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Full Length Research Paper

A Study of Women Attitudes Toward their Socio-economic and Political Empowerment: Nigeria Women and National Development

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Contemporary issues in development demand equal gender representation in all sectors of the economy but most societies, Nigeria included, are unfortunately structured on patriarchy. The campaign for women empowerment is no myth considering the changing of global politics and economics. However, the big question that needs asking now is, "Are women working to be empowered?" The argument for women empowerment has been on for decades but it remains a worry that we are yet to feel its impact with any significance today. Hence, my sociological exploration of the phenomenon. The objective of the study is to ascertain if women have favourable attitudes towards their empowerment in the areas of socio-economic and political issues. Also, to find out if the concept of women empowerment is gaining currency among women themselves; we want to know whether the women are ready for their socio-economic and political empowerment. The significance of the study is that it ascertains the extent to which women are ready for their empowerment and how they are faring within the key areas we are studying. The methodology used is descriptive because it reveals current attitudes of the women towards their empowerment in the stated areas. Finally, the research outcomes would have implications for future policies on women and development.

Keywords: Women Attitude, Socio-economic and Political empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Gboyega (2003) defines development as attempts at improving the conditions of human existence. This implies improvement in the material well-being of all citizens-- not just the powerful or rich-- in such sustainable ways that secures the future. It also means the removal or drastic reduction of poverty and inequality of access to fundamental needs. Thus, development seeks to improve personal security and expand the life chances of citizens within a polity. National development therefore can be described as the overall development or collective socio-

economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). It is interesting, however, that the very definitions of development assume a masculinist tone or are conceived in those terms; in other words, women are not represented even in the very definitions of development. By extension, women empowerment have been serially misdirected by both the sincere and the cynical. While some understand women empowerment as a feeling of comparative gender superiority, others view it as the bane

of male domination; others, still, see it as the undesirable liberation of women (Osisanya 1998). Former American President, Bill Clinton, reveal that women perform 66% of the world's work, and produce 50% of the food, yet earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of its property. Whether the issue is improving education in the developing world, or fighting global climate change, or addressing nearly any other challenge we face, empowering women has become a critical part of the equation (Clinton Global Initiative (September 2009).

Gender should ordinarily constitute neither an advantage nor a setback when it comes to issues of development; however, facts reveal that gender inequality persists in economic and political circles. Globally, women are less likely than men to participate in policymaking or in participating in its implementation. The case is more pathetic in developing countries like Nigeria where women presumably face social, economic and institutional barriers to decision-making, from households and communities up to national levels. Their voices are marginalised and they enjoy only little political representations and are therefore unable to influence policy or hold Government to account (Waterhouse and Neville, 2005; Maksimovic, 2005). These conditions affect women's contribution to national development. Considering the gravity of gender discrimination in relation to the efforts invested (to little effect) by concerned Nigerians, one cannot but ask more questions. However, the more pertinent question for me here is, "Are women favourably disposed towards own empowerment?"

Recently, developing countries have heightened efforts at promoting gender equality so that the rights of women as equal partners in the development process may be protected. Some scholars have dismissed women empowerment in derogation and have summarized it as the ranting of a few vocal feminist movements bent on tilting the order of nature (Adegoroye, 2005). Not everyone shares their sentiment as research shows that some men admire, respect and are comfortable around women who wield power in economic or political sphere. This revelation dismantles the misleading notion that successful women are abhorred and constitute a threat to society; especially to their husbands and associates (Beck, Thorsten, Asli Demirgüç-Kunt, and Vojislav Maksimovic. 2005). Marginalisation of women in almost all "lucrative" spheres of human endeavours is a universal phenomenon but the concern here is that, while women across the world are enjoying some improvement in gender relations, the case for Nigerian women is worsening (Oyekanmi & Agomo, 2001; Ade-Cole, 1999). Research shows that through a complex web of religious sanctions, socio-cultural taboos and superstitions, hierarchies among women in the families, seclusion, veiling, and curtailment of physical discrimination in food and other financial resources, women actively participate in perpetuating their own oppression (UNIDO, 2001;

Batliwala, 1994). Whether subconsciously or wilfully, women actively grease the machinery of patriarchy that keeps them subordinated in society and politics, and since they are the custodians of cultural values, they believe in and accept their own oppression. This inferiority complex makes it difficult, if not impossible, for women to overcome the socio-economic and cultural barriers instituted by patriarchy. Majority of these women are comfortable being discriminated against and are only mouthing an "empowerment" that they themselves either do not believe in or are not convinced they deserve.

Nigeria has not been lucky to have a female president or a female governor (Jacobs 1999). Even though Nigerian women constitute up to half of the nation's population they have not assumed, and, I argue, cannot (*ceteris paribus*), any political positions of significance in the country's history. The few women who have attained presumably significant positions of leadership (either as Ministers or Permanent Secretaries) based on their "glowing" credentials or their political exposure are only compensated with *token appointments* or are used to legitimize patriarchal claims to fairness in gender representation. Another category of women who participate in contemporary politics (and they command the most prominent presence) are the Ankara-wearers, who adorn dresses bearing the logos and slogans of "their" political parties. They are summoned to sing and dance on special occasions like party conventions, visit of a party kingpin (usually a man), campaign days, etc, and are usually cordoned to a corner when the serious business begins. In short words, these women are mere embellishments in the party's machinery; they have no worth beyond their face value, they either lack knowledge of the workings of "their" party or are plainly insignificant in the order of things. It is important, however, to highlight that their importance in the workings of these men-dominated parties. This level of participation is important in masking the patriarchal machinery of these political; thus, they make a spectacle of women so that the casual observer may lose sight of the deficient structure of the parties. Other women, still, engage with politics only at the voting level. The various levels of women involvement in politics is important in understanding the place women in modern Nigeria; however, their activities does not discredit the beautiful contributions made by renowned Nigerian feminists to the emancipation of the woman in the public space especially post-independence feminists (some pre-independence feminists are covered in the Literature Review). One of such feminists that appeals to my analysis here is Mrs. Fodayegbe Akintunde-Ighodalo, who became renowned in Nigeria for her scathing criticism of patriarchy and women empowerment advocacy at a time in Nigeria's history when such clamour could best be described as wishful imagination. Importantly, her advocacy work spans from pre- to post-independence Nigeria. After getting educated in Europe, Mrs. Akintunde-Ighodalo returned to Nigeria to become

the country's first female Permanent Secretary in 1958. Although her position as Permanent Secretary precluded her involvement in partisan politics, she was quick to discover the significance of active participation in government in that capacity as she was able to influence policy making and general issues that impact women. Her commitment to women empowerment remained unwavering as she continued to operate from grass-roots to national levels as the opportunities arose. In this perceptive essay on the life of Mrs. Akintunde-Ighodalo, Denzer (2001) manages to capture the many faces of the feminist icon:

Although her appointment excluded her from formal political activity, it allowed her plenty of room for behind-the-scenes policy-making and implementation ranging from women's rights within the service to access to critical information to allocation of official resources for community development and international travel. Since then, Akintunde-Ighodalo has served as both a model for Nigerian career women and also as spokeswoman for female empowerment. Akintunde-Ighodalo provides a unique voice speaking and writing on women's empowerment for almost a full half-century in a variety of contexts: as an organizer of Nigerian women students in London; as an interpreter of African women's needs and views to international organizations; as an advocate for working women's rights within the government service; as an executor of government policy; as a founder and leader of women's organizations; and as a matriarch who feels duty-bound to remind her listeners of constitutional imperatives, historical lessons, and commitment.

Denzer's (2001) assessment of the feminist is helpful in that it accounts for the complexity of Akintunde-Ighodalo's advocacy work; both in the public and private sector, in business and community, locally and internationally. The sheer passion that Akintunde-Ighodalo had for the emancipation of the Nigerian woman is evidenced not only in the quality and consistency of her advocacy but also in the timing as she operated at a time in Nigeria's history when we could not boast of many model feminists. It is then worrisome that years after Mrs. Akintunde-Ighodalo's work at women empowerment, women can still not boast quality representation in politics and economy. Again, if the feminism propaganda and actual work on women "empowerment" by various interest groups in Nigeria is anything to go by then maybe it is time we (women) turned the lens inwards and evaluate our disposition towards the idea of "empowerment": do women genuinely want/need empowerment in all spheres of life? Do they conceive of empowerment as deviant behaviour, or are the few elite women advocates are just in the business of "women empowerment" to enrich themselves under the claims of oppression at the expense of the truly oppressed? While many faces to women empowerment exist, the focus here is on the attitude of women to the general idea

especially in the domains of socio-economics and politics.

Objective of the study

The purpose of this research endeavour includes the following:

- * To understand the correlations between women attitudes towards empowerment and the reality of their oppression.

- * To ascertain the extent to which the women's attitudes have enhanced their status in the society.

- * To establish the extent to which women's attitudes affects their successes (or failures) in socio-economic and political activities.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it establishes that investing in women's empowerment is central to sustainable national development. Also, the study intends to provide knowledge regarding the key variables that influence and is responsible for maintaining or changing the structure of women's disposition within the prisms of their empowerment. The research outcome could be used for designing appropriate policy intervention's to enhance women's status and productivity.

Literature Review

Empowered Women in Nigerian History

Historical records show the political activism of some notable women took independent and direct action in questioning the injustices of tradition and colonial rule. These women contributed to national development in various capacities and could serve as role models to the 21st century Nigerian women. I highlight some of such women in this section:

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti'

Her political activism inspired her being dubbed the doyen of female rights in Nigeria and "The Mother of Africa." In 1947, Funmilayo was described by the West African Pilot as the "Lioness of Lisabi" as a result of her leadership of the Egba women and also for her campaign against arbitrary taxation. She was a very powerful force advocating suffrage for the Nigerian woman. That struggle led to the abdication of the Egba high king Oba Ademola II in 1949. Also an educator and activist, Funmilayo founded the Federation of Nigerian Women

Societies in 1953, which subsequently formed alliance with the Women's International Democratic Federation. She was a member of the ruling National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons party (NCNC) and was one of the few elected women to the House of Chiefs in the 1950s. Funmilayo also founded the Egba Women's Union along with her sister-in-law (mother of the Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka); that organisation was said to have had a membership of approximately 20,000 women. Besides receiving the national honour of membership in the Order of Nigeria in 1965, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was bestowed an honorary Doctorate of Law in 1968 by The University of Ibadan. She also held a seat in the Western House of Chiefs of Nigeria as an *ofoye* of the Yoruba people. (www.nnn.com.ng)

Drawing inspiration from the activism of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo became a principal player in the Aba Women's Riot of 1929 when Aba was a hotbed of women struggle in Nigeria. Despite the death of about 50 women, Ekpo was successful in registering her dissent against the colonial administration's taxation program as well as the perceived excesses of native court officials (Uchendu 1993). Mrs. Ekpo made clear that "no nation rise without its women" and so she fought for the empowerment of women particularly on Universal Adult Suffrage, which ensured that women could vote and be vote for. In 1961, Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo contested elections in Aba Urban North constituency under the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) platform and won, thereby becoming a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly until 1966.

Olori Moremi,

A daughter of Ile Ife, lived at a time when Ife was at war with a neighbouring tribe known as the *Igbò* (Forest people). Moremi was a very brave and beautiful woman who, in order to deal with the problem facing her people, offered to avenge them of their *Igbo* neighbours. As such, she offered to sacrifice to *Esimirin*, the river spirit, so that she could discover the secret strength and strategies of her Ife's enemies. She then surrendered herself to be taken into captivity by the *Igbo*. However, while in captivity in the land of the *Igbo*, Moremi won the heart of the king of the *Igbo* people with her beauty and was soon taken as queen of the land. Her position in the palace afforded her the opportunity to study the war tactics of the *Igbo* people. Upon familiarising herself with the secrets of her new husband's army, she escaped back to Ile Ife and revealed them to the army in Ile Ife, who were subsequently able to defeat the *Igbo* in battle. She returned to her first husband, King Oramiyan of Ife (and later Oyo), who immediately had her reinstated as his Princess Consort after the war. To fulfil her pledge to *Esimirin* before embarking on her mission, Moremi had to offer her son, Oluorogbo, because this was what was

requested of her upon return. Today, Moremi is remembered for her selflessness and bravery and several public structures are named after her in Nigeria; two of such are prominent female Halls of Residence in the University of Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moremi>).

Efunstan Aniwura

The famed Iyalode of Ibadan was a woman of Egba ancestry who migrated to Ibadan where she became very a powerful and prosperous entrepreneur at Oja-Oba (literally "The king's market"). Oral evidence reveals she had three large farms tended by no less than 100 slaves. Efunsetan not only extended credit facilities in the form of ammunition to the warriors when they were going on military expeditions in 1872, but she also fielded 100 slave-soldiers under her head slave, Ogidan, to join Ibadan forces on their expedition to the Ekiti country. Even before then, she had been made the Iyalode of Ibadan in recognition of her contribution to the society. As the leader of the women in Ibadan and a successful entrepreneur in arms, she was strategically positioned to contribute to debates on matters of war and peace. Besides being a powerful, rich and influential High Chief of Ibadan (Ilesanmi. 2010) Efunsetan Aniwura later became the spokesperson of the anti-war group in Ibadan. Her notoriety often captured in oral history speaks to her doggedness in featuring actively in the politics of her time despite patriarchal limitations.

Madam Tinubu

She was an entrepreneur and a patriotic activist who she lived in the 19th century and was born in Abeokuta, Western Nigeria, to an enterprising family. Despite having no formal education, Madam Tinubu learnt trading under her mother and went ahead to establish a flourishing tobacco and salt business in Badagry. She later expanded her business enterprise with European slave traders as a middleperson and later played hostess to the exiled King Akintoye of Lagos in 1846. Tinubu sought refuge in Badagry where she inaugurated a pro-Akintoye movement in 1846 dedicated to the eventual reinstatement of the king to the throne. She got involved in the male-dominated politics of Lagos at the time. In 1851, Akintoye regained his throne and Madam Tinubu was invited to Lagos where she ran her business enterprise to success. She extended her business activities to Abeokuta where she dealt in ammunition like gunpowder and bullets. Tinubu's influence was also felt in Egba politics where she played two important roles: (1) contributing to the successful defence of Egba land during the Dahomean invasion of 1863 following which she was awarded the title of Iyalode (First Lady) in 1864. (2)

succeeding in installing her chosen candidate during the Alake succession crisis of 1877. They conferred her with the title of Iyalode, which placed her in a position of power that she was denied in Lagos. A monument stands in the town square of Abeokuta named after her, *Ita Iyalode* (Iyalode Square). <http://culturaltips.blogspot.com/2009/07/meet-madam-efunroye-tinubu.html>

Hajia Gambo Sawaba

Hailed from northern Nigeria where women were denied the franchise to vote even well after independence. As a result of this discrimination, prominent female politicians in the North could neither vote nor be voted for. It was only in 1979 that women in northern Nigeria were given the franchise to vote, following the return to civilian politics and as a product of her struggle. (www.nnn.com.ng/id=315). In Southern Nigeria, women already enjoyed suffrage by Independence unlike their counterparts in the North. In fact, in 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. Mrs. Janet N. Moku and Miss Ekpo A. Young also contested elections, won and became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. Omenani, 2010.

Professor Bolanle Awe

A scholar who in the 70s became Commissioner for Education in the old Western State and a Commissioner for Trade, Industries and Cooperatives of State, held an unrepentant faith in Nigerian women and African culture. Professor Awe believed strongly that there is hope for Nigeria but that the bulk of development lies heavily with women. She evaluates women development over the years and noted the tremendous impacts they have had on society and economy. She stated that Nigeria should be proud of her women because she has the highest number of professional women in Africa South of the Sahara and concluded that brains have no gender. The story of women's struggle in a male-dominated world in spite of social and political challenges is a long-standing one. Whether they are working in the fields or eking out a living in slums and ghettos, or are at the boardrooms or in the medical and legal fields or in the institutions of learning, Nigerian women are well known all over the world for their determination to display their talents and be ahead of other African women (National Mirror, June 13th. 2012).

Bisi Ogunleye

She is someone we could describe as an empowered

woman who has contributed to national development by offering personal loans to other women so that they could start their own businesses. When participating entrepreneurs make loan repayment, Ogunleye reinvested the money in other groups. Bisi Ogunleye founded COWAN (Country Women Association of Nigeria) in 1982, with six cooperative societies of 150 members. COWAN has grown to over 1,400 groups and over 31,000 active members across different states in Nigeria. In 1994, she partnered with CEDPA (Center for Development and Population Activities) to aid health and family planning issues. Through COWAN, Ogunleye established NARWA (Network of African Rural Women Association) which has programs in credit, agriculture, and small business development. She served as co-chair of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and is one of the women on the United Nations Earth Council ([www.motherlandnigeria.com\(2012\)](http://www.motherlandnigeria.com(2012))).

Economic Factors

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible for them to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth (Eyben et al., 2008). Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities like jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information (OECD, 2011). While presenting a keynote address titled "Towards Financial System Stability: Recent Policy Reforms in the Nigerian Banking Sector" at the second Murtala Muhammed Foundation 2012 Public Policy Dialogue in Lagos, the CBN Governor, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, set a target to ensure that between 2012 and 2014 40% of top management positions in banks are held by women.

During the same period, 30% of board positions in banks will also be reserved for women (Aderinokun and Chima, (Thisday, 16th February, 2012). This is to ensure that women are active agents in the process of achieving sustainable development, pro-poor growth and that they are integrated into the pursuance of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Beyond argument, gender equality breeds empowered women who then function as catalysts for amplifying development efforts. Some scholars argue that gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments (OECD, 2010). A proper dissection of the interwoven issues around economic empowerment for Nigerian women will invariably reveal a number of contending factors, some of which are socio-cultural or politically induced (Oyekanmi and Agomo, 2001; Ahmed, 1997). Women and other marginalized social groups in any country of the world

suffer most critically in the face of poverty, power, politics, and resource control. De Bruin, et al. (2006) and Onimode (1996) stressed that economic empowerment remains a major factor in the pursuance of total empowerment and liberation of Nigerian women. This is so because, according to him, social, cultural and political empowerment remains incomplete without access to and control of financial resources. A look at the poverty profile of the country reveals that 50% of Nigeria's rural population accounts for 70% of the total population live in poverty and more than 50% of them are women (Oyekanmi, 2003; Onimode, 1996). This reality has affected their income-generating abilities. The imbalance persists because women are generally handicapped by the lack of (a) (or limited) access to financial credit; (b) management and technical skills; (c) training and access to business information; (d) linkage between women in business and existing business support Services (Aribisala, 1996). In a similar vein, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (2010) also believed that higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to long-term economic growth. The share of women in waged and salaried work grew from 42% in 1997 to 46% in 2007; in India, GDP could rise by 8% if the female/male ratio of workers went up by 10%; total agricultural outputs in Africa could increase by up to 20% if women's access to agricultural inputs was equal to men's; women-owned businesses comprise up to 38% of all registered small businesses worldwide; the number of women-owned businesses in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America is growing rapidly and, with that growth, come direct impacts on job creation and poverty reduction.

The question is how many women want to be economically independent despite the patriarchal figures in their lives (e.g. husbands, fathers) by making sure they have access to all the above stated areas, paying households bills, or as basic as paying for meals when on a date with man etc. (Illumoka, 1996)? In a study in Brazil revealed that the likelihood of children survival increased by 20% if the mother controlled household income as women usually invest higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men (Extracted from World Bank President Zoellick's speech at the MDG3 conference, Copenhagen, 25 March, 2010.).

Women and Political Empowerment

Atsenuwa (1995) stated that women must also realize that their increased participation in politics is critical to their socio-economic, legal and cultural liberation. Mogaji (1997) contended that political empowerment for women should be considered integral to the overall efforts at their socio-economic and political liberation. Jacobs (1999) stated that women must regain their confidence and

prove themselves worthy of leadership; they should not be contented with token appointments and must ensure that they take hold of the evolving political agenda alongside their male counterparts. Makanjuola (1999) is of the view that men should not be afraid but should see women as good, if not better, managers whom they need to work with to realise individual, corporate and national development. Ekaete (1997) says women should be prepared to turn obstacles into stepping stones in their political strides. They should be prepared to meet obstacles as they attempt to jump political hurdles; he contends that one of the primary obstacles they must be prepared to jump is their husbands (Akpe, 1997). Babatope's (1999) position is that women need no preferential treatment in politics as they are just as intellectually and emotionally endowed as men. Saraki even made a public confession when he said that he draws "his strength is from women because they are reliable, dependable and loyal; they will wait for hours to cast their votes" (Jacobs, 1999). National Policy on Women (2000) seeks to redress the imbalance in women's representation in the political and social life of the nation, especially at the decision-making levels of the three arms of government. Atsewuwa (1995) agreed that women are under-represented in decision-making, which means that decisions on public policies that affect women's lives are still the prerogative of men, who lack the required level of investment to pursue these issues. The above attitudes may account for Drude Dahlery's (1994) position: "don't expect women to make much difference as long as they are few in politics, it takes a critical mass of women to make fundamental change". Bucknor-Akerele contends that "women are not in chains" and have the potential to form a critical mass in politics. Former President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida once testified that African countries have all along underutilised the potentials of their women and that the development of nations can only be carried out in partnership with women and no one gender should be seen as either superior or inferior in the relationship (Akande, 1999).

Some barriers the women's effective participation in politics includes lack of economic power, which is essential to meaningful involvement in politics. Yet as a consequence of mass poverty and economic deprivations the role of money in determining political participation and outcomes cannot be overemphasised. Since men are more financially solvent, women are not able to match their spending might in politics (Jacobs, 1999).

Women Attitudes towards their Empowerment

"Attitude" refers to an organized and enduring set of beliefs and feelings towards an object or a situation. In other words, attitudes refer to certain regularity of an individual's feelings, thought and predisposition to act towards some aspect of his environment (Sote, 1997).

Attitudes are also related to value systems in that individual attitudes are frequently organized into a value system. For instance, a person whose value system is predominantly humanitarian is likely to have a favourable attitude towards social welfare, labour unionism and equitable distribution of wealth, etc. Such a person is also likely to be unfavourably disposed towards war, dictatorship and capital punishment.

In this paper, we are interested in the disposition of women towards their empowerment struggle. Negative attitudes of women towards their empowerment include the received belief that the woman's place is in the home (or, more symbolically, the kitchen). The National Policy on Women Chapter 5, Section 4, Subsection 2, states that the structures that uphold and reinforce patriarchy (inheritance through the male, high value for male children, strict adherence to division of labour along gender lines) should be dismantled. The above reason prompted Margaret Ekpo's (1993) exclamation that she would change the hearts of Nigerian men if she were to change anything in Nigeria. While Mrs. Fumilayo Ransome Kuti demonstrated this sentiment when she led the Abeokuta Women's Union to fight all forms of oppression and insist on the equality of women. She led a demonstration against the excesses of the then Alake of Egbaland who was accused of not consulting women on matters which affected them as a group; she used (AWU) body to fight all forms of oppression against women particularly in the form of indiscriminate taxation (Jacobs, 1999).

The issue of women empowerment in Africa is one that has triggered considerable controversy. The common questions and comments raised in the Nigerian context include "So what do women want?"; "Women are not oppressed since they have considerable influence over men at home"; "So they want to dis-empower men?"; "Women are their own worst enemies, so what is all this noise about?" It is on these grounds that Ilumoka (1996) seek to build consciousness and solidarity among women. In a Beijing workshop, she remarked that women did not wish to take on responsibilities at "high" levels of decision-making in the public and private sector or work the late hours thus required. Ibokwe (2001) said while some women burn the candle at both ends for career and family matters, others ask why men do not have to negotiate such challenges, nor work hard to achieve a similar balance.

Some women however stressed some contrary views on the matter. For instance, Udegbe (1996) argues that women constitute strong barriers to their empowerment because they internalize, believe, propagate and even act as custodians of oppressive practices. As mothers, sisters, in-laws or health workers, they espouse and maintain traditional beliefs and practices that keep subordinated to men. In Nigeria, women are majority actors in the implementation of female genital mutilation. It is pertinent to stress that influencing a positive change

in women's attitudes towards their empowerment is critical if meaningful progress is to be made in this regard.

Theoretical Orientation

In general, various theories have been advanced to explain the existence of inequality between males and females: several theoretical approaches had been identified in the area of women and development. For the purpose of this study, African political economy model and critical feminism will be adopted.

African Political Economy Model

Even though the political economy tradition offers feminism very useful conceptual categories, it fails in its mission to study society as an integrated whole (Afonja, 1981). Feminists are united in their belief that explaining social phenomena in Third World nations using Western class categories and Western economic conception is inappropriate. Therefore, social sphere, and women being confirmed to a "private" sphere closer to nature, was challenged by Afonja (1979). Adherents of political economy model believed that the inter-connections between and among the various elements of the society, economy, politics, ideology and other institutional factors must be thoroughly understood for women to be adequately integrated into development. Mueller (1987) opined that development efforts continue to foster international capitalist order, thereby contributing to the maintenance of an oppressive order. The model identified the primary agents of change in the political economy system. In essence, the matrix of relationships embedded in the political economy model explains the situation of African women beyond patriarchy. This includes global exploitation of both men and women within the capital system. A major shortcoming of the Africa political economy model is that some dimensions of interpersonal interaction, representation, ideology, psychic structures and sexuality are beyond its framework (Maronney & Luxton, 1987)). However, feminist political economy creates a broader theoretical scope by including a gender analysis. It therefore forms a useful basis for the interpretation of the impact of social and economic development on women empowerment in Nigeria.

Critical Feminism

Critical feminism holds that the long-established myths and jokes that misrepresent or downgrade women should be abolished to allow room for a new and a better order, which would not deny women their rightful position in society (Ogundipe, 1987). Critical feminist opposes a

situation where national development and other issues in society are defined in relation in male terms or through masculinist interests, needs and concerns (WIN 1985). The arguments of critical feminism stems even deep in to the very gendered-ness of grammatical nomenclature. Critical feminists disagree, for example, with the use of "chairperson" to refer to women only. This idea was encouraged by radical feminists to avoid naming the sex of the holder of the chair. Critical feminists insist that both men and women are chairpersons (Ogundipe, 1988). They also express concern on the use of the prefix "Mrs." for married women; they contend that since men—both unmarried and married— remain "Mr.", then women too should retain their "Ms." prefix regardless of marriage status. They also oppose the universalization of "he" in reference to human beings. Critical feminists are clearly on a "conscientization" mission to dismantle anti-women cultural structures in society such as parent's preference of male children over female. Though these issues may be considered trivial by casual observers, critical feminists insist that they have implications on the statuses of women in society and in national development. They explain that women would continue to be second-class citizens if the language and symbols of society continue to present them as such (Ityarvyar et al 19992. As a theory, critical feminism could be incoherent and considered largely bundled in contradictions, which are not immediately relevant towards women and development.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Frame and Sample Size

Since it is hardly possible to study all the women traders in University of Lagos within the specified age categories due to time and money constraints. The study is restricted to only women with a sample of 200 respondents. Their population consist of married, single, separated, divorce and widow. They engaged themselves in entrepreneurship activities within the selected location. They were of different ages and occupations. It is difficult to get sampling frame of University of Lagos entrepreneurs because they did not all register with the school authority because some of them were illegal occupants and "attaches". Thus, the method for this choice of sample size and the procedure is discussed below.

Sampling Procedure

For this research endeavour, we adopted cluster and simple random sampling techniques in order to have a fair representation of the total population involved. To get 200 respondents of women from age 20 years and

above, we used existing shop numbers and where there were no shops number and re-number the shops in order to know the total number of shops in each cluster. 40 respondents were selected from each cluster from shops numbered already and wrapped in a paper and placed in a container from where two adolescent female were asked to pick 20 wrapped papers each. We interviewed the owner or the employee of the selected shop numbers.

Research Findings

The research revealed that 72 (36.0%) respondents contribute 75%-100% of their earnings to family expenses, followed by 64 (32.0%) respondents who contribute 25% - 50% of their earnings, while 16 (8.0%) contribute nothing to family expenses. The significance of this is that more women are the bread-winners of their various homes, which might be the result of mass retrenchment of their husbands. The economically independent women have favourable attitudes towards their empowerment; as the findings revealed 80 (40.0%) strongly agreed, and only 16 (8.0%) respondents were uncertain. The significance of this distribution is that it reveals that economic independence of women made them favourably predisposed towards their empowerment.

The finding revealed that 112 (56.0%) respondents strongly disagreed that women should pay household bills, while only 8 (4.0%) strongly agreed that women should pay all household bills. The significance of the above distribution is that women are not ready to shoulder household responsibilities. In fact, they consider it a woman's paying of domestic bills taboo or a curse yet they want economically empowerment like the men but not ready to spend their resources as men do unless they have options and have to assume such responsibility grudgingly.

On respondents that think empowerment of women leads to national development: the research reveals that 88 (44.0%) respondents strongly agreed that women empowerment leads to national development, while 64 (32.0%) respondents disagreed, followed by 24 (12.0%) respondents were not certain; 16 (8.0%) respondents strongly disagreed and 8 (4.0%) totally disagree that women empowerment leads to nations development. The significance of this distribution is that majority of our respondents believed that their empowerment will definitely lead to national development.

On the question of if empowered women were arrogant: the research revealed that 53 (26.5%) respondents strongly agreed that empowered women are arrogant, 41 (20.5%) respondents, strongly disagreed, while 39 (19.5%) respondents were uncertain, followed by 36 (18.0%) who agreed, but only 31 (15.5%) respondents disagreed. This attitude does not really portray that women are ready for their empowerment

since majority still believed that empowered women are arrogant.

On whether women should contest political positions: seventy-two (36.0%) respondents strongly agreed that women should contest political positions, 40 (20.0%) respondents strongly disagreed, while 16 (8.0%) respondents disagreed. No respondent was uncertain on this position. The significance of this table is that women are politically conscious to the extent that they want to also contest political positions. This implies that the days when women were seen but not heard may be gone.

On women's place in the making of family decisions: majority of respondents, 64 (32.0%) respondents, strongly disagreed that women should take family decisions. 48 (24.0%) respondents were uncertain, while 16 (8.0%) respondents disagreed. Here, many of our respondents believed women should not take family decisions.

On the relationship between women empowerment and all-female-children motherhood, majority of our respondents, 80 (40.0%), strongly agreed that women with all-female children support women empowerment; 64 (32.0%) agreed, while 24 (12.0%) respondents were uncertain and only 8 (4.0%) disagreed.

Respondents were asked if they thought that women are already empowered and majority of our respondents, 160 (80.0%), said women are not yet empowered, while only 40 (20.0%) respondents said they are already empowered. The significance of this response is that women are not unaware of their place/status in Nigeria. Despite the Beijing Conference ratification, Nigeria women confirmed that they are yet to be empowered.

On why women are not empowered, the research revealed that majority of our respondents, 64 (34.8%) respondents, thought that Nigerian men do not believe that their wives should be richer than them; 48 (26.1%) respondents said that men will not allow women to be empowered, while 40 (21.7%) respondents said they don't know why women are not empowered. 16 (8.7%) respondents said some women did not even make attempts at empowerment at all, followed by 8 (4.3%) respondents who attributed the suppression of women to traditional beliefs and that some women are too arrogant respectively in their responses. The above responses imply that women hold men responsible for their dis-empowerment.

Majority of the respondents, 160 (80.0%) of them, said women empowerment is not a deviant behaviour, while 32 (16.0%) respondents said it is. This implies that women wants to be empowered but may not be making enough effort to get empowered.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis (H₁)

Income-generating women have favourable attitudes

towards women empowerment.

Interpretation

The calculated chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 108.72$ is greater than the table chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 7.96$ at 0.05 alpha level of significance at 16 degree of freedom. We hereby accept our research hypothesis which says income generating women have favourable attitudes towards women empowerment. The contingency coefficients of the variables were equally calculated and it revealed a strong relationship between the two variables i.e. income generating women and their empowerment at 59% level of contingency coefficient.

The relevance of this finding is that the more economically independent or financially buoyant a woman is, the more she supports and advocates women empowerment. This finding buttresses Ahmed's (1997) position that economic empowerment for Nigerian women constitute the means through which they can realize their full potentials; that their productivity levels should redefine the global roles of women as equal partners in the struggle for self-fulfilment and a starting point for them to make any appreciable contribution to national development. There is evidence of increased participation of women in economic activities in the formal sector of the economy as a result of improved levels of education, which has increased their opportunities and roles in direct agricultural production, self-employment, particularly in small business enterprises is considerable (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2010; Atsenuwa, 1995).

Hypothesis 2 (H₂)

Politically conscious women are likely to supports women empowerment.

INTERPRETATION

The calculated chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 46.98$ is greater than the table chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 5.23$ at 0.05 alpha level of significance at 12 degree of freedom. Therefore, we accepted the hypothesis which states thus, political conscious women are likely to support women empowerment. The contingency coefficient of the variables were also calculated and it shows a weak relationship between the independent and dependent variables i.e. political consciousness and women empowerment at 44% levels of contingency coefficient.

This finding reveals that politically-conscious women are predisposed to women empowerment. This finding corroborates Omoruyi's (1992) statement that Nigerian women are not powerless at the lower levels of political participation such as voting, while Mogaji (1997)

contended that women's political empowerment should be seen as part of an overall effort of womanhood for socio-economic and political liberation (OECD, 2011). Jacobs (1999) rejected token appointments such as women leader or representatives from women groups.

Hypothesis 3 (H1)

Women who have all female children have favourable attitudes towards women empowerment.

Interpretation

The calculated chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 90.56$ is greater than the table chi-square value of 7.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance at 16 degree of freedom. We accepted our research hypothesis which says women who have all female children have favourable attitudes towards women empowerment. The contingency coefficient of the variables were calculated and the findings shows a strong relationship between women with all female children and their attitudes towards women empowerment at 56% levels of contingency coefficient. This finding implies that these women do not want their children to suffer relegation in any sphere of life by their male counterparts. The finding corroborates Adeyefa's (1996) argument that "a female child should enjoy same right as the male and have access to all available resources in the family from birth to death".

FURTHER ANALYSIS

The research shows that, though not in significant numbers, many women are not favourably disposed towards their own empowerment especially in the area of economic independence and political responsibility. The statistics reveal that a sizeable number of women are still trapped in a patriarchal sensibility of themselves. In other words, the Nigerian woman's understanding of herself emanates from a patriarchal conception of womanhood that subordinates and oppresses her being. For example, 26.1% of the women respondents believed that men would not allow them to achieve empowerment. In another category, 26.5% of the respondents felt that empowered women are arrogant women. The patriarchal roots of these responses by women themselves are not hard to detect. While the patriarchal slant of the former is obvious, it is only implied in the latter; the fact that many women conceive of their own freedom as the prerogative of men is both worrisome and revealing. For one, this attitude towards personal freedom come from received understandings of gender relations that not only privileges the voice of the man and discounts that of the woman, but also arrogates *ownership* of the woman to

the man. The man in this case often manifests in the form of the husband, father, father-in-law, uncle, or even boss. To the women that thought that empowerment means arrogance, the questions we should ask is where did those associations come from? First, this finding confirms the fallacious assumption that self-confidence and self-assertion are masculine traits that, if/when exhibited by women, translates into arrogance or defiance. In this sense, such patriarchal assumptions have been ingrained in Nigerian women so much so that their judgement of character is inherently warped. Such attitudes towards empowerment get amplified in the public space to such degrees that women become absent in public policy-making even on issues that directly impact them.

This internalization of inferiority by Nigerian women manifests differently among women of different ages, classes and ideological position. The category of women with which I relate daily in my work as a lecturer, scholar and course adviser at the University of Lagos is female students, and although they are not covered in the sample frame, they are worth mentioning. Many female students that I have had the opportunity to teach and/or mentor exhibit this inferiority in their interactions with their male colleagues; from the appointment of class representatives to exhibiting general responsibility to self and [academic] community female students are generally more willing to play second fiddle to their male counterparts. On a more social level, the proliferation of "Aristos" and "Sugar Daddies" (rich elderly male lover) on campus is also evidence of this received inferiority that later impacts their attitudes towards or even understanding of women empowerment. By receiving petty gifts like phones, laptops, meals, dresses and expensive fashion accessories in exchange for sex/companionship, women (or in this case, girls) begin to measure self-worth in terms of material possessions, which they could receive through such unwholesome patriarchal alliances. These girls grow up looking for wealthy husbands so that their financial future is guaranteed; only a handful of them think of attaining financial independence from men so that they could afford whatever material possession they desire. Such attitudes of gender inferiority emanate from women's sense of *self and* Akintunde-Ighodalo constitutes a really important model for women to draw inspiration from in this regard.

The study reveals a deep desire for empowerment on the path of women. However, it simultaneously reveals their unwillingness to take empowerment by the horns. This is evidenced in their unwillingness in participating actively in financing the home, or in venturing into business, or taking bold risks. More troubling is the fact that this apathy to empowerment is taken to the sense of responsibility to the private space—the home— such that we see a proliferation of women that cannot cook an "edible" meal without qualms, or raise children in socially accepted ways. They nowadays fail on both fronts: the

private and the public space. Their conception of empowerment is summarized in their desire to secure a husband that can pay the bills and “take care of her”. This development portends doom both for the Nigerian woman and for the future of the country; as such, attention should be paid to delivering women from the clutches of patriarchy; “patriarchy” in this sense extends to include a careful look at the complicity of women in maintaining their subordination.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Changing the attitudes of women in respect of to their empowerment has been amply demonstrated in the wealth of literature reviewed in this study. The study has established that women are becoming increasingly aware that they need empowerment. In theory, many women desire empowerment but do not appreciate the labour that attends such empowerment; enduring the tortuous path to empowerment is a daunting challenge for them. The study debunked the general beliefs that women do not like to be empowered or that only the educated supports women empowerment. The positive relationship between women attitudes and economic independence, political consciousness among other variables articulates the need to involve women in programs designed to empower them. It also confirms the fact that with adequate education, coupled with stark realities of economic survival in various homes, most of the conditions that engender negative attitudes of women towards their empowerment could be changed.

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