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**EFFECTS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND ITS SOLUTIONS TO ATTAIN GENDER EQUALITY**

First of all, I feel we need to understand the term “Gender discrimination” which can also be called gender inequality or sexism. According to Wikipedia Gender discrimination or sexism is a prejudice based on a person’s sex or gender. Sexism can affect anyone but it mostly affects women and girls but basically they are trying to say that men believe that they are superior to women.

“When I see how women are discriminated in Nigeria are treated, I really don’t want to become one”. These were the words of a 15 years old girl, Zahra, which was later written in French magazine GEO about the discrimination in Nigeria .Also according to EIGE Europa union, it defines sexism as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status on the basis of equality between men and women of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field.

In a nutshell, Gender discrimination is an act based on a wrong belief usually by men feeling superior to women. Statistics show that 2 out of 3 women are being discriminated based on gender without even realizing it. For example, in the Yoruba land women as seen only useful in the kitchen and in the bedroom only. Another example is the job of transportation like the motorcycles or bus drivers , if a woman is at the wheels of a bus some arrogant men will prefer to wait hours for the next bus to arrive than to stoop so low to allow a woman to drive them which means she will never make it in the business financially. I would like to give some areas where women are discriminated.

Firstly, Education, in eight northern states over 80% of women are unable to read compared to the 54% for men. 70.8% of young women aged 20-29 in the North-west are unable to read and write and only 3% of females complete secondary school in the northern area. The reason for the huge discriminatory act is really unknown but the parents are to be blamed for the bad attitude to towards women.

Secondly, Violence, the level of violence against women are extremely high. Battery and marital rape are not considered as crimes. Women are sexually harassed, abused, and killed even for rituals. When a woman is involved in adultery, which of course is committed with a man, in most cases the man goes unpunished and the woman is unmercifully punished. Rape is punishable by life imprisonment in Nigeria but there are no sanctions in the penal code about spousal rape. Societal pressure to keep quiet and stigma faced by the victims usually make the rape victims not to come out to report sexual assaults. However, the country penal code allows a husband to beat his wife, provided the violence does not result in serious injury, so police are usually reluctant to intervene in domestic violence cases, unless the woman has received a serious beating.

Another important one is Gender preference, traditionally most parents prefer boys over girls, thus, right from birth women are viewed as second-class citizens or inferior. It is a calamity for a woman to give birth to only girls and the consequence is that the husband must marry another wife so as to ensure his lineage does not go into extinction.

Lastly, weak political representation, although women and men have the same right to vote and stand for election in Nigeria. Women are comprising of a really small percentage of elected officials in the Nigeria Senate and House of Representatives even in the ministerial positions. Employed women are entitled to maternity leave for twelve weeks at the state level and up to four months at national level, and during this time they are entitled to 100% of their wages. However, a number of discriminatory practices still exist in Nigeria in the private sector; many employers force young single and married women to sign job contracts where they are stipulated to not get pregnant in their first three years of employment.

Now that we have covered the areas of sexism, the next one is the effect of gender discrimination.

1. Due to lack of women in decision making positions, there is low investment in such sectors as health and education that are crucial to human development outcomes.
2. Women’s reluctance to be involved in political responsibilities is due to lack of trust to economically empower them to fulfill their ambitions.
3. Large number of out of school dropouts due to early marriage, early child births, poor sanitations, and shortage of female teachers.
4. The violence now threatening the security and cooperate existence of Nigeria is not a happenstance. When violence was perpetuated against women at the domestic front, it was condoned because women were the victims of the battery and assault, now it has the society into worsen place.
5. Lastly, it destroys families everyday with every husband leaves his wife for another woman all because of she gave birth to only girls just to keep their lineage from ceasing to exist.

With that said, I think I have given you a semi raw view of what women are facing in the society, especially children and a so-called married woman. The only way forward is by finding solutions to this problems which unfortunately are very few but largely important which are:

1. Parents should treat and raise their children in equality and equity.
2. The Nigerian constitution provision of equality should be followed to the letter.
3. The federal government should also fashion out an educational policy that can influence parental decisions about the need to educate the girl child.
4. Schools from the primary school to the tertiary should develop a curriculum about gender studies in line with our cultural policy objective.

If these solutions are taken by the government seriously, it will earmark a start for the eradication of gender discrimination. Women should always be taken in the same regard as men in all aspects of life.

After all like human societies, culture is static. The dynamism of culture should make us march forward and liberate the productive forces of our women for self-actualization and national development. By doing so, Nigerian women will never become slaves in our eyes but will take their rightful places in the scheme of things domestically as well as globally.

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REFERENCES