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Women's Education, Maternal Health, Entrepreneurship and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

In modern society, several studies have focused on women affairs in both developed and developing countries. Through some of such studies, some significant improvements have been recorded in the status of women in developed nations while the reverse has been the case in most developing countries such as Nigeria, mostly in the areas of education, maternal health, entrepreneurship and national development. This means women in developing countries are negatively affected in terms of education, maternal health, entrepreneurship and contributions national development in Nigeria. The present paper intends to discuss how women are negatively affected in these areas using data retrieved from a secondary source and content analysis as its methodology. The article used radical feminism theory to gain insight into the plight of women in Nigeria and advocated equal opportunity for men and women to develop their potentials in its concluding remarks. This could go a long way to ensure the transformation of women lives from poverty to affluence and enhance their immense contributions to societal development. Since contributions to national development depend on potentials which do not have any gender connotation, equal opportunity should be granted to male and female for capacity building. Such an effort could greatly enhance national development than when only one gender (male) is solely empowered.

Keywords: Patriarchy, women's education, maternal health, entrepreneurship and development

Introduction

The term development has occupied the mind of mankind for several decades but the yardsticks which are being used to determine the concept have remained unstable over the years. Such include variables like politics, economy, education, health care, nutrition, dwelling, etc. Although these are all relevant concepts in the field of development but the concern of this article is hinged on the human aspect which is generally known as human development.

Human development is the means of expanding the abundance of human life; instead of focusing on economic growth which may not reflect positively in the lives of ordinary citizens the focus of scholars in this area of sociology is hinged on how life is been made comfortable for mankind. Hence, UNDP (2019), argues that it is a strategy that human beings employ to create fair opportunities and choices for a better lifestyle.

In recent times, such strategies include a country's level of literacy, health care, unemployment and poverty level, entrepreneurship drive (Binder & Georgiadis, 2010). However, it could be noted that these variables could make meaning or be useful when human beings are allowed to develop their potentials irrespective of gender. On that ground, national development could be achieved faster and easier than when only one gender (male) is empowered.

Despite this, studies have shown that women's contributions to development, mostly in developing countries are hindered due to the norms of patriarchy. The norm for several decades has been empowering men to subjugate women, not minding their indispensable roles in society (George, Ozoya & Amoo, 2017; Afolabi, 2019).

The roles of women christened as indispensable in this piece might not be an intention to undermine the roles of men in development but an attempt to broadcast and commend the burden of women on crucial aspects of human life which are absolutely beyond the reach of men. These include:

- a. The conception of babies for nine months;
- b. Bringing forth of babies or giving birth to them in a painful situation;
- c. Nurturing and educating children firstly by informal and later by formal method; and
- d. Developing children morally, socially, religiously and psychologically.

These are cogent aspects of life that are exclusively meant for women. They are not only essential in maintaining society but crucial in transcending human society from one generation to another. Any carelessness on the part of women to adequately enforce the above-mentioned roles could lead to the escalation of indecency, abnormality, truancy, moral decadence, criminality in human society, all of which undermine national development.

Dwelling on biology and divine roles in human society, the encroachment of men into most of the above roles could be regarded as an exercise in futility. This is because it would be considered an abnormal or a taboo for men to develop breast, virginal, conceive and give birth to babies. Besides, the role of breadwinner ascribed to men in the society appears to have made it practically impossible for them to perform other roles of women which are not related to biology and divinity.

To 'win bread', a lot of energy is needed to be dispensed outside the home in work-related activities from morning till evening, and if possible, till night. Thus, the execution of such a vital role goes with physical, financial, social and psychological challenges. Thus, when men arrive home, they are expected to bath, eat, relax and sleep so as to be refreshed for the assignments lineup for attention or execution the next day. Although, in some homes, women are breadwinners, yet they are still subjected to subjugation despite the fact they carry out the role exclusively meant for men.

In spite of the above-mentioned indispensable contributions of women to life, the priority places on women affairs, most especially in areas of education, health, and entrepreneurship appears to be very weak in developing countries. Although, some literature state that women are well treated in developed countries, but the case of developing countries, where millions of women are seriously experiencing subjugation due to the norm of patriarchy (Okeke, Anyaehie, Ezenyeaku, 2012; Solomon, 2018) could be regarded as an issue of concern to scholars worldwide.

Patriarchy is a cultural practice that supports the subjugation of women and the superiority of men without any scientific evidence. Solomon, (2018) argues that patriarchy emerges from Greek word "Patriarkhēs" which literally means the father of a given race or the chief of a race while authors such as Christine & Dudley Jr., (2020) traced the source of patriarchy to two Latin words "Pater (father) and arch (rule)", all translates to the rule of the father, strongly backup by the norm of patriarchy.

The irony is that the incapability, irresponsibility, insensitivity, lack of ingenuity and brilliance of a man does not confer the title of rulership or dominion on a woman who is more capable, sensible, brilliant, sensitive and responsible than the man in the family. His inability to perform social, cultural, and economic responsibilities in the family is immaterial. So long a man gets married to a woman, he has automatically become her superior in developing countries and it appears the pathetic situation is aggravating due to the nature of developing countries which is characterized by illiteracy, poor exposure and underdevelopment.

At the root of patriarchy lie norms, beliefs and practices that determine how human beings live their lives. The addiction of men, to these norms, beliefs and practices is responsible for behaviours that manifest in the maltreatment of women. The irony of it all is that modernity and global campaign for its eradication are yet to yield a fruitful result largely because the practising communities are sticking to their tradition or culture. Thus, in spite of the general outcry for change, studies have shown that the position of women has not improved greatly in many developing countries, including Nigeria, most especially in their access to education, maternal care, entrepreneurship and contributions to national development (Firestone, 1970; Hanisch, 2009; Feminist Majority Organisation, 2020). It is on this premise the present article was conceived. The article is sub-divided to deliberate on the concept of education and its negative effect on women, health care, entrepreneurship and contributions to national development.

Literature Review

The Concept of Education

Education can be viewed as the wealth of knowledge and understanding which human being usually acquired at the end of studying or training in a particular field of human endeavour. Also, it could be regarded as a means of developing potentials in all spheres of life. It can equally be viewed as a process of obtaining literacy or skill needed to transform one's life, family members and the entire society in as much as it is a major requirement for securing work placement, affluence, influence and human development in general (Sivakumar & Sarvalingam, 2010). Thus, it is the bedrock of national development (Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007).

The foregoing is an indication that without education, the transformation ever recorded across the world could be practically impossible. The immense development in the field of education is responsible for the advancement in science and technology that has brought comfort to human beings in contemporary societies than in traditional societies when human energy was required to achieve feats and well-being.

Given the importance of education and the heavy resources required to ensure its actualization in qualitative terms, its responsibility becomes that of the government (Rahman and Uddin, 2009). The huge resources realized via tax, mineral resources etc. are under the control of the government and they are expected to be properly engaged in ensuring quality education. However, the management of such resources has been a serious problem among the elites in different parts of the world. While the elites in most developed nations are prudent in managing their resources, their counterparts in developing countries squander their nation's resources (Odukoya, Omonijo, Misra & Ahuja, 2021). Consequently, while education is well funded in the former, it is poorly sponsored in the latter Husain & Syed, (2016) and this may likely be one of the reasons why education in the former is highly developed than the latter.

Women's Education in Nigeria

The usefulness of education must have prompted the world organisations, mostly the UNICEF, (2020) to consider it the right of every child, irrespective of where they live and their circumstances. However, the strict compliance of countries to its implementation is traceable only to developed nations while the leadership of developing countries such as Nigeria play lip-service to its implementation.

Consequently, 10.5 million children between the age of five and fourteen are out of school (UNICEF, 2020). Apart from children, another group that are badly affected in developing countries is women. Despite the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, studies have shown that seventy-two million females are out of school (Gender statistics, 2010). Besides, out of the 774 million adult illiterates worldwide, 64% are women (Gender Statistics, 2010).

Women suffer this plight because they are regarded as properties that will eventually end up at the men's kitchen due to the distribution of social roles. In most villages in Nigeria, a girl-child is not given the right to education like the male-child because she is considered another man's property. The major implication is that the potential of such a child that is needed for the transformation of the society is being ruined. This corroborates Rölz, (2016) who argues that educating females is a strong instrument of combating global poverty, but women in developing countries may not attain their potentials due to improper or lack of formal education.

Studies have shown indicators that reveal the trends and pattern of education in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, such measures include literacy, enrollment status and years spent in school (Rolz, 2016). The World Bank cited in Rolz, (2016) shows that each of these indicators leads to the same conclusions; the level of female education is low in the poorest countries, with just a handful of exceptions, and by any measure, the gender gap is the largest in such societies.

The foregoing prompted The United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to sponsor gender equalization (Aja-Okorie, 2013). Through this goal, it is mandatory for every country to empower women through education, but the position of women in Nigeria is yet to be greatly improved due to several limitations out of which patriarchy dominates (Olowookere, Omonijo, Odukoya and Anyaegbunam, 2020).

Maternal Health

Maternal health entails the medical services that are needed to women who are pregnant, aborted and nurturing babies. It also involves the care dimensions of family planning in most societies. In Nigeria, it is being organised as follows:

Table i: Tiers of Maternal Health Care, Locations and Activities in Nigeria

SN	Tiers	Locations	Activities	Sources
1	Primary	Nearest to women in each of the local governments	The tier handles antenatal cases, child delivery and postnatal.	Umana, (2018)
2	Secondary	Could be far to women's location but in existence in each of the 36 states	The tier handles complicated cases that cannot be handled in the primary	
3	Tertiary	Could be very far to women residence, but in existence in special locations within the country	The tier treats cases that secondary tier cannot handle.	

Source: Researchers' Compilation, (2020)

Although, studies have shown that maternal health problem is just one of the numerous challenges confronting the health sector in Nigeria but infectious and communicable diseases are other notable ones that often result in death. Other root causes of death according to Muhammad, Abdulkareem & Chowdbury, (2017) are HIV/AIDS, malaria, diarrhetic, malaria, protein/energy malnourishment, meningitis, cancer, infections related to lower respiratory, stroke and others.

The problem of health care has continued to generate problems in Nigeria due to the shortage of health personnel to attend to the large crowd seeking medical attention. Studies have shown that such medical experts are in large number but based in developed nations where they are well treated (Umana, 2018). Thus, there are twenty-seven medical doctors per one thousand Nigerians (Public Health Foundation of Nigeria, 2017). The gloomy state infrastructures, unfriendly attitudes of staff to patients, shortage of vital drugs and poor-quality service, water supply and electricity (Umana, 2018). Given this, the World Health Organisation (2019) ranked Nigeria's health care 187th among 191 United Nations member states.

The complicated health care in Nigeria is compounded with poor economic policies and factors related to politics, poverty and governance. Women are badly affected due to the inability to access medical care on their own because most of them are not educated and they are underemployed and underpaid.

Access of people to health care is another major criterion for determining human development index. While the problem could be regarded as a general problem, the case of maternal health is horrible and it has been a major

concern to many developing countries. According to the World Health Organisation (2019), almost one hundred per cent of maternal death globally occur in developing countries with half and twenty per cent in West Africa and Nigeria respectively.

Specifically, the WHO (2019) states that from 2005 to 2015, over six hundred thousand cases of maternal death were recorded in Nigeria while less than nine hundred thousand cases of near-miss cases were reported. Thus, a woman in Nigeria has a one in twenty-two-lifetime risk of dying in the course of pregnancy, childbirth or postpartum or post-abortion which may never be compared with developed nations that have the lifetime risk of one in forty-nine thousand.

Any woman lost to maternal death could be regarded as potential lost to national development. The more a country continues to experience such, the more she loses potential materials to national development.

Entrepreneurship

Just like other concepts in social sciences, entrepreneurship has been defined in several ways. These include the act of creating or extracting value Gaddefors & Anderson, (2017); a system premeditated to design, launch and run a new enterprise. Such a business is usually very small at the initial stage, but could later grow to a medium and large-scale business; the eagerness and ability to establish, organize and manage enterprises, not minding the risks it portends to make profits (Yetisen, *et al.*, 2015).

The foregoing is an indication that entrepreneurship entails the act or a process of producing persons who are ready to take a risk in going into business transactions in order to earn profits, either to better their lots or ensure the transformation of families and human society at large. Over the years, experiences have shown that such an act or process do not entertain gender connotation, but the ability to possess features disposing to success in business transactions and it could be possessed by a man or a woman. Despite this, studies have shown that human factors predisposing entrepreneurship are more favourably disposed to men than women in developing countries Adenuga, Omonijo, Ogunyemi and Olowookere, (2020). Such could be traced to the norms of culture and patriarchy as well as biological factors.

Hinderance which human tradition places on women's entrepreneurship via culture lies in the denial of inheritance such as money, land, houses, cars etc. In most societies in Nigeria, women are not permitted to inherit their fathers' property. Such property is usually transferred to men in the family. This is because, when a woman gets married, she lives her father's house to leave permanently with her husband and his kindred. Her rights in that family are no longer tenable. The importance of inheritance in the life of a brilliant woman who has business initiative or prowess may not be quantified, judging from the problem of raising funds for a start-up in most developing countries. With a substantial wealth inherited, the foundation of a flourishing business could be laid and maintained by women who are prudent in managing resources. But when they are prevented from accessing such a vital opportunity, their business potentials could be destroying and that could be a major hindrance to women's contributions to national development.

The aspect of limitations which biology has placed on women's entrepreneurship could be located in areas of conception, childbirth, bread feeding and upbringings. These could be regarded as demanding tasks for women and those who are not physically strong may not be able to combine them with the stress of managing entrepreneurship, except if such an economic activity could be suspended till after childbearing.

Theoretical Point of View

Several theories have discussed the plights of women globally. Such include Marxist feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism and others. While all of them have made some useful contributions to understanding the status of women in the society, mostly in developing countries, the focus of this paper is on radical feminism because of its strong connection with patriarchy and culture.

The origin of radical feminism has been traced to the work of Robin Morgan, Shulamith Firestone and Carol Hanisch in the year 1967 (Firestone, 1970; Hanisch, 2009; Feminist Majority Organisation, 2020). These authors were inspired by the rate at which women's position was neglected by the antiwar groups and civil rights crusaders

led by men several decades ago. The neglect ignited their anger and prompted them to commence the movement as well as the protest in 1968 at Miss America Pageant, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Radical feminism blames the disparity between men and women on patriarchy. In order to ensure women's freedom, radical feminist authors have refused to accept equality with men but suggested the total destruction of patriarchy, a complete end to domestic violence and rape. Ardent among such authors include Andrea Dworkin, Ellen Willis, Firestone, (1970) and Hanisch, (2009). They seriously contend with the act of dividing societal rights, power and privilege between men and women in the society using gender because of its connection with patriarchy and advocate for its abolition.

Dwelling on the above, radical feminism has a point that needs to be commended with all seriousness. Such is located in tracing the root of women's subjugation in the society to patriarchy, most especially in developing countries such as Nigeria. To say that the norms of patriarchy backed up by the culture undermine women's position in the society is not an understatement; it reflects the social reality of women's subjugation. However, it becomes pertinent for radical feminists to note that every society operates by its culture and since patriarchy has a strong link with the culture of human society, the emergence of rules governing marital affairs could be very difficult to challenged and altered successfully.

Such rules include women leaving their father's house for their husbands' house after marriage, bearing their husband's name and raising children in the same name. Also, the dowry and bride price paid on women by their husbands in most societies are heavy (**See Table ii**); it gives the impression that women are being purchased by men. It appears such a heavy dowry has given men the right to consider women as their property.

Table ii: Communities, States and Dowries/bride price in Nigeria

SN	Communities	State	Dowries/Bride price	Source
1	Mbaise people	Imo State	From N300,000 to N500,000	Onuoha, (2020)
2	Annang people	Akwa Ibom	From N500,000 to N700,000	
3	Ikwerre inhabitants	Rivers state	One million naira	
4	Ngwo People	Enugu State	Not stated	
5	Bororos	Northern Nigeria	Ten to fifty live cows	
6	Ijebus	Ogun State	Not stated	
7	Nkpa	Abia State	Not stated	
8	Efik	Cross River	From N500,000 to 3 million	

Source: *Researchers Compilation, (2020)*

Besides, radical feminists have failed to realise that biology and spiritual engagements have already drawn a line of demarcation between men and women and any attempt to alter the demarcation could be regarded as an exercise in futility. Although, women have options of securing unlimited freedom for themselves in society such could be possible under the following conditions:

- a. Forgetting about marriage and denying themselves the joy of sexual satisfaction under martial obligation. Although, they can have a sexual relationship with some men but such women are never considered responsible in most cultures;
- b. Remaining childless, because it is not possible to conceive without having sexual intercourse with a man. Although, they can bear children outside marriage such children will be regarded as bastards in most cultures and it goes with ridicule;
- c. Be ready to stay in their fathers' houses or their own houses as long as they live and
- d. Be ready to cater for themselves.

Judging from human nature that needs comfort, companion, social interaction, emotional stability, the above conditions could be very difficult to apply to women, who are more often regard as weaker sex. Although, it may succeed to some extent in developed nations due the individualist nature of such countries but its application to women's situation in developing countries could be tantamount to subjecting women to a miserable lifestyle because:

- i. Most women are poorly educated, unemployed, underemployed and underpaid and may not be able to cater to their needs;
- ii. An unmarried woman is considered irresponsible and does not enjoy the respect from the African culture;

- iii. Giving out daughters in marriage is a thing of joy in Africa culture. Hence, unmarried daughters are always a concern their parents; and
- iv. Husbands are considered the crown of women in African culture “ade ori”, thus any woman without a husband does not have a crown “ade ori” and is vulnerable to humiliation

Given the above, it could be a good idea if feminist theorists could reconsider their anger and bitterness against patriarchy and men domination and commence advocating for fair treatment of women in society.

Concluding Remarks

This paper discussed issues surrounding women’s education, maternal health, entrepreneurship and development in Nigeria. The paper craved the indulgence of policymakers and strong advocate of patriarchy to the fact that education, health, entrepreneurship are cogent areas of human development that demands contributions from every member of the society, irrespective of gender. The more a society gives equal participation to her inhabitants without any disparity the more advantageous it becomes for such a society. This goes to corroborate Giri, (2006:24) in a book titled “Deprived Devis: Women’s Unequal Status in Society,” that “The evidence is overwhelming that education improves health and productivity and that the poorest people gain most. When schools open their doors wider to girls and women, the benefits multiply.”

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