FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Nigeria is essentially a patriarchal society. This entails that women are marginalized and subordinated to men in all aspects of life. Furthermore, the wellbeing, interests and overall issues affecting men are given priority over and above that of women. Yet, women constitute about a half of the Nigerian populace. Thus, they could be rightly described as a significant but neglected segment of the society. The need to rectify this imbalance informed this study. The paper which relies on secondary data identifies the following as factors militating against gender mainstreaming in Nigeria. These include culture and related issues of patriarchy and religion. It includes also the low access of women to education which encompasses women political and financial disempowerment. Additional factors include the nature of Nigerian politics, attitude of men to women in the work place and women themselves who embrace male dominance very uncritically.

The paper recommends the following as the way out There is need for sustained and well articulated programme of cultural orientation and re-orientation. More females like their male counterparts should be sent to school. There is also the urgent need to empower women both politically and financially. Finally, the attitude of men to women particularly in the work place must change. All these are imperative if our quest for development will be realized, meaningful and all inclusive.

Keywords: Culture, Male dominance, Religion, Development

Introduction
The volume of literature on gender has been growing by the day. This is certainly indicative of a new understanding that, in a world where men and women are almost equally represented numerically, attempts to attain meaningful development must of necessity identify, harness the potentials and incorporate the efforts which males and females could make and are making to national development. However, Nigeria is traditionally a patriarchal society. Perhaps, the degree of patriarchy differs from society to society and from one ethnic group to another. Yet, it will not be superfluous or an overgeneralization to state that Nigeria is an overwhelmingly patriarchal society and this is inimical to national growth and development. This is not unmindful of some of the advances made towards the incorporation of women into all the facets of the national development agenda, (Aina, 2012). Both in attitude and action, the story in terms of gender is still one of overarching patriarchy and the need for a reversal of this lopsided state of affairs underscores the importance of this paper.

Though in contemporary Nigeria, women are increasingly more recognized and are indeed enjoying enhanced social, cultural, economic, educational and political visibility than hitherto, there are strong evidences that there is the need for sustained gender mainstreaming in Nigeria. (Onwumah, 1989). Be all these as they may, it is desirable to state that while collecting data for this work the asymmetrical relationship between males and females in Nigeria was laid bare. For instance, it was found that in virtually all Nigerian societies, women have not been allowed by culture to be traditional rulers. This is not unmindful of a few and rare instances where women acted as chiefs and regents in Yorubaland. It was also observed that even in nuclear and extended families, women were never allowed to be heads. This again excludes instances where there were no men or the men were away from home for a long period of time and the male children were still minors.

14038
Attitudinally, in most communities in Nigeria, when a woman records an outstanding feat, she is described as a man. However, when a man underperforms or does that which is unexpected and unbecoming, he is described as a woman. We have shown elsewhere that among Aniocha people of Delta State that, personal names are used to show the low status of woman. There are such names as “Okeibunor” which translates to mean that, ‘a man is the bedrock of the home or family’. Otherwise, it means that a family without a male child is still not established as there will be no male child to guarantee family continuity. There are such other names as Nwabuokei meaning that a male child is the real child. In another sense, after a long wait for the arrival of a male child one would hear such as ‘Nkenchor’ meaning ‘my desired one’ or ‘what I desire’. The list is long. There is even a cultural practice among the Aniocha people, in a situation of all female children, culture allows one of the daughters to be retained in family and to remain unmarried forever. She will be allowed to associate with men or a man of her choice in anticipation that she will get pregnant and probably give birth to a male child as the only way of ensuring family continuity. The interpretation of this is, a family with all females is one that is viewed traditionally as destined for extinction. In another sense, an all-female family is considered an inch better than a childless one. In such societies, women are seen and not heard and their views are hardly ever reckoned with. In contemporary times, the scenario is changing very slowly but a sustained and well-articulated gender mainstreaming programme is still needed to bail out Nigeria from the pangs of gender inequality, discrimination and inequality and their unsalutory implications for national development.

Characterizing gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming traverses all aspects of life such that precision of definition is almost difficult if not impossible. Therefore, for a detailed understanding and robust appreciation we shall characterize the concept of gender mainstreaming. Thus, gender mainstreaming entails:

- Recognition of males and females as equal partners in progress
- Conscious and legitimate efforts for women to remove all legal, political, financial, socio-cultural and educational hindrances to women empowerment
- A recognition of women and insistence on their inclusion in all development programmes.
- Allocation of at least forty percent of legislative and executive offices to women at all the levels of government.
- Deliberate efforts to promote the education of women

In summary, the starting point of gender mainstreaming is a consciousness of the fact that any drive for national development which does not incorporate men and women on the basis of equality will remain elusive and to that extent a mirage.

Brief Review of the Literature

The literature on gender generally is growing geometrically. The ones on gender mainstreaming is also equally voluminous. In this essay, we shall review only a few of the relevant literatures. For instance, in the area of politics, Cowper, S., Kopec, A., Suton, T., Nelson, K., in a seminal work on overcoming the barriers of participation in leadership by women pointed out that there were cultural, psychological, institutional and socio-economic barriers and hurdles for women to cross in order for them to easily attain leadership positions in Nigeria. From childhood, Nigerian women have been made to believe that it is traditional and nature has ordained it for women to be subordinated to men. Implicit in this, is the view that it will be offensive to nature to contest or overturn that which is divinely ordained. In relation to the above, both the family and religious institutions support and reinforce the notion that women are inferior to men. The work of Dominic Azuh, Matthew
Egharevba and Akunna Azuh (2014) on gender discrimination and Politics in Nigeria further highlight the factors which militates against women participation in politics of Nigeria. Accordingly, they identified problems of illiteracy, poverty, money politics, intimidation by men and harmful traditional practices as some of the factors which work against women participation in Nigeria’s politics. In yet another study by Fatile Olufemi Jacobs, Akhaekpe Ighodalo, Igbor, Ibeto Chinyeaka Justina and Oteh Chukwu Okpo (2017) on Feminism and Political participation in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis highlighted the issue of discrimination from men in both voting and appointment; paucity of finance and responsibilities from the family as constraining factors to women’s participation in politics in Nigeria. Still on politics Ohis Samson Amu (2008) in the paper Gender Equality: Factors Hindering Female participation in Nigerian Politics found that two schools of thought exist on the issue. One, that in the past, women had proved themselves and by implication should be given more opportunities to serve. The second school of thought as pointed out by the above writer is that women are not currently being given enough chances in the political sphere, a situation which is unfair and should be reversed. While identifying hinderances to female participation in Nigeria politics, he identified educational, cultural, psychological factors and poverty. For example, he pointed out that women have come to believe that politics is men’s affair and that women involvement in politics is an intrusion into an area that is the exclusive prerogative of men. To turn such situation around, women should be empowered generally but particularly economically.

In the same manner, the discourse on gender has been extended to the issue of agriculture by Yemisi Ogunlola, Aisha Muktar (2009) and Ozoya, M (2015). While Yemisi Ogunlola found that though women constitute 60-80 percent of the labour force in agriculture their contributions do not seem to be noticed let alone rewarded. They decried the situation in which women have none or minimal role in decision making about agriculture. Similarly, Mercy Ozoya (2015) found that Esan women of Edo State Nigeria were not empowered despite the many empowerment programmes by the Federal Government of Nigeria Throwing more light on the issue, Mahmuel Kayode Adebayo, Babun Abubakar and Umar Lana Yusuf while writing on Gender Equity and Access to Education: A Review of Factors Inhibiting Girl Child Education in Northern Nigeria identified the factors which work against girl-child education in northern Nigeria to include socio-cultural, religion, poverty, teenage pregnancy and early marriage as hindrances.

Donatus Okon (2016) found that, a society where gender is mainstreamed is a society on the path to sustainable development. On the challenges facing women empowerment in contemporary Nigeria. Joseph Egwurube (2016) also identified legal, political, social, cultural and personal factors which militated against girl-child education in Nigeria. Other factors as identified by him included women’s low access to paid employment and low political representation. Egwurube equally found that there were twice as many women below the poverty line than men, and nineteen times more men in managerial positions than women. The issue of gender mainstreaming has also been treated in relation to occupational therapy. This time there was a twist in the discourse because it now focused on how to bring men into occupational therapy. With data from Canada, occupational therapy was found to be a profession that was overwhelmingly dominated by women. In a joint paper, Bryden Beagan and Erin Friedricks (2012) found that, occupational therapy in Canada, only thirteen percent of the profession were men. Therefore, efforts should be made to facilitate gender balance by ensuring that more men get involved in occupational therapy.
Theoretical Orientation
Functionalism
The current study will be based on two theories one of which is functionalism. The theory of functionalism was developed by some of the founding fathers of Sociology. Functionalism is evident in the works of August Comte, Herbert Spencer and a few others. It was developed by Emile Durkheim and further refined by Talcott Parsons.

Functionalism conceives society as an organic whole with inter-related parts. It draws a comparison between society and the human body which consists of parts such as the liver, lungs, brain, heart and others. Though each part has its own distinct function, it cannot operate effectively in isolation to other parts. In fact, a disruption in the functioning of a part will impede the function of other parts. In relation to the society, it (the society) consists of so many parts or institutions which fit together and must work in harmony if the whole will survive and experience orderly change. For instance, we have the family institution, which functions to produce and socialize new members into the society. The economic institutions exist for the production and distribution of goods and services. It could be seen that a disruption in either the family or economic institution will affect other institutions. This could be likened to how the part of the body functions. When the liver malfunctions, it will affect the kidney, the heart and eventually the whole body will be affected.

Functionalism also emphasizes what it terms functional prerequisites. This refers to basic needs for the society to survive. For example, the need for the production and distribution of goods and services is essential for the society. Similarly, all societies also require compulsorily a means of socializing new members. These need without which the societies cannot function seamlessly is referred to as functional prerequisites.

The next key idea as propounded by functionalists is the issue of value consensus. Values are things to which people attach importance. For instance, the value of the educational institution is that it produces skills that are required in different areas of the society. There are other aspects of value consensus such as hard work, courtesy, respect for each other, honesty, integrity and others. For a society to be fully integrated, her members must have a minimum degree of value consensus. Otherwise such a society will be BERSchaotic and utterly disorderly.

Another issue or key idea of functionalism is how social order is maintained if certain conditions exist in any society. There is need for value consensus which will form the basis for solidarity and cooperation in the society. The other is the need for socialization which is the process by which the values of the society are internalized by new members. Naturally, if such values are internalized by a vast majority of the society then the maintenance of order could be taken for granted. The few who do not comply or agree with values of the society are known as deviants and societies always develop mechanisms to enforce compliance. The relevance of this theory to the topic under study will be highlighted in concluding sections of this paper.

Gender Theory
Another theory that is critically relevant to this study is gender theory. The theory posits that for society to be complete and make meaningful progress due recognition must be accorded to the both males and females. A departure from previous studies generally termed feminism which focused on women alone, gender theorists adopted a more pragmatic and holistic approach by pointing out that while men constitute one half of society, women make up the other complementary and inevitable half. Therefore, if development is to be fast tracked and inclusive, the two halves must be incorporated (Aina, 2012).
Gender theory queries the whole idea of patriarchy with its emphasis on male dominance and female subordination. Therefore, gender theorists argued that patriarchy is largely unprogressive because it promotes and projects the interests of males alone. To that extent therefore, it should be modified to accommodate the interest of both sexes. Gender studies have undergone changes and modification in a bid to promote women affairs without compromising those of men. Gender theory has grown from the women in development through women and development, to Gender in Development into finally Gender and Development. While the women in Development thesis postulate that women should not only be agents of developments, they should also be beneficiaries of it. This gave rise to the Women and Development framework. This framework emphasizes the fact that, with few exceptions, being a woman is synonymous with poverty, a situation which they argue should change. While Gender and Development draws attention to the need to empower women, the Gender and Development framework maintains while previous approaches may be relevant they have obvious lapses by not drawing attention to the need to close the gender gap, remove gender blindness and stereotypes. It further argued that, the system which produced inequality was the real problem and not just that of inequality between men and women. Therefore, for progress to be made, the system must be changed. Both functionalism and gender theory are not full proof, to critically analyze and attempt to understand the challenges of gender mainstreaming in Nigeria. However, we shall use as theoretical guide for this paper.

Benefits of Gender and Mainstreaming
Gender mainstreaming will facilitate gender equity and accelerate the whole process of poverty reduction (Egwurube, 2012). It has been demonstrated empirically that more women are poor when compared to their male counterparts. It will lead to increased agricultural production especially in African countries (Ozoya, 2015). This is because, though more women are into agriculture, women are not part of the decision-making system on matters of agriculture. It will also promote good governance and democracy as more women will be involved in the process of governance. It will engender an all inclusive approach to development as no segment of the populace will be left out.

Surmounting the Hurdles against Gender Mainstreaming in Nigeria
The first factor which contends with gender mainstreaming is culture. Among all ethnic and language groups in Nigeria, it is accepted as a way of life that woman should and be seen as being under men. Anything otherwise is seen as abnormal. The situation is so deeply entrenched and accepted as a normal way of life that when women are seen to have offended it is also the women who are made to impose sanctions on her, some of which are very severe and in -human For instance, in the case of widowhood practices, it is the women who execute inhuman and unjust treatment to their fellow women. All of these are done in the name of culture. The whole knowledge, values and belief systems have been configured through the generations to see women as underdogs compared to the men. Though culture is dynamic, yet some cultural traits may be resistant to change or change very slowly. The acceptance of women as equals with men is one of such cultural practice. Therefore, attempts at gender mainstreaming must start from a process of cultural re-orientation. Related to the above is the issue of patriarchy. In most Nigerian societies, patriarchy privileges men over women. The interests of women are subordinated to that of men. In most instances, women have little or no inheritance rights. Patriarchy guarantees that the interests and affairs of women are protected and promoted to the extent to which they do not clash or run counter to the interest of men. For instance, in some (certainly not all) societies, in a situation of adultery, the woman is punished, the man goes free. Additionally, there is the issue of poverty and disempowerment. Comparatively, women are poorer than men. Yet it is a well known fact that money is a platform to many good things of life. These may be politics, education, health, agriculture and what have you.
Thus, to facilitate gender mainstreaming, women should be empowered financially and politically. There should be equal pay for equal work for both men and women. So far, it is clear that women work more but earn less (Aina, 2012). Women should be encouraged to pursue education more than before.

Another major hurdle to gender mainstreaming the limited access of women to education in Nigeria. Mahmud Kayode Adebayo, Babun Abubakar, Umar Lawal Yusuf (2012) have shown statistically that more boys than girls are in all the levels of education. To a large extent an educated person is a liberated person. He or she is also less gullible and with a more progressive mind and more equipped to contribute meaningfully to national development. However, in a situation of little or no education all of these will remain elusive and farfetched and therefore a stumbling block to gender mainstreaming.

An equally significant factor is the nature of Nigerian politics. This has to do with money politics, prebendalism and political violence. Political violence and thuggery scare women away from politics. Most political meetings are held in the night when it is not convenient for women to participate. It has been pointed out in one of the proceeding paragraphs that women are much poorer than men. In most instances they may not have what it takes financially to participate in politics which in Nigeria is very expensive.

Equally important, is the issue of the attitude of men to women in the workplace. This derives essentially from both patriarchy and culture. In the workplace, some men are very hesitant to yield to the leadership of women. Such men reluctantly accept the headship of women because it runs counter to their culture which maintains that women must be always subordinated to men in all things and in all situations and this is a major hurdle to be crossed in the process of gender mainstreaming. We must discuss the attitude of women to themselves. Allusion has been made to this earlier, women must learn to tolerate themselves. Though female subordination may be permitted culturally, the world is in a new age of globalization where men and women are partners in progress. It is heart warming that progress is being made in this direction yet a lot is still needed to be done.

References may have been made to it, but it requires to be treated more explicitly as a separate *subheading* and that is the issue of religion. Women subordination receives rationalization from the two dominant religions in Nigeria. These are Islam and Christianity. References are made to verses in both the Koran and Bible which lends credence to female subjugation. However, those verses in the two holy books which refer and promote the interest of women are conveniently overlooked.

**Summary**

We therefore summarize the factors which militate against gender mainstreaming hereunder

1. Culture and patriarchy.
2. Poverty and disempowerment of women
3. Limited access of women to education
4. Attitude of men to women in the workplace
5. Attitude of women to themselves
6. Nature of Nigerian politics
7. Religion
8. Low political representation of women
Defining the Right Pathway
There is an urgent need for cultural orientation and reorientation. Culture is dynamic but some cultural traits are resilient and the issue of gender relationship is one of them. Therefore, cultural orientation and reorientation aimed at gender mainstreaming is an agenda that is long overdue. This assigns a key role to the traditional institutions, the government, religious, educational, mass media, and other social institutions.

Another way of achieving gender mainstreaming is through poverty reduction programmes that are targeted exclusively at women. So far, extant poverty alleviation programmes are too general to be impactful. In the area of education, admission into all levels of education should be on the basis of 50-50 for both boys and girls. This is the only way of bridging the educational gap between men and women. Furthermore, parents in all parts of the country should be encouraged to appreciate the girl child as they do for the boys. By implication, girls should be sent to school like the boys without any form of discrimination or prejudice. The attitude of men to women in the workplace must change. Provisions for gender equality should be clearly stated in all letters of employment and reinforced by repeated emphasis on it after employment. Since this is basically an issue of mindset, the mindset of the populace should be changed. This entails that all social institutions be mobilized to achieve the goal. In the area of politics, money politics should be de emphasized to give room merit and pedigree. Rather, ideas, values, and service should be the guiding principles of Nigerian politics. The entire political system should be reconfigured in such a way to reduce violence. This is one of the significant ways of encouraging more women to participate in politics.

Christianity and Islam should begin to propagate the equality of men and women. It should be known that gender mainstreaming is neither unchristian nor unislamic. In the drive for gender mainstreaming, the mass media have a critical role to play. Thus, articles, news commentary, feature articles and jingles should promote and give special emphasis to gender equality. With the skewed gender scenario which downplays the interest of women the time has come to incorporate gender studies into school curricula at all levels. This will go a long way in molding the minds of young ones early in life.
In addition to all of these, it is important to have gender equality explicitly stated in the constitution. It is inadequate to believe that the constitutional provision for human rights has taken care of this.

Conclusion
This paper draws to a close on the note that gender equity in Nigeria is both a necessity and a compelling need which time has come. The obstacles are many and well entrenched, yet they are not insurmountable. It therefore behooves both males and females to close ranks and work for the evolution of a society which functions on the basis of gender equity and equality. Finally, gender problems are systemic it follows that only a holistic approach to gender mainstreaming will yield the required dividends. Gender mainstreaming cannot be achieved overnight it will require a long process of political and cultural engineering.

Reference


