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Article

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Gender Equality and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

Dupe Adesubomi Abolade

Abstract

Purpose of the article: The objective of this study was to examine issues and challenges of gender equality in Nigeria in relation to the achievement of the desired sustainable development in the nation.

Methodology: The study adopted survey research design. One hundred and sixty females were randomly selected from the State Secretariat, Ibadan as a sample population for the study. A set of self-structured questionnaire which had four sections were used as instrument for data collection. One hundred and forty properly filled questionnaire were analysed. Three hypotheses were generated and tested.

Scientific aim: The study examined these three factors: socio-cultural factors, workplace discrimination and women participation in political activities in Nigeria to find out if there is equality between male and female genders in Nigeria that could translate to sustainable development in the nation.

Findings: The study establishes that there is no equality between the genders; that women are discriminated against and they still play the second fiddle and that the inequality hinders the coveted sustainable development in the nation.

Conclusion: It therefore recommends that the government and its agencies and employers of the workforce have the political will to include the female gender in the scheme of things and put them on the same level as their male counterparts for the achievement of development in the nation that will indeed be sustainable.

Key words: gender equality, sustainable development, patriarchal society, socio-cultural factors, illiteracy

JEL Classification: D63, J31, J71, Q01

Introduction

Gender as a reference to the maleness and femaleness of the human capital in a nation or an organisation has attracted many research inputs with the intent of finding equal engagements of the two sets in enhancing their development and that of the nation and the workplace. The issue that some societal norms, values, practices and beliefs may hinder or ameliorate sustainable development, which this present study has set out to investigate, have not received such attention. From the existing literature on gender equality and sustainable development, there is a gap on the issue of addressing the factors that are addressed in this present study to achieve the coveted equality and development in Nigeria. Gbadebo *et al.* (2018) premised their study on the association between gender equality and sustainable development, the magnitude of the relationship between gender equity and sustainable development in Nigeria and how the relationship between men and women affect sustainable development in Nigeria; the factors raised in this present study are missing, they are not addressed there, hence this present study adds to knowledge and bridges gap in this regard. Idike *et al.* (2020) looked at gender identity, democracy and national development in their study, but this present study goes further to look at socio-cultural factors, illiteracy and poverty, inequality in the workplace between the genders and economic challenges that militate against the female gender which may hinder sustainable development. Hence, this present study chooses to work on the factors raised in this study to bridge the gap and add to the existing studies on gender equality and sustainable development in literature.

The equality challenge between the male and female human capital is seen as the bane of the development of the individual, the organisation and the nation in every sphere. The development of individuals as human capital of a nation to enhance the development of the immediate society translates into the development of the nation which must

be sustainable for the now and the future of the nation. Meanwhile, gender equality and empowerment of women is goal number five of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals highlighted by the UN in the 2030 agenda. Gender equality is human right and it is essential for the achievement of all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Development may take an extensive number of forms and there are plenty of variables that may be considered as factors that will enhance the development of the human resources so as to have the needed human capital development which will translate to sustainable development. Some of the variables include, but not limited to, education, *i.e.* both the formal and informal form of education, adult and literacy education, robust and sustained economy, good health of the population, employment for those who are within their active and productive years, mechanised farming for improved food production, healthy environment, or good infrastructure for decent living. The United Nation's 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals aims to achieve gender equality and empowerment for women and girls by the year 2030; this is very laudable but all the factors that will be needed to achieve this must be put on the front burner by all concerned. The UN SDGs over the years have brought to fore the need for equality between male and female gender for sustainable development, however women and girls still suffer discrimination everywhere in the world (UN SDGs, Goal 5, 2019). The importance of women in sustainable development cannot be over emphasised. The General Assembly Resolution (2014, pp. 19) thus provides: "We recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future. We reaffirm our commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making. We underscore that women have a

vital role to play in achieving sustainable development. We recognize the leadership role of women, and we resolve to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable development policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels".

A nation is as developed as its human capital. The human capital comprises of individuals engaged in economic activities at both the formal and informal sectors of the nation, these humans are the variables needed for sustainable development of the nation. Training of individuals at the formal and informal education levels to acquire knowledge and skills is necessary for the much-desired development. However, to have sustainable development, there must be equitable distribution of resources based on gender equity (Pathania, 2017). It is globally known that equality between female and male genders has been a great challenge as internationally suggested solutions stemming from global conferences have not been able to fully bring the male and female on the same level for the needed sustainable development. Lack of political will on the part of the various governments along with socio-cultural and religious beliefs seem to be parts of the factors militating against gender equality in Nigeria as discrimination against women and girls continues unabated. Gender equality in every sphere of human endeavour may eventually put the Nigeria nation on the map of developed nations of the world and enhance the development of the individuals and the nation economically, socially and lead to a quantum improvement on health as a healthy nation is a developed nation.

1. Literature review

1.1 Social-cultural factors and gender equality

Just as other African nations, Nigeria is a patriarchal society which prefers the male

gender to the female gender. This is imbibed from home at young age by the male and female children; the female is thought to know that the male is superior to her whether young or old, this places the female at a disadvantaged position. The female is expected to submit to the headship of the male even if the male is a younger person to the female and she must always play the second fiddle. This is equally practiced in workplaces, both at the formal and informal sectors of the economy; most often a female leader in an organisation contends with this as the male members treat her with the attitude of female is subordinate to male. Society's cultural practices, values and beliefs are transferred to the workplace by the workers. According to Sagiv, Schwartz (2007), cultural values of a society have significant relationship with the manner in which employees function in an organisation.

The tabloids are filled with news of discrimination even in 21st century against the female gender in Nigeria and many other developing nations of the world. In India, some women were sexually molested and one was set ablaze and killed for daring to want to testify in the court of law. Punch (2019) reports that baby girls are buried alive for being girls as the families are not ready to pay dowry as the custom demands and babies are aborted once it is discovered that it is a female baby that is in the womb; for fear of the worth of her father, a teenage mother buried her day-old baby alive but the baby was discovered by a dog (Punch, 2019). It was reported that in India (as in many other developing nations) women are often discriminated against socially and girls are seen as financial burden among poor communities. Traditional preference for sons meant millions of female children are lost to foeticide and infanticide over the years. In Nigeria, nine married men gang-raped a ten-year-old girl just for being a girl in March 2020.

According to the World Bank (2019), Nigeria's population is 200,962,417; out of

this number, 50.69% are males and 49.31% are females. When a group that makes up about half of a population is seen as not being equal with the other group on the basis of sex which the group did not determine, and which does not imply that the female group is not as intelligent as the male group, but that the female group is rather subjugated by social norms and values, then the development of the society is likely to be stunted. Culturally, women are not allowed to inherit from their parents like the men simply because they are women or even own land property; the male members of the family are the ones who make decisions on such and other things in the family, even decisions concerning the life of the woman. Kabeer, Natali (2013) believe that for communities to be more peaceful, women should be given equal opportunity with men in the decision-making process. According to UN Women (2019), 49 countries world-wide do not have laws that protect women from domestic violence and 39 countries in the world do not allow daughters to have equal inheritance like boys.

Women are still treated in many African contexts as second class citizens, denied rights to land and inheritance, play the second fiddle and subjugated to the preferential basis on which men's entitlements are regarded by legislative, customary and statutory institutions. Abolade (2014) states that females are sandwiched and buffeted between the patriarchal controls of the males in the community and cultural demands that restrict them to the kitchen and the bedroom. These values and social practices that are inherent in African societies where the female gender is seen and treated as of lower standard to the male gender generally may not allow the females in the society contribute meaningfully to development in all areas of human development endeavours. Maziku *et al.* (2014) conclude in their study that socio-cultural factors, such as poor attitude and lack of support from the society

members including husbands and husbands' restriction on women's mobility, negatively affect the performance of women SMEs in Tanzania. Women who engage in the SME and have the needed support from the society and family will contribute to development in the community. Religion-wise, and religion is culture *de facto*, females are placed at a lower level to males. Women are not allowed to sit together with males in many religious places; they are not allowed to participate in most religious rites because of their gender. African society expects the females in the household to shoulder the responsibility of taking care of house chores and caring for every member of the family. The female gender so encumbered as a result of the cultural demands may have their innate potential that may be of immense benefit for the development of the larger society caged within them as the society has set a limit to how far the females can go in their contributions to the overall development of the society.

1.2 Illiteracy and poverty as female gender-specific variables

Nigeria as a nation is struggling with poverty occasioned by improper planning and lack of political will on the part of the government to ameliorate the plights of the female gender in the society, is yet to be numbered among developed nations of the world. Social welfare that could take care of the ordinary needs of the people to enable every child irrespective of gender access compulsory formal education is generally unavailable and this increases illiteracy and poverty which seem to be female gender-specific. Abolade (2013) believes that the female illiteracy situation in Nigeria, as in most developing countries, assumes an epidemic proportion with at least half of the female population being illiterate and suffering under gender-specific inequalities which are continually reinforced by unequal access to education. She finds out that women's participation in literacy programme is poor because of cultural demands,

poor socio-economic status of women and husband refusal to allow them participate. Literacy, which is the foundation of education, is essential for development and women denied education might not be able to contribute to their own development and that of the society. She further explains that women are the building blocks of the nation; that the building blocks of the nation must be strong for the nation to be strong, where the females are poor, illiterate, ignorant, under-developed and unskilled; the nation will just be like its building blocks. No nation can rise above the collective ignorance and poverty of its mothers. The reason for this is that women in their national roles as mothers and on account of the very strong influence which they have on the formative years of children are the first teachers on societal ethics. A society is as ethical or unethical as its motherhood (Abolade, 2013).

To attain sustainable development, the hitherto feminization of poverty must be addressed by ensuring that women are seen and treated as equal to men in the society and allowed without prejudice to compete favourably with their male counterparts. Klasen (2002) says that gender inequality in education and employment negatively affect economic growth of the society as the amount of human capital in that society will be reduced, which hampers economic performance of the society. Education plays a major role in improving the life of the woman, her household and the community. The educated woman is indeed an asset as her children are likely to be educated as well, and this will set the society on the path of continuous improvement/progress and set the tone for developing the nation.

The female child is disadvantaged because of her femaleness, and may not be trained in the formal education and if she is fortunate to have formal education to a certain level, she may not get to the peak of her education especially if the family is disadvantaged financially; a male child will be preferred to be

educated instead. Robinson (2015) explains that girls do not have the same educational opportunities as boys in Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, and Western Asia. In Nigeria, the percentage of literate female in 2016/2017 was 59.3% as against that of male, which was 70.9%. The illiteracy rate among women in Nigeria is rather high at 61.4% in 2015 and it moved to 62.02% in 2018 (World Bank, 2020).

Young girls in the core north of Nigeria, which is the North East and North West, marry at early age, as early as 10 years. Many are withdrawn from school so as to marry and start childbearing, which hinders their education. Many of them are given in marriage to men who are their fathers' age or older. In some other cultures in the South East, girls are given to older men as ransom for money borrowed by their parents from such men and these very young girls become wives to these older men and cannot attend schools to get education (BBC, 2019). Girls whose childhood had been destroyed in this manner may not have the opportunity to get formal education and be able to contribute to the development of the nation. This may have ripple effects as children born by these girls may end up in the same circle of illiteracy and poverty and they may just be statistics who may not be able to add anything to the development of the nation.

1.3 Economic challenges and gender equality

Women perform most of the economic activities in Nigeria and in other local African settings for the upkeep of the family; many are involved in petty trading and farming though not recognised or paid for. In Nigeria, women are expected to take care of the members of the family from the husband to the children and even the elderlies in the family and with that a few numbers of them who had formal education may even be employed in corporations and their earnings go into the upkeep of the family. The glass ceiling

hinders majority of them from progressing to the top of their careers. Many females who are employed incorporations, such as financial institutions, are faced with family demands that put so much stress on them along with their responsibilities in the workplace and they contemplate quitting their job (Abolade, 2019), which could put them under more economic stress.

Most Nigerian women are active outside the home, particularly in agriculture and in income generating activities in the informal sector; they are yet to compete on equal basis with men in the labour market (Abolade, 2013). Women manage only 13 % of agricultural land in the world (UN Women, 2019). Though they work hard on the farms and in other economic activities, they are still poor economically because they have little to work with and the money is spent on family upkeep. Poor societal and family support and non-recognition of the women and their contributions accentuate their economic challenges, as the majority of them are unable to compete with their male counterparts on capital and property procession for their better economic performance.

Most of the large businesses in the nation and generally across Africa are owned by men; women are in petty trading and small cottage businesses that do not give them much economic profit but rather stress them even as they face the usual discrimination. The World Bank says that the performance of female-owned businesses consistently lags behind that of men-owned businesses in Africa with 34 % profit lower on average than those of men, using ten countries as case study: Benin, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo, and Uganda. The women have fewer employees, lower average sales, and less value-added. The gaps in economic opportunities are a primary, and significant driver of the gender gap in business performance. The factors that hold back women in business performance in Africa are: legal

discrimination, social norms, risk of gender-based violence, household allocation of productive resources, time constraints, and care (World Bank, 2020). These will naturally negatively affect their economic performance and the needed development.

In spite of the societal value of placing the male above the female, many households are headed by women, and these women are the main pillars of the upkeep of the families spending the little money they have on the family. Abolade (2019) states that the issue of many homes being headed by women (FHHs, female headed households), in recent times has been a contributor to many of them taking up paid employment and many are engaged in other economic activities that contribute to the upkeep of the family. World Bank (2019) states that 14.30% of households were headed by females in 1990, 18.50% in 2013 and 19.30% 2018; that the population of females engaged in paid employment in 1981 in Nigeria was less than 30 ; in 2002 it was 47% and in 2017 it went as high as 50.43%. Though the Nigerian statistics in this regard is low when compared with Rwanda that has 86.04% of the female population in paid employment, more Nigerian women contribute to the economy of the home by engaging in paid employment along with their heavy workload at home.

1.4 Women participation in political activities

Women seem to be discriminated against in politics in Nigeria and the few of them who ever get elected or appointed to political positions have so much to contend with as it is believed to be the world of men. The number of women who even dare contesting elections in Nigeria is so minimal as politics here is actually money politics. Many women are unable to afford the huge sum of money that this requires along with the fact that the society sees women as not been cut out for such and the men treat women as second class citizens who must be seen only and not heard. In

Nigeria, women representation in the House of Representatives is 5.5% and in the Senate, it is 5.8% (UN Women, 2019). The number of women who vied for elective positions in 2019 was too small compared to that of men. According to UN Women (2019), 73 candidates contested for the post of the President of Nigeria only 5 of them were women; 1,668 men as against 232 women vied for the 109 Senatorial seats in the Senate and only 560 women as against 4,139 men vied for the 360 seats in the House of Representatives. The differences in the number of women and men in the race point to the fact that women do not have the wherewithal in the political landscape of the country. Women make up only 23.7% of national parliaments globally (UN Women, 2019). Political scene in Nigeria is characterized by violence and ethical practices seem alien to that world hence the inability of women to play on the same level with their male counterparts; they cringe away from vying for political posts though they have much to give to the society based on their feminine instincts.

Nigeria as at 2010 had 7% of seats held by women in national parliaments, and the fact that it sank to all time low of 3.38% in 2019 is an indication that women are sidelined in political inclusion in Nigeria. The rather low statistics indicates that they are disenfranchised. The abysmal poor representation of women in the senate or being elected into political post is global. According to Robinson (2015) there are just 42 countries in the world where women hold 30% of seats in the national legislature. When compared with other countries in Africa, Nigeria is far behind. Out of the 186 countries whose data were used globally, Nigeria was the 181st position whereas Rwanda was the 1st and the best with 61.25% of women in the parliament; South Africa was in the 11th position with 45.71%. Togo and Chad who are neighbours to Nigeria had 16.48% and 14.88%, respectively. The picture does not paint Nigeria in good light in the committee of

nations in the world or even in Africa where Nigeria is considered the largest economy.

UN Women (2014) state that when women and girls have equal opportunities to fully participate in economic, social, political activities in the nation and have equal access to employment compared to their male counterparts, the society will be better for it. It is established that when women participate in politics and are involved in leadership, it is highly beneficial to the society as the society becomes more egalitarian, democratic, more inclusive and responsive, (Markham, 2013).

1.5 Inequality between women and men in the workplace

There are few women in paid employment in both public and private sector organisations in Nigeria (World Bank, 2019). According to UN Women (2019), global employability rate of men is 94%, while that of women is 63%. These women have so much to contend with in the male dominated world of work. The unwritten law of the glass ceiling that does not allow them to reach the peak in their career; and the few who get to the top have their male counterparts who do not understand why a woman should be the 'boss' to contend with. The physical and psychological stress they experience in this regard may hinder them from contributing their very best. Some workplaces are gendered where men are the ones in higher positions though it may not be a written law and discrimination against women during the recruitment and selection stages are features of gendered workplace. In Nigeria, 65.3% of senior positions are occupied by men, while only 34.7% are occupied by women (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). McGuire (2002) finds out that gendered workplace rankings mirror gendered cultural rankings where women are less esteemed and seen to be of less status than their male counterparts. Davies-Netzley (1998) establishes that the patriarchal factor is the reason for the scarcity of women in top positions. The cultural values

of the society play out in the individuals in workplaces and affect procedures in the organisation. Gorman (2006) believes that women are seen as less influential and less competent than men; women are expected to perform better than men to get to the same position as men. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2019), 26.6% of women within the labour force age of 16–64 years were unemployed; that there is a gap of 6.3% between the rate of unemployment between women and men. 50.43% of Nigerian women were in paid employment as at 2017 as against 86.04% in Rwanda (World Bank, 2019). The gap thus created in the labour force undoubtedly hinders development of the nation.

In the world of work, the female gender is still discriminated against in such a manner that their male counterparts get more pay than female workers doing the same job even in the developed economies such as the USA and Australia; this is in spite of the US Equal Pay Act of 1963. The Australia Bureau of Statistics revealed that national gender gap-pay remained at 14% with men on average earnings of \$241.50 more per week than women. According to Forntenot *et al.* (2018), as at 2017, women who were working full time and working all year round in America were paid 20% less than their male counterparts. Boris (2016) believes that wage discrimination between male and female can be attributed to the prejudice held by employers against female employees; that a substantial part of unexplained gender wage gap stems from imperfect competition in the labour market. Women across the globe earn 24% less than men and they do not enjoy the same conditions compared to their male counterparts; women globally are underrepresented in powerful positions where the pay is higher (UN Women, 2019). Women are discriminated against in workplaces; this leads to the gender wage gap and this bias plays out during the selection process especially in private sector organisations (Aderemi,

Alley, 2019) The glass ceiling is yet to be eradicated, as many women find it difficult in the male dominated world of work to get to the zeniths of their careers. However, Noland *et al.* (2016) and Credit Suisse (2012) conclude that having gender equality in an organisation especially at the top management levels will enhance the organisation performance. According to UN Women, (2019), the government, society, companies, and private sectors must play major role in ensuring the achievement of gender equality by year 2030. Gender inequality seems to be a clog in the wheel of sustainable development, hence the unrelenting call for gender equality. Ensuring that all human genders are groomed to be positive contributors to the development of the society will make the society a good place for all.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the factors discussed in this study, three hypotheses are formulated for the study.

Hypothesis one:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender inequality.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between socio-cultural actors and gender inequality.

Hypothesis two:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between women's participation in politics and gender inequality.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between women's participation in politics and gender inequality.

Hypothesis three:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design, and random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of one hundred and sixty female respondents from different units of the State Secretariat, Ibadan, Nigeria. A self-structured questionnaire consisting of four different sections was used as the instrument to elicit information from the sample respondents who were mainly females. Section “A” was used to collect information on the demographic characteristic of the respondents; section “B” was used to elicit information on some socio-cultural factors as they relate to gender equality; section “C” was used to elicit information on workplace discrimination between the genders, and section “D” was used to find out about women participation in politics as it relates to gender equality. One hundred and forty of the instruments were properly completed by the respondents and these were analysed. The reliability test of the instrument was done using the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient, which yielded 0.87 for socio-cultural factors; 0.76 for workplace discrimination and 0.82 for women participation in politics. Three hypotheses were generated for the study and these were tested to ascertain gender equality or otherwise based on the factors considered in the study.

Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the demographic data collected from the respondents. The regression analysis was used to determine the equality or otherwise of genders based on socio-cultural factors; as well as relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality. The Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality.

4. Presentation and interpretations

Demographic Information of Respondents (n=140).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by age range in different units of the State Secretariat, Ibadan. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents (42.1%) are within the range of 31–40 years of age; those who are within the age range of 41–50 account for 35.7%; those within 20–30 years of age account for 16.4%, and those who are 51 years and above are the least in frequency, resulting in 5.7%.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the respondents’ educational qualification in different units of the State Secretariat, Ibadan. The study found that the majority of the respondents with 34.3% had a Bachelor’s Degree as

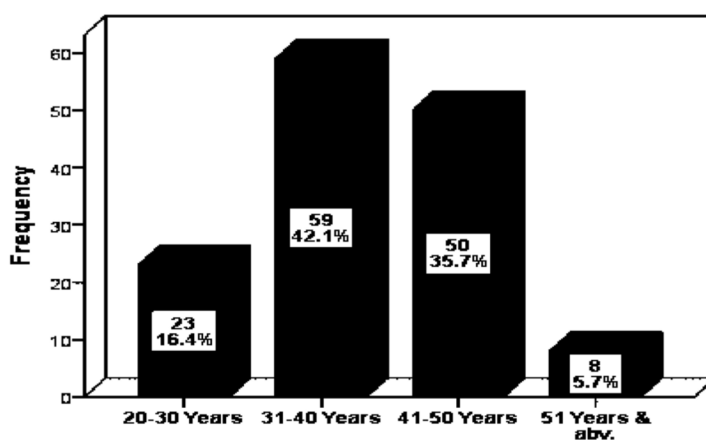


Figure 1. Demographic distribution of the respondents according to age. Source: Field study, 2020.

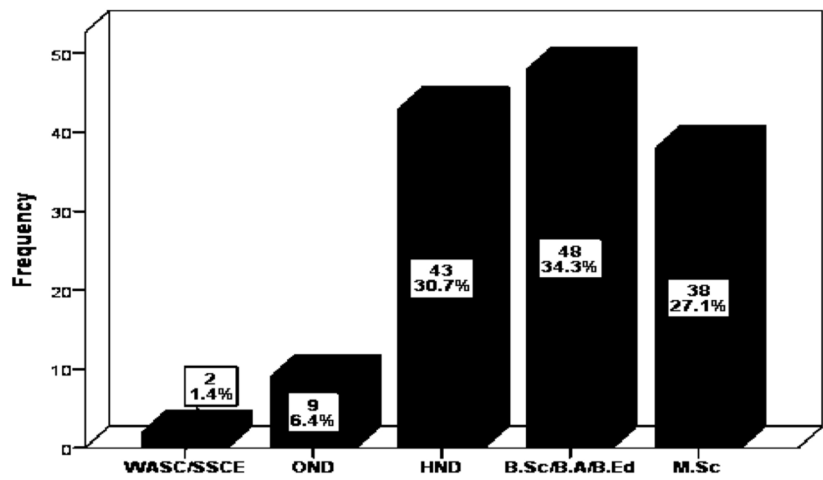


Figure 2. Demographic distribution of the respondents according to educational qualification.
Source: Field study, 2020.

their highest educational qualification, followed by the respondents with the HND Degree with 30.7%, the respondents with M.Sc. Degree yielded 27.1%, the respondents with the OND degree accounted for 6.4%, while the respondents with WASC/SSCE as their highest educational qualification had the least frequency and resulted in 1.4%.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the respondents by marital status in different units of the State Secretariat, Ibadan. The results

indicate that 60.7% of the respondents are married, followed by respondents that are single who accounted for 25.7% of the total sample; those who are separated from their spouses account for 10.7%, and 2.9% represent respondents who are divorced.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the respondents' length of service in different units of the State Secretariat, Ibadan. The study showed that the majority of the respondents representing 47.1% have spent between

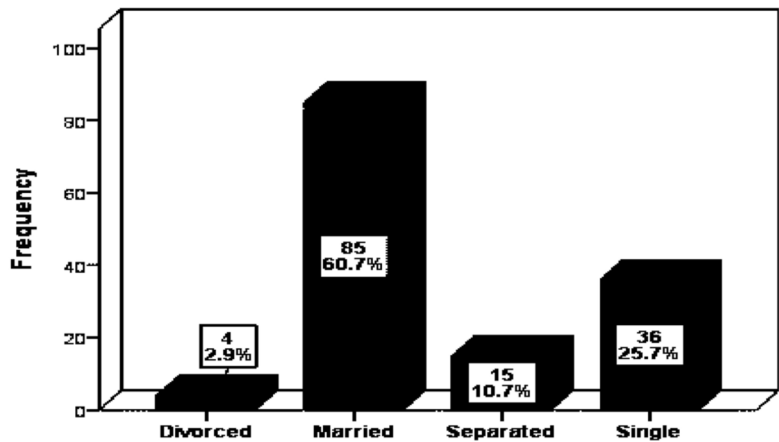


Figure 3. Demographic distribution of the respondents according to marital status. Source: Field study, 2020.

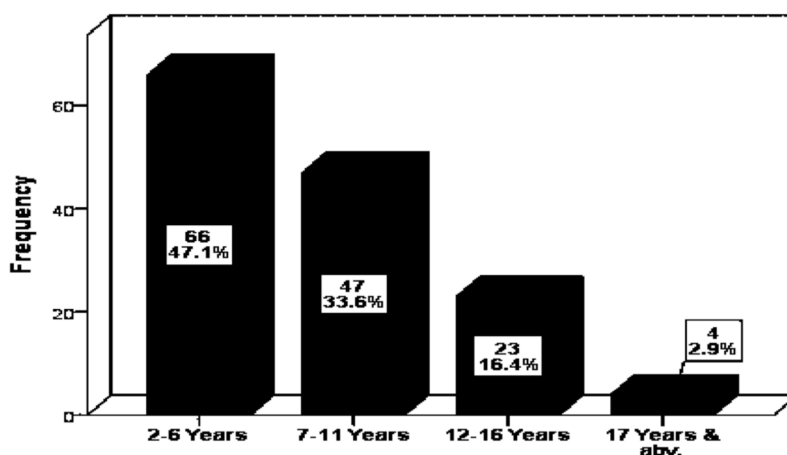


Figure 4. Demographic distribution of the respondents according to length of service.

Source: Field study, 2020.

2–6 years in the workplace, followed by the respondents with 7–11 years of working experience which represents 33.6%; the respondents with 12–16 years yields 16.4%, while the respondents with 17 years and above working experience are the least representing 2.9%.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender inequality.

Decision Rule: The regression analysis results provided in Table 1 show that the coefficient of R-square (R^2) of 0.164, which indicates that gender inequality accounts for 16.4% of the overall variance, which is a high coefficient in the determination of socio-cultural factors. The findings show that there is a relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender inequality.

Decision Rule: The ANOVA results given in Table 2 indicate that the statistically calculated F-value of 13.452 is greater than

Table 1. Regression model summary^b on the relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender inequality.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.405 ^a	.164	.152	.388	.164	13.452	2	137	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender inequality.

b. Dependent: Socio-cultural factors.

Source: Field study, 2020.

Table 2. ANOVA^a on socio-cultural factors and gender inequality.

Model	Sum of Squares	Degree of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4.052	2	2.026	13.452	.000 ^b
1 Residual	20.634	137	.151		
Total	24.686	139			

a. Dependent variable: Socio-cultural factors.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender inequality.

Source: Field study, 2020.

the critical F-value of 3.996 at 137 degree of freedom, so the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, stating that there is a significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender inequality. That is the tabulated significant value of .000^b is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between women participation in politics and gender inequality.

Table 3 describes the Pearson correlation analysis, which shows that there is a negative significant relationship between women's participation in politics and gender inequality ($r = -.171^*$, p [Sig. 0.044] < 0.05, $n = 140$).

The results of the findings show that gender inequality has a negative impact on women's participation in politics. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and proven to be true that there is a significant relationship between women's participation in politics and gender inequality.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality.

Decision Rule: The regression analysis results provided in Table 4 indicate that the coefficient of R-square (R^2) of 0.220 shows that gender inequality accounts for 22.0% of the overall variance, which is a high coefficient

Table 3. Correlation between women's participation in politics and gender inequality.

Correlations		Gender inequality	Women's participation in politics
Gender Inequality	Pearson Correlation	1	-.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.044
	N	140	140
Women Participation in Politics	Pearson Correlation	-.171*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	
	N	140	140

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Field study, 2020.

Table 4. Regression model summary^b on the relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.469 ^a	.220	.209	.375	.220	19.347	2	137	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender inequality.
b. Dependent: Socio-cultural factors.
Source: Field study, 2020.

Table 5. ANOVA^a on the relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality.

Model	Sum of Squares	Degree of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.437	2	2.718	19.347	.000 ^b
1 Residual	19.249	137	.141		
Total	24.686	139			

a. Dependent variable: Workplace discrimination.
b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender inequality.
Source: Field study, 2020.

in the determination of workplace discrimination. The findings of this study show that workplace discrimination has a significant relationship with gender inequality.

Decision Rule: The ANOVA results provided in Table 5 indicate that the statistically calculated F-value of 19.347 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.996 at 137 degree of freedom, so the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, stating that there is a significant relationship between workplace discrimination and gender inequality. That is the tabulated significant value of .000^b is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.

5. Discussion

This study establishes that there is a significant relationship between gender inequality and socio-cultural factors of preferential treatment of male children, social beliefs and the practice of early female marriage, females performing all the house chores, family decision-making, and family inheritance that exclude women. This is as shown by the regression analysis results provided in Table 1, where the coefficient of R-square (R^2) of 0.164 indicates that gender inequality accounts for 16.4% of the overall variance, which is a high coefficient in the determination of socio-cultural factors. The findings therefore show that there is a relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender inequality. Also, the ANOVA results provided in Table 2 indicate that the statistically calculated F-value of 13.452 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.996 at 137 degree of freedom; this establishes that there is a significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender inequality as the tabulated significant value of .000^b is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. Social and cultural practices in Nigeria limit women to take independent decisions even about their own lives (Azuh *et al.*, 2015). In Africa and

especially in the southern part of Nigeria, women have no right to own or inherit land due to cultural and traditional norms and this makes them dependent on the male members of their families for their livelihood (Gender Across Borders, 2012; Women's Land Link Africa, 2010).

The results of the findings also show that gender inequality has a negative impact on women's participation in politics. The null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted and proven to be true that there is a significant relationship between women's participation in politics and gender inequality. According to the findings of this study, gender inequality negatively affects women's participation in politics where $r = -171^*$, p [Sig. 0.044] < 0.05, $n = 140$. The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7% in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the global average of 22.5%, the African Regional average of 23.4 % and West African Regional average of 15% (Oloyede, 2016).

The findings of this study show that workplace discrimination has a significant relationship with gender inequality, the tabulated significant value of .000^b is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. Aderemi, Alley (2019) establish in their study that there is gender discrimination in workplaces in the area of wage gap between male and female workers; female workers earn less than male employees both in public and private establishments. Tiwari *et al.* (2018) find out in their study that women are discriminated against in the workplace based on gender-based stereotype and prejudices, which is in line with the findings of this present study.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Women have important roles just as their male counterparts to play in the sustainable development of the nation or an organisati-

on. The results of this study have established that the factors highlighted in the study, if properly addressed, will bring the male and female genders in the society on the same participation levels for the attainment of sustainable development, as the female gender will be able to maximally contribute to all the socio-economic development of the nation and unleash their potentials in the attainment of improved organisation performance. The socio-cultural factors of preferential treatment of male children, social beliefs and the practice of early female marriage, females performing all the house chores, family decision-making, and family inheritance that exclude women are the family beliefs and practices accepted as the norms in the larger society; they are age-long practices. These should be sincerely addressed to allow both male and female have equal opportunities, treatment and participations socially and economically. Nevertheless, reorientation of the families by advocacy groups and even legislations from the government to stop the practices may help in this sense. The government should know that these practices must be jettisoned if the nation must be on the list of developed nations of the world.

The study shows that females do not participate in the same manner as the males in politics, since they are discriminated against as a result of their gender; it is also established that they are discriminated against in the workplace because they are females. Policy makers in the nation and industry should ensure that policies are put in place and political will enforced to ensure equality in the involvement of both genders in the different spheres. Steps must be taken by these different groups so that there could be equal opportunities and pay between the genders. Both males and females have potentials that are good and could be channelled for the progress of the nation and industry when given the opportunity to be involved and treated as equal partners.

The challenges women face in Nigeria due to gender inequality as shown in this study are the social norms, beliefs and practices that place them lower than their male counterparts, where they could not have economic freedom and make decisions about their own lives without a man, this must change. In every environment in the nation, the age long beliefs of women being inferior to the males should be eradicated and legislation could be used to address this. Illiteracy among the female gender is a challenge and it leads to poverty, as the present study has shown. Making education compulsory from primary school to secondary school in Nigeria for the two genders and supporting tertiary education of the learners will address this, and law could be enacted to deal with parents and guardians who deny their wards from participating in the free and compulsory education.

Again the study proves that women are discriminated against in the workplace; the glass ceiling and sticky ground that inhibit many women from reaching the pinnacle of their careers should be removed; there should be equal pay for equal work; the government and employers must have the political will to address this. Women have the innate potentials that could be harnessed for improved productivity and better organisation performance in the present global business competition.

This study establishes that women do not participate in politics in the same manner as men. Women do not have the huge amount of money that politics entails in Nigeria. Money politics should seriously be discouraged and both genders must be given equal opportunities. The challenges of discrimination against the female gender in politics and violence in politics that make most of them cringe away from vying for political posts should be discouraged and law should be put in place and enforced to address the challenges. The challenge of domestic violence and the tradition of silence over it because society frowns at her speaking out as it will bring stigma on the

individual female and her family; the challenge of the female sweating it out to take care of everybody in the household and her challenge of depending on the male to make decisions for her about everything pertaining to her life are all parts of the problems the female face in Nigeria, and these can be addressed by strong political will to correct all the anomalies which debar women from contributing to their individual development and societal development. Gender equality in all the areas discussed in this study, if corrected, will lead to improved contributions of women to the development of the society, which will be sustainable as a result of continuity from generation to generation.

To have development that will be truly sustainable therefore, all hands must be on deck to address all these issues sincerely. The value orientations of the local communities

must be changed and from the homes people must come to terms with the facts that all humans are equal and can attain to whatever level without prejudice. The government at all levels, and employers of the labour force must give equal chances to all irrespective of the gender. The role of the government in gender equality generally will therefore include training and development of both genders, the political will to carry out the plan to achieve the sustainable development, the inclusion of women in the scheme of things-education, economy, health, and politics. No gender should be seen and treated as superior to the other. Gender equality is actually the right of everyone in any society and it will enhance the sustainable development of the individual, the organisation, and the nation.

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