

GENDER EQUALITY AND LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was an examination of gender and leadership challenges in Nigeria. Descriptive design of survey type was used. A total of 600 staff of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. Researchers developed questionnaire using 'Gender and Leadership Challenges Questionnaire (GLCQ)' with reliability coefficient of 0.88 was for data collected. Mean, standard deviation and bar-chart were used for analysing and presenting the research questions. The findings revealed that restrictive religious practices, patriarchal settings in society, sexual harassments, maternal mortality, poor access to education and scholarship facilities in various professions and marital obstruction were among the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria. It was also indicated that women in leadership post to certain extent can reduce extreme poverty and economic empowerment of women, eliminating employment discriminatory practices against women and addressing labour issues affecting women, empowerment of women in organization, greater enrolment of girls into educational institutions and inspiration for women who occupied and are occupying positions of authority. The study recommends among other things that in order to have women participated in leadership and politics, gender equality initiatives should be implemented at all levels of governance both in private and public organization. The government needs to work towards changing the political structures which produce gender inequalities. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making positions will provide a balance which more accurately reflects the composition of society, interests and the general good of all citizens.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Leadership Challenges, Restrictive Religious Practices, Patriarchal Settings, Social Justice.

Introduction

The issue of gender in the world today has been seriously discussed and this is to ensure gender sensitivity and balance in the organization. Many nations of the world have begun to realize the important of ensuring gender balance for the collective responsibilities towards enhancing human development. Gender plays the roles and obligations that differentiates women and men and it is biological difference between female and men form the basis of social norms that define appropriate behaviours for women and men and determine the differential social, economic and political power between the sexes (Grown, Gupta & Kes, (2005). Ikegbu and Ozumba (2012) defined gender as the qualities associated with men and women that are socially and culturally, than biologically determined, gender includes the way in which the society differentiate appropriate behaviour and access to power for women and men, although the details vary from society to society and change overtime, gender relations tend to include a strong element of inequality between women and men and are strongly influenced by ideology. Meanwhile, as concern human relations, gender also played significant role in leadership in an organization. Ikegbu and Odey (2018) defined leadership as the act or art of decision making in conducting affairs whether personal or impersonal. Mamadun (2009) carefully articulated the views of Peretomode on what constitutes leadership as he rightly said that leadership is an ability of a person in a group to persuade, inspire or influence the attitudes, behaviour and actions of others or the activities of the organization so that the group members can work cooperatively and enthusiastically towards goal achievement. Fapahunda (2012) reiterated that the fundamental contributions of women in their households and national economies are increasingly acknowledged within Africa and by the international community mainly because of their energetic efforts to organize, articulate their concerns and make their voices heard. At both grassroots and national levels, more women's associations are taking advantage of the new political openings to assert their leadership roles. They are also pressing for an expansion of women's economic and social opportunities, and the advancement of women's rights. By improving their own positions, women enhance the country's broader development prospects. However, women in Nigeria continue to face enormous obstacles.

A nation's population is usually almost divided evenly between males and females except under peculiar circumstances such as war or highly selective immigration which normally affect males more than females. Despite that, throughout the ages, the sharing of power, wealth, influence, employment among others, between men and women has never been close to equality. Even in the most advanced countries, gender inequality in wealth distribution has remained a live issue. Over the years, many women have faced daunting challenges of joblessness, no source of livelihood, widowhood, and single parenthood. These challenges notwithstanding, the roles played by women in national development and in all facets of human endeavors have been quite notable. Though there has been considerable progress in developing the capabilities of women, their participation in economic and political decision making remains very limited. This study examined gender and leadership challenges in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study was an examination of gender and leadership challenges in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. The challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria.
2. The prospects of women participation in leadership in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Gender

On one hand, gender is a specially constructed phenomenon that is brought about as society ascribes different roles, duties, behaviours, and mannerisms to the two sexes (Mangyvat, 2006). It is a social connotation that has sound psychological background, and it is used to refer to specific cultural patterns of behaviour that are attributed to human sexes. Gender relates to cultural attributes of both males and females (Akpochofo, 2009). Gender according to Lahey (2003) is a psychological experience of being a male or female. It has to do with personality and central components of self-concept. Unlike sex, which is concerned with, only the distinction between male and female based on biological characteristics, gender encompasses other personality attributes as roles, orientation and identity based on individual's conceptualization of self. For instance, Singh (2010) opines that gender refers to a socio-cultural construct that connotes the differentiated roles and responsibilities of men and women in a particular society. This definition implies that gender determines the role, which one plays in relation to general political, cultural, social and economic system of the society. According to Betiku (2012), gender refers to all the characteristics of male and female, which a particular society has determined and assigned each sex. Also, Onyeukwu (2013) sees gender as the dichotomy of roles culturally imposed on the sexes. Avulata and Oniyama (2013) once described gender stereotype in school as hidden curriculum which send out messages to girls to conform to role expectation. In most societies, gender has roles based on the women folk, preventing their participating in, and benefiting from development efforts. This has created a big psychological alienation or depression in the minds of the female students (Joel & Aride, 2006). As a result, boys dominate Social Studies, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Environmental studies classes while the girls go into reading languages and Arts.

On the other hand, leadership is the process of influencing others to work willingly toward an organizational goal with confidence (Lawal, 2013). Leadership is generally defined simply as the process of influencing people to direct their efforts towards achievement of some particular goal or goals. According to Koontz (2009), leadership is generally defined simply as the art of influencing people so that they will strive willingly towards the achievement of group goals. This concept can be enlarging to include not only willingness to work but with zeal and confidence.

Nwachukwu (2013) refers to leadership simply as an act that involves influencing others to act toward the attainment of a goal. Ubeku (2011) defines leadership as the act of motivating or causing people to perform certain task intended to achieve specified objectives. Leadership is the act of making things happen rather than letting things happen. This the leader does by exerting both intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the group. Even though leadership is the most visible of the management functions; largely because it deals with much with people. It

has variedly been referred to as directly, commanding, guiding, inspiring, initiating, and activating. However, all stand for the same purpose whatever denotation used. The user, as the striking feature of all suggest a relationship through which one person influences the behaviour of other people.

Sikula (2016) sees leadership as the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically towards achievement of group goals. The emphasis of this definition is that ideally, people should be encouraged to develop not only willingness to Work but also willingness to work with zeal and confidence. Leadership has also been interpreted more specifically as the use of authority in decision making exercised as an attribute of position, personal knowledge or wisdom.

Ejiofor (2012) defined leadership as a social influence process in which the leader seeks voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational objectives. Similarly, Tennenbaun (2018) defined leadership as interpersonal influence exercised in situations and directed through the communication, towards the attainment of a specific goal(s).

Adebakin and Gbadamosi (2014) defined leadership as the process of influencing and directing the activities of an organized group towards the achievement of the group of organization set objectives. The foregoing lions show that leadership been based on function of personality, behavioural category, the role of a leader and their ability to achieve effective performance from others, the interpersonal behaviour and the process of communications. Despite these variations, there are at least three important implications of these definitions. Firstly, leadership is a process engaged in by certain individual (leaders). It is an on-going activity in an organization. Secondly, it involves other people in form of subordinates who by their willingness are influenced by the leader. Therefore, the subordinates formalize the leader's authority by making leadership process possible. Thirdly, the aim of leadership is accomplishment of goal and objectives, a pointer that the leaders attempt at influencing the subordinate are directional and therefore aim at level of achievement (Goddy, 2014).

According to Asika (2010), leadership is generally defined simply as the process of influencing people to direct their efforts towards achievement of some particular goal or goals. Akpala (2012) defined leadership in terms of functions performance by executives as individuals and as a group. This concept clarify that the responsibility of the superior is to direct behaviour into channels that promote the achievement of organization and departmental goals.

In the view of Eze (2013), he sees leadership as a relational concept involving both the influencing agent and the person being influenced. This he claimed means that without followers there can be no Leader. He further indicated that the factor which interact to produce an effective leader include not only the abilities and characteristics of the group he is leading, but also the characteristics of the situation in which his leadership takes place. To round it up, Eze (2013) described the Nigeria leader as having authoritarian leadership characteristics and practices. They seem to maintain a rigid dictatorial approach to management as well as a master-servant. rider horse relationship with subordinates. A Nigeria by nature and training is autocratic and demands nothing but respect and obedience from his is subordinates. Eze (2013) posited further that leadership particularly in the public sector becomes the 'cradle of influence to rule enforcement and productivity, shoddiness and

inefficiency, double standards, lack of seriousness and indiscipline. Okafor (2011) asserts that Nigeria leaders are tight lipped, egg-head, who clogged up the nation's wheel of progress. He further explained that Nigerian leader in the foreign owned private sector is also an autocrat who maintains a master-servant relationship with his subordinates. He equally hold the concessionary view of public office, but unlike his counterpart in the public sector, he is performance conscious, works hard to reach target set for him by his foreign masters and is highly responsible and accountable. He does this because of his fear of dismissal and because he enjoys good working conditions and good fringe benefits.

This study was backed up by the theory of gender oppression through patriarchy and liberal Feminism approaches. According to this theory, women's low participation is to several factors such as socio-cultural practices, marginalization in political party, poor access to education, lack of women's empowerment, lack of political funding and so on, has a serious implication for leadership, good governance and development of any country such as Nigeria. Patriarchy Approach to Women's low Participation in Leadership in Nigeria under theory of gender oppression describe women's situation as the consequence of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men have fundamental and concrete interests in controlling, using, and oppressing women – that is, in the practice of domination. By domination, oppression theory means any relationship in which one party (individual or collective), the dominant, succeeds in making the other party (individual or collective) the subordinate, an instrument of the dominant's will.

There are two major variants of gender oppression theory: psychoanalytic feminism and radical feminism. Like all oppression theorists, psychoanalytic theorists see patriarchy as a system, in which men subjugate women, a universally pervasive system durable over time and space, and steadfastly maintained in the face of occasional challenge. Distinctive to psychoanalytic feminism, however, is the view that this system is one that all men, in their individual daily actions, work to create and sustain. Women resist only occasionally but more often either acquiesce in or actively work for their own subordination. This theory then explains women's oppression in terms of men's deep emotional need to control women, a drive arising from ambivalence toward the women who reared them.

At the empirical fronts in Nigeria, Okafor and Akokuwere (2015) examined some factors that have brought about wide-gap in political and socio-economic disparity among gender. Using both historical and descriptive approaches and guided by patriarchy and liberal feminism theories, they argued that the various economic, political, social and systemic practices serve as obstacles to effective participation of women in politics, governance and decision making in Nigeria. They concluded that, for there to be greater participation of women in all spheres of Nigerian society, government and other stakeholders should engage in programmes and policies that would empower women politically, socially and economically. Lawal, Oluyemi and Olakunle (2019) examined critically some challenges facing women participation in Nigeria's politics. Using both historical and descriptive approaches and supported by patriarchy and liberal feminism theorist, the authors argues that household care, money politics and political violence serve as obstacles to effective participation in politics, governance and decision making in Nigeria. They concluded that, for greater women participation and the attainment of leadership position in Nigeria politics, government and

party leaders as well as stakeholders should engage in programmes and policies that would encourage women politically.

Research Methods

Descriptive design of survey type was used. A total of 600 staff of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. Researchers developed questionnaire using 'Gender and Leadership Challenges Questionnaire (GLCQ)' was used for data collection. The instrument was divided into two (2) sections; namely sections A and B. Section A focused on demographic characteristics of the respondents and section B examined items on the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post and the prospects of women participation in leadership. The initial draft of the questionnaire was subjected to content and face validation by experts. The test re-test method was carried out. The instrument was administered twice within two weeks interval on 20 staff of Tai Solarin University of Education different from the sample. The data generated was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the reliability coefficient of the instrument yielded 0.88. Data was collected using the validated instruments. Mean, standard deviation and bar-chart were used for analysing and presenting the research questions.

Results and Discussion

Based on the cut-off point of 2.50 (strongly agree (SA) 4, agree (A) 3, disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) 1). $4 + 3 + 2 + 1/4 = 2.5$. Any mean scores equal to 2.50 or greater than 2.50 was regarded as agreed and less than 2.50 was disagreed. Table 1 indicated that respondents agreed on all the items raised as the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post. This implies that restrictive religious practices (3.98), patriarchal settings in society (2.62), sexual harassments (2.93), maternal mortality (2.92), poor access to education and scholarship facilities in various professions (2.50) and marital obstruction (2.72) were among the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria.

Research Question 1: What are the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation responses on the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria

Items	Mean	SD
Restrictive religious practices	3.98	0.837
Patriarchal settings in society	2.62	0.951
Sexual harassments	2.93	0.914
Maternal mortality	2.92	0.698
Poor access to education and scholarship facilities in various professions.	2.50	0.823
Marital obstruction	2.72	0.815

Source: Field Survey, 2020

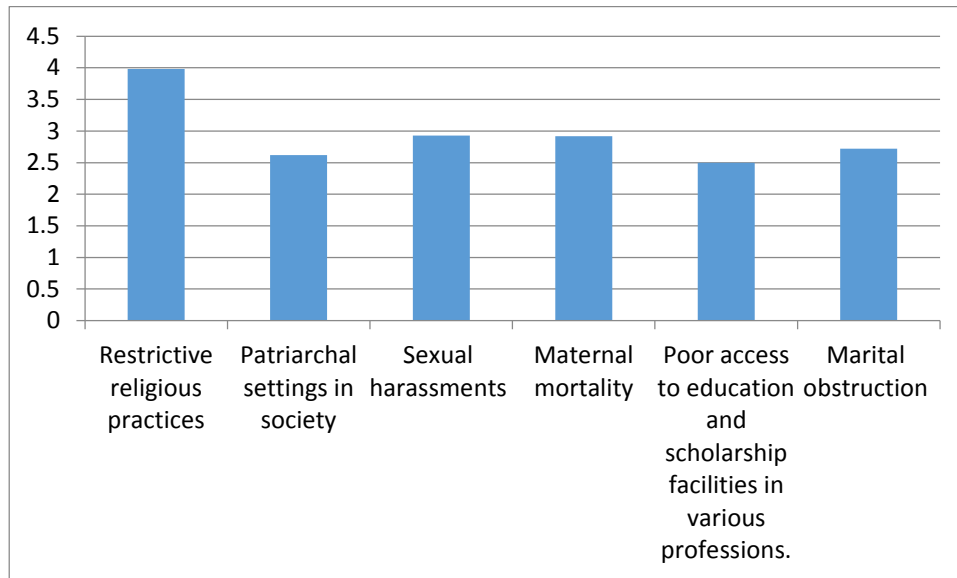


Figure 1: Bar-chart on the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria

Based on the cut-off point of 2.50 (strongly agree (SA) 4, agree (A) 3, disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) 1). $4 + 3 + 2 + 1/4 = 2.5$. Any mean scores equal to 2.50 or greater than 2.50 was regarded as agreed and less than 2.50 was disagreed. Table 2 indicated that respondents agreed on all the items raised as the prospects of women participation in leadership. This implies that women in leadership post to certain extent can reduce extreme poverty and economic empowerment of women (3.26), eliminating employment discriminatory practices against women and addressing labour issues affecting women (3.37), empowerment of women in organization (3.41), greater enrolment of girls into educational institutions (3.10) and inspiration for women who occupied and are occupying positions of authority (2.92).

Research Question 2: What are the prospects of women participation in leadership in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation responses on the prospects of women participation in leadership in Nigeria

Items	Mean	SD
Reducing extreme poverty and economic empowerment of women.	3.26	0.869
Eliminating employment discriminatory practices against women and addressing labour issues affecting women.	3.37	0.908
Empowerment of women in organization.	3.41	0.873
Greater enrolment of girls into educational institutions.	3.10	1.156
Inspiration for women who occupied and are occupying positions of authority.	2.92	0.898

Source: Field Survey, 2020

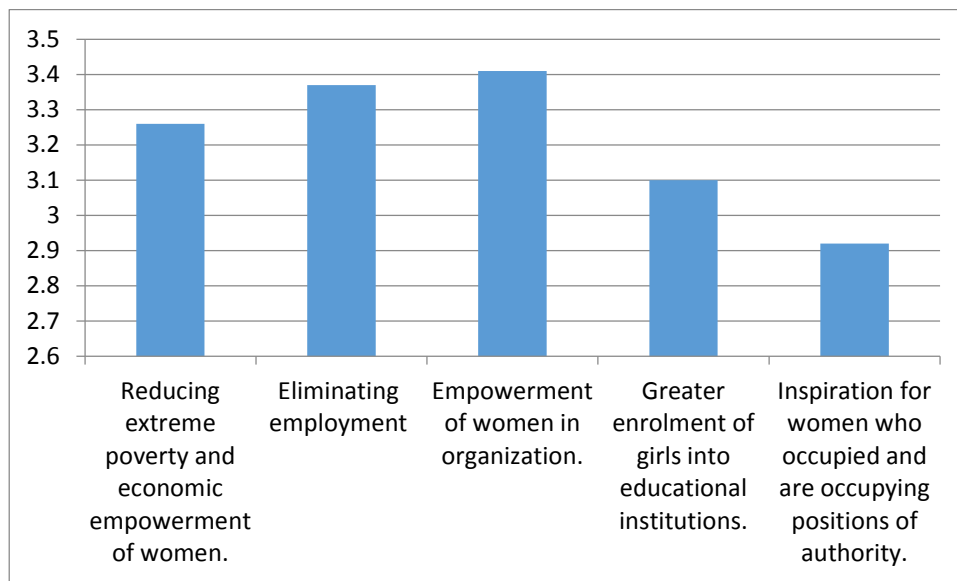


Figure 2: Bar-chart on the prospects of women participation in leadership in Nigeria

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that restrictive religious practices, patriarchal settings in society, sexual harassments, maternal mortality, poor access to education and scholarship facilities in various professions and marital obstruction were among the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria. It was also indicated that women in leadership post to certain extent can reduce extreme poverty and economic empowerment of women, eliminating employment discriminatory practices against women and addressing labour issues affecting women, empowerment of women in organization, greater enrolment of girls into educational institutions and inspiration for women who occupied and are occupying positions of authority. These findings corroborate with Okafor and Akokuwere (2015) who have examined some factors that have brought about wide-gap in political and socio-economic disparity among gender and found out that the various economic, political, social and systemic practices serve as obstacles to effective participation of women in politics, governance and decision making in Nigeria. They concluded that, for there to be greater participation of women in all spheres of Nigerian society, government and other stakeholders should engage in programmes and policies that would empower women politically, socially and economically.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Nigeria, women have been taken as second class citizen both in private, public organization and even in political activities. These incidents have created gender gap in the country; thus, this study concluded that restrictive religious practices, patriarchal settings in society, sexual harassments, maternal mortality, poor access to education and scholarship facilities in various professions and marital obstruction were among the challenges confronting women in getting to the leadership post in Nigeria. It was also indicated that women in leadership post to certain extent can reduce extreme poverty and economic empowerment of women, eliminating employment discriminatory practices against women and addressing labour issues affecting women, empowerment of women in organization, greater enrolment of girls into educational institutions and inspiration for women who occupied and are occupying positions of authority. On this note, this study recommends that:

1. In order to have women participate in leadership and politics, gender equality initiatives should be implemented at all levels of governance both in private and public organization.
2. The government needs to work towards changing the political structures which produce gender inequalities.
3. Women gender inequality should be addressed in relation to women's deprivation, socio-economic and political factors.
4. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making positions will provide a balance which more accurately reflects the composition of society, interests and the general good of all citizens.
5. There to be greater participation of women in all spheres of Nigerian society, government and other stakeholders should engage in programmes and policies that would empower women politically, socially and economically.

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