

Gender Inequality: Implication for Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

Adedire Solomon

*Political Science and International Relations Department
College of Business and Social Sciences
Landmark University, P.M.B. 1001, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria.
bayoadedire@yahoo.com*

Abstract

This study used secondary data to examine Gender and Development in Nigeria. Human development is people-oriented in the sense that human beings are the end objectives of development. The search for freedom, well-being and dignity of individuals in all societies when individuals are not just passive recipients of progress has called for gender equality. Gender inequality is strongly correlated with poverty, making women at the low end of income distribution, at greater risk to sources of insecurity with implications for life expectancy. The study revealed that the ratio of male to female in socio-economic and political development is very low. This is evidenced in the great disparity of women participating in politics, access to education and public goods, employment opportunities, access to bank loans, land and property, high rate of maternal mortality and many more. The paper recommends that there is the need to bridge the gap between the male and female for any meaningful development to take place. This can be done by allowing people to have equal opportunities to education, effectively adopted and appropriately enforced gender quota, changing cultural beliefs, empowering women to contribute to economic growth and allow women to have access to land like their male counterparts.

Keywords: *Development, Freedom, Poverty, Disparity, Life Expectancy*

Introduction

Gender deserves central attention in any discussion of economic and social development. No one would deny the major significance of demographic change for development and policy-making including its impact on the gender division of labour (Beneria, 2003). The United Nations Nigeria Common County Assessment has remarked that little regard is paid by policy makers to gender issues. The report states that females in Nigeria have a lower social status than their male counterparts, despite their crucial role in society; Nigerian women are dominated, discriminated against and even disinherited by their relatives (Hodges, 2001). Women constitute half of the world's population and have contributed significantly to the well-being of the human race. In Nigeria, for instance, women have always played five key roles-mother, producer, home manager, community organizer, socio-cultural and political activist (UNDP, 1996). In the vast majority of African countries, women and girls are less well nourished, more prone to poor health, sexual abuse and violence and have less legal protection including fewer legally guaranteed property contract and religious rights. They are frequently subject to the double burden of employment and household responsibilities, which can take a toll on their emotional and physical well-being (Rosenberger & Sauer 2012, p.9).

Socio-economic inequality describes the disparity not only in income but in education, health, employment and political participation. It is an established fact that all forms of inequality are detrimental to socio-economic development and well-being. Their severity seems to be more pronounced when viewed from the gender perspective, more so, if the distribution or allocation of those resources is biased against women (ADB, 2002a; Evans, 2001). As Safilios-Rothschild (1991) puts it "a society that has a powerful gender stratification system that tends to place men in decision making positions with men relegated to traditional training and economic activities with limited demand that do not provide them with adequate means of livelihood is an endangered society. For instance, if the gender inequality is such that leads to women's having less access to education and skills for productive employment, it will have a far-reaching effect in terms of poverty creation and perpetuation in the present as well as in the next generation"(Quisumbing & Maluccio 1999; Filmer 1999; Klasen 1999).

Measures that have been developed in the past to track socio-economic gender inequality remain an unfounded issue because women have continued to be at the disadvantaged end. In the United Nation Development Programme gender-related measures suffer from a range of flaws and have it has also not been able to fill this gap. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to examine gender inequality and its implications for socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The growing concern for gender equality is an attempt to search for freedom, well-being and dignity of individuals in all societies when individuals are not just passive recipients of progress. Inequality is a key factor in producing a wide range of social ills such as education disadvantage, health inequality, crime and may undermine social cohesion. It relates with economic performance but in a much more complex fashion than a simple trade-off between growth and inequality (Nolan, 2009). The existing literatures in Nigeria attest to the male dominated agriculture linked to the disproportionate male access to resources and information required to produce crops more efficiently than their female counterparts (Fasoranti, 2006; Otitoju & Arere 2010; Liverpool-Tasie *et al.*, 2011). Low female capital relative to male levels may lead to slow growth of incomes and of well-being, and conversely, the pattern of economic growth may not benefit different genders fairly (Palmer-Jones, 2008).

In Nigeria, gender inequality in disfavor of women features prominently in access to and control of land, credit facilities, technologies, education and health and as a result, women are more vulnerable to poverty than men. In Nigeria, the inequality level is said to have worsened and many studies using household survey income and consumption concept document this fact. Gender inequality has made women and girls to be more prone to poor health, sexual abuse, violence and be less well nourished. The problem of this study therefore, is that of great disparity between men and women which could be attributed to their level of participation in politics, access to education and public goods, employment opportunities, access to bank loans, land and property, high rate of maternal mortality.

This study sought to find out the socio-economic implications of gender inequality in Nigeria. It sought to find out the reasons for gender inequality in Nigeria, examine the ratio of men and women in employment and politics, discuss the socio-economic implications of gender inequality and suggest possible solutions.

Conceptual Framework

There are two basic concepts that are central to the title of this paper, these are gender and gender Inequality.

Gender

In understanding the concept of gender, there is a need to make a clear distinction between sex and gender. Sex refers to biological differences between male and female, whereas gender refers to socially constructed differences between men and women. It is preferable to talk about gender instead of sex because sex is typically not socially interesting (D'Amico & Beckman, 1995). Sen (1999) states that there is a danger to confuse the term 'gender' with women. He posited that the concept of gender is not limited to the male or female species, but goes further to assess the relationship between them.

According to Cassell (2002), gender refers to a sense of being male or female or having the recognizable traits of one's sex. The characteristics and behaviours that are generally associated with being a male are called masculine and those associated with being a female are called feminine. Masculine and feminine usually refers to a combination of physical traits such as bodily shape, voice and facial hair and acquired characteristics such as hair style, clothing, body movements and display of emotions. Olujobi (2001) refers to it as a division of humanity into two distinctive categories based on their sex. To the sociologists, it is used to denote the roles played by women and men and deals not only with the differences but also with how the society confers power on each of the sexes.

Gender, therefore, in a simple term is the established socio-cultural dichotomy drawn upon biological categorization of male and female. This singular biological difference has far reaching effects on these established categories: male and female in relation to status, roles, power and privilege. It has for a long time been the determinant factor for social relations and economic activities in our society (Chikwe, 2003).

Gender Inequality

Canada-Ukraine Gender Fund (2004) states that gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities for realizing their full human rights and potentials to contribute to national, political, social, cultural development and to benefit from the result. On the other hand, inequality is often referred to as lack of equality; being unequal in amount, size, value or ranks; lack of evenness, uniformity; lack of due proportion or even distribution of resources (World Book, 2002). Gender inequality also means a situation where women do not have the same rights and enlightenments as men to human, social, economic and cultural development and where women do not have equal voice in civil and political life (Evans, 2001). It is a situation of uneven distribution of income, lack of access to

productive inputs, such as credit and education, lack of command over property or control over earned income as well as gender biases in labour market and social exclusion between men and women (Cagatay 1998; Harris-White & Saith 1997; Ravari 1998).

Klasen (2002) observed that gender inequality in education may undermine a number of development goals. First, gender inequality in education and access to resources may prevent reductions in fertility and child mortality and the expansion of education of the next generation. Second, gender inequality in education may reduce economic growth, which if it is low, investment rate will also be low because countries with lower human capital are said to always have smaller returns on investments. An index called gender inequality index is used for measurement of gender disparity that was introduced in the 2010 Human Development Report 20th anniversary edition by United Nations Development Programme. According to UNDP, this index is a composite measure which captures the loss of achievement within a country due to gender inequality, and uses three dimensions to do so: reproductive, health, empowerment, and labour market participation.

Theoretical Orientation

Gender inequality is a concept that is often used by scholars without a vivid understanding. In this paper, a theoretical framework is required to enrich our knowledge and to form the basis of moving forward. Bras (1987, p. 7), observed that “good theory is the accurate generalization of practice”. The theoretical orientation adopted is the Liberal Feminist theory. The feminist political theorists have argued that the appearance of neutrality toward gender or equality between men and women in government actually hides substantial gender inequality (Rosenberger & Sauer, 2012). This theory challenges male dominance and advocates social, political and economic equality of women and men in society (Riger, 1998). The theory grew out of the social contract theories of the 16th and 17th Centuries and flowered in the 18th Century when its ideals in individual rights, freedom and equality were put to test in the French and American revolutions. It begins with the assertion that, as human beings, women have a natural right to the same opportunities and freedom as men. Their approach has been to fight these by campaigning for changes in laws that discriminate against women, gaining rights for women that were previously enjoyed by men (For example, Suffrage); Within the Nigerian context, these ideals were first tested during the Igbo Women’s riots of 1929 and the demonstration of Egba women against flat rate tax (Udegbe, 2001).

From the above, it is obvious that gender inequality fits into this orientation in view of the disparities between men and women in employment, income, access to resources etc.

The Need for Gender Equality

The Food and Agricultural Organization (2001) listed the benefits of taking gender concerns into consideration in the design, implementation and review of development programmes as:

- a. Enhanced social and economic impact;
- b. Increasing possibilities for successful action;
- c. More efficient use of resources; and
- d. Tapping local knowledge.

Enhanced social and economic impact: Sustainable development depends on integrating environmental, technical and economic consideration with social and cultural aspects. The active participation of men and women in gathering information differentiated by gender and the analysis of this information will lead to a more positive social impact. Economic impacts will also be reinforced because the possibilities for consolidating and increasing income related to natural resources will take into account income generating activities carried out by both women and men.

Increasing possibilities for successful action: Sustainable rural development should take into account gender based division of labour and gender-based access to resources. Control of resources will result in development initiatives based on more complete information. Furthermore, rural development based on the full range of social, economic, technical and environmental issues opens up the opportunity for greater exchange of ideas and approaches among the different sectors.

More efficient use of resources: Taking into account social, environmental, technical and economic considerations will ensure that development activities make better use of often increasingly diminishing resources available.

Tapping local knowledge: Tapping the respective knowledge of women and men regarding the management and conservation of natural resources and biological diversity increases the possibilities of successful programmes. Thanks to the collection of gender inequality data for planning and management. It is possible to guarantee that this invaluable source of local technical knowledge is fully utilized

Causes of Gender Inequality in Nigeria

Lack of access to resources: The existing literatures in Nigeria attest to the male dominated agricultural linked to the disproportionate male access to resources and information required to produce crops more efficiently than their female counterparts (Fasoranti, 2006; Otitoju & Arere 2010, Liverpool-Tasie *et al.*, 2011). According to Ajani (2008), women are marginalized in their access to economic, political and social resources compared to men, rendering them relatively less powerful than their male counterparts. Duflo(2006), points out that weak or non-existent property rights for women, especially in Africa; are identified as creating production ineffectiveness. He argues that weak property rights prevent women from renting land to their husbands because if the husband works the land long enough, the wife may lose her property rights.

Employment opportunities: The gender dimension for 2004 and 2005 revealed that unemployment rate was higher for the female group at 11.2 per cent and 14.1 per cent in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Mustapha (2004) linked the historical foundation of inequality in Nigeria to difference in education. Women generally have less education than men, particularly so among some social groups in the northern regions.

Cultural practices: Cultural practices of many contemporary societies are biased against women and serve to subjugate them to men and to undermine their individual self-esteem. For example, the Nigerian society is permeated by patriarchy whereby women are expected to conform to and confine themselves to male dominance and female subservience. Women are seen to belong to the home, be incapable of making sound decisions and it is unbecoming of women to expose themselves in public for political activities such as campaign rallies. Men often find it incredible and impracticable to see them participating in politics (Iloh & Ikenna, 2009, p. 124; 2003, p.336).

High rate of maternal mortality: In the vast majority of African countries, women and girls are less well-nourished and more prone to poor health. Poor nutrition creates special health risks for pregnant and lactating women. With the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) that set to expire in 2015, studies show that the goals have spurred significant progress, but yielded uneven results, including continuing lack of progress in reducing maternal mortality. About 800 women die every day due to childbirth and other pregnancy related complications (United Nation, 2013).

Unequal access to education: On the national level there continue to be disparities in access to education and other public goods. The inequality between men and women in educational attainment has encouraged low level of participation of women in politics. Some women in Nigeria naturally subject themselves to domestic activities and the need to prevent broken homes. The United Nations (1995) posits that education is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfill their role as full members of society.

Government legislation: The position of women in any given society is less governed by the existing legislation on equality of opportunity than by institutional factors such as action labour market policies, the allocation of time in paid and unpaid work (Beneria, 2003).

Poverty: Gender inequality is strongly correlated with poverty, making women at the low end of income distribution at greater risk to sources of insecurity with implications for life expectancy (Rosenberger & Sauer, 2012).

Violence against women: Women are regularly exposed to various forms of physical, psychological, sexual and emotional violence. This can be traced to the unequal power relations in society between men and women and the pervading patriarchal norms that support the inequality.

Implications of Gender Inequality for Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

Klasen (2002) observed that gender inequality in education may undermine a number of development goals. First, gender inequality in education and access to resources may prevent reductions in fertility and child mortality and the expansion of education of the next generation.

Second, gender inequality in education may reduce economic growth. This is drawn from the importance of human capital to economic growth, which if it is low, investment rate will also be low because countries with lower human capital are said to always have smaller returns on investments. Palmer-Jones (2008), asserted that low female capital relative to male levels may lead to slow growth of incomes and of well-being, and conversely, the pattern of economic growth may not benefit different genders fairly. Klasen (1999) points out that the period 1960 to 1992, between 0.4 and 0.9 per cent of annual per capita growth differences between East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the middle-East can be attributed to gender basic differences in education.

Studies have shown that gender inequality has continually increase maternal mortality. Africa has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the world (roughly 50times higher than developed countries) (Rosenberger & Sauer, 2012). About 800 women die every day due to childbirth and other pregnancy related complications (UN, 2013).

Gender inequality breeds poverty. As Safilios-Rothschild (1991) puts it, a society that has a powerful gender stratification system that tends to place men in decision making positions with women relegated to traditional training and economic activities with limited demand that do not provide them with adequate means of livelihood is an endangered society. For instance, if the gender inequality is such that leads to women having less access to education and skills for productive employment, it will have a far-reaching effect in terms of poverty creation and perpetuation in the present as well as in the next generation (Quisumbing & Maluccio 1999; Filmer 1999; Klasen 1999).

Materials and Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It describes in a systematic manner the characteristic features or facts about a given population. It specifies who and what to be measured (Adekoya & Adetore, 2007). The method of data collection was through secondary sources such as books, journals, magazine, newspapers, and internet materials. Descriptive method was used to analyze the data collected.

Results and Discussion

Gender Inequality in Nigeria: An Overview

The idea of gender equality in the decision-making process is considered pertinent for the proper development of any country. A recent publication by the Federal Office of Statistics, FOS (1998/99) contains gaps between women and men in policy, investment and employment in Nigeria and what is needed to reduce the gaps and create equal opportunities for women in health, in education, in work and in decision making at all levels (Owo, 2010). Table 1 shows the summary of employment by year and gender between 2001 and 2005 in Nigeria.

Table 1. Summary of Employment by Year and Gender (2001- 2005)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total	Average
Women	19.28	20.05	20.78	20.95	21.06	19.95	20.42
Men	80.72	79.75	79.22	79.05	78.94	80.05	78.58
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: National Board of Statistics, 2006

In table 1, the average employment of women between 2001 and 2005 was 20.42 per cent while the average employment of men within the same period was 78.58 per cent of the population. This implies that men constituted the largest percentage of population that was in the labour force. This showed a wide disparity between men and women in relation to employment in the country. The study revealed that over a period of five years, there was a stable growth of 20 per cent of women in employment.

Table 2. Percentage of Women and Men in Federal Civil Service

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total	Average
Women	28.5	28.7	30.7	29.5	39	61	31.28
Men	71.5	71.3	69.3	70.5	78.94	80.05	68.72

Source: National Board of Statistics, 2006

In table 2, the average percentage of women employed in the federal civil service between 2001 and 2005 was 31.28 while the average percentage of men employed within the same period was 68.72. This is an indication that men had greater employment opportunities in the federal civil service than women. This may be due to the low level of education of women during this period. It can also be attributed to the fact that women decided to take up low-paid jobs in the private sector.

Table 3 shows gender representation in National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) in the election of 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011.

Table 3. Percentage of Men and Women in the National Assembly

House of Senate	Total Number of Seats available	Men	Women	% of Men	% of Women
1999	109	106	3	97.2%	2.8%
2003	109	105	4	96.3%	3.7%
2007	109	100	9	91.7%	8.3%
2011	109	102	7	93.6%	6.4%

Source: The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report (2008), New York, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The above data indicates that the 2007 polls witnessed a slight increase in the number of women in the Federal legislature. In 2003, the percentage of females was 3.7% for the Senate and 6% for the House of Representatives while that of males was 96.3% for the Senate and 94% for the House of Representatives. In 2007, the figure rose to 8.3% in the Senate and 7% for the House of Representatives for females.

In 2011 polls, 7 female Senators (6.4%) and 19 Representatives (5.28%) were elected while 102 male Senators (93.6%) and 341 Representatives (94.72%) were elected.

Table 4. Participation in Elections by Gender in April 2011 Nigeria

Office Contested	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	Total
President	1 (0)	19 (1)	20
Vice President	3 (0)	17 (1)	20
Governor	13 (0)	340 (36)	353
Deputy Governor	58 (1)	289 (35)	347
House of Representatives	220 (19)	2188 (341)	2408
Senatorial	90 (7)	800 (102)	890

Source: Salihu (2011: 70-71) in brackets are the elected

Table 4 shows participation in elections by gender in April 2011. It reveals that the number of female participants in each position was relatively too low when compared with the number of male participants. Also, in all the positions 27 females were elected while 516 males were elected. This makes one to conclude that women level of participation in politics and their representation in government is very low compared to their men counterparts.

House of Representatives	Total Number of Seats available	Men	Women	% of Men	% of Women
1999	360	347	13	96.4%	3.6%
2003	339	318	21	94%	6%
2007	358	333	25	93%	7%
2011	360	341	19	94.72%	5.28%

In summary, the available statistics on gender representation at all levels of public decision-making especially in the two houses of National Assembly shows that political participation by the female is still very much in its infancy. In other words, representation of female in National Assembly is relatively low compared to their male counterparts.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, the following are the summary of the findings:

1. There was a great disparity between men and women in employment in Nigeria. Men constituted largest percentage of the population in the labour force.
2. The percentage of women employed in the federal civil service was relatively low compared to their men counterparts.
3. In decision making process, women were few in number when compared to men. The study revealed that the percentage of women in the house of senate was as high as 8.3% and as low as 2.8% while that of male was as high as 97.2% and as low as 91.7%. In the house of representative, the percentage of women was as high as 7% and as low as 3.6% while that of men was as high as 96.4% and as low as 93%.
4. In their participation in election for the position of the President in 2011, 1 female candidate contested while 19 male candidates contested.

This paper has focused on gender inequality in Nigeria and its implications for socio-economic development. It has been established that there is a great disparity between men and women in income level, employment opportunities, education and public goods, health facilities, access to resources etc. Invariably, this inequality has led to poverty among women, high rate of maternal mortality and dwindling economic growth. What has been responsible for this inequality was not unconnected with women lack of access to resources like land, cultural practices of the society especially the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society among others. Thus, there is the need to bridge the gap between men and women so that socio-economic and political development of the society can be enhanced.

Gender quota should be effectively adopted and appropriately enforced, land reform that can enhance the contribution of women to socio-economic development should be designed in their favour. Also, an empowerment programmes that will help in full utilization of women should be introduced. Finally, an enlightenment programmes that promote gender training and raise women cultural awareness should be introduced.

Recommendations

From the above discussion, the results show that there was a great disparity between men and women in employment opportunities, decision-making, labour force and participation in election. The findings derived from this study have serious socio-economic and political implications for development of the country.

The United Nations Organization has fostered several declarations and conventions aimed at ending all forms of discrimination, including specifically discrimination against women. Among such international documents that prohibit discrimination based on sex are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (UNDP, 1997). The Nigerian government has also formulated National Policy on Women (Dauda, 2004, p. 93) which aimed at effective enforcement of the principles and provisions contained in the Nigerian constitution. In this case, gender quota should be effectively adopted and appropriately enforced.

Socio-economic development can take place when men and women are given equal opportunities. Therefore, women should have access to more resources. Also, land reform that takes into consideration the contribution of women to socio-economic development should be in favour of women.

Entrepreneurship programmes that will empower women should be organized; this can be done by setting up micro-credit institutions to make funds available to the women folks. Hassan-Liman (2005), asserts that full utilization of women in the development of human resources would bring about their acceptance in every phase of national development.

UN women has launched a call to galvanize the gender equality agenda and ensure concrete action that will enable women and girls to truly live as equal citizens everywhere (Pravada.Ru, 2013). The Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria should organize awareness programmes that promote gender training and raise women cultural awareness, particularly in the areas of gender relationships.

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