

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**TREND AND CAUSES OF FEMALE STUDENTS
DROPOUT FROM TEACHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS OF ETHIOPIA: THE CASE
OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

This article examines the state of female students' enrollment and dismissal rate and major factors that cause them to dropout from the higher learning institutions. Data were collected from the drop out students, instructors, gender officers and guidance and counseling office of the University through questionnaires, interview and focus group discussion. Moreover, secondary data were collected from the university registrar. The results of the study reveal that though the enrollment rate of female students increased from time to time there is a wide gap between the two sexes. Moreover, the dismissal rates of female students are greater than males. The major factors that caused female students to be dismissed from the university include harassment, homesickness, lack of assertiveness training, teachers gender insensitivity, absence of special support program, poor time management, anxiety, financial problems lack of proper guidance, and counseling service and department placement without interest.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Ethiopia is one of the poorest and educationally disadvantaged countries in the world. Rose (2003: 1) predicted based on the data of 1993/94 that when the primary gross enrolment ratio was just 30 percent for boys and 19 percent for girls. It was predicted that "in spite of recent enrolment increases, with no other changes to admission rates or to progression rates

within the system, by 2008/09 almost two-thirds of the school-aged population would still remain out of primary school, and the gender gap would worsen". The existing literature also reveals unsatisfactory pictures of a stark gender imbalance against females. As Seyoum (1991) indicated, after a long time in 1974 the rate of female enrollment at the tertiary level in the

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country reached only 6 percent. The same study also indicated that the number of graduates in the country over decade that is between 1963 and 1973 was only 6.7 percent.

It is very evident that gender issues have received high priority in education policy in Ethiopia since the new government came to power in the early 1990s. A specific objective of the Education and Training Strategy is to use education to change attitudes towards the role of women in development (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia {FDRE}, 2002). This included giving attention to gender issues in curriculum design, placing special emphasis upon the recruitment, training and assignment of female teachers, and giving financial support to raising the participation of women in education. The education of girls was also supported by a number of other government policies such as population and social policy, women's policy, etc (Rose, 2003)

The Women's Policy primarily aims to institutionalize the political, economical, and social rights of women by creating an appropriate structure in government offices and institutions so that the public policies and interventions can be gender-sensitive and can ensure equitable development for all Ethiopian men and women (Transitional Government of Ethiopia {TGE}, 1994). Consistent with the above policy, Article 25 of the new Constitution guarantees all persons equality before the law, and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of gender. In addition, Article 35 reiterates principles of equality of access to economic opportunities, including the right to equality in employment and land ownership ((Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia {FDRE}, 1995). Moreover, a National Education Policy, which aims at raising the enrollment rate and retention of

girls, is being developed and implemented. The Ministry of Education is in the process of reviewing the education curricula. In the education sector development program gender is mainstreamed in the different components such as curriculum, teacher training, capacity building and through distance education to enhance the participation and performance of female students at different levels (Transitional Government of Ethiopia {TGE}, 1994)

Despite the positive effects of gender-sensitive policies, factors that constrain girls' entry into tertiary educational institutions seem to exert a greater impact on gendered access in the contemporary context than factors that facilitate it. Bookie Kethugisile, et al. (2000) indicates that socio-economic and cultural factors, which inhibit girls' access to education in the primary and secondary levels effectively, cut off their access to tertiary education. They cite factors such as inadequate educational facilities; male-biased or inappropriate curricula; the devaluation of girls' education; teenage pregnancies; financial considerations; early marriages; the timing of girls' initiation ceremonies and psychological, social and cultural barriers that portray women as perpetual minors and which in turn negatively affect girls' and women's perceptions of higher education.

Some girls clearly do enter tertiary institutions despite numerous obstacles, but for most girls, the battles to overcome gender impediments and obtain qualifications once they are enrolled continue unabated. They often encounter an institutional culture that has not been transformed and that remains hostile to their gender needs. Within this culture, they either negotiate their specific needs as discretely and unobtrusively as possible, or dropout when the environment makes

learning untenable. Their requirements may vary from the need for childcare for parent, the need for women's residences, for safe and accessible transport to and from educational institutions at all hours, to an institutional culture which values women's intellectual capacities and skills (Bookie Kethugisile, et al. 2000).

In order to ensure that every girl enjoys her fundamental right to education, different strategies and intervention programs were developed and implemented by the government of Ethiopia through the already established gender machinery. Special effort has been made to bridge the gender gap in development through taking affirmative actions across various ministries and at all levels of education. The ministry of education is taking many measures to improve girls' enrollment in the higher education. One of the measures is taking affirmative action strategies. As per the strategy, for tertiary level enrollment Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Qualification Certificate (EHEEQC) grades favor girls. That is for girls the entrance result is lower than their male counterparts. As a result, the number of female students enrolled in higher learning institutions is relatively increasing at an alarming rate.

Despite this fact, experiences of the researchers show that the dropout rate of female students in higher learning institutions is so high as compared with their male counterparts. It even exceeds their rate of graduation (Ababayehu, 1998). Here, it seems clear that though the Ministry of Education has tried to increase the enrollment of girls in higher learning institutions, many female students are dropped out from higher learning institutions in each year and in every semester. Thus, the problem of female students' dropout at tertiary level learning

institutions seems worth stressing. To the best knowledge of the researchers, it appears much has not been done to investigate the probable causes to the problem at hand. It is in the light of this problem that the researchers were initiated to undertake this study in the aforementioned area.

Thus, the general objective of the study is to assess the trend of female students' dropout rate and to investigate the major factors that cause female students to dropout from the higher learning institutions.

To achieve the above stated objectives, the following research questions are raised

- What looks like the state of girls' enrollment and dropout rate in higher learning institutions of Ethiopia?
- What are the factors that cause female students to drop out from higher learning institutions?

METHODOLOGY

Subjects of the study

This study was conducted on one higher learning institutions of Ethiopia, Jimma University. Hence, the population of this study included all readmitted female students of Jimma University, (Faculty of education). The reason behind selecting faculty of education is that from the dismissed students the majority of them are from this faculty. From the total 362 readmitted students of the year 2007/2008 in Jimma Universities, 130 students were selected and taken as samples of the study by stratified sampling techniques. The researchers believe that these readmitted students can represent the target population as they consist of different departments. In addition, six instructors, gender officers, and guidance and counselors of the university were also selected as a sample

for the study by using purposive sampling technique.

Data Collection Instruments

This study adopted the descriptive research design. The data input for the study were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The data were collected using the following techniques.

Questionnaire Survey: This was done for all selected readmitted students of faculty of education. The questionnaire survey helped to generate both qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to causes of female student dropout. For this purpose both open and close-ended types of questions were prepared and distributed

Key Informant Interview: Structured types of interview guides were prepared for instructors, university gender officers and the university guidance and counselor officers.

Focus Group Discussion: This was done to triangulate, supplement, and enrich the results of the other methods. Based on the outputs and processes started through the questionnaire survey and key informant interview, key discussion questions were raised for female students for further discussion. To undertake the focus group discussion, two focus groups, each comprising 8 students, were made and discussion points were raised.

Documentary Review: The researcher employed this instrument to gather data and relevant statistics regarding student admission and attrition. The information was gathered from unpublished materials such as reports and statistical abstracts. The information was expected to supplement the primary data collected.

Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques were employed. The data collected through questionnaire survey and documents were presented through frequency distributions and percentage. On the other hand, data from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, classified and presented in a narrative form. The qualitative data were intertwined with the quantitative data to further enrich and enhance the information collected.

Findings and Discussion

In this part, the quantitative and qualitative data collected through different means of data collection tools are presented. The quantitative data collected via the questionnaire and from documents are processed, summarized and presented in tables followed by brief descriptions of the data. The data gathered through interview and focus group discussions is presented qualitatively in narrative summary forms after quantitative data description. Generally, for the sake of convenience, related items or concepts have been treated together. Thus, the findings and discussions are with respect to the question of the study.

Trends of Female Students' Enrollment and Dropout rate

The trends of new student admission help secure the participation of students at freshman level alone. In order to determine the annual growth rate of all students from freshman through graduating years, it seems imperative to examine trends of students' enrollment by sex in different academic years. In response to this, Table I indicates the enrollment of both male and female students in six years time.

Table I. Enrollment of regular undergraduate Degree program of Jimma University, Faculty of Education

Academic Year	Female		Male		Total
	#	%	#	%	
2001/2	33	16.92	162	83.08	195
2002/3	69	11.69	521	88.31	590
2003/4	237	21.37	872	78.63	1109
2004/5	235	20.71	900	79.29	1135
2005/6	263	21.21	977	78.79	1240
2006/7	294	26.23	827	73.77	1,121
Overall	1,131	19.69	4,259	80.31	5390

Source from Jimma university registrar office

As it is clearly depicted in Table I, the total number of female students enrolled with in the consecutive six years (2001/2 -2006/7) in the faculty of education was increasing from year to year. For instance, the enrollment of females in the year 2001/02 was only 33 (16.9%) of the total. This figure rose to 294(26.2%) of the total in the year 2006/7. Nevertheless, from the total enrollment of 5,390 students in the six consecutive years, the number of females was only 1,131 (19.69%).

From the Table I, one can clearly understand that though the enrollment of students in

the University (faculty) is increasing from year to year, it should be noted that it is far from reaching gender equity in higher education. For instance, the percentage of male students enrolled in the year 2006/07 is 73.77 % while the percentage of females enrolled in the same year is only 26.23%. In other words, even though there is a steady increase in the general number of male and female students' enrollment, there is still wide gender disparity that is the gap between the two sexes is yet wide and a subject of discussion.

Table II. Enrollment and dismissal rates of regular undergraduate Degree program of education faculty (JU) the year 2005/06

Department	Enrollment			Dismissal				
	M	F	F(%)	M	M(%)	F	F(%)	Total(%)
Amharic	58	46	44.23	8	13.79	26	56.52	32.70
Afan oromo	74	45	37.81	3	4.05	37	82.22	33.61
English	131	14	9.65	22	16.79	10	71.42	22.07
Biology	90	42	31.81	9	10	24	57.14	25.00
Physics	90	13	12.62	24	26.66	9	69.23	32.04
Chemistry	110	19	14.72	31	28.18	12	63.15	33.33
Mathematics	125	11	8.08	16	12.8	8	72.72	17.65
Geography	158	40	20.20	29	18.35	36	90.00	32.83
History	141	33	18.96	12	8.51	23	69.69	20.11
Overall	977	263	22	154	15.45	185	70.23	27.70

Source from Jimma university registrar office

As shown in Table II from the nine departments of the faculty of education, most of female students were dismissed from Afan Oromo, Geography, Amharic, Biology and History department. From the total admitted female students (263) in the faculty of education Jimma University, in the year 2005/6 academic year 185 students that is 70.23% were dismissed within one academic semester. In other words, half of the female admitted students were dismissed in a single academic year. Nevertheless, a look at the dismissal rate of students indicates that male's dismissal is by far lower (15.45%) than their female counterparts, that is 70.23%.

As illustrated in Table II, the dismissal rate of female students is by far greater than their male counterparts. For instance, while the dismissal rate of female students in mathematics is 19.1% of female students enrolled, it is only 2.48% for females from the total males enrolled in the department. A look at the total dismissal rate indicates that while the total dismissal rate (for all departments) female students is 6.47%, it is only 1.33% for males giving a male – female ratio of 1:6 which implies that for

each and every 1 male student dismissal, there are 6 female dismissals.

Causes of Students Dropout

From the above discussions, it is clear that though the enrollment of students in higher learning institutions has shown improvement over the past few years, the number of dropouts is parallel to enrollment. If that is a case, what are the causes of high dropout among female students? Respondents were asked through close and open-ended questions to list the possible factors that cause female students to dropout from higher learning institutions. The responses of the respondents are presented in the following section.

Lack of Female Role Model Teachers

One of the most convincing arguments for increasing the number of women teachers in schools relates to the positive impact that doing so has on girls' education. There is evidence to show a correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrollment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2003). In other words,

the presence and/or absence of female teachers at any level have impact on enrollment and retention of female students. To see the existence of female teachers as well as whether students learn

by female teachers or not and to see its effect on students learning questions were raised for females students in the university and their response is presented in the Table III.

Table III. The presence female role model teachers in the university

Item	f	%
Have you ever taught by female teachers in the university?		
A. Yes	40	37.03
B. No	68	62.96
Total	108	100.0
If your response to the above question is "No" what do you think is the reason?		
A. Since there are no female teachers in the department	50	73.52
B. There are female teachers in the department but not assigned to us	14	20.58
C. Since there is no female teachers in the university	4	5.88
D. Others Specify	-	-
Total	68	100.0

As it is clearly presented in Table III female respondents were asked whether they were taught by female teachers in the university or not; 40 (37.03%) of the respondents replied they were taught while the other majority, i.e. 68 (62.96 %) responded that they were not ever taught by female teachers. Those who said no to the question were in turn requested to mention the reason why female teachers did not teach them. Most of them, i.e. 50 (73.52%) replied that they were not taught by female teacher since there are no female teachers in the department. While others 14(20.58%) stated that even though there are female teachers in the department they are not assigned for them. On the other

hand, very few respondents 4(5.88%) mentioned that they were not taught by female teachers since there are no female teachers in the university.

To identify the impact of absence of role model female teachers on students' academic performance, students were in turn asked to mention probable impacts. Consequently, they stated the impacts on issues such as being used as role model, understanding problems easily, and ease approaching them. Most of them reported that since they have not taught by female teachers they failed to get good role models that they imitate to be like them or they feel that one day they can be like them. Some

times, since they do not have female teachers, they feel that females can not be lecturers in the university. If they see female teachers teaching us, they can be motivated or encouraged to learn. Besides, female teachers unlike male teachers can understand the problems of female students easily. For instance, (respondents replied) if female students are sick due to menstruation problems, female teachers can understand it easily than male teachers. Thus, the presence of females in the university is vital.

Likewise, those students who reported that female teachers had taught them were asked to mention the benefits they get from being taught by female teachers in the university. They stated that since female teachers know the problems of female students better than male teachers do, they could understand us better. In addition, since they passed many challenges while they were students, they can share their experiences to solve the problem that we face today. Sometimes female teachers also struggle for the rights of the female students. They also stressed that they are pleased when female teachers teach them because they are symbols for female students in that females can reach at higher level if they work hard like males. Furthermore, they reveal that while they face problems in the university, they openly discuss the problems and find solutions with female teachers. Since they are sympathetic to female problems, they make the students free to say whatever they want to say. This makes students learn freely and feel relaxed. They give chance to ask and answer questions in the classroom.

From the response of the female students, one can understand that the presence of female teachers in the higher institutions that can serve as a role model has a significant effect on the female students'

success in higher learning institutions. This implies that the absence of female teachers in universities in adequate amount can have a negative repercussion on the success of female students in the university. Research findings by UNESCO (2003) show that in countries where there are equal numbers of male and female primary teachers, there is close to gender parity in student intake. By contrast, in countries where women constitute only 20% of teachers, there are far more boys than girls entering school. However, as highlighted in the same study from Nepal, such large-scale trends mask more complex patterns of the local level. The relationship between women teachers and females' enrollment is more than a simple cause and effect, as there are many factors that prevent female students from attending school, it also influence the number of women teachers. Increasing the number of women teachers has to be accompanied by other strategies to promote females' education. There are different reasons for the generally positive relationships between girls' enrollment and women teachers.

Supporting the above idea scholars such as Randell and Jennifer (2008) pointed out in their research that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the level of girls' enrollment and the declining level of female faculty members in the secondary and tertiary systems. Without role models that are proportional to the number of women in society, the education system continues to uphold male power and authority roles. This becomes strikingly evident at the university level, where only small percent of faculty members are women.

Lack of Assertiveness Training for Female Students

Assertiveness training, which is a behavioral technique, help students

develops the necessary social skills to manage interpersonal and academic situations more effectively, and to feel better about themselves in those interpersonal and academic situations. One of the roles of the higher learning institutions to bring gender equity is

providing such skills. Thus, to see to what extent the sample higher institutions offer such training for female student, respondents were asked for the same their response is presented in the Table IV.

Table IV. Provision of assertiveness training in the university

Item	f	%
Have you received any assertiveness training in the university?	30	27.8
A. Yes	78	78.2
B. No		
Total	108	100.0

The Table IV indicates that the majority, 78 (78.2%) of the students replied that the university did not provide assertiveness training for female students and thus they are not benefited from such strategies of developing confidence. While the rest 30 (27.8%) of the respondents replied that they are benefited from such strategies. This result indicates that the sample university has given less attention to the provision of assertiveness training for female students to develop self-confidence among female students.

Information collected through focus group discussion with students also confirmed the fact that though there is no any sort of assertiveness training given by the university, they have got some sort of informal advice from the senior female students when they were in their first year at the university. From the advice, students acquired information such as how to work

hard in the university, making them to be independent of male students; reduce their fear, not to feel inferior to male students etc. Additionally, senior female students shared the positive and negative incidents they experienced in the university and this helped them to be aware of the environment of the university in general. This orientation also makes female students clear in that all female students can face many problems during their stay in the university but they have to struggle to be successful.

Here one thing that we have to be clear is that there are no assertiveness trainings given by the university. As a result, there are no systems developed to organize, facilitate and offer assertiveness training for female students. The absence of such support for female students is one probable cause for their dropout from higher learning institutions. Supporting this view,

Abebayehu (1998) noted that due to the absence of assertiveness training in the universities most female students develop a feeling of inferiority about their abilities. This in turn contributes to their low achievement and failure in higher education. To reduce such problem to some extent orientation schemes and assertiveness training organized by the university and offered to female students may help them build self-confidence so that they can integrate themselves with university life.

Yelfign (2001) strongly mentioned that unless girls are given some kind of assertiveness training after they join the university, they might be susceptible to academic dismissal. Thus, lack of such training could be a cause of female students' dismissal. She further goes to say that assertiveness training is provided to female students who join higher institutions to be successful in their academic and social life. Outstanding female students show their experience with study skills to first-year students in order to help getting a good start at university.

On the other hand, Yelifgn (2003) after a review of literature confirmed that when female students in higher institutions join the universities they usually face problems for the environment is new to them. Particularly in countries where patriarchal society is dominant, females believe that they are less competent than male students are even if they have a potential and a capacity to do. Hence, as a remedy to this universal problem, each institution should provide assertiveness training for female students that can help these students to develop self-confidence. Many female students have difficulty in speaking up in conflict situations. The majority of female students may feel intimidated by pushy people, or have low self-esteem and

regularly put aside their own desires in favor of what others want. This can result in a variety of psychological problems, especially depression, with feelings of low self-esteem and helplessness. Lack of assertiveness makes them feel powerless and make them be dependent on others (mostly male students of their department).

In addition to assertiveness training, since female students are disadvantaged at different angles, provision of training as how to take and make notes, attend lessons and study are of paramount importance. This kind of training could be organized and delivered by gender office of the university. However, information collected from students confirms that there was no any kind of training given to them in the university regarding the issues raised. Moreover, the information collected from the gender officer representative of the university shows that the office facilitates tutorial classes for first year female students. As the officer representative made clear, each faculty has gender office representative, which facilitates first year female student tutorial class. However, there is no assertiveness training given for the female students.

University and Department Choice of Students

University and department placement of students' play a key role in their future life adjustment and their success in a given field of study. In most cases if students are placed in the university and department they are interested in, they can be successful in academic endeavors in particular and in their future life in general and vice versa. Considering such truth in mind, students were asked to air out their view for the same. The result is depicted in Table V.

Table V. Students' choice of university and department

Item	f	%
Did you join the university by your choice?		
A. Yes	62	57.4
B. No	46	42.6
Total	108	100.0
Have you joined the department that you are enrolled by choice?		
A. Yes	80	74.1
B. No	28	25.9
Total	108	100.0

As it is seen in Table V, most of the students, that is, 62(57.4%) reported that they joined the university by their own choice, where as 46 (42.6%) of the respondents replied that they join the university without their choice. From this result even though the majority of the respondents joined the university by their choice, a significant number of respondents joined the university without their interest that may have impact on their learning and achievement.

Subsequently, those respondents who replied as they joined the university without their choice were asked to state the effect of this on their academic performance. As a result, they explained that one of the problems is lack of interest in the environment of the university and this makes them lack attention to attend their lesson. Some of the respondents also reported that since they are assigned too far from their parents they are suffering from longing of their families (particularly when they were freshman students). They

strongly argue that this is the problem of the Ministry of Education in placing them in the universities without considering their choice.

In item two, of Table V respondents were also requested to report whether they join the department, that they are attending now their interest and choice or not. The majority of them, that is, 80 (74.1%) verify that they join their department without their choice. This implies that the interest of students to choose a department is not considered and this may make students to loose interest to study hard in the department where they are placed. On the other hand, the rest 28(25.9%) of the students joined the department by their interest and thus they do not have any problem regarding department placement.

Focus group discussant students also substantiate this result. They reported that most students in the university are placed in different departments without considering their interest and this led most

of the students to lack motivation to learn. Indeed, they do not have courage to learn as they thought that the field is not appropriate to their potential; they develop anxiety and lack of motivation. As a result, they failed to study hard and this directly affects their academic performance negatively. Moreover, some of them responded that since they undermine their department; they lose interest and they cannot understand what the teachers are teaching. Similarly, one interviewed student account that

I was assigned in the department of Geography and Environmental Studies without my interest; my interest was to be placed in the department of Amharic. Consequently, I have lost my interest in the department and thus dismissed in the university and now I am a readmitted student.

Furthermore, interview results from the instructors show that females at the time of department placement are complaining to change from what they have been placed. In addition, entertaining the interest of every student interest at the time of department placement is difficult (as replied by the heads). Thus, some students feel dissatisfied with the department placed and lose interest to learn in the department

placed and thus ultimately dropout of the university.

The existing literature on girls' education in higher educations of Ethiopia also confirms that there are few girls who pass school and join higher institutions. There is also a lot of competition among students for the limited admissions to higher institutions and there are few girls who have high grades. Thus, the desire of girls to join the fields that they want require high GPA (General Point Average) for these departments do not match and many of them go to the departments they do not want to join. Moreover, higher institutions are also a new environment, and for some girls it becomes difficult to adjust. The new environment adds to academic difficulties, and eventually girls drop out (Yelfign, 2001).

Guidance and counseling service

Provision of guidance and counseling service for students in the university is very crucial for their success in their academic and non-academic endeavors. In the light of this, students were asked about the issue at hand and the result is presented in the Table VI.

Table VI. The availability and utilization of guidance and counseling service

Item	N	%
Do you know that there is guidance and counseling service for students in the university?		
A. Yes	24	22.2
B. No	84	77.8
Total	108	100.0
Have you went there and received counseling service?		
A. Yes	0	0.0
B. No	24	100.0
Total	24	100.0

As depicted in the Table VI surprisingly a large number of respondents 84 (77.8%)

reported that they did not know the existence of guidance and counseling service in the university. While the rest 24 (22.2%) of the respondents confirmed that they were aware about the presence of guidance and counseling service in the university. Nevertheless, amazingly none of them went to the office to get service. The result indicates that the students are not aware of the existence of guidance and counseling service in the universities. An interviewed student, a second year student in the department of History, reasoned out that most students do not know what services are given and not given by the office. Even those who know the presence of the service feel shy to go there and get the service

Similarly, the university guidance and counselor officers confirm that even though the office is open for helping the students, the numbers of students who come to this office are negligible in relation to the total number of the students of the university.

From this result, the students are not benefited from the office. On the other

hand, Gysbers, and Henderson, (2000) strongly suggested that provision of guidance and counseling to students is vital to make students understand the school environment, to develop school success skills, career awareness and educational planning, understanding self and others, and develop interpersonal and communication skills. Indeed, the university is expected to arrange such services and make students aware of such services so that they can be beneficiaries of such service. The presence or absence of the guidance and counseling service is assumed one factor affecting the academic achievement of students.

Teachers' gender sensitiveness in the classroom

Teachers play significant role in students learning. Particularly if teachers have positive attitudes towards female students and are gender sensitive in the classroom, female students will be encouraged to learn. To see the teachers' gender sensitiveness in the university classroom question was raised for the respondents and the results are presented in Table VII.

Table VII. Teachers gender sensitiveness in the classroom

Item	f	%
Are teachers' genders sensitive in the classroom?		
A. Yes	28	25.9
B. No	80	74.1
Total	108	100.0

As shown in the Table VII, while the majority, 80(74.1%) of the case replied that their teachers are not gender sensitive in the classroom, the rest 28 (25.9%) of them reported as teachers are gender sensitive. This finding indicates that most of the university instructors are not gender

sensitive in their classroom. Unless instructors understand the needs and problems faced by female students in the education system, it is difficult to expect the situation of females to improve in practical terms. Interviewed instructors reported that the way teaching and learning

is carried out in higher learning institutions encourages more competition than cooperation. This situation is contradictory to the way women are raised and function. As a result, women could be alienated, for that, it could result in the alienation of male students as well. In addition, interviewed female students confirmed the fact that since teachers under perceive the performance of female students, most of them dread to approach their instructors to ask academic support and advice when they need. Even, as the interviewed students reported, they feel shy to ask teachers as their face is not well coming.

The prevalent view in the literature so far holds that boys compared to girls receive more attention, praise and critical feedback,

from their teachers (Sadker et al., 1991). In other words, teachers perceive girls to be less intelligent and thus treat boys and girls differently. Accordingly, male students receive more attention from the teachers, given more time to talk in class and ultimately are given more praise than girls are in the classroom. As a result, there is no self-esteem for the girls because they are meant to be subservient, to be quiet and sit at the back of the classroom.

In addition to the above problems, students were asked to rate different sets of factors given as “yes” or “no” basing that a certain problem is a factor for students dropout from the Universities or not and the result is given below(see Table VIII)

Table VIII. Response of students on causes of dropout

No	Factor	Students response			
		Yes		No	
		No	%	No	%
1	Unfavorable weather condition	39	36.1	69	63.9
2	Lack adequate facilities	61	56.5	47	43.5
3	Lack of interest to learn	43	39.8	65	60.2
4	Home sickness	75	69.4	33	30.6
5	Weak academic background	72	66.7	36	33.3
6	Poor time management	88	81.5	20	18.5
7	Anxiety	102	94.4	6	5.6
8	Teachers' method of teaching	63	58.3	45	41.7
9	Teachers evaluation technique	37	34.3	71	65.7
10	Economic problem	61	56.5	47	43.5
11	Problems related to pregnancy	62	57.4	46	42.6
12	Sexual harassment	89	82.4	19	17.6
13	Poor study habit	61	56.5	47	43.5
14	Lack of support from teachers	85	78.7	23	21.3

Table VIII indicates that except three factors (weather condition, lack of interest to learn, teachers' evaluation technique); the remaining are the factors that cause students to drop out from the institutions of higher learning.

Anxiety

As it is indicated on the Table VIII, 94.4% of the respondents replied that *anxiety* is a factor that causes students to leave the

university. Interviewed students' confirm this result. They reported that since they face new environment in the university, they feel anxious and thus unable to attend their lessons properly and able to read at the right time. They further reported that senior students of the campus are sources of frustration and tension. The discussant students confirmed that senior students create frustration among fresh ones by saying you will be here for the first semester, i.e. you will be getting out of the campus.

In the same way, current researcher results confirm that anxiety is one of the series causes of female students' dropout from higher learning institutions. For instance, Randell and Jennifer (2008) with the sponsor of the national dropout prevention center conducted an extensive survey of literature in order to summarize the rate of dropout of the risk factors and identified that one of the causes of students dropout from the higher learning institutions is stress and anxiety.

Homesickness

For the majority of the cases, i.e. 75(69.4%), homesickness is another cause for students dropout from higher learning institutions. Focus group discussant female students explained that since most of the students leave their home for the first time, their mind is there in the home and thus highly affected by homesickness. Because of this, they cannot properly study with stable and well-adjusted frame of mind. Ziddy (2007) conducted a research on challenges facing the implementation of a policy on girls' education in Zanzibar and pointed out that homesickness as one of causes of female students' dropout. On the other hand, for 72(66.7%) of the cases, weak academic background of the students is considered as a major bottleneck for girls

dropout. Students clearly stated that our high school training is incomplete because teachers in the high schools do not cover the portions in the high school texts and the major contents, which serve as a base for university education, are left untouched.

Poor time management

Poor time management among female students is another important factor that causes female students to dropout from higher education institutions. Interviewed students and instructors substantiate that while students join the university, they fall in love with students or individuals outside the campus who do not help them to study hard and become successful in their academic endeavors. Students further noted that when they are fresh, they are subjects of discussion for love affairs and male students always request for love affairs and thus they waste time by being called by different students repeatedly. After many times of restless request by males, females may be engaged in love affairs and then another problem may occur. Following the engagement of female students in love, the males decide dating arrangements. They said that whenever the males need their girl friends, they call their girl friends at any time whether their girl friends are studying; taking rest, etc is not their headache. At this time, females do not refuse the question of their boy friends because they fear that their relationship will be put in danger. Students here stressed that female students try to create love relationship with males not based on real love but it is based on certain benefits mostly of academic benefit. Thus, they do not like to lose such benefits.

Likewise, research conducted by Ziddy (2007) designate that out of the number of causes of female students' dropout, poor time management is one of them. He also confirms that students are unrealistic with

their time management and fall behind in every area as a result. He further recommends that students should make a schedule and live by it

Economic problem

The other problem faced by female students is economic constraint. Economic constraints seriously affect girls' education, which spans from the very limitation of purchasing the necessary educational materials to affecting their health. Most of the students are from poor families and as a result, they failed to fulfill necessities such as education materials, cosmetics, recreation, etc. Focus group discussant students revealed that to get away from such traps they may be engaged in different risk full activities, i.e. they are engaged in different sexual affairs and exposed to them the risk of HIV and pregnancy that causes them to drop out of the university. The report from interviewed students confirmed that some students (mostly of rural origin) are exposed to such activities, which make them be vulnerable to the problem of HIV and pregnancy. One interviewed girl said the following:

I had a friend of mine. She was from poor rural family. She was unable to purchase for educational materials. She was in serious problem and we were sharing what we had with her. Nevertheless, she felt a sort of dependency on us. Lately she tried to get out of such a problem by being engaged in sexual activity by having partners from both outside and inside the university campus. Finally, her fate was being a victim of HIV/AIDS as well as dismissal from the university.

From this case, one could understand that economic problem of female students force them not only for academic dismissal but also exposes them to various sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment by students and some times by teachers is another problem that causes females to with draw from the university. This was evidenced by 89(82.4%) of the respondents. A research by Tesfaye (2006) confirms the same fact. He asserted that the social environment in which young women find themselves as they join higher education institutions is very different from what they seem to be familiar as they were under parental care and control. What is waiting them largely appears to be frequent and widespread sexual harassment and discrimination. For instance, one interviewed girl reported the following:

Girls too often encounter violence in the university. They continue to be sexually abused and harassed, at university by male classmates and some times by teachers. For many girls, violence and abuse are an inevitable part of the university environment.

To protect female students from such and other related problems, Gender offices are established in the higher learning institutions of the country. In line with this, interviewed students were asked about the office and consequently all the interviewed do not know its existence and purpose.

Another contributing factor for dropout which is related to harassment is pregnancy. This is evidenced by 62 (57.4%) of the respondents. In relation to pregnancy, one interviewed student reported the following:

I had known a female student who had a boy friend in the university. She approached him to get academic benefit out of him. While they were friends, they were committing sex without the use of condom or any contraceptive method. As a result, the

student becomes pregnant and dropped out from the university.

From the interview result of female students, it is clear that one of the causes of female students' dismissal from the university is sexual harassment by male students and teachers as well as unwanted pregnancy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The major purpose of this study was to assess the state of female students' enrollment and dismissal rate and to investigate the major factors that cause them to dropout from the higher learning institutions. Data were collected from the dropout students of the faculty of education in Jimma University, from instructors, gender officers and guidance and counseling office through questionnaires, focus group discussion and interview. Moreover, secondary data were collected from the registrar office of the university. Then the data were analyzed through percentage and using some descriptive statistics and qualitatively. Based on the analysis made, the following results were found:

- Even though the number of female students' enrollment in higher learning institutions has increased from year to year, there is still a wide gap between the two sexes. This clearly indicates that it is far from reaching gender equity in higher education of Ethiopia.
- Although many female students join the university, they do not survive in the university and subject to dismissal. In other words, the rate of dismissal among female students is by far greater than that of male students. This implies that increasing enrollment of female students in higher institutions does not give

guarantee for their survival in the university

- The major factors that cause female students to drop out from higher learning institutions include lack of assertiveness training, department placement without interest, lack of appropriate guidance and counseling service, lack of teachers support, anxiety, sexual harassment, poor time management, weak academic background, homesickness and economic problem. This implies that most of the causes emanate from the institutions, the teachers and the student from themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study the study comes up with the following recommendations:-

- However, there is a relative increase in the number of enrollment at tertiary level, generally the enrollment of female students in Ethiopia show a tendency of decline as one goes from primary to tertiary level. This in turn contributes to their marginal share at territory level. Therefore, attempts to promote the education of females in tertiary level should take account of quality primary and secondary education. To act otherwise is to forget the root cause of their under representation.
- The representation of female models among faculty members is a potential force to promote girls education. In fact it has always been associated with female student retention. Thus, in order to gradually reverse such shifting environment to the education of females' fair representation to high-ranking academics positions among university staff is properly suggested.
- Most females have a reserved view about their abilities. This in turn contributes to their low achievement

and failure in higher education. Providing appropriate orientation and assertiveness training may help them build self-confidence so that they can integrate themselves with the university life.

- Tutorial class should be given in all subjects. The rationale behind this approach is to improve the performance of female students and reduce their dismissal rate.
- To solve the financial problem of female students the university should design a mechanism of providing grant scheme targeted to the most needy female students is vital in improving retention and performance.
- The university through the gender office should organize gender awareness training for the instructors so as to incorporate gender variables in their instruction. Since such a strategy is vital force to help reduce the dishonor that has so far been attached females' subordinate position in academia
- The university should design a mechanism that helps female students placed in the department they choose. On top of maintaining the representation of female students in various fields, this strategy may reduce attritions caused by forced field choice.
- Freshman students particularly at the beginning face many problems since the environment is new to them. The guidance and counseling office of university is an appropriate body to give adequate orientation and advice. Therefore, universities should assign qualified personnel with full time that can provide appropriate service for the students, as they need help from the office.

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