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Gender Inequality In Nigeria

Imagine this scenario; Mrs A and Mr B both apply for a job. Mrs A has a Master's degree while Mr B does not. The interviewer says he'll get back to whoever gets the job. Mrs A waits, and waits and waits... she never gets that call.

Puzzling right? How can a master's degree holder who is more than just qualified for a job not be given that job? I have one answer,

Misogyny.

In Nigeria and many parts of the world, women lose out on job opportunities which they are ideally qualified for and have that opportunity given to a man even if he is not as qualified as she is.

This is just one of many instances of gender inequality that plagues the Nigerian society and the world at large.

Gender Inequality in Nigeria is a multifaceted concept influenced majorly by different cultures, beliefs and ideologies that dwell on male preference and male supremacy and promote the subordination of women. In Northern Nigeria, it is widely believed that women do not need to be educated, it is believed that a woman's place is the home and all she has to aspire to is get married and cater for the children and her husband.

Roughly forty years ago, Feminism, which arose in Nigeria in response to the evident and wide disparities in opportunity for men and women, can be attributed Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who fought for and supported women's rights, as well as for women having a larger impact in the Nigerian government.

Even nowadays there seems to be hardly any change in response to the move for gender equality. Many people like to deny or cast a blind eye to this but it is real and it exists in Nigeria and many other countries in the world. Using Nigeria as a case study; there is an imbalance in the sharing

of political offices between men and women as less than six percent of seats in the parliament are held by women, they are also less likely to access adequate healthcare leading to one of highest maternal mortality rates of any country in Africa, there are unfair taxes on women and they account for a large percentage of people in extreme poverty.

The gender bias on women promotes violence, sexual assault, rape and generally endangers lives of those who are especially vulnerable which includes women and children.

This is because women are viewed as “second class citizens”, as persons subjected to male authority, men feel less hesitation in using and degrading women for their own satisfaction as their satisfaction is deemed to be of greater importance, this general notion was even reinforced by our own President Muhammadu Buhari during a press conference in Germany in 2017 when he said “I don’t know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen and my living room and the other room”.

This kind of chauvinistic gaffe just shows how badly gender inequality and patriarchy has eaten into our society that a political leader can utter such a statement. This not only makes it difficult for there to be peace but ultimately violates the basic human rights of women.

With limited participation of women in the economy, Nigeria also loses millions of dollars in potential economic gains.

So what’s the way of achieving this seemingly improbable task of total equality between men and women in every aspect of life?

First we need to promote proper education and reorientation. Reorientation for our men and boys growing up in the society. The sense of superiority in males are ingrained in the right from childhood. Some boys grow up watching their mother slaving in the kitchen while their father is stretching his feet in the living room, watching a football match, others grew up in a home where while they were out in the backyard playing football, their young sisters were washing their clothes or cleaning the plates. This already creates a sense in them that women are meant to serve them and cater to their every need. This mentality is what festers in young boys and when they grow into men, they consciously or unconsciously treat women as objects or make comments that are offensive to the female gender. We need to reorient our men and even our women. There are mothers who still believe that while their daughter is cooking, their son should be doing

something “manly” that is outside the kitchen. We need to kill that notion that certain tasks are for women only and that a woman’s place is the kitchen. It is said that the family is the first unit of socialisation, raising men with the idea that they should treat women with respect and that women are equal to them goes a long way.

There should be proper and impartial dispensation of justice when it comes to violence against women and other gender based crimes. Government and society should both actively support female empowerment measures and there should be encouragement of women to take up roles in more aspects of the economy that are dominated by men so as to bridge the gap. In the history of Nigeria, less than a hundred people have been convicted of rape. Ever. Yet almost everyday in Nigeria, we hear and read about cases of young girls and women being raped and or murdered. For a crime so rampant, you would expect for there to be a strict penal system but sadly there isn’t. This lack of strict penal measures for sexual offenders creates a sense of invincibility in men that makes them believe that they can do anything to a woman and get away with it.

When this course of action is taken under consideration and implemented we can surely start to see its positive effects on the society, economy and the country. From an economic standpoint, the gross domestic product of Nigeria (GDP) would rise significantly if women participated in the economy to the same extent as men. From a social standpoint women’s rights would be protected as gender based violence would be reduced. And generally, women across the country would be free to pursue their own ambitions without the fear of discrimination or suppression by anyone.

All of this just goes to show that misogyny, chauvinism and suppression of women’s voices has long been a problem in Nigeria and has permeated human history. It is one which we must keep fighting for until there is total reform and a level playing field is reached which provides equal rights and opportunities for all Nigerian women and men with no discrimination or biases placed on gender.

References

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