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GENDER INEQUALITY

In the 21st century we have experienced a lot of campaigns battering around the inequality of opportunities based on gender. The issue of gender inequality has been prevalent in our society for a very long time due to the patriarchal nature of the society. We have experienced movements by women fighting to be given the same status as their male counterparts. This birthed the emergence of FEMINISM.

I would define FEMINISM but firstly let me take you through what gender inequality is all about. Gender can be defined as the range of characteristics pertaining to and differentiating between masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics may include biological sex; sex based social structures or gender identity.

Gender inequality acknowledges that men and women are not equal and that gender affects an individual's living experience. These differences arise from distinctions in biology, psychology, and cultural norms. Some of these types of distinctions are empirically grounded while others appear to be society constructed. Studies show the different lived experience of gender across many domains including education, life, career, expectancy, personality, interests, family life and political affiliations. Can Gender Inequality be erased from The Society?

Gender inequality is seen and experienced in various interactions and various sectors of the human life. An instance of gender inequality is Gender Stereotype and it is the cultural Stereotype which can dictate specific roles, engrained in both men and women and these stereotypes are a possible explanation for gender inequality and the resulting gendered wage disparity. Women have traditionally been viewed as being caring and nurturing and are designated to occupations which require such skills while these skills are culturally valued; they were typically associated with domesticity, so occupations requiring these same skills are not economically valued. Men have traditionally been viewed as the main worker in the home, so jobs held by

men have been historically economically valued and occupations predominated by men continue to be economically valued and earn higher wages. Gender Stereotypes influenced greatly by gender expectations, different expectations on gender influence how people determine their roles, appearance, behaviours etc. When expectations of gender roles is deeply rooted in people's mind, people's values and ideas start to be influenced, leading to the situation of stereotype, which actualize their ideas into actions and perform different standards labelling the behaviours of people. Gender Stereotypes limit opportunities of different gender when their performance or abilities were standardizing according to their gender at birth , that women and men may encounter limitations and difficulties when challenging the society through performing behaviours that their gender is "not supposed to perform".

Another instance is at home, gender roles are heavily influenced by biology, with male-female play styles correlating with sex hormones, sexual orientation, aggressive traits, and pain. Furthermore, females with congenital adrenal hyperplasia demonstrate increased masculinity and it has been shown that rhesus macaque children exhibit preferences for stereotypically male and female toys. Also in the attempt in equalizing household work, despite the increase in women in labour force since the mid-1900s, traditionally gender roles are still prevalent in the society. Many women are expected to put their career goals on hold in order to raise a family, while their husbands become primary breadwinners. However, some women choose to work and also fulfil a perceived gender role of cleaning the house and caring for the children. Despite the fact that certain households might divide chores evenly, there is evidence supporting the issue that women have continued being the primary care giver in a family life even if they work full time jobs. Study shows that modern couples do not necessarily purposefully divide things like household chores along gender lines, but instead they rationalize it and make excuse. One excuse used is that women are more competent at household chores and have more motivation to do them, and some say the jobs men have are much more demanding. Also the upbringing of a child is believed to be reliant on the mother so when a child misbehaves people tend to blame the mother more.

Another instance is childless marriage where the woman is called barren and the fact that she must have destroyed her womb through multiple abortions but the man

is not blamed at all. In some situations of childlessness research have shown that the men have difficulties in impregnating their wives but due to the deep rooted believe that the woman has to be at fault they might never get checked or get treated for not being able to produce a child.

Even in property inheritance many countries have laws that give less inheritance of the ancestral property for women compared to men. In the Nigerian customary law for example, some cultures believe women are part of inheritance and are to be inherited, some others prevent her from inheriting at all, some cultures give her divided by two of her male counterpart, and some states prevents her from owning landed property. This is one instance of gender equality that is very popular here, an example is the *Bini* customary law which prevents women from inheriting the igi ogbe that is the ancestral home of her father, the Igbo society is patrilineal and prevents women from inheriting at all and in the instance where her father has no son the property of the father goes to his brother or his brother's son.

Another instance is gender based violence which is violence that a person faces dues to their sex. Women have been reported to face more violence because it is believed that they can't defend themselves, examples of this which have seem to increase over the years are rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and domestic violence. The fact that women are blamed for the crimes committed against them is an instance of gender inequality. We see people ask questions like what was she wearing, where was she, why was she there in rape cases, while in cases of domestic violence questions like what did she do would mostly be asked. This shows that being feminine has to come with extra precaution and when people believe such precautions are not taken then she has called for whatever violence she goes through.

On the question of whether gender inequality can be erased, this brings us to the various campaigns by the women who felt oppressed and birthed feminism. Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and the ideologies that aim to define, establish and achieve the political, economic, social and personal equality of sexes. The movement has been recognised by the United Nations by adding gender equality to the sustainable development goals (SDG). The united nations through its committees have created convections to ensure equality of the

sexes and ensure women are treated well especially in the work place example being the ILO convention.

Conclusively, the problem of gender inequality has eaten deep into our societies and the fight for equality is a difficult battle especially in a society like ours where patriarchy is still the order of the day and a person striving to change this norm is seen to be wrong. We could do more as a society and start by cancelling gender based roles as this would go a long way in helping the acceptance of women into any industry they would like to be in.