

Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Women Empowerment in Ilorin West Local Government, Kwara-State, Nigeria

MODUPE OJO, OLASUNKANMI OSUNDINA
Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract. The debate on the role of women in national development has been a discourse at the front burner of contemporary issues. This contention, to fast-track the empowerment of women necessitated the Sustainable Development Goals 4 to advance their inclusiveness in the polity for national development. However, a negation of the above in empowering women will result in devastating socio-economic life of a nation and by extension would affect development and personal fulfilment of individual in the community. The paper adopted survey research design. The targeted population were women of Ilorin-West local government area, Kwara State. A cluster sampling technique was adopted to divide respondents into multiple groups. Four Hundred (400) questionnaire were administered and three hundred and eighty one (381) were retrieved for analysis. Equally, secondary data were used to interrogate some salient and relevant issues. The paper found out that education has a role in improving the lives of women with attendant benefit to empower and promote gender parity in society. Paper also revealed that there are some key positions in the Ilorin West local government area that are exclusively men-based. However, final submission was that women in this local government area do have opportunities in certain fields of endeavour. In conclusion, paper recommends that since gender parity is important and the role of women central to socio-economic development, government should enact a policy to ensure quality education become a major block of empowering women at every local government area in Nigeria.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Ilorin-West, Quality Education, Sustainable Development and Kwara State

1. Introduction

The debate and the role of women in national development has been a discourse at the front burner of contemporary issues. Women have often struggled and strived to liberate themselves from the authority and control of the other gender, traditional power, and structures, to secure equal rights for themselves, remove gender discrimination from laws, institutions and behavioural patterns as well as set legal standards globally to promote their full equality with the other gender. Women are integral part of a society and to an extent play important role in determining developmental outcome of a nation. Hence, scholars like Swami Vivekananda said that “the growth of a nation is measured by how well it treats its women”. Therefore, according to Priya (2017) their recognition in the society and their involvement in socio-economic and political affairs cannot be overemphasized.

Women empowerment is a recognised platform given to assist, promote, engage and develop the potentials found in a woman for the betterment of her society and the ability to function without any form of discrimination (Osundina et al, 2021). Over time the feminine gender has been limited to the domestic sphere of life, patriarchy gender prison, political exploitation, social oppression and human right neglect. However, awareness of equality and participation of women became an important key to open up the world of patriarchy and address it in which women were key actors (Jones 2009).

The Sustainable Development Goals which was one of the paths created by the United Nations to push issues that affect women such as empowerment, emancipation and equality were born at the United Nations Conference on sustainable development in Rio De Janeiro in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing the world. It was a replacement of the

Millennium Development Goal to tackle the indigents of poverty and expand education to all, women inclusive. Previous studies, has shown that women empowerment can to a large extent be promoted and achieved through access to quality education among women.

Quality education which is the 4th Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations is aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education to all especially women and promoting lifelong learning opportunity for all. It was formed to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education. Furthermore, this goal recognizes that increasing the availability of high quality education is essential to promoting sustainable development while a good education improves quality of life, equips women with the tools they need to develop innovative solutions to the world's greatest problems (Kolk 2016, Jaeger, Banaji, & Calnek-Sugin 2017).

In Nigeria, the heterogeneous nature of the country is characterized as one rooted in cultural, religious and traditional values and these factors have made women in Nigeria at the receiving end of gender oppression and exploitation accompanied by cultural, traditional practices, marital injunctions and religious doctrines that all disempower women from participating in public decision making processes. Women in Nigeria are constantly faced with having to fight against all these odds in order to gain their respect and freedom in the society and to give expression to her gender without condemnation nor restrictions placed on her by culture, religion, tradition and society (Monica 2017).

Ilorin-West is one of the sixteen local governments that make up Kwara State in the North Central geo-political zone. It is the largest and most populous local government in the city with a population of 365,221 as at 2006 National Population Census, it is predominately dominated by women who make up more than half of its population. It is also an Islamic city with roots in Islamic education. Although, over time, socio-cultural and religious beliefs have made individuals of this society give more attention and acceptance to the male child than to its female counterpart (Das Gupta and Chung, 2007 and Milazzo, 2012, Bumiller, 2015; Basu, 2016). The culture of Ilorin celebrates male superiority which are deep rooted in tradition. Hence, the socio-cultural and religious belief of these people contributed to the gender disparities and low gender empowerment in terms of access to quality education which has also led to an increase in the number of illiterate women

in the region. A woman is forced to believe that her life's existence is to marry and raise children and education is not necessarily important to the female gender, this belief has contributed immensely to gender discrimination, low- girl child empowerment, low national development and gender emancipation in Ilorin-West (Amara, 2011, Milazzo, 2012; Dudeja, Singh, Jindal & Bhatnagar, 2013).

2. Statement of the Problem

Women Empowerment is vital to the growth and development of the woman and to the growth and development of the society at large. And recent studies have shown that equal access to quality education irrespective of gender is a key enabler to drive sustainable development, fundamental human right, women empowerment and a basis for ensuring personal fulfilment. However, a negation of the above in the socio-economic life of a nation would bring devastating effect to development and personal fulfilment of individual in the community.

The prevailing negative contentions above are indicators seen in the socio-economic life of Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State. Even though women in this region are industrious, access to quality education to improve life chances and personal fulfilment to various opportunities are limited as a result of cultural biases to gender parity. Hence the motivation of this paper to seek ways in which this structural problem and misconception can be addressed using inclusive quality education as a platform of empowering and leveraging women of this area.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role quality education plays in improving the lives of women in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State.
- To ascertain how well gender equality has helped in developmental process in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State.
- To identify various opportunities of empowering women in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State.

4. Methodology

The paper adopted survey research design. This design was chosen because it permits the researcher information in their natural setting. This research design aided the researcher in ascertaining the views, ideas, opinion and feelings of women towards quality education and the extent to which quality education played a major role towards women empowerment in

Ilorin West local government. A cluster sampling technique was adopted and the reason for this, as well as the selection of Ilorin-West, is because Ilorin – West is the most populous local government among all the 16 local governments in Kwara State and it is predominantly dominated by women which make up more than half of its population. However, these women are found in various fields and areas of life hence the researcher divided these women into clusters in accordance to the fields and areas these women can be found so as to get a rounded and unbiased data from the targeted respondents.

Equally, secondary data were used to interrogate some silent and relevant issues germane to the work. Hence, United Nation publications, journals, articles, government gazette, Newspapers and Non-governmental Organization materials were used as sources of data collection.

5. Theoretical Framework

The theory for this paper is the Marxist theory which was developed in the 19th century by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. A major tenant of the theory is that it poses that economics is a dominant factor that brings about a change in the world but notably class struggle is the drive for social change. Marx believed that the society is made up of two classes, the bourgeoisies or business owners who control the means of production and the proletariat or workers whose labor transforms raw commodity into valuable economic goods. To maintain their position of power and privilege, the bourgeoisies employ social institutions as tools and weapon against the proletariat by physical cohesion to enforce laws, and private property right to the means of production. Marx’s therefore predicts that the inherent inequalities and exploitative economic relations

between the proletariat and the bourgeoisies would ultimately lead to a revolution in which capitalism would be abolished (Chappelow 2019).

The theory is relevant to the paper because it talks about a class struggle (male gender vs female gender). The upper class who can be considered as the patriarchal male and the lower class who can be considered as the women and the exploitation and injustice that goes on between these two classes. There is a class struggle that goes on between the men and women especially in Ilorin West where women are seen as second class citizens with no emergent need to be educated. The men in this culture are seen as the upper class with the upper hand and are in control of societal goods, values and traditions. The women are viewed as the lower class with little or no significance in the society besides the role they play as domestic or secondary individuals in their homes and in the society at large. The patriarchal system makes use of family, religion, culture, and traditional institutions as tools to oppress the lower class who are the women. Marx predicts a revolution in which the oppressed would over throw the oppressors in order to establish a class less society and this has started happening in some region, women are emerging and coming out to take up responsibilities in various aspects and space that exist in the region. Also, another relevance of this theory to this paper is that the act of consciousness to the revolution Karl Marx talked about can be seen as that powerful tool which can help empower and emancipate women from the clutches of beliefs, sentiments and patriarchal cage they have been confined in by society thereby bridging the gap that exist between men and women and mending the space society has created and formed about women.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the role of quality education in improving the lives of women in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State

Variables	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	UN Freq. (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
	Total=381						
Quality education is not a welcome idea for women in my community	35 (9.2%)	53 (13.9%)	231 (60.6%)	48 (12.6%)	14 (3.7%)	3.12	.875
Education has exposed me to better opportunities in my community	128 (33.6%)	205 (53.8%)	33 (8.7%)	10 (2.6%)	5 (1.3%)	4.16	.789
Education to an extent has made me independent and shown me how important it is to get one	127 (33.3%)	205 (53.8%)	26 (6.8%)	18 (4.7%)	5 (1.3%)	4.13	.833
Education has nothing to do with building my confidence and increasing my chances of participation and representation in my community	50 (13.1%)	75 (19.7%)	160 (42.0%)	82 (21.5%)	14 (3.7%)	3.17	1.028
Education has improved my life regardless of cultural and religious constrains of my environment	108 (28.3%)	198 (52.0%)	44 (11.5%)	21 (5.5%)	10 (2.6%)	3.98	.926
Average mean score						3.71	0.890

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, UN=Undecided.

Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Undecided; 1.5-2.49= strongly disagree; 2.5-3.49= Disagree; 3.5-4.9= Agree; 4.5-5.0= Strongly Agree.

Table 1 discloses that the respondents disagreed that quality education is not a welcome idea for women in my community ($\bar{X} = 3.12$, $SD= .875$). The participants agrees that education has exposed them to better opportunities in their community ($\bar{X} =4.16$, $SD=.789$), however the participants agree that education to an extent has made them independent and shown them how important it is to get one ($\bar{X} =4.13$, $SD=.833$), the respondents disagreed that education has nothing to do with building their confidence and increasing their chances of participation and representation in their community ($\bar{X} =3.17$, $SD=1.028$). The result also shows that the respondents agreed that education has improved their life regardless of cultural and religious constrains of their environment ($\bar{X} =3.98$, $SD=0.926$).

Lastly, the research question will be answered using the average mean score ($\bar{X} =3.71$, $SD=0.890$). This result shows that the respondents agrees that education has a role in improving the lives of women most especially in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of how gender equality help in the developmental process in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State

Variables	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	UN Freq. (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
Total=381							
If equal opportunities are given to both genders in the society Ilorin West will be a better Local Government	258 (67.7%)	73 (19.2%)	25 (6.6%)	20 (5.2%)	5 (1.3%)	4.47	.925
When women and men come together in politics, our community will more urbanized	255 (66.9%)	89 (19.2%)	22 (5.8%)	5 (1.3%)	10 (2.6%)	4.51	.872
Education to an extent has helped close the gender gap that exist in my community	55 (14.4%)	89 (23.4%)	166 (43.6%)	60 (15.7%)	11 (2.9%)	3.31	.996
Education doesn't guarantee equal access to power, resources, position and opportunities as the men because I am a woman	68 (17.8%)	141 (37.0%)	155 (40.7%)	10 (2.6%)	7 (1.8%)	3.66	.863
If gender equality was fully acknowledged in my community there would be a significant increase in the number of educated women	165 (43.3%)	166 (43.6%)	23 (6.0%)	20 (5.2%)	7 (1.8%)	4.21	.909
Average mean score						4.03	0.913

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, UN=Undecided.

Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Undecided; 1.5-2.49= strongly disagree; 2.5-3.49= Disagree; 3.5-4.9= Agree; 4.5-5.0= Strongly Agree.

Table 2 reveals that the respondents agreed that if equal opportunities are given to both genders in the society Ilorin West will be a better Local Government ($\bar{X} = 4.47$, $SD= .925$). The participants strongly agreed that when women and men come together in politics, our community will be more urbanized ($\bar{X} =4.51$, $SD=.872$), furthermore, the participants disagreed that education to an extent has helped close the gender gap that exist in their community ($\bar{X} =3.31$, $SD=.996$), the respondents agreed that education doesn't guarantee equal access to power, resources, position and opportunities as the men because they are woman ($\bar{X} =3.66$, $SD=.863$). The result also shows that the respondents agrees that if gender equality was fully acknowledged in their community there would be a significant increase in the number of educated women ($\bar{X} =4.21$, $SD=.909$).

Lastly, the research question will be answered using the average mean score ($\bar{X} =4.03$, $SD=0.913$). This result shows that the respondents agree that gender equality will help in the developmental process in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of the opportunities women have towards empowerment in various fields in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State

Variables	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	UN Freq. (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
	Total=381						
In my community a woman can't emerge as the head of the community and social development agency because such position is reserved for the men.	62 (16.3%)	237 (62.2%)	58 (15.2%)	19 (5.0%)	5 (1.3%)	3.87	.786
I can't apply to be a local government official because the position is strictly reserved for the men	42 (11.0%)	113 (29.7%)	199 (52.2%)	19 (5.0%)	8 (2.1%)	3.43	.832
Education has given me the leverage as a woman to contest for the position of Local Government Chairman in my community.	96 (25.2%)	200 (52.5%)	46 (12.1%)	17 (4.5%)	22 (5.8%)	3.87	1.028
I have not been able to lunch out outstanding projects for my community due to my gender as a women and because such deeds are reserved for the men alone.	44 (11.5%)	84 (22.0%)	209 (54.9%)	28 (7.3%)	16 (4.2%)	3.29	.916
In my community, equal opportunities on empowerment are given to both men and women to take up and lead projects across the community	80 (21.0%)	89 (23.4%)	173 (45.4%)	25 (6.6%)	14 (3.7%)	3.51	1.012
Average mean score						3.59	0.914

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, UN=Undecided.

Decision rule if mean is: 1-1.49= Undecided; 1.5-2.49= strongly disagree; 2.5-3.49= Disagree; 3.5-4.9= Agree; 4.5-5.0= Strongly Agree.

Table 3 discloses that the respondents agreed that in their community a woman can't emerge as the head of the community and social development agency because such position is reserved for the men ($\bar{X} = 3.87$, $SD = .786$). The participants disagrees that they can't apply to be a local government secretary because the position is strictly reserved for the men ($\bar{X} = 3.43$, $SD = .832$), furthermore, the participants agree that education has given them the leverage as women to contest for the position of Local Government Chairman in their community ($\bar{X} = 3.87$, $SD = 1.028$), the respondents disagreed that they have not been able to lunch out outstanding projects for my community due to their gender as women and because such deeds are reserved for the men alone ($\bar{X} = 3.29$, $SD = .916$). The result also shows that the respondents agrees that in their community equal opportunities are given to both men and women to take up and lead projects across the community ($\bar{X} = 3.51$, $SD = 1.012$).

Lastly, the research question will be answered using the average mean score ($\bar{X} = 3.59$, $SD = 0.914$). This result shows that women have opportunities in various fields in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State.

7. Discussion of Findings

In this section, discourse will be on the findings indicated in the analysis derived from the presentation of data above and upon which discussion

of findings will be placed. According to the objective of the study number one which says, examine the role quality education plays in improving the lives of women in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State, this paper revealed that education has a role in improving the lives of women most especially in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State. This same position is supported by UNESCO (2017) when it asserted in her publication on a discourse titled Women, Education and Empowerment: Pathway Towards Autonomy that in contemporary times, educating women is of great gains to national development as they are able to do more for their families, community and the nation. Equally, according to Sakariyau (2019) opine that Islamic education has always been for women within Ilorin area. Although such education may not be of quality education as proposed in the working document of the United Nation with particular reference to SDG 4.

The second objective is to ascertain how well gender equality has helped in developmental process in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State. The paper in it research revealed that education for the women do not guarantee equal access to power, resources, position and opportunities as that of men. And this can be attributed to the cultural terrain, tradition and religion perception in this region. However, respondents agree that if gender equality was fully acknowledged in their community there would be a significant increase in the number of

educated women. This means that women educated elites are available but not in great measurement to the menfolk. Hence, the final submission of all the respondents was that gender equality will help in the developmental process of Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State when more access to quality education and a promotion of rights to invest on the girl-child and not just the male is embraced. The assertions above are equally corroborated by many scholars such as Pratiba (2017) when stated that women empowerment will flourish when patriarchy tendencies are replaced with parity in society, Jindal & Bhatnagar (2013) on preference of male over female, while Dudeja and Singh (2013) opine on gender discrimination and Milazzo (2012), on women empowerment in society.

Finally, the third objective is to identify various opportunities of empowering women in Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara State. The paper found out that there are some key positions in this society that are the exclusive rights of the men. Some of these positions include but not limited to head of community, social development agency and local government Secretary. However, respondents in this area with interview conducted were of the opinion that some level of education attainment are found among women in this area which afford them to contest for the position of Local Government Chairman and that as a result of education, some notable women of their community have held political offices too. Finally, the paper in its analysis submitted that women in this local government area do have opportunities in certain fields of endeavor. The above findings can be seen in the work of UNESCO (2017) when it asserted to the fact that education creates opportunity for women in community and by implication such leads to development of such environment.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has helped to shed more light on the influence quality education has in women empowerment especially in Ilorin- West local government of Kwara State. The paper showed that religious, culture and social values, norms and sentiment most times poses as a barrier and a restriction limiting women from having access to quality education and exploring the various opportunities available to them. Therefore, when unhindered access to quality education is given to women in the society, such has a significant role it plays in various aspects of their lives. Equally, this paper revealed that quality education provides women with the necessary skills needed to increase

their productivity and opportunities in the society. Furthermore, paper revealed that women have the capacity to get involved in activities beyond domesticity when they are given the opportunity and the platform to do so. Similarly, this paper proved that when gender equality is allowed to play out in the society, the gender gap that exist reduces especially in areas where women are not well represented in the formal economy and in the labour force.

As a result of the above, the following recommendations are made:

- Since education is found to be beneficial, government should enact a policy to ensure quality education become a major block of empowering women at every local government area in Nigeria.
- The level of educational attainment of women stunted because of certain structural platform like culture, tradition and religion. Hence, policy maker should create a community-based orientation agency to disabuse perceptions and idiosyncrasy ideology that limit the promotion of gender parity in society.
- One major way to create more opportunities to the women folks in this area is when government leverage policy of incentive to motivate and draw more women into enrolling for education and giving them some soft landing which in turn encourage family and community to embrace their participation in the socio-economic life of their environment.

References

- Amara, J. (2011). The Igbo woman and her plight. Retrieved from <http://www.nigeriafilms.com/news.13124/20/the-igbo-woman-and-her-plight.html> on 25th 05-2020
- Basu, A. (2016). Culture and the Status of Women and Demographic Behavior, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bowen J. (1972). A History of Western Education, London: Adam and Charles Black
- Bumiller, E. (2015). May you be the mother of a hundred sons: A Journey Among the Women of India. New Delhi: Penguin Books
- Chappelow J, (2019). Marxism Investopedia Retrieved from <https://www.Investopedia.com/terms/m/Marxism.asp>, accessed on the 31-05-2020.

- Das Gupta, M., & Chung, W. (2007). Why is Son Preference Declining in South Korea? The Role of Development and Public Policy, and the Implications for China and India, Policy Research Working Paper 4373
- Dudeja, P, Singh, A, Jindal, A & Bhatnagar N, (2013). Preference for Male Child in two-Semi-Urban Communities of Pune, J Postgrad Med Edu Res 47(3): 144-147.
- Jaeger, J., Banaji, F., & Calnek-Sugin, T. (2017). By the numbers: How Business Benefits from the Sustainable Development Goals. Washington, DC: World Resource Institute. <https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/04/>, Accessed 1st March 2021
- Jones P. (2009) Introducing Social Theory, translated into Indonesian by Achmad Fedtyani Saifuddin, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia
- Kolk, A. (2016). The social responsibility of international business: From ethics and the environment to CSR and sustainable development. *Journal of World Business*, 51(1), 23–34. doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2015.08.010
- Milazzo, A. (2012). Son Preference, Fertility and Family Structure: Evidence from Reproductive Behaviour among Nigerian women. *The World Bank Policy Research working paper no. 6869*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank
- Monica (2017) Women Emancipation: A Gateway to Peaceful Coexistence, *Journal of Social Policy and Issues*, vol 9, November 2 2002, ISSN 1117-1669.
- National Library of Medicine (1995). The Girl Child Problem and Survival in the Nigerian Context, <http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12291581/Nigeria>
- Premium Times Paper (2020), Kwara State Government releases new commissioner nomination list., http://www.google.com/amp/s/kwarastate.gov.ng/press_releases/kwara-gov-releases-new-commissioners-nomination-list, Retrieved on the 01-09- 2020
- Osundina, O, Osundina W, & Adewumi, E. (2021) Socio-cultural Implication of Child Marriage in Northern Part of Nigeria. A Lecture Series Paper delivered at Babcock University. Unpublished.
- Priya S. (2017) A Critical Analysis about Challenges of 21st century of Women Empowerment in India, *International Journal of Applied Research*, 3(11): 330-333
- Sakariyau A (2019) The Modernisation of Islamic Education in Ilorin: A Study of the Adabiyya and Markaziyya Educational Systems, Vol 10 Issue 1-2, ISSN 2154-0993, Publisher: Brill.
- Sakariyau A (2019), Transmission of Learning in Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education 1897-2012, University of Leiden, Netherlands, Online publication Retrieved on the 17- 09-2020.
- UNESCO Nigeria (2016). The State of Education in Nigeria. Lagos; UNESCO office.