Culture and Beliefs: Social Implication on Education of Women in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria

Ewelum, Johnson Nnadi (Ph.D)

Department of Adult Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract- The main focus of this study was culture and beliefs: Social implication on education of women in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. To guide this study, three research questions were formulated. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all the business women at Ogige Main Market, Nsukka LGA with first School Leaving Certificates. The sample consisted of 250 business women selected through multi-state sampling technique in which simple random sampling and proportional sampling techniques were used. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection which was dully validated by two experts in Adult Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation. Data collected were analyzed using mean. The reliability of the instrument was 0.85. Among the major findings of the study were that women play significant roles in national development such as production of food, health care delivery, peace making, etc. the socio-cultural factors militating against women education include among others denial of right to own property, subjection of girls to early marriages, preference of boys education to girls. The strategies include early childhood development, compulsory education, campaign against early marriage, among others. Some of the recommendations include that parents should be sensitized on the need for education of girls/women, the education of girls should be caught young, just to mention but a few.

Index Terms- Culture, Education, Women education

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are generally considered to be at the lowest rung of poverty ladder in Nigeria. Women are more than fifty percent of the world's population. They perform two-third of the world's work, yet receive one-tenth of the world's income and own one-hundredth of the world's property. They represent a staggering seventy percent of the world's one billion poorest people. This is a stack development reality for our world (Elegbede, 2012).

In Africa, most women have been politically, socially and economically oppressed, discriminated and repressed for so long that in these societies, they still encounter many impediments and they try to ascend to different positions apart from the ones "originally reserved for or expected from them (African Development Forum, 2008). Attempts by women rights advocates to challenge the status quo have often met with stiff resistance from the men and even some women of such societies,

who question their audacity and authority to alter nature and culture (Simona, 2010). This, therefore, leaves one with the question as to whether all these do not amount to a newer forum of slavery or whether they are just aimed at sustaining culture. Culture in this sense, is the aggregate of the social, ethical, intellectual, artistic, governmental and industrial attainment of a community, and by which it can be distinguished from any other community. It includes the ideas, traditions and material objects characteristics of such a community (Anyanwu, 2002). In other words, culture is the totality of peoples' way of life.

Moreover, in some parts of the South-East Nigeria, women up to this day are often exposed to harmful and obnoxious cultural practices after the death of their spouse, ranging from ritual confinement, restriction of movement, deprivation of family property to expulsion from the family home. This is in agreement with Nmadu (2000) that the Nigerian society (both historical and contemporary) has been dotted with peculiar cultural practices that are potently harmful to women's emancipation, such as early/force marriage, wife-inheritance and widowhood practices.

Women's overall development has been characterized by a traditional gender bias in economic empowerment which has by and large locked them into types of work that accord low economic status. The situation affected their value in the society and also prevented their movement towards better remunerated jobs. This situation also deprived women opportunities to maximally contribute their quota to national development. This phenomenon and other harmful cultural practices in Nigeria such as the preference of male child to female child did not help matters with regards to women education. This contributed in causing retrogression in women education as many parents preferred withdrawing their daughters as to give room for their son's education (Adedokun, 2011).

Fadeiye and Olonegan (2001), viewed woman education as a process of enabling women to develop the capacity to actualize their potentials. It involves all efforts that is geared towards harnessing the hidden or untapped potentials in women. Women should thus be looked at as individuals that posses some hidden potentials to contribute to national development. They should, therefore, be encouraged to develop to their fullest potential through education. Wikipedia (2015) defined education as a process of teaching and learning skills and knowledge. It also means helping people to learn how to do things and encouraging them to think about what they learn. It is, therefore, important for educators to teach ways to find and use information. This is in line with Anugwom (2009) that education is the main tool for

imparting skills and attitudes relevant to the contribution of the individual to the development of the society. It is a key every individual should possess in order to make significant contribution to national development.

Unfortunately, one of the major areas where women are socially discriminated and suppressed with great consequences on their individual futures and that of the society as a whole is education. Despite the massive global sensitization on gender equity in the provision of educational services, some women in Nsukka Local Government Area are still being discriminated in education. Evidence abounds that in some communities in the area, preferences are still given to education of boys much more than girls. The girls are sent to early marriages while their boys are in school thereby creating more illiteracy in the society which is a gap that needs to be bridged. For instance, girls who have succeeded in finding themselves in schools are also exposed to teachers and other school activities that reinforce negative gender stereotypes, discriminatory practices and even sexual harassment. Some women at Nsukka are still being oppressed with humiliating and dangerous widowhood rites, relegated to low income jobs, denial of the right to own land or property, as well as denial of the right of widows to inheritance all because of cultural belief. Many still believe the saying that "a man's culture is his identity" to perpetuate acts of injustice on women in the name of identifying with their culture. This has even become so serious that some of the women have accepted their fate and see such oppressive culture into which they were born as immutable and sacred. Many of the women are engaged in one business or the other at Ogige Market, Nsukka, just to earn a living.

Therefore, the exclusion of these women from education due to culture and beliefs that women are intelligently weak, potential and future housewives and not major key players in society has created a negative mindset about female education which is suppose to be a reverse. It is against this background that makes this topic well founded and timely by the researcher.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.
1. What are the roles of women in national development?
2. What are the socio-cultural factors and beliefs that militate against women education empowerment in Nsukka Local Government Area?
3. What are the strategies for enhancing women education in Nsukka Local Government Area?

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised of all the business women with First School Leaving Certificates (FSLC) at Ogige main Market who are indigens of Nsukka LGA. The sample of the study consisted of 250 business women selected through multi-stage sampling technique. In the first place, out of the 18 communities that make up Nsukka LGA, 9 communities were randomly selected. Secondly, to make sure that the 9 communities are equally represented in the sample, proportionate sampling technique was

used to selected sample from each community using 50%. A self structured questionnaire titled "social implication of culture and beliefs on education of women (SIOCAOEOW)" was used. The instrument was subjected for validity by two experts in Adult education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. Comments and recommendations were effected in the final construction of the instrument by the researcher. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha and 0.85 was obtained and was adjudged highly enough. The data collected was analyzed with Mean. Decision rule was based on 4-points numeral values assigned: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The criterion mean is 2.5. This implies that any mean that is up to 2.5 and above was agreed on while means below 2.5 were not agreed on. The means were also ranked.

IV. RESULTS/FINDINGS

The findings of the study were presented according to the research questions in tables 1, 2 and 3. Out of the 250 copies of the questionnaire distributed and returned, 7 were badly filled and discarded while the remaining 243 copies were presented and analyzed in tables using mean.

Research Question 1
What are the roles of women in national Development?

Table 1: Roles of women in national development

S/N	Roles	Mean	Rank
1.	Production of food for all	3.84	1st
2.	Representation of women in politics	2.66	9th
3.	Peace making in societies	3.72	2nd
4.	Coordinating of resources	2.87	7th
5.	Management of homes	3.65	3rd
6.	Nursing mothers/carers	3.55	4th
7.	Agents of socialization	3.36	5th
8.	Educating of masses	2.84	8th
9.	Health care delivery	3.21	6th

Table 1 revealed that all the items were agreed by the respondents. This is because the mean scores in all the items are above the criterion mean of 2.5 which implies that all the items are the roles women play in national development.

Research Question 2
What are the social-cultural factors and beliefs that militate against women education empowerment in Nsukka LGA?

Table 2: Socio-cultural factors and beliefs that militate against women education empowerment in Nsukka LGA.

S/N	Factors	Mean	Rank
1.	Women are oppressed and humiliated	2.74	6th

2.	Women are relegated to low income jobs	3.30	5th
3.	Denial of the rights to own land/property	3.72	2nd
4.	Preference of education of boys to girls	3.74	1st
5.	Women regarded as inferior sex	3.42	4th
6.	Sexual harassment	2.61	7th
7.	Ritual confinement of widows/ widowhood rites	2.52	9th
8.	Subjection of girls to early marriages	3.53	3rd
9.	Exclusion of women from public leadership of family.	2.60	8th

Table 2 equally revealed that all the items were agreed by the respondents because all the means scores are above the criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that all the items are the socio-cultural factors and beliefs that militate against women education in Nsukka LGA.

Research Question 3

What are the strategies for enhancing women education in Nsukka LGA?

Table 3: Strategies for enhancing women education in Nsukka LGA.

S/N	Strategies	Mean	Rank
1.	Early childhood development by parents.	3.32	1st
2.	Intervention to reduce the opportunity cost of schooling for girls.	2.58	8th
3.	Mobilizing women to go to school	3.01	3rd
4.	Adopting basic education to catch girls young as they grow into adulthood.	3.23	2nd
5.	Creating a conducive learning environment	2.90	6th
6.	Compulsory education	2.85	5th
7.	Sensitization of parents on the need for girls' education.	2.77	4th
8.	Non-formal education for out-of-school girls/women.	2.54	9th
9.	Campaign against early marriages.	2.66	7th

Table 3 showed that all the items were agreed by the respondents because all the mean scores are greater than the

criterion mean of 2.5. This implies that all the items are useful strategies for enhancing women education in Nsukka LGA.

V.   DISCUSSION

The data in table 1 revealed that all the items were accepted by the respondents as the roles of women in national development. This implies that the women play significant roles in both Federal, State and Local government levels in engendering enormous development in Nigeria. This agrees with Awe (1990) who sees the importance of women from their roles as peace and stability at home that depends largely on the managerial abilities of women. She further stressed that the women, especially the mothers plan, organize, direct and coordinate all resources at home to the benefit of all members of the family. Effective management of the home promotes national development. But wherever this is lacking, the reverse is usually the case (Lasiele, 1999). In agricultural sector, women have made significant contribution to food production and processing. Olawoye (1985) describes Nigerian women as a crucial factor of production. To him, they assumed this status because they are largely responsible for the bulk production of crops, agro-based food processing, presentation of crops and distribution of yields from farm centres to urban areas. This corroborates with the report by NAERLS (2000) that women in Anambra State of Nigeria contribute more than the men in terms of labour input in farming and are solely responsible for household management duties.

In the political and decision making spheres, women in Nigeria have also played important and vital role. For example, in Nigeria, some women have held positions at both Federal, State and Local government levels. They include Mrs. Okonjo Iweala (Minister of Finance), Hon. Saudatu Sani (chairman, house committee on women affair and youth development), Hon. Abike Dabiri (Chairman, house committee on media and publicity), among others. These women helped in empowering Nigeria women and contributing to national development.

The data in table 2 revealed that all the items were accepted by the respondents as the socio-cultural factors and beliefs that militate against women education empowerment in Nsukka Local Government Area. The sub-ordination and marginalization of women affect the educational empowerment. This is in support with Eya (2005) that instances of socio-cultural subjugation of women abound in contemporary Africa Societies. There is till a high preference of boys to girls and men to women. Consequently, some women have lost their human identity and dignity right from birth. This issue of high preference of male to female children has brought a lot of conflicts and violence in matrimonial homes as the women involved are often maltreated and held responsible for changing the baby boys in their wombs to girls in a situation where majority of the children happen to be girls.

More so, there is still a lot of sexual degradation and exploitation. Most societies, especially in Africa believed that sexuality and women mean the same thing. Female sexuality is viewed as property of men and the women have no control and right over their own sexuality. It is, therefore, not surprising to see a man battering his partner for refusing him his right to sex" (even when the women are not in a sexual mood. With this kind

of mindset, it is not difficult to comprehend why and how some women easily become victims of prostitution. In the same vein, UNESCO (2008) agrees with the view that the female-to-male ratio in school enrollment across Africa remained below 0.80 in more than half the countries, as there had instead been a reversal in the convergence process of the gender gap between boys and girls in enrollments with a decline from 82% in 1999 to 79% in 2004. This backward trend in the education of girls across Africa, is a product of religious and cultural beliefs that see female education not only as a waste but also a crime. This, therefore, creates a huge challenges for most African countries, as the agenda of the UN through the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) in closing gender gaps in education and other related domains within the projected time frame remains elusive.

The data in table 3 also revealed that all the items were accepted by the respondents as the prospective strategies for enhancing women education in the area. It is assumed that when the strategies are rightly employed, the tyranny and operation against women education will be reversed. Women should be helped to enroll in educational programmes so as to achieve social integration. This agrees with Sussmuth (2004) that it is not the transmission of knowledge that is the problem but the integration of women against a background of differences in cultural identity. We can no longer afford to be paying lip service to women participation in literacy programmes, women should be looked for and brought to literacy programmes or such programmes taken to them where they are for them to take advantage of the proximity to attend. This corroborates with the view of the World Bank (2015) that outlined five steps to improve girls' education, skills and job prospects thus: (i)give girls a strong foundation through early childhood development (ii) intervention to reduce the opportunity cost of schooling for girls such as conditional cash transfers (iii) creation of an environment that encourages investments in knowledge and creativity that requires innovative specific skills and investments to help connect people with ideas, as well as risk management tools that facilitate innovation (iv) adopting basic education and promotion of flexible, efficient and secure markets by the societies.

VI. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is evident that women play significant roles in national development ranging from food production, social to political development of the nation. Unfortunately, in some areas such as Nsukka LGA, women are oppressed with humiliating and dangerous widowhood rites, relegated to low income jobs, denied the right to own land or property as well as denial of the right of daughters and widows to inheritance. Girls are sent to early marriages and preference is given to male education to their female counterpart, all in the name by discrimination and cultural beliefs.

Women education has been seen as a sinquanon for empowering women to be able to organize themselves to increase their own self reliance and be independent in their way to contributing to family, society and national development. Through education, women can be conscientized on the negative implication of the culture and then seek solution that would ameliorate the situation and pave way for women liberation.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should be sensitized on the need for girls/women education. This is to enable them understand that girls education is as good as boys education and to avoid discrimination against female children.
2. The society should abolish the cultural beliefs and traditional practices that militate against women. This will accord the women equal opportunity with their male counterpart in developmental issues.
3. The government should make education compulsory for all categories of learners. This will help to catch the girls young as they grow into adulthood.
4. Campaign should be mounted on the negative effects of early marriage. This will help to reduce the rate and interest of parents in giving their female children out for marriage

REFERENCES

[1] T. Elegbede, "Gender inequality: The Nigerian case", 2012. [online]. Retrieved on 20th February, 2015 from http://www.dailyin dependentnig.com/2012/11/gender.

[2] African Development Forum, "Achieving gender equity and women's empowerment in Africa: Progress report", Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Development Bank. 2008.

[3] C. Simona, "Questioning women's subordination: Cross-cultural insights from Anthropology." Journal of comparative research in Anthropology and Sociology, 1(1), 2010. Pp. 167-174.

[4] C. N. Anyanwu, "Community education: The African dimension". Ibadan: Alafal Nigeria Company. 2002.

[5] T. Nmadu, "On our feet: Women in grassroot development". Journal of women in academics, 1(1), 2000. Pp.165-171.

[6] M. O. Adedokun, "Literacy: A potent tool for women empowerment". International journal review of social sciences and humanities, 1(2), 2011. Pp.13-21.

[7] J. O. Fadeiye, and C.E. Olonegan, "Education: A panacea for women empowerment". Journal Education Development, 1(2), 2001. Pp.64-69.

[8] Wikipedia, "Definition of education," 2015. [online]. Retrieved on 23rd June, 2015 from http://simple.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Education.

[9] E. E. Anugwom, "Women, education and work in Nigeria". Educational Research and Review Journal, (4), 2009. Pp.127-134.

[10] Awe, B. (1990). The role of women in management in the 90s. Journal of Management in Nigeria, 26(6).

[11] A.A. Lasiele, "Women empowerment iProblemn Nigeria: s, prospects and implications for counseling". The Counselor, 17 (1). 1999.

[12] J. E. Olawoye, "Rural women's role in agricultural production: An occupational survey of women from six rural communities in Oyo State". Nigeria Journal Rural Sociology, 1985. Pp.18-23.

[13] NAERLS, "Assessment of contribution of women to family farming in North-East Nigeria." Report of a research sponsored by the National Agricultural Research Programme, Abuja, Nigeria. National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. 2000.

[14] R. Eya, "Gender and culture: What needs to change in the society and in the Church". In Uchem, R. (ed), Gender equality from a Christian perspective, Enugu: Ifendu Publications. 2005. Pp.15-21.

[15] UNESCO (2008). "UNESCO Institute for Statistics", 2008. [online]. Retrieved on 18th June, 2015 from http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/tableviewer/document.Aspx? Reported.

[16] R. Sussmuth, "Lifelong learning, adult education, and employability". Adult Education and Development, No.6. 2004.

[17] The World Bank, "Five steps to improving girl's education, skills and job prospects", 2015. [online]. Retrieved on 16th June, 2015 from http://blogs.worldbank .org/education/five-steps-improve-girls-education.

AUTHORS

First Author – Ewelum Johnson Nnadi (Ph.D), Department of Adult Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria., Email Address: ewelumjohnson@gmail.com & ewelumjohn@yahoo.com, Phone No: 08064113123.