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Nigeria Women and National Development: A Survey Analysis

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Abstract
National development is a lofty ideal that explores the essence of initiative and drive of individuals and collectives. In Nigeria, the female gender constitutes a significant segment of the society where very few have distinguished themselves in different facets of national life. In reference to this trend, this paper examined challenges preventing this gender from contributing optimally in national development. The Study has a descriptive cross-sectional design. The projected population size of the Case Study Area (Enugu South local government area) is over 300 thousand. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to establish a sample size of 300 persons through simple random sampling selected from two residential areas (Achara layout and Idaw River layout) in Enugu South Urban. The views of the respondents were sampled on three raised research questions elicited from the gap of conceptual analysis. This discourse further revealed myriad of factors militating against efforts of women in a calculated grand mean of 3.0 while the grand mean response to measures advocated to mitigate these constraints is within 2.9 grand mean response and 3.1 represents the grand mean for mobilizing women to contribute meaningfully to national development. The discourse therefore opined that women empowerment is fundamental to explore their potentials and drive towards national development.
Keywords: empowerment, gender, national development and women.

Introduction

The industrial revolution in England and other parts of the western world in the 18th century drastically altered the primary role of women in the society. Women henceforth could be seen playing roles hitherto regarded as the exclusive preserve of men in the economic, political and social lives of the society (Ogunjemilua & Familugba, 2015). In our globalized world, women constitute a significant segment of the productive population visibly seen in governance, politics, economy, public service etc. This situation accentuated the euphoria for "gender equality", "women empowerment and child rights" in emerging democracies such as Nigeria.

Basically, the strategic relevance of women in national development continued to elicit global attention on plausible measures to ensure inclusion and effective roles of the female folk in contributing meaningfully in strands of national development. In this vein, Adeboye (2020), observed that the issue of women in the development of Nigeria, as in other developing nations has received a lot of attention from international bodies such as the United Nations Organization. The mostimportant way by which the UN has fostered the women's movement is through the various conferences it has convened and the instruments established. These include the First World Conference on women in Mexico 1975, Second World Conference in Copenhagen, 1980. Third Conference in Nairobi, 1985 and Fourth Conference in Beijing,1995. In addition to these, the UN holds special sessions of the General Assembly on women's issues. It declared 1975 and 1985 as the decade for women and midwifed several other instruments. Notable among such instruments on women's rights are: the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979 women, and the Beijing Platform for Action 1995. These instruments are concerned with the issue of women's rights, empowerment and equality. Nigeria, as a member of the UN, signed these international instruments and with that accepted the responsibility to put in place locally all necessary structures that will enhance the lot of women, ensure their equality and remove all discriminations against them. Many of the moves made by successive military regimes described above should, in fact, be seen as part of their response to these international commitments. Notable among these is the establishment of the National Commission for Women (NCW) by the Nigerian military

government in 1989. Despite the tensions between the NCW and the Better Life Program(BLP), the former was able to initiate the production of an acceptable National Policy document on women's development in 1993. The NCW later metamorphosed into the Ministry of Women Affairs under the Abacha regime. Today, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting the cause of women has proliferated and their role cannot be overemphasized. Many women NGOs were involved in "advocacy and capacity building programmes aimed at making national development programmes sensitive to gender concerns and imperatives". These NGOs were in various categories. There were professional groups such as those of women academics, women lawyers, women journalists and market women; NGOs with specialized focus on particular issues such as HIV/AIDS, women trafficking, reproductive health, inhumane widowhood practices etc; social welfare groups like Zonta, Soroptimists, Inner Wheel etc; Faith-based NGOs like the Muslim Sisters' Organization, Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), and National Council of Catholic Women's Organization of Nigeria. A major criticism often made against the NGOs is their elitist outlook. Many of them are urban-based with little presence, and by implication, minimal impact on rural areas. There is also the National Council of Women Society which is a federation of non-political women's organization. It has, been providing a platform for the formulation and dissemination of women's opinions and ideals, making representations to government on behalf of women, keeping abreast of global issues on women; and awarding scholarships to female students.

Subsequently, the visibility and drive of women in Nigeria predated the era of euro-imperialism and contributed immensely in the decolonization process. Accordingly, Okonjo, (1975), remarked that the modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as queen. Queen Amina of Zaria was a great and powerful warrior, she became famous because of her widespread conquests. She built high walls around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion. She extended her influence to Nupe, built many cities, and received tributes from many powerful Hausa leaders. The people of Kano and Kastina paid tributes to her. She turned Zaria into a very prominent commercial center. Yet again another vital role played by women in history in the early colonial era was the Aba Women's Riots also known as the Women's War, it was an insurrection in British Nigeria which occurred in November 1929. The revolt broke out when thousands of Igbo women from Umuahia and other places in eastern Nigeria travelled to the town of Oloko to protest against the warrant Chiefs because of the obnoxious taxes imposed on them by the colonial masters. The protest encompassed women from six ethnic groups (Ibibio, Andoni, Ogoni, Bonny, Opobo, and Igbo) it was organized and led by rural women of Owerri and Calabar provinces. Essentially, the riot was a response to the women's economic and political suppression during the colonial period in Nigeria, (Uchendu, 1999).

In post-colonial Nigeria state, women have featured prominently in various strata of national life and development. Today, we make reference to meaningful contribution of Margret Ekpo, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Prof Dora Akunyili, Dr. Nogzi Okonjo-Iweala, Oby Ezekwesili, Senator Ita Giwa, Abike Dabiri Erewa, Cecilia Ibru, and, so many of them in entrepreneurship, entertainment, sporting activity etc. However, despite this societal reticence, there are still obvious challenges constraining efforts of women towards national development. Hence, Endu (2019), Azizi *etal* (2018),Johnson and Adenrigbe (2018) and Hassan, *e tal* (2020), affirmatively insisted that Nigeria women are still constrained to compete more favorably with the male counterparts in various aspects of national development amid obvious strides in politics and governance.

Succinctly, Osimen, *e tal* (2018), Idika, *e tal* (2019) and Yusfu (2017) have stressed that the potentials of Nigerian women have not been meaningfully explored to advance fundamental roles of national development. This situation enormously stem from patriarchal nature of Nigerian society despite other constraining conditions. From this indication, Ogunjemilua and Familugba (2015) remarked that Nigeria society is permeated by patriarchy where women are expected to conform to and confirm themselves to male dominance and female subservience. Women as seen belong to the home because they are incapable of making sound decisions and are not allowed to explore themselves in public for political activities. Women in Nigeria like other developing countries of the world suffer from undue marginalization, discrimination and exploitation by the men folk through religious practices and cultural beliefs, and most importantly, traditional prejudices which placed men as super human beings. Women on their part do not often see themselves as viable instruments of political participation and growth. The complacency of women in several aspects of national life not only reduces their capacity for maneuver in a male dominated society but helps in perpetuating the culture of reducing women to position and role of second fiddle.

Against this backdrop, this discourse examines the challenges bedevilling Nigerian women towards national development. This discourse is streamlined in five sections beginning with this introduction, conceptual analysis, research design, data analysis and conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Analysis

Hornby (2000), defined 'woman' as adult female human being. Also, the Oxford Dictionary of current English viewed 'woman' as an adult human female, the female sex, wife or girlfriend. In this context, 'women' would refer to adult females in the society. It is usually used to refer to married females mostly mothers (Okoli, *e tal*, 2019). The concept of women explicitly denotes the female folk or female gender. In the conception of creation, they represent the 'weaker –sex' and 'acquaints to men'. The natural roles of women are reproduction, domestication and sexual gratification. However, these roles are today complemented with other responsibilities in response to emerging plights and expectations seen in virtually every sector of national economy occasioned by globalization which has consequently enhanced the relevance of the female gender in the recent times. Today, we make reference to "women-politicians, women-permanent secretaries, women-directors, women-business tycoons, women-pilots, women-lawyers, women-medical doctors, women-pastors or bishops, women footballers, women journalists" contributing immensely to achieve the prospects of national development.

The term "national development" is a derivative of development. Hence, the concept of development is polemical eliciting diverse definitions among scholars of social sciences. Hence, the concept eludes precision in meaning because of its multi-disciplinary orientation. Thus, Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) lend credence to this factuality with a historical perspective to argue that the concept of development seems to be in a flux since the end of Second World War. In the early 1940's, the ideological differences between the Socialist East and Capitalist West appears to have influenced the meaning and conceptualization of the term. Invariably, this ideological divide crystallized in the liberal and marxist conceptualization of development among scholars. In other words, Okereke and Ekpe (2002) aptly sum up the assumptions of the Liberals and Marxists on the meaning and nature of development,

> Development in the liberal perspective has been variously defined. In its elementary form the term is inextricably tied to the economic domain. Most liberal theorists see it as economic development, which could be gauged in terms of growth of Gross National Product (GNP). Accordingly, development is defined as the maximization of the growth of the GNP through capital accumulation and industrialization. The radical scholar's perception of development is quite different from that of their liberal counterparts. In their view, development rather than being an abstract economic category is multi-dimensional. When viewed from the dialectical materialist binocular, development rather than being restricted to macro-economic variables focuses on man and his well-being.

Although, there are different interpretations of development; however there are some reflective attributes on which the concept of development is premised. Audu (2013), outlined the following as reflective attributes of development, (a). Development is a process and not a static and, this process are many-sided. (b) Development involves action which emphasizes the conscious efforts of the state to induce development in the society. (c). It focuses on quantitative and qualitative changes in the structure, composition and performance of the forces of production. (d). It also emphasized an increasing capacity to make rational value and use of natural and human resources for meeting people's social ends. (e). It ultimately brings about qualitative improvement in the standard of living of the people.

Development is explicitly multi-dimensional. To this extent, the World Bank's report on world development (1991) noted that the concept of development has economic, social and political attributes such as sustainable increase in living standards including consumption, educational, health and environmental protection, equality of opportunities, liberties and political freedom. Implicitly, when the term "development" is therefore prefixed it further indicates the political, economic and social development which constitutes the necessary components of national development. Accordingly, national development can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political development as well as religious advancement of a country or nation (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). Similarly, Imhonopi and Urim (2010) posit that national development is the ability of the country or countries to improve social welfare of the people, namely by providing social amenities like good education, power, housing, pipe borne water, and others. Hence, national development is a conglomeration of diverse aspects of development. It is therefore pertinent to assess critically the roles or contribution of Nigeria women within the various facets and dynamics of national development.

The resolutions of the Beijing Conference in 1995 accelerated reasonable scale of awareness on the imperatives of gender issue in all aspect of livelihood globally. Women are indispensable group in the development of any nation. Beside their numerical strength, women have great potentials necessary to entrench new economic order, accelerate social welfare, participate actively in the democratization process and, engineer the fundamental targets of national development (Idika, *e tal* 2019 and Anyaoko, 2017).

Consequently, most emerging democracies and developing economies have made significant efforts to improve the chances of women to contribute in the national development. For instance, as earlier noted Nigeria formulated the National Gender Policy in 2006 aimed at improving the socio-economic status of Nigeria women to contribute meaningfully in national development. However, Nigeria government is yet to achieve or realize the key priorities or targets of the policy with regards to awareness, advocacy and empowerment and, poor numerical strength of Nigeria women in the appointive, administrative and elective positions of the federation. This situation had invariably exacerbated the intense campaign for ''gender equality" and competence'' of the female folk to play proactive roles in national development. As observed, most Nigeria women have strived to demonstrate exceptionality in the various facets of national life but unfortunately limited. Similarly, Lasiele (1999) noted that Nigeria women have been contributing their quota to the development of the nation; however, their potential has not been fully tapped due to some constraints". To this extent, it is imperative to examine the following conditions militating against the roles of Nigeria women in national development:

1. ***Political Constraint****:* Though, successive political administrations (with reference to Obasanjo and Jonathan's governments) have done well in improving the number of the female gender in ministerial and administrative positions of the National government. However, the federal government is yet to demonstrate an unflinching commitment to the targets of National Gender Policy of 2006, and the 35% affirmative action of the United Nations. Today, the present statistics still indicate that Nigeria women are under-represented in the National Assembly. Furthermore, Nigeria election process is still susceptible to violence which often discourages mass and active participation of women in politics and governance (Ameachi, 2017 Odoko, 2018; Onyeke, 2018).

2. ***Economic Constraint:***Furthermore, Nigerian economy is bedeviled with high unemployment rate, low standard of living and sundry socio-economic problems, etc. The Nigeria women and children are mostly affected by these unpleasant situations. Hence, a large number of women in Nigeria are economically disempowered which makes it extremely difficult for few (with skill of prudent leadership and entrepreneurship) to play vital role in national development. Still, Adebayo (2020) opined that contribution of women to the economy continued in the period under review. Most women, were (and still are) involved in the informal sector as farmers, food processors, artisans and traders. Those in the urban communities embraced dressmaking, hairdressing, various crafts and retail trading. A few of them in the importing business like Sulia Adedeji in the Southwest amassed great wealth which became a stepping stone into politics. The Structural Adjustment Programme introduced in 1986, while it promoted Small Scale Enterprises also created new hardships with its disdain for social welfare services. Despite these, few women emerged as 'contractors', real estate investors and operators of businesses that are capital intensive.

3. Education Constraint: Again,e ducation is the bedrock for human development. Hence, "education of a woman" is imperative for meaningful advancement. However, most Nigeria women are not exposed to western education. It is only a fraction of Nigeria women that are educated to the university level whilst the remaining is educated between primary and secondary levels of education. This unpleasant situation implied that most Nigerian women are still grappling with ignorance and illiteracy which consequently deprived them the chance to assert their rights, skill to be productive and knowledgeable to contribute positively in national development (Onwudike, *e tal*, 2016; Abari and Mohemmed, 2014; Yerima, 2017).

4. Social and Cultural Constraints: In the prevailing climate of poverty, corruption and cynical disposition of the relevant authorities, most Nigerian women have been subjected to all kinds of inhuman treatment and victimization. They are often intimidated, sexually harnessed, raped and, even killed by the male gender. Hence, it is not uncommon today that men often demand "sex" from the female folk for employment, contracts, political appointment, board recommendation, awarding of examination scores, etc. Thus, these ugly incidents often discourage many intelligent and resourceful women from contributing positively in national development from their various careers. This ugly condition is also preceded by widespread constraining values. In African traditional setting, values and norms have profound influence on the female gender. Hence, traditional values confine women to child-bearing and domestic activities. Again, Lasiele (1999), asserts that cultures and sub-cultures in Nigeria give preference to male children as they are usually regarded as the heirs or the pillars of the family. Female children are usually less privileged and consequently not given adequate opportunity to acquire

education and formal training. This unpleasant development underscores the less emphasis accorded to the education of the girl-child in Nigeria society. In this vein, Umar (2006), noted that the girl-child is valued not for who she is, her potentials or achievements but for services, submissiveness and at best good looks. He further stated that in any traditional Nigeria community, it is believed that the place of the girl-child and women is in the kitchen or at home.

5.Religious Constraint: Furthermore, religious values also constrain women from playing pivotal roles in national development. This is because, most religious faithful in Nigeria have different views with regards to the position and roles of women in the society. For instance, some religious leaders believed that women should not be seen but heard while others firmly regarded men as superior to women. These views adversely undermined the opportunities and avenue through which women contribute effectively in national development.

From these scholarly submissions and gaps in literature, the following research questions are put forward: (a) What are the factors responsible for conditions militating against women's roles in national development? (b) What are the specific measures to address the conditions constraining women's efforts towards national development? (c). How best can women be mobilized to contribute efficiently in national development?

Research Design

The design of this discourse is descriptive cross-sectional design. Hence, the design is streamlined to draw inferences from causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables under study. The design also illuminates the imperatives of area of study and population, sample and sampling techniques, instruments for data collection and analysis.

i. Area of Study and Population: The area of study is Enugu South local government area which is one of the 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Enugu State. According to report of 2006 National Population Census, the local government area has a population of 198,723 (94,461 male and 104,262 female) and projected population of over 300 thousand residents and indigenes in consideration of its urban character and status.

ii. Sampling Technique and Sample Size: The study design is a descriptive cross-sectional type, involving a calculated sample size of 300 (25-59 years). A multistage sampling technique was used in sample selection. Enugu South LGA was selected out of the three LGAs in Enugu Urban (Enugu North and Enugu East) by simple random sampling technique. Among the residential areas in Enugu South, Achara layout and Idaw River Layout residential areas were selected using simple random sampling technique. Achara layout had 50 streets while Idaw River Layout had 18 streets. This gives a ratio of approximately 3:1 streets. Nine and three streets were randomly selected from these two residential areas respectively. From the sample size of 300 respondent adults studied, 225 and 75 were proportionately allotted to Achara layout and Idaw River layout respectively.

iii. Instruments for Data Analysis: For the purpose of analysis, data was analyzed using the Likert Mean rating scale. It assigned numerical values according to the strength and weakness of the opinion of the respondents. In the following order: (a). Strongly Agreed, SA (4 points),(b). Strongly Disagreed, SD (3 points), (c). Agreed, A (2 points)(d). Disagreed (1 points) (e). Undecided (0 point). Hence, five (5) points rating scale was used to determine the extent of acceptability or non-acceptability along respective numerical values. Again, interval scale of 0.5 was added to bring the mean to 2.5. From this indication, a decision rule of 2.5 is reached. Hence, any response receiving a mean score rating of 2.5 is regarded positive response less than 2.5 is regarded negative response. Also, the cumulative (grand mean was employed to determine the strength or weakness of the overall responses.

Data Presentation

Table 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Age group (years)	Frequency	Percentage
25–29	44	14.7
30–34	113	37.7
35–39	72	24.0

40–44	36	12.0
45–49	18	6.0
50–54	9	3.0
55–59	8	2.7
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 2:SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristics	**Frequency=300**	**Percentage**
Occupation:		
Civil servant	178	59.3
Trader	48	16.0
Private employee	27	9.0
Student	26	8.6
Unemployed	12	4.0
Artisans	9	3.0
Gender:		
Female	201	67.0
Male	99	33.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Research Question 1: What are the factors responsible for conditions militating against women's roles towards national development?

Figure 1:RESPONSES ON THE FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDITIONS MILITATING AGAINST WOMEN'S ROLES IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

S/N	**Questionnaire Items**	**X**	**Decision**
1.	Patriarchy system of Nigeria society.	3.1	Positive
2.	Education and poor awareness.	3.3	Positive
3.	Governance failures.	3.1	Positive

4.	Harsh socio-economic realities.	2.9	Positive
5.	Cultural values. .	2.8	Positive

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Grand mean $\sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{3.1+3.3+3.1+2.9+2.8}{5}$ 15.2 /5 = 3.0

Research Question 2: What are the specific measures to address the conditions constraining women's efforts towards national development?

Figure 2: RESPONSES ON MEASURES TO MITIGATE AGAINST CONDITIONS CONSTRAINING WOMEN'S EFFORTS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
6.	Enlightenment and Advocacy.	3.2	Positive
7.	Effective implementation of National Gender Policy.	2.7	Positive
8.	Domestication of international instruments on women's rights and privileges.	2.6	Positive
9.	Women empowerment.	3.1	Positive
10.	Community advocacy through traditional rulers and institutions.	3.1	Positive

Source: Field Survey,2021

Grand mean $\sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{3.2+2.7+2.6+3.1+3.1}{5}$ 14.7 /5 = 2.9.

Research Question 3: How best can women be mobilized to contribute efficiently in national development?

Figure 3: RESPONSES ON MOBILIZATION OF WOMEN TOWARDS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

S/N	Questionnaire Items	X	Decision
11.	Gender advocacy group and sensitization.	2.8	Positive
12.	Federal and State Ministry of Women Affairs.	3.1	Positive
13.	Political Parties.	3.3	Positive
14.	Rural advocacy and awareness.	3.3	Positive
15.	Educational institutions.	2.9	Positive

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Grand mean $\sum \frac{x}{n} = \frac{2.8+3.1+3.3+3.3+2.9}{5}$ 15.4/5 = 3.1

Data Analysis

The index of figure 1 outlined responses on the various factors responsible for conditions militating against women's roles towards national development. Data elicited from the cluster of five questionnaire options as seen in 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 showed positive responses on myriad of attitudinal, institutional and societal constraints militating against efforts of women in national development. The grand mean of 3.0 underscored

the fact there are adverse indicators responsible for challenges constraining efforts of women in national development.

Furthermore, figure 2 attempts to establish the specific measures to mitigate against conditions constraining women's efforts towards national development in Nigeria. The measures outlined received positive response above 2.5 from data elicited from the cluster of five questionnaire options as seen in 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The grand mean of 2.9 responses is an indication that resonate the importance of the measures outlined.

The last figure 3 illuminates plausible measures through which women can be effectively mobilized to contribute meaningfully in national development. Information elicited from the respondents in a cluster of five questionnaire items as contained in items 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 showed that women advocacy groups, government, political parties, and educational institutions have crucial roles in the mobilization of women. The calculated 3.1 grand mean showed the imperatives of the measures outlined in the mobilization of women towards national development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Basically, the inclusion and participation of women in various facets of national life is strategic in the actualization of priorities of national development. However as showed in scholarly submissions and empirical findings, women grapples with numerous challenges which have limited their energy and drive in contributing meaningfully in the development process of Nigeria nation-state. Hence, the calculated grand mean of 2.9 responses in Figure 2, indicate that there are measures imperative to mitigate against the constraining conditions and 3.1 grand mean in Figure 3, further underscored the effective ways through which women can be mobilized to contribute effectively in national development.

Conclusively, it is undisputable fact that the women are critical in every sustainable development. Hence, this factuality has over the decades elicited serious attention on the part of the government, relevant stakeholders, gender civil society organizations, the religious institutions and our traditional rulers on the imperatives of the women in national development. Beyond the measures embellished in Figure 2 and Figure 3, the following are fundamentals for the empowerment of women to contribute effectively in national development.

1. The need for federal government to review National Policy on Gender, 2006 in deference to emerging challenges. Hence, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs should review objectives and targets of National Policy on Gender to reflect the current realities and respond more efficiently to the expectations of women in national development. Furthermore, the federal government in collaboration with the state and local government should establish organizational and structural framework for effective implementation of its objectives and targets for the empowerment of Nigeria women.

2. It is also expected that the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs should develop inter-ministerial policy blue-print in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity for empowerment programme for women across the 36 states and FCT of the federation.

3. The state governments and local government authorities should give more priorities to the empowerment of women. This lofty ideal can be achieved through a comprehensive Rural Empowerment Programme designed to empower urban and community women to be self-reliant and productive towards the growth of rural and state economies.

4. The Nigeria media, civil society and community-based organizations should intensify campaign for social, economic and political empowerment of Nigeria urban and rural women.

5. Synergized roles between the government with religious institutions and community leaders should intensify efforts through legislations, advocacy and persuasion to eliminate obnoxious practices constraining efforts of women in self-reliance and national development.

7. It is expected that through appropriate legislations and policy framework, the government (at every level of governance) should encourage girl-child education. Again, intense campaign and awareness particularly in the Northern states of Nigeria is imperative within this trend.It is therefore anticipated that empowerment of women is fundamental to national development.

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