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A Philosophical Reflection on Gender Inequality and the Status of Women in the 21st Century Nigeria Social Environment

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Abstract:

The twenty-first century Nigeria is burdened with myriads of problems mostly on the issue of gender inequality. Centuries back owing to cultural stereotypes, womanhood for male chauvinists like Aristotle means weaker sex (both in intellect and body) and inferior citizen. As human society progresses, Aristotelian thought penetrate the minds of the societies including, Nigeria and control their way of thinking. Prior to 21st century in Nigeria, it is observed that the status of women is grossly devalued, culturally insignificant and politically unrecognisable because there is the commonality of the general belief system that women are inferior and they belong to the 'Kitchen'. This trend continues to affect the social representation of women and equally gives a repulsive definition of womanhood starting from the level of the family down to the circular Nigerian society. With the beginning of 21st century in Nigeria, women meticulously and rationally prove that they are also instrumental for positive changes in the social environment. Women have initiated and championed vital programmes and policies in the country. Those who find themselves into politics have displayed exceptional administrative and political dexterities. In the light of the above, this study theoretically examines the status of women in the 21st century Nigeria, giving emphasis for the rationale behind gender equity in the Nigerian social environment and a need to reposition the ancient Aristotelian philosophy of gender inequality. The study therefore suggests that, for a sustainable social environment in Nigeria, gender equity should be the nucleus of every policy.

Keywords: Equity, social, Nigeria, gender, inequality

1. Introduction

Rtd. General Muhamadu Buhari, the President of Nigeria once retorts to an interview granted to his wife Aisha Buhari by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2016 saying that, his wife (Aisha) is deficient of political knowledge, belongs to his kitchen and other inner rooms. Buhari fails to know that though women and men have different biological and physiological make-ups, both are furnished with rational faculties which enable them to advance their environment. In recent years globally, gender marginalisation and low involvement of women in decision making have increasingly gotten recognition, attention and challenge in most societies especially in Nigeria. Religious and social groups, non-governmental organisations and human rights scholars have challenged this principle of alienation of women from certain societal responsibilities following the 1975 declaration as the International Women's Year by the United Nations.

Globally in this 21st century, women explicitly are growing forces in various human endeavours in the social environment. In politics, there are female heads of government. Angela Merkel (Chancellor of Germany: 22 November, 2005), Sheikh Hasina (Prime Minister of Bangladesh: 6 January, 2009), Jacinda Ardern (Prime Minister of New Zealand: 26 October, 2017), Erna Solberg (Prime Minister of Norway: 16 October, 2013), Mette Frederiksen (Prime Minister of Denmark: 27 June, 2019), Katrin Jakobsdottir (Prime Minister of Iceland: 30 November, 2017), Sophie Wilmes (Prime Minister of Belgium: 27 October, 2019), Mia Mottley (Prime Minister of Barbados: 25 May, 2018), Ana Brnabic (Prime Minister of Serbia: 29 June, 2017), Sanna Marin (Prime Minister of Finland: 10 December, 2019), Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic (President of Croatia: 18 February, 2015), Jeanine Anez (President of Bolivia: 12 November, 2019). etc. Administratively, CNN amidst the outbreak of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19), on April 16, 2020 reports that: -

Women leaders are doing disproportionately great job at handling the pandemic. In Taiwan, early intervention measures have controlled the coronavirus pandemic so successfully that it is now exporting millions of face masks to help the European Union and others. Germany has overseen the largest-scale coronavirus testing program in Europe, conducting 350,000 tests each week, detecting the virus early enough to isolate and treat patients effectively. In New Zealand, the prime minister took early action to shut down tourism and impose a month-long lockdown on the entire country, limiting coronavirus casualties to just nine deaths. All these three places have received accolades for their impressive handling of the coronavirus pandemic. They are scattered across the globe: one is in Asia and the other is in the South Pacific. But they have one thing in common: they are all led by women. The success of these and other women-led governments in dealing with a global pandemic is all the more noteworthy, given that women make up less than 7% of world leaders.

Significantly, women are also great administrators; thereby showing no crystal scientific difference between the Intelligent Quotient (IQ) of man from that of a woman.

Women constitute half of the world's population which makes them a major stakeholder in the progress of any social environment. Agbalajobi in using Nigeria women as specimen states that: -

Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country and are known to play vital roles as mother, producer, time manager, community organizer and social and political activist. In most societies' women assume five key roles: mother, producer, home-manager, community organizer and socio-cultural and political activists.¹

Presently, women are seen as positive agents of positive change. There is a dictum that 'educating a man is educating an individual, educating a woman is educating the entire generation.' Women are so important in the environment to extent that it cannot exist without the existence of a woman.

Environment is the relationship between man and the physical environment for the sake of protecting and enhancing benefits in the environment. Okechi sees environmental philosophy as: - "deeply engaging with knowledge in the area of the physical environment and its social component. It raises existential questions about the environment and its dimensions of being, usage, conservation, justice, politics, economics, value, social considerations and other philosophical issues."² However, the duty of optimising social environment is not only central to man rather, woman as well has vital roles to play. In spite of such significant contributions and major changes in women's roles in the social environment in recent times, a traditional attitude still ravages the status of women in many Nigerian societies. The point is that, most societies in Nigeria still categorise women as second-class citizens.

Gender inequality is a global issue which champions the marginalisation of women at all levels. From its nature, gender inequality depicts subordination, discrimination and oppression against women. Here, women are treated as weaker sex. These deprivations manifest in diverse forms; political, economic, socio-cultural dimensions, etc. Politically, women are not only underrepresented, but are also victims of repressive public policies and political violence. Economically, women are discriminated against, particularly in terms of employment in the economy due to the occupational structure of employed persons, access to land, credit facilities and other financial resources, and as victims of poverty. On the socio-cultural front, women have suffered no better fate. In some societies with respect to education, women are under-privileged, coming second far behind their male counterparts in terms of adult literacy level, primary and secondary school enrolment, and record high rate of primary school dropouts.

Gender inequality, difference, oppression and social exclusion slow social, economic, and political development in the society. Omotola puts it that: - "these developments have been imputed largely to the door steps of certain cultural practices that relegate women to the background and the low responsiveness of government to these issues."³ Gender inequality however, destroys self-reliance, slows creativity and increases domestic violence due to the patriarchal ideology that women are men's property. This study however theoretically concerns itself with the philosophical analysis of gender inequality in Nigeria especially in the face of 21st century.

2. Meaning of Gender Inequality

The word Gender inequality is a coinage of two different English words: 'Gender' and 'Inequality'. Gender primarily describes the social, cultural, political and philosophical expectations and roles given to women and men as a result of their sex in a particular society while inequality is the state of social disparity. In seeking for scholarly definitions of gender inequality, several efforts have been made to develop that. According to Ani, gender inequality is the: - "documented conditions of unequal opportunities and life chances for both between men and women with one sex holding an unjustified domination over the other."⁴ Dzurgba sees the concept in the form of sexism which he defines as: - "the belief that women are weak, less intelligent and less important than men."⁵ Hooks gives a kind of summary as regards to gender inequality: -

Gender inequality commonly revolves around three meanings: first, men usually experience better opportunities, more freedom, and higher social regard than women who share the same social characteristics (such as class origins, race, nationality, and age); second, men usually hold sway in marriages and other direct relationships between genders; and third, men occupy a preponderance of the social positions that possess significant political, economic, legal, or cultural power...⁶

Thus, gender inequality places particular emphasis on the superiority men more than that of women. Further, it calls for unwarranted discrepancy between the locations of men and women in the society.

3. Philosophical Survey of Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a very influential phenomenon that has constantly evolved in almost every facet of academic discourse including in the study of philosophy. As a discipline, philosophy: - "studies man and things that surround him both visible and invisible."⁷ Philosophy however, concerns with all of reality including human cultures in so far as they exist or are conceivable by the intellect in the environment. The subjugation of women to men's control have a philosophical history. The Greeks were the first to compile the status of women into academic discourse. Through their promotions of patriarchal thoughts which vehemently influence their conception about women, the Greeks define the right and nature of women and put them in a position of alterity which initiates marginalization process. They use various derogatory expression at their disposal to posit the status of women. Outside the Greeks cultural theories, one of the most recognised account of gender inequality is expressed in the Hebrew-Christian account also known as Adamic period. This Hebrew-Christian accounts holds that: -

Lord God took the dust of the ground and formed a man. He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being. Having made a man, the Lord God said to himself that it was not good that the man should be alone. "I will make him a helper fit for him." Therefore, the Lord God caused the man to sleep deeply. While he had a deep sleep, God took one of his ribs and closed the place with flesh. With the rib that God had taken from the man, he made a woman and gave her to the man.⁸

From this account, Adam is blamed and punished for his failure to control his wife, Eve who actually violates the order given to them in the first garden on earth. This Christian account is categorical on the position of women in relation to men. In accordance with divine will and purpose, women were instructed to be subordinate, submissive, obedient and loyal to their husbands who are heads, masters, bosses, mentors and leaders. Interestingly, scholars who subscribe to this Christian account do not know that it has sociological and philosophical significance. Ritzer argues that "when God instructed the first man and woman to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, the both man and woman were given authority and power, individually and collectively, to subdue and have dominion over the earth with all its living and non-living creatures. In this context, both man and the woman were held responsible and accountable to God."⁹

In the history of philosophy, though some scholars believe in the equality before law of all human beings some still preach gender inequality. Those who champion gender inequality throughout history make shocking contributions thereby making gender inequality discourse and its practical realisation, a continuing ideal of humanity established, fostered and sustained by scholars whose goal were to establish what they considered as two distinctive categories of human beings. In the ancient period for example, Plato through creation theory proposes a theory which in disguise supports gender inequality. In citing Grimshaw on Plato's creation theory, Akande states: -

According to this theory, all souls were originally implanted in male bodies and given volition, sensation and emotion. They were all males and were equal; to continue to be male. Souls had to conquer their emotions and develop their intellects. All those who failed to master their irrational and emotional instincts were deemed incapable of reason, and they to be reborn as women.¹⁰

Woman according to Plato is an undeveloped man. This forms the basis of this argument that woman should be confined to private life while man should be in-charge of the state administrations.

Thomas Aquinas who represents medieval era has a similar view to that of Plato because women according to him are the products of environmental pollution. Aquinas argues that, women are less intelligent than men; men have perfect reason and stronger virtue than women. Amaku writes: "Aquinas's belief that man is superior to woman is manifest from his definition of a woman. He agrees with Aristotle that woman is defective and a misbegotten male... The superiority of man over woman, in the judgement of Aquinas, is not a question of humiliating women, or inferiorizing them; it is due to the natural necessity of order."¹¹ To Thomas Hobbes, men are gifted with higher wisdom and valour than women have. The aim of this greater wisdom according to Hobbes is to keep monarchies from collapsing.

4. Aristotle's Philosophy of Gender Inequality

Aristotle (384-322 B.C) is born in Stagira Northeast of Thrace. He is an ancient Greek philosopher popularly known as the founder of sex polarity because he is the first scholar to critically investigate the significance differences between men and women. At first, he dismisses Socratic ideas that men and women who shares the same circumstances and education could achieve the same level of virtue. Women in the view of Aristotle are physiological defective of character and behaviour, and are also intellectually inferior. That between male and female, the former is by nature superior and ruler, and the later inferior and subject. Aristotle asserts: - "Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind."¹² Women on the other hand are essentially misbegotten males, cursed by nature with lamentable physical and emotional deficiencies. Femaleness in this case is regarded as the deformity that affects half of the human race. he compares a woman to a slave and an amoral child: "for the slave has no deliberative faculty at all, the woman has but it is without authority and the child has, but it is immature...the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying."¹³ Thus, there is a permanent inequality between men and women.

Aristotle sees man as a natural ruler; that is the reason a husband should rule over his wife which is a constitutional rule; "... the male is by nature fitter for command than the female..."¹⁴ The male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature. This act of commanding and obeying according to Aristotle is a moral virtue. A woman by implication, cannot carry forward the difficult reasoning process needed to acquire wisdom associated with the syllogism because of the weakness of her mind. Aristotle states clearly that men and women by nature have different psychologies, and even that, men are psychologically superior to women.

In terms of procreation, Aristotle maintains that both the male and female are the principles of the process of procreation; the male is the forming principle who gave the seed and the female procures the material element for warmth which is lacking in the female principle. Aristotle considers women incapable for education. Onwunali-Ugo states that: - "Aristotle does not see woman fit of qualified for education, politics and for the study of philosophy, hence women are maimed men."¹⁵ Women rather, are capable only of friendships of inequality with their husband in a marriage. This inequality flows from the superior nature of the husband in relation to the wife.

5. Social Status of Nigeria Women Prior to 21st Century

Prior to 21st century in Nigeria, almost every tribe practice gender inequality. The society describes women as weaker sex both physically and mentally. Dzugba infers that: -

In Nigerian society, women were associated with physical weakness, low intelligence, mental dullness, lack of mental alertness, less integrity and less importance. The graceful qualities of women are taken for a complete physical, mental, moral and social weakness and a natural handicap. In relation to this view, men see themselves as having physical strength, intelligence, mental alertness, great integrity and self-importance. It is on account of this perspective that men engage in discrimination and segregation against women in domestic life, educational training, employment opportunities, occupational promotions, management positions, housing and division of labour.¹⁶

He further states that: -

In Nigerian society, men have more cultural, religious, social, economic and political power than women. Men are the custodians of both ideological and material values. As a result, men have been able to subdue and have dominion over women. Men have consistently used this power to impose law, orders, customs, traditions, beliefs, practices, world-view and code of behaviour on women. It is in this context that women are socialised to be subordinate, submissive, humble, obedient, unassertive and undemanding while men are socialised to be independent, assertive, strong, bold, aggressive, demanding and domineering.¹⁷

Thus, the limitation on the rights of women is culturally determined. Women are made to believe for past decades that their rightful place was in the home; as housewives, producers and makers of children while their husbands carry on with societal tasks such as politics and governance.

The Nigerian society prior to 21st century dates back before the coming of the colonial masters and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1945. Nigeria is a Federal Republic comprising of 36 states grouped into 6 geopolitical zones with a Federal Capital Territory located in Abuja. The country is located in West-Africa and shares borders with the Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroun in the East, Niger in the North and the Atlantic Ocean in the South. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population of over 200 million, consisting of 3 major ethnic groups with diverse languages. The major tribes in Nigeria comprise of Igbo, Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba. These tribes culturally support gender inequality. For instance, among the Yoruba people of South Western Nigeria, the wife (Aya) is under traditional obligations to be submissive to the husband (Okò). This is popularised in the Yoruba expression: "Okò lolori Aya", that the husband is the master/crown of the wife. This is similar among the Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria where women are also considered to be the weaker sex. Wives address their husbands as "nnam ukwu", meaning "My Lord or My Master." While to the Hausa/Fulani of Northern Nigeria, they operate what they call "matan kule", that is purdah. The Hausa/Fulani uses Islam to subject women to men's authority, power and domination. Purdah keeps women indoors both night and day; they are to be seen and heard in purdah, but never to be seen and heard in public. Women under Purdah are denied freedom of movement and interaction, it separates them from the mainstream of public worship and social activities in the areas of politics, business, civil service, education, etc. The essence of this, they claim, was to checkmate any tendencies towards infidelity and promiscuity on the part of women.

Prior to 21st century in Nigeria, women are side-line from holding certain political posts. According to Agina-Ude: - The political marginalization of women in Nigeria was well played out during the First Republic (1960-1966) when there were only two female legislators, Mrs. Wuraola Esan and Mrs. Bernice Kerry in the federal parliament, and two others, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Janet Muokelu in the Eastern House of Assembly. There was no female minister. During the Second Republic, there was one female senator out of 571, and 11 members of the House of Representatives out of 445. In the 19 states of the federation, there was no female representation in all the State Houses of Assembly, neither was there a female chairperson nor councilor at the local government level. Under the infamous transition programme of General Babangida, the longest and most expensive in Nigeria (1985-1993), women were also grossly alienated. For instance, in the 19-member Political Bureau of 1986, only two were women. In the 1990 local government elections, 3 women were elected out of 591. In the State Houses of Assembly, there were 27 out of 1172 members, where there was no women legislator in 14 States. In the House of Representatives, women counted 14 out of 589, and 1 out of 91 in the Senate. Of the 3000 presidential aspirants in 1991, only 8 were women.¹⁸

Nigerian society then is a male-dominated venture (patriarchal) where traditional male values are supreme not only in the family, but also in the economic, social, political and religious dimensions. Because of these dimensions, the traditional Nigeria societies impose harmful traditional practices such as humiliating widowhood rites, taboos against women acquisition of property and exclusion from decision making in the family or community.

Despite this marginalization meted against women in this period in Nigeria, some of these women either as individuals or groups stand-out because of the kind of positive roles they play in the social environment. Women like: - Queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Kambasa of the bonny kingdom, Efunsetan Aniwura the famous warrior in Yorubaland, Madam Tinubu who supplied arms to Egba people in the 19th century, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who led a protest against discriminatory taxation and British high-handedness, Aba Women's Riot of 1929, Princess Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin, Henrietta Lawson, Hajia Gambo Sawaba, Keziah Fashina, Oyikan Morenike, Kofoworolu Pratt, Flora Nwakauche, Janet Mokelu, etc. These women then confront, overcome oppression and violence in Nigeria; they challenge government then and make her to reverse some of her decisions in the nation.

6. Women and the 21st Century Nigeria Social Environment

Twenty-First marks the new dawn for the total redefinition of the status of women in Nigeria. Nigerian women in this period enjoy tremendously Fundamental Human Rights and gender equity. Nigeria like other developed countries see how instrumental everyone can be. For instance, president Buhari during 2019 International Women's Day with the

theme: - 'Balance for Better' enjoins the rest of the world to act on the theme of which is highlighting the all-important quest for a gender-balanced world. In Nigeria, several reforms agenda, policies, development plans and programmes have been put into place to bridge gender gap and promote equality. Among these policies are: -

- Better life for rural women (1987)
- Family Support Programme (1994)
- Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) (1996)
- National Policy on Women (2000)
- National Gender Policy (2006)
- Establishment of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (1999)

These policies anchor on the development of the family, strengthen the human rights of women, improve health care delivery and the general wellbeing of women. Women Rights in Nigeria are legally supported through the Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Criminal Code and Penal Code Laws of Nigeria, Customary Laws and practices and the police Act, as well as several policies such as National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP), National Population Policy, National Policy on Women, National Policy on Sexuality Education in Schools, Nutrition Policy, Universal Basic Education Program, Micro Credit Scheme, National Policy on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, National Policy on HIV/AIDS, etc. The Section 15 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that "no one shall be discriminated against on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status and ethnic ties."¹⁹

With these constitutional provisions and rights, the promotion of women issues become recognized in the Nigeria social environment. Olojede states how successive Nigerian governments respond to the challenges of gender politics;

Much earlier in 1989, the Federal Military Government, in compliance with the United Nation's directive, established the National Commission for Women by Decree 30. The Commission was to improve the welfare of women in general, to promote responsible womanhood and maternal health, stimulate actions that would improve civic, political, cultural, economic and educational conditions of women, support the work of NGOs, co-ordinate government and women's organizations, encourage the establishment of co-operative societies, formulate and propagate moral values within the family units, and work towards the total elimination of all socio-cultural practices tending to discriminate against and dehumanize womanhood.²⁰

Thus, the 21st century Nigeria government promotes the full birth of women rights equal to that of their male counterparts. The twenty-first century Nigeria records numerous great women who are known for their intellectual, political, academic, social, spiritual and economic empowerment measures. Women are the fundamental human reservoir of Nigeria as they control most of the non-monetary economy (subsistence, agriculture, bearing children, domestic labour etc.). Women henceforth are seen playing roles hitherto regarded as the exclusive reserves of men in the economic, political and social lives of the society in the Nigerian setting.

In 2010, the minister of information and communication, Prof. Dora Akunyili launch campaign of re-branding Nigeria. To her, Nigerian image has been branded negatively and so, there is the need to create in the world the new image of Nigeria through the process of re-branding, with the slogan 'Nigeria, good people, great nation.' Thus, to re-brand Nigeria is not to prioritize the externality but ultimately the internality. From 1999, women are fully included in the Nigerian politics; President Olusegun Obasanjo appointed a number of women into the Federal Executive Council, Dr. (Mrs.) Kema Chikwe (Minister of Transport), Mrs. Dupe Adelaja (Minister of State Defence), Dr. (Mrs.) Bekky Ketebu-Igwe (Minister of State, Ministry of Solid Minerals), Dr. (Mrs.) Amina Ndalo (Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Health), Mrs. Pauline Tallen (Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology), Hajia Aishatu Ismaila (Minister of Women Affairs), and Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku (Special Adviser to the President on Women Affairs). President Musa Yar'Adua, in his short-lived administration appointed: - Saudatu Bungudu, Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, Diezani Alison-Madueke, Dora Akunyili and Grace Epkiwhre in his cabinet. In 2011, President Jonathan appointed 33% of women into political offices. They include; Zainab Maina (Women Affairs), Prof. Ruqayyatu Rufai (Education), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Finance), Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi (Niger Delta Affairs, State), Diezani Alison-Madueke (Petroleum), Omobolaji Johnson (Communication Technology), and Viola Onwuliri (Foreign Affairs, State). The first tenure administration of President Muhammadu Buhari around 2015-2019 included more women in his cabinet because of their value in political administration. These women made list in Buhari's cabinet: - Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed (Minister of Finance), Aisha Alhassan (Minister of Women Affairs), Amina J. Mohammed (Minister of Environment), Zainab Ahmed (Minister of state for Budget and National Planning), Aisha Abubakar (Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment). While in Buhari's second tenure include; Sharon Ikeazor (Minister of State for Environment), Hajiya Zainab Ahmed (Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning), Rahmatu Tijjani (Minister of State, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Dame Paulen Tallen (Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development), Hajia Sadiya Umar-Farouk (Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management), Hajia Maryam Katagun (Minister of State of Industry, Trade and Investment), Sen. Gbemisola Saraki (Minister of State for Transport). Also, in not less than two months in 2020, Nigeria's former Minister of Finance; Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala receives four international assignments among which include: - member of South African economic advisory, World Health Organisation (WHO) special envoy for the newly inaugurated Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, and other international appointments.

Outside politics, Nigerian women have serve in certain sensitive offices in the past: - Dr. Sarah Alade (Deputy Governor of Central Bank), Ndi Okereke Onyike (former Managing Director of the Nigerian Stock Exchange), Prof. Dora Akunyili (former Director General, National Agency for Food and Drugs Control (NAFDAC) and Minister of Education) before her demise, Dr. Obiageli Ezekweseli (former Senior Special Assistant to former President Obasanjo on Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (otherwise known as Due Process Unit), Mrs Evelyn Oputu (Managing Director of

Nigerian Bank of Industry), Mrs. Ifueko Omoigui Okauru (Immediate past Executive Chair Federal Inland Revenue Service), Marilyn Amobi (Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Nigeria Bulk Electricity Trading Plc, NBET), Adejoke Orellope-Adefulire (Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs), Sharon Ikeazor (Executive Secretary, Pension Transitional Arrangement Director (PTAD), Toyin Adeniji (Executive Director, Micro Enterprises, Bank of Industry), Mojisola Adeyeye (Director General, National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), etc. Satisfactorily, these show consciously-motivated commitments of women.

7. Possible Consequences of Countenancing on the Philosophy of Gender Inequality in Nigeria

Reports around the world especially in Nigeria show women's compelling contributions in the social environment. This means that, since women participate actively for societal development, there is need to reposition those negative philosophies against their status of women. To Adebimpe: - "many women have taken up business ownership and are exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities as a means of generating an income and sidestepping the harsh reality and discriminatory practices inherent in the corporate sphere."²¹ This is enough to disregard every philosophy or ideology that supports or promotes gender inequality. But if Nigerians should persist on the practice of gender inequality, it may prevent the enhancement of prosperity and well-being of Nigerian women. For instance, social exclusion will prevent women from involving and participating in occupational activities at certain levels of Nigerian economy. Gender inequality will set backwards efforts towards the actualization of creative education in the Nigerian schools and also threaten future progress in Nigeria. It will return Nigeria to a state of undue gender marginalization, discrimination and exploitation by the men folk through the implementation of their religions and cultural beliefs, traditional prejudices which placed men as super human beings. To stay away from this, Nigeria needs and deserves gender equity for improvements and quality of life. Nigeria needs an environment where the benefits of economic and social development will reach everyone; a world where the major economies are held accountable to their many commitments.

8. Conclusions

Whatever the cultural dimensions, women have proven that they have important roles to play in the advancement of social environment. Nigeria includes human societies that have realised that the growth and development of any nation depend on the eradication of gender inequality. Women can achieve social development because they are the majority, influence the youth and even convince their husbands. Men and women have the same biological structures but differ in terms of reproductive organs. In the Nigerian practical society, it is obvious that men and women cannot enjoy and express human love without the other. Often times, men and women say to each other: "my dear, I love you." "Do you love me?" This actually shows that gender inequality lacks logical clarity because it is a mere cultural fabrication. Women are not properties of men; they are human beings that also have vital roles to play in the Nigerian society. Unfortunately, traditional belief on gender inequality has been reinforced by the two imported religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity, both of which preach that women should be submissive to their husbands, the heads of the family. This has prompted the Nigerian society to measure a woman's devotedness to God partially in terms of her loyalty and submission to her husband. Within this context, women are expected to be home keepers in all ramifications, including child rearing. In conclusion, women should be empowered to participate meaningfully and positively in cultural, religious, social, economic and political activities in Nigeria.

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