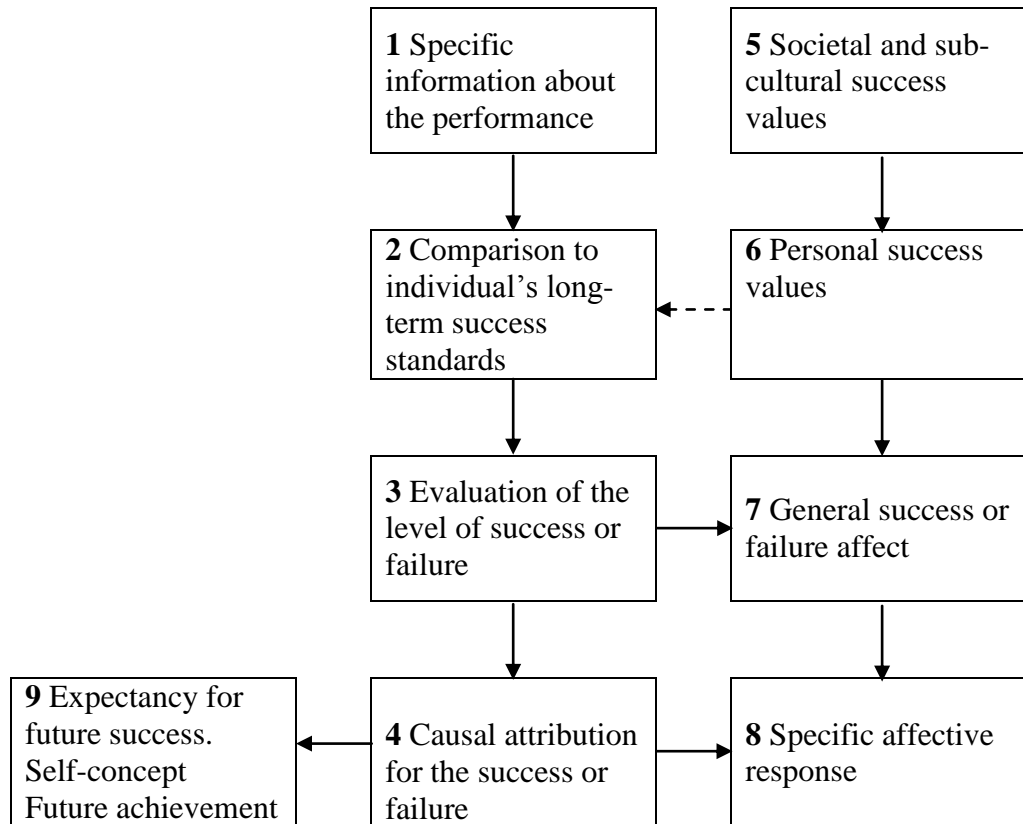
relations within the education which replicate in the larger society depict inequalities in the operations of power, as is evident in the statistics of access, employment, decision-making bodies and welfare and the capacity to access research and professional opportunities. The experience and behaviour of women and men, both at institutional and at the societal level at large, are a core consideration for an achievement model (Weiner *et al.*, 1971).

Freize *et al.*'s (1983) expanded achievement attributional model is one of the most influential of all achievement and performance conceptualisations because of the encompassed variegated integers or determinants of achievement, the high cognisance of affective achievement outcomes and a touch of what I call “academic competition”.

Academic competition is an achievement behaviour concerned with competition against personal standards of excellence, and success is equated with achieving those standards. Within this framework, academic success should be seen as involving competition with others as well as hard work; hence, the enrolment and access of women students in higher education. Using the enrolment rates of women students in higher education, the rationality and relationship between enrolment/access and academic performance can be extensively understood. The expanded achievement attribution model stresses that an increase in the number of students of the same age group, sex, status, and so forth, stirs up competition among them. On account of this, a call for increasing the participation and enrolment of women in higher education should be a “thing of consciousness” (Bolarin, 2001; Mukangara & Koda, 1997).

Although Maslow (1954), in his famous theory of motivation, regards competition as fundamental to success, his ideas stress intellectual and social products that are socially validated. According to Beck (1999; 2002; 2005), the demonstration of competence and independence, and support from family members and husband/wife are also essential to performance success or failure.

In summary, Frieze *et al.* (1983) used the attribution process to buttress their expanded achievement attribution model to show factors that determine academic performance and their interconnectivity.



**Figure 1.1:** Short-term reactions to the achievement/performance event

Source: Frieze *et al.* (1983:14)

In Figure 1.1 above, Box 1 is used to infer why the outcome occurred in Box 4. In the model, before the determination of the level of success can be made, a more complex sequence of initial information processing is proposed (Boxes 1, 2 and 3). The information included in Box 1, which is believed to be relevant in determining the level of success or failure, includes the objective score or performance level (if such information is available), as well as other information already available to the person, such as how much effort was put into the performance, the prior performance expectation, and how challenging the task was. These bits of information are then

assessed against the long-term personal success standards of the individual (Box 2). For example, the objective performance level may be compared to the person's previous performance. The level of effort and mood are also evaluated. These assessments may be made relative to outcomes experienced in the past, or they may be compared to absolute standards. This information processing stage then results in a subjective evaluation of how good (or how successful) the performance was (Box 3). The model postulates that it is this subjective success evaluation that influences the general positive or negative affect associated with the outcome (Box 7), as well as the causal attribution made (Box 4). Both of these steps then lead to a specific attribution – dependent affective response (Box 8). The model proposes that both the general affective responses and the attribution dependent affect are moderated by the values of the society (Box 5) and the personal values of the individual (Box 6). Lastly, (Box 9) in alignment with previous attribution research (McClelland, 1961; Weiner, 1971), the causal attribution is seen as influencing an individual's expectancies for future success, future achievement behaviour and general self-concept.

According to Frieze *et al.* (1983; Doolittle, 2007), the major feature of the model is that the subjective evaluation of the outcome precedes the formation of the causal attribution, but follows the information acquisition stage. Also, the objective and the subjective outcomes are seen as separate variables, with the objective outcome being considered as just one of several determinants of subjective success appraisal. The affective response is divided into two components, one dependent on the causal attribution and the other a direct result of the success appraisal. Finally, the model specifically incorporates the influence of values on the affective responses to various levels of outcomes.

Having identified cultural practices as a potential factor in women's academic performance in higher education (see pages 73, 74, 75 & 76), I proceed to locate culture within a suitable framework that will be helpful in understanding culture and women in relation to education and empowerment. Beck's individualised individual theory is embraced to understand the dynamism of culture and women's liberation and empowerment. Ulrich Beck, a German sociologist, used his theory of the individualised individual in his work, *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*, to show the interplay

between social actors and the desires of women in a contemporary society. Beck (1992; 2002) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) reveal that social factors, such as culture and tradition, necessitate changes in the attitude, behaviour and perception of women towards marriage, education and general life style. Falola (2001) believes that change is an attitude, and that the behaviour of individuals is a fallout of culture. Culture is embedded in society; people live and are part of society, and culture and society are inseparable. For this reason, it is almost impossible for people to take themselves out of a culture – no wonder sociologists say it is a way of life.

A key contributory factor to the development of the individualised individual is the liberation of women. As Beck (1992:105) states, in a reflexive modernity, “people ... are removed from the constraints of gender”. His argument points to the idea that men and women are being released from their traditional, ascribed gender roles. Concurrently, Beck points out that these changes reside more in people’s minds than in their actual practices. His strong advocacy for women’s liberation is linked to feminist exploration and explanations of structures of power and gender, and particularly, in second-wave feminism (see Barret, 1980; Bank, 1981; Skelton, 2005). Second-wave feminism sought to actively re-evaluate femininity and masculinity and develop new understandings of what it means to be human (Wetherell, 2006:216). Second-wave feminism encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as being deeply politicised, and reflective of a sexist structure of power (Brittan, 1984). While first-wave feminism focused on absolute rights such as suffrage, second-wavers were largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as an end to discrimination (Freedman, 2003) and entrance to liberation.

Women’s liberation, according to Beck (2002:202) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995; 2002), is identified as the release from ‘compulsory housework and support by a husband’. This, I believe, is good for women as it will motivate and encourage them in their education. Although Beck writes that power brings about liberation, he fails to provide a concrete, clear and precise definition for what he means by power and how it informs his theory. In my own understanding, and aligning to Skelton’s (2002) opinion, Beck (1999; 2005) sees power as a limited resource with the implication that men,



through masculinism, are able to access it and that this is enabling for them but disabling for women. Moreover, liberal feminist theorists see equal opportunities for men and women as a vehicle for power balancing. With equal opportunities, women will be able to compete with men and their talents, as well as to productively utilise their abilities in the general interests of the society. Equal educational, economic and political access; quality health care; freedom from violence; and protected human rights are necessary conditions for women's wellbeing (Harrison, 2009). Women's wellbeing is the rationale behind gender equality, which, in turn, enhances inclusiveness. More inclusive human rights movements informed by feminist thought and action are central to cultivating that collective will and the wellbeing of a nation (Billson & Fleuhr-Lobban, 2005:411). Given the argument of liberal feminists, I suggest that power is, *inter alia*, the availability of opportunities. Women are regarded as powerless because the opportunities needed for them to demonstrate their potential, abilities and talents are structurally absent.

I consider Beck's theory of the individualised individual for the study because of the increasing attention it is receiving from social scientists, especially those interested in social justice, women's education and equality issues (Reay, 2003; Skelton, 2005). Secondly, Beck's argument has some commonalities with Buchmann (1989) and Giddens (1991; 1992), who reveal that societies have moved away from the old "left versus right" political distinction (societies where people are born, live and die within a confined boundary with the same way of life as their parents) and are being replaced by globalisation and globalised citizenship.

Skelton (2005) uses the individualised individual model to explain the tension and struggles that exist between men and women and between women and women in the academic workplace. The study examines the ways in which power differentials emerge for younger female academics through a combination of their age and marital status. Also, it discusses the importance of higher qualifications (degrees) for female academics in order for them to compete with their male counterparts locally and in a global context. As Beck emphasises, ideally women are part of modern society and should move to being politically distinct and a part of globalisation and should become globalised citizens.

In agreement with Beck, it is now generally accepted that the modern state must promote the course of social justice. Most modern constitutions recognise this as one of the cardinal functions of the state. The foundation on which this philosophy rests is the equality of human beings irrespective of colour, status, gender, social class and so on. This rests on the assumption and embraces thinking that human beings are created equal. The individualised individual theory will help me to understand how culture can sustain irrationality, unfulfilling lifestyles and social injustice, revealing the degree to which certain ways of life within culture are strategically organised to preserve the interests of some members of the society to the detriment of others (Hebert & Beardsley, 2001). I am aware of the argument against the individualised individual model and other similar theories as revealed by the literature. These arguments basically state that such theories tend to split the world rather than unifying it by exposing the oppressed and the oppressor. This, they say, will pave the way for conflict. This contribution to knowledge is appreciated but I disagree with it because it is only when the oppressed and the oppressor are known and separately understood that reconciliation can take place and the world becomes unified and a better place for all.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 4.1 Introduction

This Chapter examines the research design used in this study. In order to focus on the discussion, the purpose of the study, research questions and research hypotheses are restated below.

##### 4.1.1 Purpose of the study restated

Through this study, I aimed to show the experiences of women students in higher education and how their experiences influence their academic performance. Linked to this is my aim to understand and explain the academic performance of *married women students* in higher education in Nigeria. It is my contention that there could be a relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education; that there could be differences in the academic performance of married women students as they progress from one year or level of study to another; and that there is the possibility of differences in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

##### 4.1.2 Research questions restated

What is the understanding of and explanation for the academic performance of married women students in Nigeria?

##### 4.1.2.1 Sub research questions restated

- 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?

#### **4.1.3 Research hypotheses restated**

Before conducting an empirical investigation to determine relationships and differences between variables, I deem it necessary to formulate hypotheses. Hypotheses are educated “guesses about how the social world works” (Neuman, 1997:128). Tredoux and Durrheim (2002) state that a hypothesis is a tentative statement of a relationship between two variables. In order for the research questions to be answered, I formulated hypotheses, which helped me to remain focused as I conducted and wrote the study (Knight, 2002:15).

For the purpose of this study, the hypotheses were stated in null form. A null hypothesis is a statement in which it is stated and maintained that there is no difference or relationship between groups or variables (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). I opt to state the hypotheses in the null form because I do not know the level of significant difference or the relationship between the research question variables. Therefore the following hypotheses were formulated:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students in year 1 and in year 2 of study.
- Ho3: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

## **4.2 Research design**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

In line with the theoretical framework that informs this study, a mixed method research design was employed: quantitative and qualitative research methods were combined.

### **4.2.2 Research design and method**

This study is analytical and was aimed at understanding and explaining the academic performance of married women students in higher education. I employed a mixed research design, which is said to mirror “real life”. “Mixed method research is both a method and a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analysing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a single study or longitudinal programme of inquiry” (Creswell, 2003). The purpose of this form of research is “that both quantitative and qualitative research, combined, provides a better understanding of a research problem or issue than either research approach alone” (Creswell, 2007). In this study, qualitative methods are used to facilitate ‘understanding’ while quantitative methods are used to facilitate ‘explaining’. When both of these are merged they give better insight into the study than if only one method was used.

### **4.2.3 Quantitative research**

Quantitative research is an inquiry that is concerned with numerical representation and manipulation of observations and responses for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations and responses reflect (Babbie, 2008:443). Put differently, Blanche *et al.* (2006:563) define quantitative research as research in which data are collected or coded into numerical forms, and to which statistical analyses may be applied to determine the significance of the findings.

Mouton's (2006) argument in favour of a quantitative research method for analytical study is partly the reason for my choice of a mixed research design. Mouton recommends that a quantitative research method is appropriate for analytical research because it involves scientific analysis. As a researcher with a background in economics and with adequate knowledge of statistics, I believe like other quantitative researchers that measuring the properties of phenomena (e.g. the attitudes and performance of individuals with regard to a certain topic) should be through quantitative measurement, that is, by assigning numbers to the perceived qualities of variables (Pidgeon, 1995:438). With this, the formulated hypothesis (HO1, HO2 and HO3) can be scientifically tested (Whitley, 2002:344). Moreover, quantitative research is highly formalised and explicitly controlled, and its range is more exact (Mouton & Marais, 1999:155–156; De Vos *et al.*, 2007).

#### **4.2.4 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem (Creswell, 1998:15). Qualitative research seeks to preserve the integrity of narrative data and attempts to use the data to exemplify unusual or core themes embedded in contexts (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:563).

Qualitative research encourages both inductive and deductive reasoning which is one component of an analytical study like this current study (Gilbert, 2001; Frankel & Devers, 2000). Also, given the fact that I used the conversation as one mean of data collection, I align myself with Harre (1983) who states that one good way of understanding a person or people is to see them as a set of possible and actual locations which emerge from conversations and social acts. The person comprises a changing location in an interaction or process rather than an object with a predefined essential character and abilities. The activities and practices associated with teaching and learning and their outcomes, as for the case of women students in higher education, provide a good example of what Harre means by the notion of a location or position in a set of social practices or a social world.

#### **4.2.5 Mixed research design: The researcher's choice**

Logically, quantitative research plus qualitative research is equal to mixed research design. Using only a quantitative or a qualitative approach in a research falls short of what is used in the social and human sciences today (Makhanu, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003:5). On the account of this, I considered mixed research design to be my choice of design for this study. Apart from the fact that mixed research design suit most the purpose of the study and will provide answers to the research questions in one study; my philosophical assumptions – pragmatism (see page 13) which underline this study played an important role in my choice of research design. Proponents of mixed research design adhere to the compatibility thesis (Johnson & Christensen, 2004:1) as they explain that quantitative and qualitative research methods are compatible and they can both be used in a single research study. They also believe that adopting a mixed method design is pragmatic since the researchers are not committed to any system of philosophy and reality. In same Opinion to Makhanu (2010) who carried out a study on ‘principals’ literacy in information and communication technology: Towards improving secondary school performance in Kenya’, this study therefore employed a mixed research design with a concurrent strategy of inquiry. Creswell (2003:16) note that “the concurrent strategy enables a researcher to investigate different issues at the same time”. In this study, I investigated the academic performance of married women students in higher education. While I do this, I seek to understand and explain the academic performance of women students in higher education; to know whether there is a significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education; to know whether there is a significant relationship between cultural practices and academic performance of women students in higher education and lastly to know if there is a significant difference in the academic performance of married women students in year one and year two of their study in higher education, all at the same time and in one study. Importantly, my choice for mixed research design was linked to my intention to gather the same type of data via different means. Also, as a means to triangulate knowing that triangulation will be useful in cross checking between data collected. The advantages of mixed method together with my personal reasons above are my reasons for choosing mixed research design for this study. The advantages of mixed

research design according to Creswell (1994:175) include: (a) it is complimentary, because overlapping and different facts of a phenomenon may emerge; (b) it helps to integrate results; (c) it helps contradictions and fresh perspectives to emerge; (d) it is developmental because the quantitative method is used sequentially to help inform on the qualitative method; (e) and mixed research design adds scope and breadth to the study.

### **4.3 Data collection method**

With regard to data collection, a survey was employed. A survey supports the collection of data by asking questions and recording peoples' answers or responses (Whitley, 2002). Surveys are fundamentally a matter of asking a sample of people from a population a set of questions to describe their opinion, beliefs and experiences and perhaps to draw conclusions (Floyd & Fowler, 2009:1). The use of a survey was imperative and inevitable in this study because it is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing and understanding a population too large to observe directly (Babbie, 2008:270). Besides, in agreement, Whitley (2002) and Babbie (2008) beautifully express that survey is an excellent vehicle for measuring or understanding attitudes and orientations towards a given subject in a large population, and is chiefly used in studies like this one where individual people are the units of analysis. Survey as a means of collecting data is compatible with mixed research design (Floyd & Fowler, 2009).

#### **4.3.1 Research instruments**

Whitley (2005) and De Vos *et al.* (2005) note that there are six ways in which survey data can be collected group administered questionnaires, mail questionnaires, personal interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups, and computer-administered questionnaires. Although each method has its advantages and disadvantages, each also has situations to which it is best suited. From the six data collection methods it can thus be extrapolated that the research instruments available in terms of the research design that



I have chosen are questionnaires and interviews. Hence, in this study questionnaire and interviews, as well as the examination results of respondents, was used as research instruments.

#### **4.3.1.1 Quantitative research instruments**

A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the respondents (see attached appendix L). This questionnaire was titled the ‘The academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education questionnaire’ and both closed and open-ended questions were used. The questionnaire is a suitable instrument for quantitative research because it allowed me to give a number of options as responses in determining the extent to which respondents hold a particular view on what I was investigating (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:233). My reason for using a questionnaire was because it helps to generate quantifiable data that are ready for statistical analysis (Mugenda, 2008:285). The questionnaire allowed the respondents to read and answer identical questions related to the topic that I was investigating, thereby ensuring consistency in the data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:357). Another reason for using a questionnaire was because it helped to generate standardised data, which made the processing of responses easier. According to Panneerselvam (2008:93), standardised data help to increase the validity and reliability of the results.

Furthermore, the use of a questionnaire enabled me to obtain data and opinions about a phenomenon from people who are informed on the issue under investigation (Delpont, 2007). Open-ended questions allow respondents to say anything they like and to say it in their own words. Closed-ended questions involve multiple-choice questions: respondents were required to select one alternative from a list of options provided by the researcher. I used more closed-ended questions because the response option can be chosen to represent categories of interest to the researcher and because it can be designed in such a way as to be easily quantified (Whitley, 2002:345). The questionnaire is divided into five sections: section A (Demographic data), section B (Attitude of women to higher education),

section C (Academic performance of women students in higher education), section D (Culture, women and higher education), section E (General).

Collectively, the questionnaire comprises thirty two (32) questions. In each section, there are ten (10) questions expect for section E that has two questions. All ten questions for sections A-D are all closed - ended questions that are related to each section's 'heading or caption' while the two questions for section E are open - ended questions aimed at knowing from the participants if there was anything that they wish to ask me or something that I did not ask them concerning the research topic.

#### **4.3.1.2 Qualitative research instruments**

For the qualitative data I used semi-structured interviews. Kvale (in Sewell, 2001:1) and Kvale (2007) define interviews as “attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation”. Interviewing is the predominant mode of data or information collecting, especially in qualitative research, an integer of mixed method research. Interviews was used because I was interested in the stories of other people in order to find out whether there are any similarities or differences to my wife's story (see rationale for the study) (Seidman, 1998:1).

Stories are a way of knowing. According to Greef, cited in De Vos *et al.* (2005) telling and perhaps listening to stories is essentially a meaning-making process. In other word, all interviews are interactional events and interviews are deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly resides within participants (Manning, in Holstein & Gubrium, 1995:4). In this study, the focused group interview was used.

##### **4.3.1.2.1 Focus group interview**

A focus group interview is a semi structured group that deals with a specific topic or experience that is familiar to members of the group (Whitley, 2002:380). Babbie

(2008:338) writes that focus group is a group of subjects interviewed together, prompting a discussion. The focus group interview was used in this study because the study (the academic performance of married women students in higher education) is tentatively a new area yet to be explored in Nigeria. This reason tallies with the opinion of Carey (in Morise, 1994:224) that focus group interviews could be meaningful in the case of a new topic, or when one is trying to take a new topic to a population, or if one wants to explore thoughts and feelings and not just behaviour. Importantly, and as it specifically apply to this study, Focus group interview provides a basis for interpreting statistically significant findings from a parallel qualitative study. This enables a distinction to be made between “objective” facts of the situation (quantitative) and the interviewees’ subject definitions (qualitative) of with a view of comparing them (Flick, 2009:150).

The focus group interview in this study was made up of focus group conversation and interview protocol.

#### **4.3.1.2.2 Focus Group Conversation**

Using the focus group conversation, I engaged the participants in a semi structured conversation. The conversation led to participants narrating their experiences in form of storytelling.

All together twelve research participants took part in the focus group conversation. These participants were part of the respondents, who completed the questionnaire. They showed further interest in participating in the focus group conversation when I seek for participants to participate in the focus group conversation. The participants for the focus group conversation were randomly selected after many of the respondents who completed the questionnaire showed their interest in the focus group conversation. Twelve participants all together were selected for both institutions (Lagos State University and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education) – research sites. 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 site: 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.

#### **4.3.1.2.3 Recording the focus group conversation**

There is need to mention here that I reside in South Africa where I am studying for my PhD despite linkage of my research title to Nigeria. On the account of this, I had to travel to Nigeria for the collection of data. On the day of the focus group 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 did not complain of the additional time spent.

#### **4.3.1.2.4 Interview Protocol**

Creswell (2007:133) describe interview protocol as a form about four to five pages in length, with approximately five open-ended questions and ample space between the questions to write responses to the interviewee's or research participants' responses. In this study the interview protocol used is made up of sixteen (16) open –ended questions and instead of writing the responses of participants myself (researcher) on the space between the questions, I gave the form to the participants since they can read to complete. My aim was to get their opinion or responses in writing form knowing that the same participants were going to participate in the focus group conversation where they will be speaking. The interview protocol was completed individually. Twelve research participants, six in each research site (three married and three single women student) participated in the completion of the interview protocol. For the purpose of data organisation and classification of responses from the interview protocol, themes were

generated. To generate themes, the subheadings of the reviewed literature for this study were considered and used as a yardstick. These themes include 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 referred 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).

#### **4.4 Population of the study**

The population involved in this study comprised undergraduate women students (married and single) between the ages of 18 and 45 who are currently in their third year of study at a recognised higher education institution in Nigeria. However, I am aware of the fact that, in the course of the study, the marital status of some students might change. For instance, single women students may become married women and some married women may become divorcees or widows. For this reason, the population of the study was much higher than the calculated or required population as stipulated by the sample size percentage guide (Stoker, 1985). Statistically, it is arguable that a higher population

(beyond the determined sample size guide) should be used to counter the problem that might arise as a result of a shift (decrease or increase) in the population of the study.

Secondly, a wide age range to broaden the population was also decided on to take care of such a problem – possible decrease in the number of research respondents and participants as the research progress.

#### **4.5 Sample and sampling technique**

The sample for this study comprised women students drawn from the Lagos State University and the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. To define them precisely, they are women students from the Faculty of Education and the School of Education respectively. Both faculties focus on similar work. One is based at a university – where there are other faculties and the other is a college dedicated to training teachers.

The students selected for the sample are all in year 3 of their study. Eighty nine women students – married and single, both institutions combined formed the total sampled research participants. I chose both institutions for three reasons: Firstly, the faculty and school of education at both institutions are among the institutions with the highest number of women students in the state’s higher education institutions as at the time when the study was carried out (Lagos State University, Faculty of Education Handbook, 2008 and School of Education, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Handbook, 2008). Secondly, many teachers in the state were trained in these institutions (my experience as a principal of a group of schools in the state saddled with the responsibility of employing teachers and a lecturer in a polytechnic over the years reveals this).

In this study I combined Graziano and Raulin’s (2000) representative sampling method and purposive sampling technique. The representative sampling method helped me to understand the concept of representativeness and its relationship to generalisation, as I make use of questionnaires and examination scores for statistical purposes. With this I was able to draw conclusions about the statistical findings of the study on the assumption that what is observed in the sample of subjects would also be observed in any other group

of subjects from the population. Specifically, the purposive sampling technique was employed because only women studying in tertiary institutions of learning were taken into consideration as a sample of the population (Singleton *et al.*, 1988).

Purposive sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from participants who were faced with the research problem(s) the researcher is interested in providing answer(s) to. Patton (1990:169; 2002) describes purposive sampling as “selecting information-rich cases to study in-depth”. Patton (2002:40–41) further asserts that purposive sampling aims to gain insight about a phenomenon, such as the academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education and not to develop empirical generalisations. Apart from the faculty handbook of both institutions, which revealed that the number of women students is highest in the sampled or chosen faculty, I was also of the opinion that it makes sense to compare similar institutions and faculties

#### **4.5.1 The respondents and participants**

In this study, I was concerned with the use of appropriate and distinguished terminologies knowing that my research is mixed method. I refer to the research participants in quantitative aspect of the study as respondents while the term participant was used in qualitative. The respondents and participants for this study comprised women students drawn from higher education, that is, the Lagos State University and the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. The respondents and participants are all in year 3 of their study. I chose respondents and participants in year three of their study because I believed that an in-depth experiences of women studying in higher education can be obtained from women students who are currently studying in higher education and who have spent at least three years in higher education institution. The duration of their higher education programme is four years for the University and three years for College of Education. More so, I needed the academic results of respondents and participants for year one and two of their study therefore, I believe that all their academic results for year 1 and year 2 would be ready and can be collected for use especially at the point of data analysis.

#### 4.5.2 Accessing the respondents and participants

Research without respondents and participants is almost impossible. In this study, accessing the respondents and participants required gaining access to the research sites because the respondents and participants are students who were studying in institutions of learning. Avoiding the inconvenience of arranging research sites elsewhere and the possibility of not getting reasonable number of respondents and participants if research sites are outside the campus of the institutions were reasons for my choice of research sites (Lagos state University and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education). To access the respondents and participants of this study the following steps were taken:

First, I wrote a letter to both institutions seeking permission to conduct my research in their institutions (see attached appendix). Upon approval of my request, I formally gained access to the research sites. At that point, I realised that there was still the need to access the respondents and participants. To do this, the second step was taken. The second step was concerned with meeting the then prospective respondents and participants. In an attempt to meet them I relied on my familiarity with the institutions and my contacts in the institutions. I obtained both my bachelor's and master's degree from the Lagos State University that makes me an alumina. I am familiar with the settings of the institution. Together with my approval letter to conduct research in the institution, gaining access to the institution and the students did not present a problem. Furthermore, while I was studying for my master degree in Lagos State University I did a three-month practicum (a compulsory course at master's level) at the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. While I was there I made friends with some of the academic and non-academic staff at the College, whom I relied on to gain access to the institution. Having gained access to the institutions; it became quite easy to access the respondents. At that point, I found out personally where the group I wanted to work with meet for their lectures. Thereafter I approached them personally. I introduced myself and requested their participation in my research – The academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education. The entire women students with no exception agreed to be part of the research. Some of them requested that I show them my identification documents and letter of approval permitting me to carry out my research in their institution before they agreed to



be part of the research. This I did and their agreement to participate in the research was confirmed.

## **4.6 Validity and reliability**

### **4.6.1 Validity**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:407) say “*validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world*”. According to Gay and Airasian (2000:42), validity is that quality of a data gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is suppose to measure.

#### **4.6.1.1 Validity in quantitative research**

The research instruments in the quantitative aspect of this study include academic results of students for year one and year two of research respondents and participants.

To ensure validity of the academic results used, I collected the academic results directly from the institutions of learning where the research respondents and participants were studying as at the time the study was carried out. With regard to the validity of the questionnaire, I drafted the questionnaire and presented it to my supervisor who scrutinised it to determine the extent to which it, as an empirical measure, accurately reflects the concepts it is intended to measure (Babbie, 2004:143). On the recommendation of my supervisor, I forwarded a copy of the questionnaire to the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria in order for qualified statisticians to scrutinise and comment on it. For over three months, my supervisor, the department of statistics and I were regularly in consultation through emails, phone conversation and meetings in their office at the main campus of the University to decide and arrive at the final version of the questionnaire. In addition, I forwarded the questionnaire to Professor T.A Bolarin and Dr Sola Aina of the Lagos State University, Nigeria for comments and

overview. Prof. T.A Bolarin is an expert on gender studies and cultural practices. And Dr. Sola Aina is an expert in educational management and policy studies. The suggestions and comments of all the persons and institution consulted were put to use in making corrections and amendments. Corrections and amendments were effected and the final version of the questionnaire was produced. With this, I was able to know the degree to which the instrument or measurement process measures the variable it claims to measure (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003:87).

#### **4.6.1.2 Validity in qualitative research**

In the case of the qualitative research instruments validity, similar procedure as above was taken (as in the case of quantitative research). I drafted the original questions meant for the focus group conversations and interview protocol. The questions were simultaneously presented to my supervisor alongside the questionnaire used for this study. My supervisor spent time to look at the questions. She returned the questions to me with suggestions and comments after a week of thorough review. The same questions were also reviewed by Professor J.W Creswell of the University of Illinois USA Whom, I was privileged to meet when he came to University of Pretoria (faculty of Education) to present a seminar on mixed method research in 2008. I seized that opportunity to request him to help review questions for my research. He was glad and offered the review on hearing my research title and the research design I intend to use. To conclude the validation process of the questions for focus group conversation and interview protocol, the contributions of Professor T.A Bolarin was also sought. Having noted the comments of Prof. J.W Creswell, I then forwarded the questions to Prof. Bolarin through post. On receiving the questions back from her, I put the comments and recommendations to work and the final questions for the focus group conversation and interview protocol was produced. While all the consultations were on going, I was constantly in touch (communicating) with my supervisor.

#### **4.6.1.3 Validity in quantitative and qualitative research combined.**

As part of the entire validity process (quantitative and qualitative research) was the role of the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. The committee issued clearance certificate after a critical look at research instruments especially as it applies to validity, reliability, and ethics amongst others (see attached appendices and ethics clearance certificate).

The validity of the study and the conclusions was based on the richness, honesty, depth and scope of the data I collected (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). In addition, the validity of the study was also addressed by triangulation. Triangulation is a check that involves using more than one method of data collection (questionnaire, academic results of research participants, focus group conversation and interview protocol) as a way of explaining intellectually and in detail the complexity of human behaviour (Denzin, 1994; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). I chose to triangulate because it allowed me to use more than one source of data collection to verify and cross-check data. Moreover, the sampled institutions academic results/records were used to verify students' claims about academic performance. The different sources of data used helped to build a coherent justification for the literature theme (Creswell, 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2003). In simple terms, I triangulated by using four different research instruments – questionnaire; academic results of sampled participants; responses of participants from interview protocol; and narrated stories of participants from focus group conversation to provide answers to the research questions and hypotheses thereafter I cross checked the findings from each instrument used against the findings from other instruments equally used.

Furthermore, the validity of the study was tied to the non-adaptation of data (Whitley, 2002). This implies that the questionnaires, academic results of participants, focus group conversations and interview protocol that I accessed, developed and made use of are all from Nigeria where the study was delimited, and not 'imported data'. That is, data generated from other places (countries) and substituted into the Nigerian context. This suggests that the data collected was applicable and highly relevant for the study.

Finally, validity was based on self-reflexivity. According to Lietz, Langer and Furman (2006) and McMillan and Schumacher (2006), self-reflexivity is same as critical reflexivity; it is the researcher's self-examination in order to avoid been judgemental and biased. This helped me as a researcher to make a distinction between respondents' meanings and my personal interpretations or beliefs. Self-reflexivity is concerned with the disclosure of my personal assumptions and bias. It is evident from the rationale of my study that I entered the research with a certain worldview and that the research was greatly influenced by the relationship between emotion, knowledge and decision making.

In this study, as part of the validity checks, my personal assumptions, bias, emotions and beliefs was disclosed. This I deem necessary because I believed that my worldview may not be the same as that of the respondents. A re-call of and reflections on my assumptions with regard to data collected formed the basis for honest, trustworthy, in-depth, open and, possibly, reliable data (Creswell, 2003; Altheide & Johnson, 1998). Altheide and Johnson describe this as "validity as reflexivity accounting", a process that places the researcher, the topic and the sense-making process in interaction. This implies that, as the researcher, I had to substantiate my interpretations and findings with a reflexive account of myself and the process of my research. Using self-reflexivity I was committed to obtaining the respondents' perspectives on the social reality of the observed phenomena, to report the multi-vocality and to show, if possible, where my voice is located.

#### **4.6.2 Reliability**

Gay and Airasian (2000:114) write that reliability is the degree of consistency that the research instrument or procedure demonstrates. Makhanu (2010), note that reliability is essential to the effectiveness of any data gathering procedure. I approached the issue of reliability in two ways. First was reliability of the instruments and second, was the reliability of the data itself. Although it is logical to think that the reliability of the research instruments is most likely to result to reliable data.

In order to assess reliability of the research instrument, the test-retest method was employed. This means that the research instruments were re-administered after a week of main research data collection to different respondents who were not part of the study population (Adekoya & Adetoro, 2001). The different research participants were not from the faculty or school of education but the faculty of science and art, Lagos State University. Three of the participants play soccer for the University female team and were on campus for a training session at the sport complex. I wish to remind you that during this period, there was an ongoing strike on campus; lectures and other academic activities were paralysed. The three participants mentioned above were accompanied by two friends of theirs who are married. The five participants (three single women students and two married woman student) completed the questionnaire at the sport complex, Lagos State University campus. I consider my meeting with these participants as luck on my own part. It was just a mere coincidence when a friend of mine, the assistant coach of the female soccer team who knew nothing about my research invited me to come watch their training session. Fortunately for me, my bag containing my documents and the research instruments were in my car's boot parked by the gate of the sport complex. Knowing that my research instruments are in the car nearby, I then spoke to these five participants about being participants for my research and they agreed to be participants on the ground that I was not going to take much of their time. The five participants completed the questionnaire while they waited for the arrival of other team mates and commencement of the training session on the same day. Immediately after the completion of the questionnaire, I persuaded them to make themselves available for a focus group conversation and interview protocol when they are free to do so. But they insisted that they would not be available given the fact the there was an ongoing strike. The finding was in no way different from the main research findings.

Reliability of the data: I adhered to the suggestion of Buchel (2006:246) that before drawing any conclusions from the data to determine whether or not the results are consequent. Any findings in research data that deviate from the regular patterns in the research should be cross- correlated against findings of the literature reviewed.

## 4.7 Method of data analysis

### 4.7.1 Method of quantitative data analysis

Data collected for the purposes of this study include students' examination scores and data compiled from the questionnaire. This was statistically quantified and analysed using statistical methods. For hypothesis 1 (Ho1), the Pearson product moment correlation was employed to determine the relationship between cultural practices and the enrolment rate of women students in higher education. *t*-test statistics were used for hypothesis 2 (Ho2) to ascertain or determine whether there is a significant difference or otherwise between the academic performance of married women students in year 1 and year 2 of the study. For hypothesis 3 (Ho3), *t*-test statistics were also employed. The statistical methods used to test the entire set of hypotheses are all appropriate as recommended by the literature (Adekoya & Adetoro, 2001; Sanni, 1998; Hucks, 2008; Coolian, 2008).

#### 4.7.1.1 The questionnaire and response rate

The study's questionnaire is a set of constructed questions put together and aim at understanding and possibly explaining the research phenomena. The literature review was the basis of the questions that formed the questionnaire. As said above (see page 108-109) the questionnaire is divided into five sections: section A (Demographic data), section B (Attitude of women to higher education), section C (Academic performance of women students in higher education), section D (Culture, women and higher education), section E (General). The responses in each section were classified into Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Undecided (UD); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD). Each class of respondent's response was scored or weighted ranging from 1 to 5 as shown below:

Strongly Agree (SA)	= 5points
Agree (A)	= 4points
Undecided/Neutral (UD)	= 3points
Disagree (D)	= 2points
Strongly Disagree (SD)	= 1points

#### **4.7.1.1.1 Response rate in quantitative research**

For any sample(s), according to Saunders *et al.* (2007:212), 100 per cent response rate is unlikely and the sample needs to be large to ensure sufficient response for the required margin of error. There is a need to obtain as high a response as possible to ensure that the sample is representative (*ibid.*:215; Stoker, 1985). In this study, unlike many other studies the response rate is 100 per cent. The total respondents for this study were eighty nine. All eighty nine (89) respondents completed the questionnaire and returned it after completion. The method employed in the administration of the questionnaire was the self administered questionnaire, and was accountable for the 100 per cent remarkable response rate.

#### **4.7.1.1.2 Method of qualitative data analysis**

Furthermore, data collected for this study was not limited to the examination scores/results of research participants or respondents and data compiled from questionnaire. It also included data collected from the interview protocol and the conversations held in the focus group interview. These data was analysed through verbatim reporting and the interpretation of the completed interview protocol via ‘deduced meanings’ or formulated meanings from significant statements written by research participants (Creswell, 2007:271 - 272).

#### **4.7.1.1.3 Response rate in qualitative research**

For qualitative aspect of the research, a total of twelve participants were considered to be the sample. The sample size agrees with the suggested percentage given the number of married women students in the research respondents and participants (Stoker, 1985). All the participants made themselves available for the focus group conversation and the interview protocol.

## 4.8 Delimitation of the study and rationale for research sites

The study was delimited to public tertiary institutions of learning in Lagos State, Nigeria.

The study was limited to the following institutions and faculty:

- Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos (faculty of education)
- Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin, Lagos (school of education).

Lagos is a commercial city with a population of 9,013,534 (4,335,514 females) (NPC, 2006; Onuh, 2006) and is situated in Lagos state, the second most populous state in Nigeria. The city accommodates people from different states, from the north to the south. Lagos is known for its cultural diversity and multi-ethnicity, which is one of the reasons why I delimited the study to higher institutions of learning in this state. NPC (2006) and Onuh (2006) reveal that there were more women residing in Lagos.

Lagos state is not a racial or religious state where women's education is overtly hindered by a particular religion/cultural practice like the Sharia in the north. Therefore, it was reasonable to expect a cultural variety of women at these institutions.

With respect to the choice of Lagos State University Ojo, and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Ijanikin, both were considered because of their proximity to residential areas. Both institutions are located in the Ojo local government area along the Badagry expressway. From experience I suggest that women prefer to study near their homes so that they can get home in time after lectures to attend to their domestic duties. In addition, after work women prefer to attend an institution of learning that is close to home, especially in view of the traffic problems encountered on the roads of Lagos. These are reasons why I chose these two institutions.



## **4.9 Ethical considerations**

According to Wisker (2008:86) all research should be ethical. As the researcher, I am the coordinator of all the research activities from the pre-research to the final writing of the research reports. In addition, responsibility for the ethical conduct of the research is vested in me (APA, 1982; 1992). My research proposal was processed by the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria (see ethics clearance certificate attached as Appendix K). It is also important to assist participants and respondents with explanations where required, necessary and to monitor the research to ensure that it is conducted ethically. Importantly, before accessing the research participants, as the researcher it was my responsibility to seek permission from the heads or administrators of the sample institution. This I did by writing to them to ask them to allow me to carry out the investigation/study at their institutions. For the purpose of this research, I divided the ethical issues involved into the following classifications:

### **4.9.1 Ethical consideration in planning the research:**

At this stage, I considered voluntary participation in the research and informed consent. In approaching the research respondents or participants the following steps was adhered to (Gay & Airasian, 2003):

- Respondents were apprised of the purpose of the study and were given an outline of it. Thereafter I asked if they were prepared to be respondents/participants.
- I made it clear that participation in the research as a respondent was not compulsory but voluntary, and that respondents were free to pull out during the course of interviewing and answering questionnaire at any time. This I believe helped me in getting sincere opinions from those who participated. Thomas and Smith (2003:21) state that nobody should ever be coerced into participating in a research project, because participation must always be

voluntary. Expressed differently, Bernnet, Glatter and Levacic (1994:93) state that “research involving human subjects all requires that the participation of individuals be completely voluntarily ... They must be given explicit choice about whether or not they wish to participate on the study”. This study was premised on the belief that women students are adults and have numerous tasks competing for their limited time. In attending to informed consent, I abide to the advice of Young, Hooker and Freeburg (1990) and Ogloff and Otto (1991) that the consent form should be designed carefully and in simple language so that the anticipated respondents will understand it fully.

- Respondents were promised full confidentiality in terms of the events (questionnaire completion, examination results and interview responses) that took place during the investigation or study. It is dangerous and damaging to respondents’ personality and dignity to expose their personal or confidential information (Christensen, 1994:147; Floyd & Fowler, 2009). In addition, I was aware that respondents have a right to privacy and that researchers must safeguard this by keeping the information provided by each individual respondent in the strictest confidence (Whitley, 2002).

#### **4.9.2 Ethical considerations during data collection:**

My ethical obligation continued once the respondents had agreed to take part in the research. I thus had an obligation to treat the respondents with courtesy and respect. As I collected the data I needed, I did not lose sight of the fact that the vast majority of respondents were doing me a favour because they were receiving no monetary compensation. This was a gesture of kindness on their part and this had to be reciprocated with politeness and humility, especially in the way I related to them. At this point, I recall the awareness of the problems or difficulties male researchers face when doing this type of research (Skelton, 2005). Being a male researcher researching in ‘women’s world’ and in a culturally sensitive environment like Nigeria, I envisaged difficulties dealing with the

women participants in terms of motivation and relating to them. On the account of this, I requested the voluntarily assistance of female research assistants. In so doing, confidentiality was not compromised because I asked the research assistants to sign a declaration stating that they would maintain confidentiality. I also spelt out the research assistants' role in the research process. This role was confined to their presence at the research site as a witness to conversations between the researcher and participants. The role of the research assistance was to fulfil the presence of females in a conversation between a male (myself) and the research participants in a culturally sensitive Nigerian society. The research assistants did not take part in the research conservation either in the form of questioning or answering questions. Despite the presence of the research assistants they did not have access to the data. Once again, they were only there because I needed the presence of a female.

#### **4.9.3 Ethical consideration following data collection:**

After successfully collecting data from the respondents, a number of ethical obligations remained. I owed it to the participants to hold a debriefing session, which took place after the research had been completed. Debriefing basically entails the researcher conducting a post-research interview (Whitley, 2002). This interview has two functions:

- To educate the respondents about the benefits of the research.
- To explain any deception that was used (if any). In this study no deception was used.

I used the debriefing session as an opportunity to thank the respondents. In summary, the researcher's ethical issues and consideration in this study were centred mainly on what I call "participants' sovereignty". This term reminds me that, at the data collection stage of the research, the respondents or participants are central to the study.

## **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a detailed description of the research design used in this study – mixed research design. The purpose of the study, the research questions and the research hypotheses were restated and served as the point of departure. In this chapter, I focused on the theoretical purpose and justification of the research design chosen, data collection method, sample and sampling technique, population of the study, validity and reliability, delimitation of the study, ethics issues and considerations. Quantitative research and qualitative research as methods combined in mixed research design were also explained with regard to how it was employed in this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to make sense of the accumulated quantitative data collected from the field (Babbie, 2008; Floyd & Fowler, 2009; Mertens, 2010). Two research instruments were used to gather the data: a questionnaire and the participants' academic results.

The quantitative analysis of this study tested hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. To test for hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 frequencies, procedures and outputs were generated from the questionnaire used for the study (see Appendix B and L). Hypothesis 1 states that there is a significant relationship between cultural practices and academic performance; hypothesis 2 states that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students at year 1 and year 2 of their study and hypothesis 3 states that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

The same questionnaire was used for both research sites, that is, for all respondents at Lagos State University and the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. Given the hypotheses (1, 2 and 3) of the study, the responses of all respondents were combined and cumulated to enable the researcher to derive the frequency outputs needed for the quantitative analysis of the data collected (see chapter 3 for a description of the quantitative research method used).

#### 5.2 Frequencies procedures and outputs

Below are the extracted tables showing the frequency procedures and outputs from the questionnaire. The frequency outputs show the responses of the research respondents.

**Table 5.1:** Age of respondents

V2	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
18	1	1.15	1	1.15
19	1	1.15	2	2.30
20	9	10.34	11	12.64
21	8	9.20	19	21.84
22	4	4.60	23	26.44
23	8	9.20	31	35.63
24	11	12.64	42	48.28
25	17	19.54	59	67.82
26	4	4.60	63	72.41
27	7	8.05	70	80.46
28	2	2.30	72	82.76
29	3	3.45	75	86.21
30	6	6.90	81	93.10
36	1	1.15	82	94.25
40	2	2.30	84	96.55
41	1	1.15	85	97.70
44	1	1.15	86	98.85
45	1	1.15	87	100.00
Frequency Missing = 2				

V2 on the above table represents the age of the research respondents. At both research sites, the age of the research respondents ranged between 18 and 45 years. A total of 89 respondents completed the questionnaire. According to table 5.1 above, two frequencies seems to be missing. The fact that there are missing frequencies means that three respondents did not answer the question.

From the above table it can be seen that the respondents included one aged 18 years and another aged 19, each representing 1.15% of the sample. Nine of the respondents were aged 20 years (10.34%), eight were 21 (9.20%), four were 22 (4.60%), eight were 23 (9.20%), eleven were 24 (12.64%), 17 were 25 (19.54%), four were 26 (4.60%), and

seven (8.5%), two (2.30%), three (3.45%) and six (6.90%) were aged 27, 28, 29 and 30 respectively. Two respondents (2.30%) were aged 40 years and one each were aged 41, 44 and 45 (1.15%). From the frequency outputs it is evident that the highest number of women students in year three of study were 25 years of age (17) and the lowest number (2) was between 41 and 45 years of age. In addition, table 5.1 also shows that the number of women students age 19 and 20 in year three of study is very low at 1.15%. This is the same percentage as for women students aged 41, 43 and 45.

**Table 5.2:** Respondents’ marital status

V3	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	66	74.16	66	74.16
2	23	25.84	89	100.00

V3 represents marital status:

1 = single women students

2 = married women student.

The respondents who completed the questionnaire comprised both single and married students. Sixty-six of the respondents (74.16%) were single and 23 (25.84%) were married. Twenty two of total respondents were women students (both married and single) of the University while the remaining sixty seven respondents (both married and single) were from the College of education (see appendix B). On appendix B, the codes 01 – 022 indicate respondents from the University while codes 101 – 189 indicate respondents from the college of education. The figures on the table above reveal that there were more single women students in year 3 of their study than married women. Although the figures show that there were more single women students in year 3 of their study, this does not have any implications for the research question (which focuses on married women students) because the researcher worked with the percentages of the group (married or single women). This suggests that married women students do not often study at higher education like single women students. Although, it may not have statistical impact but it is a fact that should not be ignored.

**Table 5.3:** Cumulative frequency: respondents' year of study

V4	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
3	88	100.00	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V4 = respondents' year of study

Table 5.3 shows only year 3. This means that all 88 (100%) respondents are in year 3 of their studies. This is in accordance with the research population and sampling.

**Table 5.4:** Married women need higher education

V5	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	52	58.43	52	58.43
2	33	37.08	85	95.51
3	0	37.08	0	95.51
4	1	1.12	86	96.63
5	3	3.37	89	100.00

V5 represents statement/question

1, 2, 3, 4, 5 = the responses of research respondents: 1=strongly agreed, 2= agreed, 3= undecided, 4=strongly disagreed and 5= disagreed. Also note that V5 – V36 represent statements/questions. These questions/statements appear at the top of each table.

Fifty-two respondents (58.43%) strongly agreed that women need higher education, while 33 respondents (37.08%) agreed that women need higher education, one respondent (1.12%) disagreed and three respondents (3.37%) strongly disagreed. In other words, four respondents stated that women do not need higher education. This means that single women also feel that married women equally need higher education.

In response to the question of whether women need higher education to gain employment, 28 respondents (32.56%) strongly agreed that women need higher education to be employed and 43 respondents (50.00%) agreed; while five respondents (5.81%)



were undecided. Eight respondents (9.30%) disagreed and two respondents (2.33%) strongly disagreed.

**Table 5.5:** Women need higher education to be employed

V6	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	28	32.56	28	32.56
2	43	50.00	71	82.56
3	5	5.81	76	88.37
4	8	9.30	84	97.67
5	2	2.33	86	100.00
Frequency Missing = 3				

V6 represents statement/question

In response to the question of whether women need higher education to gain employment, 28 respondents (32.56%) disagreed and disagreed respectively. In total, 71 respondents (80.7%) believe that higher education is necessary for obtaining employment. Put another way, this means that possible employment is one among the reasons why women need higher education.

**Table 5.6:** Women need higher education to have a career

V7	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	43	49.43	43	49.43
2	32	36.78	75	86.21
3	4	4.60	79	90.80
4	6	6.90	85	97.70
5	2	2.30	87	100.00
Frequency Missing = 2				

V7 represents statement/question

All respondents responded to this item in the questionnaire. Forty-three (49.43%) and thirty-two (36.78%) responded that they strongly agreed and agreed respectively. Meanwhile, six (6.90%) and two (2.30%) responded that they strongly disagreed and

disagreed respectively. Apart from these respondents, four (4.60%) were indecisive as the time of questionnaire completion and neither agreed nor disagreed

**Table 5.7:** Women need higher education for a successful marriage

V9	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	21	24.42	21	24.42
2	32	37.21	53	61.63
3	6	6.98	59	68.60
4	21	24.42	80	93.02
5	6	6.98	86	100.00
Frequency Missing = 3				

V9 represents statement/question

In response to this question, 21 respondents (24.42%) and 32 respondents (37.21%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while six respondents (6.98%) were undecided. Twenty-one (24.42%) respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, while six (6.98%) merely disagreed. This suggests that women regard higher education as a requirement or need for successful marriage.

**Table 5.8:** Women in Nigeria have a negative attitude to higher education

V10	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	5	5.88	5	5.88
2	22	25.88	27	31.76
3	7	8.24	34	40.00
4	33	38.82	67	78.82
5	18	21.18	85	100.00
Frequency Missing = 4				

V10 represents statement/question

Five respondents (5.88%) strongly agreed that women in Nigeria have a negative attitude towards higher education while, 22 (25.88%) agreed that women in Nigeria have a negative attitude towards higher education. Seven respondents (8.24%) were undecided

and 33 (38.82%) strongly disagreed And 18 (21.18%) just disagreed. This means that women (both married and single) in Nigeria welcome higher education and have a positive attitude towards it.

**Table 5.9:** Women students in higher education should be financially supported only by their husbands

V11	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	12	13.48	12	13.48
2	23	25.84	35	39.33
3	4	4.49	39	43.82
4	27	30.34	66	74.16
5	23	25.84	89	100.00

V11 represents statement/question

A total of 35 respondents were of the opinion that women students in higher education should be financially supported only by their husbands. Of these 35 respondents, 12 (13.48%) strongly agreed and the other 23 (25.84%) agreed. On the other hand, 27 respondents (30.34%) strongly disagreed that women students in higher education should be financially supported only by their husbands, while 23 respondents merely disagreed that women students in higher education should be financially supported only by their husbands. Only four (4.49%) respondents were undecided. Given that only 25 per cent of the study's participants this does not have any significance or implication for the frequency scores here.

**Table 5.10:** Women students in higher education should be financially supported only by their parents.

V12	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	8	8.99	8	8.99
2	10	11.24	18	20.22
3	8	8.99	26	29.21
4	33	37.08	59	66.29
5	30	33.71	89	100.00

V12 represents statement/question

Eight respondents (8.99%) and ten respondents (11.24%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the above question. Thirty-three (37.08%) and 30 respondents (33.71%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that women students in higher education should be financially supported by their parents. This implies that 63 respondents (71.59%) believe that women students in higher education should not be financially supported only by their parents. Only eight respondents (8.99%) were indecisive at the time that they completed the questionnaire.

**Table 5.11:** The dream of women is to become housewives and mothers rather than higher education students or graduates

V13	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	5	5.62	5	5.62
2	10	11.24	15	16.85
3	8	8.99	23	25.84
4	28	31.46	51	57.30
5	38	42.70	89	100.00

V13 represents statement/question

A total of five respondents strongly agreed and ten agreed that the dream of women is to become housewives and mothers rather than higher education students or graduates. On the other hand, 28 (31.46%) respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed and 38 respondents (42.70%) disagreed. In a nutshell, 66 respondents (75%) said that it is not true that the dream of women is to become housewives and mothers. The table also shows that 8.99% of the total respondents (8 in number) were undecided. It could be argued that in the sample studied, women do not see their life's ambition to be housewives. It is possible that they have career ambition especially when one consider their responses on V7 (women need higher education to have a career).

**Table 5.12:** Courses offered at higher institutions can influence the attitude of married women to higher education

V14	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	24	26.97	24	26.97
2	38	42.70	62	69.66
3	10	11.24	72	80.90
4	13	14.61	85	95.51
5	4	4.49	89	100.00

V14 represents statement/question

Twenty-four (26.97%) and 38 respondents (42.70%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that the courses offered can influence married women's attitude towards higher education. Meanwhile 13 (14.61%) strongly disagreed and four (4.49%) disagreed. For them, the courses offered at higher institutions cannot influence the attitude of married women towards higher education. This means that the numbers of married women students in higher education will increase if certain courses, possibly courses related to women studies and course that will interest them are offered at higher education institutions.

**Table 5.13:** Marital status influences the academic performance of students in higher education.

V15	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	17	19.54	17	19.54
2	42	48.28	59	67.82
3	8	9.20	67	77.01
4	15	17.24	82	94.25
5	52	5.75	87	100.00
Frequency Missing = 2				

V15 represents statement/question

In response to this statement, eight respondents (9.20%) were undecided. However, 17 (19.54%) strongly agreed and 42 (48.28%) agreed with it. In short, 59 respondents (67%)

would appear to believe that marital status does influence the academic performance of students in higher education. Fifteen respondents (17.24%) strongly disagreed and 5 (5.75%) respondents disagreed, however. In effect they would seem to believe that marital status does not affect or influence the academic performance of students in higher education. Conclusively, 67.82% of respondents (59 of a total of 88 respondents) said that marital status influences the academic performance of students in higher education. The responses of the participants suggest that marital status of women students in higher education affect their academic performance.

**Table 5.14:** Academic grade point or class of degree is not considered top priority by married women students.

V16	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	6	6.82	6	6.82
2	34	38.64	40	45.45
3	17	19.32	57	64.77
4	28	31.82	85	96.59
5	3	3.41	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V16 represents statement/question

With respect to this question, 45.46% of respondents (40) believe that married women students do not consider academic grade point or class of degree to be a top priority in higher education. In their responses, six (6.82%) strongly agreed while 34 (38.64%) agreed. Twenty-eight respondents (31.82%) strongly disagreed while three (3.41%) merely disagreed. A fairly substantial number (19.32%) were indecisive. Above 50% of respondents believe that women students in higher education do not consider class of degree or grade point at the end of the academic year to be a major reason for them to be in higher education. It is possible that acquiring higher education for the sake of it or becoming higher education graduates irrespective of their grade point is their top priority.

**Table 5.15:** The academic performance of women students in higher education does not have impact on their academic knowledge

V17	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	7	8.05	7	8.05
2	12	13.79	19	21.84
3	9	10.34	28	32.18
4	46	52.87	74	85.06
5	13	14.94	87	100.00
Frequency Missing = 2				

V17 represents statement/question

Twelve respondents (13.79%) agreed and seven (8.05%) strongly agreed that the academic performance of women students in higher education does not have an impact on their knowledge. On the other hand, 46 (52.87%) and 13 (14.94%) of the respondents said that the academic performance of women students in higher education does have an impact on their knowledge. Meanwhile, 10.34% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. This suggests that the academic performance of women students in higher education does not have significant impact on their academic knowledge.

**Table 5.16:** Good academic performance is necessary for a successful marriage.

V18	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	20	22.99	20	22.99
2	35	40.23	55	63.22
3	1	1.15	56	64.37
4	22	25.29	78	89.66
5	9	10.34	87	100.00
Frequency Missing = 2				

V18 represents statement/question

Only one (1.15%) respondent was indecisive with regard to this statement. Twenty (22.99%) strongly agreed and 35 respondents agreed (40.23%) that good academic performance is necessary for a successful marriage. Twenty-two (25.29%) and nine

respondents (10.34%) respectively on the other hand strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. In other words, they indicated that good academic performance is not necessary for a successful marriage.

**Table 5.17:** The husband’s educational qualification can influence a married woman’s academic performance in higher education

V19	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	30	34.09	30	34.09
2	42	47.73	72	81.82
3	4	4.55	76	86.36
4	10	11.36	86	97.73
5	2	2.27	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V19 represents statement/question

A total of 72 respondents responded that the husband’s educational qualification can influence a married woman’s academic performance in higher education. Thirty (34.09%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 42 (47.73%) agreed. On the other hand, ten respondents (11.36%) strongly disagreed while two respondents (2.27%) disagreed. For them, the husband’s educational qualification does not influence a married woman’s academic performance in higher education. Four respondents (4.55%) were undecided.

**Table 5.18:** Family background and qualifications can influence married women’s academic performance in higher education.

V20	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	21	23.86	21	23.86
2	44	50.00	65	73.86
3	8	9.09	73	82.95
4	10	11.36	83	94.32
5	5	5.68	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V20 represents statement/question



With respect to this statement, 21 respondents (23.86%) and 44 respondents (50%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that family background and qualifications can influence married women’s academic performance in higher education. All together, 65 respondents (73.03%) supported the view that family background and qualifications can influence married women’s academic performance. In contrast to the above, 15 respondents said that that family background and qualifications cannot influence married women’s academic performance in higher education. In a nutshell, ten respondents (11.36%) strongly disagreed and five respondents (5.68%) disagreed. In addition, eight respondents (9.09%) were undecided, that is, they neither agreed nor disagreed. There is a strong possibility that family background, qualification and women academic performance are linked and thus affect academic performance of women students in higher education significantly.

**Table 5.19:** The academic performance of women students in higher education has an impact on their skills.

V21	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	18	20.69	18	20.69
2	51	58.62	69	79.31
3	8	9.20	77	88.51
4	9	10.34	86	98.85
5	1	1.15	87	100.00
Frequency Missing = 2				

V21 represents statement/question

Eighteen respondents (20.69%) strongly agreed and 51 (58.62%) agreed that the academic performance of women students in higher education has an impact on their skills. Nevertheless, ten respondents disagreed with this opinion of the 69 respondents above. Among these ten respondents, nine (10.34%) strongly disagreed while one (1.15%) disagreed. For them, the academic performance of women students in higher education does not have an impact on their skills. However, eight respondents (9.20%) were undecided. With respect to the sampled respondents, the academic performance of women both married and single students has significant impact on their skills given the

percentage of total sample respondents that affirm agreed and and strongly agreed to the question on academic performance and its impact on skills.

**Table 5.20:** Women studying in higher education should not have children.

V22	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	2	2.25	2	2.25
2	7	7.87	9	10.11
3	7	7.87	16	17.98
4	32	35.96	48	53.93
5	41	46.07	89	100.00

V22 represents statement/question

A very high number of respondents – 73 out of a total of 89 respondents (82.02%) said that women studying in higher education should have children. Thirty-two (35.96%) and 41 (46.07%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that women studying in higher education should not have children. Other respondents: two (2.25%) and seven (7.87%) responded strongly agreed and agreed respectively. In other words, they believe that women studying in higher education should not have children. Apart from the above respondents, another seven (7.87%) were undecided. Interestingly the number of 73 out of total respondents affirms that women studying in higher education should have children. This sounds really interesting as some married women often complain of maital responsibilities which taking care of the children is part of.

**Table 5.21:** Women students in higher education are not able to study at home

V23	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	6	6.74	6	6.74
2	14	15.73	20	22.47
3	7	7.87	27	30.34
4	43	48.31	70	78.65
5	19	21.35	89	100.00

V23 represents statement/question

Six respondents (6.74%) strong agreed and 14 (15.73%) agreed that women in higher education are not able to study at home. Apart from these respondents, 43 (48.31%) strongly disagreed and 19 (21.35%) merely disagreed that women students in higher education are not able to study at home. They maintain that women students in higher education are able to study at home. Another seven respondents (7.87%) were undecided. This suggest that reasonably high number of women students are not able to study at home yet they insist that women students in higher education should have children (See V22 above) that could possibly be one of the responsibility or reason for their inability to study at home.

**Table 5.22:** Women students in higher education are more interested in the certificate itself than in grade points.

V24	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	13	14.77	13	14.77
2	29	32.95	42	47.73
3	9	10.23	51	57.95
4	25	28.41	76	86.36
5	12	13.64	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V24 represents statement/question

Thirteen (14.77%) and 29 (32.95%) respondents agreed and disagreed respectively. However, 25 respondents (28.41%) and another 12 respondents (13.64%) differed in that they strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with this. It is also important to note that nine respondents (10.23%) were undecided as to their response.

**Table 5.23:** A mother in- in-law sees higher education for her daughter in-law as a waste of time.

V25	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	8	8.99	8	8.99
2	30	33.71	38	42.70
3	9	10.11	47	52.81
4	34	38.20	81	91.01
5	8	8.99	89	100.00

V25 represents statement/question

A total of 38 respondents (42.69%) supported the statement that a mother in-law sees higher education for her daughter-in-law as a waste of time. Among the 38 respondents, eight (8.99%) strongly agreed and 30 (33.71%) agreed that a mother-in-law sees higher education for her daughter-in-law as being a waste of time. In contrast, 34 respondents (38.20%) and eight (8.99%) responded that a mother-in-law does not see higher education for her daughter-in-law as a waste of time. Meanwhile, nine other respondents (10.11%) were undecided).

**Table 5.24:** A mother-in-law sees higher education for her daughter-in-law as a waste of her son's money.

V26	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	14	15.73	14	15.73
2	32	35.96	46	51.69
3	11	12.36	57	64.04
4	22	24.72	79	88.76
5	10	11.24	89	100.00

V26 represents statement/question

With respect to the above questionstatement, 14 respondents (15.73%) strongly agreed and another 32 (35.96%) agreed that a mother-in-law sees higher education for her daughter-in-law as a waste of her son's money. In contrast, 22 respondents (24.72%) strongly disagreed and 10 (11.24%) disagreed. The frequencies for V25 (A mother in- in-

law sees higher education for her daughter in-law as a waste of time) and V26 (A mother-in-law sees higher education for her daughter-in-law as a waste of her son's money) validate each other i.e there is compatibility between the two frequencies. In short, it reveals the power of the mother-in-law in a woman's higher education pursuit and most probably her academic performance. Simply put, the mother-in-law's view is very influential on higher education of women students in higher education.

**Table 5.25:** Cultural practices in Nigeria require women to concentrate only on their home, children and husbands

V27	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	18	20.45	18	20.45
2	38	43.18	56	63.64
3	8	9.09	64	72.73
4	17	19.32	81	92.05
5	7	7.95	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V27 represents statement/question

Eighteen respondents (20.45%) strongly agreed and 38 agreed that cultural practices in Nigeria require women to concentrate only on their home, children and husbands. Eight respondents (9.09%) were undecided, however, implying that they neither agreed nor disagreed. Furthermore, 17 respondents (19.32%) strongly disagreed and seven (7.95%) disagreed that cultural practices in Nigeria require women to concentrate on their home, children and husbands.

**Table 5.26:** Cultural practices in Nigeria establish that men/males are the breadwinners of their families and therefore support men’s education and discourage women’s education.

V28	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	9	10.23	9	10.23
2	32	36.36	41	46.59
3	8	9.09	49	55.68
4	28	31.82	77	87.50
5	11	12.50	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V28 represents statement/question

All together, 41 respondents strongly agreed and agreed that cultural practices in Nigeria establish that men/males are the breadwinners of their families and therefore support men’s education and discourage women’s education. In the actual response, nine (10.23%) strongly agreed, and 32 (36.36%) agreed. Also shown on the above table are those who strongly disagreed, disagreed and undecided. Twenty-eight respondents (31.82%) strongly disagreed and 11 (12.50%) disagreed that cultural practices in Nigeria establish that men/males are the breadwinners of their families and therefore support men’s education and discourage women’s education. Eight other respondents (9.09%) were indecisive.

**Table 5.27:** Compliance and obeying cultural norms, taboos and beliefs make women better citizens.

V29	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	13	14.77	13	14.77
2	36	40.91	49	55.68
3	12	13.64	61	69.32
4	17	19.32	78	88.64
5	10	11.36	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V29 represents statement/question

Thirteen (14.77%) and 36 respondents (40.91%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that compliance and obeying cultural norms, taboos and beliefs make women better citizens. By contrast, 17 (19.32%) and 10 respondents (11.36%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the above statement. In short, this implies that they believe that compliance and obeying cultural norms, taboos and beliefs do not make women better citizens. Twelve other respondents (13.64%) were undecided. Given the responses of sampled respondents, it appears that majority of women believe that women in general should comply and obey cultural norms, taboos and beliefs. This they must do it if they want to be seen as better citizens. In the nutshell, women see compliance and obeying of cultural practice as a must for women. This view seems to corroborate their view on V28 above where they, in large number or frequency believe that men are the bread winners of the family because cultural beliefs establishes it.

**Table 5.28:** Compliance and obeying cultural norms, taboos and beliefs make women succeed in their marriage.

V30	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	16	18.18	16	18.18
2	39	44.32	55	62.50
3	11	12.50	66	75.00
4	14	15.91	80	90.91
5	8	9.09	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V30 represents statement/question

Sixteen respondents (18.18%) strongly agreed, and 39 respondents (44.32%) agreed that compliance and obeying cultural norms, taboos and beliefs make women succeed in their marriage. In total, 55 respondents (61.79%) out of the total 89 respondents support or agree with the above statement/question. Meanwhile, 11 other respondents (12.50%) neither agreed/strongly agreed nor disagreed/disagreed. Those who strongly disagreed numbered 14 (15.91%) while eight other respondents (9.09%) disagreed. In other words, 22 respondents (24.71%) disagreed with the above statement/question. A reasonably

number of women believe that being a successful citizen begins at home. For married women to be successful citizens their marriage must be successful and they link the success of their marriage to the compliance and obedience to cultural norms, taboos and beliefs given their responses in V28, V29 and V30.

**Table 5.29:** Culture and tradition are formulated by men and implemented mainly through the co-operation of aged women to prevent women from liberation and empowerment.

V31	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	5	5.81	5	5.81
2	29	33.72	34	39.53
3	29	33.72	63	73.26
4	17	19.77	80	93.02
5	6	6.98	86	100.00
Frequency Missing = 3				

V31 represents statement/question

Thirty-four of a total of 88 respondents supported the above statement. In short, five (5.81%) strongly agreed and 29 (33.72%) agreed with the above statement. Other respondents: 17 (19.77%) and six (6.98%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the above statement. A relatively high number of respondents, 29 (33.72%), was undecided. The statistics is very important especially when I relate it to my experience. Earlier in this study when I reviewed the literature in relation to my my rational I noted that culture and tradition are formulated by men and implemented mainly through the co-operation of aged women to prevent women from liberation and empowerment. Given the number of respondents who agreed and those who disagreed with the above statement, it is logical to say that ‘women are women’s problem’ because the literature regard culture and tradition as a problem to women’s liberation and empowerment.



**Table 5.30:** Women in higher education should cook and clean the house before and after classes.

V32	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	23	26.14	23	26.14
2	50	56.82	73	82.95
3	3	3.41	76	86.36
4	10	11.36	86	97.73
5	2	2.27	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V32 represents statement/question

Twenty-three respondents (26.14%) strongly agreed and another 50 respondents (56.82%) agreed with the above statement. This means that these women believe that women in higher education should cook and clean the house before and after classes. Some respondents had different opinions, however. Ten (11.36%) and two (2.27%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the above statement. For them women in higher education do not have to cook and clean the house before and after classes. Only three respondents (3.41%) were indecisive on this issue. There is the possibility as shown by the sampled respondents' responses here that cooking and cleaning the house is a marital responsibility hence a cultural norm and belief that women must comply with, and obey in order for them to be successful in their marriage and be seen as good citizens (see V28, V29 and V30).

**Table 5.31:** Fathers and husbands should help with housework if women are studying in higher education.

V33	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	20	22.73	20	22.73
2	53	60.23	73	82.95
3	4	4.55	77	87.50
4	8	9.09	85	96.59
5	3	3.41	88	100.00
Frequency Missing = 1				

V33 represents statement/question

With respect to the above statement, 20 (22.73%) strongly agreed and 53 (60.23%) agreed, a total of 73 respondents. Of the others respondents, eight (9.09%) strongly disagreed with the statement while three (3.41%) disagreed. Apart from these responses, four respondents response were undecided. Although, housework for men, fathers and husbands is not culturally acceptable or permitted. But the responses of suggest that fathers and husbands should help with housework if women better still their wives are studying in higher education. There is the possibility that women will enjoy studying and their academic performance improved if husbands for married women students and fathers for single women students help with houseworks.

**Table 5.32:** Cultural practices affect married women students' academic performance more than single women students' academic performance in higher education.

V34	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	12	13.79	12	13.79
2	37	42.53	49	56.32
3	18	20.69	67	77.01
4	15	17.24	82	94.25
5	5	5.75	87	100.00
Frequency Missing = 2				

V34 represents statement/question

Here, 12 (13.79%) and 37 respondents (42.53%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the above statement/question. By interpretation, they said that cultural practices affect married women students' academic performance more than that of single women. In short, 49 respondents (55.68%) out of a total of 88 affirmed that the above statement is true. Despite these responses, the table also reveals that 20 respondents said that the above statement is not true. Fifteen of these (17.24%) strongly disagreed and the other five (5.75%) disagreed. Respondents whose response was "undecided" numbered 18 (20.69%). Over Fifty percent of sampled respondents both married and single women agreed that Cultural practices affect married women students' academic performance more than single women students' academic performance in higher education. Compliance and obeying cultural practices, the view of the mother-in-law, taking care of children, cooking and cleaning the home before and after classes, courses offered in higher education, not considering academic performance to be a top priority amongst others mentioned above is likely to be chiefly responsible.

**Table 5.33:** Should married women obtain higher education qualifications?

V35	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	79	100.00	79	100.00
Frequency Missing = 10				

V35 represents statement/question

Seventy-nine respondents responded to the above question. All of them (100%) strongly agreed that married women should obtain higher education qualifications. The reasons given include: Women need higher education for children/family togetherness, for societal/nation building, to have a say at home, executing or exercising their rights; Knowledge advancing purposes, and career prospects/earning more income. Most respondents identified career prospects and children/family togetherness as the reason why married women need higher education.

**Table 5.34:** Cultural practice should be upset/retained

V36	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	10	43.48	10	43.48
2	13	56.52	23	100.00
Frequency Missing = 66				

V36 represents statement/question

Table 5.35 shows that 23 respondents support the retaining of cultural practices. In their responses, 10 of them (43.48%) strongly agreed while 13 (56.52%) agreed. The remaining 66 respondents (missing frequency) did not respond to the question. Even at these complains of women against cultural practices with reference to their academic performance in higher education, they emphasis given the high responses of sampled respondents who are of the opinion that cultural practices should not change but retain. Their reasons may include the belief that cultural practices make women better citizens and successful in their marriage.

**Table 5.35:** Cultural practices in Nigeria should be changed.

V37	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
1	26	55.32	26	55.32
2	6	12.77	32	68.09
3	15	31.91	47	100.00
Frequency Missing = 42				

V37 represents statement/question

Twenty-six respondents (55.32%) strongly agree and another six (12.77%) agreed that cultural practices should be changed. The other respondents were undecided. This would seem to imply that, at the time of questionnaire completion, they were indecisive. The responses here confirm V36 above the women support that cultural practices should not be changed.

**Table 5.36:** Comments on areas not addressed in questionnaire

V38	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	
			Frequency	Percent
Frequency Missing = 89				

V38 represents statement/question

The above table is blank. The missing frequency is 89. This implies that the respondents found the questionnaire to be satisfactory. In my own words, they regard the questionnaire as being well constructed.

### 5.3 Testing hypothesis 1

From the above frequency outputs, responses on cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education were gathered separately and shown in different tables. These tables are given below.

**Table 5.37:** Responses regarding cultural practice

Questions	SA	A	UD	D	SD
V25	8	30	9	34	8
V26	14	32	11	22	10
V27	18	38	8	17	7
V28	9	32	8	28	11
V29	13	36	12	17	10
V30	16	39	11	14	8
V31	5	29	29	17	6
V32	23	50	3	10	2
V33	20	53	4	8	3
V34	12	37	18	15	5

Key:

SA = strongly agreed

A = Agreed

UD = Undecided

SD = strongly disagreed

D = Disagreed

**Table 5.38:** Responses regarding academic performance

Questions	SA	A	UD	SD	D
V15	17	42	8	15	5
V16	6	34	17	28	3
V17	7	12	9	4	13
V18	20	35	1	2	9
V19	30	42	4	10	22
V20	21	44	8	10	5
V21	18	51	8	9	1
V22	2	7	7	32	41
V23	6	14	7	43	19
V24	13	29	9	25	12

**Table 5.39:** Collapsing extreme and eradication of undecided options/responses on cultural practice.

Questions	A	D
V25	160	76
V26	198	54
V27	242	41
V28	173	67
V29	209	44
V30	236	36
V31	141	40
V32	315	22
V33	312	19
V34	208	35

Note: The undecided option/response was eliminated, i.e. not used or considered for statistical computation on the grounds that the researcher does not consider it as a substantive response, but as good as no response. In this study, the researcher is only interested in working with definite responses such as agree, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree. To do this, strongly agreed is added to agreed to obtain A (agreed) and strongly disagreed added to disagreed to obtain D as shown on tables 5.40 and 5.41.

**Table 5.40:** Collapsing extreme and eradication of undecided option/responses on academic performance

Questions	A	D
V15	253	35
V16	166	59
V17	83	105
V18	240	53
V19	318	22
V20	281	25
V21	294	19
V22	38	105
V23	86	105
V24	181	62

Note: The table above on collapsing extreme and eradication of undecided option/response was converted to X, Y, X<sup>2</sup>, Y<sup>2</sup>, XY variables to suite statistical purpose i.e Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (see Appendix B). Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to test hypothesis 1 stated in null form that there is a significant relationship between cultural practices and academic performance.

Pearson product moment correlation coefficient(r)

$$\begin{aligned}
 r &= \frac{N \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{(N \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(N \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}} \\
 &= \frac{20(408,441) - (2,628)(2,530)}{\sqrt{(20(534,152) - (2,628)^2)(20(510,080) - (2,530)^2)}} \\
 &= \frac{8,168,820 - 6,648,840}{\sqrt{(10,683,040 - 6,906,384)(10,201,600 - 6,400,900)}} \\
 &= \frac{1,519,980}{\sqrt{(3,776,656)(3,800,700)}}
 \end{aligned}$$

$$= \frac{1,519,980}{\sqrt{1,435,393,646}}$$

$$= \frac{1,519,980}{3,788,659}$$

$$r = 0.4012$$

## 5.4 Decision

Based on the result of the correlation, the null hypothesis (HO1) is not upheld. The analysis of the data revealed that the relationship is significant at 0.40. Thus, the hypothesis should be rejected. This is because the correlation co-efficient is less than 1. This implies that there is a significant relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education.

## 5.5 Testing hypothesis 2

- Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students at year 1 and year 2 of their study.

**Table 5.41:** Grade point accumulated of married women students for year 1 and year 2 of their study.

CGPA		G	G <sup>2</sup>
YEAR 1	YEAR 2		
3.0	3.04	0.04	1.6
0.0	2.34	2.34	5.4756
3.0	1.80	-1.2	-1.44
2.0	2.81	0.81	0.6561
0.0	1.16	1.16	1.3456
2.37	2.37	0	0



The table above shows the academic grade point of six married women students of Adeniran Ogunsanya college of Education who were in year 3 of their study as at the time this study was carried out. The students whose cumulative grade point accumulated (CGPA) appear on the above table were the students who took part in the focus group conversation and interview protocol as research participants.

The Grade points accumulated are the academic scores representing the academic results of students for an academic session. An academic session in Nigerian higher education is made up of two semesters – Rain semester and harmattan semester. The grade point is structured in a way that 5.0 is the maximum and 0.0 is the least. For each semester, Examination marks and continuous assessments marks are added together to get a certain percentage for each course. Thereafter, the percentages are then converted to five point maximum grade point. Having done this for all the courses of the student(s), an overall average is then computed. The computed or arrived average which the maximum will be 5.0 becomes the grade point of the student for the semester. Sessional grade point i.e the academic year cumulative grade point accumulated (CGPA) will simply be grade points for two semesters (added) divided by two. The year's academic cumulative grade point accumulated is what (results) appears on the table above as YEAR 1 (CGPA) and YEAR 2 (CGPA). G indicates the difference between year 1 CGPA and year 2 CGPA. (See pages 51 and 52 for academic grade point interpretation). Having obtained their academic results from Adeniran Ogunsanya College of education, it was important to convert the results (CGPA) statistical formulars to enable me test the generated hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) which states that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students at year 1 and year 2 of their study.

$$\sum G = 3.15$$

$$\sum G^2 = 7.637$$

$$N = 6$$



$$t = \frac{\sum(G)}{\sqrt{\frac{N\sum G^2 - (\sum G)^2}{N-1}}}$$

$$t = \frac{3.15}{\sqrt{\frac{6(7.637) - 3.15^2}{6-1}}}$$

$$t = \frac{3.15}{\sqrt{\frac{45.822 - 9.9225}{5}}}$$

$$t = \frac{3.15}{\sqrt{\frac{35.8995}{5}}}$$

$$t = \frac{3.15}{\sqrt{7.1799}}$$

$$t = \frac{3.15}{2.6795}$$

$$t = 1.1756$$

$$Df = N - 1 = 6 - 1$$

$$= 5$$

$$\text{Alpha } \alpha = 0.05$$

## 5.6 Decision

From table 5.42, the critical value is 2.5706. Hence, the calculated value of  $t$  (1.1756) is less than the calculated table  $t$  at the 0.05 level. This implies that the difference in academic performance is not significant at that level. Therefore, I do not reject the null hypothesis but accept it.

## 5.7 Testing hypothesis 3

- Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

**Table 5.42:** Table showing the cumulative grade point of married women students in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of education for years 1 and 2.

CGPA		X CGPA	X <sup>2</sup>
YEAR 1	YEAR 2		
3.0	3.04	3.02	9.120
0.0	2.34	1.17	1.368
3.0	1.80	2.4	5.76
2.0	2.81	2.41	5.80
0.0	1.16	0.58	0.336
2.37	2.37	2.37	5.616
		11.95	28.01

**Table 5.43:** Table showing the cumulative academic grade point of single women students in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of education for years 1 and 2

CGPA		X CGPA	X <sup>2</sup>
YEAR 1	YEAR 2		
1.0	2.78	1.89	3.572
1.75	1.41	1.58	2.496
2.0	2.51	2.26	5.108
2.0	1.12	1.56	2.434
4.0	4.53	4.27	18.233
2.0	3.27	2.64	6.967
		14.2	38.81

Key:

A: refers to table 5.42 (The cumulative academic grade point of married women students in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of education for years 1 and 2.).

B: refers to table 5.43 (The cumulative academic grade point of single women students in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of education for years 1 and 2.).

A:  $\bar{X} = 1.49, s^2 = 0.842, N = 6$

B:  $\bar{X} = 2.37, s^2 = 1.040, N = 6$

Derivation of  $S^2$  of A =  $\sqrt{N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2} / N(N-1)$

$$S^2 = \frac{6 \times 28.01 - 11.95 \times 11.95}{6 \times (6-1)}$$

$$= \frac{168.06 - 142.80}{6(5)}$$

$$= \frac{25.26}{30}$$

$$S^2 = 0.842$$

Derivation of  $S^2$  for B =  $\sqrt{N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2} / N(N-1)$

$$S^2 = \frac{232.86 - 201.64}{6(5)}$$

$$S^2 = \frac{31.22}{30}$$

$$S^2 = 1.040$$

Ratio variance =  $\frac{1.040}{0.842} = 1.235$  (This is less than 4, therefore the pooled variance is

employed, see Nunez in Tredoux & Durrheim [2002:151]

$$S^2_p = \frac{(6-1)0.842 + (6-1)1.040}{6+6-2}$$

$$= \frac{4.21+5.2}{10} = \frac{9.41}{10} = 0.941$$

The square root of this is needed =  $\sqrt{0.941}$

$$= 0.970$$

Therefore, to use *t*-test statistical method to test hypothesis Ho3: the below formula is employed.

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{S_{x_1 - x_2}} = \frac{1.49 - 2.37}{0.970 \sqrt{\frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6}}} = \frac{-0.88}{0.970 \sqrt{0.333}}$$

$$= \frac{-0.88}{0.56} = -1.571$$

$$t = -1.571$$

At this point, I now test the hypothesis using this data (using two tailed test – the most inclusive option).

$$DF = n_1 + n_2 - 2$$

$$= 6+6-2 = 10$$

$$\text{Alpha } \alpha = 0.05$$

Consulted table of critical t value = 2.228

## 5.8 Decision

Since 2.228 is greater than 1.571, the null hypothesis is rejected as there is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

## 5.9 Summary of results

This chapter provided answers to the research hypotheses. The analysis of quantitative data shows the following results for hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

- Firstly, hypothesis 1 should be rejected; this means that there is a relationship between cultural practices and the academic performance of women students in higher education.
- Secondly, hypothesis 2 should be accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students at year 1 and year 2 of their study.
- Thirdly, hypothesis 3 should be rejected. In short, this means that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

## 5.10 Discussions of findings with respect to hypotheses

This section presents the findings with respect to the hypothesis of this study.

In this section, findings with respect to hypotheses are done in accordance to the null hypothesis of the study stated below:

- Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between cultural practices and academic performance of women students in higher education.
- Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students in year 1 and year 2 of the study.
- Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.

### 5.10.1 Hypothesis 1:

*There is no significant relationship between cultural practices and academic performance of women students in higher education.*

The overall response on cultural practices (section D of the questionnaire) and overall responses on academic performance (section C of the questionnaire) were used to test hypothesis 1. By overall responses, I mean the total responses to cultural practices and academic performance on questionnaire for both research sites. Statistically, I was required to distinguish between the two variables so as to be able to substitute the variables properly into the chosen statistics formula that was then intended to be used to test the hypotheses. The two variables are dependent variable and independent variable. Cultural practice is the dependent variable while academic performance is the independent variable. X and Y were used to represent the variables since I aim at knowing about the significant relationship between the two variables (cultural practices and academic performance).

To test hypothesis 1, I employed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) (see page 154).

$$r = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{(N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

$$r = 0.4012$$

Based on the decision made on hypothesis 1 (see page 155) the hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between cultural practice and academic performance of women students in higher education. The implication of this is that cultural practice can significantly influence academic performance hence it can be said to be a determining factor of the academic performance of women students studying in higher education. Further, results emanating from the tested hypothesis suggest that cultural practices should not be over looked if the academic performance of women students in higher education is to be considered a matter of interest.

### 5.10.2 Hypothesis 2

*There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students in year 1 and year 2 of their study.*

In order to test this hypothesis, I made use of the academic results collected from the institutions where the sampled participants were studying. I was able to obtain academic results of sampled participants from exams and records division in collaboration with the school of education, of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education (see attached appendix E). Unfortunately I could not get the academic results of participants who are studying at the Lagos State University even with their initial promise in writing (see attach appendix F). The ongoing strike then on campus (see page 120) was the explanation offered for the institution inability to provide the academic results but long after the strike, I called from South Africa to request for the results. It was never released to me. Leaving me with no choice, I resulted to work with the academic results I got from Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education.

The academic results of sampled participants from Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education were used to test hypothesis 2. The cumulative grade point accumulated (CGPA) for year 1 and that year 2 of the sampled participants were used (see table 5.41, 5.42 and 5.43). The data i.e grade points were further substituted into statistics formula so as to test hypothesis 2. The t-test statistics was employed.

$$t = \frac{\sum(G)}{\sqrt{\frac{N\sum G^2 - (\sum G)^2}{N-1}}}$$

t (calculated) = 1.1756 and critical value = 2.5706 at 0.05 alpha

Based on the above result and decision made (see page 157) hypothesis 2 was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students at year 1 and year 2 of their study. Furthermore, the result of the hypothesis tested suggest that there are no meaningful changes in the academic



performance of women students at year 1 and year 2 even when people like me expect their academic performance to change with a change in their year of study at higher education institution. Ideally, it is expected in the second year that the academic performance of women students to improve given the fact that they will be more familiar with higher education settings, environment and academic tasks as they move upward or spend more years in higher education institutions.

### 5.10.3 Hypothesis 3

*There is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education.*

In an attempt to test and draw findings for hypothesis 3, the academic results of married women student participants collected and used in hypothesis 2 was compared to the academic results of single women student participants which was in the same way collected and shown on table 5.42 and 5.43 (see page 158). Having presented the academic results of the sampled participants for year 1 and year 2, the difference in respective category of sampled participants was obtained by subtracting the academic results (CGPA) of year 1 from year 2. This was done for each participant. I restate here that the academic results used for comparison was only that of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. The academic results in form of CGPA were substituted into appropriate t-test statistics formula to enable the researcher to test the hypothesis. The below t-test was employed (see page 160).

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{S \sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}}}$$

$$t = -1.571$$

Based on the above results and decision made (see page 160), the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of married women students

and single women students in higher education was rejected on the ground that the critical value of  $t$  2.228 (see page 160) is greater than  $-1.571$ , calculated value of  $t$ . This means that there is a significant difference between the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education. This suggest given result of the hypothesis that the academic performance of married women students and single women students in higher education are not on par. Having said this, I was prompted to take a further and critical look at table 5.42 and 5.43 where the results of both married and single women student participants are shown. At a glance there is an obvious difference in academic results (CGPA) of participants, testing the hypothesis reveals the significant difference in academic performance of married and single participants, and a thorough individual participant result view indicate that the single women student results for year 2 improved on the aggregate and better. One can say that single women participants in higher education are performing better academically than married women student participants. A caution note however is that this finding is confined to women students in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education.

## 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

<b>SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT</b>	<b>DEDUCED MEANING</b>
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

<b>SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT</b>	<b>DEDUCED MEANING</b>
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

<b>SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT</b>	<b>DEDUCED MEANING</b>
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.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Letter of informed consent

806 Gravelotte, 129 Troye Street  
Cnr Jorrissen Street Sunnyside  
Pretoria, South Africa  
10<sup>th</sup> January, 2009

To: The Respondent / Participants  
Department of Primary Education Studies  
Faculty of Education  
Lagos State University Ojo  
Lagos, Nigeria.

#### LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research study. The focus of my study is to understand and explain the academic performance of married women students in higher education in Nigeria. More specifically I would like to understand whether the cultural context in which married women study has any discernable link to their academic performance. The research is undertaken as partial fulfillment for my doctoral studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

I would like to conduct a **survey** of married women students in year 3 in the Department of Primary Education Studies at your institution. This would mean that you will be requested to respond to a questionnaire. No personal details will be required on the questionnaire. I am selecting students in year 3 because their academic results for year 1 and year 2 would make it possible for me to compare two academic sessions and so help

me to understand and to explain their academic performance in relation to the research questions.

As a follow up to the questionnaire I would also like to **interview** you. The interview will last approximately one hour. In accordance with cultural practice an older woman will be present, as a third party, at the interview. She will not be from the area in which your institution is based and is unlikely to know you. However, you will have the space to terminate the interview at any time or to not respond to a particular question.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality of all participants is assured. No name(s) or any other data that could possibly identify participants will be used in the dissertation. Transcripts of interviews will be made available to you for comment before it is used.

Attached is a consent form. Should you be willing to participate in this study, please read and sign the consent form.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any question(s) or concerns. My contact details are:

Phone: +27763594537 or 08024466923

Email: [cpotokri@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cpotokri@yahoo.co.uk)

I look forward to working with you.

Yours faithfully,

.....

Potokri. O. Collins

## CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to participate in this research project on the academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education.

I understand that I can withdraw at any time from the research as a participant.

I have received the contact details of the researcher should I need to speak about any issues which may arise from the research/study.

I understand that my response will be anonymous and will remain entirely confidential.

.....

Respondent / Participant sign

## Appendix B: Frequencies output from questionnaire

Mr OC Potokri - Research Project - T08079 - OOP9001 -

OO438224

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(P01-R1): PROC PRINT of data set STUDENTS from data file

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Mr OC Potokri - Research Project - T08079 - OOP9001 -

OO438224

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(P01-R1): PROC PRINT of data set STUDENTS from data file

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82 160 21 1 03 2 2 . 2 . 4 2 4 5 3 2 3 4 2 2 2 3 4 2 4 4 2 2 3 3 3 4 2 2  
. 01 . 02 . . .

83 161 21 1 03 2 2 2 2 2 5 5 5 5 2 4 4 4 2 4 4 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 3 3 4 2 2  
3 01 . 03 . . .

84 162 27 2 03 2 2 4 5 4 . 4 5 4 2 1 3 2 4 4 2 2 4 5 4 2 2 1 3 4 5 4 2 2  
3 01 . . . . .

85 163 28 1 03 2 1 1 2 1 4 2 4 4 1 1 4 2 5 5 5 4 5 5 4 4 4 1 4 2 2 3 1 4  
4 01 . 02 . . .

86 164 22 1 03 2 2 1 . 3 2 4 5 5 1 2 3 4 4 1 1 2 5 5 2 3 3 2 2 2 2 3 2 2  
3 01 . 01 . . .

87 165 24 2 03 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 2 4 2 2 2 2 4 4 2 4 4 2 4 4 3 3 3 2 2  
4 01 . 01 . . .

88 166 23 1 03 1 2 2 1 2 3 3 3 4 4 4 4 3 1 4 2 2 3 4 3 2 2 4 4 2 2 2 2 2  
2 . . . . .

89 167 25 2 03 1 2 1 2 4 3 3 3 5 2 2 3 4 4 2 2 2 5 3 3 4 3 4 5 4 3 3 2 1  
4 01 . 03 . . .

### Appendix C: Statistical computation table

	X	Y	X <sup>2</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>	XY
1	160	253	25600	64009	40480
2	198	166	39204	27556	32868
3	242	83	58564	6889	20086
4	173	240	29929	57600	41520
5	209	318	43681	101124	66462
6	236	281	55696	78961	66316
7	141	294	19881	86436	41454
8	315	38	99225	1444	11970
9	312	86	97344	7396	26832
10	208	181	43264	32761	37648
11	76	35	5776	1225	2660
12	54	59	2916	3481	3186
13	41	105	1681	11025	4305
14	67	53	4489	2809	3551
15	44	22	1936	484	968
16	36	25	1296	625	900
17	40	19	1600	361	760
18	22	105	484	11025	2310
19	19	105	361	11025	1995
20	35	62	1225	3844	2170
Total	2628	2530	534152	510080	408441

For the value of X and Y to be obtained, the points for response, i.e. SA (5 points), A (4 points), UD (3 points), D (2 points), SD (1 point) are made use of, i.e. multiplied to obtain the responses.

X = represents responses on cultural practices

Y = represents responses on academic performance



Appendix D: Attorney's attestation letter



**BASSEY EKPO & CO.**

*Barristers & Solicitors*

ADDRESS:  
23, Bank Road,  
Ijanikin (Cele B/Stop)  
Badagry Exp.Way, Lagos.  
Tel: 08037128961.

Ref: BEC/UPMPD/01/09 ..... Your Ref: ..... Date 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 .....

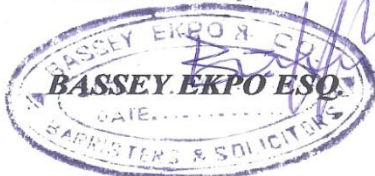
The Head of Department,  
Management and Policy Studies,  
Groenkloof Campus,  
University of Pretoria,  
South Africa.

Sir,

**ATTORNEY'S ATTESTATION**

1. We hereby state that the bearer, **Onoriode Collins Potokri** who is studying Management and Policy Studies (PhD) in your Institution is well known to us. The said student has been our client for about 10years.
2. We understand that he is presently researching on the topic "The Academic Performance of Married Women Students in Nigeria Higher Education".
3. As a researcher, the bearer has been made to understand and is now aware and conversant with the law as it relates to right of privacy as enshrined in Section 37 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the numerous Intellectual Property Laws of the Federation.
4. The bearer has also been made to understand that the right of privacy is the basis of all research ethics and has been made a requirement for research by the National University of Commission and other bodies that regulate standards in Colleges of Education, Polytechnic and Monotechnics in Nigeria.
5. We assure your Institution that the bearer will adhere strictly to all the rules and regulations governing anonymity and confidentiality in his undertaking. He will also not misrepresent and or hide information, which should be disclosed to research Participants or Respondents.
6. The bearer will ensure that the research participants and respondents will verify their Data/Information before it will be finally used.
7. That the bearer will ensure that the Participants/Respondents will not be forced into participating or continuing in the research neither will they be exposed to any risk.

Yours faithfully,





## Appendix E: Letter of permission from Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Lagos Nigeria



### ADENIRAN OGUNSANYA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

OTTO/JANIKIN, KILOMETER 30, BADAGRY EXPRESSWAY

PROVOST: **A. O. K NOAH** B.Ed., M.Ed., Ph.D., MNAE.

REGISTRAR: **BOLA S. DISU** B.Sc., MCA (Ibadan), MBA (LASU).

P.M.B. 007  
FESTAC TOWN  
LAGOS.

Jur Ref: AUCOE/ACAD/38

January 16, 2009

four Ref: .....

Date: .....

Mr. Potokri O. Collins,  
+27763594537  
806 Gravelotto Flat,  
Troye Street Cnr Jorrisen Street,  
Sunny Side Pretoria,  
South Africa.

Dear Sir,

**PERMISSION TO USE ADENIRAN OGUNSANYA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION FOR A STUDY ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MARRIED WOMEN STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

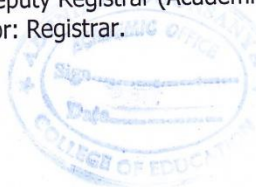
I am pleased to inform you that the Management of the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education has approved your request to conduct your Ph.D Research Project in the College.

I am by this letter assuring you that the School will make available to you all the relevant materials and resources towards an effective research performance.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

**T. A. Uthman**  
Deputy Registrar (Academics)  
For: Registrar.





## Appendix F: Letter of permission from Lagos State University



### Lagos State University Office of the Director, School of Part-Time Studies ETF Building, Badagry Expressway, Ojo,

P. M. B. 0001 Festac, Lagos State, Nigeria. Tel: 234-1-7923540, 234-1-8547019, 234-1-8547270 Cables: LASU  
E-mail: [sptsdirector@lasunigeria.org](mailto:sptsdirector@lasunigeria.org), Website: [www.lasunigeria.org](http://www.lasunigeria.org)

Director: **Olaide A. Adedokun** Bsc (UNN) Msc (Ib.) PH.D (Lag.); . FDAN. FSS.

Our Ref: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Ref: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

LASU/ES/S/136

24th March, 2009

Chief M.O. Potokri  
1, Adams Street  
Opposite Police Station  
Ijanikin

Dear Sir,

**RE: APPLICATION FOR USE OF YOUR REPUTABLE UNIVERSITY FOR  
STUDY ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MARRIED WOMEN  
STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Your application dated 2nd March 2009, forwarded to the University on behalf of your son Mr. Collins Onoriode Potokri, refers please.

I am directed to inform you that the Faculty of Education has approved your son's request to conduct his research in the University.

Yours faithfully,

**A.A. Adesunkanmi (Mrs)**  
Secretary, External System

## Appendix G: Interview protocol/research questions

# Interview Protocol: The Academic Performance of Married Women Students in Nigerian Higher Education.

Time of Interview:

Interviewee:

Date:

Place:

Kindly respond to the below questions

Questions:

1. Why did you choose to study in higher education institution?

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---

---

2. Are you married?

---

3. What support do you get from your parents (if any)?

---

---

---

---

---



4. What support do you get from your husband (if any)?

---

---

---

---

5. What would you like them (either your parents or husband) to do for you?

---

---

---

---

6. What are the challenges you face in your studies?

---

---

---

---

7. Can it be true or false that cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students in higher education?

---

8. How do cultural practices affect the academic performance of women students in higher education?

---

---

---

---

9. Which category of women students (single or married) in higher education do cultural practices affect most?

---



10. Which cultural practice affects you most as a woman student in higher education?

---

---

---

11. As a woman student studying in higher education institution, are you satisfied with your present academic performance?

---

12. Give reason(s) for your answer/opinion in question 11?

---

---

---

---

13. Between married women students and single women students in higher education, which do you think perform better academically?

---

14. Give reason(s) for your answer or opinion in question 13?

---

---

---

---

15. Is there anything that I have not asked that you would like to share with me?

---

---

---

---



16. Would you like to ask me any question?

---

---

---

---

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS INTERVIEW**

## Appendix H: Research assistance declaration letter (1)

[olufemilovetremi@yahoo.com](mailto:olufemilovetremi@yahoo.com)

3 Eburn Olejede Street  
Badagry Expressway, Lagos.  
20<sup>th</sup> June, 2009.

To: Mr. Potokri O. Collins  
Dept. of Management and Policy Studies  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa.

Sir,

### **RESEARCH ASSISTANCE DECLARATION**

I Mrs. Loveth R. Olufemi, a B.SC (Psychology) holder, residing at the above address and presently working with tenderland college, Coker Orile Lagos State, as the College's counselor hereby agree to be a research assistance to Mr. Potokri O. Collins, a PhD student of the University of Pretoria South Africa.

The research title for which I will be assistance is the academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education.

I shall only be assisting the researcher at the interviewing stage of the research.

The research site or venue where I will be assisting the researcher shall be the main campus (Ojo Campus) of the Lagos State University.

Being the research assistance, my presence at the interviewing venue will be to act as a witness or third party between the researcher and research participants whilst conversation takes place not as an interpreter.

My acceptance or participation in the research is voluntarily. Therefore, I am not entitle to any form of remuneration.

Through this medium, I declare that I will abide or conform to confidentiality as stipulated by the national university commission and the privacy act of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria.

I will not hesitate to contact the researcher if I have any question(s) or concerns.

I look forward working with you.

Yours sincerely,

Olufemi, L. R

## Appendix I: Research assistance declaration letter (2)

chineyrobert@yahoo.com  
No 67 Hasssan Street Era  
Badagry Expressway, Lagos  
22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2009

To: Mr. Potokri O. Collins  
Dept. of Management and Policy Studies  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa.

Sir,

### RESEARCH ASSISTANCE DECLARATION

I Mrs. Chineyere Roberts, a B.SC/ED (Computer Science/ Mathematics) holder, residing at the above address and presently working with New Era College, Ojo Barracks Badagry Expressway Lagos State, as the College's mathematics teacher (Senior Secondary School) hereby agree to be a research assistance to Mr. Potokri O. Collins, a PhD student of the University of Pretoria South Africa.

The research title for which I will be assistance is the 'academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education'.

I shall only be assisting the researcher at the interviewing stage of the research.

The research site or venue where I will be assisting the researcher shall be the main campus (Otto Ijanikin) Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Ijanikin, Lagos.

Being the research assistance, my presence at the interviewing venue will be to act as a witness or third party between the researcher and research participants whilst conversation takes place not as an interpreter.

My acceptance or participation in the research is voluntarily. Therefore, I am not entitle to any form of remuneration.

Through this medium, I declare that I will abide or conform to confidentiality as stipulated by the national university commission and the privacy act of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria.

I will not hesitate to contact the researcher if I have any question(s) or concerns.

I look forward working with you.

Yours sincerely,

Roberts Chineyere

## Appendix J: Table of interviewees

### Focus Group: 1

**Institution: Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education**

<b>Name (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>
Lola	Married
Funmilayo	Married
Ejiro	Married
Ronke	Single
Amaka	Single
Slyvia	Single

### Focus Group: 2

**Institution: Lagos State University**

<b>Name (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>
Iyang	Married
Zainab	Married
Mummy Bola	Married
Evelyn	Single
Efe	Single
Jumoke	Single



## Appendix K: Ethics clearance certificate



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

**DEPARTMENT**

**DATE CONSIDERED**

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**

EM09/08/03

PhD: Education Management and Policy studies  
The Academic Performance of Married Women Students in Nigerian  
Higher Education

Potokri O.C

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

27 July 2010

APPROVED

Please note:

*For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

*For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE** Prof L Ebersohn

**DATE**

27 July 2010

**CC**

Prof Pillay  
Ms Jeannie Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.





## Appendix L: Questionnaire

**QUESTIONNAIRE:** The academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher Education

Respondent

*Please answer each question by circling an appropriate number in a shaded box or by clearly writing your answer in the shaded space provided*

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

1. What is your age (in completed years)?

--

2. What is your marital status?

Single	1
Married	2

3. What is your year of academic study?

--

**SECTION B: ATTITUDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

4. Please read each statement below and circle a number in a shaded box to indicate your answer

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Women need higher education.	1	2	3	4	5
Women need higher education to be employed.	1	2	3	4	5
Women need higher education to have a career.	1	2	3	4	5
Married women need higher education.	1	2	3	4	5
Women need higher education to have a successful marriage.	1	2	3	4	5
Women in Nigeria have a negative attitude towards higher education	1	2	3	4	5
Women students in higher education should be financially supported only by their husbands.	1	2	3	4	5
Women students in higher education should be financially supported only by their parents.	1	2	3	4	5
The dream of women is to become housewives and mothers rather than become higher education students or graduates.	1	2	3	4	5
The courses offered at higher institutions can influence the attitude of married women towards higher education.	1	2	3	4	5

For office use

V1    1

V2   4

V3  6

V4   7

V5  9

V6  10

V7  11

V8  12

V9  13

V10  14

V11  15

V12  16

V13  17

V14  18

**Appendix M: Letter from the editor**

*Alexa Barnby*  
*Language Specialist*

---

Editing, copywriting, indexing, formatting, translation

---

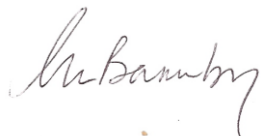
Mobile: 071 872 1334  
Tel: 012 361 6347  
Fax: 086 610 9420

barnbak@unisa.ac.za

To whom it may concern

This is to verify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, ID No. 510509 0097 080, have edited Collins Potokri's PhD thesis entitled 'The academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education' for language and technical aspects. The onus is, however, on the student to make the changes suggested and to effect the corrections.

Yours sincerely



Alexa Barnby



## Appendix N: Formatting of document

*Gerry Barnby*  
*Formatting Specialist*

---

Editing, copywriting, indexing, formatting, translation

---

Mobile: 083 340 4679  
Tel: 012 361 6347  
Fax: 086 610 9420

[gerrybarnby@gmail.com](mailto:gerrybarnby@gmail.com)

To whom it may concern

This is to verify that I, Gerald Barnby, ID No. 450822 501 5187, have electronically formatted Collins Potokri's PhD thesis entitled 'The academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education'. The onus is, however, on the student to ensure correctness of work and content.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerry Barnby".

Gerry Barnby