

**A RETROSPECTIVE DISCUSS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN WAGE  
EMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This paper investigates the patterns of discrimination against women in wage employment and its alarming consequence, in Nigeria and Ihiala in particular the methodology applied in this study was both questionnaire and interview method. Simple percentage method of data analysis was applied in the analysis of information obtained from the respondents. from the findings the patterns of discrimination against women in wage employment is very pervasive in most of the ministries and parastatals where the research was carried out, the paper recommends amongst others a good qualitative enlightenment programme for both the men and women workers, as a remedy to the high level of discriminatory practices against women in the industrial work force of Nigeria .*

**Keywords;** women, discrimination, wage employment and

**INTRODUCTION**

The concept of Discrimination on the basis of sex is one element of human rights abuse that has eaten into the fabric of every sphere of the labour work force in Nigeria. Discrimination is any situation in which an individual is treated unfavorably based on prejudice, usually against their socially distinct group or category, Such categories include gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, age and disability.

Historically, and culturally, the Nigeria women, by men are assumed to be home keepers, that is one whose primary role is the care of children, their husband and other members of the family. Other responsibilities include farming to feed the family and also engaging in petty sales of farm produce etc, to consolidate the teeming folk as second–class citizens whose roles are second fiddle and one who succumbs to control from the male counterparts without any consideration.

This notion according to David (2004) as manifested itself in most formal and informal organizations where unequal performance are being used in employment opportunities, wage benefits in work place. Despite the great improvement in science and technology, law and the humanities, Nigeria women are still in bondage in society at large and always, women hold the very short end of the stick.

The position of women of every society is not different from one society to the other, but it varies in intensity. Discrimination mated on women in Nigeria is similar to that of women in other parts of the world. Statement of problem.

In most countries of the world, the position of women in the labour market is about the same. The percentage of women employed is lower than that of men. There is a close relationship between employment and status. The proportion of married women in employment is lower than that of single, separated or divorced women. in addition, it is possible to point to certain professions as being women jobs, such professions includes nursing, secretarial workers, cleaners, etc. common to these jobs are the lowest paid in the case where jobs are mixed, women on the average are paid less than their male counterparts in the same category. In terms of production, the promotion of women in an organization may not be as regarded as that of men.

Some corporate organizations such as the banking industry engage female workers as corporate prostitution. Women are made to work under inhuman conduction for instance in the banking sector, women are employed to occupy certain positions in order to assist the bank to maximize profit through unethical means. They are given unachievable target, they will be threatened that they will be sacked if they do not achieve the prescribed target (David: 2004). In order to meet this target, they are forced

to do many things that are against their free will. They are kept under undue pressures which are detrimental to their health.

The inferior position of women in the labour market can be explained by women's role as mothers or as persons who for the reason are assigned the care of children. She does not have the same opportunity of training as men or make use of facility less than men. She will not be promoted will not be promoted as her male counterpart based on the arguments that she is not available to full time jobs, giving the instance of maternity holiday as reason.

In terms of wage structure, they are paid less than their male colleague. They are deprived of certain benefits, which their male colleagues are not deprived of, for instance, women in some organization are not entitled to housing allowances. They are not allowed to give birth in some few years of their employment.

The segmentation of the wage employment along this direction has retarded the contribution of women in the development of our society. taking into consideration their population in the society, they are the indispensable arm of human development. Any injustice being meted out to them affects the society as a whole. The simplicity of women in nature will lead to transparency in the management of Nigeria resources.

However, the current efforts from different groups to bring the women folk to the front line in politics, management of organizations etc has been indirectly humiliated by men folk in the society.

Historical origin of Gender Inequality in labour market.

The explanation of gender discrimination can be located within the Marxist analysis of historical materialism. As society changed towards capitalism as a result of industrialization, so also gender discrimination increased.

Julius Ogunro (2004) under the communal egalitarian society, there is distinct role differentiation on the basis of sex. Work relationship is not based on gender, there is equal respect for every member of the work group irrespective of their gender. In this society, women gather food while men hunt. At times there are reversals of roles. A very good example is the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria. There is no permanent role for both genders in the society in this system; there is no distinction between private domestic life and work. Work is seen as extension of domestic life. The emergence of feudalism brought about the rise of class within the society. This class distinct consists of the Lords and Serfs. The serfs are meant to work for the Lords, the women belonging to the serfs were not allowed to work, so most of them could not participate in productive activities, on the other hand, male and female serfs have to work for their Lords. As such women in this category can be regarded as slaves. In this system, there was a rigid sex role differentiation certain roles were reserved for men and others for women. Series of efforts made to separate females and male work roles.

In this respect, men's work accorded low status. This marked the beginning of what is called "double work load acronyms for women.

The emergence of capitalism led to formal institutionalization of the subordination of women. In this system, there are two classes; the bourgeoisies and proletariat. Women in all classes are engaged in work, while women in the upper class work out of choice. Their earning is used to complement the net income of the family. (The World Bank Group 2004).

The feminist theory

Feminist theory embodied the various perspectives they include; the label feminism, socialist feminism, black feminism and post modern feminism. These various thoughts can be due to political affiliations, the liberal feminist does not have a clearly developed theory of gender inequality. The liberal feminism enjoys greater popularity and support than other perspectives, this is because the view possesses less of the challenge to existing values. This school of thought conceives human being as one with rational capabilities and therefore exercise human freedom and equality. (Brain Chiplin, 1976,).

Both men and women are harmed because the potential of female and male alike is suppressed. For instance, many women with the potential to be successful and skilled members of the work force do not get the opportunity to develop their talents, while the male are denied some of the pleasure of having close relationship with their children. The classical feminism advocates for equality between men and women, equal opportunity particularly in education and work. The other strand of liberal school is the welfare school of thought. The focus of the school is on economic justice. The welfare school of thought calls for government intervention in the economy, in other for the market not to widen the gap of social inequality among individuals.

The basis of liberal feminism is the argument that women are being discriminated against and that their discrimination is based on sex not on individual merit. Female and male have always been different. They

differ in biology, psychological disposition and social behavior. The discriminatory practices are blind to the wishes of women, abilities or merits and interest and this deprive them of their self fulfillment.

The welfare feminist is being criticized as advocating for comparison for past injustices suffered by women as well as the elimination of socio-economic and legal impediment of women progress. Radical feminist blames the exploitation of women by men as an act of subordination.

Radical feminism sees society as particularly dominated by men, this point of view see men as the ruling class. The family is often seen by the radical feminism as the key institution for oppressing women in the rural and urban societies. They believe that evolutionary change can offer the possibility of the liberation of women. Some radical feminist believe that women oppression originated from their biology. However, some scholars see it as domination of women by men as a result of culture.

Radical liberal feminism believes that it is both possible and desirable for gender differences to be eradicated and greatly reduced.

The Marxist feminist school of thought does not attribute women exploitation entirely to men. They see capitalist as the man beneficiaries. The disadvantage position of women is held to be the consequence of the emergence of private property ownership and their lack of ownership of the means of production and class in the society, women within the bourgeois class will not experience the same discrimination as fellow women within the protectorate class. The control exercised by the men over the women is expected to fade away with female employment and economic independence.

The bourgeois women may be wanted at home to reproduce heirs that will inherit the wealth and continue with the capitalist system. The women are subjected to control, to have undisputed paternity, while women within the protectorate class is expected to take care of the home in addition to the wage labour which is needed to supplement the household income for the family survival.

The Marxist feminist have been criticized for seeing female wage labour as a step to women liberation, when it only strengthened capitalist society. Women generally continue to be financially disadvantaged as compared to men even when they take paid employment. They tend to get lower status job than men.

Present State of Nigerian women

Nigerian women are now assuming gender responsibility. Gradually designation, in occupation distribution that certain occupations are reserved for men is fast breaking down. Despite the barriers against their full participation of women in the labour market, the economic climate in the country has shown that women are earning some times far more than their husbands the socio-economic contribution of women to the economy cannot be over emphasized.

Women contribution to Nigeria economic development in the past has been underestimated or neglected, their functions both at work and their households. For example among the ethnic groups such as Hausa of Northern Nigeria, the produce from the women's farm is used to feed the household while crops from the husbands farm supplies cash to pay for taxes and ceremonial expenses.

Among the Yoruba people of the Western Nigeria, women work as unpaid workers, they also make a substantial contribution to family net cash income. As Nigeria is getting developed by the day and more women are entering into the economy as market women, whole sale, civil servants, and business women in professional carriers, their economic contributions to economic development are becoming more publicly acknowledged (Oluwatoyin: 2002).

In some studies the formal sectors is defined as activities within the government enterprise or private enterprise, organization officially, forecast and regulated by the state through various regulation with features as salaries employment with difficult entry, formally acquired skills and protected market (through tariffs, quotas, trade license) cooperate ownership and capital intensive.

Informal sector refers to economic activities carried either in urban or rural areas with features such as case of entry, absence of salaried employment, family ownership or enterprises, labour intensive and adapted technology still outside formal system and unregulated and competitive market.

In Nigeria, the informal sector is seen as heaven for those who might remain unemployed after failing to obtain wage employment. Women and migrants have been found to represent this sector in Nigeria. The reason why women dominate this sector includes the following;

- (1) Employment in the formal sector require some minimum level of education which many women do not posses, they are therefore compelled to resort to self employment in the informal sectors.
- (2) Employment in the informal sector can be easily combined with domestic responsibilities because working hours is flexible and women can take their children to their work.

Most of the women in wage employment are in the formal sector.

Within the urban center, only a relatively small percentage of Nigeria women are employed in the

modern sector. This sector consists of largely manufacturing and commercial enterprises government establishment, major social services and wholesale. Generally women in urban sector are relatively highly educated. A number of these women's are occupied in limited number of occupation or "women's jobs which traditionally places women to domestic roles, mothering roles or supportive roles such as nursing, teaching, sewing etc.

In the management and leadership level, women now hold position of leadership or prestige in management level than before. Many female employees are gradually moving up in the management levels than before.

Having examined the factors that brought Nigeria women into wage employment, it is pertinent to discuss the discriminatory patterns against them in paid employment. The discrimination against them are ideologically based rather than economic and politically based. The following are the ways in which they are being discriminated against.

Policy Formulation and implementation.

In Nigeria, policy makers are guilty of neglecting women in development plans and policy formulation. They tend to view problems and proffer solutions from male perspective. One of the complaints leveled.

Against agriculture extension programmes is that the decision is taken from the position of the men. This grossly affected the female performance in the agriculture sector. It is important to note that it is only in the later 1980s did policy that related to the women were formulated with some practicality and this have little effect in addressing the women question.

RECRUITMENT: Ideological values such as prejudice, stereotypes particularly affect the job opportunities of women. Recruitment adverts are structured in such a way that it is a little bit difficult for women to meet the required criteria.

Where some women get the job, at times women are not paid equally as their male counterpart who does similar jobs. Some employees do this either consciously or unconsciously, with the notion that it is men that is more financially responsible.

Inequality of Opportunities to staff development and training.

This is another factor that militates against women in

Employment. The negative perception of women's capacity to work translates to limited opportunities of them for professional advancement. Such as training opportunities, attendance at international seminars and conferences etc. in all this, the most affected are married women, these groups of female workers require their husbands permission to work, attend courses, go on local and overseas official trips couple with this fact, male superiors are reluctant to make these trips with married women.

They do not wish to be seen going away with other men's wives. However, such concerns could indicate the preference for single girls with who attempt for gratification are demanded. Although, these problems exist in all parts of the country, it appears to be more prevalent in Eastern Nigeria than any other part of the country due to the religious beliefs given to women's place.

Absence of women in trade union activities.

This is an organization that is supposed to be of the well being of employers but is prejudiced in its composition and operation. Trade unionism is a powerful force through which workers needs and expectations are articulated and advanced. It gives workers a voice in the management of affairs affecting them. Most women in wage employment are not members of any union, Women apathy to trade unionism is due to political intrigues involves in trade unionism and the fear of being vocal and falling out of favors with their husbands, make them shy away of female education and limited access to modern skill acquisition has also affected the participation of women in wage employment. Religious practices in some parts of the country have also caused discrimination of women with equal qualification with men.

Recommendations.

This paper recommends the following for the development and improvement of women participation in wage employment.

- (1) There should be a comprehensive programme for women employment and orientation.
- (2) There should be design and implementation of programmes for actions, in order to raise the socio-economic status of women through intensified training in both formal and informal educational sector.
- (3) Government should also fund association that will be saddled with the responsibility of generation and distribution of data and information on women employment in the various sectors of the economy through research and related activities.

- (4) Employers should be given incentives to allocate equal positions in labour force.
- (5) Female educations should be subsidized in order to encourage more women to enroll in various educational institutions, if all this recommendations are adhered to, the position of women in wage employment would be greatly emancipated.

#### CONCLUSION.

Traditionally, the sex roles assigned to male-female stereotypes are similar to those encountered by women folks in Africa as a whole. However, there is nothing more permanent in life than change. Although most gender inequalities and stereotypes are culture specific, culture is dynamic and undergoes constant changes.

In contemporary Nigeria, the culture barriers militating against women folks are breaking down. Education, Science and Technology have contributed greatly to the socio - economic advancement of women in Nigeria and the process seems to be irreversible. If these processes are being intensified there is every possibility that the position of women in Nigeria society will be improved.

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