

United Nations and Gender Equality in Nigeria: A Reference of 2010-2020

Ije O. Jairus
Ajiya Sarah
Michael Agbo John

Abstract

The study examines United Nations and Gender Equality in Nigeria a reference of 2010 to 2020. The study made use of secondary sources of data as veritable tools for its analysis. The study revealed that the menace of marginalization, deprivation, poverty, exploitation, discrimination, oppression and the violation of women's rights by men, institutions, religion and culture is still ongoing in Nigeria despite the main goal of the United Nations Organization (UNO) which is the protection and then promotion of the fundamental human rights and the freedom of both men and women without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language or religion. The study is anchored on Eager's Model of International Norm Construction Theory. The study concludes that despite many conventions, commissions and declarations established and declared by UN and her agencies, the status of women is still suppressed by men, religion, institutions and cultures in Nigeria. It finally recommends that women status can only be enhanced and can contribute meaningfully to the socio economic and political development of our society if all forms of gender biases are removed and women are not regarded as inferior beings but as people created with equal endowment by God.

Introduction

Since its founding, the United Nations has made it clear in the preamble to its charter that it is committed to reaffirming faith in basic human rights, in the worth and dignity of every person, in the equality of men and women, and in all nations, big and small. The protection of fundamental human rights and freedom for both men and women without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language, or religion is one of the core objectives of the UN, as stated in the preamble to the Charter. 2018 (Gorman)

It is important to emphasize that the UN is setting an example for other organizations by eliminating the gender pay gap in its specialized bodies and agencies. In order to do this, the UN has sponsored and organized numerous conferences and conventions in cooperation with international NGOs and other UN gender-specific institutions during the past 50 years, along with a number of declarations and general assembly and Security Council resolutions. The Commission on the Status of Women, one of the organizations the UN created particularly to address gender issues, worked for more than 30 years before the UN General Assembly approved the CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Bimalee (2017)

The 1949 Convention on the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Others for Prostitution, the 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women, and the 1957 International Convention on the Nationality of Married Women are just a few of the conventions that took place during the 20th century. The CEDAW was enacted by the UN General Assembly at the turn of the millennium, and it came into effect in September 1981. The agreement is regarded as the international declaration of women's rights, comparable to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Fourth World Conference on Women also produced the Beijing Declarations and Action Plan 1995 and its Follow-Ups: Beijing +5, Beijing +10. The crucial point to keep in mind is that the UN, via all of these initiatives, has contributed in some way or another to the advancement of women both internationally and domestically. Examples of these international organizations are the ILO, AU, UNDP, IMF, World Bank, etc. 2016 Sarkins

One of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN is to ensure women's engagement at all levels, such as in political, economic, and public life (SDGs). The position of many women around the world, notably in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria, has not changed despite the efforts made thus far. For instance, only six of the 37

members of Buhari's cabinet (16%) are women. Only 31% of Jonathan's cabinet members were women. During Obasanjo's government, just seven women out of 42 ministers were selected, or 17% of the total (Torue, 2017)

Gender is characterized by Torue (2017) as a pertinent empirical category, analytical instrument, and normative position from which to develop alternative world regimes. Nevertheless, the question remains why are women unevenly represented in education, employment, politics, policy making in different parts of the world especially Nigeria despite international covenant and agreements that promote inclusiveness of the various sexes?

Objectives of the study

The study is predicated on the following research objectives:

1. Ascertain United Nations and gender equality in Nigeria a reference of 2010 to 2020
2. Determine the level to which men, religion, institutions and cultures have prevented gender equality in Nigeria
3. Examine economic policy contribution to female career development in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study made use of secondary sources of data as veritable tools to critically discourse the United Nations and gender equality in Nigeria a reference of 2010-2020. The choice of this method was informed by its outstanding qualities and expert submissions that enhance efforts of findings and obtaining understanding of people's opinions and beliefs about the importance of promoting gender equality and its contribution to economic development of a country. This methodology helps outlines the step-by-step details of the procedures followed in carrying the study. Data for the study were sourced from internet, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, textbooks, published articles, journals, and dictionaries, encyclopedias, quoted speeches, workshop and seminar papers.

Theoretical framework

The study is anchored on Eager's Model of International Norm Construction. The theory believes that in life, nothing is static rather, everything is in perpetual flux and the only thing that is permanent in life is change. According to the theory, changes in the international community or in the priorities and interests of states have a significant impact on normative change. According to a constructivist

perspective, state or non-state actors who spread a new norm do so based on how they see social reality. (Eager, 2018). The theory argues that gender inequality is a way of classifying humans into first, second or third class citizenship which is naturally wrong and it is not in any way reflecting the mind of the creator of both man and women. The theory posits that in societies where only the men are allowed to work either as civil servants or hold political positions and their female counterparts are denied such rights and privileges, such policies are bound to have negative consequences on its economic growth and development in general as it is not scientifically proven anywhere in the world that bread-winning is an exclusive preserve of any gender or sex. The theory maintains that complementary efforts in production will succeed more than any one thing else, for example, it will yield greater harvest, self-sufficiency, wealth creation, non-existent of poverty absence of dependency and ensures a better standard of living (Eager, 2018)

The rationale for adopting this theory is that from the time of Lord Lugard to the last of the colonial administration in Nigeria, gender equality was not an issue. This legacy is still manifesting today with all its attendant consequences. (Lawal, 2019)

Conceptual clarifications

Three key concepts in the topic require theoretical appreciation to define parameters with which the chosen variables and identified. These are United Nations, gender and equality.

United Nations (UN) this is an international institution whose role is to initiate and promote international law via treaties, conventions, resolutions and declarations in the world. The UN was formerly inaugurated in San Francisco on April 25, 1945 in the United States of America. Fifty (50) members' states attended the inaugural ceremony and signed the Charter which formerly established the United Nations Organization. Also five (5) of the founding members, USA, USSR, Britain, France and China were given veto power and made permanent members of the security council (Richard, 2017).

Before the formation of the United Nations Organization in 1945, there was international organization already in existence known as the League of Nations. The League of Nations was formed in January 1919, at the end of World War 1. The main aim of the League was to promote international cooperation and provide safeguard against war. Its headquarters was Geneva, Switzerland. The main organs of the League include: the Assembly, the Council and the International Court. The League failed to prevent the outbreak of the Second World

War in 1939 leading to the formation of the UN as substitute for the following reasons:

1. The league could not enforce its resolutions. Individual countries decided whether to act on the League's resolutions or not since there was no sanction.
2. The League's resolutions were not truly international since United States of America was not a member.
3. The League lacked any military force and could not restrain any aggressor.
4. The big nations did not surrender themselves to the League's arbitration.

There were various movements or preparations by certain groups which eventually led to the creation of UN. The first was the Atlantic Charter of August, 13, 1941 initiated and signed by the government of Britain and Washington. The second was the United Nations declaration of January 1, 1942. The four leading powers of the allied forces namely, Russia, America, Britain and China made the declaration. The third and last declaration was the Moscow declaration. This was a pledge from Moscow and the other allied powers to put the UN declaration of 1942 into a more positive and practical use. Several other meetings were also held in the following areas: (Richard,2017)

- a. Dumbarton Oaks conference 1944, Washington
- b. Yalta conference January 1, 1945
- c. San Francisco conference on April 25, 1945, USA (Richard , 2017)

Gender:

This can be referred to the two opposite sexes, male and female within the context of society. Gender inequality has been a source of worry or debate in many societies of the world. In societies that are exclusively Islamic such as Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan etc. certain duties and positions are regarded as exclusive preserve of men and their women counterparts are prevented from performing such duties or holding such positions even if it is clear that they can perform better than their male counterparts.

Equality: this is the fact of being on the same page in rights, status, advantages. It also includes racial, social, and sexual as well as equality in opportunity without any form of discrimination, bias or preference. For example, equality before the law and human rights originated from this general concept of equality (Alvarez, 2018)

Review of related literature

History of the United Nations

The United Nations (UN) is a global organization whose mission is to establish and advance international law through treaties, conventions, resolutions, and declarations. The League of Nations was an international organization that existed before the United Nations Organization (UNO) was established in 1945. After the First World War, in January 1919, the league was established. The League's failure to stop the Second World War from starting in 1939 resulted in the creation of the United Nations Organization.

United Nations and gender equality in Nigeria

It is impossible to overstate the UN's contributions to gender equality on a worldwide scale, in Africa, and particularly in Nigeria. The UN established a large number of organizations and institutions with a focus on gender. Numerous conferences have been started, funded, and supported by it both globally and in Nigeria specifically. (Bamidele 2017)

Although there is disagreement over whether or not these laws are legally binding, the UN has played a significant role in the development of international law. Its dedication and support for the promotion and advancement of gender equality, non-discrimination, and the abolition of violence against women is unmatched.

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, and its follow-ups, Beijing +5, Beijing +10, and currently Beijing +15, are some of the organization's contributions to the issue of gender, particularly equality and non-discrimination against women. the Commission on Women's Status (CSW), 2016 (Higgins)

Another specialized department of the UN is the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The majority of women still fall behind their male counterparts in almost all areas of life, despite the UN's best efforts, and they continue to experience abuse, discrimination, and socioeconomic marginalization. Their significant contributions to the economic development and expansion of their nation are neither acknowledged nor valued. In order to close the gender gap, which gender equality is the solution to, considerable work still needs to be done in the areas of women's rights, education, health, and empowerment. (Pregl, 2019)

One significant international agency that recognizes UN and other international organization resolutions, conventions, etc. as sources of international law is the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Important policy tools that may be stated, ratified, adopted, and put into practice as steps to enhance gender relations and equality among the populace include the resolutions and declarations on gender-related issues made by the UN general assembly and the Security Council. (Pregl, 2019)

According to Moser (2018), institutions play a crucial role in deciding who represents whom in a democratic system. Institutions like electoral systems and constitutions are frequently cited as the cause of the unequal representation of men and women in national parliaments around the world. (Pregl, 2019) contends that the Structural Adjustment Program, which was part of the Bretton Woods Institution's 1980s economic recovery, did more harm to gender equality than good in most developing countries, including Nigeria (SAP) Despite international agreements protecting women's rights, these global financial organizations did not take gender issues, such as women's positions in public and private life, into account. Gender equality is being achieved slowly because of gender bias in social institutions. According to Uroh (2017), social institutions of norms, traditions, and values cast women in a subordinate role at home and across the community.

We cannot ignore the extent to which social institutions like the family, school, church, etc. at the domestic level of analysis have aided in discrimination against girls as well as women in society, claims Nwankwo (2016). Most actors in governmental institutions disregard the significance of gender equality in their policies and programs due to greed, corruption, and lack of sincerity.

According to Uroh (2017), religious dogmatism, particularly in the Northern region of the country, is another factor contributing to the enormous disparity between men and women in all aspects of life. Krook (2018) asserts that party quotas, legislative quotas, and reserve seats are some of the several strategies for achieving gender equality. These quotas are crucial because only women themselves can speak for the interests of women.

Global implementation report and female leadership in Nigeria

According to the Human Development Report 2007-2008 of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Nigerian women hold less than 10% of ministerial positions and only 6.85 percent of seats in the national legislature. While the 2006 national census revealed that

roughly 49% of Nigeria's population is female. According to Social Watch (2006), Nigeria ranks 45th out of 100 countries in terms of gender equality, which is a measure of women's political, economic, and educational empowerment, behind the Gambia (50), Ghana (58), Uganda (64), South Africa (70), and Rwanda (84) The magnificent contributions that women have made to societal growth have been somewhat depoliticized as a result of ideological, cultural, material, and legal restrictions (Okuosa, 2017).

Regardless of how intelligent and articulate they may be on the political front, society and religion act to limit women to soft portfolios and political appointments. According to the CEDAN study, women's access to social justice and human rights is restricted by the legal system of statutory, customary, and religious laws, which has a significant impact on women's professional growth. 2017 (Okuosa) According to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD), more women ran for office in 2018 and served as party representatives and election observers. The percentage of women running for political office climbed from 3.2 percent in 2003 to 7.58 percent during the general elections of 2011, and 500 of these women were nominated by their respective parties for seats in state and federal legislatures. As of 2011, the nation's female ministerial appointees increased to 31% of the Federal Executive Council, breaking the 30 percent global barrier for women's involvement for the first time (FMWASD 2015)

Only seven women, or 5.6 percent, were on the 130 federal boards of public firms in 1999, when they were 23 and 21. Out of the 47 cabinet ministers chosen during that time, just 7, or 14.89%, were women. The director general of a government regulatory body was a woman. There were two women serving as senior special assistants and special advisers, respectively. Eight (8) women were named permanent secretary, six (6) women were named special assistants, and one woman was named special assistant to the vice president. In 2011, more women were appointed to political positions. Out of the 42 ministerial positions, 12 were handed to women, or 30% of the total. Four out of every 20 special adviser positions went to women. Out of the thirty special advisers in the current administration of President Buhari, just six were women. 2015 (FMWASD)

The low representation of women in elective and appointed posts in Nigeria has been addressed in a number of ways, including the creation of Women Political Empowerment offices, Nigeria Women Trust Funds, and Women Lobby Groups. In order to increase the representation of women in decision-making in Nigeria, the INEC

gender policy was established, the national multi-stakeholders discussion was started, many interventions to implement affirmative action were launched, and the Nigeria's Women Strategy Conference was held.

International economic policies and female career development in Nigeria

Except for homes headed by women, women experience poverty at a higher rate than males. In 2018, the National Bureau of Statistics According to the World Bank Gender Status 2002–2005 data, 65 percent of men and 35 percent of women respectively participated in the labor force. The number of employment options for women is significantly expanding as a result of rising urbanization and globalization, yet time and poverty remain barriers that prevent them from successfully competing with males on the job market. For instance, if they face financial difficulty or get married, they may be forced to leave school. (2018) National Bureau of Statistics Women's ambitions in academia and the workplace have been hampered by tradition. In every household in Nigeria, women's interests and ambitions are consistently subordinated to those of men. The psychology of female underachievement makes it difficult for them to advance in their careers, and as a result, women academics lag substantially behind their male counterparts. (2018) National Bureau of Statistics

Gender awareness should be incorporated into the entire educational system in terms of content, context, and delivery in order to eliminate the obstacles to gender equality posed by custom and religion. The Beijing Declaration reaffirms national commitment to women's and girls' unalienable rights to empowerment and equal participation in the socioeconomic and political development of all countries. 2019 (Williams)

Conclusion

The main objective of the study is to ascertain United Nations and gender equality in Nigeria a reference of 2010 to 2020. The study relied on secondary sources of data as veritable tools for its analysis. Findings revealed that despite the establishment of many conventions, commissions, specific women agencies and declarations by the UN, women fundamental human rights are still being suppressed by men, institutions, cultures and religions. Gender bias against women is preventing them from contributing to social, economic and political development of Nigeria. Nigeria through her religious, academic and

cultural institutions, is violating UN number one goal of protecting and promoting the fundamental human rights and the freedom of both men and women without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language or religion because of the way women are regarded, classified and treated,

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the discussions involved and conclusion thereafter drawn, the following recommendations are hereby proposed:

1. For women fundamental human rights to be upheld in Nigeria, the role of culture, academic and religious institutions is key.
2. United Nations number one goal of protecting and promoting the fundamental human rights and the freedom of both men and women without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language or religion should be upheld in all the countries of the world.
3. Nigeria should make gender equality compulsory in both elective and appointive positions.
4. United Nations should make the principle of equality binding on all nations.
5. Socio-economic and political marginalization and discrimination against women should be stopped and their important contributions to the development of their countries be appreciated.