PATRIARCHY AND EMERGENT GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA: A LINGERING ISSUE IN NIGERIA NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

Patriarchy has been defined as a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. It has been said that there can be no gender equality without gender equity. Nigeria institutions are no doubt experiencing certain conditions that are common with their counterparts in other nations of the world but there are peculiar issues confronting their development in terms of productivity, welfare, growth and competitiveness (nation building). The issue of patriarchy and gender inequality on the productive development of Nigeria in these present times is the focus of the paper. Thus, patriarchy is a determinant factor in gender equality and as such should be eradicated. This paper concludes that there can sites where patriarchy can be attacked like domestic production, paid employment, culture and religion, sexuality, male violence, state.etc. There should be equal participation of women and their men counterpart in the society, eradicating socio-cultural delineation of the female gender, participation of women in the political institution and also strict adherence of policies in eradicating discrimination of women.

Key words: Patriarchy, Gender equality, Equity, marginalization, Gender, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION
Many Nigerians just like Nakpodia, Urien and Okebukola (2012) have these views and believe that as long as patriarchy is

prevalent in our society, gender equality may be far-fetched and our work force may also continue to lack the necessary ingredients for growth and productivity, especially because the female half of its population are undermined and disadvantaged. Patriarchy as a way of doing things has been so deeply entrenched in most African settings- in our norms, values and customs that trying to separate it from our humanness and culture is not only unfathomable for most, but also a deeply unsettling and un-welcome "impossibility", a very difficult process.

Furthermore, Stopler (2006) making reference to the anthropologist, Sherry Ortner (2010) observes that women are considered inferior to men in every known culture. To substantiate this claim, she points out three types of data as follows:

➤ Elements of cultural ideology and informants' statement that explicitly devalue women, according to them, their roles, tasks, products and their social milieu, less prestige than are accorded to men and the male correlates.

➤ Symbolic devices, such as the attribution of defilement, which may be interpreted as implicitly making a statement of inferior valuation;

➤ Socio-cultural arrangements that exclude women from participation in or contact with some realm in which the highest powers of the society are felt to reside.

➤ Feminist have argued that in any of the historical forms that patriarchal society takes whether it is feudal, capitalist or socialist, a sex gender system and a system of economic discrimination operate simultaneously. A patriarchy is considered the head of the household and within the family, he controls productive resources,

labour force, and reproductive capacities based on the notion of superiority and inferiority and legitimized by differences in gender and generation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

PATRIARCHY

Patriarchy according to Hartman is defined as a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them to control women. Patriarchy is thus the system of male oppression of women. The materials base of patriarchy is men's control over women labour power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. It can also be seen as a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females. This is as a result of men classed as having the following qualities: Strength, vigour, virile/powerful courage, self-confidence and the ability to meet the outside world that is animal and human intruders head on and deal with it effectively.

Okpe(2005) Submits that patriarchy is a broad network or system of hierarchical organization that cuts across political, economic, social, religion, cultural, industrial and financial spheres, under which the overwhelming number of upper positions in society are either occupied or controled and dominated by men. Thus, any system that operationalizes an order that accords men undue advantage over women is considered patriarchal.

Patriarchy justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and inheritance (Salam, 2003). Also, this culture of patriarchy is a very strong determinant of male dominance over female and as a result, men will sit back in the family to keep the family name and lineage growing while women will be married out. Despite the pronounced commitment of the international community to gender equality and to the bridging the gender gap in the formal political arena, reinforced by the convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Again Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing plat form of Action, women are highly marginalized and are poorly represented in political activities (cf. UNDP Report, 2005).

GENDER

All human beings are normally born male or female. Young males are called boys while adult males are called men. Young females are called girls while adult females are called women. It is important to note that there is difference between sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological inference that distinguishes both as male and female respectively. For instance, the adult female has breast that can secrete milk to feed a baby but the adult male does not have. According to Ezumah(2003), gender refers to characteristics that are socially constructed for women and men such as roles attitudes, behaviour, and values. Most people are born with a defined sex, but they learn respective appropriate norms and behaviours from their societies, including proper interactions with individual of the same or opposite sex, within households, workplaces and their communities. For Ezumah(2003), gender consists of two categories, feminine and masculine. Masculine, the male gender is perceived to be though and strong while the feminine or female gender is soft and weak

(cf. Oakley, 1980, Oyewumi 2002; Germor, 2010 cited in Ngum, 2012).

GENDER EQUALITY
The term "gender" refers to the set of social norms, practices and institutions that regulate the relations between women and men. Gender equality refers to the goal of achieving equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of human, men, boys and girls. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that their rights responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality is not a woman's issue, but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Achieving gender equality requires that the interest, needs, priorities and contribution of both women and men are taken into consideration.

ROLE OF EDUCATION
Education is said to be a vehicle that breaks the shackle of poverty thereby leading to transformation, development and progress (cf. Ikoni, 2009). With the 2005 MDGs' first deadline for attainment of gender parity in primary and secondary schools' enrolment already missed, the ability of women and girls to empower themselves economically and socially by going to school, or by engaging in productive and civic activities is still being constrained by their responsibility for everyday task in the house hold division of labour (cf. CEC Report 2007). According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2005), Nigeria was classified as a low development country in respect of equality in educational accessibility. Female Adult literacy Rate (Ages 15 and above) for the country was 59.4% as against male, 74.4%, the combined Gross Enrolment for primary, secondary and Tertiary

Schools for female was 57% and male, 71%. Omolewa(2002) shows that this inequality has its root in the colonial system of education which was primarily geared towards meeting the manpower need of the colonial government that obviously alienated women from educational and economic opportunities. Women in Nigeria are more intelligent than men but by the non-challant emphasis placed on female education, and the womenfolk, subject them to statutory discrimination (cf. Ojo, 2002).

The notion that women are the subjects of a growing national and international interest is unquestionable (cf. Duryea, and ArendsKuenning, 2003; Ajayi, 2009) and this interest stems from the acute recognition that women are crucial to social and economic development. Apart from the domestic tasks which may be seen as a deduction of socialization and convention, women were also very productive in the social, economic sphere of the Nigeria society. (Ponte, 2006) has reported that women in Nigeria are more involved than men in virtually all areas of agricultural activities ranging from farm clearing to processing. Thus, gender bias against women ranges from labour market discriminations to exclusion from policy making. According to Igbube(2004), this discrimination exacerbates poverty by preventing the majority of women from obtaining the education, training, health services, credit, child care and legal status needed to improve their prospects. It is therefore not surprising that women's inadequate access to education has been seen as the source of the various discriminations that they suffer (cf. Alabi, Bahaland&Alabi, 2012). On this high rate of marginalization that we see that there has been a ground swell of agreement that women's lot and general socio-economic improvement of nations can be achieved through the acquisition

of education and broad empowerment of women (cf. Adeniran, 2009).

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION
Politically, women are perceived as not being worthy of exercise of power and authority in the society. Local traditional sayings empowered this perception. For example, there is a saying that "owo-nwaninsidatanyin, asidatitit" (a woman can only be active in bed). Such ideas exclude women from public domain and deny them participation in governance.

Nigerian politic is predominately politics of men, men dominate the political arena, men formulate the rules of the political game and men define the standards for evaluation. Political life is based on male norms and values and in some cases even male lifestyle. Women are marginal to national and states politics, and more generally, to the public and private life of our nation. The gender discrimination against women has been extended to public life where women experience marginalization.

Aina (2012) asserts that there are sufficient evidences to prove that women are a veritable access in public offices (cf. Aina&Olayode, 2010). The leadership roles played by both Mrs FunmilayoRansome-Kuti and Mrs. Margaret Ekpo in the Nigerian pre-independence political struggles of the 1950s are incontrovertible (cf. Sklar, 1963). Mrs Kuti was a strong advocate and campaigner for women's right across the country. Mrs Margret Ekpo on her part was the only female member of the seven-man committee set up in 1951 to organize a national political organization geared toward achieving self-government within five years. She became Vice-president of the Eastern House of chiefs in 1959. Indeed, it may well be that the woman who spearheaded the 1929 Aba women's riot in South-Eastern

Nigeria were the precursors and role models of the two better Known female political activists (cf. Nduka, 2001).

Grace Alele-Williams not only distinguished her in the field of mathematics education, but also rose to become the vice-chancellor of the university of Benin- the first female Nigerian academic to be honoured (cf. Nduka, 2001). Similarly, late Dora NkemAkunyilli who was the former Director of National Agency for food and Drug Administration and Control reduced the incidence of fake drugs from about 90% to 68% of drugs in 2001 (cf. Akunyilli, 2006). NgoziOkonjo-Iweala successfully transformed the Nigerian economic platform when she succeeded in negotiating a debt relief package for Nigerian as the finance minister July, 2003-June, 2006 under the Obasanjo regime and also spearheaded the unpopular fuel subsidy removal policy by the Nigerian government, which led to protest in January 2012 under the Goodluck Jonathan regime (cf. Aina, 2012, McGroarty, 2012). Also she stressed the need to reduce the country's recurrent expenditure which is currently 74% of the national budget and embark in capital project which could improve the 14% unemployment rate in the country (cf. Osa-Okunbor, 2012).
In all developing countries, women leaders abound, not just in politics, but also in academia, and public sector organization (cf. Okafor, Fagbemi& Hassan, 2011).

DISCUSSION
Many Nigerian believe that the prevalence of male dominance in virtually all sectors of Nigeria work organization continues to engender inequality which perpetuates, among other things, fewer opportunity for women, unequal participation.

Argument supported by the view of Nakpodia and Urien (2012) that:

> *Gender discrimination is a problem that has eaten deep into the society. Women are seldom allowed to do their work; training opportunities are less for women than men. There is no contesting the fact that there is gender inequality and stereotyping that is skewed to the disadvantage of the girl child and women in our society. It is a problem that requires a proactive solution not only from parents, governments, the educational system, Non-governmental organizations (NGO's) but all and sundry in the society.*

Also, Okebukola (2008) stresses that: Thus, in the developing African countries where the unsettled patriarchal system persists, the girl-child and indeed the women are subjugated to play subordinate roles that often impede their access to equal opportunities for development. Consequently, these countries lack a skilled and educated workforce; they lack knowledge and investments in the basic education of the majority of their population. Such countries have not been able to take full advantage of the resources invested nor were they able to distribute the fruits of these investments for developments.

Hacker(1972) states that with the employment of women as wage earners men were quick to perceive them as a rival group and make use of economic, legal and ideological weapons to eliminate or reduce their competition. They excluded women from the trade unions, made contracts with employers to prevent their hiring women, passed laws restricting the employment of married women, and carried on ceaseless propaganda to return women to the home and keep them there.

Again, Sachaefer (2008) declares that, "a detailed overview of the status of the world's women issued by the United Nations in 2000, noted that women and men live in different worlds-worlds that differ in access to education and world opportunities and in heath, personal security and human rights".

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Some scholars have suggested that patriarchy is located in six relatively autonomous structures, which we have also adopted in this paper as programmatic sites that patriarchy can be attacked. These sites include:

a. **Domestic Production**
    - Challenging patriarchal division of labour in the home.
    - Advocating for equitable distribution of housework
    - promoting male responsibility for fatherhood and
    - Inclusion of domestic work in the computation of GDP.

b. **Paid Employment:**
    - Challenging stereotypes in paid employment
    - Fighting discrimination against women in paid employment
    -Promoting the entry of women into male dominated or reserved
    Professions

c. **Culture and Religion**
    - Combating cultural practices that oppress women e.g. Widowhood
    practices, wife inheritance, female genital mutilation etc.
    - Challenging cultural taboos that subordinate women
    - Challenging practices that promote son preference

d. **Sexuality**
   - Empowering girls and women to have control over their sexuality
   - Challenging practices that predispose women to infections such as STls and HIV/AIDs.
   - Promoting women sexual and reproductive rights
e. **Male Violence**
   - Combating violence against women
   - Interrogating masculinity and feminity and promoting new conceptualization of a transformed man and women.
f. **State**
   -Challenging the patriarchal arrangement of the state and the violence in the state.
   - Challenging neo-liberalism and fundamentalism
   - Challenging state practices that fuel violent conflicts
   - Promoting women participation in governance

In order to redress gender inequality in Nigeria, there should be emphasis to the need to challenge the influences of patriarchy, and promote women's rights in domestic production, paid employment, culture and religion, sexuality, male violence and governance. I recommend that the United National General Assembly reaffirm is convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), making it compulsory for all nations to adopt. Its cardinal objectives and employing stricter sanctions for violating the convention.They should be strict adherence to some of the millennium development goals (MDGs) like the New Partnership for African Development adopted in 2001.In all, women should be given equal representation and should be bound not just in politics but also in academia and private and public sector/organizations (Okafor, Fagbemi& Hassan 2011).

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