

WOMEN EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Women play vital role in sustaining peace and development most especially in the education sector. In developed countries women play vital role, however in Nigeria women are still relegated due to educational, economic and political power. This paper is an attempt to re-awaken the zeal of females on their attitude; empowerment and importance to get involved in the quality of the education towards enhanced national development. It highlights the need for women participation in education system, issues and prospects in education. Descriptive survey design was adopted while 150 respondents were sampled from three local governments in Ondo state using precision of 95% confidence interval. The paper submits that the role of women cannot be undermined out of education sector to boost their social, political, economic and financial participation towards peace and natural development.

Keywords: *Women Education, Tool, Peace, National Development, Nigeria*

Introduction

Women in most countries around the world have remained the most neglected in the programmes of government in providing socio-economic benefits Osaat (2011). Despite constituting a large percentage of the society, women have not been given the opportunity to discover, harness and contribute to the development of their society Obi and Ezeoba (2011). According to the United Nations (1979) in UNESCO (2010), women alone constitute one half of the world's population they do two-thirds of the world's work, they earn one tenth of the world's income and they own one hundredth of the world's

property including land. This buttresses the fact that women have so far benefitted very little or nothing despite contributing much from the economic resources accruing in the society.

This is an indication of the fact that the potentials of women in the society has been greatly underutilized. The opportunity given to women to contribute to national development has been very little for a very long time. Major and minor responsibilities such as those in the family and business units, and also bigger tasks such as those in national and international endeavours remained the sole responsibility of their male counterpart. This has relegated women to the position of being passive even in matters that involve their overall wellbeing. Expectedly, this has reduced the worth and impact of women in most societies. Women in the society have therefore been deprived the opportunity of contributing at optimum to the welfare of the society in which they belong.

Despite the fact that this trend has been so for a long time now, it appears that women in the society are also not prepared to change the trend in the country and world at large. This is reflected in the unwillingness of women to explore all avenues through which their voices can be heard in a society where their population and dexterity can make a difference. Majority of the women in the society have failed to rise up to the challenge through seminars, running apprenticeship programmes, developing entrepreneurial skills and acquiring quality formal education as a step towards ensuring equality with their male counterpart in the society.

Significance of Women Education

The education of women has a very long history around the world. Educating women was earlier limited to the informal system of education which is education acquired in the family. The informal method of educating women was the major system of acquiring knowledge which women were exposed to for a very long time. According to Barry (2013), women education dates back to the 18th century in America where women were being taught how to handle household chores. Women education during this period was therefore fashioned towards assisting the girl child become a wife material and manage her home properly after marriage.

Today, the education of women has gone beyond the task of being home managers to that of managing small and large business organizations. Women now acquire formal education in order to assist them to contribute effectively to the management of various sectors of the society. Since women are now exposed to the same learning environment available to their male counterpart, they have been empowered to contribute equally to the advancement of the society. It refers to all platform of education established to provide women with equal opportunity and access to formal education just like their male counterpart. This means that education of women must be tailored to meet their societal and health needs. Baba (2012) concurred to this position when he stated that women education is an instrument for providing sustainable economic development. It is an avenue for providing formal education to women in the society by equipping them with the skills and abilities needed to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of themselves and the nation. Women education is therefore provided at all levels of the educational sector specifically for women in order to equip them with the required knowledge to become empowered and contribute to self and societal development.

Factors that Constrain the Education of Women in Nigeria

As earlier posited, women play a significant role in sustaining the efficiency of the various sectors of the country. The economic, political, social and religious sectors of the economy will perform better when women are involved in managing the affairs of the various sectors of the economy. This will assist the nation in achieving quicker and better national objectives. However, there are so many factors that have hindered the education of women in order to empower them to contribute meaningfully to the sustainable development of the nation. Some of these factors include but not limited to the following:

Cultural Beliefs: The African culture over the years has relegated the position of women into that of a home tender. This belief system has been upheld by various societies and has contributed to the slow progress recorded by women both nationally and internationally. According to Shinaba (2008) cultural beliefs in the past suggest that training a woman was just a waste of time and resources. This has

contributed to the unwillingness of parents, communities and the nation at large from providing an enabling environment for women education to thrive. Based on the little attention given to women on education due to various cultural beliefs in our society, women have been the opportunity for the acquisition of formal education at all levels. This has resulted in a wide disparity between the number of males and females who are undergoing various programmes in the various educational institutions across the country.

Truncated Self-Esteem: According to Glover (2000) most women have failed to pick up science and technology related tasks even though they possess the needed intellectual ability. They have deliberately shied away from responsibilities that they also have the capacity to execute. Women all over the country have passionately embraced the position of a home tender which society has relinquished to them. Very few women are willing to rise up and compete with the men in areas where they have comparative advantage. This is due to the low self-esteem that has been developed by them. Most women have viewed themselves as being incapacitated even in activities where they would have performed well due to fear of failure. Women believe that they do not have the strength, intellect and political will that the men possess and as such it becomes unnecessary to compete with them. This has made most women to ignore the need to further their education as they view it as a waste of time and other precious resources.

Fear of Power: Another factor that has inhibited the drive for the education of women in the country is the fear of domination by their male counterpart. Anugwom (2009:131) stated that "men see themselves as the rightful owners of the formal economic sector and abundant socio-cultural practices support this. It appears that the will and possibility of succeeding in the society is solely reserved for the men. Therefore, most men fear that when women are given the opportunity to acquire the needed education, it may imply that they may have to relinquish some of their positions to the women in the society. Women in the society have been deprived the opportunity for quality formal education as this may mean that the men will have to share their political, economic, social and cultural privileges with women in the society.

Insufficient Infrastructures: Infrastructures play a significant role in the provision of quality education in any nation. The availability of appropriate infrastructures such as school library, classrooms, workshops, laboratories, electricity, water supply and so on contributes to effectiveness of the school system. Infrastructures that will boost their entrepreneurial skill, home management skills need to be put in place in order to make schooling interesting to them. Also, there are certain facilities that enable women to learn effectively in any school system. This includes sanitary facilities, home management facilities among others. However, when these infrastructures are not available, meaningful teaching and learning may not take place for them.

Insecurity: The level of insecurity in the nation has affected the educational sector as a whole. However, the worse hit is women who are already marginalized in the past and are unable to defend themselves in the time of crisis and violence. Most parents would prefer their children to attend schools in which its security is guaranteed. Also, with the increasing level of insecurity in the country, students both male and female alike have been deprived the privilege of acquiring education of their choice. According to Odebode (2013) insecurity in the north has led to the death of 70 teachers, 100 students with thousands of teachers and students fleeing for safety. This has compounded the problem of inaccessible education in the country both for male and female students in the country. Despite the prevalence of the security challenges in the country, the male students have been able to manage the situation than the female. More female students have therefore been deprived the opportunity of going to school for fear of insecurity around the country.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment at all levels of education in the country is more pronounced between male teachers and female students. In the same way, the type of job secured by women is dependent on the type of education acquired. Women are therefore exposed the most to sexual harassment both in school and at work. Leathwood (2005) noted that the preference for different job types contribute to sexual enticement in selected job types. With more male teachers in the educational sector, there is bound to be an increase in the level of sexual harassment between male teachers and female

students than the other way round. This has contributed to the more reasons why most girls especially in the north have been deprived the opportunity of attending formal education as this may serve as an avenue for the married women around them to be exposed to sexual advances from their male teachers. This has contributed to the more reason why some men would prefer their wives to be housekeepers rather than undergo any form of formal education.

Ways to Develop the Education of Women in Nigeria

Various educational stakeholders have continued to re-iterate the need to improve on women education in the country as a way of empowering women in the society. The education of women has been linked to have a positive relationship with national development. It is therefore needful that women education be given the needed attention in the society. Some of the ways through which women education can be improved in the country include the following:

Ensuring Gender Equality in Admission Process: Most of the tertiary institutions in the country reserve some courses basically for the male against their female counterparts. Some of these courses are areas where women can either perform better or compete favorably with their male counterpart. As a way of improving women education in the country, more women need to be given equal opportunity during admission to study courses of their choices. The method of admission in higher institutions should be gender friendly and give women the opportunity to acquire higher education in a course and institution of their choice.

Provision of Educational Grants: Although, all persons interested in acquiring formal education in the country should be given the opportunity to do so, however, more female students should be given educational grants as a way of encouraging them to further their education to higher levels. In the face of the disparity that already exists in the ratio of males to females in most of the educational systems in the country, more female students should be provided with financial support as a way of bridging the differences in education at all levels. Female students can be provided with educational grants that will help them complete their education or provided with financial

encouragement in the form of stipends that will assist them to study comfortably in any institution of their choice. This will help to increase the interest of more women to acquire formal education just like their male counterpart.

Proper Legislation: Various authors have identified the fact that the African tradition naturally places more importance on the male child than the female child. However, Nasir (2002) also noted that the inability of women to acquire education and contribute to the independence of Nigeria also contributes to the slow progress of women education. It is therefore necessary that proper policies be formulated and implemented that will protect the female child from cultural and contemporary beliefs. The various arms of government should be ready to stand up and defend the rights of women when such right is being eroded and abused. When appropriate laws are put in place, it will go a long way in overcoming all barriers that limit the girl child from acquiring quality education just like other citizens in the country.

Concept of Sustainability

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs: it contains two key concepts

- The essential needs of the world's poor development
- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs (Tarasosky 2007).

The Role of Women in Safeguarding Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

There are various ways through which women can contribute to the development of the nation. Based on some of the special qualities possessed by women, a lot can be benefited from them if given the opportunity to be educated. Some of the benefits that can be derived from women education towards a sustainable development are:

Quality Leadership: According to the report of Shinaba (2008) abuse of power, violations of human rights, mismanagement of national resources and under development are the order of the day for the past

four decades that men have been in power. Similarly, the period in which men have been in power have been characterized by gross inequality and violence. However, as managers of the home, it is expected that if women are given the opportunity, they will be able to implement their managerial skills in the management of the various sectors of the economy. The quality of leadership that will be provided by women will be such that would be characterized with equality, peace, transparency and protection of human right. All of these qualities are very important in building a stable nation.

Growth in GDP: The activities of women in the various economic sectors of the economy have the potential of contributing to an increased GDP. This is because their contribution will help to counter the argument that effort of their male counterpart in securing a higher GDP.

Building of a Strong Nation:Orji (2011) noted that girl education vis-à-vis women education stands as one of the potent tools for reducing girls' vulnerability. A healthy nation has also been linked to a wealthy nation. Similarly, Kingdon (2002) noted that doubling the female secondary school enrolment ratio from 19% to 38% in 1975 helped to reduce infant deaths in 1985 by 64%. The education of women is therefore closely related to raising a healthy generation that would be empowered to contribute significantly to national development. Women in the society are usually known for their cleanliness and have the capacity of building a healthy nation.

Reduced Dependency Rate: The education of women is one of the ways of reducing the level of dependency in the nation. The empowerment of women through education will assist in reducing the pressure on economic resources in the country. This will help to sustain the economic resources in the country towards the path of development. Similarly, empowering women through education would also enable them to become self-sufficient individuals. They would be equipped to learn and develop various means by which they can meet up with personal and societal needs. This will help to reduce the pressure on national resources and also reduce dependency level on their sponsors.

Resource Management: The prudent management of resources helps to reduce wastage and increase economic benefit from available resources. When women are properly educated, it helps them to put their managerial skill into use and help manage national economic resources for the benefit of all. It is therefore advisable that women should be empowered through formal education on how they can harness their management abilities for the long term benefit of all citizens in the country.

Statement of problem

If development has to be achieved, educating women has to be every country's priority. Cultural factors, which are ideas, beliefs, dogmas and practices created and nurtured by the male-dominated groups to ensure that the society is organized in their interest. It is generally believed that the family name is preserved in the lineage of the male child, hence, the male child should be better equipped than the female in order to get a good job and provide for the family. It is believed that women are mainly for the purpose of reproduction and domestic activities hence, there is no need to educate them, as this is a waste of resources. The fear stems from the fact that one day the girl child will eventually marry out to a person of another family. Others believed that if they send a girl to school, she will be more exposed and civilized and cannot agree to be under the authority of any man. Some people are of the opinion that people use women activism as a platform to enter into politics, hence the suspicion. The unwillingness of Ondo state government to create a space for women in the governance of Ondo state is a huge challenge that women have to contend with. This breeds unhealthy competition amongst the women, rivalry and related ills that do not augur well for sustainable economic integration, peace building and development in Ondo state. It is against this background that this research tends to know the effect of women education on national development especially in Ondo state.

Methodology

The descriptive research design was adopted in the study. Ondo state has three Senatorial Zones comprising of eighteen local government areas. The study was conducted in Ondo West L.G.A., Ile-oluji/okeigbo L.G.A. and Owo L.G.A. Population of the study included all the educated

women in the three LGAs of Ondo state. The population of women in Ondo West L.G.A was 147,009, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo LG.A. was 84,772 and Owo L.G.A. was 110,206 and total of 342,087. The sample size was 150, using precision of 95% confidence interval. Thus, the samples from the three L.G.As. are 64, 37 and 49 for Ondo West, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo and Owo L.G.A. respectively. The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire titled with 20 items. This was structured under four likert scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree. Data were analysed, using Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) for research questions. Acceptance and Rejection point of each research question for the items was mean of 2.50.

For the Hypothesis: One-sample T-test was used to test the difference between the level of significance of the hypothesized value. If the observed significance level for this test is small (e.g. less than 0.05) then the rejected null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and accept alternative hypothesis (H_1) then otherwise if greater than 0.05.

H_0 : Sustainable Peace and National Development does not have significant influence on Women Education in Ondo State

Table 1: One-Sample t-test or the hypothesis

One-Sample Test				
	T	Df	Sig.	Mean diff.
Peace building is fostered by women education for positive change.	52.068	149	.000	3.1266

For Sustainable Peace

One-Sample Test				
	T	Df	Sig.	Mean diff.
Education makes women to participate in decision making.	63.525	149	.000	3.2600

For National Development

Results illustrated on table suggested that we accept the Alternative hypothesis (H_1) because the significance level is less than 0.05 shown in the table above. Therefore, it is concluded that Sustainable Peace and National Development have significant influence on Women Education in Ondo State.

Research Questions:

1. To what extent do implication of education on women in developed practices improve national development?
2. To what extent do women education and peace build sustainable environment?
3. How can women education in overcoming socio-cultural practices improve social change in Ondo State?

Results: The results were shown in the tables in line with the research questions.

Table 1: Implication of Education on Women in Developed Practices in Ondo State

S/N	IMPLICATION OF EDUCATION ON WOMEN IN DEVELOPED PRACTICES	MEAN (x)	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARK
1	Education makes women to participate in decision making.	3.260	0.628	Agree
2	Discrimination is reduced when educated women are in position of authority.	2.986	0.843	Agree
3	Education encourages girl-child education.	2.953	0.846	Agree
4	Education helps women to be aware of their rights when abused.	2.986	0.866	Agree
5	Education favour male child more than female.	2.233	1.172	Disagree
6	Education enables women to escape unjust practices.	3.173	0.692	Agree
7	Education empowers women in national	3.513	0.501	Agree

	development.			
8	Education breeds acceptability of females in families and society.	2.700	0.775	Agree

Table 1: Above shows the Implication of education on women in developed practices in Ondo States. These are seen in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 which were rated above 2.5; while item 5 was rated below 2.5 revealing that education does not favour only male child.

Table 2: Education and Peace Building in Ondo State

S/N	EDUCATION AND PEACE BUILDING	MEAN (x)	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARK
9	Peace building is fostered by women education for positive change.	3.126	0.735	Agree
10	Education is a tool for equity, justice and fairness for peace sustainability.	3.193	0.620	Agree
11	Peace education exposes women to team building.	3.266	0.575	Agree
12	Education breeds women participant in societal issues and prospects.	3.346	0.543	Agree
13	Education blends peace in society within and without.	3.793	0.406	Agree
14	Education enables women to bring peace in their families.	2.913	0.578	Agree
15	Education distorts peace building in the society.	2.606	0.758	Agree

Table 2: Above shows the education and peace building on women in Ondo States. These are seen in items 9 to 15 which were rated above

2.5; it shows that women education helps women to participate in peace building.

Table 3: Women Education in Overcoming Socio-Cultural Practices in Ondo State

S/N	WOMEN EDUCATION IN OVERCOMING SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES	MEAN (x)	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARK
16	Education discourages women from being forced in early marriage.	2.986	0.827	Agree
17	Education stops parents from denying their female children in asset sharing.	2.900	0.932	Agree
18	Education enables women to select their spouse.	2.906	0.726	Agree
19	Education enable families to accept women without a male child.	2.433	1.089	Disagree
20	Education encourages intergenerational girl child education.	2.886	0.831	Agree

Table3: Above shows the women education in overcoming socio-cultural practices on women in Ondo States. These are seen in items 16, 17, 18, and 20 which were rated above 2.5; while item 19 was rated below 2.5. This is an indication that they did not agree that education enable families to accept women without a male child.

Discussion

Result from table 1 showed that education enabled women to actively participate in decision making for societal improvement thus reducing discrimination against women in position of authority. It was observed that girl education helped women to be aware of their rights and to be empowered for national development. This was buttressed by Isife (2013) in the study of women empowerment on national development and Osaat (2011) in the need for gender equity in national development.

Table 2 revealed that with quality education, women are exposed to peace building to foster positive change, justice, fairness and sustainability in the society. Women education will enhance their primary roles, for effective home management in terms of attending to their husband's needs, performing household chores and supporting their husbands in terms of provision of the family needs. This therefore implies that women should be included at different social and economic engagements to reduce conflict situations and restore peace in the society. There are also many pronouncements that have shown that the contributions of women and women organizations both at local and international levels to stop violence and change situations for peace building Sife, (2014).

Table 3 results revealed that respondents agreed that education reduces early marriage, education stops parents from denying their female children in asset sharing, education enables women to select their spouse, and education encourages intergenerational girl child education. This is in line with Okeke, and Nria, (2013) Education: A panacea for devastating effects of socio-cultural practices on women.

Conclusion

The importance of women educational development cannot be overemphasized, since it brings peace and development in the society and nation as a whole. Education of women will lead to improved empowerment, job opportunities, self-awareness and confidence to assist in involvement of social, political and economic issues. It is therefore noted that women have potentials that are necessary for peace and development. There is therefore need to fully involve women in all sectors of the economy especially education so as to evenly distribute gender participation in the country.

Recommendations

- Women should be accepted as men were accepted in any sector for collaboration in the national economy
- To restore peace in the society advice or contributions of women should be accepted when necessary during conflict resolution

- Gender discrimination should be stopped by stakeholders for effective and efficient peace and sustainable development of the nation
- Women programmes should be supported implemented and made effective in the country
- Women forum should be encouraging to create sensitization among both literate and illiterate ones among them on values, knowledge to improve social, political and economic life style

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