

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Challenges Faced by Women Professionals in the Development of the Society in Nigeria

Sarkinfada, Halima

Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundations,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

Dr. Umar, Maimuna Rabo

Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundations,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

Abstract:

The paper discussed the challenges faced by women professionals in the development of the society in Nigeria. Women have always played an important role in the progress of a nation, even as they emerge as, scholars, poets, writers, reformers and administrators Nurses, Mothers Leaders in various spheres of life. They have also contributed to societal development as professionals in all field of human endeavours. Though women have triumphed in pursuing careers and professionalism but they still envisage some challenges in crucial aspects of life. This challenges have served as deterrent to women development some of these challenges include: traditional and cultural challenges, religious challenges and economic challenges. The paper also considered some professional challenges such as negotiation and networking and building long-lasting business relationships, emotions spoil leadership skills, women tend to push themselves too hard, balancing work and family life, low risk-bearing ability, and delegation. In conclusion Women played an important part in drawing attention to the role of women in the development process of the society. For a long time now there have been tough competitions against male counterpart since most of the fields have been dominated by men. It is therefore, necessary that we revisit the level of inequalities and disparity that exist in among male and female counter part in Nigeria, if we will make good development impact in the lives of all citizens. The more time we give women, and their contributory opportunities to the development of the house hold income and ownership of land and other capital income generating ventures, the better their chances of seeking and having justice in their work and community issues.

Keywords: Challenges, professional women, development, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Women are a major stakeholder in the development project of any society. Globally, the issues of women contributions and active participation in political leadership, decision making in societal development have been attracting a lot of attention from scholars. They are serving as teachers, doctors, Engineers, Administrators and even head of the states. The office of the first lady was first institutionalized by Maryam Babangida. Other women who have made impact in the country's politics include, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Minister of Finance. Mrs. Obi Ezekwesili also left a huge landmark in the history of Nigerian politics. The late Prof Dora Akunyili, former Minister for Information, also performed credibly when she was the Director-General of National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC); the inferiority complex that exist between men and women. The issue of male chauvinism and women do not lend support to a fellow women counterpart when it comes to nomination and election, women running for public office typically gain additional, unnecessary scrutiny on their private lives, building a support network has also serve as deterrent to women development: It is therefore, necessary that we revisit the level inequalities not disparity that exist in Nigeria, if we will make good development impact in the lives of all citizens. The more time we give women, the better the contributory opportunities to the development of the house hold income and ownership of land and other capital income generating ventures, the better their chances of seeking and having justice in their work and community development.

Women have always played an important role in the progress of a nation, even as they emerge as, scholars, poets, writers, reformers and administrators Nurses, Mothers Leaders in various spheres of life. They have also contributed to societal development as professionals in all field of human endeavours. Today, the global world shows that female share of the global workforce is 45.4 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Women's formal and informal labor can transform a community from a relatively autonomous society to a participant in the national economy. Despite significant obstacles, women have continued to strive in developing rural communities and extended family's lifeline and formed a networked economic foundation for future generations (Macionisi & Plummer 2002). The role of women in the urban and rural workforce has expanded exponentially in recent decades.

Career women have remained professionals in all their fields of discipline. A professional is a member of a profession or any person who earn their living from specified professional activity. The term also describes the standard of education and training that prepare members of the profession with the particular knowledge and skills necessary to perform their specific role within the profession. In addition most professionals are subject to strict codes of conduct, enshrining rigorous ethical and moral obligations (Shepherd & Greene, 2001).

2. Women in Development (WID)

Is one theory which has remained prominent as regards women education and development The WID theory is associated with wide range of activities concerning women in the domain, which donor agencies, government and NGOs have become involved in since the 1970s (Tinker, 1990). The 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year at Mexico City, and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), gave expressions to the major preoccupations of women around the world improved educational and employment opportunities equality in political and social participation in increased health and welfare services. In sum, the WID movement that emerged during this period demanded social justice and equity for women. WID arguments were aimed at providing a rationale for directing scarce development resources to women Building upon the work of Boserup and others (Akuebe, 2012).

WID advocates claimed that failures to acknowledge and utilize women's productive role within and beyond the household were planning errors leading to the inefficient use of resources (Tinker, 1990). This help to make women-only focus in research and in the delivery of resources via women projects. By improving women access to technology and credit, women's productivity would increase and impact positively on national development. One of the women's productivity is justifiable in terms of economic returns as well as social returns.

3. Contribution of Women in Different Field

Women professionals have contributed to societal development in all spheres of life. Apparently their contributions are inexhaustible, but we would look at some professions where women have played a vital role as follows: The role of women in Nation Building cannot be over-emphasized. Over the years, women have been relegated to the background on issues of development, especially in developing countries, such as Nigeria. The reason may have been that, the views of women are always sentimental. While women have contributed positively to the progress of humanity, this article will focus on the role played by women in the development of Nigerian politics. For a very long time women and politics were standing far from each other and all was because of deeply rooted stereotypes which excluded the role of women in any political affairs. There was a strong belief that women have nothing to do with politics

Though, the likes of Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, Mrs Janet Mokuolu and others were members of the Eastern House of Assembly. The late Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, though not a full-fledged politician, was a very strong force to reckon with in the politics of the Western Region. Hajia Gambo Sawaba waged a fierce battle for the political and cultural emancipation of women in the North. They made impacts in pre-independence era and surmounted so many obstacles and limitation but their exploits still stand as a legacy up till today. The coming of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida's regime brought the role of women in the country's politics to the front burner. The office of the first lady was first institutionalized by Maryam Babangida. Other women who have made impact in the country's politics include, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Minister of Finance and Director General, World Trade Organization (William 1986).

4. Women in Government

In the modern era women are under-represented in most countries worldwide. Women have inadequate opportunities in social participation, especially in striving for political rights and power in the government and different institutions. Social status of women is relatively poor compared to men in different countries around the world, that contributes to generating the atmosphere of inferiority of women in the society. This tendency is still persistent, although women are increasingly being politically elected to be heads of state and government. As of January 2017, the global participation rate of women in national-level parliaments is 23.3%. In 2013, women accounted for 8% of all national leaders and 2% of all presidential posts. A number of countries are exploring measures that may increase women's participation in government at all levels, from the local to the national Out of 189 countries, listed in descending order by the percentage of women in the lower or single house, the top 10 countries with the greatest representation of women in national parliaments are (figures reflect information as of July 1, 2017; a represents a unicameral legislature with no upper house) (Alele-Williams, 1992).

5. Role of Women as Caretakers

Women are primary caretakers of children and elders on every country of the world. International studies demonstrate the when the economy and political organization of a society change women take the lead in helping the family adjust to new realities and challenges. They are likely to be the prime initiator for outside assistances, and play an important role of facilitating (for Hindering) changes in family. 'Rural women play a key a role in supporting their household and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural and overall well-being' (UN Women watch Organization)

6. The Role of Women as Educators

The contribution of women to a society transition from pre-literate to literate likewise is undeniable. Basic education is key to nation's ability to develop and achieve sustainability targets, Research has shown that education improve

agricultural productivity, enhance the status of girls and women, reduce population growth rates, enhance environment protection, widely raise the standard of living (Unaghia, 2006). It is the mother in the family who most often urges children of both genders to attend - and stay - in school. The role of women is at the front end of the chain of improvements leading to the family's community long-term capacity (Amalle, 1991).

7. Women in Arts

Women have played many roles in societies since the dawn of time ever changing with time and from society to society. Each society hold a special place and role for women good and bad. Freedoms and equality of women has varied from oppression to freedom. I will discuss some specific pieces of art and explain how the art shows the role of women in a specific society. I will tell you of their peril and achievements through time. Giving you a glimpse into the lives of women and how they were perceived by males and society. Some have revered women and some have disrespected them but through it all women have found a way to preserver. Women hold a place in history from culture to culture, and we see this in many pieces of art. From the art we can have a glimpse into a culture view of women and how they were treated in society. Women hold a place in history from culture to culture. In this piece of art you can see that an emphasis is put on family and women of upper class being fairly equal to men. Women in Egypt had the right to divorce, own property such as land, slaves, and were entitled to their belongings (Meighan, 1986).

8. Role of Teachers in Women Empowerment

As we celebrate the accomplishments women have made around the world, I can't help but question my involvement as an educator in any woman's empowerment. It is almost automatic that anyone educating a girl empowers her. However, concentrating solely on educating girls will not result in empowered women unless teachers are themselves skilled and active promoters of gender equality. Alongside families and communities, teachers from the front-line of a child's development and in many cases, spend more time with children than anyone else, acting not only as educators but also as conduits of information and change (Bhatia, 2006). Women teachers can be powerful role models for girl students, and can encourage, counsel, and help girls to complete their studies. Increasing the numbers of women teachers may also mean that girls in school are safer (Uhn & Hagen 1992).

9. Challenges Faced by Women in the Society

Women have life skills and abilities that are vital to their profession. Some of the skills include negotiation and networking and building long-lasting business relationships. However, they face a lot challenges that make them fail to utilize these skills, making them shy away from some vital development:

9.1. Challenges Faced by Women Professionals

The traditional and cultural beliefs about women professionals have serve as deterrent to women development in all spheres of life. Some of these challenges include:

- Traditional And Cultural Challenges
- Religious Challenges
- Economic Challenges

9.2. Traditional and Cultural Challenges

Women professional envisages challenges from the cultural and traditional communities where they lived and operate as literate women with a career, the society sees them as violators of traditional laws of the society which requires women to stay at home and their office is the kitchen. Women seen going out every day to offices or work place are seen as rebels and that their husband cannot control them. The tradition and cultural believes of the Northerners is contradicting what the religion says about education and professional development Marriage should serve as a hindrance to professional development, for one to survive the dwindling economic crises in the country today, professionalism in career development and economic prowess is required. The religion considers women as help mate and culture recognizes her as home maker, for women to function well in these areas she need education and social development fit properly in these capacities.

9.3. Religious Challenges

Many factors are seen as impediment to women education. Ada (1992) Identified religious misinterpretations and cultural practices as challenges to Women education in the North-west. Some women prefer to acquire religious education than the western education; the community uses tenets and obligations of religion to discourage women from attaining necessary development within the society. Religion should not be seen as barrier to professionalism (United Nations Report, 2014).

9.4. Economic Challenges

With almost 70% of the Nigerian population living below poverty and for women to progress and fight poverty they need to be included into resource allocation of the nation., but on the contrary women are kept to play a second fiddle in most spheres of life. The society refuses to consider women as capable to held leadership positions, most women professionals have acquired all the necessary experiences but the society fail to have faith in them that they can do better.

Thank God for Helen Jonson Sele of Liberia who became the first female president. When professional women are not empowered they tend to remain discouraged and economically they are handicapped.

Professional Challenges are Hurdles faced by women who have acquired skills to activate their Careers. They still face some challenges which are as follows:-

9.4.1. Have right Self Concept

In spite of all their accomplishments and professionalism, women for most times have to conform to the male idea of what a leader should look like, not having the right self concept of themselves have been a serious challenge to women role in development. Women have an inbuilt self tendency that they play a second fiddle in all spheres of human development and this has been detrimental to their achievement. It is necessary that women own their personality regardless of how the opposite sex perceives them. Self concept does not do justice to their talent. Talent is what does justice to their personality.

9.4.2. Building a Support Network

In spite of proving their credibility, dependability and worth, women often falter at building a support system for themselves. A lot of times women mistake 'who you should know' with 'what you should know'. This usually happens as a result of their showering extra focus on their work, but in an age when social media has made the world a real small place, networking is a thumb rule. In almost any type of entrepreneurial endeavor, a key contributor to success is access to connections and equity with people who can help them to get through the door. Without mincing words, women need to build equity with influencers and game changers in their role as society builders.

9.4.3. Access to Funding

Women face greater obstacles than men when starting a project, especially when it comes to investment and venture capital. Though it might be unintentional, men fund people who look and sound just like them. My piece of advice to women here is, 'Don't do it alone! Seek advice from a variety of sources, including co-founders, professional advisers such as accountants and lawyers, peer advisory groups, mastermind groups, board of advisers, counselors, and family members.' In so doing they can erect lasting projects.

9.4.4. Delegation

This stems from the earlier challenge of building a support system. Women often fear failure. Women need to understand that they need to work on their themselves, so that when they are leading, they should show their potentials, and be extra active not delegating responsibility which make them look incapable. Own the work and the scale, so you are understood as owners and not cogs in the larger machinery. They are to be the driving force and not the driver!

9.4.5. Low Risk-Bearing Ability

Women in Nigeria lead a protected life. They are less educated and not always economically self-dependent. All these factors reduce their ability to bear risk involved in running a societal development. Risk-bearing is an essential requisite of a successful development irrespective of gender. The sooner women internalize this and move on with great strides, the better. And once that is accomplished, women should stop waiting for permission or recognition from others in order to feel entitled to your success.

9.4.6. Balancing Work and Family Life

The ranking of this point at the bottom end in the list is not by chance but a deliberate idea. There has been sufficient chatter around this, both merited and unmerited. It has become a gender neutral goal. Work-life balance is a goal of many professionals regardless of their gender, but mothers who start career experience greater pressure of expectations as their role is multifaceted not only in their professional sphere but their personal life as well. And in this area, traditional gender expectations often still prevail.

Unequal distribution of household labor is still very much a part of reality. However, women have come a long way in managing expectations; it is time that the world understands gender equality in more ways than one.

Women do not have to prove so much today. The sooner they prove their mettle in balancing all, there will be a newer set of expectation and challenges. It is important to never lose sight of objectives, do your best, and chance will settle the rest.

9.4.7. Women Tend to Push Themselves Too Hard

Given a target, you will find that women tend to overextend their efforts in their quest to show their male counterparts that they can make it. They want to show that they are and can remain in control. As a woman, if you are out to build whatever business concept you have a huge success, you need to learn how to delegate. You need to know what a priority is and what isn't, and you need to learn how to manage time and resources well.

9.4.8. Emotions Spoil Leadership Skills

Women are naturally more emotional than men. This factor at times stands in the way of making critical decisions that affect their work. Women tend to lean more towards building relationships, which at times lead to taking the wrong decisions in matters arising. (Though not always), as compared to focusing on achieving targeted goals. Due to these

emotions, many women professionals find it difficult to work without being sentimental (UN Women watch Organization, 2001).

For a very long time, women were considered inferior to men. However, the role of a woman in society has significantly changed during recent decades (young, 1993). The first positive changes connected with the role of the women became especially obvious after the World War I. Gradually people started realizing the importance of women in the society as it is. It's safe to say that it didn't happen easily. It took lots of tears, fights, struggle for many generations of women to, at least, get the right to vote.

Women face numerous obstacles in achieving representation in governance. Their participation has been limited by the assumption that women's proper sphere is the 'private' sphere. Whereas the 'public' domain is one of political authority and contestation, the 'private' realm is associated with the family and the home. By relegating women to the private sphere, their ability to enter the political arena is curtailed. Even once elected, women tend to hold lesser valued cabinet ministries or similar positions. These are sometimes described as 'soft industries' and include health, education, and welfare (Williams, 1986). Far less often do women hold executive decision-making authority in more powerful domains or those that are associated with traditional notions of masculinity (such as finance and the military). Typically, the more powerful the institution, the less likely it is that women's interests will be represented. Additionally, in more autocratic nations, women are less likely to have their interests represented (Sarkinfada, 2017).

Additionally, women running for public office typically gain additional, unnecessary scrutiny on their private lives. For instance, fashion choices of politically active women are often picked apart by the media. In these 'analyses' women rarely gain approval from those in the media, who usually say they either they show too much skin or too little, or perhaps that they either look too feminine or too masculine. Bashevkin (2005) also notes that their romantic lives are often subject of much interest to the general population, perhaps more so than their political agenda or stances on issues. She points out that If they are in a monogamous, married relationship but have children, then their fitness for office becomes a question of how they manage being a politician while taking care of their children, something that a male politician would rarely, if ever, be asked (Uhn & Hagen, 1992).

9.4.9. Conclusion

Women played an important part in drawing attention to the role of women in the development process of the society. For a long time now there have been tough competition against male counterpart since most of the field have been dominated by men. It is therefore, necessary that we revisit the level inequalities not disparity that exist in Nigeria, if we will make good development impact in the lives of all citizens.

10. Way Forward

The more time we give women, and their contributory opportunities to the development of the house hold income and ownership of land and other capital income generating ventures, the better their chances of seeking and having justice in their work and community issues.

Our old policies of early marriages and lack of educational opportunities t the girl child should be redressed as to cope with the changing trend in the world today. Women on their own should work hard to encourage the mass action to change injustices and inhuman treatment against women and the society in general

11. References

- i. Ada, N. A. (1992), Paradox of equality of education opportunities for all citizens in Nigeria and challenges of rural transformations. *Journal of Art and Humanities* 4(2) 48-56.
- ii. Akuebe, F. N. (2012). Women in society. Status education and contribution to national development. *Journal of liberal studies* (special edition).9(1), 352-392.
- iii. Alele-Williams, G. (1992). Developing Nigeria Women Managers for socio-economic transformation Nigeria. *Journal of Management in Nigeria*. 27 (6).45-56.
- iv. Amale, E. (1991). Developing Nigeria Women Managers for socio-economic transformation Nigeria. *Journal of Management in Nigeria*. 27 (6). 45-52.
- v. Bashevkin, S. (2005), <http://www.sagepub.com/northouse6e/study/materials/reference/reference1.2.pdf> (PDF). www.sagepub.com. Retrieved 2015-04-09. External link in |title= (help)
- vi. Bhatia, K. K. (2006). *Principles' and Practice of Education*. Kalyani Publishers fourth revised edition. New Delhi.
- vii. Blakemore K. & Cooksey, B. (1981). *A sociology of education for Africa*. London. George Allen & Unwin Publishers. Ltd. Sociology: A Global Introduction London. Prentice hall.
- viii. British Council in Nigeria report, (2012).
- ix. Kizmo, DavidBri. 'Women nurses in World War 2 - Facts | World War Stories'. Retrieved 2015-04-09.
- x. Meighan, R. (1986). *Sociology of Educating*. Cassel Educational Ltd.
- xi. Memissi, F. (1991). *Women and Islam: A Historical and technological Enquiry*, Oxford Basil publishers Blackwell.
- xii. Miller, H. L. (1998), *Social foundations of Education: An Urban Focus*, New York: Collins Publishers.
- xiii. National Bureau of Statistics (2013). *Gender and Poverty Monitoring* NBS Abuja.
- xiv. National Population Commission Census (2006). [Www. Population Commission /ng.census/2006](http://www.populationcommission.ng/census/2006).
- xv. Reynolds A. (2005). Tips for women entrepreneur to fund their business

- (https://www.tomorrowmakers.com/articles/women_tips-for-women-entrepreneurs_to_fund_their_business. Sarkinfada, H, (2017). Stakeholders' perception of the contributions of women centers for continuing education to socioeconomic development of women-graduate in North-west Nigeria. Unpublished Ph. D thesis. Shepard J. M & Greene R.W (2001). 'Sociology and you' national textbook company Lincolnwood Illinois. Uhn, C. & Hagen K. (1992). *Economic Development and women's work in a Newly industrializing country: The case of Korea* working papers on women in International Development.
- xvi. Uku, P. (1992). 'Women and Political Parties' in Chizea and Njoku (eds) *Nigerian Women and the Challenges of Our Time*. Lagos Malthouse press, Ltd.
- xvii. Unaghia, A. O. (2006). *Sources of information on new economic partnership for Africa development. Library Philosophy and Practice. 8(2)*. Online library.Uni.edu:2000/LIPP/LIPP'8n2htm.
- xviii. United Nations (2014). *United Nations Report on Women and Girls Education*. <http://www.UN.education/efa/global.cocomprehensive.efa>.
- xix. Wikipedia 'http://www.sagepub.com/northouse6e/study/materials/reference/reference1.2.pdf'(PDF). www.sagepub.com. Retrieved 2015-04-09. External link in |title= (help)
- xx. William, G. A. (1986). *Education of Women for National Development*. A key note address at workshop on Women's Education in Nigeria under the auspices of Federal Ministry of Education. Lagos 23rd, September, *Year Book of Adult and Continuing Education 1975-1976*. Chicago Illinois Marvius Academy Media.
- xxi. Women's Bureau (WB) - Statistics on Registered Nurses'. Wwww.dol.gov. Retrieved 2015-04-09. Nursing Through the Generations'. www.valleychildrens.org
- xxii. Young, G. (!993). *Hierarchy and Class in Women Organization: A case study from Northern Mexico*. 'In Staudt K, (Eds). Op.cit.