



Investigating Secondary School Students' Attitude Towards Gender Stereotype in Ijebu-Ode Metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This research investigated secondary school students' attitudes toward gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis, Ogun State. Questionnaires were administered to two hundred (200) students from four selected secondary schools in the metropolis. Data were collected and analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and t-tests. The findings of this study revealed students' positive attitudes towards gender stereotypes. Also, it was found that there is no significant difference in the students' attitudes towards gender stereotypes based on gender and class of study. Some recommendations were made on the findings obtained from the study.

Keywords: Gender, Stereotype, Attitude, Students, Ijebu-Ode Metropolis.

1. Background to the Study

Gender stereotypes means assigning specific attributes, characteristics, or roles to an individual woman or man by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, (OHCHR, 2024). A gender stereotype has been further described by OHCHR (2024) as a harmful, generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics or about the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men.

Wenyao (2023) is of the view that gender stereotypes are prevalent in most aspects of life in this society and that gender stereotype is a decisive factor that leads to social gender problems. According to PNAS Nexus (2023), gender stereotypes cause damage to human beings of both genders and society more generally by guiding and sometimes narrowing individuals into behaviours, functions, and activities connected with their gender. Islam and Assadullah (2018) observed

that it is unsafe to restrict individuals from pursuing their professional careers, developing their abilities, and making choices about their lives based on their gender. Harmful stereotypes are damaging whether they are overtly hostile or seem trivial.

Shared stereotypes comprise the belief that men are most concerned in professional life and women in domestic life. However, despite the exceptional abilities of women, conventional stereotypes about their career progression are still prevalent and continue to shape the career choices of both men and women.

Across the globe, irrespective of a nation's developmental status, societal norms and gender stereotypes have a profound impact on girls. This influence permeates various societal structures, including parents and educators. This is a crucial finding of the Global Early Adolescent Study conducted by WHO/John Hopkins University (2018). While some might dismiss this as insignificant, it has far-reaching adverse effects on girls from a tender age, diminishing their dreams and constraining their career possibilities."

Global rankings have continuously placed Nigeria within the low performers group when gender stereotype issues like gender equality, political representation, and educational attainment are discussed (IMF, 2022). Olonade et al. (2022) observed that in Nigeria, women's participation in the economy has been relatively low compared to men. They maintained that there has been unfair treatment of women and girls.

Ofoha (2013) remarks that from the moment a child is born in Nigeria, the gender role education process begins, with the male child being perceived as an asset that is highly treasured in most Nigerian homes. She

added that in education, priority is usually given to men because of the cultural perception of their role as breadwinners. For females, the belief is that they will ultimately wed and 'go under' their spouses; subsequently, they are treated as second-rate. Moreover, to sustain the predominance of the male youngster over the female youngster, she noticed that the female youngster is prepared to put herself under her male kin. she observed that the girl-child is trained to put herself below her male siblings.

In some homes, to make up for the financial inadequacy of the family, the girl-child is sent out to hawk to raise money for the family's needs. Some of the girls are married off at a tender age so that the bride price will be spent on the education of the boy-child and other family needs. In some cases, the girl-child may be given off for domestic labour in urban areas for a regular income to the family. These traditional beliefs and practices have successfully provided two different developmental grounds in the same home for the growth of the boy-child and the girl-child (Ezeliora & Ezeokana, 2011).

These views can be confirmed with the Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI) (2023). According to the GSNI, there are certain biases against women that exist in four different areas: political, educational, economic, and physical integrity. This index evaluates people's attitudes towards the roles of women. The report, which covers 85% of the global population, reveals that nearly 9 out of 10 people hold significant prejudices against women.

It is, therefore, against this background that this study is set aside to examine the perception of Social Studies students towards gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis, Ogun State.

The research questions include:

- What is the attitude of secondary Social Studies students towards gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria?
- Is there any significant difference between the male and female attitudes toward gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria?
- Is there any significant difference between secondary school students' perceptions of gender stereotypes according to their class?

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the social learning theory, which postulates that human behaviour is a function of the individual and the environment. This implies that

the variables of persons' behaviour and environmental situations are interrelated. The theory assumes that when two persons or groups interact, they become part of each other's environment.

Based on this theory, Bandura (1998, 2004) has developed a more specific model for predicting behaviour. Bandura used the concept of "goals" instead of "attitudes" and "subjective norms" (which are predicted by expectations and evaluation of expectations), and he used "outcome expectancies" (which can be physical, social, and self-evaluative) as predictors. Instead of "perceived behavioural control", he used the concept of "self-efficacy".

Bandura made outcome expectancies (the expected outcome of a specific behaviour) and self-efficacy (perceived ability to perform the behaviour), two of the most central concepts of his theory, explain how to understand the causal processes behind a behaviour, mainly as they apply in health behaviour research. An essential tenet of Bandura's theory is his "reciprocal determinism" principle. He distinguishes among three critical factors: behavioural, personal, and environmental. These can all be cause and effect.

Furthermore, Bandura includes "socio-cultural factors" (facilitators and impediments) in his model. Inducing a change in one of the factors may lead to changes in the other factors. The theory further suggests that teenagers learn behaviours through observation, modelling, and reinforcement from their social environment.

3. Research Methodology

The research design for this study is a descriptive survey research design that seeks to investigate the attitude of secondary school students towards gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis of Ogun State. A total sample of two hundred (200) students was selected from four randomly selected secondary schools. Fifty (50) students, twenty-five Junior and twenty-five senior secondary school students from each school, were selected using convenience sampling.

A twenty-item structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A contains the respondents' demographic information, while Section B contains statements on gender stereotypes with a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agreed, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). A test-retest method was used to determine the instrument's reliability, where 30 students were not part of the samples selected for the

study. The split-half method was applied in the analysis, and a Cronbach Alpha coefficient reliability value of 0.81 was obtained, which shows that the instrument is reliable. Data were analysed using

frequency count, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and t-tests using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Data Analyses

The results obtained from the demographic variables of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	81	42.2
Female	111	57.8
Total	192	100.0
Age		
18-20yrs	59	25.5
Above 20yrs	133	69.3
Total	192	100
	Frequency	Percent
Junior Secondary	80	35.9
Senior Secondary	143	41.1
Total	192	100.0

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of secondary Social Studies students towards gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean response on the attitude of secondary school students towards gender stereotype

S/N	Items	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	Mean	Std.D
1	Boys are more active and outspoken than girls	69 (36.0)	75 (39.0)	32 (17.0)	16 (7.8)	3.03	.929
2	Boys can handle pressure situations better than girls	84 (43.7)	59 (30.7)	22 (11.4)	27 (14.0)	3.04	1.058
3	Men are mentally stronger than women	97 (50.5)	60 (31.2)	22 (11.5)	13 (6.7)	3.26	.911
4	Boys generally possess more scientific skills than girls	80 (41.2)	59 (30.7)	29 (15.1)	24 (12.5)	3.02	1.036
5	Females are better in reading than their male counterpart	73 (38.0)	64 (32.3)	29 (15.1)	26 (13.5)	2.96	1.038
6	Men are ready to take any risks	70 (36.4)	69 (35.6)	33 (17.3)	20 (10.4)	2.98	.979
7	Male students generally do better in school than female students	73 (38.0)	73 (38.0)	26 (13.5)	20 (10.4)	3.04	.967
8	Women are responsible for raising children	61 (31.7)	85 (43.4)	22 (11.4)	24 (12.5)	2.95	.967
9	Men should be the head of the family	81 (42.1)	73 (38.0)	22 (11.4)	16 (7.7)	3.14	.924
10	Women's place is at home	84 (44.0)	58 (30.2)	29 (15.1)	21 (10.9)	3.07	1.013
11	Women should not spend money without husband's approval	72 (37.5)	78 (40.6)	25 (13.0)	17 (8.8)	3.07	.927
12	Men have more socialization skills	84 (44.0)	63 (33.0)	22 (11.0)	23 (11.9)	3.08	1.015
13	Men are better at making financial decisions	70 (36.4)	68 (35.4)	29 (15.1)	25 (13.0)	2.95	1.020
14	A young girl should not be given much freedom as boys enjoy	71 (36.9)	74 (38.5)	22 (11.0)	25 (13.0)	2.99	1.005

15	Boys need sports activities for their physical and psychological development more than girls	73 (38.0)	80 (42.0)	19 (9.8)	20 (11)	3.07	.946
16	It is wrong for a woman to go out after midnight	55 (28.6)	93 (48.4)	24 (13)	20 (10.4)	2.95	.911
17	Women are not capable of taking risk as men are	78 (41)	69 (36)	23 (12.3)	22 (11.4)	3.06	.993
18	A women should not attempt to take up all kinds of typical male tasks	66 (34.4)	82 (42.7)	22 (11.4)	22 (11.4)	3.00	.960
19	Women should cook and do household chores	69 (35.9)	80 (41.6)	20 (10.4)	23 (11.9)	3.02	.973
20	Husband should be more educated than their wives	61 (31.7)	81 (42.1)	22 (11.4)	28 (14.5)	2.91	1.007
	Average Mean					3.03	.982

The data in Table 1 show that all the variables had mean values more significant than the critical value. From this result, it was deduced that all the statements were positively responded to as the perception of Social Studies students towards gender stereotypes. It was concluded that the respondents have a cheerful disposition toward gender stereotypes. This could be confirmed by the patterns of responses on the various items and issues raised under this research question.

For instance, the result shows that 'Husbands should be more educated than their wives' had the slightest perception, with a mean value of 2.91, while 'Men are mentally stronger than women' had the highest perception, with a mean value of 3.26. The average mean value of 3.03 is equally higher than the critical value of 2.50.

The perceived opinions include but are not limited to:

- boys are more active and outspoken than girls;
- boys can handle pressure situations better than girls;
- men are mentally more muscular than women;
- boys generally possess more scientific skills than girls;
- females are better at reading than their male counterparts;
- men are ready to take any risks;
- male students generally do better in school than female students;
- women are responsible for raising children;
- men should be the head of the family;
- women's place is at home;
- women should not spend money without their husband's approval.

The opinions expressed also included men have more socialisation skills; men are better at making financial decisions; young girls should not be given as much freedom as boys enjoy; boys need sports activities for their physical and psychological development more than girls; it is wrong for a woman to go out after midnight; women are not capable of taking a risk as men are; women should not attempt to take up all kinds of typical male tasks; women should cook and do housework; and husband should be more educated than their wives.

These patterns of responses confirm the student's position on gender stereotypes and show that they do not see anything terrible in these stereotypes. This is a reflection of the effect of the cultural undertones and beliefs surrounding socialisation in Nigeria and other African countries. This is confirmed by Mensah (2023) in his study "Husband is a Priority: Gender Roles, Patriarchy and the Naming of Female Children in Nigeria", where he reported that "heterosexuality is part of the traditional conception of marriage and has all the essentialist trappings that engender male dominance.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference in the attitudes of males and females towards gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria?

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	t	Sig.
Male	81	44.250	6.888	.617	.534
Female	111	43.655	6.451		

The independent sample t-test analysis indicates that the males ($N=80$) do not have a significant difference ($M=44.250$) than females ($N=116$; $M=43.655$ $t(194)= .617$). The males and females do not differ significantly from each other in the attitude of secondary school students towards gender stereotypes. It was therefore it was concluded

that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards sexual orientation between males and females in Ijebu-Ode.

However, this finding is a clear-cut departure from recent research by scholars like Skinner and Gottfried (2024). According to their new study, "young people's attitude to masculinity and women's equality show signs of an emerging gender divide, with the views of men and women often differing more from willing younger rather than older generations (Skinner & Gottfried, 2024).

Research Question 3: Is there any significant difference between secondary school students' perceptions of gender stereotypes according to their class?

Table 4: Analysis of significant differences in gender stereotype attitudes of secondary students according to their class

Class	N	Mean	Std. D	t	Sig.
Junior Secondary	96	23.175	4.295	-.918	.360
Senior Secondary	96	23.810	5.057		

The result in Table 4 revealed no significant difference ($t=-.139, P>0.360$). This implies that the mean score of attitude towards gender stereotypes of JS students is 23.175, which is not significantly different from the mean score of SS students, which is 23.810 at 0.05 level. That is, the observed difference is not statistically significant. The senior student category is slightly higher than the junior students, but the difference is not statistically significant. Thus, it was concluded that there is no significant difference between the attitudes of the two respondents towards gender stereotypes at both the JS and SS levels in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis.

This result does not, however, imply that all is normal at both levels of Nigeria's educational system. This is because other intervening variables like teachers' behaviour and instructional activities have not promoted inclusive practices in the classroom for both male and female students. Research findings from the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEL, 2023) revealed from a baseline study conducted in Bangladesh that only 56 per cent of the teachers in the study reported giving leadership roles to both boys and girls in their classrooms. This is already a reflection of some gender stereotyping from the teachers' angle.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Thus far, this study has investigated secondary school students' attitudes towards gender stereotypes in the Ijebu-Ode metropolis, Ogun State. The study found that a majority of the students have positive attitudes towards gender stereotypes. However, there is no significant difference in their attitude towards gender stereotypes based on gender and class of study.

The study emphasised how harmful it is to make generalisations about orientation that limit people from pursuing their careers and making choices about

their lives. Such stereotypes could also be damaging, whether they are overtly hostile or trivial. In addition, they are harmful when compounded and linked with other types of stereotypes; they have a more significant negative impact on particular categories of women. Gender stereotyping is, therefore, wrongful when it results in a breach or breach of human rights and essential freedoms.

Some gaps were noticed in students' attitudes to gender stereotypes. The findings reflect the students' acceptance of gender stereotypes, even though their gender and class level did not affect this pattern of results.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are the result of this proposal:

- Curriculum review exercises at the national level and their adaptation at the state level must fully consider building content that is gender-sensitive and can help students question gender stereotypes in whatever they are learning.
- Teachers at the secondary school level need more definitive and clear policy direction on strategies for embracing gender-responsive approaches in the classroom. This will go a long way toward correcting the students' unpalatable dispositions toward gender stereotyping.
- Teachers' capacity to acquire the knowledge and skills required to overcome their fear of handling controversial gender stereotype issues in the classroom must be initiated and made an integral part of teacher professional development programmes.
- Teachers will need to acquire the digital skills to effectively source and handle relevant online resources needed to promote gender

equality in the classroom through self-development and government support.

The feasibility of these recommendations can be further assured if the findings of Ifegbesan (2010) are highlighted here. Specifically, from his findings on gender stereotypes, beliefs and the Nigerian primary school teacher, he concluded that, teachers are fully convinced on the need to integrate learning about gender-stereotypes into the school curriculum. He also found out that teacher training needs to be conducted in a way that will allow for the promotion of necessary awareness and knowledge about how to reduce gender-stereotypes through classroom teaching and learning.

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