

EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

Ode A. N. A (Mrs)

Abstract

In spite of the fact that the success of economic rehabilitation and self-reliance depends to a large extent on the active participation of women, they are being marginalized. Manifestation of violence against women includes women trafficking, marginalization in education, religion, deprivation of husband's properties in case of death etc. Women are generally regarded as being inferior to men, in traditional African society like Nigeria. The purpose of education was clear; functionalism was the main guiding principles. This belief has produced values and taboos that have affected the opportunity offered women to contribute to economic rehabilitation and self-reliance. The paper reveals that institutionalized beliefs, ideas, practices and status of women tend to impede their ambition, aspiration and participation in economic rehabilitation and self-reliance. The paper also examines the socio-cultural values that are the early socialization which gave rise to inhibiting factors on Nigerian women such as inferior social status, superstitions etc. Efforts of women in the past were also highlighted. The paper was also concluded with some recommendations.

Introduction

Violence is defined according to Hornby (2000) as behaviour that is intended to hurt, to kill or crime committed which could act as a threat. For instance, genital mutilation, human trafficking, etc, are among the violent acts. It has been incontrovertibly established by Usuman (1997) that women constitute more than half of the world's population and play a role in crucial societal development. Women hardly constitute more than 15% to 20% even in ministerial appointment at federal and state levels (Azikiwe, 1992). The Nigerian women traditionally, are associated with qualities which include weakness and strength, good and bad, purity and danger, beauty and politics, economic power and in some cases ritual roles in communities (Ohadoma, 2001).

Manifestation of Violence Against Women

Negative Attitude to Women: Early childhood socialization could be traced to the causes of negative attitude to Nigerian women participation in the economic rehabilitation and reliance. This is so because every society has the means, by which it socializes the young and inculcates basic values. It is obvious that our national opinions and ideas are moulded by our culture. The overall beliefs and attitude that characterize our society; what we learn in the family at an early stage in our lives are the basic attitudes that direct or shape the future opinions and our attitude towards our neighbours, other classes of people man or woman (Azikiwe, 1992).

Socio -cultural Values: These are those standard and moral behaviours which individuals and groups are identified with and which are generally accepted by society. These values are learned and passed from one generation to another. They are difficult to do away with when they are learned and internalized. Our early socialization therefore gave rise to the inhibiting factors on Nigerian women, such as inferior social status, superstition, early marriage and low aspiration. In most cases however, modification of such values comes as a result of resistance, acculturations or protest. It becomes difficult to sweep some internalized values under the carpet; this is because people are slow to accepting cultural changes or modifications. In a situation where the learned negative values and inhibiting factors progress people are forced to voice their opinions and in many cases suggest ways and means of modification.

Cross-Cultural Perception of Women: The status and role of women in every sphere of their life, has affected their progress in participation in economic rehabilitation and reliance. The early Romans perceived women as chattels i.e. things that could be bought and sold (property) (Azikiwe 1992). In the words of Napoleon Baneparte, nature intended women to be slaves of men. They belong to them just as trees that bear fruits belong to a gardener he stressed. According to Nosike (1990), women are nothing but machines to produce children,

Women have few rights than men in the African traditional society. Female children were regarded as second-class citizens by their male counterparts (Baserap, 1970). A Woman's capability to bear and rear many children has long been the core of her identity the principal source of esteem for her within her family and community (Osuman, 1997). Girls are supposed to remain at home in some remote parts of Nigeria in the custody of their mother taking care of them, preparing food, washing utensils and generally taking care of the dwelling place. It is generally believed that the kitchen is traditionally regarded as a woman's rightful place. Her major role is to keep the home, bear and raise children, attend to the needs of her husband and the society. A woman is looked upon as a failure where she fails to bear children. Women are expected to bear children to satisfy the sex preference of their husbands and their families. In Nigerian society today the effect of the cultural values and other socio logical factors on women are indeed great. All these expectations affect women's ambitions and behaviour in their participation in economic rehabilitation and reliance.

Type;; of Violence against Women

African women (especially Nigerian) remain victims of harmful rites that are associated with death of their spouses. It is not uncommon that when a husband dies, and some members of his extended family organize themselves into bandits and raid his matrimonial home. They virtually " sweep out" all his possessions and take over. Mostly relatives who could not practice this insensitive act, while the deceased was alive. According to Osuman (1997), deaths, even in circumstances in which the causes are natural and explicable are never perceived as such in African communities. Deaths are attributed to mysterious factors. Widows are targets of accusations about bewitchment and invariably take the blame

According to Ibiam (2001) the ordeal of the widow begins with accusation and victimization by her biased spouse's next- of kin. She may be forced to swear before a family shrine or drink water that has been used to wash the husband's corpse, to prove her innocence, prolonged'mourning for weeks, months and sometimes years during which they put on black and in some situations are not allowed to change their black cloths often, and prevention of widows from taking care of their personal hygiene (Azikiwe, 1992). Widows have had all that their husband's left behind taken away from them by their husband relatives. Women are then left with nothing to take care of their children (Ejiofor,2001).

It is important to know that there are places women are still being treated like second-class citizens, relegated to the background and exploited. In Nigeria today women are still being marginalized. Kalu (2001) stated that women because they do not tell their stories enough, tend to be invisible in our society. When people are invisible, they are very difficult to empower and people who are not empowered tend always to be poorly represented. Ejiofor (2001), indicated that womanhood is a symbol of completeness of man and the almighty creator. God realized the incompleteness of man, when he decided to create the first woman to assist the man; God did not wish that women should be enslaved and maltreated as is the case today.

Majority of people suffering from HIV/AIDS pandemic all over the world are women (Ejiofor 2001). He went further to stress that when a woman is raped by a man apart from the physical and psychological injuries suffered, the woman is at high risk of contracting the AIDS virus. Again many women contract HIV / AIDS from their husbands who keep other sexual partners (Ejiofor, 2001). He acclaimed that the situation is worse in Africa and Asia where women have been denied the right to choose when, how and where to have sex. There is a wrong belief in some communities in East Africa, that a man suffering from HIV/ AIDS can get cured by sleeping with a virgin, such a wicked belief that exposes women to deadly infection must be fought against by women's associations and other non-governmental organizations.

The achievement of the Better Life Programme added impetus to the establishment of the National Commission for Women by Decree 30 of 1989, which was later, replaced by Decree No. 42 of 1992. The establishment of the commission brought about vocational centres in almost every Local Government Area of the state. Despite the establishment, it is observed that so many women both in the rural and urban areas have not acquired the skills and knowledge needed to make them self-reliant. The competencies needed to make them gainfully employed either in the public or private sector has not been acquired. Some women are restricted at home and are not allowed to do any job or vocation of their own, the effect of this is that they live at the mercy of their husbands for means of survival. Other women due to marital commitments cannot go into their choice of occupation, or due to transfer of their spouse, have to resign their jobs to accompany their spouses to their new location. (Ejiofor, 2001)

Effort of Women in Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance

In the past, several women have played distinct roles aimed at attaining economic rehabilitation and reliance of the African society. Among them were Queen Arnina in Northern Nigeria Ransome- Kuti in Western Nigeria and Margaret Ekpo in the East who was the former President of Aba Women Association. Today, Ekpo is being remembered as a strong force behind nationalist struggle. She with others championed the fight for Nigeria's independence. The late Mrs. Furnilayo Ransome -Kuti successfully organized the Abeokuta Women Union that fought against taxation of women in Western Nigeria. This culminated into the April 28, 1948, street demonstration, which led to the immediate stoppage of taxation of women in Nigeria. Beside these names mentioned, many other women have silently or loudly led struggle for economic rehabilitation and reliance. Mrs. F.Y Emmanuel, former permanent secretary, Federal Ministry of Health, gave a strong support in 1988. At the Federal level, women's struggle is paying out as pockets of them are now being appointed minister. Mrs. Egun Oyegbola was former Minister of National Planning, Mrs. Elizabeth Ivase was former Minister of State for Education. In the present regime, the lady, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the Minister of Finance. She is among other female ministers. The regime also parades a host of women senators. Sarah Jibnl had proudly aspired for nation's number one seat.

In all the political zones that make up Nigeria, historic women had participated, one way or the other, in the activities of traditional government. In Hausa land, woman founded cities, led migrations, commanded armies, conquered kingdoms, extended their political and commercial influences and receive tributes from powerful chiefs (Ohadorna, 2001). One of the women, she noted was responsible for the introduction of kola-nut to the Northern region. Even though, women are marginalized, their contribution to national economic rehabilitation and reliance cannot be undermined. In Igbo land, for instance, roles played by the *Umuada* in the burial ceremonies of their kinsmen portrays them as mothers. It is important to know that this paper will reveal that institutionalized ideals, belief, practices and status of women tend to impede their ambition, aspiration and participation in economic rehabilitation and reliance.

Limitation of Women

The major constraints that hinder women's effective participation in economic rehabilitation and reliance are: marginalization in education, relegation to domestic function, deprivation of husband's property in case of death and genital mutilation. These factors have greatly impeded women's participation in societal development.

Nigerian women have been estimated to be more than 70 percent of those who can neither read nor write (Ayesha, 1985). He further explained that many men considered the education of women as a waste of resources since they, most times, end up as a house wives. Women themselves do not help matters. They have the fear that when they read up to university level, they can hardly get a good husband. (Carley,1962). Odu (1983) discovered that many men prefer to marry illiterate or semi-educated women because they cost less and obey their husbands. It was noted by Fapohunda (1974) that among the Moslems young women are given away in marriage very early in life. He regretted that when they are married, they are usually placed in "purdah" that is, a complete restriction to the inner apartment of their husband's compound. Their movement, therefore, becomes highly restrictive.

Ejiofor (2001), acclaimed that in Northern Nigeria of old and parts of the Middle Belt, the education of girls was not considered important. The situation is still a far cry despite recent government efforts. Many parents, especially in rural areas, do not send their daughters to school. Many girls do not advance beyond primary six and were given out in marriage at a very early age. According to Osuman (1997), marriage at a premature age exposes a girl to dangers associated with teenage pregnancy and child birth, and some suffer from the urinary tract defect, visco vaginal fistula (VVF) after the birth of the child. The agony VVG victims suffer is better imagined than when it is experienced.

Our experience today is a situation where women have been subjected to various forms of in human treatment and deprivation. The basic rights of women have been trampled on both in peace time and war time. Women according to Madunagu (2000) have become victims of genital mutilation, domestic violence, rape, mental and physical tortures and sexual abuse all over the world; Women carry the burden of pregnancy and child birth and even die due to neglect; they toil for hours on the farm without rest in order to provide food for their families and yet they get neither recognition nor respect. Ejiofor (2000), acclaimed that thousand of women and young girls of fifteen and above are taken to Western Europe and North America to work as prostitutes and sex slaves. The explosion of this illicit trade especially in Nigeria has prompted the

establishment of various non- governmental organizations to fight the scourge and protect innocent women and children.

According to Omololu, (1969), most parents are now becoming aware that to educate a woman is to educate a nation. In the same vein Jibowu (1969), supports the value of providing sound education to women by asserting that to educate a man is to educate an individual, but to educate a woman is to educate a nation. The above assertion is properly based on the assumption that educated women often contribute economically, socially and academically towards the education of their children. Well meaning individuals, non-governmental organization should rise to the challenge of defending the rights of women. For success in economic rehabilitation and reliance, they should also see problems of women as national problems and not as women's problems.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that women are essentially resources for economic rehabilitation and reliance, but they are often neglected and marginalized in developing countries including Nigeria, hence the slow pace of their development. It is important to note that ideas, beliefs and practices against women, tend to impede their aspirations to participate in economic rehabilitation and reliance. They are denied the right to education and to express themselves. Women are marginalized, dehumanized, thus the manifestation of violence against women, effect of violence against women, and their effort so far in economic rehabilitation and reliance and its limitations was also highlighted.

Recommendations

Suggestions on the improvement of Nigerian women's effective participation in economic rehabilitation and reliance include the following:

1. Government should institute a law to make education free at least from the primary to secondary education. This may be made to offer opportunities for every child to be able to attend school, no matter the economic status of the family. Education is the most effective way to enhance Nigerian women's economic productivity, promote their awareness and effective participation in economic rehabilitation and reliance.
2. Government should legislate powerful laws to protect females from embarrassment, rape, and unwholesome practices. And non-governmental organizations (NGO) should be more active in highlighting the plight of women and not that the initiators of the NGOs should use the opportunity to enrich themselves. This will go a long way in bring about economic rehabilitation and reliance.
3. There should be an abolition of some cultural and traditional practices that regard women as second-class citizens like, situations where family members take properties of widows and nothing is left for them to train their children. The non-governmental organizations (NGO) should help women by making sure such laws that would enhance the economic fortunes of women are implemented to the last letter.

Women organizations should solicit the help of both government and private bodies for the effective mobilization of more women in decision-makings in the country for economic rehabilitation and reliance.

References

Azikiwe, O.A. (1992). *Women Education and Empowerment*. Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company.

Aysha, M.I. (1985). Nigena Women Social Injustice and Discipline. *The Guardian*, July 28.

Boserap, E. (1970). *Women's Role in Economic Development* London: George Allen and Unwin Publishers Ltd.

Carley, R. (1972). Understanding Women's Implications for Personality Theory and Research. *Journal of Social Issues*.

- Ejiofor, O. (2001). Injustice Against Women. *This Day* Thursday May, 17.
- Fapohunda, O. J. (1974). The Place of Education in Man-power Planning in Developing Countries. *West African Journal of Education*.
- Hornby A. S. (2000). *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* Oxford University Press U.K.
- Ibiam, A. (2001). Rooting for Widow's Right *This Day* Friday, June 15.
- Jibowu, D. (1969). *A Philosophy of Nigeria Education*. A Report on the National Curriculum Conference September 8-12.
- Kalu, U. (2001). Women, Children Take Over the Rights. *The Guardian*, Monday, February 26.
- Madunagu, E. (2000). Reflections on the Women's Question. *The Guardian Thursday*, July 20.
- Noiske, A. (1990). Women in a Developing Economy. *Weekly Star*, July 8, No 853:2.
- Odu, D. E. (1983). The Needs and Challenges of Vocational Education for Rural Nigeria Women.
- Ohadoma, C. (2001). Power of the Nigerian Women. *This Day*, Vol.7 No 2176, Saturday, April 7.
- Omololu, A. (1969). Education for Women. In *A Philosophy of Nigeria Education*.
- Osuman, G. I. (1991). *The Education of Women in Developing Countries*. Makurdi: Osuman and Co.