

## **Socio-Economic Factors Militating against Women Participation in Labor Force in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The main objective of this study is to investigate the socio-economic factors that militate against the participation of women in labour force in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research, using a multi-stage design. The simple random sampling and purposive (judgemental) sampling techniques were adopted. Through this sampling technique, a total of 1,200 respondents were to be reached through volunteering process but 1,196 respondents actually volunteered, showing a very good return rate. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents and oral interviews were also conducted to supplement the questionnaire data. Frequency counts and percentages were used to carry out a descriptive analysis of the data. The study found out that low level of education of women and cultural factors/customs were the leading factors militating against women participation in labor force in Nigeria, followed by religious factor. The study recommended among others that Governments of Nigeria, at all tiers, should give education of female child a top priority through free education and award of bursaries and scholarships.*

**Keywords:** socio-economic factors; women; labour force.

### **1.0. Introduction**

From the Bible History, God put Adam (first man) in the Garden of Eden and said that it is not good that the man should be alone and therefore made a woman Eve for him. By implication, God thrust the earth to both man and woman without discrimination. In fact, Apostle Paul cited in Galatians 3:28 of the Holy Bible stated that there is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither slave or freeman, there is neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. This showed that God in his infinite wisdom abhor discrimination against sexes in any form. However, all through the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs in Nigeria, the literature is inundated with cases of discrimination against women. In fact, women have been relegated to the background by the various Nigerian cultures. Ali (2014) observed that despite the large number of women and crucial functions, the division of power between the male and female sexes as prescribed by most cultures, assign the subordinate position to women.

According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006), women constitute about fifty percent (50%) of the Nigerian population. Otite and Ogionwo (2006) confirmed this and added that over 70% of them may be described as rural. In more specific terms, the estimated population of Nigeria by 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2016 is 184, 635, 279 which is 2.67% higher than that of 2015. The sex ratio for 2016 is 1.04 males/female, which shows close equality in population between males and females in Nigeria. Surprising, the data on labour force is significantly different. The National Bureau of Statistics ((NBS, 2013) showed that in 2013, the labour force participation rate was 64.5% for women and 70.3% for men for the age of 15-64 years. Also, there is male dominant labour force in most states of Nigeria except Abia, Delta, Gombe, Rivers and Taraba where some measure of equity seem maintained between men and women.

That is not to say that some few states such as Bauchi, Bayelsa, Ekiti and FCT have women dominance in the labour force. On employment in the States Civil Service, on the average, about 64.5% of senior positions were occupied by men compared to 35.5% by women for the years 2010 to 2013. Similarly, the pattern was the same for the junior level as well as by cadre. On employment of staff in Federal MDAs between 2011 and 2013 by both grade level and cadre skewed in favour of men. The proportion of women on grade levels 1-17 plus the special cadre was below 35%. Considering the importance of labour force to the national development, it becomes very disturbing that a huge segment of women are not engaged in the labour office. As Ali (2014) aptly stated that no any nation can prosper if half of its resources are neglected (women). This calls for a serious concern, hence this paper intend to resolve the question that “What are the socio-economic factors militating against women participation in labour force in Nigeria? The sole objective of this study is to investigate the factors militating against women participation in labour force. The next section of the paper was concerned with the theoretical framework; while section three is on methodology; and section four will be on Results and Discussions; while the last section is on Conclusions and Recommendations.

## 2.0 Theoretical framework

There are many theories related to gender issue but this study will limit itself to patriarchy theory; structural functionalist theory; and liberal feminist theory.

**2.1 Patriarchy theory:** The patriarchy theory was developed by Beauvoir (1953), Millet (1969) among others. The theory affirmed male dominance over the female. That is, males are seen to be controlling access to institutional power and mould societal ideology, philosophy, arts and religion basically to satisfy their selfish ego. In fact, Millet (1969) observed that the power of the male permeates every aspect of the human endeavour. He stated thus:

*Our society, like all other historical civilization is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, technology, universities, science, political office and finance – in short, every avenue of power .... Including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands .... What lingers of supernatural authority, the deity, his ministry, together with the ethics and values, the philosophy and arts of our culture is of male manufacture.*

In summary, according to this theory, women are seen as a sub-group in a man's world. Ajibade, Ocheni and Adefemi (2012) relating the theory to Nigeria observed that Nigeria society is a patriarchy one where men dominate everything including political power.

**2.2 Structural functionalist theory:** The functionalist theory according to Rizer (1992) was developed by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) but was refined by Talcott Parsons (1902-1979). The Parsons' theory is summarized in the acronym AGIL where A means **Adaptation**; G means **Goal attainment**; I means **Integration**; L means **Latency/Pattern maintenance**. That is, it was this functional imperatives that promoted inter-dependence of various parts working harmoniously together to promote order and balance in the system.

**2.3 Liberal feminist theory:** According to Okin (1989), the liberal feminist theory is of the view that all people (male or female) are born equal. Therefore, equal opportunities should be given to them and that the women marginalization and subordination arose because of non-implementation of this theory. The liberal feminist warns that nobody should benefit from existing gender differences because both male and female are important in the development of the society. So they should be treated equally. And added that no society can prosper if half of its resources are neglected (women) (Ali, 2014).

The liberal feminist theory fits into our study. The theory emphasizes that women should be given equal opportunities as their male counterpart and the battle of sexism.

## 3.0 Methodology

The survey research was used in this study. The research was conducted among men and women living in Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and was conducted between March and June 2017 (4 months). The study population consists of men and women between the ages of 18 and 60 years who are fully employed in States or Federal MDAs. A multi-stage cluster sampling approach was adopted. The country was first zoned into six geopolitical zones in the country. The zones are South-West zone, South-East zone, South-South zone, North-West zone, North-East zone and North-Central zone. All the zones were purposively chosen to enhance a good representative sampling.

Each state was chosen from the zones using simple random sampling for each zone. The names of the states were written in a small sheet and folded before putting in a bag. Sampling with replacement was done and the following states were selected as the sample states: South West – Lagos State; South East – Anambra State, South-South – Edo State; North-West-Sokoto state; North-West – Taraba state; North-Central – Benue state. Again the respondents were chosen on a voluntary basis; they were therefore volunteers and no incentives were provided to participate in the research. Two hundred respondents were expected to volunteer from each states comprising of one hundred male and one hundred female. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) was contacted in each of the selected states to assist in meeting volunteers in their respective states. One thousand, two hundred questionnaires were given out and one thousand one hundred and ninety six were returned showing a very good return rate.

**3.1 Source of data and method of analysis:** Data for the study therefore were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Oral interviews were conducted to enhance the accuracy of the questionnaire results. The oral interviews were done only in Edo State because of its closeness to the researchers. Data collected through questionnaire were analysed using descriptive technique such as frequency counts and percentages. Data obtained through interviews were summarized and content analysis was done on them. Conclusions were based on both data. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the main features of the data in quantitative forms. Descriptive analysis is concerned in quantitatively summarizing the set of data instead of supporting inferential statements about the population, as the case in inferential statistics’ (Jeffrey, 2011).

**4.0 Results and Discussions**

Table 1 shows the sexes of the respondents in the various states. This is done to ascertain the degree of interest of both sexes in the study.

**Table 1: Sexes of the respondents state by state**

Sex	L a g o s	A n a m b r a	E d o	S o k o t o	T a r a b a	B e n u e	T o t a l
M a l e	1 0 0	1 0 0	9 9	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0	5 9 9
F e m a l e	1 0 0	1 0 0	1 0 0	9 8	1 0 0	9 9	5 9 7
T o t a l	2 0 0	2 0 0	1 9 9	1 9 8	2 0 0	1 9 9	1 , 1 9 6

Source: Data from the field (2017)

Table 1 shows that of six hundred questionnaires sent to men, five hundred and ninety nine volunteers responded while for women, five hundred and ninety seven volunteered. Its shows that both male and female are interested in the topic of study.

**Table 2: Social features of the respondents**

F e a t u r e s	C a t e g o r i e s	F r e q u e n c y	P e r c e n t a g e
S e x	M a l e	5 9 9	5 0 . 1
	F e m a l e	5 9 7	4 9 . 9
A g e s ( y e a r s )	1 8 - 3 0	3 1 0	2 5 . 9
	3 1 - 4 5	5 3 2	4 4 . 5
	4 6 - 6 5	3 5 4	2 9 . 6
R e l i g i o n	I s l a m	5 5 2	4 6 . 2
	C h r i s t i a n i t y	6 1 8	5 1 . 7
	O t h e r s	2 6	2 . 1
M a r i t a l S t a t u s	M a r r i e d	7 1 0	5 9 . 9
	S i n g l e	2 5 4	2 1 . 2
	D i v o r c e	2 0 5	1 7 . 1
	W i d o w / w i d o w e r	2 7	2 . 3
E d u c a t i o n a l l e v e l	P r i m a r y	1 7 4	1 4 . 5
	S e c o n d a r y	3 8 5	3 2 . 2
	T e r t i a r y	7 8 3	6 5 . 4
	N o f o r m a l e d u c a t i o n	0	0 . 0
	O t h e r s	1 1	1 . 0
S a l a r y G r a d e L e v e l s	0 1 - 0 5	5 6 4	4 7 . 1
	0 6 - 1 0	4 2 2	3 5 . 3
	1 1 - 1 5	7 0 1	5 8 . 6
	1 6 - 1 7	1 7	1 . 4
T o t a l		1 1 9 6	1 0 0 . 0

Source: Data from the field (2017)

Table 2 reveals the social features of the respondents. It shows that almost equal male and female volunteered to participate in the study. The inclusion of male in the study is because no policy aimed at bettering the well being of women can be promulgated and implemented successfully without the active support of the male folk. The age structure of the respondents shows that about 26% of the respondents are between 18 to 30 years while 31 to 45 years constitute about 45% (the largest group) and about 30% are between 46-65 years. The import of this is that both the young, the middle age and the old preparing for retirement are captured in the study.

On religion, over half of the respondents (52%) are Christians while 46% are Moslems. The two major religion in the country actively participated in the study. This is an indication that feminist struggle has not only permeated Christianity but also Islam. Other religions such as African Traditional Religion constitute 2% of the respondents. Also the marital status of the respondents indicates that married men and women constitute almost 60% of volunteers while those still single represent about 21%, Divorcee are 17% and widow/widower are just 2%. The active participation of married class may not be unconnected with their good and bad experiences in their journey of marriage and wish to express their opinion to help society move forward. Also these groups are more confident to express their views on feminism unlike other categories who may not want to be labeled on whatever view they support. The tale also reveals that educational level of the respondents. The tertiary category constitutes 65% of the respondents followed by secondary category which is 32%. The reason is very clear. These two categories may find it easier to read and respond to the structured questionnaire without assistance of a third party. On the salary grade level of respondents, levels 11-15 constitute about 59% and levels 06-10 represent about 35% of the respondents. Levels 16-17 is only about 1½% of the respondents. These levels 16-17 are not only few in the MDAs but are also near retirement, hence their dwindling interest in the study. The poor response from level 1-6, which is about 5% may be due to their level of education. Generally, the 1,196 respondents are true reflection of the social characteristics of those working in the state and federal MDAs in Nigeria and therefore, the findings of the study show a true reflection of the views of Nigerians.

**Table 3: Level of support for female employment in MDAs by Respondents**

**Question:** Do you support the employment of more female in MDAs both at the state and federal levels?

A n s w e r s	F r e q u e n c y			P e r c e n t a g e		
S t r o n g l y a g r e e	2	1	3	1	7	. 8
A g r e e d	4	8	1	4	0	. 2
U n d e c i d e d	1	0	2	8	.	5
S t r o n g l y D i s a g r e e d	1	3	2	1	1	. 1
D i s a g r e e d	2	6	8	2	2	. 4
T o t a l	1	1	9	6	1	6 0

**Source:** Data from the field (2017)

Table 3 shows the level of support and/or concern for female employment in the public sector (i.e MDAs). From the table, over 40% of the respondents agreed that more females should be employed in the MDAs while 22% disagreed. Again about 18% strongly agreed and 11% strongly disagreed only about 9% are undecided. In summary, a total of 58% of the respondents are in support of female employment.

**Table 4: Respondents choice of factors militating against women participation in Labour Force**

F a c t o r s	F r e q u e n c y			P e r c e n t a g e		
Religious factor against women working	3	0	2	2	5	. 3
Low level of education of women	3	4	9	2	9	. 2
Cultural factor/customs that forbid women working	3	1	7	2	6	. 5
Lack of interest by women	5		6	4	.	7
Lack of clear policy by government on woman employment	1	7	2	1	4	. 3
T o t a l	1	1	9	6	1	0 0

**Sources:** Data from the field (2017)

**Table 4** shows the factors militating against women participation in labour force as revealed by the respondents. The factors identified by the study based on extensive literature review of Ajibade, Oche, M and Adefemi, A. etal (2012); Koroma (2014); Ali (2014), Danjuma, Muhammed and Alkali (2013) and the responses of the respondents are discussed below:

**i. Religious factors against women involvement in paid jobs:** About 25% of the respondents identified this factor as militating against women participation in labour force in Nigeria. Some religion in Nigeria believe that women are in the home and family (private sphere) while that of men are the public (Ali, 2014). The President of Nigeria, Mohammed Buhari was quoted in 2016 that the place of his wife is in the kitchen and other room. President Buhari is a Muslim.

**ii. Low level of educational qualification of women:** About 29% of the respondents are of the view that the low level of education of women is the factor militating against women participation in the labour force. Prior to this study, Akomolafe (2006) conducted a qualitative survey using interview and participatory experience and discovered that low education and cultural discrimination against women is a constraint to women empowerment. Also, Ebele (2003) argued that education increased the opportunities for employment of women. This got the highest support among the respondents. Employment in Nigeria is highly certificate dependent.

**iii. Cultural factor/customs that forbid women from working:** About 27% of the respondents viewed cultural factor/customs that forbid women from working as a factor militating against women participation in Labour force. Koroma (2014) citing the works of Chandler, etal, UNDP 1997, stated that:

*Rigid social norms about the appropriated gender division of labour often restrict women ability to earn income. Women are perpetually underrepresented in the income generating work force, and therefore contribute less directly to nation's development.*

Adegoroye and Adegoraye (2008) in a similar study from their study that harmful cultural practices militate against women economic empowerment.

**iv. Lack of interest by women:** About 5% of the respondents believe that lack of interest by women to participate in the labour force is responsible for the low level of women participation in the labour force in Nigeria. Ordinarily, some women show non-challance in engaging in paid job. They relied fully on their husbands for their up-keeps and are contended in children bearing and rearing and home chores.

**v. Lack of clear policy of Government on employment of Women:** About 14% of the respondents agreed that lack of clear policy of government in employment of women is a factor militating against women participation in the labour force. Although, the Nigerian government preaches non-discrimination of sexes on employment matters but it hardly provides any enabling environment for women to catch up with their male counterparts. For example, there is no quota for female employment in the MDAs like Olufemi (2006) rightly observed that one of the factors affecting women is constitutional issue. That the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is an impediment against women especially in political participation; as married woman are often discriminated against if they married outside their state as to which is their real state of origin-state of nativity or state of marriage?

### **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nigeria like most African countries is a patriarchal society where male domination is the order of the day. Despite many achievements globally in the living standards of women, there are still an empirically supported facts that the gap between men and women in Nigeria regarding their political, economic and social status is still very visible. The study therefore investigated the factors militating against women participation in the labour force eliciting information from both males and females. The study revealed that low level of education of women having got 29% of respondents is the leading factor militating against women participation in labour force; closely followed by cultural factor/customs that forbid women from working with about 27%. Another factor that garnered support is religious factor/practices against working by women with 25% of the respondents. Lack of clear policy of government on employment of women (14%) and lack of interest by women to engage in paid employment (5%) are the other factors.

To avoid a situation of neglecting women, which are half of the population in the socio-economic development of Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

- a. The Governments of Nigeria, at all tiers, should give education of female child a top priority by: (i) not only making education of the female child compulsory but also giving female children incentives such as free education and bursary awards as the case may be, to encourage them to embrace education without any hindrances. Also, the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) should reserve some quota for female applicantsto tertiary institutions as the case with educationally disadvantaged states. In this case, the educationally disadvantaged is the female sex.

- b. The Ministry of Women Affairs at the State and Federal levels and the Community Development Office of the Local Government Councils should embark on sensitization and awareness programmes to reduce the limiting effects of cultural/custom barriers/religions issues that inhibit women from achieving their God-given potentials especially from engaging in paid employment. That is, women should be mobilized for national development.

Government at all levels should reserve employment quotas for women employment without sacrificing merit and efficiency as women are capable in competing, if giving equal opportunity.

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