

Globalization, the Socialization of the Nigerian Woman and Her Quality of Life

Julia Otibhor Omokhodion

Department of Sociology of Education, University of Lagos State, Lagos State, Nigeria

Abstract: This study focuses on gender socialization and female roles in Nigeria. It shows how both of these interact with the process of globalization to put women at a disadvantage economically. Ethnographic data were collected on a small sample of women in Lagos; the largest city in Nigeria. Using the case study approach, the general predicament of women, is discussed. Finally, some suggestions are made on ways in, which the situation can be altered.

Key words: Socialization, woman and her quality, globalization, economy, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Globalization represents the increased interdependence of world economies. It represents the break down of trade barriers and investments liberalization and deregulation policies initiated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The fuel for globalization was ignited at the Uruguay Round Agreement, where a decision was taken to create a world of free trade, where all WTO (World Trade Organization) member countries will be granted the status of Most Favored Nation (MFN). This of course means that all these countries will not discriminate against their members and they will practice reciprocity, irrespective of their level of development. Thus, these countries were compelled to make far reaching commitments; the implementation of, which require drastic policy changes, that require major economic, financial and social costs (Akanji, 1997).

Women and globalization: In Nigeria, women have been more negatively affected by globalization and trade liberalization, because they are more in the informal food production, which is highly discriminated against. Thus, they have not been able to reap the benefits of export promotion. In situations where, these women produce cash crops their lack of education has made it difficult for them to take advantage of the policy. Besides this, many developing countries could not afford to support price incentives with better infrastructures, because of the heavy debt burden and massive devaluation of their currencies, which are vicious effects of globalization to poorer nations. The reductions in the income of the male farmers have very heavy ripple effects on the women, who now have to take on more responsibilities in addition to child bearing and rearing.

With globalization, our national policies become weaker, even though technological innovations and knowledge generation and accumulation are supposed to be at their highest. Globalization helps the developed nations to break down all existing barriers that hitherto prevented them from economically exploiting the developing nations. It is therefore, clear why Nigeria's economy is experiencing the worst runaway inflation ever, why many marriages are breaking down, why HIV/AIDS is on the increase in spite, of the knowledge of its existence, why the school drop out rate is increasing, especially for female children, since parents are unable to afford their education. With the second rate status accorded female children and women in our society, it is not surprising that if a family has two children and can only afford to educate one, irrespective of their chronological ages and cognitive ability, most Nigerian parents will give priority to the male as opposed to the female child (Omokhodion, 1998b)

This study wishes to look at the issue of globalization generally and its effects on the Nigerian society and women in particular. It will also look at the components of the socialization of the Nigerian woman and how this has put her at a disadvantage, during this era of globalization; starting with a brief discussion of the Nigerian society.

Nigerian economy: Nigeria is a country in the West African Sub-region. It is the most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an estimated population of about 140 million people. Most Nigerians live in the rural areas and they depend on farming for their livelihood, yet the few urban areas are densely populated by immigrants in search of better life in the cities, which accommodates about 36% of the populace.

The Human Development Index (HDI), which is a composite measure of income and access to education and health services, ranked Nigeria as the 152nd out of 175 countries in 2001. Thus, the national data shows that the number of poor Nigerians increased from 18 million to almost 68 million, while most of the previous middle class were all wiped out and pushed into the working class group. The estimates in 2001 showed that over 70% of Nigerians live below the international income poverty line of \$1.00 a day. The current National Millennium Development Goal Report (2003) indicates that between 1980 and 1996, poverty increased from 22-69.8% in the rural areas and from 17.6-55.2% in the urban areas. Most Nigerians spend between 65 and 90% of their income on food alone. A 1997, World Bank report put the literacy level in Nigeria at independence in 1960 at 40%, while 30 years later in 1990, it was 63%. The primary enrolment was 93% in 1990. The secondary enrolment in 1990 was 77%, while the tertiary enrolment was 38% and our labor force was 25%. However, it is quite curious that in spite of this obvious growth in general educational achievement, there were only 2.2% female legislators in Nigeria. This can only be explained in terms of male domination and female subjugation.

Nigeria at independence in 1960 inherited a very fragile agricultural economy, which was strongly dependent on British and western market for the consumption and use in their industries. Thus, they dictated the prices of both the raw materials from Nigeria and the finished products from them. The multinational Corporations were thus, channels for the milking of the host country's economy and making them the dumping ground for their specially manufactured sub-standard products for export only.

These multinationals also manipulated the drilling of Nigerian crude oil to their advantage. They had a heavy influence on the enacting of the 1959 Mineral Oil Ordinance, which allowed them to take away as much as 50% of the oil proceeds to their countries. Thus, a lot of oil deposits in the eastern Nigeria were committed to British Petroleum Limited and Royal Dutch Shell Company, while they in turn manipulated the figures showing the exact quantities of Nigeria's oil deposits. They also ensured that any government that was opposed to their business interests did not succeed.

These multinationals formed foreign monopolies, created artificial scarcity and militated against the efforts of developing countries like Nigeria to take off, mature and sustain any meaningful economic growth. The problem plunged Nigeria into her debt crisis.

NIGERIAN DEBT CRISIS

Nigeria's debt is currently put at \$35b (US). In 1979, it was 1b (US). The foundation for Nigeria's debt seem to have been laid, when a former governor of Central bank of Nigeria was quoted as saying that our problem was not money but how to spend it. This made many Nigerian administrators to start and keep on a competition of loan taking, which a lot of time ended up in private accounts in Europe and America, as a result of official corruption.

Official corruption in nigeria: Official corruption in Nigeria is caused by three main factors as follows:

- The absence of a Nation State called Nigeria to, which every Nigerian owes allegiance.
- The long military rule destroyed meritocracy and entrenched mediocrity. Thus, the country was placed in a state of anomie and people are never sure of the real criteria for appointments and promotions.
- The absence of a reliable pension scheme or a good social security system.

The above has led to a total destruction of a positive work culture in Nigeria, which erodes national commitment and creates a problem in the support of the Nigerian Nation State. People therefore, want to steal as much money as possible as they have more confidence in that than on the government.

The structural adjustment program made a bad situation intolerable. Structural adjustment is relevant if there is production. However, in a situation where production has been grounded to a halt, structural adjustment program can become a terrible nightmare for any country.

Female socialization in nigeria: Socialization is the process through, which the culture of a society is transmitted to new members of the society. It is the modification of an individual's behavior from infancy to conform to the demands of social life (Omokhodion, 2000).

In Nigeria, child socialization is a family affair, not the sole responsibility of biological parents alone. Thus, every member of the extended family including neighbors see the socialization of your children as their joint business. Generally, boys are socialized to be tough, strong, free, responsible and protective. They are usually taught the art of hard work as a foundation to being able to provide for their families later in life. For instance boys are not expected to cry, or exhibit any sign of weakness or emotion. On the other hand, girls are expected to be gentle, less adventurous, loving, kind, passive and less

aggressive than boys and honest. Strong girls who, for instance do not cry when in pain are perceived as lacking feeling and thus, are abnormal. Such, females are to be avoided by men when it comes to marriage. However, girls are also expected to be hard working and help provide for their families. In Southern Nigeria, there is the strong tradition of women working. In the past, both sexes had informal education within the community, from families and through the apprenticeship system. Since, the colonial period and even today, as a result of patriarchy, boys are favored when it comes to education. Nonetheless, women have not been relieved of their responsibilities to assist their children financially (Seager and Olson, 1986). The data presented below will reveal that the denial of education puts women at a serious disadvantage in today's world.

Results from an informal survey in Lagos; interviewing mechanics at motor mechanic villages in Agidingbi and Omole areas of Lagos and some University Lecturers in Lagos, on the list of socialization attributes that 50 Nigerians, living in Lagos, would want their daughters to imbibe revealed that all of them mentioned attributes like being good at cooking, house keeping, being gentle, respectful, loving, obedient, submissive, caring, homely, friendly, neat, high cognitive achievement, avoidance of fornication and taking care of parents in old age. Other attributes include ability to take care of the younger siblings, avoidance of smoking and drinking and keeping a close link with the parents and siblings even after marriage.

Data collection: The respondents for this study are women from different cultural groups in Nigeria, but who are all living in Lagos, a city of about 13 million people, former capital of Nigeria and its major sea port. Some of them were born in Lagos, while others were born in other parts of Nigeria before migrating to Lagos. The bias here however is that because of the location of Lagos, all the respondents are from the southern part of Nigeria; notably from specific ethnic groups; Yoruba (53.3%), Igbos (20%) and Edo (33.3%).

A 31 item interview guide was used to guide the interviewer's questions for the respondents, while the questionnaire included both closed and open ended questions on demographic issues (e.g., marital status, educational attainment, number of children etc.) and childhood socialization. Each respondent was told to mention at least ten issues emphasized by her parents in her upbringing. Each was asked if the issues stressed by her parents were similar to those stressed for her male siblings. Respondents were also required to indicate those aspects of socialization they disliked. In addition, I

wanted to know which of the attributes impressed on them affected their lives, work and perspectives the most. The respondents were asked which attributes they believed should be impressed on their daughters and sons. Finally, they were asked to suggest what society and women should do to improve women's status in Nigeria.

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

A total of 15 women were interviewed for this study. Their ages range between 25 and 56 years. They are all from southern Nigeria; 20% from Ogun State, 20% from Ondo State, 33% from Edo State, 6% from Oyo State, 6% from Lagos State, 13% from Imo State and 6% from Anambra State. This of course confirms the cosmopolitan characteristics of Lagos. In spite of the diversity in state of origin, most of them are born in Lagos (46%), while 13% each are born in Edo, Oyo and Ogun States, respectively, while 6% are born in Ondo State and 6% in Imo State. In terms of religious beliefs, 86% of them are Christians, while 6% are Muslims and 6% are traditionalists.

Regarding educational attainment, 40% attended only primary school, 13% are undergraduates, 13% are non-literate, 13% attended secondary schools, 6% have Higher National Diploma, N.C.E. and Ph.D each. Almost all the respondents are employed in the informal sector. They process food (cassava into fufu), sold cooking ingredients (such as pepper, vegetables and cooking oil), make hats and women's dresses. All such research has been adversely affected by globalization. Only 6% of the respondents are employed in the formal sectors as University Professor.

Most of the respondents are married confirming the fact that the society sees marriage as an enhancement of the status of a woman. Interestingly however, most of the marriages 46% are monogamous. This may not be unconnected to the status of Lagos as an urban centre. The location makes polygyny expensive, cumbersome and more difficult to manage. Another, 20% are in polygynous unions, while 6% are in a multi-local polygynous arrangements, with a mobile husband.

The average number of children per woman is 5.5; each has 8, 7, 4 and 6 children, while 26% each have 3 and 5 children. This number of children is also likely to reduce the respondents quality of life further because of the high cost of educating children now in Nigeria. One can safely hypothesize that if these women were in the rural areas, they probably would have had more children; especially if they are from the eastern part of Nigeria, where women are given titles and special ceremonies performed for them. A cow is slaughtered after the birth of

10 children. Thus in this area, it is the aspiration of many women especially the non-literates to have at least 10 children.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

The education of women in Nigeria has been an important issue for a lot of women and progressive minded men. Education is clearly one of the strongest assets for the growth and development of confident and progressive women. This is because any woman who can read, write and add numbers will have a better chance in life than the one who can not. This study shows that, most of the women have little education, which in a country as big and diverse as Nigeria can only place them in the informal sector of the economy, which is usually negatively affected by globalization. Women seem to have an uphill task getting any education in good times, while in bad times they are usually the first to be withdrawn to work and subsidize the families' income to educate the boys.

This is why at the primary level of education, there is usually a high female enrolment, but by secondary and tertiary levels enrolment drops. Thus, many women who have higher education today have either achieved it on their own or were simply lucky to have found themselves in a place, where they could be educated outside their nuclear families. The low level and lack of education, have seriously disadvantaged many women that they are unable to reap the positive fruits of globalization. Also, lack of education or too little education has made it very difficult for Nigerian women to reap the gains of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This is because, it is impossible to understand a lot of its components without adequate education; one needs to go beyond basic literacy to make an impact.

WOMEN'S WORK

Most Nigerian women are employed in the informal sector even in the urban areas. A visit for instance to the markets in Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Benin or any the Nigerian towns and villages will reveal that most of the traders are usually women (over 80%). Many of them are market traders, domestic servants, tailors, hair dressers and food vendors, which go uncounted because the statistics are not available.

In this study 80% are self-employed in the informal sector, 14% are unemployed and 6% are employed in the formal sector. The implication of this is that these women are thus, unable to reap the benefits of globalization, which makes them worse off as they still have to survive in an inflation prone economy/society.

With globalization theoretically, women's participation in market economy is encouraged, while demand for women's labor has increased. However, this increase has not been matched with an equivalent increase in earnings, while inflation keeps reducing every ones quality of life; especially the women. Thus, poverty has a gender bias. The says that women make up 90% of the world's 1.385 billion poor. Besides this, a lot of women work for more than 15 h a day in their homes as house wives and home makers and this is unpaid labor. This means that generally, women work for longer hours earning lower wages than men.

WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

In Nigeria marriage is culturally seen as both an important milestone in the life of everyone especially women and a status symbol (Omokhodion, 1998a). Thus, it is the dream of most Nigerian women to get married and stay in the union. The implication of this is that women are sometimes willing to bend the rules; sometimes to their own disadvantage to get into the union, because of family pressure and societal stigma, they are also usually ready to bear the sufferings from an abusive husband who do not take care of the family just to have the honorable title of housewife. Thus, in this study, 74% of the respondents are married, while the 6% are divorced and 20% single. Those who are single all wish to be married. Besides this, in Nigeria, marriage is still very much a union of 2 families rather than that of 2 individuals, while the extended family system is still quite effective and important. From the sample, the estimated average age of marriage is between 18-22 years. This is because many of the respondents are not very sure of their ages. Thus, we had to estimate based on the length of schooling time, length of marriage and age of the first child.

Increasingly, marriage in Nigeria is becoming a survival technique. Thus, one can say that some women will today be willing to marry very wealthy demons as opposed to very poor saints. Globalization has thus, encouraged families to be very materialistic, when it comes to seeking a spouse for a child. This exposes women to sexual and physical abuse from husbands. Now the emphasis is on wealth, without a thought for how this wealth has been made. There are many sad tales of young girls ending up with underground criminals. Many parents encourage their children to seek out rich suitors, since they (the parents) stand to gain in their old age from such unions.

A vivid example of how Nigerian society brings down women for the men to grow is here presented.

This is the case of a Christian Edo trader in Lagos. She has no formal education, but learnt to sew and cook.

She is married with 5 children into a polygynous union as the second wife. She said that her father wanted her to go to school and actually put her into a school, but her maternal grand mother who was a very tough woman, went to remove her and said that she needed her as her assistant. She insisted that she had to assist her to produce traditional black soap and carry same to the market to sell, so that she (her grand mother), whose only child was her mother, could educate the son; (her older brother), who her mother had out of wedlock, before marrying her father. She continued to do this until her older half brother completed his training as a medical doctor, while she remained non-literate. Her grand mother assured her that her older brother who knew she was put down for him to be educated will always assist her. She however, recalled sadly that her older brother married a Norwegian lady he met in England, while in medical school and he developed foreign culture. Thus, refusing to assist her on the basis of the extended family obligations. She, thus had to do all sorts of odd jobs to keep her 5 children and herself above starvation level as the second wife in a polygynous marriage. She recalls her youth with a lot of bitterness against her maternal grand mother, who refused to allow her have any education, but made her to slave for her older brother, who ended up abandoning her when, she needed him most. She recalled an incident that happened when her first daughter gained admission into secondary school. She went to him for assistance towards the school fees, but he angrily sent her away with the statement; Was it because of me you were having your children? I have the three children that I can maintain. You too should have given birth to the children you can maintain also. This lady is now in her late 1970s; a mother, grand mother and great grand mother, yet the pains of her earlier life is still in her voice whenever she recalls the story.

CONCLUSION

The above findings have established linkages between the socialization of women in Southern Nigeria and their social situation in the midst of globalization. It has also shown that there is a strong element of discrimination against women in Nigerian homes and society at large. One would need to conduct a much larger study to know whether or not women in general, are aware of the problems suggested by my study.

Even though the sample is small and only covers one location within a country that is known for its ethnic heterogeneity, I believe that one aspect of life in which there is unity and homogeneity in Nigeria is the area of female discrimination and subjugation. Thus, the picture will not be radically different in the middle belt and

northern Nigeria, which is not represented here.

A recall of the case of Safiriyu Husaini, who was condemned to death by stoning for getting pregnant outside wedlock by a Sharia court in Sokoto State (Northern Nigeria), while the man responsible for the pregnancy was free because there was no witness to the act, in 2001 shows gender inequity in Sharia laws. This is in spite of the knowledge of scientific methods; like through DNA of proving paternity cases. This is a strong case of female discrimination. Similarly, Amina Lawal Bakori was sentenced to death by stoning in a Katsina State Sharia court, for having a baby outside wedlock, while the man responsible for the pregnancy was free. The main evidences against Safiya and Amina are their pregnancies and deliveries of babies. If this had happened in the 15th century, it would have been understandable, but in the 21st century, it is difficult to understand the rationale for the acquittal of the men and condemnation of the women, except in the area of strong discrimination against women.

The findings from this study have shown that female discrimination is very rampant in Nigeria and that it cuts across all ethnic groups, while the components of female socialization are usually clustered around the duties of a house wife and subordinate. Women are more likely than men to be non-literate or semi-literate in all parts of Nigeria.

It seems also that Female circumcision is more rampant among the Edo than among the Igbo and Yoruba. This study also showed that the educational statuses of most Nigerian women have no direct relationship with their cognitive ability, but it is rather a result of female discrimination, while gender discrimination has made many women uneducated, poor, unhappy and bitter about their socio-economic statuses. Also, many Nigerian women still socialize and provide for their children almost single handedly, even when they are still married and living with their husbands. Many women prefer to stay married rather than break up. It is however, quite comforting that the views of many Nigerian women are now getting quite positive on their daughter's education because of their own experiences. Thus, one can project a time when the education and social statuses of women in Nigeria will keep improving until it reaches a much higher level. Also, some components of female socialization and the strong societal discriminations against them have led to the massive reduction in women's quality of life.

It is clear that the gradual improvement in the statuses and quality of life of the Nigerian woman will not be an overnight venture, but the foundation is clearly being laid now in the frustrations and sufferings of our women, which has made them take some far reaching

decisions that can positively affect the future of female children in Nigeria. Thus, one can say that the sufferings have not been in vain. It will however require the joint efforts of every one to be successfully achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The socialization of the girl-child must be quite similar to that of the boy-child, while 6 stereotypes in tasks, duties and attitudes to life and textbooks in schools must be de-emphasized.

In order to obtain better health for women, female genital mutilation, should be stopped as it has been found to be very harmful to the lives of female children and does not really reduce female libido, contrary to the general belief and assumption by our men folk. Rather, polygyny should be made illegal as has been done in other African countries like Tunisia. Men also need to pay attention to the sexual needs of their wives, rather than turn their attention to others as soon as the problem arises.

To help rebuild the women's ego common statements like *na woman self* (she is just a woman), or common woman or ordinary woman or *asewo* (prostitute), which are used to insult women in many Nigerian towns and villages daily should be religiously sanctioned. Nigerian women experience a lot of verbal abuse in addition to physical abuse daily without any visible reason apart from being a woman.

To achieve total success in improving the women's social status in Nigeria, women should be re-socialized to know their rights and seek redress against any gender induced abuse, physical or verbal.

To improve women's quality of life in Nigeria, Nigerian women's attitude and aspirations must be in agreement with the rest of the world's women, while to allow the Nigerian woman realize her true potentials and improve her quality of life, meritocracy must be emphasized in the Nigerian society. A major problem is the need to re-socialize both males and females. Unfortunately, women are often the strongest supporters of patriarchy as members of their own patrilineages. They often lord it over other women who marry into the patrilineage.

To help women build their own self esteem, sexual crimes and abuses in the Nigerian society should be seriously sanctioned as is done in the western world. This will make men think twice before committing such crimes as pouring of concentrated acid on women who refused to marry them or with whom they have a misunderstanding, just to destroy them and their looks, so that no one else will desire them.

Similarly, the culture of patrilineage should not be allowed to shroud the beauty and utility of the girl child as even when they get married and lose their names, studies have shown that they care more for their parents in old age than the boys/men (Omokhodion, 2000). This is a priceless asset, which should encourage all parents to take very good care of their daughters.

Also, the social construction of womanhood that has been created in the Nigerian society and which, contributes to the poverty, frustration and wretchedness of the Nigerian woman should be positively re-created, using the state machinery. This can be through jingles, positive publicity on women and other conscious efforts to recreate a positive image of womanhood in people's minds.

For equity, the culture of burying alive favorite wives of some special traditional rulers, with their husbands at death, so that they can continue their union in the life beyond, should be stopped in the few places where, this practice still exists. This is because no husband is ever buried alive with his wife, irrespective of their love, while all harmful widowhood practices, which affect women and are ironically sometimes enforced by other women, like forcing a woman to drink the bath water of a deceased husband, to exonerate herself from being responsible for his death, should be seriously sanctioned because of its health implications for the woman. This is because widowers in the same society never have to go through suicidal practices for their deceased wives.

All the above, will help the girl child to see herself as equal and having the same potentials as the boy child and consequently compete as equal, not subordinate who is not expected to do better.

REFERENCES

- Akanji, B., 1997. The Gender Implication of Structural Adjustment for Nigerian Women Farmers and Their Households. In: Garba, P.K., B. Akanji and I. Isiugo-Abanihe (Eds.). *Women and Economic Reforms in Nigeria*. Ibadan: WORDOC.
- Omokhodion, J.O., 1998a. *The Sociology of Esans*. 2nd Edn. Pearl Publication, pp: 1-307. ISBN: 978-34560-7-5.
- Omokhodion, J.O., 1998b. *Socialization in Some Nigerian Communities*. 1st Edn. John Odionuwa Publishers, pp: 1-111. ISBN: 978-34292-4-8.
- Omokhodion, J.O., 2000. *Sociology of Education: An African Experience*. 2nd Edn. Pumark Publications, pp: 1-211. ISBN: 978-2049-24-7.
- Seager, J. and A. Olson, 1986. *Women in the World*. 1st Edn. Pluto Press Publication, pp: 1-128. ISBN: 0-330-29193-9.