

A Sociological Approach Towards Utilising the Strength and Uniqueness in Gender for Maximum Productivity – A Case Study of Nigeria

Ogundiminyi Michael T.

*Department of Sociology,
Federal University Gashua, Yobe State*

Abstract

This paper focuses on the utilisation of the strengths and uniqueness in gender, for maximum productivity, with particular reference on Nigeria. The issues bothering on gender as it relates to its emphasis on masculinity, have been unequivocally lingered as a front burner, over time in the societal discuss. It also deals with the analysis of the makeup of characteristics of masculinity which includes mostly the biological bodily formations, resulting into the ability of men to look smarter in the undertaking of some tasks that of their female counterpart, hence making the society to arrive hastily at conclusions by ascribing some occupations like hunting, fishing, soldiering and others to be the best for the masculine gender, and activities like cooking, baby sitting, and domesticated jobs as the role of the feminine gender. Consequently, this restriction of gender roles has unconsciously formed a hedge of extreme superiority on one gender at the expense of the other counterpart. The paper strictly employs the use of secondary sources of data to drive home its positions as to whether the present level of gaps in gender is enough to ascribe special distinct roles to an aspect of gender; and treat a particular gender as like extremely superior to the other; and so on. In the findings, it was discovered that discrimination of the female gender existed in various notable works of life and in the psyche of people in the Sub Saharan Africa most especially in Nigeria, hence causing a hindrance in the rate of reduction in the gap created already among the gender. The paper recommends among others that, the gaps created by the society – aiding the disparity in gender, through various ways like cultural beliefs, psyche, and others should be reasonably closed up, while the feminine and the masculine gender should be made to cooperate to generate strengths in their diversities if any is eventually identified.

Keywords: *Strengths, Uniqueness, Gender, Productivity*

Corresponding Author: Ogundiminyi Michael T.

Background to the Study

The issue bothering on gender has been in the forefront among discussants that regard and cherish a better and harmonious interrelationship within individuals and groups in the social structure. There is no gain say the fact that, until recently, the society has been going through a global social revolution that is obviously characterised by the rise of professional dominance. We must recall the historic feudal and industrial ages during which women were denied access to rank among the elites that control the engine that propel the societal economy as most of the land and capital were owned by men, and backed by law and most times the custom to remain like that (Jenny, 2004). At the moment, through civilisation, access to the educational advancements have made many women to not only be a literate, but also to ensure that females have the ease to increasingly acquire necessary educational qualifications that make them to have a standing in the community.

In spite of the foregoing analysis, that presupposes a better, enviable and robust output in relation to the achievable gains among men and women, the reverse is the case in most cases, as there exist restrictions that limits the aspects and concerns of a aspect of the gender, and also the one that limit the ways male and female interrelate, in view of their differences in access to, and the use of resources, and how they react to changes, interventions and policies (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2014).

The control and social roles played by gender most times as a matter of emphasis is not ability based as it is generally believed on sex alone, which is shaped by the culture, social relations, and natural environment in which one is found. Hence, depending on the values, customs and laws of the land, men and women worldwide have revolutionised roles differently. The roles performed in relation to gender, vary and it cuts across responsibilities in labour and responsibilities in occupational processes involved in the decision making, and in the management of resources. It is note worthy the fact that, women and men possess knowledge about different things; they do not have same knowledge about the same thing; the both organise knowledge in different ways; and most times, they transmit their knowledge through different means (Husinga, Yoder, and Martin, 2001).

The biological diversity in men and women is also seen as their belief system and, cultural and spiritual values. Women are seen to belong to the vulnerable group. However, it is high time we approach the issue of gender as not as lore, or seen to be natural or embedded thoroughly in our institutions. It is not proper also to view it as true, by accepting a common place adage as scientific and already proven fact, but to step back and view gender from a new perspective for the facilitation of rapid and enduring social and economic development of the individual and the society at large.

Objectives of the Study

It is based upon this motive, that this paper will be preoccupied with making its objectives to comprise:

1. The identification of the characteristics of masculinity;
2. The characteristics of feminism;

3. Biological formations of both male and female that makes each to fall into specific culturally acceptable occupations and roles;
4. And the need to maximise the strengths in both gender for maximum productivity in Nigeria.

Consequently, this paper is ordered by starting with the introduction, the major objectives of the paper, the clarification of concepts like gender, productivity, strengths and others. This paper will also attempt a theoretical framework for the explanation of the subject matter, the overview of gender discrimination in Nigeria, identification of the factors that amount to gender inequality in Nigeria, conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Literature

For clarity and precision, it is necessary to define some common terms as used in the paper specially to reflect strictly what the study meant concerning them. It is with this, that the researcher will introduce some words like: gender, sex, strengths, and uniqueness.

Gender

This refers to the roles played by men and women especially as specified and created by the society through the culture and its integration in the family for the purpose of assimilation and learning. The concept of gender perceive roles played by male and female as normal and this shaped the characteristic feature, the aptitude and the attitude of both male and female. The concept of gender is vital because, applied to social analysis; it reveals how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined nor is it fixed forever (UNESCO Gender Mainstream Implementation Framework, 2003).

Sex

This describes the differences between male and female. These differences are determined at birth and are universally acceptable. Sex is a term used to distinguish if someone is a male or a female. Biologically, it spells if spells out if someone is supposed to have either a penis or a vagina (Sex and Sexuality: Understanding the Difference (n.d). To further enhance our clarification of the notion of sex, it is the biological aspect of being a male and a female. Sex is a trait in demography that simply classifies human beings as male or female. Broadly speaking, sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between male and female sex. Hence, the term sex is used to make a difference physically between the biological male and the biological female.

Strengths

This refers to the ability to possess a improved and outstanding muscular development. It is used to decide the advantages and overwhelming ability to surpass a fellow through a maximal force expressed in the mode of interaction and in behaviour, which if put into good use, will command some positive and unique benefits now and in the future. It can be succinctly said here that, the strengths in an aspect of gender is its ability to resist the influence of the eternal social forces acting to limit and militate against its achievements and relevance in the society

(Svetlana, Angel, and Dimitrina, (n.d.). It is of value to note here as reflected by Strasburg, (1998) that, gender is not just only a socially constructed explanation of men and women, the construction contains an unequal power relationship with male domination and female subordination so as to strike a balance of this unequal power relationship between women and men to favour efficiently their values and priorities maximally.

Uniqueness

This can be explained as the peculiar differences in the human variations as per male and female. The variations inform some uniqueness that makes a difference in the mode of reasoning, fluency, creative ability, flexibility, unusualness just to mention but a few. This uniqueness in the explanation of Sing, and Ping, 2015, allows some functions to be better performed by say a male, while it can be difficult to perform by say the female with time.

Theoretical Framework

The liberal feminist theory as exposed by Betty Friedan, (1963) which is an off shoot of the post colonial feminism, will be adopted to fully explain and clarify issues in view of the need to integrate the female fully as parts of the wheels that drive the societal economic wheel, and for the need to fully maximise the potentials of the gender for maximum productivity either for themselves or for the society at large. The theory, gained its weakness from the fact that, it is a response to experiences of women in western cultures, and that the theory might not be able to adequately represent issues bothering women in the third world countries - until recently, that the third world feminist is being integrated into the mainstream western feminism. Friedan's central thesis was that women suffered under a pervasive system of delusions and false values under which they were urged to find personal fulfilment, even identity, vicariously through the husbands and children to whom they were expected cheerfully to devote their lives – the role of wife and mother (Feminist and Gender Theories (n.d).

The theory also gains its relevance and uniqueness in this paper for its emphasis on the need for how the political, economic and social rights can be fully extended to women within this contemporary and modern society. It is the belief in this paper that if such rights are given, feminists can be able to aspire to the top, and contribute fully and maximally in the society to support her male counterpart and the society in general.

Overview of Gender Discrimination in Nigeria

A cursory look at the discrimination posed by gender in Nigeria can be examined through the policy that was put in place to address the issue of gender in the Nigerian state. There was the emergence of gender policy as a result of the world wide discrimination in gender. There was the widening gap between the access to political and economic sphere of the economy which necessitated the need to promote the equality in gender as a catalyst for development. It is a fact that the progress of a nation is been determined by the people which is a factor of both masculine and feminine gender that toil all day to escape from poverty and to better their living standard. Consequently, the issue of gender equality is not an end in itself, but as a sine qua none to the achievement of a development that is not only necessary but sustainable in

itself. Hence the need for the equal empowerment to both male and female remains a priority among discussants in the society. Although, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was globally expressed in the year 1948, which represent the guiding principle of the secular state and human right culture in which most countries find it good to embrace by agreeing to same common standard of human rights and also makes it a taboo to discriminate on the ground of sex, religion, and race.

In spite of the above, which demonstrates the world standard regarding human rights and discrimination issues at all levels, in the description of Sani, and Baba, there is still a high level of imbalance in some vital areas of the economy in such as politics, education, security and commerce. In most cases, some areas of life are exclusively meant for the male folk. Women do not have the freedom of choice in some areas like their male counterparts, hence they are forced to behave in some differently specialised and specific ways.

Men are culturally and socially allowed to belong to some specific groups which make them to have access to some common goods. This led into only a handful of women making outstanding impression in public life hence making them practically unable to reach their zenith of power and or decision making. In Nigeria specifically, it took a long time to have a stop in the female genital mutilation, granting credit to through the micro credit scheme to females, integration of the female folk into the National Policy on HIV /AIDS, and the implementation of some other policies aimed at bringing social justice to the female folk. The result of which have created a systematic limit and distinct definition to the expectant traditional roles to be performed by males and females.

Understanding Gender Inequality through the Traditional Roles of Males and Females in Nigeria and Some Factors that Account for Gender Inequality

The understanding of what constitute disparity in gender roles is best understood through gender inequality. Gender roles are orchestrated by gender inequality. It is necessary to say here that; the roles are behavioural activities that are related to sexes in any social or interpersonal relationship in a particular culture. Normative behaviours are strengthened in defining masculine and feminine identities. Similarly, any social settings are best understood if the culture of the people is put into consideration - that invariably equips us to know the reasons why some things happen and the extent of its occurrence. Traditionally, men wield a lot of power over many aspects of woman's activities. In the public domain, men are mostly prominent when it comes to functioning as head of states, head of government, ministers, religious leaders, judges and so on (Lidia, 2013). In the primitive settings, hunting, tapping, warfare, security related activities are exclusively meant for the males. In the private life, he acts as the head of the family, a father and the bread winner of the family, thus giving him the ability and propensity to directly impact on the economic success of the woman. Women on the other hand are summarily left behind to operate and function in the background by engaging in herculean task of child rearing, baby sitting, washing, cleaning, sweeping and cooking for the family of which commands no financial remuneration. In most cases, they engage in activities only when the man wants them to. It is no gain stressing the fact that in Nigeria, the female is discriminated, even in the families. Consistently, men were trained not to partake in most

domestic chores such as cooking, sweeping, fetching water and firewood, which are exclusively left for women. In favour of this Ihimodu, (1995) agree that women were relegated to the domestic sphere that were not renovated or valued.

Females are lagging behind in the area of education in Nigeria for instance, some reasons which are related to the attitudes that each culture connects with each sex especially in Nigeria. Take for instance, people attach value to whether a new born is a boy or a girl- that simply shows the preference for boy at this instance. Also the seemingly belittled and unnoticeable roles females play in the society and even in jobs that are seen to be dominated by men. Women are only seen and not heard, hence seriously affecting them in their attainment and furtherance in education, as this was corroborated in the works of Clement, (1963), in which he stressed that “in a review of the history of education revealed that even among the ancient cities of Athens and Sparta, girls were excluded from the education given to the boys”. Anifowose, (2004) equivocally affirmed that most family prefer to send their male child to school, irrespective of the fact that female children are more important to attend school.

In the view of the emphasis made earlier in this paper establishing gender as to have created a clear cut distinction in the differences in male and female especially in the sub Saharan Africa, and Nigeria inclusive, which has constructed distinct roles and behaviour expected of males and females. The roles have socially submerged the females to favour the males. The culture of a people, which summarily approves of the standardised way of social life of a people account grossly for social inequality in gender especially in Nigeria. This foundationally established psyche has generated a slow but progressive level of inequality among gender, hence silently generally retrogressive to the society as a whole, while simultaneously hindering the achievement of sustainable development and a tranquil prosperous world.

More importantly in some African societies of which Nigeria is prominent, as described in Azuh, Lanre, Akunna, Oresanya, and Matthew, women were disallowed to engage in any economic activities that will allow her to own properties like land and assets. The attendance of school is also hindered and married women were considered as private properties of their respective husbands.

The havoc wrecked through colonialism was also much. Despite notable achievements by women like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a Nigerian citizen but British schooled woman in over forty years ago, championed the first taste of feminism in which she was described as the Lioness of Lisabi – was not just a politically sagacious but also a outspoken woman's right activist and a traditional ruler (Hannah, 2018). Also in the paper of yet Hannah, it was reiterated the existence of huge and consistent disparity in the educational attainment of men and women in some specialised field of work. Her paper spelt out by representing in percentages the portion of women in the following field of works:

- Media Practitioners – 18.3%
- Architects – 2.4%
- Lawyers/Jurists – 25.4%
- Lecturers – 11.8%

Obstetricians and Gynecologists – 8.4%
Pediatricians – 33.3%, just to mention but some.

Similarly, compiling the statistics of women as lecturers from the website of some prominent universities at the end of 1998 and 1999 academic session, the following discoveries were generated which served as testimonies to the issue of gender disparity:

University of Benin	21%
Ladoke Akintola University	12.4%
University of Lagos	19.5%

Other factors such as diverse cultures, political factors and most especially religious beliefs pose a potent source of encouragement to gender inequality in Nigeria as although religion has been a great contributor to a good and peaceful living on the planet earth but some religion or religious practices restrict women to just domestic roles, making it impossible for them to perform beyond the background.

All these and many others are a major factor that has deprived the feminine gender to have a suitable chance to compete favourably with their male counterpart in the educational sector, in politics and so on.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In view of the deprivation of women in some key areas in the Nigerian social structure, there is the need to urgently create a stable environment that will ensure a level playing ground for both feminine and masculine gender to efficiently operate.

It is of great relevance to note that, the people or society cannot operate in isolation of their culture. However, the people should embrace the modification of some seemingly retrogressive cultural elements that portends danger to the development of the individual and groups. The desire for one aspect of the gender to the detriment of the other one should be discouraged – a situation whereby men exercise so much (political) power on women as a reflection of patriarchy even at its own detriment and that of its family should be abolished. There should be the proper orientation of the local communities by the government. We all know that the African and more importantly, the Nigerian communities have high regard for their leaders especially the traditional and their religious leaders, the government can clinch on this unique advantage to facilitate the orientation, enlightenment, and education of their subjects on the need for equal opportunities for their children as they are nurtured towards adulthood.

Raising the status of women through gender equality and empowerment has become vital in the quest towards improvement in living standards and well being of the masses and by extension, transforming the economies to a more stable one (Dominic, Matthew, and Akuna, (2014). The factor related to economy is of prominence here, inadequate economic incentives prevent women in participating in active and meaningfully active politics in Nigeria. Political activities are now left mostly to their male counterparts and some affluent individuals in the

society, hence taking politics away from those that may have genuine and excellent ideas that may have transformed the Nigerian states into the next level of development and all round liberation.

The freedom for the choice of occupation for the aspects of the gender is also of a necessary factor here, some types of activities should not be unnecessary restricted to a male while some are exclusively restricted to the female. It has come with experience in life that some males may be exceptionally efficient in doing laundry, cooking and other work that seems to be naturally kept for females while some ladies can surpass their male counterpart in shooting, warfare, and even in combat.

There must be a continuous change that involves the reorganisation, and the reorientation of the populace in general, including the economy and the entire system. There must be radical changes in our institutions and potential behaviours towards our beliefs and customs.

The time has come to bridge the societal induced gaps between the aspects of the gender, so that the individual, the groups, the society and the Nigerian nation can benefit maximally from its citizens, for the uplift and for national prosperity.

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