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GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER EQUITY: AN OVERVIEW OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The major aim of this paper is to ascertain the level, differential, and prediction of gender equality and gender equity in Nigeria and the specific objectives are to Identify the reasons for gender equality; Identify the reasons for gender equity; Assess the Strategies to promoting gender equality between women and men; Assess the Strategies to promoting gender equity in Nigeria; Examine the attributes of gender equality; and Examine the attributes of gender equality. Women, have become major factors in economic development and are increasingly at the core of a country's competitive advantage in the global economy. Secondary data from Nigeria Demographic Survey, Nigeria Demographic and Education Survey, National bureau of statistics and National Population Commission (NPC) data were used. The result showed that majority of Nigeria women had no education while little percentage of men had no education. The result showed that Nigerian women face a lot of violence due to gender disparity and that there is gender inequality neither is there gender equity in Nigeria and also that gender equity is more realistic than gender equality. Nigeria should thereby work towards gender equity and not equality.

Introduction

In the gender literature, we often come across two concepts: 'gender equality' and 'gender equity'. They are sometimes used interchangeably, but they do not quite refer to the same thing. "Gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards." In other words, gender equality refers to equal access to social goods, services and resources and equal opportunities in all spheres of life for both men and women. When there is gender inequality, it is women that are more likely to be disadvantaged and marginalised; but we should not ignore the negative impact that gender inequality can have on men as well. For example, societal norms regarding the appropriate behaviour for men tend to put them under pressure as regards the need to provide materially for their family, and also deny them opportunities of being more nurturing towards their children and wife. Therefore gender equality is the concern of all and changes must be brought about for both men and women. However, this is not to say that men and women are equally affected by gender inequality. It remains true that women have the greater share of disadvantages. "Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men." UNFPA (1999)

Women form about half the world population and any society which neglect such a large number of human resource potential cannot achieve any meaningful development. At the local and international level, population problems especially of women constitute the cornerstone of discussions about the gap between the actual numbers of women to employ, educate, equip, etc. Acha (2009)

Women and men should not only be given equal access to resources and equal opportunities, but they should also be given the means of benefiting from this equality. This is where the concept of 'gender equity' comes into play. Gender equity implies fairness in the way women and men are treated. The different life experiences and needs of men and women are taken into consideration and compensation is made for women's historical and social disadvantages. The lower status of women in society often constitutes a handicap and provisions should be made to redress this inequality before they can take advantage of the opportunities provided. Gender equity thus serves to level the playing field and empower women. Therefore, we can say that equity is essential to achieve true equality. the rights of women and girl-children as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. UN (1992)

The terms 'sex' and 'gender' are closely linked, yet they are not synonyms. 'sex' can be used to refer to the physical differences between men and women, while the term 'gender' be used in connection to the behaviour and cultural practices of men and women. This distinction is the basis for all the definitions of 'sex' and 'gender' that are provided in the literature nowadays. Stoller (1960)

Nigeria has the highest population of any African country. With a population of over 180 million, Nigeria is ranked the world's seventh most populated country. of this magnitude, forty-nine percent are female; some 90.2 million girls and women. Comparatively, thirty-eight percent of women in Nigeria lack formal education as



against twenty-five for men and only four percent of women have higher education against the seven percent of their male counterpart. Nigeria ranks 118 of 134 countries in the Gender Equality Index. Elegbede (2012) Gender roles continue to influence crucial individual decisions: on education, on career paths, on working arrangements, on family and on fertility. These decisions in turn have an impact on the economy and society. It is therefore in everyone's interest to offer genuine choices equally for women and men throughout the different stages of their lives. Gender equality is more than just a slogan; it is our social and economic responsibility. Reding (2015)

Conceptual clarification

Sex

It simply refers to the natural biological differences between men and women, for example, the differences in the organs related to reproduction.

Gender

"Gender refers to the cultural, socially-constructed differences between the two sexes. It refers to the way a society encourages and teaches the two sexes to behave in different ways through socialisation." Browne, 1992

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming, known also as mainstreaming a gender perspective, is "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies, and programmes, in any area and at all levels". Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for integrating gender concerns in the analysis, formulation and monitoring of policies, programmes and projects. It is therefore a means to an end, not an end in itself; a process, not a goal. The purpose of gender mainstreaming is to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in population and development activities. This requires addressing both the condition, as well as the position, of women and men in society. Gender mainstreaming therefore aims to strengthen the legitimacy of gender equality values by addressing known gender disparities and gaps in such areas as the division of labour between men and women; access to and control over resources; access to services, information and opportunities; and distribution of power and decision-making. UNFPA has adopted the mainstreaming of gender concerns into all population and development activities as the primary means of achieving the commitments on gender equality, equity and empowerment of women UNFPA 2005

Gender equality

Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. SBGA 2001

Gender equity

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. ILO (2000)

Aims and objectives

The major aim of this paper is to ascertain the level, differential, and prediction of gender equality and gender equity in Nigeria. and the specific objectives are to:

- [1] Identify the reasons for gender equality
- [2] Identify the reasons for gender equity
- [3] Assess the Strategies to promoting gender equality between women and men
- [4] Assess the Strategies to promoting gender equity in Nigeria
- [5] Examine the attributes of gender equality
- [6] Examine the attributes of gender equality

Reasons for gender equity in Nigeria

The major reasons why gender equity should be preferred to gender equality are because women and men have different and special needs which include:

- [1] **Biological nature of both sex:** This indicate that there is a great difference between the biological nature of both women and men and thereby there different roles can be played by both sex in the society. For example you don't expect same treatment for women and men after child birth because we know who carries the baby for nine month so as a result of this, for gender equity to be achieved there is need to place women where they belong and also men where they belong.
- [2] **Physical differences between men and women:** Women tend to need more attention health wise than men because of some physical disparity between both genders



- [3] **Religious belief:** Most religion does not encourage gender equality but encourages fairness to both male and female which can only be achieved through gender equity and not equality
- [4] **Cultural values:** Some cultures in Nigeria place men above women in other not to go against any culture gender equity is more realistic

Strategies for gender equality between women and men

- [1] Participation of women in the work force i.e. equal economic independence
- [2] Proper representation of women in strategic decision making
- [3] Putting an end to all forms of violence against women i.e gender based violence such as domestic violence

Attributes of gender equality

- [1] Respect for and promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men
- [2] Ensure equality of access for women, especially girls, to education
- [3] Ensure equality between women and men
- [4] Promote equality between women and men in economic, social and political decision-making
- [5] Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women
- [6] Provision of support and assistance to women who have become victims of any form of violence, including in the home, workplace and during armed conflicts
- [7] Promoting greater involvement of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts and, in particular, in activities promoting a culture of peace in post conflict situations.”

Attributes of gender equity

- [1] Promote fairness and social justice in the society
- [2] Ensure access of women and girls to education
- [3] Ensure access of women to economics
- [4] Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women

Way Forward to promoting gender equity in Nigeria

- [1] Educational empowerment of women to encourage the equal access to knowledge in all field
- [2] Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women to support women's human rights
- [3] Promoting the attainment of gender parity
- [4] Encouragement of women's full citizenship and equal participation in policy-making, and the elimination of stereotyped roles and expectations
- [5] Encourage women's creativity and freedom of expression by supporting their cultural activities, research, training, capacity-building, networking, exchange of information and women's NGOs
- [6] Building a culture of peace in the minds of women and men by recognising women's capacity for leadership and non-violent conflict resolution
- [7] Encouraging Women's contribution to the management of natural resources and environmental protection

Reasons for gender equality and equity in Nigeria

- [1] The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
- [2] Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training
- [3] Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
- [4] Violence against women
- [5] Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
- [6] Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
- [7] Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
- [8] Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment
- [9] Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl-child

Recommendations

Government should provide sufficient fund towards sensitize the key people in the area that can disseminate the importance of training women.

Government should allow women to contribute and participate fully in all aspects of life in Nigeria

Government should promote gender-based equity in the access to and control of productive resources.

Government should increase women's participation in decision- and policy-making at all levels.

Government should promote a reduction in rural women's workloads and enhance their opportunities for remunerated employment and income.



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