

Violence and Culture on Women Role Performance in Economic and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT---- *Nigeria just like any other African Countries is besieged with harmful cultural practices which tend to regulate womanhood in the Socio-economic as well as political development of the nation. To this extent, this paper will examine the issues of violence against women and the destabilizing effect of cultural practices among women which tends to limit their role in the sustainable development of the nation. This paper will also proffer solutions to the identifiable social and cultural practices which tend to limit the role performance of women in the country.*

Keywords---- Role performance, violence, culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture as it is generally believed, is the people's way of life. It is a complex whole, which includes shared ideas, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Culture is something that cannot be seen, held, smelled, torched or tasted and yet it has been in continuous existence for years. However there are people who believe that culture encompasses the tangible and intangible as it also incorporates the subtotal of the material and non material tools, art work and work of art of the people and knowledge accumulated by the people. The peculiarity of a given culture is a function of its distinctiveness as it relates to its impact on the attitudes, aspirations, motivations, representations, skills and behaviors of the people celebrating some and discarding others. Culture entails all that people have learned and preserved from past collective experience. Quite remarkably, individuals in all culture conscious societies spend years learning necessary minimum cultural heritage. Therefore in Nigerian society, the culture of woman, being at the background and playing second fiddle in homes are heritage. In Nigeria women are seen not as equal to their men folk. The culture of majority of the ethnic group in Nigeria demands that women are married to compliment their husbands not on equal footing but to bear children and take care of the home fronts and offer useful advice where necessary and solicited for by their male counterparts.

This particular belief, has led to many violence at home especially between husbands and wives. With the exposure of western education, coupled with the gender sensitiveness, women have come of age to reclaim their mandate in the business of husband and wife relationships. With the era of agro-cultural period over and the equipment of women in terms of education and other cultural and social transformation, women are set to challenge the dominant role possession of their male counterparts hence the occurrence of violence in some home

Violence is the expression of physical or verbal force against one or more people, compelling action against ones will on pain of being hurt. Therefore in this paper, the issue of violence against women in Nigeria will be examined along with the destabilizing effects of some cultural practices especially to women. The paper will also proffer solutions to the identifiable harmful social and cultural practices which tend to inhibit the role performance of women in the social and economic development of the country.

Violence

Violence behavior is defined as intentional physically aggressive behavior against another person. Scientists do not agree on whether violence is inherent in humans. Among prehistoric humans, there is archaeological evidence for both contentious of violence and peacefulness as primary characteristics. Violence is used as a tool of manipulation and also is an area of concern for law and culture which take attempts to suppress and stop it. The word violence covers a broad spectrum. It can vary from between a physical altercation between two beings to war and genocide where million may die as a result. Gilligan (1996) said that violence is often pursued as an antidote to shame or humiliation. The use of violence often is a source of pride and a defense of honor, especially among males who often believe violence defines manhood. Stephen (1989) stated that criminological studies have traditionally showed that women are largely invisible in

both theoretical considerations and empirical studies. since the 1970s, important feminist works have noted the way in which criminal transgressions by women occur in different contexts from those by men and how women experiences with the criminal justice system are influenced by gendered assumptions about appropriate male and female roles. Feminists have also highlighted the prevalence of violence against women, both at home and in public he further stated that of all crimes reported in 2006, 76.2 percent of arrestees were men and also there was a huge imbalance in the ration of men to women in prison. In 2004, women only made up 7.1 percent of the prison population. Men are over whiningly the aggressors in certain categories of crime such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape women are mostly the victims in these categories. It is estimated that 25% of women are victims of violence at some point in their lifetimes. Aldarondo (2000) was of the view that marital violence is a major risk factor for serious injury and even death and women in violent marriages are at much greater risk of being seriously injured or killed. The authors further stated that there is current considerable controversy over whether male to female marital violence is best regarded as a reflection of male psychopathology and control or whether there is an empirical base and clinical utility for conceptualizing these patters as relational and this is more in African continent,. However, they concluded that the risk of violence remains strong in a marriage in which it has been a feature in the past. Thus, the urgent clinical priority is the protection of the wife because she is the one most frequently at risk.

The centre's for disease control and prevention (CDC2000) defines violence as "injury inflicted by deliberate means" which includes assault, as well as legal intervention and self-harm. The Health Organization (WHO 2000), in its first world report on violence and health defined violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm mal development or deprivation especially amongst women in their matrimonial homes

2. THE DESTABILIZING CULTURAL PRACTICES WHICH TEND TO LIMIT THE ROLE PERFORMANCE OF WOMAN IN NIGERIA SOCIETY

Nigeria as a nation is defined with varied cultures arising from the phralistic nature of the people. To this extend, there are a lot of cultural practices which permeate from one geographical location to another. For instance, the issue of polygamous marriage is well known to the Nigerians and perhaps inherited from their fore fathers. It is belief, where one man is entitled to marry as many wives as possible whether he has the means or not. In the past, parent valued their male children more than the female one. The reason being that when female children grow up, they would be given out in marriage with out contributing substantially to the economic development of the family. For this reason, women are ignored and more attention given to the boys even though the female children as more intelligent and economically viable. This perhaps led to the marrying of many wives by Nigerians in line with their customs Meziobi (1995) stated that prior to 1960, in Nigeria early marriage was the trend. parents married ladies for their sons even where the sons were unemployed. Courtship and formal engagement were uncommon as the young men may not have known the brides until; marriages are contracted at times without their consents. In Nigeria, people in the past, believed that the primary function of women was to bear children alone. But we have seen from the exposure given to women, coupled with their intelligence and administrative acumen in public offices, they can do better than their male counterparts.

Culturally, women are to be seen in Nigeria and not to be heard in matters affecting them and the members of the public in Nigeria. This has tended to reduce the role performance of women in the public. In the northern parts of Nigeria, women are subjected to the pudah system as a result of the influence of Islamic religion in the areas. The political and social role-performance of these categories of women in the northern Nigeria, are being inhibited. Social taboos such as the OSU system or caste system in some Nigerian societies are issues of role-performance among the women folk. Some women, especially in the past, were regarded as "untouchables and as such, they cannot mix up with the rest people of Nigeria no matter how intelligent or enterprising they may be. Socially, this has created social alienation and frustration among these people and their best as citizens of Nigeria cannot come out. Whereas in advanced cultures and countries, such inhibition does not arise and everybody is regarded as equal, this has always brought out the best of contributions from these citizens especially among the women.

The culture of husband battering the wife" appears to be a cultural practice especially among the old people in Nigeria. In the past The customs of the people demand that husbands should use cane to beat up their wives whenever there is a case of misbehavior from wives who were regarded as the men's "bought commodities". This culture promotes a lot of violence especially in the marital homes. The resultant effect of this practice, is that women now become afraid of their husbands and they are frightened to exhibit their God-given talents in political and other social engagements in the nation

Religious and political ideologies have been the cause of interpersonal violence throughout history. Ideologies often falsely accuse others of violence such as the accusations of casting witchcraft spells against women in Nigerian society and other satanic ritual abuses. All these things tend to limit the role-performance of women in the society. They are some people who believe that capitalism in Nigeria is the root cause of violence and possible limitation of role-performance among the women folk. These people believe that private property, trade, interest and profit survive only because police violence defends them and that capitalist economics need war to expand. They may use the term ‘structural violence’ to describe the systematic ways in which a given social structure or institution kills people slowly by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Couples who are not able to meet their material basic needs now resort to violence at homes. In some cultures in Nigeria, women are not allowed to do government jobs or allowed to work in banks and any other offices. These cultures limit the role-performance of women in the society there by preventing them from contributing their quota to the national development.

Women are prevented from playing active politics in some areas in Nigeria. Any woman in politics in Nigeria before now was regarded as an outlaw especially rural dwellers. This again is a militating factor to the role-performance of women in Nigerian society (FGN/UNICEF, 2001) supporting this assertion stated that women in Nigeria, face an array of barriers to their full participation in various aspects of social and political life, due to entrenched cultural attitudes, which put girls at a disadvantage in education and discourage or hinder women participation in various types of employment, as well as public life.

In family decision making for instance, Nigeria being a patriarchal society, entrust the man with the responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the family and especially his wife. Thus, just as girls can get married off without their consent in different parts of the country, women are often not expected to have a say in the number of children they should have nor take part in decisions such as are required on family inheritance. Women are rather informed when the decisions have been made and they are expected to abide by these. Their sons can however be part of the process where the woman has a son. This is particularly troublesome from women when they lose their husbands as informed by the widowhood practices in parts of the south east where extremely severe sanctions await women who violent widowhood rights (FGN/UNICEF 2001).

At the community level, women can only participate in decision through recognized women’s groups. Beyond these groups, women cannot express their opinion on community issues and these are not sought any way. Boys of whatever age can however participate at these meetings in order to learn how they are conducted husbands and sons can communicate the decisions made at these meetings to their wives and mother. It is at these meetings that decisions concerning the stance of the community on any issues are taken. Sometimes the decisions can be on punitive measures against an erring women, Of course in the same vein, decisions on conflict resolution with neighboring communities are not ones that woman can participate in through the women’s groups, they can express their feelings and aspiration and can express their reservations on any law they perceive as not favorable to woman. However despite the fact that far back in history, some women managed to break the barrier to become outstanding as warriors, traders and politicians, today, it is rare to hear of women holding such exalted position. Even the few women who manage to dabble into politics are stigmatized and perceived as loose and bad women

3. SOLUTION TO THE IDENTIFIABLE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES WHICH TEND TO LIMIT THE ROLE PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY

As we can observe above, analysis of the various factors militating against the effective and now it is also good to suggest some possible solutions to these problems and they are as follows;

First, women should be thoroughly educated just like their male counterparts, when a woman is educated, the whole nation is equally educated. We have seen the magnificent contributions of women like Prof. Dora Akwuyih, Dr Ngozi, Okongo Iweka etc in the education and other public ventures. All women should be properly educated in order to take their rightful position in the overall development of the nation. Culture or no culture all children in the home should be given equal opportunity in the field of education.

Secondly, women should be seen as equal partners in progress in the management of their matrimonial homes. The culture which upholds that women should be seen as second fiddle in the homes should be discarded or reputed by the people. This is to enable them contribute their best in the running and maintenance of the homes.

Thirdly women should be allowed to do government jobs like their male fold. The culture which has it, that the role of women in the house ends in the kitchen, should be jettisoned. This becomes imperative in view of the present economic hardship plaguing the country. A man alone cannot finance the running of the home adequately and therefore needs the

wife to be of help to him. In this way too, women can have active role-performance in the economic and social lives of the people in the country.

Fourthly, government at all levels should legislate against women battering by their men counterparts. This is very important in order to alienate the fears of women especially in their various matrimonial homes. The culture of love is there amongst the people and it can be used as a weapon to discourage women battering. Fernando (2000) in supporting this assertion, stated that, in all cultures there are values, practices and traditions that facilitate male dominance and oppression of women as well as values that are protective and support men's recognition of women's self determination effective practice for batterer intervention programmes involves understanding and using these culture elements to help man change Neff (1995) stated that law enforcement is the main means of regulating non-military violence in society. Government should regulate the use of violence through legal systems governing individuals and political authorities, including the police and military.

Fifthly, women in matrimonial homes in Nigeria should have access to property, land and credit. experience has shown that poverty has becomes feminized with women constituting majority of the poor masses. In most cultures, women cannot own land and yet they are heavily involved in agriculture. After all, FGN/UNICEF citing Uzodike (1993) stated that the triple marriage laws in Nigeria (customary, Islamic and statutory) have resulted in plurality of legal provision precedents regarding property rights and inheritance. Under statutory marriage the married women property rights give women the right to acquire, hold or dispose of property, whether acquired before or after marriage. Upon divorce, her rights may be enforced through court processes. Similarly under the matrimonial cases act in some states, the courts can rule that women have a share of family property in the event of divorce on equity grounds. Usually, however, the man is presumed to be the owner of family property unless the women bring documentary proof of her contribution. Very often, women are unable to enforce property rights in a court of law due to ignorance of their rights, lack of financial resources and the fear of antagonizing their in-laws.

Sixthly, women should be allowed to play politics and hold political positions in the country. Women are not emotionally weak as people are made to believe. Some women are batter managers of their homes, businesses and their political position. The culture that prevents them from venturing into politics should be therefore jettisoned in the society in order to have effective role-performance in the society lastly religious violence and harmful believe system in the country should avoided. This entire religious riot in the northern parts of the country when women and children are killed should be discouraged and perpetrators of these religious riots charged to court in addition, there are some religious sects who believe that women are not supposed to be seen in the public. This again prevents women from contributing their best to the nation development. When all these factors enumerated above, are put in place, violence amongst women will reduce in Nigeria and women will be able to play their roles effectively well in the society.

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