

Gender, Sexuality and Development in an Insecurity Era

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ABSTRACT

The misconception of the phenomenon of gender and sexuality have place unequal rights on the female folks who are being made to undergo series of humiliations, deprivations and even death. The study wishes to examine gender and sexuality in Nigeria as concept, sexuality and women development in Nigeria, sexuality and women deprivation, gender and women development, gender and human security, factors mitigating against gender and causes of insecurity as it affects gender equality.

Keywords: Gender, sexuality, development, insecurity, deprivation

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, gender and sexuality studies are beginning to occupy the minds of scholars in Africa or the global south with quite a number of institutions dedicating sections of their journals for these studies. In America and Europe, researches on gender and sexuality have been on-going for quite longer than the global south. This is not unrelated to the different cultural, economic, social and political backgrounds these regions operate from. This explains why in Africa, disparity between the female and male folks is wider compared to the other regions mentioned above and that in Africa and Nigeria, free discussion on sexuality and reproductive rights are not encouraged due to the fact that issues of sexuality are not openly discussed because of the belief that

sexual matters are private and thus open discussion is regarded as immoral. These misconceptions of the phenomenon of gender and sexuality have placed unequal rights on the female folks who are being made to undergo series of humiliations, deprivations, and even death due to their status as women. This act of segregation which has placed the woman in their current underprivileged position is denying the Nigerian state and Africa at large, the much needed contribution of women towards national development. Lazarus (2012). Nigeria in recent times has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity. This has made national security threat to be a major issue for the government and has prompted huge allocation of the national budget to security. In order to ameliorate the incidence of crime, the federal government has embarked on criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011, installation of Computer-based Closed Circuit Television cameras (CCTV) in some parts of the country, enhancement of surveillance as well as investigation of criminal related offences, heightening of physical security measures around the country aimed at deterring or disrupting potential attacks, strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities and the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media (Azazi, 2011). Despite these efforts, the level of insecurity in the country is still high. In addition, Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2012), signifying a worsened state of insecurity in the country. Hence, Adagba, et al (2012), Uhumwuangho and Aluforo (2011) are of the view that the efforts of government have not yielded enough positive result. With the lingering security challenges and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security in the country, the question that borders everyone in Nigeria today is that “can there be security?” Is security of lives and properties achievable? Apparently, the security situation in Nigeria appears or at least have remained insurmountable and many people have argued that government at all levels has not done enough by not confronting the situation head on and dealing with it decisively, others have argued that

the situation has a political undertone or inclination calculated to serve the interest of certain political gods, who have been dissatisfied and disgruntled about the political manifestations in the country. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to provide a synthesis of existing knowledge on insecurity by integrating diverse explorations and to propose a strategy for security management. In the following sections, we examine first, the concept of insecurity, the causes of insecurity in the country so as to provide a background for understanding and appreciating the enormity of the problem and our proposed model for security management in Nigeria. This is followed by an exploration of the connection between security environment and business activities and an evaluation of the Nigerian security situation and its implications for business and sustainable development. Finally, in consonance with the call on everyone by government, to contribute to the war against insecurity, the paper proposes a security management model that could assist in managing security challenges in the country.

Gender and Sexuality in Nigeria as a concepts

Gender and sexuality shall be discussed and analysed in relation to the Nigerian situation as a country by **Lazaru (2012)**

Gender

The word gender is not synonymous to any particular groups of individuals, sex or ethnic group. As a result, no group can claim sole authority over its use and deprive other people over it. Gender therefore refers to human beings both male and female who are engaged in the process of production for development. In this work, however, the term gender shall be used to refer to the female population in Nigeria who are segregated or deprived from engaging in the process of production for development. It is pertinent to note that the different notions ascribed to both male and females are the creations of communities by way of their customs, traditions, norms etc. In this dimension, Udegbe in Gushop averred that the gender belief in Africa between males

and females include “traditional stereotypes that characterize women as submissive, illogical, passive, talkative, emotional and easily moved to tears. Men on the other hand are assumed to be competent and logically independent. These stereotypes tend to reflect men and women as belonging to opposite bipolar adjectives in which men have desirable qualities while women have undesirable ones... Societal norms and stereotypes also function as a traditional ideology that regulates women to house wife roles while promoting men as actors, providers and final authority”¹. It should also be noted that these stereotypes differ from one society to the other due to the differences in cultural backgrounds. However, they all have their own fare share of discriminatory laws against women which are retrogressive to the women self-esteem and the society at large.

Sexuality

The word sexuality is defined by the World Health Organization in Madunagu (2007) as “a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relations. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are often experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethnical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors”². Mumbi Machera on the other hand views sexuality as the act of eliciting images of belongingness physically and emotionally. She goes ahead to say that sexuality is a multifaceted meaning referring to deep emotional feeling as well as to issues of power and vulnerability in gendered relationships which is socially constructed and is influenced by cultural definitions and prohibitions than by physical possibilities³. In both Madunagu and Machera’s definitions of sexuality, culture is seen to be playing a

key role in the act of sex, a feature which the global south is internationally recognized as “hesitant” in liberalizing it. From the religious point of view (Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion), being the most popular religions in the global south, sexuality is viewed as a temptation of some kind, a general gift, a means of procreation, a way of strengthening emotional bonds between people in officially blessed or recognized relationships, which should not be misused.

This suggests that most religions limit sexual behaviour strictly to relationships which are recognized or sanctioned by religious institutions: some require celibacy for their clergy, withholding ordination to unmarried clergy and generally require their officials to eschew abusive, manipulative and

harassing their members sexually. The various definitions of sexuality given above which are a true

reflection of the Nigerian setting, notwithstanding, and for the purpose of this discussion, sexuality is defined as the act of imbalanced emotional, physical, psychological relationship between males and females leading to sexual activities due to cultural roles in the global south and Nigeria. The idea of imbalanced used in this definition is to emphasize the disadvantaged position women have found themselves in Nigeria as far as sexual issues are concerned, hence tradition has placed a subjective status on them thereby repressing their ability to control their very own sexual bodies, desires, behaviours experiences and to procreate at will or at their own time.

Sexuality and Women’s Development in Nigeria

Ordination of women as clerics; in some religious organisations, women do not even sit together with men neither do they worship in the same building or structure but are rather confined to worshipping at home. These religious restrictions on women goes as far as prohibiting women from stepping out of their compounds in the case of Islam in what is known as Pudah5 – Jolae while the men are not restricted in anyway. Infact, in

both Christianity and Islam, women suffer harsh punishment when caught in the act of sexual immorality while the men are allowed to get away scott free. The traditional religion in Nigeria does not give women any liberty either. Infact women suffer the worst form of segregation in Africa traditional religion. This is because they, like some of their Muslim counterparts, dare not go to the shrine to worship the deities. Among some communities, like the Kadung people in Pankshin L.G.A of Plateau State, it was believed that if a woman sees certain categories of masquerades, she was going to be barren unless she appeased the gods⁶ Maigoro and Danfulani. Yet no holy book said that a woman is inferior to a man. Marriage is another institution where the traditional role associated to the husband and the woman has made the woman to be discriminated upon in most communities in Nigeria. The woman is primarily to be used for the production of children and up-keep of the house. This explains why barren women hardly survive in their marriages. They are either divorced or will have to go through the trauma of living with a second wife for the rest of the lives. In some families, women are even restricted from picking up jobs of any kind but largely to stay at home and take care of the children thereby depriving them the opportunity to go to school and acquire skills that would help them live a better life. In most Nigerian communities, male children are preferred to females hence the belief is that females are just to help their mothers with the household chores while the male children are to be educated in schools.

Customs and traditions in many Nigerian societies have tended to be biased against women by subjugating them to men thereby undermining their pride and self esteem. Some of these cultural barriers against the women include forceful marriage, under-aged marriage, female genital mutilation etc. An example of under aged marriage is the case of a serving senator in Nigeria and former governor who married a girl of thirteen years (13). All these negative traditional stereotyping are aimed at instilling a sense of inferiority status on women. Commenting on this, Olusegun and Akin observed that

“women become conditioned to accepting social debasements of the type associated with widowhood rights and self-imposed abuses of the type that denies female children good food. Even in urban centres and civilized circles, the stereotype gender roles make women over play the femininity by accepting that they are a weaker sex over emphasizing the dainty nature of their compartment viewing the ambition of some members of their sex as ominous and regarding exceptional achievements as untoward competition”⁷. These roles have reduced the women folk in Nigeria to accept their deprived positions as ordained by God.

Gender and Human Security as a Conceptual Framework by Yetunde (2021)

The nexus between gender and security can be approached from many different angles. There are a multitude of different understandings of gender issues, from liberal feminist theorists to self-identified womanists. This section draws upon the schools of post-colonial and post-structural feminist theory and the work of various African gender theorists. As such, ‘gender’ is understood as the socially constructed roles and relationships between men, women, boys and girls. We are often taught to act, feel and think differently depending upon whether we are born female or male (Nzegwu, 2001). These social roles are fluid and vary depending upon the specific ethnic, religious, class and geographic community that we are born into. Context is everything. In contrast, biological differences between males and females, such as hormones, reproductive organs and genetic differences are largely fixed. When referring to biological rather than socio-cultural differences between women and men the term ‘sex’ is used. These socially constructed gender roles have determined African women and men’s differential access to education, employment, political power, etc., all of which influence the security threats that they face and their ability to access security and justice (Okome, 2001). For instance, African women are much more likely to become victims of domestic and

sexual violence, while men are more likely to suffer from gun and gang-related violence. Another example is that women are less likely to have access to formal justice systems due to the feminisation of poverty; women often do not have the resources to cover the necessary transportation costs, bribes or lawyers' fees (Hendericks and Valasek, 2010). Gender roles are one of the key factors that construct the different security experiences, needs, priorities and actions of men, women, girls and boys. In relation to GBV and Human Security, gender is an essential concept. This is because it is a perspective that focuses on people, their experiences, and why they experience things the way they do. It is a bottom-up approach where people's perceptions are in focus (McKay, 2004). Some feminist approaches have focused mostly on the 'violence *against* women' and that the existence of a violent and oppressive patriarchy is taken for granted (Shepherd, 2008:37). Shepherd says that theorizing women within this perspective has focused on addressing violence "...perpetrated against individuals who are socially identified as women, perpetrated as a result of this identity" by men towards women (Shepherd, 2008:38). By continuing to point the research towards 'violence against women' the focus is kept on the marginalized women and their stories, and the unveiling of their experiences, which has led to a focus on women as victims (ibid. 39). This is a very interesting approach as it is a focus on the structural violence that surrounds women in many societies and where women are struggling on a daily basis for their rights and freedoms as human beings. Violent structures have not only been addressed by the feminist scholars per se, but also by peace researchers such as Johan Galtung. He refers to *structural violence* as exploitation and repression by social and world structures where "patriarchy is then seen as an institutionalization of male dominance...legitimized by culture...often emerging as direct violence with males as subjects and females as objects". This is not ignoring the possibility of men been victims of violence, but it is an inescapable fact that

women are the most marginalized and more often than men are subjected to violence due to their gender.

Factors Mitigating against Gender, Sexuality and insecurity in Nigeria:

According to NDHS (2013), 28 per cent of women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence at least once since age 15, and 11 per cent experienced physical violence within the 12 months prior to the survey. Also, 7 per cent of women age 15-49 report having experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Overall, 25 per cent of ever-married women age 15-49 report ever having experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their spouse, and 19 per cent report having experienced one or more of these forms of violence in the past 12 months. Among ever-married women who had experienced spousal physical violence in the past 12 months, 33 per cent reported experiencing physical injuries. However, 45 per cent of women who experienced violence never sought help or never told anyone about the violence. It is acknowledged that it is natural for a husband to beat/commit violence against his wife in Nigeria. A husband beats his wife over domestic disputes such as burning food, arguing with him, going out without permission or neglecting the children. Much of the blame is placed on the plural legal systems. The law as currently constituted does not offer women and girls adequate protection from violence (Mahdi 2011; Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition 2008). The literature identifies statutory, religious and customary laws in Nigeria that permit violence against women. The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition report (2008), for example, identifies the penal code (section 55(4)), applicable in the Northern regions, that legalises 'corrective' beating of a child, pupil, servant or wife, as long as this does not cause grievous hurt. For some, this is the root cause of violence against women. Although progress has been made (for example, the Violence against Women Prevention, Protection and Prohibition Act 2002), only four Nigerian states (Ebonyi, Jigawa, Cross Rivers and Lagos) have enacted domestic violence laws, while

just six (Enugu, Edo, Bayelsa, Delta, Cross Rivers and Ogun) have passed laws against female genital mutilation (FGM).

Wife Battery

The law on domestic violence is clearly inadequate, particularly regarding wife battery. Domestic violence is currently classified under common assault, which downplays the seriousness of this crime. According to section 55 of the penal code, wife beating is allowed as long as it does not amount to grievous hurt in the Northern part of Nigeria. As defined in section 241 of the penal code “grievous hurt” include emasculation, permanent loss of sight, ability to hear or speak facial disfigurement, deprivation of any member or joint, bone fracture or tooth dislocation (Imam, 2008). This means that a man who beats his wife short of inflicting the above injuries is acting within the law. How then is the woman’s fundamental right to dignity is protected under such circumstances? Section 353 of the criminal code makes an indecent assault on males punishable by 3 years imprisonment. A similar offence of indecent assault on females is treated as mere misdemeanour punishable by a maximum of 2 years imprisonment (section 360), clearly a discriminatory provision. Nigerian law is therefore infused with discriminatory practices against women, apart from the implied legal backing to the assault of a wife in Section 55 of the penal code, but also, in Section 6 of the criminal code, a lack of legal recognition for rape within marriage.

Rape

Marital rape is excluded from the definition of rape in penal legislation in the North and under the criminal code in the South (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition 2008). An Amnesty report, “Rape: The Silent Weapon”, makes the point that differences in the definition of rape in federal, State, Sharia and customary legal

systems create a plural justice system that potentially will undermine women's rights to seek legal redress in such cases. Indeed, current legislation may penalize the victim rather than the perpetrator. Muslim women can face particular problems when they seek justice and redress for rape under Sharia law, because the need for a witness makes successful prosecution more difficult (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition 2008). What this seem to mean is that the state is protecting its individual citizens from specific GBV cases such as rape, as long as they are not married. Within marriage, it seems, the individual woman's value changes and the state is no longer willing to extend its human security to her. What this means in practice is that security only applies to one group of women, and that women who are married do not have the state's support to bring their case in front of a statutory court, if they are raped by their own husband.

Abuse

Corporal punishment, bullying and physical abuse can cause girls to drop out of school (Action Aid, 2011). Findings from the study reported that corporal punishment is entrenched in school systems and was discussed most by girls in Nigeria. It is often connected to poverty, for example in response to non-payment of fees and lack of uniform or books, and parents and girls complained about this occurring but appeared powerless to stop it. Recent work by Mahdi and Asubiaro-Dada (forthcoming) documents shows the kinds of physical punishments reported by students, teachers and parents across Nigeria. Their respondents cite examples of teachers meting out severe, violent and degrading punishments. They also discuss some of the informal and unwritten "rules" that govern relations between boys and girls in and around schools. They refer to "no go" areas for girls that are defined and enforced by boys and may include girls' exclusion from areas of the classroom or school. The respondents also talk about age hierarchies that permit

older students to inflict violence on their juniors. These examples underline the importance of understanding, challenging and changing informal rules that are oppressive and teaching girls and boys about power relations between the sexes and between age groups (Mahdi and Asubiaro-Dada, forthcoming).

Human Trafficking:

Human trafficking is also a serious social problem in Nigeria. The government statistics in 2004 and 2005 reported that about 80 per cent of victims were girls and more than 300 children had been forced into the sex industry and domestic labour in 2005 (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 2008). In all age groups, twice as many women as men are victims of trafficking (NBS 2009). More worrisome, vulnerable young and adolescent girls in the 6-15 age groups are most likely to be trafficked. Reported cases in this age group show a rise from 12 in 2004 to 353 in 2007, almost a thirty fold increase. Reported cases of trafficked adult women increased eightfold during the same period (from 44 to 368). It is not clear which groups are most likely to be victims of this practice or what their relationship is with the perpetrators, but trafficking was mentioned as one reason why girls dropped out of school in specific areas in the South (Mahdi and Asubiaro-Dada, 2011).

Female Genital Mutilation

Traditionally also, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is carried out although the percentage has gradually declined to a national average of 32.6 per cent in 2008 from around 40 per cent in 1998. FGM presents not only a physical but a mental danger to females. The risk of bacterial infection is high since FGM is usually conducted at the time suckling. Educational/advocacy activities for the abolition of FGM still needs to be conducted for parents/ adults with the long term view of abolishing FGM despite the willingness of girls. According to the Federal Ministry

of Women Affairs and Social Development (2008), FGM is not so popular in the North East and the North West regions but it appears to be common custom in the South West and the South East region. In those two regions, 50.4% and 60.7% of women are reported to be victims of FGM (NBS 2009). At a state level, Edo state of the South region established a law to prohibit FGM in 2000 and it burdens the FGM conductors with the fine of 1,000 Naira (about 6.5 U.S. dollars) and imprisonment for six months. Ondo state, which is in the South region, also has a law that prohibits FGM.

Conclusion

Security just like other elements in the business environment enhances and optimizes business activities but insecurity hinders these activities and so it constitutes a threat to business organizations. There is a strong skepticism that if the level of insecurity in our country is not scaled down, our vision to be among the best 20 countries of the world may be aborted.”The approach towards curbing this menace has been to respond when the crime has been committed and the harm has been done. This paper emphasizes a change in attitude and approach by being proactive. We must strive to get to a level where crimes will be nipped in the bud before they are perpetuated. Therefore, the government, civil society groups, business organization and individuals must fight insecurity so as to create an enabling environment where business organizations will feel free and secured to achieve their full potentials and the country will itself be safe to achieve sustainable development. To this end, we recommend that prevention and emergency response focusing on the rising state of insecurity since 2009 should be the main focus on insecurity management.

RECOMMENDATION:

Government should come up with economic policies for women aimed at empowering them. This is because researches have shown that in developing countries like Nigeria, the unequal status accorded to women has contributed in impoverishing than more than their male counterparts. Such policies could be in form of small scale loans without collaterals in order to enable them have access to such loan facilities. Furthermore, legislation against under aged marriage should be sponsored by the government. This is with the sole aim of protecting teenage girls who are forcefully married off by veracious parents to people who will violate their sexuality rights, emotions and respect. The issue of genital mutilation should be prohibited by the law without recourse to any custom and tradition. It is a barbaric act which subject females to unnecessary pain and deprivation of their sexuality satisfaction. In this 21st century, no civilized society should condone this terrible act.

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