

## Abstract

Considering women's meager percentage in political, economic and social arena in Nigeria, there is no doubt, there are more questions than answers on the issues concerning ordeals of women. The implementation of series of international (especially Beijing declaration of 1995 in which Nigeria is a signatory) and local women conventions is still a mirage and regurgitating issue among activists, social analyst and commentators. This paper tries to look at challenges faced by women in Nigeria and how gender roles are created, implemented and made to be seen as natural by culture and religious misinterpreters (the patriarchs). The objectives of the study are: to assess how gender role affect women; how scriptures are misinterpreted in order to reiterate male domination in the society and to suggest some panacea toward women empowerments in Nigeria. This paper used qualitative method of data analysis and data were collected from secondary sources. This study recommended that women ordeals need intensive attention in Nigeria. The main finding of this paper reveals that patriarchy is in really trending which serve as an impediment towards women empowerment.

## 1.1 Introduction

This study tries to look at the seemingly institutionalized Patriarchy in Nigeria and the need for Women Empowerment. Empowering women has become a frequently cited goal of development intervention (Mosedale, 2005). There is no doubt, despite their social, demographic, political and economic unique relevance; women have been squeezed to a sorry edge in almost every known human society, globally. As Johannsdottir (2009), posited that my reasoning is from a radical feminist point of view since, I blame the patriarchy and its detrimental effects, for women's position in the world. Patriarchy seems to have succeeded in its propaganda of stamping women's ordeals as God's pronouncement. These patriarchal ideologies are constantly championed, watered, cushioned or sponsored by religion misinterpretations, socio-biology and culture. Adam and Castle(1994) Posit that in patriarchal society like Nigeria, men have ultimate authority over material resources in the household, such as land and cash crops, and over the labor of women and other household members.

Patriarchy seems to be flamboyantly vegetating despite series of global women conventions. Since the approval of United Nations Human right declaration in 1948, issues concerning gender discrimination have gotten global attention. This served as the earliest building block for later global women conferences. Sometimes in 1965 United nations General Assembly adopted the declaration of any form of discrimination against women. This serve as a second major building block towards rescuing

women from patriarchal ordeals. Conferences such as that held in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. UN- Women (now The Commission on the Status of Women) (United Nations entity for Gender equality and the empowerment of women) has been responsible for organizing and following up the world conferences on women in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995).

Despite all these reputable global conventions, women are still in ever gushing tears prompting the concerned social analysts and commentators to doubt the globally and yet daily saying that, children are the leaders of tomorrow. It should be noted that these leaders of tomorrow need to be socialized or trained for certain period of time. Women are mostly, if not wholly the earliest agents of child socialization. According to Crespi Isabella (now the way we are, behave and think is the final product of socialization. Since the moment we are born, we are module into being what society wants us to be.

However, despite the positions of Mosedale(2005), Johannsdottis (2009), Adam and castle (1994) it is not yet known if patriarchy has place in Nigeria. This study would aim at ascertaining issues such as; finding out how gender roles affect women, to assess the effects of scriptural misinterpretation on subjugation of women and to explore the challenges faced by women in Nigeria.

## 1.2 Literature review

### 1.2.1 Gender roles, Sex roles and stereotype

In order to put the current stereotypic situation

of women into perspective, it is highly imperative to know what sex and gender roles entail. *Sex roles* are biological roles exhibited by men and women. This roles are innate, inbuilt and are determined at birth. Sex roles are static. For example a woman cannot impregnate a man and vice versa, men cannot breastfeed, women bear children, women have vagina while men have penis. *Gender role* are societal constructed norms of how men and women should behave. They are dynamic and alterable. Men and women can play this role perfectly interchangeably. For example; going to war, hunting, sports, sweeping, cleaning, cooking, baby sitting, washing, going to school, leadership and decision making etc. Stereotype according to Random House Webster's Dictionary (1998) refers to an unvarying form or pattern, specifically a fixed or conventional notion or conception of a person; group, idea, etc. held by a number of people and allows for no individuality or critical judgment. According to Hederington and Parke (1999) 'traditionally, men are supposed to earn a living to support their families. They are to be aggressive and in charge. Women belong at home cooking, and caring for children. They are to be submissive and weak. Gender stereotype such as this pervades society today'. According to Anaeme (2012) Gender discrimination and violence against women are global phenomena as old as human history. Gender roles are wrongly seen or defined by these cynics as sex roles. These cynics base their argument probably on Religious, cultural, socio-biological or psycho-biological perspectives.

Some scientists believe that variations in the behavior and social roles of men and women can be explained in terms of hormones and brain differences (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004) Endocrinologists, medical doctors with expertise on the production, maintenance, and regulation of hormones, long believed masculinity and femininity to be the result of sex hormones (Lillie, 1939). Gendered behaviors began to be justified by sex hormones, rather than religion (Bem, 1993). Sex hormones during gestation create brain differentiation, and thus were indirect causal agents for sex differences (Young, Goy, & Phoenix, 1965). In her study on women empowerment in Nsukka, Posits that the underrepresentation of Nigerian Women in educational, economic and political programmes could lead to a serious setback in development (Oyishi, 2011).

But argument in favor of biological origin of gender roles did not go unchallenged among scholars. Psychologists (Bandura and Waters, 1963; Kohlberg, 1966) used socialization theory to explain how girls and boys became socially appropriate men and women,

husbands and wives. Fausto-Sterling (2002) believes that the way people are attributed to a particular gender is a social process. Connell (1987) opines that although the hypothesis that biological factors largely determine behavior patterns in men and women continues to inform some scientific work, a century of research to identify the physiological origins of this influence has been unsuccessful. There is no evidence of the mechanisms which would link biological forces with the complex social behavior exhibited by human beings. Giddens (2013) supports this argument that theories that see individuals as complying with some kind of innate predisposition neglect the vital role of social interaction in shaping human behavior. According to UNESCO (2013), gender reveals how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined nor is it fixed forever. Also, Giddens (2013) argued that 'gender differences are biological in origin; these may be cultural factors of a general kind that produce such characteristics. In the majority of human cultures, due care for children, women could not readily take part in hunting or war but this does not mean that male aggression is the cause of this difference'. When boys are growing up, they are exposed to toy guns, catapult, bows and arrows, leadership and several other adventurous games or activities. While girl are exposed to domestic works like cooking, sweeping cleaning, washing of plates and clothes, baby sitting and submission to the decision of men etc.

### 1.2.2 Religion and women

Radical feminists, orthodox Marxists and traditional addicts should blame men more for their dogmatic selfish misinterpretation of scriptures just to reiterate male supremacy, not scriptures and religions themselves. If we carefully flip through Qur'an and Bible, though the verses showed little bit of male domination. But it doesn't just permit men to be wicked to women. When scripture says women should be submissive to men or be ruled by men, it means men must provide for women in order to earn respect. It should be noted that gender pronouncement by religion is conditional. Though some verses seem to have been constructed by men to buttress their supremacy. For example, in the Bible, Original Sin in the Garden of Eden was women. She tasted the forbidden fruit, tempted Adam, and has been paying for it ever since (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). In the book of Genesis, the lord said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee (Genesis, 3:16).

And in Qur'an, 'and if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry (other) women of your choice, two or three, or four but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one or (the captives and the slaves) that your right hands possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice (Qur'an, 4:3). Allah commands you as regards your children's (inheritance); to the male a portion equal to that of two female (Qur'an, 4:11). Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands). And guard in husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husbands property etc.). As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly if it is useful (Qur'an, 4: 34). Chapter of the Qur'an discuss extensively on three things; Divorce, dowry giving and inheritance which according to Lansing (2001:7913), three instances that affirm the male dominance over the females have been challenged, particularly by feminist scholars.

The theory behind men supremacy seems to be an arrangement for men to rightly or justly see the affairs of the society and women. Religion may not permit men to bully, hit or subjugate women out rightly. But since religion privileged men over women in terms of the ownership of means of production, men dominate women. In Marx's philosophy 'the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Since men inherit more than women according to Islam and culture, men have the primary instrument to condition women affairs in Nigeria.

### 1.2.3 Women in Nigeria and the world

Just as Alanana (2006) concludes that Progress, change and social stability are central to sociology of development, the three concepts are also crucial to the understanding and explanation of women and their situation in Nigeria and the world. To understand country's development, Seer (1972) raised three crucial questions that need to be answered: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? These three questions and their answers are also important in addressing the current situation of women in Nigeria. These questions cover researches on women educational attainment, economic position, political participation and access to health etc.

Women have approximately 49% (3,741,330bn) of the total world population of

7,550,262bn. While men have 3,808,932bn. According to (2017) population projection by the United Nations Department of Economic and social affairs. According to this same estimate, population of Nigeria is 190,886m. Female accounts for 94,157m while male accounts for 96,729m, women are still struggling make their voices heard.

In terms of gender gap, Global Gender gap report (2016:8) reports thus:

- ❖ **Economic participation and opportunity:** 24 countries (3 less than 2015) including four from sub-Saharan Africa: Burundi, Botswana, Rwanda and Ghana and the Nordic countries-Norway, Iceland and Sweden have closed more than 80% of the gender gap. 19 countries of which 15 are from Middle East and North Africa have closed less than 50%. On this index, Pakistan and Syria hold the last spot of this index. Thirty countries actually bellow average of the expected gender gap close globally (the Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). Nigeria, according to this same report, ranks 52<sup>nd</sup> globally in terms of economic participation and opportunity. It ranks 84<sup>th</sup> on labour force participation, 25<sup>th</sup> in terms of wage equality for similar work, estimated earned income 87<sup>th</sup>.
- ❖ **Educational attainment:** 24 countries actually closed educational gap, just one country less than 2015, guinea, and Benin and Chad hold last spot here globally. Thirty four countries fall below world average... there are 17 countries were women have less than 90% of education outcome' (the Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). Nigeria ranks 113<sup>th</sup> globally on gender gap on education, literacy 130, enrolment in primary education 129, enrolment in secondary education 128, and enrolment in tertiary education 117.
- ❖ **Political empowerment:** Only Iceland has closed more than 70% of its gender gap. Only Finland has closed more than 60% of its gender gap. 30 countries have closed less than 10% of gap (the same in 2015). Oman, Lebanon and Qatar occupy the lowest position as they closed less than 3% of their political gender gap. 100 countries globally rank below global average in this index. (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). According to this same report, Nigeria is the number 109<sup>th</sup> in the world, women in parliament 136, women in ministerial positions 42. According to report

News Agency of Nigeria as quoted by premium times (2017) only seven out of the 109 senators who will serve in the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly are women...four of the senators were elected on the platform of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), while three are members of All Progressives Congress (APC). For the House of Representatives according to Jimoh's article on Daily trust (2015) 15 (10 PDP and 5 APC) women lawmakers made it to the Green Chambers to represent the federal constituencies. It is worrisome that in Nasarawa state, there no women legislature in the house of Assembly. Currently, out of eleven local government chairman (Interim Management Team), only Sa'adatu Yahya for Obi and Jamila Sarki of Kokona are female (Joseph, Leadership; October, 25, 2017). Out of fourteen Members of the governing council of the Federal University Lafia, only Dr. (Mrs.) Chioma Nwadei, the current Deputy Director, Federal Scholarship Board of Nigeria is included. Patriarchy seems to have firmly plunged women to a sorry state in Nigeria.

- ❖ **Health and survival:** On access to health, thirty eight (38) countries have closed gender gap on this. India, Armenia and China are the lowest ranked countries. No country has closed more than 90% of gender gap on health and survival. Seven countries scored below world average. While nine countries; Bahamas, Barbados, Finland, France, Jamaica, Latvia, Lesotho, Nicaragua and the Philippines have fully closed the gap on both the health survival and educational attainment sub indexes, no country has yet closed both the economic participation and political empowerment. (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). Nigeria ranks 135 globally on health and survival. Healthy life expectancy 138.

Nigerian ranks 118 globally, in terms of gender gap which shows it has little improvement compare to 2015 index. It manages to narrow its gender gaps in secondary education enrolment and wage equality. A further cluster of West African countries follow: Burkina Faso (123), Benin (127), Ivory Coast (136), and Mali (138). the sub Saharan Africa region is completed by bottom-ranked Chad 140). (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016).

#### 1.2.4 The case of Aisha Ahmad

Married to a retired military general, Abdullah

Ahmad and blessed with two sons. Aisha, 40 years old was educated at the University of Lagos, Abuja, Cranfield School of management UK and several other galaxies of professional courses. As soon as she was appointed on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2017, as one of the four CBN Deputy Governors, she was out rightly challenged on two fronts. The first obstacle is on the cynical Democratic front. That her previous promotion to Executive Director of CBN which swiftly led to the current promotion is suspicious. The second is her religious amorality from the theologians. Our concern here is the later which has heavy patriarchal colorations. On his twitter handle, and later published on Daily trust newspaper in Nigeria, kperogi (14/14/2017) writes that the second group made up of mostly Muslim men said she was unworthy of her position...her formal western attire doesn't conform to the Islamic dress for Muslim women..While these groups are animated by different impulses, they are united by a common, gnawing patriarchal arrogance and unease with successful, high-flying professional women. One widely shared Facebook status update, in fact, defamed her as a "sex worker" on account of her dressing. That's a prima facie case of libel.

If we are talking about the former, there is no provision that says she must be a deputy director before been appointed as Deputy Governor of CBN. This is a woman with at least 20 years of financial and banking prowess. Suleiman Barau one of the four DGs never served as Executive Director, Kingsley Moghalu with no banking experience as claimed by Kperogi (2017) Eye brows were not raised by these democratic cynics until the appointment of this educated and brilliant gentle lady, Aisha Ahmad. The later that has to do with religio-patriarchal philosophy is even more grumpy and grim. Stressing more on attire than her competency and contribution to national economic progress. These people seem to be obsessed with nudity and defining mere women skin as object that triggers men hormones, not to talk of canal knowledge. According to Kperogi (2017) In fact, a three-term governor and serving senator from Yobe State (who introduced Sharia in his state) was recently caught almost literally pants down—and with irrefutable videographic corroboration, too in a threesome with two women who are not his wives in a cheap, grubby brothel. There was no outrage from the self-anointed moral police. His reply to vanguard news paper was 'if they say I raped, that's a different matter altogether. Is it because I am a public official then I am not entitled to private life?' (Vanguard, 2017). Imagine if it were his wife, Senator Hadiza Bukar Ibrahim, will he and his cohorts (the patriarchs) call it just a private affair?

### 1.2.5 Challenges faced by women

According to United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women (n.d) these are challenges that need to be overcome in order to effectively achieve women's sustainable development globally. They encompass most if not all the ones listed by Gender Gap Report (2016) they are as follows.

- ❖ **Poverty:** Described as a state of squalor and lacking, which could be absolute or relative. Women are the worst affected by poverty, due to strict roles and division of labour assigned by society, it dawned on women that they are at the dirtiest edge of absolute or relative poverty. According to UN-WOMEN (2016), All over the world, gender inequality makes and keeps women poor, depriving them of basic rights and opportunities for well being.
- ❖ **Hunger:** Food is a necessity in life. No wonder Abraham Maslow placed it among his basic hierarchy of needs. Therefore, hunger connotes lack of food. It should be noted that man most first of all eat before engaging in every other aspect in life. According to UN-Women (2016), ending hunger, means that all women can consume enough food with adequate nutrients.
- ❖ **Lack of healthy life and sanitation:** The highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental right of every person. Women are more susceptible to sickness and less likely to obtain care, for reasons ranging from affordability to social conventions keeping them at home.
- ❖ **Lack of inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all:** Most if not all we do in our societies may be learned (whether formally or otherwise). Women are actually still behind in the schooling sectors of many countries across the globe. Currently, no country has closed its gap on education according to Gender Gap Report 2016. According to UN-Women (2016:10), all developing regions of the world have achieved or almost achieved equal enrolment of boys and girls in primary schools. Despite that, in sub-Saharan Africa, only 23% of poor rural girls finish primary school. Gender gaps widen significantly in many countries in secondary and tertiary education.
- ❖ **Women empowerment:** Women across the globe, especially those in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) need to be strengthened.
- ❖ **Lack of inclusive and sustainable economic,**

**productive employment and descent work for all:** There is currently alarming gap between men and women on wealth acquisition, underemployment and mal-employment of women. Women are not efficiently involved in the society.

How can Nigeria now boast of actualizing the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's chapter four (sections 33- 44) that talks clearly on human rights and liberty. For example, Section 42 (2) of the 1999 constitution puts it thus:

"No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth".

These fundamental human rights are supposed to be enjoying by both men and women. But the implementation of this seems to be greatly at the theoretical stage. Number 35 of Annex I of Beijing declaration (1995), states that we are determined to:

Ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, by means of international cooperation.

### 1.3 Conceptual clarification

**Patriarchy:** A form of social organization in which a male dominate societal affairs. This is buttressed by Walby (1990) and Johannsdottir (2009), that patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. And also the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every women in a subordinate one.

**Women:** A women refers to the collection of two or more female human being. It is the plural of Woman. Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary (2010) defined woman as an adult female human being.

**Empowerment:** Wallerstein (1992), opined that empowerment is a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organization, and communities towards the goal of increased individual

and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life and social justice. Lord and Hutchison (1993) sees empowerment as processes where by individual achieve increasing control of various aspects of their lives and participate well in the society.

#### 1.4 Theoretical framework

**Social dominance theory:** This theory was pioneered by two professors of psychology, Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (1999). It is designed to explain the origin and consequence of social hierarchies and oppression, (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). It holds that human social groups tend to be organized based on hierarchical arrangement of preference or importance. It has the following assumptions according to Sidanius and Pratto (1999):

- Individuals are stratified by age, sex and group. Group identification is based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, and so on.
- Human social hierarchy consists of a hegemonic group at the top and negative reference groups at the bottom.
- As a role gets more powerful, the probability it is occupied by a hegemonic group member increases
- Males are more dominant than females.
- Racism, sexism, Nationalism and classism are all manifestations of this same principle of social hierarchy.

Assumption four (4) explains this study more efficiently because patriarchy connotes the supremacy of men over women in societal social structure. In Nigeria, men enjoy more than women politically, socially, and economically. This work saw a need to address this male dominated Nigeria. It should be noted that social dominance theory is influenced by Marxism and socio-biological ideas.

#### 1.5 Methodology

Data were secondarily sourced. This encompasses the repertoire of information, issues and discussions in published journals, monographs, textbooks, periodicals, scriptures and government official records. Data were explored both in hard and softcopies. The softcopy materials were accessed via internet, while the hard copies were gotten from libraries.

#### 1.6 Discussion of findings

Based on the findings of this study, UNESCO (2013) actually affirmed the social definition of male domination. That it is indeed a societal message of

showing male dominance. It is not natural. The Bible and Qur'an also have been misinterpreted by men so as to stamp their dominance. Some of the effects these patriarchal hegemony have widened gender gap in Nigeria; economically, educationally, politically, and on health and survival. This study also exhumed the case of Aisha Ahmad and found out that it was a mere trending patriarchal attempt to widen its poisonous tentacles against not just Aisha, but women in Nigeria. Based on these findings, there is no doubt women are facing serious challenges constructed cynically by men in Nigeria which calls for thirst to empowerment them.

#### Recommendations

- There should be professional conferences, seminars, journals and textbooks etc. on what constitutes sex roles, gender socialization and how they came to about. Books such as that of Frederic Engels' 'Origin of family, private properties and the state' should be recommended for readings. Also Margaret Mead's, Harriet Martineau's, Pamela Abbott's, Firestone Shulamith's, Johann Jacob Bachofen's, Wallace Claire's works and the famous history of Queen Amina of Zazzau should be recommended for intellectual emancipation of women.
- There should be economic and political liberation. Women should have equal right to own the means of production. To achieve this, women must be provided with adequate education, decision making, employment and also be given chance to invest and reinvest.
- Working class women should lead the liberation crusade not wives of the bourgeoisie or middle class. According to Smith (2013), there is one particular wing, in fact, that we should treat with outright hostility: bourgeois, or middle-class, feminism. Ruling class and middle-class women do face oppression, but that doesn't mean that they can be entrusted with pursuing a strategy that will address the suffering of the vast majority of women, who are in the working class.
- There should be maximum governmental will: the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (chapter IV, sect. 33-44) and 1995 Beijing Declaration which Nigeria is a signatory must be respected and implemented.

#### 1.8 Conclusion

It is regrettably worrisome that even in 21st Century, Nigeria is still a heavily patriarchal society

and peoples' mind has not yet accepted to change the status quo. Though women's issues have come into the national and international agenda, the trending nature at which those (mostly men) at the corridor of religion selfishly misinterpret scriptures, especially the two Abrahamic religions (Islam and Christianity) coupled with cultural beliefs of female subordination is still alarming and need unreserved attention. Indeed, there is much more out there in the world, if women in Nigeria are to be given the chance to be more than just a stay at home wives and mothers.

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