Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.4 No.2 June, 2021; p.g. 345 – 362; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

THE MYTHS AND THE REALITIES OF GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTH- WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

Gender inequality is a universal phenomenon. Women in Nigeria, like many other countries in Africa, continue to experience discrimination and marginalization such that questions of the efficacy and effectiveness of the various feminist movements conducted the world over bedevils the mind. This study observed that despite Nigerians understanding of the concept of gender equality, gender inequalities still persist. Using quantitative data collected in Ekiti and Osun States, it was observed that religion, culture and patriarchy hinder the actualization of gender equality in the country. The study also observed that unless a comprehensive set of policies and interventions are developed and implemented that will tackle the underlying forces constraining women, gender equality may not be realistic. The paper therefore calls for full participation of all stakeholders to the cause of equality and the enactment of sanctions for the violations of any of the cardinal objectives of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Keywords: Myths, Gender Equality, Feminism, Appraisal, Discrimination, Realities.

Introduction

Despite the gains of gender equality in some countries, many others are still faced with the challenge of bridging the gender gaps that exists in their society. Hazel and Kleyman (2019) observed that the problem of gender inequality continues to be a persistent one with gaps in economic and political participation, opportunities, health and survival. Though it is argued that many western societies like Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Ireland have achieved gender equality with women having the same legal rights as men, this cannot be said of the African continent especially Nigeria. In Nigeria, many women experience widespread poverty, heavy labour burdens and limited opportunities in trade, industry and governance. Even with the many feminist movements and agendas to which Nigeria is signatory, Nigerians are yet to buy into the ideas of the movement and recognize women as the other half of humanity. Worse still, is the observation that these gaps in developing countries may not be closed for another century due to factors related to culture, occupational

segregation, compensation negotiation, entitlements, the 'glass ceiling' bias, discrimination in job advertisements and hiring, workplace harassment, leadership stereotyping, role congruity and the 'motherhood penalty' (Hazel & Kleyman, 2019).

The challenge of gender inequality has been a wakeup call for many national and international bodies but getting it right in Nigeria has been a difficult task. This has led the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterras to state that achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the greatest human rights challenge of our time. He noted that if gender equality is to be achieved, there should be equal rights and opportunities for both men and women; there should be equal access to quality education and health, equal access to economic resources and a level plain ground in politics, employment, leaderships and in decision making at all levels (UN, 2017). Though the country responded to the request of the United Nations to end all forms of discriminations especially gender based discriminations by articulating policies and programs that are geared towards reducing gender inequalities, success is still farfetched. The persistence of gender discrimination and inequalities in the country questions the extent at which Nigerians understand gender equality and the workability of the tenets of feminism in a society like Nigeria.

Given the fact that gender equality is critical to human and national development, the main objective of this study therefore is to query the phenomenon of gender inequality in Nigeria with the aim of understanding why inequalities still exist. Using Marxist Feminism as a point of departure this paper aims at answering the following research questions:

1) To what extent are Nigerians aware of the concept of gender equality?
2) What are the myths of gender equality in Nigeria?
3) What are the myths and the realities of gender equality in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The paper is based on the null hypotheses that:

1. Patriarchy, culture and religion made no composite and relative contribution to gender equality in South-West Nigeria.
2. Patriarchy, culture and religion have no composite and relative influence on the actualization of gender equality in South-West Nigeria.

Conceptualisation

Gender is considered a social construct that separates the roles and expectations of males and females. It is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes. Gender can be viewed as those attributes, relationships and opportunities associated with being male and female. According to Ibrahim and Okam (2017), gender can be defined as those distinguishing roles, mental and emotional characteristics developed by society for men and women. Learned through socialization processes, these attributes, opportunities and relationships are passed down from one generation to another. Overtime, these roles and attributes become internalized, erroneously interpreted and applied as if they are natural. They get exaggerated to a point that they constitute myths and predicaments which tend to limit human relationships and the utilization of ones potentials as well as development (Ibrahim and Okam, 2011). As a power relation, gender shapes and naturalizes other social relations of power by describing them in mutually exclusive categories.

Gender equality relates to equal treatment, opportunities, equal rights of women and men and girls and boys (EIGE, 2019). Equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development (ILO, 2000). Gender equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that their rights, responsibility and opportunities will not depend on their sexes. Implying that, the interest, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration and that their diversity as well as their differences are recognised (UN Women, 2018). It also means accepting and valuing equally the diverse roles men and women play in the society. It requires discussing the possibilities of changing the structures that contribute and maintain the unequal power relationships that exist between women and men in order to reach a better balance in values and priorities. Gender equality is not women's issue alone. It is a human right issue and a precondition for and indication of sustainable people- centred development (EIGE, 2019). Gender equality is not only an end but a prerequisite to achieving sustainable development (Ekpe, 2014).

Gender inequality in contrast refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender (Nyalunga, 2007). It is the idea that men and women are not equal. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles. To Auunobi (2002), gender inequality is usually caused by engrained cultural stereotypes and reflects in both opportunities and outcomes. It tends to create differentials in capabilities, livelihoods, and empowerment of its object. It generates the preconditions for securing one's economic wellbeing through engagements in decision making as well as conditions that enable individuals to adequately provide for themselves and their families. Gender inequality is not perpetuated exclusively through differential access to and control over material resources but reinforced through gendered identities that constrains the behaviour of women and men in ways that lead to inequality (Khan, 2018). Oppression and discrimination are key features of gender inequality. Usually viewed as the inequitable use of authority and law, oppression happens when people are pushed down by societies (Ngendanayo, 2014). To Van-Wormer, citing Robert L. Barker of the Social Work Dictionary, oppression places severe restrictions on an individual, group or institution (Van-Wormer, 2005). Government and political organization also places restrictions formally or covertly on oppressed groups so that they may be exploited and unable to compete with other social groups. Oppression becomes institutionalized when its enforcement on the social life of the individual is not easily identified as oppression. Oppression can take the form of wife battery, abuse, domestic violence and inheritance deprivation.

The term feminism has no single definition as it is usually determined by the specific experiences of women in specific cultural and environmental stances. This means that feminism means different things to different people. It is a complex notion that spans generations, ethnic identities, sexual orientations, social class, nationality and a myriad of identities. Feminism is a scholarship that aims to make visible the subverted gendered relations of power in society (Confortini, 2017). To Akorede (2011), feminism is a socio-political consciousness that triggers the agitation for equality of all forms of rights between sexes. It can be viewed as a theory that highlights issues like violence, discrimination, sex stereotyping, sexual objectification, patriarchy and oppression as it concerns women. It incorporates the position that societies prioritizes the male point of view and that women are treated unfairly within societies and therefore advocates for women's rights on the basis of

the equality of sexes. There are different areas of emphasis as it concerns women's experiences among activists, critics and scholars. This is as a result of the different social realities and implications that women in different societies face on daily basis. These realities led to the categorizations of the various stands of feminism.

Literature Review

Aside being central to achieving the Sustainable development Goals, gender equality is fundamental to the development of any society. It is a key element in reaching the goals and objectives of many national and international policies, frameworks and declarations most especially the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations has a long history of addressing women's human rights and much progress has been made in securing women's rights across the world. However, important gaps still remain and women's realities are constantly changing with new manifestations of discrimination against them regularly emerging. These realities as opined Jain-Chandra, Kochhar, Newiak, Zinullayev and Zhuange (2017) accounts for the existing disparities between women and men in decision making, economic participation and access to opportunities. Women globally are often restricted in terms of education, ownership of wealth, monetary returns for work, financial opportunities and opportunities to influence decisions at the family and societal levels (Mikkola, 2005) and the problems associated with gender inequality are such that should not be ignored by any society (Bayah, 2016; Chinasa, 2018; Egbulonu and Elenonu, 2018; Azuh and Amodu, 2017).

In Nigeria, gender inequality is largely influenced by diverse cultural and religious beliefs. Religious doctrines and cultural norms bear overwhelming influence on human rights and are the two reasons often invoked as the justification for the violation of women's rights. They have to a large extent affected the promotion and protection of women's rights especially in the areas of marriage and property (Udoh, Folarin and Isumonah, 2020). Citing Abara (2012), Udoh et al (2020) observed that in some parts of the country especially in the North- East, culture has a pervasive influence on women's right to own properties. They opined that only 4% of land in that region is owned by women while in the South-East and South-South zones of the country, women barely own about 10% of land. The cultural norm is that women cannot own lands and if a woman eventually buys a property, she is expected to get the consent of her husband before making any decision on the property. Cultural norms and practices, to Anyalebechi (2016) subjugate women and undermine their self- esteem. They relegate women to only the domestic sphere that is the 'kitchen' and 'the other room', giving no room to plunge into productive areas that will enhance their potentials and build their self-esteem. In most patriarchal societies, culture and religion go hand-in –hand in the subjugation of women with religion playing a vital role in the lives of women. The status of a Nigerian woman is largely influenced by outcome of the interpretation of religious doctrines and its setups. Though most religions recommend that women should be respected due to their crucial role in the family, they do not, however, advocate emancipation in the sense of total equality with men Sibani (2017). In some cases, severe restrictions are placed on women even while performing religious worships. For instance a woman who is pregnant or menstruating cannot enter the temple or touch the Quran. In the Roman Catholic Church, women cannot be ordained as priests. Religion in many ways places an imbalance on men and women's roles. This imbalance as observed by Grim and Lyon (2015), gives impetus to the different gender-based

violence done in the name of religion. Though a number of feminist faith activists are leading the way in re-examining religious teachings and laws by advocating for women's rightful participation in the interpretation of religious doctrines and generating new narratives on the roles of religion and faith, not much have been achieved as the relationship between religion and gender equality is a complex one.

It is important to note that in as much as religion and culture constitute major hindrances to gender equality in Nigeria, the lack of political will on the part of the government to fully implement the Program of Actions and Declarations to which she is signatory also has its own setbacks in attaining gender equality. Though a part of the constitution accords women and men equal rights in governance and public life, in reality, this is not obtainable. Oluyemi (2016); PLAC (2018) and NWTF (2019) observed that women have not enjoyed the much needed support in vying for elected positions. This is because since the commencement of democratic rule in the country, women's representation in politics and governance has been grossly inadequate. In the 1999 general elections, it was observed that of the 11,117 available contestable positions, 631 women indicated interest out of which 180 got elected representing 1.6% of the elected positions. In 2007, women only had 7.0% of representation in the parliament. This figure further declined to 6.8% and 5.6% in 2011 and 2015 (Iloh & Alumona, 2009; NBS, 2018; Tamunosaki & Opuene, 2019). Between 1999 and 2003, it was observed that out of the 47 cabinet ministers appointed by the President only 7 were women and of the 130 federal boards of public corporations only 7 were women (Oluyemi, 2016). Though the situation changed a bit in 2011 where 12 women out of 42 ministers were appointed representing 30% of the appointments. By 2015, this representation dropped to 6 out of 30 ministerial appointees (Oluyemi, 2016). This scenario indicates that disparities still exists in the appointment of women to the position of headships in government owned parastatals. The recent appointments of President Mohammed Buhari further exacerbate this disparity with only 7 women out of the 43 persons appointed by him constituting his cabinet members (Onyeji, 2019). Constituting more hindrances for women is poverty and the low economic status of women. Many women want to engage in partisan politics but are constrained by finances a situation that Nkwackuwu, Chukwuemeka and Oluchi in PLAC (2018) attribute to the inability of many women independently earn a living. Women in the formal workplace are not spared as many of them experience discrimination especially with climbing the career ladder (Oyagbola, 2019). In a study conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2016 and 2018 it was observed that women made up 48% of the formal sector but occupy very few executive positions (Ogbonna, 2016). Even highly educated women are marginalized as Bako and Syed (2018) observed that only about 15% of women make up the academic faculty.

Women in Nigeria have found themselves in a difficult position that bridging the gender gap that exists between them and men may seem unrealistic due to the continuous assumption that "women are weaker sexes". This assumption not only predisposes them to discrimination but open them up to abuses. To Adewoye, Odesanya, Abubakar and Olerede (2014); Haruna, Adaju, Audu and Aye (2016) an assumption of this sort, makes many women to be less ambitious and places them in inferior position (Ekhator, 2018). The negative stereotyping of women is even backed by some part of the nation's customary law and practice. Citing section 55 of the Labour Act and Section 127 of Police Act Ekahtor (2018) opined that women are barred from taking night jobs expect in the nursing profession while unmarried women cannot get pregnant while in the service of the Police force. He opined that gender

discrimination is encouraged in the country's Criminal Code when section 360 of the code allows assault on woman to be viewed as misdemeanour punishable by a 2-year jail term and assault of a man by a woman a felony which is punishable with a 3-year jail term. The Penal Code used by some states in the country also condones domestic violence against women by permitting husbands to "chastise their wives so long it does not inflict grievous harm on the woman" (Section 55 of the Penal Code). The Nigerian Constitution is not exempted from discriminatory practices as it allows a man to confer citizenship to a woman married from another country while the same power is not extended to women. A woman cannot transfer citizenship to a man from another country expect through naturalization which takes at least 15 years.

All of these realities exist despite the National Gender policy of 2006 that promises to support women in occupying 35% of all elective positions and the gender equality bill that seek to give women equal access to opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

The problem in achieving gender equality in Nigeria can be theorized from the perspectives of different feminist groups with each of these perspectives offering a range of explanations for the pervasiveness in the relations of domination and subordination between men and women. Founded on the principle that women have something valuable to contribute to society, feminist theorist states that women have been oppressed; that they are not able to maximise their potentials and have not been able to gain full participation in society. To Marxist feminist, gender inequality is not just a derivative of gender relations but a product of capitalism. Hinged on the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marxist Feminist argues that systematic inequalities led to the different experiences of oppression and marginalization women face in the society. This systemic inequality to Munoz and Woods, (2020) is caused by patriarchy that does not only devalue women but oppresses them.

Using the analogy of the super-structure and the substructure, Marx and Engels situates women's situation to the system of production where women do not own the means of production but are viewed as the proletariat. According to Karl Marx, the super-structure of the society recommends a range of institutions and ideology that advances the interest of those in power, aid the exploitation of the lower class and at the same time conceals their exploitative tendencies. Engels on the other hand argued that women's current position is a result of the overthrow of matrilineal inheritances which imposed monogamy on women and bringing profound disadvantages to the status of women. Engels argued that the subordinating position of women today did not just come about as a result of her biological disposition but as a result of social relations established around the female reproductive capacity. Engels argued that the exercise of control over women's labour in the system of production as well as in the sexual faculties has transcended into all sphere of society and has become institutionalized even in the nuclear family. Though Karl Marx and Engels works have been criticized for lacking credence in analysing women's inequality and oppression in the work place, the Nigerian situation of discrimination and inequality can be best situated within this framework. This is because the traditional nature of the Nigerian state places so much value on cultural and religious doctrines with all of these doctrines emphasizing male dominance- a dominance that is birthed by patriarchy. The strong culture of male dominance as affirmed by the Human Resource Management International Digest is what caused for

women's inability to balance work-life and family life as well as other forms of inequalities (HRMID, 2019). The Nigerian society is oriented to belief that women must be dependent on their husbands for their economic welfare such that their personal contributions to social development go unrecognized and undervalued. Ademosu (2016) also affirm that patriarchy sets the parameter for women's unequal position in the family, the work place as well as providing the space for the occurrence of domestic and sexual violence with little or no sanctioning.

For many centuries, Patriarchy in African societies dictates gender relations and inculcates male dominance in the process of socialization, social structure as well as in the realm of leadership. It justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and family life (Ademosu, 2016). To African Feminist, patriarchy does not only expose the African woman to exploitation but also discrimination. The many forms of gender discriminations experienced by the African woman in addition to the experiences of exclusion of black women from white western feminism, lend voices to African feminist on the realities, needs and the complex cultural experiences that women in Africa have to deal with. Based on the assumption that Africa societies are not monolith in nature and that the ideology of many feminist are not a true reflection of the experiences of the African woman, African feminist therefore advocate the defeat of racism, economic exploitation and the provision of spaces for women to contribute in the running of their societies (Ihle, 2008; Bayu, 2019). Prominent amongst these feminist are the likes of Late Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who advocated for the economic rights of women while Margaret Ekpo broke the yoke of women non-involvement in politics. Between 1980 and 2014, feminist groups and individuals have advocated for safe sex and the eradication of harmful traditional practices. The current wave of feminism is advocating for the elimination of the rape culture, sexual assault, molestation with gender equality on the spot light of contemporary problems (Tayo, 2018).

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The survey was conducted between December 2019 and February 2020. The study population was drawn from two states in the south western part of Nigeria, precisely, Ekiti and Osun States. These two States were selected due to their relatively high educational status and differences in religious practices. One Local Government from each of the senatorial zones of these states was purposively selected for the study. In Ekiti, the survey was conducted in Ado, Oye and Ikere Local Government Areas while Osun had participants drawn from Obokun, Ejigbo and Osogbo Local Government Areas.

The study participants comprised men and women within the age brackets of 18- 54 years. Data was collect from the staff and students of two (2) tertiary institutions (Federal University Oye-Ekiti and Osun State University, Osogbo), Staff of the Civil Service Commission, Osun State and self-employed individuals who volunteered to participate in the survey. With the help of two research assistants, 1200 questionnaires were randomly distributed while 1170 were retrieved representing 97.5% of the sample.

The instrument for data collection titled "The Myths and the Realities of Gender Equality in Nigeria: A situation analysis from Ekiti and Osun states" had 5 sections; Section A comprised

of the respondents' personal data while Sections B–E contained items which elicited information on the general knowledge of people towards gender equality, the myths of gender equality, the realities of gender equality obtainable in Nigeria and the influence patriarchy, culture and religion wield in the actualization of gender equality in the country. The questionnaire contained 47 items all of which were closed ended questions. The questionnaire was validated by experts in the fields of gender and development at the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, Ekiti State University and Statisticians at the National Board for Technical Education, Osogbo. A reliability test was conducted with 20 civil servants at Olorunda Local Government Secretariat Igbona, Osun State to measure the accuracy, stability and consistency of the instrument. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the reliability of the instrument with 0.86 value obtained.

The data collected for the study was analysed using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) at 0.05 level of significance. The results for the research questions were presented using standard deviation and frequency while the hypotheses in the study were tested using liner regression and ANOVA. The results are presented below:

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic and general characteristics of respondents (N=1170)

Characteristic	**No Respondent**	**Percentage**
Sex		
Male	581	49.7
Female	589	50.3
Age		
18-24	300	25.6
25-34	198	16.9
35-44	552	47.2
45-54	84	7.2
55-64	36	3.1
Marital Status		
Single	351	30.0
Married	702	60.0
Divorced	117	10.0
Educational Status		
Tertiary	1147	98.0
Secondary	23	2.0
Religion		
Christian	582	49.7
Moslem	521	44.5
Others	67	5.7
Employment Status		
Student	425	36.3
Civil Servant	558	47.7
Self Employed	138	11.8
Unemployed	49	4.2

Table 1 indicated that 49.7% of the respondents were male while 589 women representing 50.3% were women. A high concentration of the respondents equivalent to 47.2% were within the ages of 35 and 44 years while the lowest number or respondents were within the age brackets of 55-64 years. 98% of the respondents had one form of training or education from a tertiary institution while only 23 of them had only secondary education. 558 of the respondents constituting 47.7% were civil servants while 4.2 of them had no form of employment.

Research Question 1: To what extent are Nigerians knowledgeable of the concept of gender equality?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the extent of knowledge Nigerians have on gender equality

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Gender equality ensure women and men's equal access to opportunities	1170	4.09	1.146
2	Gender equality ensures women and men's rights are valued and respected equally.	1170	4.07	1.153
3	Gender equality ensures that both women and men maximize their potentials	1170	4.29	.952
4	There is gender equality when women have equal rights with men in marriage and child bearing	1170	4.10	1.120
5	There is gender equality when boys and girls are given equal rights and access to education	1170	3.88	1.237
6	Gender equality is practiced when boys and girls are allowed to choose their career paths without bias or discrimination	1170	3.86	1.283
7	Gender equality is present when men and women have equal access to economic resources.	1170	3.95	1.292
8	There is gender equality when both women and men are allowed to express their opinions and take decisions on matters that relate to their wellbeing	1170	3.85	1.300
9	Gender equality is a human rights issue and affects both men and women	1170	3.78	1.321
10	For any form of development to take place in society, gender equality must be in place	1170	3.84	1.285
11	If gender equality is practiced women will not be victims of abuse and discriminations	1170	3.71	1.346

From the mean rating in table 2, the researchers found that respondents have a high knowledge of the concept "gender equality". The mean value of 4.09, 4.07, 4.2 ,4.10, 3.95 and 3.78 showed that respondents understands gender equality to mean men and women's equal access to opportunities, economic resources, marriage and family matters. They also agreed that gender equality ensures that women and men's rights are respected and valued as well as their potentials maximised. With a mean rating of 3.84, respondents agreed that for development to take place in the society, gender equality must be in place.

Research Question 2: What are the myths and the realities of gender equality in Nigeria?

Table 3: Frequency and percentage on the myths of gender equality

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSE/ PERCENATGE SD	D	U	A	SA	TOTAL
1.	It is believed that the girl child should have equal rights to education like the boy child	110 (9.4)	120 (10.3)	49 (4.2)	433 (37.0)	458 (39.1)	1170 (100.0)
2	Female children are not supposed to experience any form of discrimination when it comes to accessing education like their male counterparts	125 (10.7)	130 (11.1)	42 (3.6)	488 (38.3)	425 (36.3)	1170 (100.0)
3	The girl child is not to be discriminated when making career choices especially careers related to science and technology	159 (13.6)	172 (14.7)	66 (5.6)	399 (34.1)	374 (32.0)	1170 (100.0)
4	In academics, women are supposed to be equally represented with no form of discrimination experienced	133 (11.4)	190 (16.2)	64 (5.5)	401 (34.3)	382 (32.6)	1170 (100.0)
5	It is believed that the socio-economic contributions of women in national development should be given adequate recognition because women contribute immensely to a the nation's economy	186 (15.9)	200 (17.1)	96 (8.2)	366 (31.3)	322 (27.5)	1170 (100.0)
6	The physiological make up of women do not hamper their decision making ability	197 (16.8)	157 (13.4)	42 (3.6)	397 (33.9)	377 (32.2)	1170 (100.0)
7	Women are supposed to have equal decision making rights in both the nuclear and extended family	130 (11.1)	206 (17.6)	49 (4.2)	396 (33.8)	389 (33.2)	1170 (100.0)
8	Women are endowed to equally contest and hold political offices like men	147 (12.6)	213 (18.2)	48 (4.1)	349 (29.8)	413 (35.3)	1170 (100.0)
9	Women are supposed to have equal opportunities in both the legislative and executive arms of government	162 (13.8)	177 (15.1)	52 (4.4)	386 (33.0)	393 (33.6)	1170 (100.)
10	The gender equality is achievable. All it requires is that society appreciates and treats women equally with in all aspect of life	268 (22.9)	270 (23.1)	72 (6.2)	294 (25.1)	266 (22.7)	1170 (100.0)

From the table above, the respondents believed that the girl child should have equal rights and equal access to education and that a woman is not supposed to encounter biases and discrimination when choosing careers. 33.9% of the respondent were also positive that the biological make up of women do not affect her ability to make decisions at home and in the larger society and that Nigerian woman has all it take to contest and hold political offices. Another 31.3% believe that women's contribution to national development should be given the right recognition.

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage on the Realities of Gender equality in Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSE/ PERCENATGE SD	D	U	A	SA	TOTAL
1.	Women are not equally represented in politics because the political environment has not supported them.	173 (14.8)	226 (19.3)	28 (2.4)	205 (17.5)	538 (46.0)	1170 (100.0)
2	Women are not adequately represented in the legislative and executive arms of government	130 (11.1)	232 19.8)	36 (3.1)	300 (25.6)	472 (40.3)	1170 (100.0)
3	Not many women occupy decision making positions because it is believed that men are better leaders	133 (11.4)	202 (17.3)	37 (3.2)	316 (27.0)	482 (41.2)	1170 (100.0)

4	Women are disadvantaged in governance because of the negative stereotypes people have towards women in governance	104 (8.9)	196 (16.8)	25 (2.1)	333 (28.5)	512 (43.8)	1170 (100.0)
5	The ratio of boys to girls at all level of learning is not gender balanced as more boys enroll in school than girls	208 (17.8)	283 (24.2)	50 (4.3)	250 (21.4)	379 (32.4)	1170 (100.0)
6	Women are not visible in science and technology due to discrimination in the sector	263 (22.5)	136 (11.6)	54 (4.6)	246 (21.0)	471 (40.3)	1170 (100.0)
7	Many women are economically dependent on their spouses due to their inability to own and control economic resources	133 (11.4)	202 (17.3)	37 (3.2)	316 (27.0)	482 (41.2)	1170 (100.0)
8	Women are regarded as weaker vessels therefore they are objects of discrimination and abuse in the society	113 (9.7)	166 (14.2)	23 (2.0)	378 (32.3)	490 (41.9)	1170 (100.0)

Table 4 revealed the realities of gender equality in the country. From the survey it was observed that women are not equally represented in politics because the political environment does not support them. To 40.3% of the respondents, women are not adequately represented at the legislative and executive arms of government. Responses from 43.8% of the respondents indicated that women's unequal participation in governance is attributed to the negative stereotype held by members of the society that men are better leaders and that the weak economic standing of women has not put women the position that they can vie for political offices.

Hypotheses 1:
Patriarchy, culture and religion made no composite and relative contribution to gender equality in south-west Nigeria.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of the contribution patriarchy, culture and religion make on gender equality

Model Summary					**ANOVA[a] Test**						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	.950[a]	.902	.902	5.66172	1	Regression	345486.244	3	115162.081	3592.635	.000[b]
a). Predicators: (Constant), culture, religion, patriarchy						Residual	37376.187	1166	32.055		
b).Dependent variable: Gender Equality						Total	382862.431	1169			

The model summary as presented in table 5 revealed that culture, religion and patriarchy with the R value of 0.950 and R^2 value of 90.2% greatly contribute to gender equality in south-west Nigeria. A one way ANOVA test also conducted to test the contribution of patriarchy, culture and religion on the actualization of gender equality also indicates that these three constant have significant influences on the actualization of gender equality with the P- value (.000) which is less 0.05 thus rejecting the null hypothesis.

Hypotheses 2:
Patriarchy, culture and religion have no composite and relative influence on the actualization of gender equality in south-west Nigeria.

Table 6: The coefficient test of the correlation between Patriarchy, culture and religion and the actualization of gender equality in South-West Nigeria

Coefficients[a]						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	18.528	.481		38.540	.000
	Patriarchy	1.027	.143	.388	7.186	.000
	Religion	3.990	.201	.965	19.838	.000
	Culture	-.900	.134	-.404	-6.699	.000

The coefficient test in table 6 also showed that religion, culture and patriarchy influences the actualization of gender equality with religion having the highest influence at standardized coefficient value of .965. This is followed by culture with a coefficient of -404 and patriarchy with .388.

Discussion

The study revealed that women have not been adequately represented in politics neither has representation at both the legislative and executive arms of government been impressive. This finding corroborates the works done by Oluyemi (2016); PLAC (2018); Iloh & Alumona, 2009; NBS, 2018; Tamunosaki & Opuene, 2019 and NWTF (2019) where they observed that since the birth of democracy in the country, women have not enjoyed the much needed support in vying for elected positions leading to their low level of representation in governance. Afolabi (2019) also observed that women have tried to gain access to decision making positions by contesting various political positions, however their efforts appears not to be greeted with much gains. This situation can be attributed to the assumption that men are better leaders as seen from the responses received form item 3 and the negative gender stereotyping of women in governance as observed in item 4. These findings is in consonance with the results of the study conducted by NiMAGES in 2015 and cited by Luke (2019) that, sexist attitudes caused by social desirability biases influences the choice of leadership between men and women. The low economic status of women as observed by responses to item 7 makes matters worse for women who want to engage in partisan politics. This is because many women do not have the financial standing to participate in politics and where they eventually do they depend on their husbands for support thus, limits their participation. This situation affirmed Nkwackuwu et al in PLAC (2018) makes it difficult for Nigerian women to break even in the political arena.

The study revealed that a disparity still exists in access to education as the ratio of boys to girls at all levels of learning indicates that more boys enroll in school than girls. This is similar to the findings of Momoh et al (2020); Olukayoade and Ayoola (2015); ASEC (2018) and Trading Economics (2020) where it was observed that many female children do not have access to education due to the problems of insurgency, conflicts, abduction, rape, religious and cultural values. This situation has caused the adult literacy level to stand at 59.4% for girls and 74.4% for boys. Afu et al (2017) also added that the socio-economic background of parents significantly determine which gender to enrol in school. The study also revealed that gender stereotyping still exist in the fields of Science and technology. This is evident in the responses received for item 6 that indicated that women are not visible in science and technology due to

discrimination in the sector. This corroborates the study conducted by Odunowo (2020); Ramachandran and Omakwu (2019) where it was observed that women only make up 30% of the workforce in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in sub-sharan Africa. They also observed that very few women occupy managerial positions in STEM and have fewer professional connections and mentorship opportunities. Media craft Associates (2018) and Abdullahi et al (2019) attributes this low visibility to women's less access to the resources needed to support active engagements in science which is heightened by the socio-economic status of parents, parental occupation, cultural factors, socialization, early marriages and child care. To make matters worse, women experience challenges with registering their businesses, getting the right certification for their businesses, establishing formal relationship with banks, accessing micro-credits, gaining access to women centred business trainings and having the right working environment (Enfield,2019).

The study, showed that women still experience discrimination in the formal workplace especially with climbing the career ladder with many more others victims of wage disparity and sexual harassments. This finding is similar to the results of the studies conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (2018); Ogbonna (2016); Oyagbola (2019); Bako and Syed (2018). It was also observed in the study that the negative stereotyping of women as being "the weaker sex" predisposes them to discrimination a finding which is similar to the result of the study conducted by Adewoye et al (2014) and Ekhator (2015). This assumption as opined Haruna et al (2016) causes women to not only have access to jobs with inferior responsibilities but occupy lesser positions in the workplace. The results from the regression analysis and the ANOVA test indicated that religion, culture and patriarchy have hindered the actualization of gender equality with religion having the most influence. Corroborating this finding, Essien and Ukpong (2012) observed that religion and religious practices a vital role in shaping the cultural, social, economic, and political life of a people. To these two researchers, gender roles and cultural practices are deeply interwoven and bear overwhelming influence on the rights of a woman. Existing literature have revealed that culture and traditional practices have created structures that causes for male domination. These structures as opined Sibani (2017), interconnects with religion and justifies male dominance. To Raday (2003); Makama (2013); Wingorova and Havlicek (2015), culture and religion have been invoked as a form of defence in order to oppose gender equality claims and have been used to preserve patriarchy at the expense of women's rights as well place restriction on their roles. Culture and religion as observed by Ejumudo (2013) is in-grained in men and are demonstrated consciously and unconsciously thus creating great hindrances in implementation gender-sensitive and gender-parity policies. The patriarchal culture of male supremacy in Nigeria remains embedded and protected by traditional institutions and structures and it is held in abeyance and relative utmost sacredness such that driving meaningful changes in gender relations may prove abortive.

Conclusion

The obstacles to achieving gender equality is not just the inability of African states to take into account the differences in income and power relations that exist between women and men but understanding how much influence religion, culture and patriarchy wields in the actualization of equality of genders. Patriarchy in Nigeria accords men some kind of supremacy and is held in high esteem. It has become a norm that is entrenched in the psychic of men such that it is consciously and unconsciously demonstrated. Whichever form

patriarchy is demonstrated, it usually puts women at disadvantage and fuels inequality. Thus, in order to build a gender balanced society, patriarchy must be dethroned. Men and women may need to question the cultural and religious practices that discriminate women. This is because gender inequality is not just detrimental to a nation progress but will also hinder the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It also requires having a full understanding of the situation in which women find themselves. As long as society continues to swim in the euphoria of its cultural and religious practices that backs and supports patriarchy, gender equality may never be achieved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

There is the need for a complete socio-cultural re-orientation of members of the society on the dangers of gender discrimination and inequality. This can be done through the institutionalization of those aspects of culture that allows for the respect of human and gender rights by ensuring the right environment that will strengthen both the human, institutional and infrastructural capacity of the society. These should be done alongside the elimination of cultural practices that impedes the ability of women to maximise their potential. This is imperative for closing the gender gap as well as enhancing social justice.

There should be development and implementation of comprehensive sets of policies and interventions that will tackle the underlying obstacles constraining women's equality. This requires having individuals that are committed to the plight of women fronting for women issues as their own issue. It is also not enough to have the gender equality bill passed into law but the bill should be monitored for full implementation.

A proper inclusion of women in developmental processes should be put in place. The fundamental reason why gender equality has not been achieved is because women are often excluded from global and national decision making processes. Programs and policies are designed without their consents and contributions. If equality is to be achieved, women especially those at the local level should be adequately consulted in the design and implementation of any policy. This is because whatever policy the government makes inadvertently has a trickledown effects on women and their issues will suffer if women's interest are not adequately represented.

Genuine commitment and political will should be promoted by government towards enhancing gender equality. Gender inequality can only be a thing of the past if there is a genuine commitment and political will on the part of government to implement policies that challenges gender disparity in the nation. No matter the number of policies that are formulated or the multiplicity of programmes that are designed, they will lie dormant until they are activated by the appropriate political will and commitment needed to translate gender responsive policies, programmes and activities into concrete reality.

The way forward to gender equality especially in the political arena is to introduce a quota system for candidates of political parties. Quota is a powerful tool that can be used to bridge the gulf between women and men in politics. Political parties should decide to set quotas that will prescribe equal percentage for women and men vying for elective positions. This will help reduce the tendency of women being side-lined.

Lastly, there should be a re-affirmation of the international declarations of which Nigeria is a signatory. Sanctions for violations of the cardinal objectives of CEDAW and the clauses to the Beijing Platform for Action should be adopted. These sanctions will serve as deterrence to individuals and institutions that would want to continue to subject women to discrimination and abuses.

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