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### Interrogating Access and Society as Factors Limiting Literacy Potentials Among the Female Gender in Ondo Area

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#### Abstract

This Paper examines the importance of education in the society. It sees education as one of the social factors whereby gender parity is reflected worldwide (Aemiro, 2018). In Nigeria, as in many other countries, the educational outcomes of students are influenced by a myriad of factors, and there is growing recognition of the need to address these factors to enhance academic performance. It goes further to assert the importance of the female gender in education by recognizing educational disparity as reflective of social misnomer. The educational achievement of female students in Nigeria, remains a significant concern due to a variety of influencing factors that impact their academic performance. . According to Kassa (2016), in Nigeria, access to education is more readily available to male gender more than females at all levels thus making the country one of the developing countries with low females' performances in education. Evidence shows that the number of female

students in primary, secondary and higher education is not equal to that of male students. The following factors were recognized as contributing to low female education in Nigeria; Personality related factor, academic factor, social factor, institutional factor and economic factor. After enumerating the derivable benefits of enhanced female education, the study concluded that socio-cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the educational achievement of female students by highlighting the importance of family support, with many agreeing that it encourages girls to pursue their education. However, cultural expectations that prioritize education for male children over female children create disparities. Additionally, societal norms that discourage girls from seeking higher education and peer pressure were identified as negative influences on academic achievement.

**Keywords:** Access, Gender Parity, Social Misnomer, Educational Outcome

#### Introduction

##### Background to the Study

Education is essential to the proper functioning and advancement of socio-economic growth of any nation. It is one of the social factors whereby gender disparity is reflected worldwide (Aemiro, 2018) <sup>[4]</sup>. Gender disparity in education remains a distant prospect in 54 countries including 16 countries in sub-saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2015) <sup>[56]</sup>. Educational achievement is a crucial determinant of individual and societal progress. In Nigeria, as in many other countries, the educational outcomes of students are influenced by a myriad of factors, and there is growing recognition of the need to address these factors to enhance academic performance.

Education in Nigeria is a fundamental right enshrined in the country's constitution and is essential for national development. Despite various reforms and policies aimed at improving educational standards. disparities in educational achievement persist, particularly among different genders and regions. Female students often face unique challenges that can affect their educational outcomes, including socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors. Schools, colleges and universities have no worth without students. Students are most essential asset for any educational institute. The social and economic development of the country is directly linked with students' performance. The students' performance (academic achievement), plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leader and manpower for the country thus responsible for the country's economic and social development (Ali *et al*, 2019) <sup>[7]</sup>.

Like in many other parts of the world, in Nigeria the participation of women is low in social and economic development in general and in education in particular due to the fact that the largest proportion of women is demoted to traditional roles.

According to Kassa (2016) <sup>[31]</sup>, in Nigeria, access to education is more readily available to male gender more than females at all levels thus making the country one of the developing countries with low females' performances in education. Evidence shows that the number of female students in primary, secondary and higher education is not equal to that of male students; this low involvement is one of the basic reasons for women's underrepresented in different life calls (Kassa, 2016) <sup>[31]</sup>.

The participation and performance of girls in all primary, secondary and tertiary education levels was lower than that of boys (Dawit, 2016) <sup>[21]</sup>. Some of the challenges that females face in obtaining education are the same for males, but, in the case of females, the challenges are more difficult. While enrollment rates for girls have increased, there remains a significant gender gap in educational achievement, especially at higher levels of education. Female students often lag behind their male counterparts due to a range of socio-economic and cultural factors. Cary *et al* (2008) cited in Tadesse (2019) <sup>[52]</sup> defines academic achievement as performance on task with measures including comprehension, quality and accuracy of answers of tests, quality and accuracy of problem solving, frequency and quantity of desired outcome, level of reasoning and critical thinking, creativity, recall and retention, and transfer of tasks. The social and economic development of the country is directly linked with students' academic performance.

### Statement of Problems

The educational achievement of female student has been recognized as one of the critical path way to promote social and economic development as well as a means to enhance women's in development efforts effectively and meaningfully. The educational achievement of female students in Nigeria, remains a significant concern due to a variety of influencing factors that impact their academic performance. Despite efforts by the Nigerian government and various stakeholders to promote educational equity, female students in this region continue to face challenges that hinder their academic success. These challenges are multifaceted, involving socio-cultural, economic, institutional, and familial dimensions. Traditional gender roles and cultural norms often prioritize male education over female education. In some communities, deeply ingrained beliefs perpetuate the notion that educating girls is less valuable than educating boys. This cultural bias can lead to lower expectations for female students and discourage them from pursuing higher levels of education.

Also, economic hardship is a significant barrier to educational achievement. Families with limited financial resources may struggle to afford educational materials, tuition fees, and other necessary expenses, leading to higher dropout rates among female students.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the purpose of the study;

1. What socio-cultural factors impact the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State?
2. How do economic constraints affect the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State?
3. What are challenges affecting the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State?

### Significance of the study

The results of the study would be significant for a number of reasons among which are that it would become a reference point for decision makers and educational planners to realize the socio-cultural, economic and religious factors affecting the advancement of female student and their improvement on educational achievement in the Ondo state. The research work would also serve as a source of enlightenment to parents and guardians on the values of educating the female student thereby erasing all the earlier beliefs about educating the girls. In addition it would also sensitize governments and other agencies concerned with children education in the area to be gender sensitive and ensure gender streaming in admission, award of scholarships and recruitment into various levels and positions. Thus, it would serve as a point of advocacy for the rights of the female child to education and equality in other spheres.

### Education and Gender Disparity

Education is essential to the proper functioning and advancement of socio-economic growth of any nation. It is one of the social factors whereby gender disparity is reflected worldwide (Aemiro, 2018) <sup>[4]</sup>. Gender disparity in education remains a distant prospect in 54 countries including 16 countries in sub-saharan Africa. Like in many other parts of the world, in Ethiopia the participation of women is low in social and economic development in general and in education in particular due to the fact that the largest proportion of women is demoted to traditional roles. According to Kassa (2016) <sup>[31]</sup>, in Nigeria access to education is more readily available to male more than females at all levels that make the country one of the developing countries with low females' performances in education. Evidence shows that the number of female students in primary, secondary and higher education is not equal to that of male students; this low performance is one of the basic reasons for women's to be underrepresented in different (Kassa, 2016) <sup>[31]</sup>.

### Types of Education

**Formal Education:** This is generally referred to as the school type by which learning is carried out on full-time basis in classroom. It is hierarchically structured and chronologically graded formed educational system can run from literacy class up to University for technical and professional training. This system of education has a series of lessons on a set of regimented curriculum. It has a number of subjects offered to participants or learners. The performance in formal education system is usually by examinations and the learners graded passed or fail for the purpose of qualification or getting certificate and having employment to earn a living (Mango, 2023) <sup>[37]</sup>.

Thus, Formal education can be posits to be a type of education that needs large number of experts and available resources to be managed.

**Informal Education:** Is incidental learning which occurs in a situation meant for other purposes other than teaching. It is concerned with situations which could be recreational, social entertainment, ceremonial or the like. Informal Education refers to the truly life process whereby every individual life acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experiences and educative influences and resources in his or her environment from family and

neighbours from work, play or mass media (Haleem *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[26]</sup>.

It is gained incidentally and can come from a variety of sources. In system, information got informally can be educative but do not have sequential study or instruction planned into them. Many adult learning takes place through this form and has no specific objectives and the process of acquiring information does not involve any conscious determined effort. Informal education occurs in a variety of natural settings of which its daily experience is one. In a nut shell informal education is perceived to be the education that take place outside the four-walls of the schools.

**Non- Formal Education:** is the type of education that cuts across the formal and informal categorization and can be received outside school. Non-formal Education: is viewed as any organized educational activity outside the school system whether operating separately or as an identifiable learning objectives (Dell'Anna, & Marsili, 2022) <sup>[22]</sup>.

According to Wass *et al.* (2021) Non-formal education refers to all organized and systematic activity outside the conventional institutionalized chronologically graded and hierarchically structured. Non-formal education is taken to mean the type of organized out-of-school educational programmes that constitute an important contribution to the nation's total educational effort. It covers a variety of activities which go through many different names such as adult literacy, school equivalency programmes, youth training, women's clubs, works and farmers training and pre-school-day care centers.

### Female Child Education

Offorma, (2019) <sup>[41]</sup> defines female-child as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen years of age. This period is made up of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stage of development. The female-child is seen as a young female person, who would eventually grow into a woman and marry. She is conditional to look after the young ones, the home and kitchen. Female child education is a catch-all term for a complexity of issues and debates surrounding education (primary, secondary, tertiary and health education for females (Okenmor *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[42]</sup>.

Female-child education also includes areas of gender equality, access to education and its connection to the alleviation of poverty, good governance, which are major ingredients in averting crime against women.

Afebendeugne in Ugwu (2015) <sup>[54]</sup> defines female-child education as the education that would make a female-child become aware of herself and her capacity to exploit her environment, and involves training in literacy and vocational skills to enable her become functional in the society. When maternal care is adequately provided for the female-child the aims and objectives of education will be achieved. It is however, discovered that female-child education is not easy to come by as it is usually proclaimed as many impediments stand in the way of the female-child. The rights of the female-children are always being denied and this denial leads to lack of access to education. Inaccessibility to education thus results in child labor, which deprives the female-child of her childhood potentials, dignity and joy. The resultant effect is poverty and the only key to ending poverty among women-folk, as a whole is education of the female-child because as the saying goes "catch them young" for the young female-child will grow to full woman in later years.

Hanafi (2021) <sup>[27]</sup> sees female-child education as the education geared towards the development of the total personality of the female gender in any society or nation. It also promotes the development of women and makes them active participating members of economic development of the nation. Education also helps girls to realize their potentials, thus enabling them to elevate their social status. Bukoye (2019) observed that female-child education as a right, because of the role women plays within the family and the society. Commenting on female-child education as a right, Mivanyi (2021) pointed out that one of the basic principles of child's right of the United Nation on the right of the child in 1990 together with the charter on the right and welfare of the child in 1991. However, current efforts, including national and global programs, have been to target increased enrollment of the female-child into the different levels of education in Nigeria.

Focusing on the traditional perspective of girl-child education, Hanafi (2021) <sup>[27]</sup> observed that girls, have only one function in life and that is to be a wife and mother. Here education plays little or no role in the brightening the prospect of girls in marriage. His study also revealed that the higher a girls' level of education, the lower her chances of getting married in some cultures especially in the rural areas. This is why one finds more cases of spinsterhood among educated women especially the highly educated among their less educated counterparts. Owolabi (2021) <sup>[45]</sup> reveals that most girls in their traditional culture are given out to husbands of the parent's choice without the consent of the girl. Unfortunately, she added that, these men to whom the girls of 8-14 years were betrothed were often between 50-60 years.

Various factors have been stated that affect the Educational Achievement and higher attrition rates of female students in Nigeria. For instance, the general institutional environment, the overall interaction and practice the students make with school personnel, institutional rules and regulations, sanctions, and the organizational structure. It is long noted that the relationship between students and their universities is one significant predictor of social and academic development that the structure of the university unfairly treats students based on their background (Yeshimebrat *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[61]</sup>.

### Factors Affecting the Educational Achievement of Female Students in Nigeria

#### Personality Related Factors

A number of personal related factors were put forward to explain female academic weakness and the high attrition rate of female students. The other most important factor is tension and fear of failure. Most females fear that they are incapable of achieving good mark despite having an effort to score. As a result, they come with serious tension that is very danger to study well.

#### Institutional Factors

Schools and universities because of their biased treatments and some other external factors become centers of gender disparity (Feldman, 2020). Thus, there are also university related factors that contributes for the low academic performance of female students. Some of these are:

Lack of proper reading place where they can use freely, The influence of male students/peer pressure, The influence from male teachers and other staff members and youth from surrounding environment According to ministry of

education Gender office report, 2009 stereotypes in higher institutions, based on students' characteristics serve as an important avenue in affecting females' academic performance. Eliminating stereotypical attitudes towards various groups that are represented in the classroom is a recognized avenue to increase females' academic performance and there by minimize their attrition rate in higher institutions.

In addition, the study conducted by Haramya University in 2014 prevailed that University students are more vulnerable to wider and risky sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and HIVAIDS problems due to new environment with poor protection, age and the need to explore life, peer pressure and absence of proactive programs. The study has portrayed that a number of female students were victims of sexual harassments or attempted sexual assault per year and in nearly most cases it was by an acquaintance, based on ethnicity, coming from same place, study group, and rarely outside of the campus by students. The types of sexual harassments include: Showing sexually appealing writings and magazines, Telling sex related jokes to female students without their consent, Disseminating female students' photographs, Sending sex related messages using electronic instruments, Touching female students' body during practical works and laboratory training, Assigning and using sex related nick names to female students, Harassing females through continuously following their activities, Hiding learning materials and forcing female students for sexual practice (Asresash *et al.*, 2022).

### Academic Factors

First of all, the main difference between male and female students on their perception of the school climate is statistically significant in favor of males. That is, male students perceived that the school climate is more conducive than their female counters. Furthermore, the comparison of the means of female and male students in the support they receive from peers and teachers has revealed that females are in the disadvantageous position (Yeshimebrat Mersha *et al.* 2015) [61].

Thus, on the basis of my experience and different studies, the following are some of academic related factors for the low education achievement of female students in higher education: Difficulty of education, Poor high school performance/previous background, Language difficulty and Unable to fit with new way of delivery of learning etc.

When female students enjoy higher education they face new way of delivery of learning/environment which largely gives emphasis for independent activities and tasks. Here the first challenge female students face is that how to fit their previous educational background with this new environment. When I observe in the previous grades the quality or/and competence of female students is relatively low. Thus, females face serious challenges while they enjoy higher education. In addition, females also lack competence on the medium of instruction that is English. In fact, this problem is true for all students but females lack confidence to speak, write and understand English.

### Economic Factors

In addition to the above factors there are also economic related factors that affect academic performance of female students in higher education. For instance, a number of female students face shortage of money to support

themselves for different activities. I remember a number of students who lack money to copy the materials given by teachers when I was a student, and it could have psychological impact too. Therefore, since many of the students are from the poor family economical related factor also played its own role for the low academic performance of female students in higher institutions. Despite the existence of various factors which affect the academic performance of female students in higher education but personal related factors such as lack of self-confidence, lack of adequate effort and carelessness constitute the major ones. In addition to the personal problems, poor educational background, lack of support from teachers' sexual harassment, absence of concerned people in higher education about female students' problems and absence of adequate counseling services are also the other crucial factors.

### The Impact of Gender Disparity on the Education Achievement of Female Student in Nigeria

Gender disparity in education has far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and societies. It hinders social and economic development, perpetuates inequality, and limits individuals' opportunities.

When discussing the impact of gender disparity in education, it is crucial to consider its effects on economic development. The exclusion of females from educational opportunities results in a significant loss of human capital. Societies are wasting their potential and talent by denying girls access to education. This hampers economic growth and perpetuates a cycle of poverty and inequality.

Investing in girls' education has proven to yield positive economic outcomes. Providing girls with equal educational opportunities reduces poverty, improved labor force participation, and increased productivity. Educated women are more likely to secure higher-paying jobs, contribute to the economy through entrepreneurship, and become financially independent.

However, the impact of gender disparity in education extends beyond economic development. It also has profound effects on social development. Unequal access to education perpetuates gender norms and stereotypes, limiting opportunities for girls and women to contribute to society and participate fully in decision-making processes.

When girls are denied education, it reinforces the notion that their role is confined to domestic responsibilities and diminishes their potential to become leaders, innovators, and agents of change. This perpetuates a cycle of gender inequality and restricts the overall progress of society.

On the other hand, when girls receive an education, it has a transformative effect on society. Educated females are more likely to have healthier families, make informed choices regarding reproduction, and contribute to community development. They become empowered individuals who can challenge societal norms and advocate for gender equality.

Educated women are more likely to raise educated children. By breaking the cycle of illiteracy and ignorance, they create a ripple effect that benefits future generations. This improves the overall well-being of families and strengthens the social fabric of communities.

In conclusion, gender disparity in education has wide-ranging economic and social development impacts. By investing in girls' education and ensuring equal access to educational opportunities, societies can break the cycle of



inequality, empower women, and foster sustainable development for all.

### **Barriers to the educational achievement of female children in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a culture enveloped and tradition friendly especially when it pertains to the female sex “women should see not heard” which gives them a perpetual position in the kitchen. The world belongs to the men folk. These are some of the humiliating traditional sayings directed to females. Right from the onset the tradition placed girls and females in a domestic servant status where they perform such duties such as farm works, fetch firewood, cook for the family and do petty trading to sustain their families and given out early in marriage, while the boy child goes to school just because of the cultural traditions and practice of the parents. In agreement with the above observation, Obeg- Denteh and Amedeker (2015) <sup>[40]</sup> reported that rightly or wrongly impoverished parents often feel they need their girl-child” labor for additional income, just to help with the grueling requirements of life. Records have it that two thirds out of 13 million children around the globe poorest nations who don’t have access to school are girls. Obeg- Denteh and Amedeker (2015) <sup>[40]</sup> also went further that 60% of girls in an estimated population of 110 million children in the developing world including Nigeria would not have the opportunity of entering school while the few girls enrolled would drop-out.

### **Benefits of educational achievement of female student in Nigeria**

Educational is desirable for female as it is for male; without education a woman can be deprived of learning about the rights, privileges duties and will have nothing to protect and support her from injustice and to support her against oppressors. Beside these girl-child education help in alleviating poverty in all sorts and thus have the following advantages as upheld by Rihani (2016) <sup>[47]</sup>.

#### **Girl-Child education improves the health of the family:**

They can participate more effectively in development programmes involving health, nutrition, water, sanitation and environment in the community. An educated woman has power over her sexual reproductive life and can be able to protect her and others from diseases (Mango, 2023) <sup>[37]</sup>.

**Mental empowerment:** Today’s girls are future wives and mothers. When a woman is trained therefore, the whole family is positively imparted, the mental. Empowerment by education destroys foolishness and positively helping to impart the right kind of virtues and skills in the family. Until a woman is mentally empowered, she will remain a burden on her family and friends. Whatever is needed for tomorrow’s children should first be put for today’s girls since they are the teachers of tomorrow’s children. Many families are having problem today just because the

wife/mother is not educated and cannot meet the societal and family expectations empowering women mentality empowers the home and when you educate a man you educate an individual but when you educate women you educate a nation. This is built on the beliefs on the maturing potentials and abilities.

**As Home Makers:** A woman can by knowledge skills and training received in school enhance the level of living in her home. Thus, maintaining the cleanliness and amenities of the house and can facilitate the healthy living of the family with respect to education for the children. She can be equipped enough to handle many home challenges. In fact, an educated woman would be excellent in home management (Ezeomah, 2015).

**Physical empowerment:** when young girls are educated and allowed acquiring good certificates, marriage are delayed and child birth is postponed allowing enough time for physical development. This ensures full development of girl’s, proper pelvic bone, maturity as well as mental maturity before the task of becoming a wife and mother. Thus, according to Rafiq *et al.*, (2021), better educated women have fewer and healthier children. Total perfect physical development prevents challenges of childbirths and motherhood that has over the years led to several avoidable morbidities. Education allows a girl become a woman before becoming a mother/wife, rather than the present practice where several children are given out in marriages before time.

**For Up-Bringing of Children:** It is the sole responsibility of woman to rise up children with good moral disposition, intellectual and cultural socialization. Reproductive activities relating to children could be done effectively by an educated woman.

**For Economic Empowerment:** Economy is an area where the knowledge acquires by a woman would enable her to make contributions. In agriculture, women can do better and grow varied crops in domestic gardens and livestock rearing. In art and craft, they partake weaving, lace making, industrial science and could do substantially okay when they are educated; woman employed in the labour force will participate in raising the family income.

### **Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

The demographic information of the respondents used for this study is presented here. It presents answers to the research questions that were asked and it presents the result of the hypothesis formulated. It equally presents discussion of the findings that are generated based on answers to the research questions.

### **Section A: What socio-cultural factors impact the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State?**

**Table 1:** Distribution of data based on socio-cultural factors impact the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State

Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
Family support significantly encourages female students to pursue their education	60	30	5	5	3.45	Agreed
Cultural expectations in my family prioritize education for male children over female children	55	15	20	10	3.15	Agreed
The community values female education equally to male education	54	20	14	12	3.16	Agreed
There are societal norms that discourage girls from pursuing higher education	72	13	5	10	3.47	Agreed
Peer pressure among girls affects their educational achievements negatively	66	20	5	9	3.43	Agreed
Employment opportunities for women after education influence their families' support for female education	60	15	6	19	3.16	Agreed
Teachers show equal attention and encouragement to both male and female students	15	20	40	25	2.25	Disagreed
The school environment is supportive of female students' educational needs	16	24	37	23	2.33	Disagreed
Female students are encouraged to pursue subjects traditionally considered 'feminine'	55	20	10	15	3.15	Agreed
There are more societal rewards for girls who conform to traditional gender roles than for those who excel academically	62	13	10	15	3.08	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean 3.06</b>						

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024, Keys to decision: 0 – 2.49 (Disagreed), 2.50 – 5.00 (Agreed)

Result in Table 1 shows the distribution of data based on socio-cultural factors impact the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State. The respondent agreed on family support significantly encourages female students to pursue their education (mean = 3.45), Cultural expectations in my family prioritize education for male children over female children (mean = 3.15), There are societal norms that discourage girls from pursuing higher education (mean = 3.16), There are societal norms that discourage girls from pursuing higher education (mean = 3.47), Peer pressure among girls affects their educational achievements negatively (mean = 3.43), Employment opportunities for women after education influence their families' support for female education (mean = 3.16), Female students are encouraged to pursue subjects traditionally considered

'feminine' (mean = 3.15) and There are more societal rewards for girls who conform to traditional gender roles than for those who excel academically (mean = 3.08) while some of the respondents disagreed that Teachers show equal attention and encouragement to both male and female students (mean = 2.25) and The school environment is supportive of female students' educational needs (mean = 2.33). The grand mean is 3.06 which implies that socio-cultural factors has great positive impact on the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State.

#### **Section B: How do economic constraints affect the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State?**

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents based on how economic constraints affect the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State

Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
My family's financial situation affects my ability to afford educational materials (books, uniforms, etc.)	40	20	15	25	2.75	Agreed
Economic hardships in my family influence my academic performance negatively	52	15	14	19	3.00	Agreed
Financial stress at home impacts my concentration and focus on studies	45	25	20	10	3.05	Agreed
Lack of funds limits my access to extracurricular activities that enhance learning	35	40	15	10	3.00	Agreed
My family's inability to afford private tutoring impacts my academic success	72	13	10	5	3.52	Agreed
Economic constraints limit my access to technology and the internet for studying	66	20	7	7	3.45	Agreed
Financial constraints influence my family's willingness to invest in my education	55	15	17	13	3.12	Agreed
My parents prioritize spending on basic needs over my educational expenses	54	20	14	12	3.20	Agreed
Economic challenges affect my aspirations for further education after secondary school	35	24	25	13	2.75	Agreed
The financial burden on my family discourages me from pursuing higher education	37	39	19	5	3.08	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean 3.09</b>						

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024, Keys to decision: 0 – 2.49 (Disagreed), 2.50 – 5.00 (Agreed)

Result in Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on how economic constraints affect the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State. It was revealed that there is a positive response among all the respondent. It was agreed that my family's financial situation affects my ability to afford educational materials (books, uniforms, etc.) (mean = 2.75), Economic hardships in my family influence my academic performance negatively (mean = 3.00), Financial stress at home impacts my concentration and focus on studies (mean = 3.05), Lack of funds limits my access to extracurricular activities that enhance learning (mean = 3.00), My family's inability to afford private tutoring impacts my academic success (mean = 3.52), Economic constraints limit my access to technology

and the internet for studying (mean = 3.45), Financial constraints influence my family's willingness to invest in my education (mean = 3.12) My parents prioritize spending on basic needs over my educational expenses (mean = 3.20) Economic challenges affect my aspirations for further education after secondary school (mean = 2.75) and The financial burden on my family discourages me from pursuing higher education (mean = 3.08). The grand mean is 3.09 which implies that economic constraints affect greatly the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State.

#### **Section C: What are challenges affecting the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State?**

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondents based on the challenges affecting the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State

Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Decision
Cultural beliefs in my environment discourage girls from pursuing education	50	20	17	13	3.07	Agreed
There is societal pressure for girls to marry early instead of focusing on their education	15	20	50	15	2.35	Disagreed
Traditional gender roles limit the educational opportunities available to female students	15	13	60	12	2.31	Disagreed
Financial constraints make it difficult for my family to support my education	35	24	15	26	2.68	Agreed
My family's economic situation influences my school attendance	37	39	15	9	3.04	Agreed
The school facilities are inadequate for effective learning	27	13	51	9	2.58	Agreed
Teachers show favoritism towards male students in class participation and support	10	15	60	15	2.20	Disagreed
Safety concerns (e.g., bullying or harassment) at school affect my willingness to attend.	26	24	13	37	2.39	Disagreed
My self-esteem and confidence levels affect my academic performance	66	20	7	7	3.45	Agreed
Mental health issues (like stress or anxiety) hinder my educational achievement	55	15	17	13	3.12	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean 2.72</b>						

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024, Keys to decision: 0 – 2.49 (Disagreed), 2.50 – 5.00 (Agreed)

Result in Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on the challenges affecting the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State. It was agreed that cultural beliefs in my environment discourage girls from pursuing education (mean = 3.07), Financial constraints make it difficult for my family to support my education (mean = 2.68), My family's economic situation influences my school attendance (mean = 3.04), The school facilities are inadequate for effective learning (mean = 2.58), My self-esteem and confidence levels affect my academic performance (mean = 3.45) and mental health issues (like stress or anxiety) hinder my educational achievement (mean = 3.12) while some of the respondents disagreed that there is societal pressure for girls to marry early instead of focusing on their education (mean = 2.35) Traditional gender roles limit the educational opportunities available to female students (mean = 2.75) and The financial burden on my family discourages me from pursuing higher education (mean = 3.08). The grand mean is 3.09 which implies that economic constraints affect greatly the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State.

### Discussion of Findings

Result in Table 1 shows the distribution of data based on socio-cultural factors impact the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State. The respondent agreed on family support significantly encourages female students to pursue their education, Cultural expectations in my family prioritize education for male children over female children, There are societal norms that discourage girls from pursuing higher education, There are societal norms that discourage girls from pursuing higher education, Peer pressure among girls affects their educational achievements negatively, this is support with the findings of Brown *et al.*, (2019) <sup>[16]</sup> in their studies that peer influence is a significant factor in the educational achievement of female student. Studies have shown that negative peer pressure can lead to lower educational aspirations and achievements among female. Employment opportunities for women after education influence their families' support for female education, Female students are encouraged to pursue subjects traditionally considered 'feminine and There are more societal rewards for girls who conform to traditional gender roles than for those who excel academically. According to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020) <sup>[55]</sup>, societal pressures often lead to lower enrollment and retention rates for female students in higher education. while some of the respondents disagreed that Teachers show equal attention

and encouragement to both male and female students and the school environment is supportive of female students' educational needs. The results is in support of the finding of Meyer, (2020) that a supportive school environment is essential for fostering educational success among female students. Studies have shown that schools that implement gender-sensitive policies tend to have better educational outcomes for girls.

Result in Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on how economic constraints affect the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State. It was revealed that there is a positive response among all the respondent. It was agreed that my family's financial situation affects my ability to afford educational materials (books, uniforms, etc.), This aligns with research by Nash and Lecker (2018) <sup>[39]</sup>, which emphasizes that a lack of financial resources can severely limit students' preparedness and engagement in school. The inability to acquire necessary materials can lead to disparities in educational achievement, as students may struggle to keep up with their peers. Economic hardships in my family influence my academic performance negatively, financial stress at home impacts my concentration and focus on studies, The agreement among respondents that economic hardships negatively influence their academic performance echoes findings by Watt and McKenzie (2017) <sup>[58]</sup>. Financial stress can create a distracting environment at home, undermining students' focus and concentration. This distraction can lead to lower academic performance, as students are unable to devote their full attention to their studies when preoccupied with financial worries. Lack of funds limits my access to extracurricular activities that enhance learning, My family's inability to afford private tutoring impacts my academic success, Economic constraints limit my access to technology and the internet for studying, Financial constraints influence my family's willingness to invest in my education My parents prioritize spending on basic needs over my educational expenses. Economic challenges affect my aspirations for further education after secondary school and the financial burden on my family discourages me from pursuing higher education. his aligns with the work of Bailey and Dynarski (2021) <sup>[10]</sup>, which emphasizes that financial constraints can deter students from seeking further educational opportunities, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting social mobility.

Result in Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on the challenges affecting the educational achievement of female students in Ondo State. It was agreed that cultural beliefs in my environment discourage girls

from pursuing education, according to Maitra and Pandey (2018) <sup>[36]</sup>, cultural expectations often prioritize male education over female education, leading to disparities in access and support for girls. Such beliefs can create an environment where girls feel less encouraged to pursue academic ambitions. Financial constraints make it difficult for my family to support my education, My family's economic situation influences my school attendance, The school facilities are inadequate for effective learning, My self-esteem and confidence levels affect my academic performance and mental health issues (like stress or anxiety) hinder my educational achievement while some of the respondents disagreed that there is societal pressure for girls to marry early instead of focusing on their education. Traditional gender roles limit the educational opportunities available to female students and the financial burden on my family discourages me from pursuing higher education. The inadequacy of school facilities was a prevalent concern among respondents, with many agreeing that insufficient resources hinder effective learning. Scholars have long noted that inadequate infrastructure can impede educational outcomes, as poor facilities can lead to disengagement and lower performance (Duncan & Murnane, 2021) <sup>[24]</sup>. The lack of essential learning resources can create an environment where students struggle to thrive academically.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that socio-cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the educational achievement of female students by highlighting the importance of family support, with many agreeing that it encourages girls to pursue their education. However, cultural expectations that prioritize education for male children over female children create disparities. Additionally, societal norms that discourage girls from seeking higher education and peer pressure were identified as negative influences on academic achievement.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Scholarships should be given to the female student who genuinely deserve and who genuinely need them.
2. Governmental initiatives are necessary for providing free and compulsory education for the upliftment of the female student in the rural area and the right to employment should be declared a fundamental right for females.
3. Reservation should be made for females in the public service appointment in all sectors.
4. At the ground level, local government or the civil societies, agricultural extension service should create maximum awareness to parents on the availability of scholarships and the newly introduced student loans to help mitigate the burden of funding education.
5. Government should ensure gender sensitivity in the distribution of scholarships and loans.

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