

## **A GENDER LENS ON GLOBALIZATION: STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** Globalization and gender equality have garnered increased academic interest from scholars worldwide. Several studies have examined globalization's impact on gender inequality. However, the gender perspectives on globalization, structures, and systems and their impact on economic growth and development in Nigeria have not been extensively investigated. The study investigates whether Globalization has increased gender equality and how the structures and systems that perpetuate gender inequality can be modified to achieve gender equality in Nigeria. Secondary sources were used to collect data and then analyzed using a content analysis method. The study revealed that there are structures and systems in Nigeria that constrain women, such as beliefs and stereotypes, cultural, religious, or family norms, that continue to confine women to specific roles, such as child marriage in Northern Nigerian serves as barriers to their equal participation in economic life. The paper recommended that gender norms, stereotypes, cultural practices, and perceptions that constrain gender balance should be challenged, and discrimination against women should be stopped via policy action. There should be socio-cultural re-orientation for men and women, educate and enforce women's property rights, and promoting skills development for women beyond gender stereotypes.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Globalization, Structures and Systems.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization and gender equality have attracted research attention among scholars worldwide in recent years. Some studies have explored globalization in the context of its effects on gender inequality. However, the gender lens on globalization: structures and systems in Nigeria and their impact on economic growth and development in Nigeria have not been extensively investigated. Gender equality necessitates an analysis of the social processes that perpetuate gender inequities and a re-evaluation of globalization's impact on gender equality. Given the increasing importance of globalization in people's economic lives worldwide, it has become critical to investigate globalization: structures and systems in Nigeria via a gender lens.

According to Nnoli, as cited in Davis and Egbuchum (2019), globalisation interacts with different aspects of social life and is infused with ambiguities, variations, uncertainties, and incompatibilities; its core is the inevitable global development of capitalism, including the propagation of its values. Since globalisation is a "complex economic, political, cultural, and

geographic phenomenon in which the mobility of money, organisations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken on a global or transnational dimension," it can be an effective tool for reducing gender inequality, according to Butale (2015). In other words, economies have flourished as a result of the free flow of technology, ideas, and people.

Globalization contributes significantly to women's empowerment by providing them with employment and educational options. According to studies, gender equality is essential for every nation's long-term political, economic, social, cultural, and human development (United Nations 2007: 953). This study investigates whether globalization has increased gender equality and how the structures and systems that perpetuate gender inequality can be modified to achieve gender equality in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **The Concept of Gender Equality**

According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Gendertoolkits (n.d.), gender is a term that refers to the social characteristics and opportunities associated with being male or female, the connections between women and men, girls and boys, and women and men. These characteristics, opportunities, and interactions are constructed socially and acquired through socialization processes. They are situational/temporal and flexible. Gender determines what is expected, permissible, and valued by a woman or a man in a specific setting. Women and men confront discrepancies and inequalities in most societies regarding decision-making possibilities, duties assigned, activities done, and access to and control over resources. Moser (1993) defines gender as "differences between men and women within the same household and across and within cultures that are developed socially and culturally and evolve through time." These distinctions are reflected in women's and men's roles, responsibilities, access to resources, constraints, opportunities, needs, and attitudes and viewpoints.

Thus, gender is not identical to femininity but rather encompasses both men and women and the mutually reinforcing connections that exist between them. Equal opportunity for men and women is defined as Equal opportunities in life for women and men, including participation in public life (Reeves & Baden, 2000). It is vital to remember that gender equality encompasses more than economic considerations; it is also social, political, and multifaceted, guaranteeing that men and women have an equal opportunity to contribute to national success without facing prejudice or bias. According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Gendertoolkits (n.d.), gender equality refers to the equitable treatment of women, men, girls, and boys regarding rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Gender equality is achieved when women and men's various behaviours, aspirations, and needs are recognized and valued equally, without resulting in unequal outcomes that reinforce inequality. Its goal is to remove stereotypes and prejudices so that both sexes can contribute equally to and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political advances in society. According to the Ugandan Ministry of Finance (2006: vii), gender equality can be defined in three dimensions: (i) equal access to and opportunities in economic, political, social, and other fields; (ii) equality before and under the law; and (iii) equality in dignity (internal worth) between men and women.

On the other hand, inequality is defined as the state of being unequal or unfair. The term "gender inequality" refers to the disparity between the sexes. When these differences between male and female genders are erased, gender equality is achieved. It is critical to recognize that gender equality is more than economic; it is also social, political, and multifaceted, ensuring that men and women have an equal opportunity to contribute to national progress without discrimination or bias.

### **Conceptualizing globalization**

Globalization is defined as "a multidimensional economic, political, cultural, and geographical phenomenon in which the movement of capital, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken on a global or transnational dimension." (Moghadam, 1999). Globalization is the process by which market exchange relationships and multimedia communication capabilities spread from the core of economically and technologically advanced countries to other parts of the world, making it easier for goods, services and people to move across national borders. This process is fueled by and reinforces an image of the world as a unified whole and humanity, even though it has different cultures and keeps changing (Waks, 2006). Globalization, according to Ake (1995 p.23), ... is about growing cultural differentiation and functional integration in the world economy; it is growing interdependence across the globe, it is about the nation state coming under pressure from the surge of transnational phenomena; it is about the emergence of a global mass culture driven by mass advertising and technical advances in mass communication. According to Nikoloz (2009), the term, globalization, refers to the exchange of information among nations, cultures, and diverse social, economic, and political organizations. As such, it comprises the following: reorganization of the state, the market, and society's functions and obligations (Rhoten, 2000, p.593). The word emphasizes product and service trade, which has been made easier and more efficient through technological improvements such as electronic money and cross-border communication (Giddens, 1999). Nikiti & Elliott, as cited in Gaburro & O'Boyle (2003), assert that globalization entails economic integration; the transmission of policies across borders; cultural stability; the reproduction, relations, and discourses of power; it is a global process, a concept, a revolution, and "the development of a global market free of socio-political control." Global connectivity has become easier to achieve as a result of technological advancements. The ease with which nations communicate has encouraged 'cultural homogeneity,' leading to the formation of a single global civilization (Waks, 2006, p.413). Similarly, Turner (2011) asserted that modern communities are becoming increasingly multi-cultural and, as a result, multi-faith as a result of globalization.

Globalization launched the world into a global village; there are no more restrictions in terms of trade; instead, with the technological advancements, there is trade openness. It also has implications for gender equality. Global interconnectedness has the potential to be both useful and detrimental to the world's nations.

### **Gains and Pitfalls of Globalization**

Globalization can have both gains and pitfalls. The task is to develop policies and practices in such a way that they support better living standards and gender equality. According to the World Bank (2011), globalization has boosted access to economic opportunities. Trade liberalization and the proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have enhanced women's access to economic possibilities and, in some instances, their pay

compared to men. Increased demand for female labour has been fueled by growth in export and ICT-enabled sectors, a fall in the value of physical strength, and an increase in the relevance of cognitive skills. ICT has also boosted female farmers' and entrepreneurs' access to markets by alleviating time and mobility constraints.

Moreover, Tabrizi (2019) noted that one of the implications of the global market is the fusion of all cultures into a single global one. As a result, we see that females are now permitted to pursue higher education and work in their specialized sectors in some developing countries. One of the primary effects of globalization is to assist developing countries in identifying and efficiently utilizing their natural resources. One of the direct effects of globalization is to assist developing countries in identifying and efficiently using their natural resources. Numerous studies demonstrate that economic development alleviates women's disadvantages, particularly educational attainment, life expectancy, and labour force participation (World Bank, 2011b). Economic development results in increased incomes and enhanced service delivery, which contributes to closing gender disparities in educational achievement, health outcomes, and employment. In conjunction with globalization, growth has also created chances for girls and women to pursue educational and labour market paths formerly barred by traditional institutions. For instance, in India, low-caste girls have expanded their enrolment in English language schools, preparing them for a more extensive range of employment in the global economy. At the same time, traditional networks continue to funnel low-caste boys into local language schools (Munshi & Rosenzweig 2006). Additionally, globalization has made it feasible to bring to light concerns impacting women through information, which has resulted in the United Nations and other international organizations cooperating to resolve such problems.

World Bank (2011) outlined several factors associated with a more global world that strengthen the incentives for action toward greater gender equality:

- In an integrated world, gender disparity is more costly since it impairs a country's capacity to compete internationally—mainly if the country specializes in female-intensive goods and services.
- International peer pressure has also forced more governments to ratify anti-discrimination treaties than ever before. • Growing media attention and consumer demand for better treatment of workers have pushed multinational corporations toward more equitable wages and working conditions for women.
- Increased access to information, mainly via television and the internet, enables countries to learn about social mores in other countries, altering perceptions and encouraging the adoption of more egalitarian attitudes.
- Economic empowerment for women strengthens this process by fostering gender role modifications and enabling women to exert more significant control over time, shift relative power within the household, and exercise agency more generally.

Additionally, Kawach and Wamala (2007) argue that higher female employment should result from trade liberalization. Increased export volume as a result of deregulation should have the following effects:

- 1) Increased female employment involvement, resulting in reduced gender disparities in labour force participation and improved economic, social, and political prospects for women.

2) Decreased unemployment rates for women, resulting in a narrowing of the gender wage disparity.

3) Increased salaries for female workers, resulting in a narrowing of the gender wage disparity.

Furthermore, Shultz (2005) investigated the link between trade liberalization and women's economic position. On the other hand, globalization can contribute to greater gender equality. However, globalization alone will not eliminate gender disparity without governmental policies. Shultz uses education and health as proxies for gender disparity. His study demonstrated that trade limitations in the form of tariffs, quotas, or other restrictions such as those on foreign exchange result in decreased commerce and have a negative impact on women's education and health. Other findings suggested that natural resource exports had a detrimental effect on women's education and health as girls gained employment and school enrollment declined. The study concluded that through spillover effects and greater demand for female labour, the study concluded that trade liberalization and globalization might result in better access to education and health care for women, hence increasing gender equality.

### **Gender Equality and Promotion of Development in a Globalised World**

There is compelling evidence that countries that promote gender equality achieve faster economic growth, higher household income, lower maternal and child mortality, and less corruption (Katseli, 2007, p.11). Women empowerment and gender equality are vital components of attaining sustainable economic, cultural, political, social, and human development, according to United Nations research (2007, p.953). Numerous development practitioners assert that campaigning for gender equality and women's empowerment increases a society's growth prospects (UNICEF, 2007, p.974-975). According to them, when men and women are treated equally, economies expand faster, children's health improves, and corruption declines. Globalization is a crucial macroeconomic indicator since it has significantly impacted gendered labour market variables in developing nations. According to the World Development Report (2012), globalization has increased relative FLFP and pay levels. Klassen (1999, p.6) stated that achieving gender parity in education may be a few win-win development strategies. Women's education boosts their capacity for decision-making and other income-generating activities, increasing economic prosperity and efficiency and advancing other vital human development goals. A well-educated woman is more informed and better positioned to care for her children regarding health care, nutrition, and even self-care. Increased Women's participation in education is one factor that contributes to globalization's advancement. As a result, "modernization benefited women by improving their access to education, paid work, and family planning (Randall, 2006). Male mobility was enhanced by globalization, allowing women to exercise decision-making capacities. Women's increased participation in society and politics has benefited their households by ensuring their children's education.

### **Methodology**

The documentary research approach was used in this study in order to carry out the study efficiently and effectively. The application of the documentary approach refers to the analysis of materials that contain information on the subject matter under investigation.



The instrument of data collection employed in this research to elicit information is secondary data, which is essentially documentary. Textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, government publications, periodicals, and the internet are the secondary sources that have been used in this study.

This study was a non-experimental study; qualitative analysis was used to analyse and present the data gathered from our sources.

### **Theoretical Framework and its Application to the Study**

The research is founded on feminist theory. Ashley (2021) asserted that feminist theory analyzes the social reality in a way that illuminates the processes that generate and sustain inequality, oppression, and injustice and thereby advances the cause of equality and justice for all humans. Feminist theorists claimed that gender is socially created due to the patriarchal family's typical perception of women as weak and oppressed. Liberal feminists contend that while women possess the same capacity for moral reasoning and agency as men, patriarchy, particularly the gendered division of labour, has traditionally denied women the ability to express and practice this reasoning Kathryn(2019). As a result, these systems must be altered to enable women to contribute fully to national development and productivity.

However, because women's and girls' experiences and perspectives have historically been excluded from social theory and social science, much feminist theory has focused on their interactions and experiences within society to ensure that half of the world's population is included in how we see and understand social forces, relations, and problems. They provided an alternative to patriarchal thought and systems. Feminists believe that women are human beings, that men and women are equal in all significant aspects, and that this equality must be publicly recognized." The Nigerian government has made gender equality and women's development a priority and has developed and implemented a series of policies and measures to ensure that women can participate equally in economic development, have equal access to economic resources and effective services, enhance their capacity for self-development, and improve their social and economic status. It would be ideal if policies were implemented effectively.

### **Structures and Systems that Constraints Gender Equality in a Globalized World: The Nigerian Example.**

Gender equality is recognized as a human right, and a legitimate goal for humanity at large, yet gender inequality and discrimination against women persist around the globe and in Nigeria. In many countries, structures and systems such as multiple practices, beliefs and stereotypes, cultural, religious, and family traditions continue to limit women to specific roles. They operate as impediments to their involvement in economic life on an equal footing with men. Thus, the core causes of gender disparity are social norms associated with women's traditional reproductive functions, represented in male dominance and authority at home and work. These issues all contribute to women's decreasing ability to create an income on their own, mainly because they make it more difficult for women to obtain resources (such as land and credit) and other fundamental services (such as education and health care). Given their subordinate position in society, women's bargaining power is likewise limited in the workplace, especially given their lack of experience organizing themselves as a negotiating or lobbying bloc. Women are primarily responsible for family reproductive processes and

caring for children and the elderly. This results in a division of labour within the household, making it more difficult for women to enter the labour market full-time. Even if women were permitted to participate fully in the labour market, discrimination against them would likely endure despite its economic inefficiency because the dominant gender order provides men more control in society. Women's labour force participation will be minimal in civilizations where women's roles are defined by maintaining the home, caring for children, and meeting the non-economic demands of the household. In a country like Nigeria, where a household division of labour exists and domestic duties, including child care, are exclusively reserved for women, women's labour force participation rates will be lower than men's. And, to maintain their control, men tend to remove women from decision-making networks. According to Tran-Nguyen and Zampetti (2004), gendered societal norms drawn solely from women's reproductive roles have tended to limit their economic and political status, maintaining gender inequity in society. It is not news that women spend more time than men on unpaid domestic labour in the home. Cooking, washing and cleaning are examples of unpaid work; tending gardens and providing drinking water for their children. Women miss out on possibilities outside their household due to these social expectations, where women are expected to care for the family and children. Even in the face of globalization, most people continue to believe that a woman's place should be in the kitchen, and hence it is untraditional for women to work outside the home. These findings imply that societal norms and stereotypes determine the rate at which women enter the labour force. Nwakeze (2010) emphasized reversing the erroneous assumption that women are only suited for non-market home activities. The point being made here is not whether a woman should fulfil her biological duty or not; instead, it is that such biological roles as mothers should not prevent women from reaching their potential in public endeavours.

There is a need to educate and enforce supreme court decisions on the female child right to inheritance and land ownership systems. In Nigeria, customary law especially in the Igbo land and other parts of the federation, were laws prohibiting women from owning or inheriting land. Such systems and processes constrain women's economic space. But On April 14, 2014, the Nigerian Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, confirmed decisions of two lower courts, which had found unconstitutional an Igbo and other part of the federation customary law of succession excluding female offspring from eligibility to inherit the property of their fathers. When women are denied the right to inherit or own land, they are forced to rely on their male counterparts for economic support. This new position of the Supreme Court in upholding the female right to inheritance needs to be enforced. If not enforced the, women would still be disadvantage to increase their liveability. The land is usually used as collateral. Consequently, land ownership implies the possibility of accessing a loan when the need arises.

Due to Nigeria's patriarchal system, where males hold the majority of authority, many women are denied the right to political involvement, land inheritance, and education. Additionally, in patriarchal communities such as Nigeria, child weddings are frequently encouraged, particularly in northern Nigeria, with older men taking on younger wives. These young females who marry often discontinue their schooling and rarely have the right to the number of children they choose to have; this further isolates the girl child from economic support from the guy. Dropping out of school due to early marriage and childbearing has a detrimental effect on these young women for the remainder of their lives since they will be less qualified to enter the workforce. "This tradition is fueled by poverty and social and cultural standards, and it is maintained by girls' and women's low status" (Vogelstein, 2013,

p. 7). Traditional structures and systems that perpetuate disparities in human capital between men and women must be dismantled so that women can contribute to national productivity and have an economic impact on their families and the nation. This can be accomplished through the strengthening of women's economic and property rights, as well as the introduction of labour-saving consumer durables through technological progress.

Additionally, Maliki (2000, p.2) captures one of these patterns in what he refers to as "Ritual Argument." These justifications and constraints include the following: (i) The idea that certain professions are unfeminine, that such employment is unsuitable for women. Thus, a woman entering such a field is an abnormality. This stems from erroneous notions of men's and women's differing working abilities. (ii) The inability of women in some jobs to create careers due to their tendency to quit more quickly than males to marry and have children. Training investment in them is frequently deemed uneconomic. (iii) Women do not possess the emotional stability necessary for some vocations and tasks. It is commonly asserted that women are inherently emotional and can become readily enraged by bad conditions. As a result, they may not be able to resist stress at times. (iv) It has also been asserted that women are not susceptible to organizational discipline. As a result of these "ritual arguments," women are frequently misunderstood in the organizations in which they work. As a result, they are left in confusion and undue stress. According to Maliki (2000, p.8), it is a source of tension and conflict for all women. Similarly, Nwankaeke (2010), opine that another challenge confronting Nigerian working women is employers' perceptions of their stability and loyalty to their careers. Due to the domestic duties that married women endure, most employers assume that women lack commitment and are less productive than males. However, when countries fail to repeal laws and destroy structures, procedures, and practices that deny women the right to property, they deprive women the right of making significant economic decisions that affect their food security, children, and eventually national production. The government must examine the underlying causes of these structures and processes that obstruct gender equality in a globalized world. Therefore, develop policies and ensure their efficient implementation to promote gender equality between women and men.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated the gender lens on globalization, structures, and systems and their impact on economic growth and development in Nigeria. The study examines whether globalization has increased gender equality and how the structures and mechanisms that sustain gender inequality might be redressed to attain gender equality in Nigeria.

Data were gathered from secondary sources and then analyzed using a content analysis method. The study discovered that there are structures and systems in Nigeria that constrain women, such as beliefs and stereotypes, cultural, religious, and family norms that continue to confine women to specific roles, such as child marriage, especially in Northern Nigeria, that serves as a barrier to women's equal participation in life.

The study advocated that gender conventions, stereotypes, cultural practices, and attitudes that stifle gender balance be challenged and policy action be taken to end discrimination against women. Men and women should undergo socio-cultural reorientation and educate and enforce women's property rights and skill development beyond gender preconceptions or bias.



### Recommendations

1. Gender norms, stereotypes, cultural practices, and views that obstruct gender balance should be contested, and discrimination against women should be eradicated through policy action.
2. There is a need for socio-cultural reorientation and redefinition for both men and women through government agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations to ensure that woman's biological roles as mothers do not prevent them from realizing their potential in the public sphere.
3. There is a need to educate and enforce women's property rights in Nigeria and promote skill development for women beyond gender stereotypes.
4. They should enforce the recently enacted land ownership law in Nigeria to ensure that women own land.
5. Female child education should be promoted and improved continuously, as education is one of the ways the girl child develops into an adult who can contribute to country building.
6. There should be a women mentorship program; those women who have managed to balance their biological responsibilities of childbearing and reach the pinnacle of their careers should mentor younger women by sharing their experiences and the obstacles they overcame to become beneficial for both family and national productivity.

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