

CURRENT TRENDS IN GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION-2018

*by*

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## **Preface**

The goals for the future of gender differences in education are to reduce the gender gap in terms of graduation and School dropout rates, and to create curriculum that is free of gender bias. While it will take time to achieve these goals, it is amazing the advancements women have made in education...especially in the last sixty years.

This book has given a background of gender issues in education, its meaning relating to education, the facts on gender and education and the understanding of the challenges relating to gender in education. Coping strategies to gender challenges in education have also been stated after which the conclusion has been made.

The need for gender analysis and for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and in the implementation of programmes was stated in the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and was reaffirmed by the Special Session of the General Assembly, Beijing+5 in 2000. The Platform urges Governments and international organizations to promote research and dissemination of information on a number of areas of concern and generate and disseminate gender statistics for planning and evaluation.

The United Nations has recognized women’s central role in development and the importance of understanding the gender-differentiated effects of development planning. More importantly, the Beijing Platform of Action’s strategic objective makes a call to “generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation”.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND TO GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION**

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Gender refers to society's division of humanity, based on sex, into two distinctive categories. Gender guides how females and males think about themselves, how they interact with others, and what position they occupy in society as a whole.

Thus gender also operates as a dimension of social inequality. This inequality, which has historically favoured males, is no simple matter of biological differences between the two sexes. Females and males do of course differ biologically, but these disparities are complex and inconsistent (Semela, 2017).

Gender roles are attitude and activities that a culture links to each sex. Gender roles are the active expression of gender identity (Blackden & Bhanu, 2005).

Globally, among democratic and non-democratic countries, women are subjected to discrimination in all spheres of life. In fact, women comprise two thirds of the world's illiterate and 21% of the world's National Parliaments calling into question

the credibility of democracies as pillars of equality and justice (Parkes, 2015).

Millions of girls and young women across the world still face huge barriers to education (Stromquist, 2011; Thomas, Serenje-Chipindi & Chipindi, 2020). What are these barriers and what inspirational initiatives are working to help overcome them?

Education is a basic human right, yet persistent inequalities in education cripples the lives of millions of women and girls, worldwide.

The issue of gender inequality is one which has been publicly reverberating through society for decades. The problem of inequality in both education and employment is one of the most pressing issues today.

In order to examine this situation, one must try to get to the root of the problem and must understand the sociological factors.

The gender disparity in educational participation and achievement is not a new thing in most parts of Africa, and it certainly is not unique to Zambia.

This complex and often emotive issue is one that has been discussed, debated and researched across the globe for several decades. Traditionally, girls have been at the helm of inequality in both educational opportunities and employment.

Gender inequity in a country like Zambia is driven largely by a lack of access to and control of resources which is highly divided along gender lines in favour of men.

Parkes (2015) notes that the inequality is especially manifested in the discrimination that is involved in the access to basic necessities and services such as education, land, credit financing as well as markets. The country is also experiencing a general decrease in access to formal employment and this definitely affects the women harder than it does the men.

A lack of access to opportunities and control over key resources has been fuelled by many factors such as a lack of women representation in the key decision making organs of governance and other aforementioned factors such as culture and traditions (Parkes, 2015).

It has also been driven by slow growth the country experienced in the past as a result of poor governance. Slow

economic growth significantly impact on the country's poverty hence making the situation worse.

As a result, the slow growth acted as an impediment to attaining gender equity or any form of progression in the economic and political spheres of Zambian society thus further restraining any advancement that the country could make in line with achieving middle income status by the year 2030.

Women participation in economy is a major economic resource which is not frequently promoted or aggressively policy-driven by many African countries.

Increasing the level of education is dependent upon eliminating gender inequality in education. Countries such as Zambia need to use all of their resources in order to reach their economic development targets.

Gender equity is the impartial treatment of women and men so as to ensure equal enjoyment of privileges and rights allotted to members of either gender. In Zambian society, this has been a controversial subject since the country earned its independence.

The subject is continually quelled by challenges and hindrances that not only make it difficult for the nation to make greater strides on its way to achieve gender equity but also continue to restrict the country's development whether in the political, social or economic spheres as envisioned in the country's economic growth

Education throughout the world enhances any type of development since it gives people the knowledge and the skills needed in social, Economic, and political sectors. Women form the majority of the uneducated population in Zambia and as such they are more vulnerable to being victims of poverty.

This has continued to contribute to the gender disparity in Zambia and thus poverty is one of the great challenges that will continue to hinder the country's achievement of gender equity as well as middle income status as it has been proposed in the country's Vision 2030.

Poverty in Zambia, for example, affects mainly the women as explained above and is experienced in more than one avenue hence making it a challenge for the country. Persistent hunger and starvation that affects the country almost every year and inability to access fundamental services such as healthcare,

education, shelter, and clean water is presently defined as a humanitarian crisis in Zambia.

A lack of an educated women population continues to restrict the country's advancement towards attaining gender equity and this is because all the aforementioned factors affect Zambian women in a worse capacity compared to men since women are more marginalized and excluded.

The vision of the Ministry of Education is to create a globally competitive quality education, training and research for Zambia's sustainable development (Daka, Chipindi, & Mwale Mkandawire, 2020).

The mission is therefore to provide, promote, co-ordinate quality education, training and research for empowerment of individuals to become caring, competent and responsible citizens who value education as a lifelong process.

Education must of essence focus on the acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as the provision of lifelong learning.

Government must create a conducive environment to enable learning to take place. Emphasis has been placed on

- ❖ The provision of a holistic quality education, training and research. Such as system of education is based on a philosophy that advances the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of learners, instilling values such as patriotism, equality of all persons, peace, security, honesty, humility, mutual respect, tolerance, cooperation and democracy.
- ❖ Teacher parent cooperation to enhance learning, emotional intelligence and multiple intelligence are part of that education.

The new constitution in 2016 explicitly gave women the same legal rights as men. Implementation of the laws remains an issue, however.

Women in Zambia continue to suffer economically, socially and politically from gender inequities. The Zambian government also had a dedicated micro-financing program for women that is now countrywide.

Girl's educational opportunities tend to be circumscribed by patriarchal attitude. Lack of education has been a strong visible barrier to female participation in the formal sector.

The social pressures on females such as early marriage and other extraneous factors as well as consideration of female

education as secondary to that of boys and certain inhibitive religious practices are the major causes of the high illiteracy rate amongst women.

Historically, it is of significant to mention that earlier education in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia inclusive was available mainly for men.

Against this backdrop, women were from the onset disadvantaged in acquisition of formal education talk less of having opportunities in the formal employment sector.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE MEANING OF GENDER RELATING TO EDUCATION**

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In our African society, the education of women did not receive significant attention and this led to the second class status assigned to women in society.

Women are relegated to mere agents of domestic engagements at home, with considerable reproductive roles. This apathy arising from gender inequality has also affected education in Zambia. As a result the males have dominated Zambian learning institutions, especially at higher learning and tertiary levels.

Gender can be a key determinant of who does what, who has what, who decides, who has power, and even who gets an education or not. In many societies, boys are seen as the ones who should be educated, while girls are not (Meier zu Selhausen & Weisdorf, 2016).

In many countries in Africa, there is persistence of gender inequality at mostly, higher levels of education. The reasons

for this ugly situation have been traced to be historical, cultural, traditional and the patriarchal structure of the societies. Education of the girl child is one of the first steps in a process of enabling her to take control over her own life, participate on an equal basis in the society and freeing herself from economic exploitation and patriarchal oppression.

Sub-Sahara Africa is lagging behind other continents in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs). This is due to the enormous challenges the continent is facing in achieving development as a whole (Heward & Bunwaree, (Eds.). 2007; Hambulo & Mukalula-Kalumbi, 2017).

Poverty, bad governance, conflict and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have made the task of raising the development levels of Africa even more difficult to accomplish.

It is acknowledged that most of the children out of school, the illiterate adults school dropouts are in Sub Sahara Africa. It is also agreed that there are groups that are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access, retention and performance in education.

These include the poor, rural populations, the physically challenged, orphans and people in armed conflict and post conflict situations.

Both boys and girls in these categories are affected. However, due to the unequal socio-economic gender construct in most African societies, the scale of disadvantages is tipped more against girls and women.

The nature of gender inequalities in education has changed profoundly over recent decades and, with regard to attainment in particular, has become more complex.

Apart from the injustice inherent in all gender stereotyping, gender differences in education can also negatively affect economic growth and social inclusion.

For example, women remain a minority in the fields of mathematics, science and technology, but on the other hand evidence shows that boys are more likely to be amongst the poorest performers in reading ability.

These two examples illustrate that gender differences in education must be taken into account when developing policies and strategies to improve educational outcomes.

Although the Government of Zambia recognizes education as the basic tool required to develop the required human resources so as to improve the quality of life of every Zambian as envisioned in the country's economic blueprint, the relatively low transition rates, despite efforts made to increase accessibility and equity in the education sector still continue to restrict the country from making gains in terms of gender equity concerns.

The enrollment rates have been on a steady rise since the implementation of several reforms in basic education which intended to eliminate the gender disparity that continues to affect the sector but sustaining these achievements requires more investment by the government since making basic education easily accessible is not all that the sector needs.

The country needs initiatives to quell impediments to raising gender quality in education rates such as developing frameworks and policies that will address the issue of making education accessible to more women in communities.

Zambia has made a lot of achievements in the last nine years when the new PF government took overpower. For example, the promulgation of the country's new constitution as well as the establishment of the country's development blueprint whose objective is to help transform Zambia into a “middle income country that will provide a high quality of life to all its citizens by the year 2030.

Among many other government policies and legislations are just a few of the many initiatives that aim to address gender equity. This signifies the commitment the country has towards development in gender equity. For instance, the constitution states that thirty per cent of positions in all sectors of development, employment, and leadership should be reserved for women.

There is need to recognize the importance of exploring the link between gender and education particularly girls' education and the overall national development in Zambia.

First, this is critical in order to empower both females and males through education and skills development so as to reduce the social and economic inequalities in society.

Secondly, there is need globally, regionally and nationally to adopt specific strategies to ensure equity in opportunities including education.

Zambia recognizes the role of basic education in ensuring sustainable socio-economic and human resource development, empowerment and good governance. In order to achieve the relevant SDG goals and objectives, Zambia continues to strengthen national and international level partnerships. The achievement of the aims and objectives are aligned to the 2016 Constitution and Vision 2030.

The Constitution is very comprehensive while vision 2030 aims to make the country an industrialized nation. Commitment to these goals in education is demonstrated by the increased budgetary allocation and various intervention strategies.

Education is first and foremost a social tool that is imperative for the continued survival and growth of the human society. Against this background, it is worthy of note to mention that education whether formal or informal, assumes a heavy social context since education generally concerns itself with the imparting of knowledge in people.

Education ideally trains manpower for the economy; it also helps to fully develop the potentials of individuals and equally help such individuals consummate employment opportunities.

Thus, since education is a critical variable in modern work situations, formal education enhances labour force participation of women.

Semela (2017) argued that women's involvement in formal education broadens their experience and also gives them access to new resources and skills.

To a very large extent, it is to be understood that education is the main tool for imparting skills and attitudes relevant to the contribution of the individual concerned to natural development.

Traditionally, African Society does not see much importance in women's education, but rather in the domestic tasks. In view of this the woman's role has come to be limited to sexual and commercial labour, satisfying the sexual needs of men, working in the fields, carrying loads, tending babies and preparing food

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES RELATING TO GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION**

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It is also agreed that there are groups that are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access, retention and performance in education. These include the poor, rural populations, the physically challenged, orphans and people in armed conflict and post conflict situations.

Both boys and girls in these categories are affected. However, due to the unequal socio-economic gender construct in most African societies, the scale of disadvantages is tipped more against girls and women.

Numerous studies have illustrated this situation to the point that education policy makers and practitioners have been forced to accept that there are serious gender disparities in education that call for urgent.

The factors behind the gender inequity and inequality in education include negative cultural values, attitudes and practices that foster teenage pregnancy, early marriage, sexual

harassment, excessive domestic chores and the disregard of the importance of girls' education.

There is also the lack of gender responsiveness among the teachers, in the curriculum, teaching methodology, teaching and learning materials, school management systems and the overall school environment.

The gender-based constraints to education tend to be more pronounced in rural areas due to the fact that the environment is normally more accommodative of gender inequality. Rural areas display stricter adherence to traditional cultural values, attitudes and practices.

As such practices detrimental to girls' education such as early marriage, abduction, genital mutilation, sexual violence, excessive domestic chores, male superiority and domination of women are tolerated and encouraged by the community both inside and outside the school.

Rural areas in Africa also constitute the majority of the un-reached sections of the populations due to poor infrastructure in terms of transport and communication. Extension workers, government officials and development agents often exclude

visiting rural areas using poor transport facilities as a justification.

For example, it is common for schools in rural areas to operate for several years without getting a visit from a school inspector or officials from the headquarters. As such, exposure to practices that could bring about positive changes to education practice can be very limited.

It is important, therefore, to recognize that provision of education for rural areas poses additional challenges in general and particularly for the achievement of gender equity and equality.

The good news however, is that a lot is already happening in the area of gender in education which is relevant to education for rural areas.

The last decade has witnessed considerable attention to gender and education at the level of both policy and practice. As such the Education for Rural Areas initiative need not reinvent the wheel but rather review what is already happening and see how any new interventions can build on existing efforts.

It is the intention of this paper, therefore, to focus on sharing experiences on strategies and interventions that have the potential to eliminate gender disparities in education for rural areas in Zambia.

### **Strategies to ensure gender equality**

- Strengthen or put in place necessary institutional and structural mechanisms for gender equality
- Increase community awareness about the benefits of education for girls
- Increase enrollment, retention and performance of female students, including girls from pastoralist and agro-pastoralist groups
- Develop and use gender sensitive curriculum and teaching methods
- Increase the number of females in leadership/ management positions in education
- Increase the number of female teachers at all levels
- Mobilize resources to increase the participation of girls in education and training
- Increase FAL (Female Adult Literacy) rates

The above view finds support in International Agreements and Conventions, which have persistently stressed on the importance of women's equal participation in political leadership.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, for example, emphasized that ‘women’s equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for justice or democracy, but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account (Cooray & Potrafke, 2011).

Without the perspective of women at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.’

The Platform therefore emphasized the need (i) to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in all power structures and decision making; and (ii) to increase women’s capacity to participate in decision making and leadership.

Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in Article 7, called upon State parties ‘to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country.’

In addition, the UN Security Council’s Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security also reaffirmed the importance of equal participation and full involvement of women in all

efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as the need to increase women's role in decision making. Despite these provisions the challenge of gender imbalance in political and occupation leadership remains.

Many efforts have been in Zambia directed at improving access to education for girls. This has included formulation policies with specific targets to increase gender parity in enrolment.

Whereas numbers of girls enrolled at grade one has indeed gone up, there have been other problems that have stood in the way of attendance and performance (Baliamoune-Lutz & McGillivray, 2009).

Long distances to school, timetables that conflict with other occupations such as farming, herding animals, domestic chores that leave little time for studies, lack of facilities such as water and sanitation, separate toilets for boys and girls, gender hostile attitudes among teachers and community member, lack of gender responsiveness in the curriculum,

teaching materials, teaching methodologies and the overall physical a social and academic school environment.

In the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, many children, both boys and girls miss or drop out of school when their parents die. The girls get the additional burden of caring for sick parents and taking over the care for their siblings on the death of the parents. Girl orphans also tend to be married off early by the relatives so that they can provide a home for their siblings.

It is clear that unless these hurdles to retention and achievement are addressed, gender parity in education will not be attained neither will be the SDG goals in 2030.

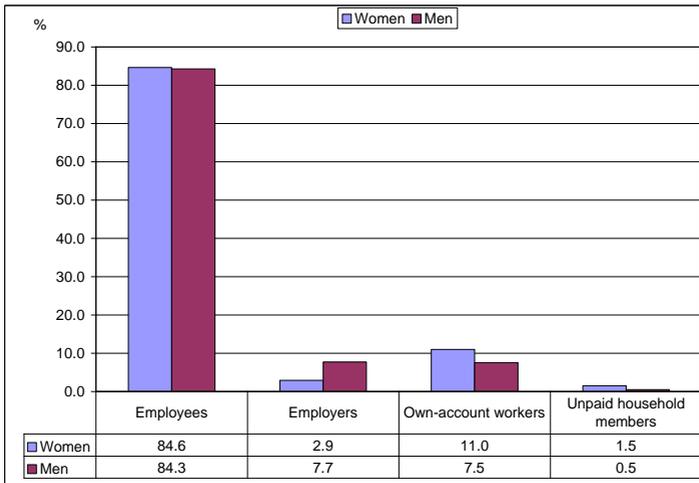
## CHAPTER FOUR

### FACTS ON GENDER AND EDUCATION

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Gender differences have been present in the Zambian education system for a very long time. Male and female students have had different expectations and opportunities at home, in the school system, and in the workforce.

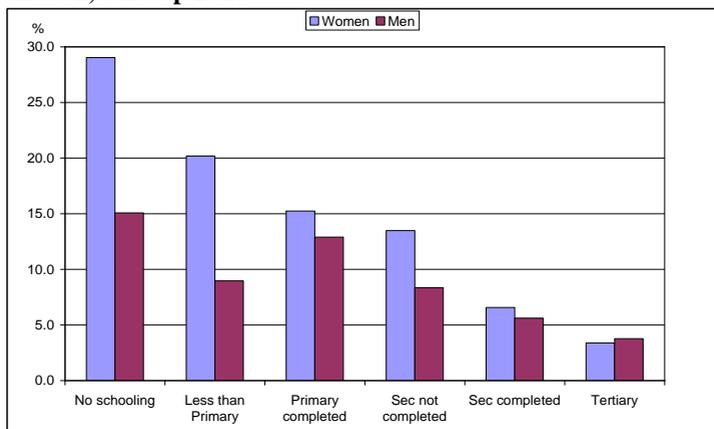
**Figure 1: Employed by status in employment and sex, Jul-Sep 2017**



*Source: UNDP, 2016 Labour Survey Report*

As depicted in Figure 1, Zambia is not immune in what is the case in most developing countries which according to the 2017 UNDP report is that greater proportions of women than those of men are found to be poverty. In direct contrast to this, a higher proportion of men than that of women are employers.

**Figure 2: Poverty among women by highest level of education and sex, Jul-Sep 2017**



*Source: CSO, 2017*

Figure 2 suggests that the disparity between men and women who are poor decreases with education and disappears among those with tertiary education

Gender inequality undermines the effectiveness of development policies in developmental states like South Africa in very fundamental ways.

Yet often it is the very essence of gender inequality that more often than not lies at the periphery of policy dialogue and decision-making, both in national and international arenas.

The neglect can be attributed to a number of reasons. First, reluctance within policymaking circles to deal with issues viewed as inextricably associated with societal norms, religion, or cultural traditions.

Second, misguided belief that gender gaps should be addressed by advocacy instead of policy. Third, an inherent blurred understanding of the nature the nature of gender disparities and the costs of those disparities to people's well-being and countries' prospects for development.

The factors behind gender disparities in education are many and complex. They include economic, social and cultural factors. As such action to resolve them calls for a multi-dimensional approach and the involvement of a variety of

stakeholders. NGOs and CBO have various experiences in this approach.

Typically, men have been the leaders of society and received the most attention in the classroom. They were the priority because they would lead the world.

While women were respected, they would not receive the same advantages as the men. Girls would discover that their education would be limited to the expectations of a male dominated society. As the decades progressed so did the expectations and education of women.

It is noted that struggles for gender equality in all areas of development go back several decades during which time various commitments, conventions, declarations and plans of action have been drawn, ratified and to a certain extent, implemented. These include the instruments emerging out of the United Nations led conferences such as Mexico (1975), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995).

It is also gratifying to note that most major conventions on all aspects of development now recognize the gender dimension of development.

Gender and education is given prominence in the Millennium Development goals (2000) as well as the Education for All Framework for Action (Dakar 2000).

Many initiatives have been undertaken towards achieving the education and gender goals. These include the UNICEF-led United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), and the Africa Girls' Initiative (AGEI).

Most governments in Africa have now incorporated gender in their national education plans where deliberate effort is directed at eliminating the gender gap in access to education.

A few governments have also started addressing the gender constraints to retention and achievement although much remains to be done in this area.

Civil society has been in the forefront with programmes on advocacy for gender equality in education. Most education related international, regional and local NGOs operating in Africa have a component on gender and particularly girls' education in their programmes.

Special mention goes to the Forum for African Women Educationalists, (FAWE), a pan - African NGO which was established to deal specifically with the promotion of girls' education in Sub Sahara Africa.

FAWE, through its chapters in 32 countries has undertaken various programmes related to influencing education policy, advocacy, and demonstrative interventions on what works in girls' education and influencing the replication and mainstreaming of best practices from what has happened so far, it is safe to claim that the need for gender equality in development in general and in education in particular, is no longer an issue for debate.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **COPING STRATEGIES TO GENDER CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION**

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This section is focused on strategies used by female students in Zambian public universities to cope with their family roles during school sessions.

Globally, the traditional higher education delivery system which has a classroom setting with students and lecturer interactions has been challenged by innovations in educational delivery mechanisms (Semela, 2017).

Innovations in information technology has enabled other methods of education delivery such as Distance Education (DE) gained prominence in higher education delivery. DE has the student in remote from the campus and is educated through a mixture of media such as TV, video, print and personal computer (Meier zu Selhausen & Weisdorf, 2016).

In many Sub-Saharan countries, tertiary institutions are under pressure to train skilled manpower to meet the increasing sophisticated demands of workplace.

However, universities lack the infrastructure to cater for the increasing numbers of students who graduate from senior high schools every year and the high demand of organizations from workers to upgrade themselves to meet the current demand of development (Dollar and Gatti, 2011).

In Zambia, women have traditionally been homemakers and child-bearers. Considering the fact that the students operate within 24 hours, the mature students who have more family responsibilities have to make time for their family roles and therefore spend less time on their academic work.

These female students with their family members need to strategize to ensure that family life does not suffer while they are in school and the students also have enough time to study and develop their intellectual abilities.

The students therefore need to devise various strategies to enable them cope with their academic work and also meet their cultural obligations to their families.

As part of strategies to expand access to tertiary education to meet the growing demands of professional education, DE has been one of the best mode of teaching employed by various universities. This is as result of the unique advantages Distance and Open learning (DEOL) provide:

DE students are not required to be physically residing on the campus of the learning institution, there is flexibility in the program in terms of place, time and pace of learning. Experts in various courses write modules for students self-learning, hence study materials could reach the remotest part of the country (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009).

Despite all the benefits of distance learning, DE students face a lot of challenges in the course of their program

(Parkes, 2015). Studies conducted on DE in Zambia reveal that students face problems such as combining full time work and family demands with studies.

Since many distance students are adults, there are a lot of responsibilities to meet while meeting the academic demands of their learning institutions. Most distance education students are matured, married and working. Additionally, distance education students have the problem of combining work, family demands, and other commitments with packed academic work (Baliamoune-Lutz & McGillivray, 2009).

DE students encounter numerous challenges such as increased responsibilities from both nuclear and extended families and other social responsibilities. These responsibilities come with their associated pressure of work, fatigue and financial constraint which may result into stress-induced behaviors among these students.

Interactions with distance students on the University of Zambia Campus during their face-to-face sessions

showed complaints of headache, sleeplessness, and fatigue by these students.

Studies on distance education in Zambia have focused mainly on students learning with information communication technology (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009); problems of distance education students (Parkes, 2015) and student mode of learning (Semela, 2017).

Very little is known about the causes of stress and the coping strategies used by these students to survive the challenges encountered in pursuing distance education in Zambia.

Research evidence suggest that students experience some kind of stress in one way or the other, therefore stress is part of students' existence and can have an effect on how students cope with the demands of university life (Ombati, & Ombati, 2017).

Other studies have consequently attributed many emotional and physical symptoms among tertiary

students such as fatigue, headaches, depression to stress (Stromquist, 2011). Excessive stress among students results in poor academic performance, school dropout, addictions, crime etc.

Additionally, Parkes (2015) argue that high levels of stress do not only lead to anxiety and loss of objectivity but could also lead to increased incidence of errors and improper behavior such as cheating in examination, fraud and negligence.

This presupposes that high level of stress and it control have effect on students learning outcomes (Stromquist, 2011). However, how students cope with these stressors depend largely on their personality, perceptions and past experiences.

Much studies have been done in developed contexts such as USA and the UK on the relationship of stress factors among tertiary students and the effects of stress on their academic performance (Parkes, 2015), however little is known with regards to stress causes among Distance

education students in developing countries including Zambia.

Distance Education students have to adapt to various forms of psychosocial changes in addition to coping with the academic, social and work demands in preparing for their professional career (Parkes, 2015).

Stress comes in various forms which could affect a person's health irrespective of the race, age, and socio-economic background.

There are many causes of stress, however, the degree of stress largely depends on the physical health, interrelationship with others, work demands, the degree of expectations and dependency; and commitments in various forms (Stromquist, 2011).

Some form of stress is experienced by most students and distance education students are no exception especially adjusting to new situations in their learning environment.

Zambian distance education and sandwich students are faced with writing assignments, preparing for quizzes and end of semester examinations.

Furthermore, meeting deadlines for submission of assignments coupled with work and other social demands requires a lot of efforts to handle these multiple roles (Dollar and Gatti, 2011).

These academic activities coupled with work schedules and other social responsibilities among distance education students have received little research attention to inform policy and practice in the Zambian contexts.

Education can generally be perceived as a very important tool for development. Thus the importance of education in enhancing social, economic and human development has a general intrinsic value.

While education of both genders has a substantial impact on economic growth the education of girls was a stronger predictor of growth than that of boys in poorer

countries of sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2011; Parkes, 2015). Female education makes it possible to tap the potentials of women to support nation building which seems to be low in sub-Saharan Africa.

Education provides women with greater earning capacity and it promotes smaller, healthier and better educated families who can deal effectively with the challenges of the 21st century (Stromquist, 2011).

The empowerment of women has implications for demographical development. Education is seen as a key to transforming women's attitudes and values from traditional to more modern, and in their behavior from constrained to emancipated (Semela, 2017).

Female education affects the way household decisions are made and have effects on issues like fertility, children's health, and children's (especially girls) school attendance.

Dollar and Gatti (2011) have stated that women who began childbearing early had more children and there was an inverse relationship between the number of children and the level of education of women.

There is also a direct relationship between a mother's education and family health (Parkes, 2015).

The education of a mother is consistently one of the most powerful determinants of child health. Educated mothers are far more likely to make use of preventive health-care services and to demand timely treatment.

An enhanced nutritional standard also reduces child mortality by five to ten percent for each additional year of schooling (Semela, 2017).

The multiple benefits of female education are cumulative, in that they become mutually reinforcing over time, with the advantages transmitted across generations.

In spite of the pivotal role Zambian women play within family, communities and society at large, women hardly occupy key decision-making positions in all sectors of economic, political and social life in Zambia.

They tend to be relegated to the background as far as public decision-making is concerned because generally, relatively few women have high education in Zambia.

University education has been found to prepare high calibre professionals to take charge of policies and administrative management of a nation and to facilitate national development.

It has been observed that though all the universities in Zambia have adopted affirmative action to increase the enrollment of female students (Meier zu Selhausen & Weisdorf, 2016) and have gender desks to ensure their welfare, conditions of operation in the universities conflict with cultural expectations of a woman's roles in the family, which appears to be static and do not always favour the intellectual development of females.

The interconnections between education, the family and social spheres of life are integral to the experiences and outcomes of female education. These relationships highlight the need to understand experiences in the life of the Zambian female student.

Female students generally have been documented to experience many difficulties during their academic programmes, but what is not well documented are the nature of the problems and the coping strategies they employ.

Information about women's education in universities provides the need for greater efforts to expand and improve university education for women.

Dollar and Gatti (2011) stated that understanding how female students cope with their difficulties will provide the building block for future intervention strategies designed to minimize problems, increase retention rates and improve academic performance.

They are stressed and this requires effective strategies for coping with their stress to allow female students in the university perform academically well to reach their goals and still maintain healthy family environments.

It has been observed in some Zambian public universities that female students often had to combine academic work and family roles and at times deferred their programmes, due to family problems, unlike their male colleagues.

If women are well resourced to develop, they will be empowered to make better contributions for improvement of the living standards of the family, the development of their communities and the nation.

Considering the fact that fewer women make it to the tertiary level of education in Zambia, it is important that an enabling environment be provided for female students in the universities to concentrate on their academic work.

In this case the family, the community, the various universities, the government and non-governmental institutions can all be key players.

The government, and non-governmental institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations and the universities, have instituted structures to facilitate increases in the enrolment of female students at all levels of education in Zambia. However, not much has been heard about how female students manage their family lives while in school in order to have a smooth running family and good grade scores.

Education and family life are not separate entities but interact and impinge on each other with particular implications for the position of women within each entity.

The less attention a woman gives to family life the more time she will have for her intellectual development and the easier the attainment of her academic aspirations.

However, while high concentration on intellectual development may cause a dysfunction in the family, the end result is a gain for the individual the family and the entire nation.

On the other hand, a loss of female intellectual development is a great loss to the individual, the family and the nation.

The interactions between family and education and their effects on female students in the university have implications on how female students organize their time and responsibilities and how they feel.

There is the likelihood that some female students may end up with dysfunctional families while others may not be able to meet their educational aspirations, depending upon the coping skills they employed and the support they received from family member stake-holders.

This section has generated information on coping strategies adopted by female students in Zambian public

universities to manage family barriers to their academic progress.

Though the government, the universities, and other organizations are all trying to improve female access to university and also encourage them to increase retention, it appears there is more to be done to prevent attrition and ensure attainment of their academic goals.

Nonetheless students employed seven different strategies to balance family and academic work. Family members and paid-domestic workers assisted with students' family roles, the students still had several roles to play to enable them concentrate on their intellectual development.

The Zambian culture of gender role segregation in families may have to give way to gender neutral skill training at both the family and institutional levels.

It will also be helpful to consider the special needs of female students in the development of programmes of the university, especially in the provision of social

services that can take care of some of their family roles and provide them with effective study support systems.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the face of poverty, both boys and girls are threatened with lack of access to schooling. However, because of the little value placed on girls' education, the girls are more likely to stay out of school in the case of unaffordable school fees.

While girls are taught to play dolls and play houses, boys are given building blocks and video or computer games.

Hence, the foundation of understanding relationships and expressions of creativity are given to girls while boys are provided with the foundations of problem-solving, spatial relationships and hands-on skills at an early age.

In this light, we see that traditional child rearing practices tend to limit the exposure of females to the core skills demanded by various learning disciplines such as technology and engineering.

Various studies have confirmed that female students struggle in math and science. As a result, more effort is being made to encourage girls to be successful in those classes.

In general, the studies suggest that female students need to feel supported in the male dominated subjects like mathematics and science.

Semela (2017) suggested that, “Changing institutional perspectives toward females and changing boys' perceptions of who can excel in mathematics can have a powerful effect on girls' mathematics success.” Also, teachers need to provide examples of women in history that have demonstrated success in those subjects.

Efforts are being made at different education levels to decrease the current gender gap. There is still concern for gender differences in the future, but unlike past decades, male students have become the focus. The best tactic for teachers to take is to be aware of and limit gender stereotypes in the classroom.

In the absence of free basic education and in the case of secondary education, which is generally not free, provision of

bursary schemes for needy girls has proved very successful in giving access to girls and keeping them in school.

Research by some scholars has shown that many poor parents cannot afford secondary education, and, therefore, many children drop out of school after primary level.

In the case of girls poor parents do not feel pressured to send their daughters to secondary school since the girls are considered big enough to get married on completion of primary school or earlier.

Bursaries have saved many girls not only from dropping out of school but also from early marriage.

The United Nations has recognized women's central role in development and the importance of understanding the gender-differentiated effects of development planning.

But more importantly, the Beijing Platform of Action's strategic objective makes a call to "generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation".

After several international conferences there is a growing awareness that a system of policy relevant gender statistics needs to be developed for monitoring changes in the situation of women compared to men.

Moreover, a set of comparable gender indicators is needed for monitoring progress in gender equality and for making appropriate cross-country comparisons.

The need for gender analysis and for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and in the implementation of programmes was stated in the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and was reaffirmed by the Special Session of the General Assembly, Beijing+5 in 2000.

The Platform urges Governments and international organizations to promote research and dissemination of information on a number of areas of concern and generate and disseminate gender statistics for planning and evaluation.

In conclusion, in Zambia, women have made immense advancements in the education system.

In the beginning the purpose of their education was to be a teacher for their young children. They were not encouraged to apply their knowledge outside of the home and family setting.

Over the decades, women were slowly allowed to enter schools and pursue higher education levels. Massive advancement came after the World Wars because women had demonstrated that they were capable of more than the societal expectation.

Several factors contributed to the advancement of women in education such as, the growth of a federally funded school system, diminishing gender stereotypes, and women entering the workforce.

Today women are excelling in the education system and male students have become the focus of concern. While there still remain some subjects that have remained male dominated, gender inequalities in the education system are slowly disappearing.

The goals for the future of gender differences in education are to reduce the gender gap in terms of graduation and dropout rates, and to create curriculum that is free of gender bias.

While it will take time to achieve these goals, it is amazing the advancements women have made in education...especially in the last sixty years.

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