

GENDER INEQUALITY, GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER VIOLENCE IN
NIGERIA: THE NEED TO ERADICATE THEM

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, the issues associated with/to Gender are becoming overwhelming. In contemporary Nigeria, every discussion on politics, the economy, education, leadership, empowerment, skill acquisition, academics, sponsorship, social culture, tradition and so on must involve the role of gender. Unfortunately, gender discussions in Nigeria centre on the woman, or girl-child leaving out the man or boy-child. This in a subtle-way, is regarded as discrimination. The much talked about gender inequality, gender discrimination, and gender violence are anchoring on inclusion and exclusion in all ramifications of life. It is important to note that the above listed concepts are in the minds of many negative concepts and by such, should be eradicated. But the truth told, these concepts cannot be completely eradicated especially in Nigeria but can be reduced to the barest minimum through the enactment of laws, policies, regulations that can checkmate the continuous existence of the practice of these three terminologies. Furthermore, for some individuals, some of these concepts exist in the imagination of some individuals. For example, the issue of gender inequality to so many individuals does not exist in reality but in the figment of some people's imagination. This comes with questions thus: who has caused inequality? Is it possible for the man and the woman to be rated as equal in the Nigeria context? If a change is needed, where will it come from? Our society is such that the male gender is always rated as superior to the female gender and there are religious and cultural/traditional backings/supports to the above assertion. This paper will discuss gender inequality, gender discrimination and gender violence extensively, with 3 (three) examples of each and how they can be eradicated in/from the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Gender Discrimination, Gender Violence and eradicate.

INTRODUCTION

The discussions on gender are becoming overwhelming and biased. It has become a must talk about in Nigeria's education system hence the establishment of 'centre for gender studies' or 'centre for women and gender studies' in Nigeria's institutions of higher learning. Onuoha-Chidiebere, Obi and Igbokwe (2017:101) noted that "Gender... is a wide world phenomenon". Nzewi (2017:1) also noted that "discussions on gender and gender issues have always been shrouded in a lot of wrong information and misconceptions". Thus the need for subtle clarifications on gender concepts and so on. Aydon (2015) has defined gender as "the social phenomenon of distinguishing males and females based on a set of identity traits..." Mondesire (2013) referred to gender as "socially constructed roles of and relations between men and women". In the view of Best (2012), gender means "socially and culturally defined sex roles, attitudes and values which communities and societies ascribe as appropriate for one sex, and not the other". Furthermore, Okeke (2002) sees gender as "many socially and culturally constructed characteristics, qualities behaviours and roles which different societies ascribe to female and males". Nzewi (2017:2) mentioned that "in general terms, gender refers to the social construct of female and male identity which is more than biological differences between men and women. It includes the way in which those differences have been valued, used and relied upon to classify women and men and to assign roles and expectations to them". With these varying conceptions of gender, gender issues abound. Some of these gender issues like gender discrimination, gender inequality, gender violence and so on are the beam of the paper. These gender issues have caused a lot of challenges for the Nigerian Government and People in such a way that activists and human rights campaigners carry out their activities with bias and in favour of the female gender with the emanation of concepts like feminism, girl-child education, women empowerment.

association of widows, charity organizations in support of single mothers and so on. These activities ignore the fact that gender is men and women and concepts like masculinity, boy-child education, association of widowers and so on should also be considered. This paper concentrates on three (3) gender issues which are gender inequality, gender discrimination and gender violence.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The relevance of this aspect of every write-up cannot and should not be underemphasized. The importance of conceptual clarification is in making the readers interpret and digest the write-up from the writer's perspective. Thus Mezieobi and Elom (2017:71) noted that "every writer tries to be precise and concise with concepts in the course of developing a write up". According to Mezieobi and Njoku (2017:34), conceptual clarification is on "the most important idea that comes in the mind of every writer is strategy of making the readers understand the write-up.

...is one very essential strategy". For these reasons, four (4) concepts will need to be clarified.

They are; gender inequality, gender discrimination, gender violence and eradicate.

THE TERM: GENDER INEQUALITY

It is a known fact that gender inequality is the direct opposite of gender equality. Therefore, if according to Nzewi (2017:6) gender equality is "equal access to social goods, services and equal opportunities in all spheres of life for both men and women", gender inequality will mean unequal access to social goods, services and unequal opportunities in all spheres of life for both men and women. According to Ijaiya and Balogun (2004) gender inequality means "a situation of uneven distribution of income as well as gender bias in labour market between men and women". Also, Onuoha – Chidiebere, Obi and Igbokwe (2017:103) averred that it is "a situation

where men and women are not given equal opportunities to contribute and actualize their full potentials and capabilities in the society”.

For Evans (2001), it is referred to as “a situation where women do not have the same rights and enlightenments as men to social, economic, and cultural development and a situation where women do not have equal voice in civil and political life”.

THE CONCEPT: GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Emeronye (2017:48) defined gender discrimination as “the systematic, unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies them rights, opportunities or resources”.

This can also be seen as that strategic act designed/planned in denying individuals their rights, privileges, opportunities, and so on based on their gender.

THE TERM: GENDER VIOLENCE

Emeronye (2017:48) out of sympathy for the women gender defined gender violence as “any act or threat by men or male-dominated institutions that inflicts physical, sexual or psychological harm on a woman or girl because of their gender”. This definition favoured the women gender due to the author’s disposition about women. But in a more neutral point of view, gender violence is that unlawful or unacceptable, display of harm or threat from one gender on another.

It can be men to women or women to men. This situation can impose on the victimized gender sexual abuse, psychological or mental trauma, and physical harm and so on.

THE WORD: ERADICATE

Eradicate simply means to completely delete or remove from existence.

VARIOUS WAYS OF ERADICATING GENDER INEQUALITY, GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER VIOLENCE

The challenges that have been caused by gender inequality, gender discrimination and gender violence are numerous hence the need to eradicate them. These challenges range from education, politics, the economy, culture and tradition, agriculture religion and so on.

Onuoha – Chidiebere, Obi and Igbokwe (2017) have succeeded in enumerating the possible strategies of eradicating gender inequality. These strategies can also be applied in eradicating gender discrimination and gender violence. They are:

- (1) Mounting of vigorous campaigns on gender issues in Nigeria.
- (2) Encouraging more girls to enroll into primary, secondary and tertiary education (lower basic, middle basic, upper basic, senior secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities).
- (3) Providing more upper basic and senior secondary schools' for 'both' females and 'males'
- (4) Awarding scholarships to students (males and females) alike in schools.
- (5) Establishing both men and women education centres in urban and rural areas.
- (6) Declaring free education for both males and females in some states even though quality and standard education cannot be free.
- (7) Introducing education for males and females with special needs;
- (8) Creating awareness on the need for children education in the family irrespective of sex/ gender.
- (9) Introducing skill acquisition and initiative programmes to promote men and women education.
- (10) Creating adult education centres to cater for out of school children (boys and girls).

- (11) Reducing cut-off marks for admission of both males and females into upper basic/senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions.
- (12) Encouraging women and men to speak loudly and clearly for their voices to be heard at relevant places.
- (13) Encouraging men and women to work very hard leaving no stone unturned especially in scientific and technological areas in order to be self-reliant and
- (14) Fixing the legal age for men and women to be married. Any policy on the above, should be adequately implemented.

Others are:

- (15) Rehabilitation of individuals that have been affected by the scourges of gender inequality, discrimination and violence should be facilitated.
- (16) Qualified counselors should be available to guide and counsel individuals with psychological and mental trauma out of inequality, discrimination and violence because of their gender.
- (17) The Nigerian constitution should be amended and made to accommodate implications for gender inequality, discrimination and violence at homes, workplace, schools and so on.
- (18) Mechanisms on handling reported cases of inequality, discrimination and violence based on gender should be put in place and monitored.
- (19) Both men and women at all levels of human endeavour should have an orientation on their rights, privileges and obligations from and to the state respectively.
- (20) Course on gender inequality, discrimination and violence should be introduced in schools from lower basic education – tertiary education levels.

- (21) The continuous bias against men and the favour of the women by human right activists/campaigners should be discouraged. Women should be allowed to make their choices accordingly just like me.
- (22) Cultural/traditional stereotype against any gender should be eradicated.
- (23) Religious organizations should educate their followers about the need for gender equity and equality.
- (24) Families should be encouraged to consider the female children in distribution of property including lands.

THE ILLUSION ABOUT GENDER

Just like Onuoha – Chidiebere, Obi and Igbokwe (2017:100) pointed out that “education is a means by which a nation equips her citizens for all round development. It is a process of achieving process in all aspects of human life, national growth and development, it is also true that there are human understandings of gender issues that are wrong. For example, it is impossible for one to accept the concepts of gender equality and equity and reject the concepts of gender inequality and inequity. This s because no nation of the world and her people have ever succeeded in achieving gender equality and equity and totaling eradicating gender inequality and inequity. Nigerians should learn to moderate some gender issues and live with them the way they are. If for example gender discrimination is moderated, individuals can live with it and continue fighting for its total eradication. The problems with gender issues are that they are on increase on daily basis. One will realize that in homes, a husband abuses his wife or a wife abuses her husband from time to time. If it is not abuse by spouses, it will be abuse by in-laws, children, relatives, neighbours and so on.

The Nigerian government is not helping matters because in a subtle way, it also abuses its citizens – through corruption, unemployment, unlawful killings of innocent citizens, insecurity, hunger, poverty, and so on.

Furthermore, any organization, group or establishment including individuals fighting for gender liberation or eradication of inequality, dissemination and violence should avoid bias on gender. This is because what is good for the men, is also good for the women. Girl child education will also fit the boy-child. If the government decides to empower women, men should also be empowered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized on gender with emphases on eradicating gender inequality, discrimination and violence.
- (2) Schools should be used as instruments for preaching about the ills of gender inequality, discrimination and violence.
- (3) The religions institutions should encourage gender equality and equity.
- (4) Traditional institutions should be reformed and transformed.

CONCLUSION

Gender inequality, gender discrimination and gender violence are three (3) gender issues that have been extensively discussed in this paper. Strategic ways of eradicating them were also highlighted. Furthermore, is it important to avoid bias whenever discussions or writings on gender are made. Considerations of both gender are necessary.

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