

Women Education as a Tool for Curbing Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract

The vital role women play in the development of society necessitates the need for women's education. The roles of women in the society are multifaceted, of great importance, and cannot be over-emphasized. The purpose of education is to prepare and qualify individuals to function at any level, to integrate them into society and also to transfer values and morals. Educating women is crucial to the development of any society. Education is a medium for women to harness and utilize their skills for the betterment of society. Education provides an opportunity and a platform for women of all categories to be empowered for national development. Corruption is a major challenge for countries around the world, including Nigeria. Corruption has a detrimental impact on every aspect of the social and economic performance of a country. It hinders development, aggravates income inequality, and reduces investment, both domestic and foreign, leads to the inefficient allocation of public funds, significantly lowers the quality of public sector services and deprives people of access to basic public services. Women in leadership roles have been shown to be more motivated and invested in addressing aspects of corruption that are closer to their own reality, i.e. in areas such as public service delivery of health care and education. Markers of women's empowerment such as greater female representation in government and higher literacy rates are linked to reduced levels of perceived corruption. This paper is intended to highlight the relationship existing between women education and reduced corruption levels.

Keywords: *Education, Corruption, Empowerment, Development*

Introduction

Corruption is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that erodes the socio-economic and political value of any nation. In many African states, particularly Nigeria, corruption is a clog in the wheel of progress, as well as a malaise that inflicts every aspect of society. Corruption is the bane of legitimacy, democratic stability and socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. It is a cancerous global phenomenon, which has persistently continued to cripple developmental efforts in Nigeria. APEC's 2014 Beijing Declaration on Fighting Corruption emphasizes that corruption "impedes economic sustainability and development, threatens social security and fairness, undermines the rule of law, and erodes government accountability, as well as public trust."¹

¹ APEC, 2014 APEC Ministerial Meeting: Annex H – Beijing Declaration on Fighting Corruption, November 8, 2014, https://www.apec.org/MeetingPapers/Annual-Ministerial-Meetings/2014/2014_a_mm/annexh.

Corruption can be defined as the abuse of a position of power for private gains, but it comes in many forms and operates at different levels. Oftentimes, corruption in Nigeria manifests in the form of misappropriation, kickbacks, vote buying, inflation of figures, budget padding, bribery, embezzlement, tribalism, nepotism, money laundering, treasury looting, conversion of public property or resources to public use, and so on. All forms of corruption are interrelated: they erode overall trust in institutions, contributing to an environment of impunity and lack of accountability. As such, it is imperative for governments to combat corruption at all levels.

Even though no country in the world is corrupt-free, corruption in the case of Nigeria has become very worrisome because she has consistently been placed among the most corrupt nations in the world. Corruption is a disease that eats into the cultural, political, and economic growth of any country and as well destroys the functioning of various organs of the government. Transparency International opines that "corruption is one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world, which undermines good government, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms private sector development and as well hurts the poor"². The pervasive and deep-rooted nature of corruption in Nigeria is indicated by the fact that in 2011, Transparency International, in its report on corruption perception, rated Nigeria as the 143 most corrupt nation out of the 183 countries surveyed³. Derin notes that Nigeria has been featuring prominently amongst the most corrupt nations in the world for the past thirty years⁴.

Corruption is a universal phenomenon and a major obstacle to development and economic growth. While it affects all social classes and groups, women are among the most affected. Corruption undermines efforts towards gender equality and is a barrier for women to gaining full access to their civic, legal, social, and economic rights. The impact of corruption has different effects across various groups of people. Corruption disproportionately impacts the poor and vulnerable. It impedes access to or degrades the quality of services like health, education, and public safety, thereby restricting avenues for social mobility. This power imbalance also plays out through gender, differentiating the impact of corruption on men and women. For instance, traditional concepts like gender roles and division of labour could restrict the economic opportunities available. More men work in the public sector than women. As a result of this, women are the least consulted when issues of corruption arise.

The effects of corruption are vast and far-reaching. Corruption is a societal malaise that spares no one. For this reason, it is only pertinent that more women should be included in the fight against corruption. Increased female representation in governments and policymaking bodies paves the way for initiatives that investigate and address corruption. Moreover, increased women's representation and civic participation could also improve institutional quality by introducing more checks and balances. According to

² E. Sicakova-Beblava, *Transparency International Slovakia - Annual Report 2005*, Transparency International Slovensko. 2006. Retrieved from <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1554659/transparency-international-slovakia/2244468/> on 12 Sep 2022. CID: 20.500.12592/64ffp2.

³ Business Day ed, *Nigeria and 2012 Corruption Index*. January, 8.2011

⁴ K. O. Derin, 'Leadership, Governance and Corruption in Nigeria'. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*. Vol. 9, November 3. 2007

Jaja, participation of both sexes is crucial to good governance⁵. In the same vein, he also opines that all groups in society be given an opportunity to improve. However, for there to be increased female participation in governance, there has to be an increased level of women's education, because education is the tool for participation at all levels in society. In order to participate in various institutions such as law, media, corruption control, and effective government, which are anti-corruption tools, one needs to have the required educational qualifications.

Education can have a significant impact on corruption prevention efforts. With increasing awareness of the adverse effects of corruption on development, the strategy to counter it is now a top priority in policies around the world⁶. One of the efforts to prevent corruption is by inculcating women in anti-corruption activities through education. The field of education is very influential in prevention of corruption, namely by providing anti-corruption education materials to females to build an anti-corruption culture.

The Concept of Corruption

Attempts to define corruption have led to several meanings by scholars across various disciplines. Johnston opines that studying corruption is a tricky business because definitions of the concept are controversial and are sometimes befuddled by self-serving equivocation⁷. Furthermore, there also exists a chasm between citizens' perception of corruption and the government perception of the same phenomenon. As a result of this challenge, there seems to be a confusion as to what acts, behaviours, and attitudes should be considered, designated and spotlighted as corrupt. In its etymological meaning, the word corruption is derived from the Latin word *corrumpo*, which literally means to break, lose value, be putrid, and useless. Corruption, therefore, means loss of purity or integrity. Generally, corruption is an ethical issue anchored on moral values and conduct.

According to Akindele, the concept of corruption has been elusive in many dimensions due to a lack of uniform definition. What is regarded as corruption depends on the existing national laws and regulations guiding certain actions. Some countries define corruption in its broadest form, while others legislate on the narrow definition of the term⁸. Waziri, citing the United Nations Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC), defines corruption as "abuse of power for private gain"⁹. Transparency International has chosen a clear and focused definition of the term as "abuse of entrusted power for private gain"¹⁰. It can also be defined simply as a deviation or change from the general accepted rules or laws for selfish gain. In the same vein, the World Bank defines corruption as an abuse of public office for private gain, where an official accepts, solicits,

⁵ J.M. Jaja, 'Good Governance in Rural Areas: Challenges for Social Security'. *Elixir International Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 71(2014). 2014. 25153-25157.

⁶ A. Persson, B. Rothstein and J. Teorell, 'The Failure of Anti-Corruption Policies, A Theoretical Mischaracterization of the Problem'. *QoG Work. Pap. Ser.* 2010.19 19

⁷ M. Johnston. Political Corruption: Historical Conflict and the Rise of Standards. *Journal of Democracy.* 2(4). 1991. 48-60.

⁸ S. T. Akindele. *Corruption: An Analytical Focus on the Problems of its Conceptualization*. Ife: Psychologia. 1995.

⁹ F. Waziri. Corruption and Governance Challenges. *Nigeria Conference Proceedings, Monograph Series, No. 7*. Abuja: CLEEN Foundation, Abuja. 2020.

¹⁰ Transparency International. What is Corruption? *Corruption Perception Index.* 2020. <https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption#define>

or extorts a bribe.¹¹ In Joseph Nye's widely known definition, he defines corruption as a "behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence"¹². An updated definition with the same elements is found in the definition of Mushtaq Khan, who viewed it as "behaviour, which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power, or status".¹³

Otite's view of corruption is the perversion of integrity, which could be manifested in acts such as bribery, inordinate favours or moral depravity. It occurs when two or more parties interact to upturn the structure and processes of a society. It is concerned with the behaviour of functionaries which promotes dishonest situations¹⁴. Corruption is also an abuse whereby private agents actively offer bribes to upturn public rules and processes for individual/personal advantage and profit. It occurs when two or more parties interact to upturn the structure and processes of a society. It is concerned with the behaviour of functionaries which promote dishonest situations. Furthermore, Ogundiya gave a very broad picture of the concept, stating that certain behaviours could be used to highlight corruption. These acts were given as embezzlement, conflict of interests, bribery, fraud, rigging of elections, misappropriation, and conversion of public funds for personal gains, extortion, and manipulation of procurement processes, diversion, and misappropriation of funds through manipulation or falsification of financial records¹⁵.

Women's Education

Education is a tool for national development, a potent weapon against poverty, and a fundamental human right to which we are all entitled. It gives people the opportunity to improve health, raise productivity and help foster participation in civil society. Education is a process of keeping the world and our society intact, fostering the development and growth upon which human survival and progress depend. This implies that education encourages the wholesome development of the individual through participation in the activities of the social group, and that there must be a guide who can direct such education in a way that can result in the all-round development of a person. Ogbonna opines that "education is a systematic and dynamic process of equipping individuals with knowledge and skills to enable them to solve the complex problems of living usefully for

¹¹ World Bank Independent Evaluation Group. *Engaging with Fragile States: An IEG Review of World Bank Support to Low Income Countries under Stress*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. 2006. Retrieved from www.worldbank.org/ieg

¹² J. Nye. Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. *American Political Science Review*.1967. 61(2): 417-427.

¹³ M. Khan. The Efficiency Implications of Corruption. *Journal of International Development*. 1996. 8(5): 683-696.

¹⁴ O. Otite. Corruption Against the Norms of African Life in O. Femi (ed.) *Effective and Efficient Implementation of Nigeria's Recent Anti-Corruption Legislation*, Abuja. 2000. Pp. 224-230.

¹⁵ S. I. Ogundiya. Corruption: The Bane of Democratic Stability in Nigeria. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol. 2 No. 4. 2009. Pp. 233-241.

themselves, their families, and make a worthwhile contribution to the overall progress and development of society¹⁶.”

Globally, education (formal or informal) plays a significant role in women’s empowerment. Through education, skills and knowledge are acquired for the transformation of societies and the maximization of women’s freedom. The knowledge gained through education endows women with the cognitive skills necessary to contribute socially, politically and economically towards national development. A Chinese proverb says, "If you educate a man, you educate one person. If you educate a woman you educate a nation".

Women can be likened to the fundamental building blocks of a society. They contribute immensely to the development of both the formal trained wage labour and the banking sector, cooperate jobs, etc.) and the economy’s informal sector (subsistence agriculture, child bearing, homebased workers, street vendors) of the economy. In developed and underdeveloped societies, women are referred to as the currency with which economic and political alliances are cemented. The benefit of female education is the fact that women are the bedrock of life. A male is taught by his mother and when he grows up, he never forgets what he was taught. Hence the saying, “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”. This fact is further enhanced in the leadership of most governments, as most of what the male leader does outside is the hidden influence of his wife or mother. Education strengthens the wellbeing of women and creates an opportunity for them to air their voices in household decisions and have better opportunities to participate in the labour market and community as a whole.

Nigeria and any other developing country treading the path of development are expected to demonstrate realistic gender mainstreaming in access to education. Gender equity in education is not just a privilege but the fundamental right of every Nigerian child. Hence individuals are legally guaranteed to have access to education irrespective of sex, race, and religion. Gender equity in education is value laden because it drives sustainable global and national development. Education opens the door for enhanced capacity and potential needed for people to succeed and to contribute to national progress. Therefore, in the real sense of it, “governments ought to make gender equity in education part of their value system and not to prioritize it because priorities can change at any time but values do not. Values and beliefs drive culture and behaviours” (Mehnert, 2019)¹⁷.

Women’s education is defined as the education that would make a woman aware of herself and her capacity to exploit her environment, and involves training in literacy and vocational skills to enable her to become functional in society¹⁸. Women’s education is synonymous with women’s empowerment. According to Aja-Okorie, an educated woman is an empowered woman and more marketable in terms of employment; better

¹⁶ B. B. O. Ogbonna. The Relationship between Tertiary Institutions and Other Levels of the Nigerian Educational System: Implication for Science Education and National Development. In Ogbonna B.B.O *et al* (eds) *Science and Technology Education for National Development*. 2000. Jos: Zimel Communication.

¹⁷ K. E. Mehnert. Make gender equity a value, not a priority. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. May 13, 2019. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/make-gender-equality-a-value-not-a-priority/>

¹⁸ H. Adamu. Women Education: Meaning and Importance. *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*. 1996. 3(2).

employment implies more earnings for the family as well as improved wellbeing, all of which contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth¹⁹. When there is an increase in the number of employed women, more women can participate in issues relating to governance. More women would understand what corruption is about and would be able to contribute their quota to fighting corruption in society. The Federal Government of Nigeria in 2004 succinctly acknowledged education as an instrument of parity for excellence in national development²⁰. A vital aspect of national development is the eradication of corruption. Other influencing factors for national development are equal living standards for all, equal share of all in profit, similarly equal distribution of income and capital, expansion of facilities regarding education, health, shelter and social welfare, and the preservation of the environment. National development in the context of this study is the mobilization and articulation of the human resource potentials in Nigeria through education of the female gender and exploiting them for the wellbeing of all.

More access to education by women is a necessary condition for women's empowerment and national development. It will enable more women to become socio-economically, culturally and politically aware. For women to be able to play their role in nation building, they must first be given access to education and frontline positions in the economy. According to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA (1994), capacity-building efforts should pay particular attention to the needs of women in order to ensure that their skills and experience are fully used in decision-making at all levels, which implies that the education and contribution of women to global and national development is indispensable²¹.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status are essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the most public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and indeed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning²².

¹⁹ U. Aja-Okorie. Women Education in Nigeria: Problems and Implications for Family Role and Stability. *European Scientific Journal*. 2013. 9(28).

²⁰ Federal Government of Nigeria. National Policy on Education. (Revised). *Federal Ministry of Education*. 2004. Lagos: NERDC.

²¹ United Nations. Department for Economic, Social Information, and Policy Analysis. *Population, Environment and Development: Proceedings of the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Population, Environment, and Development, United Nations Headquarters, 20-24 January 1992*. No. 129. United Nations Publications. 1994.

²² United Nations, *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995*, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html> [accessed 21 September 2022]

The State of Women's Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, access to reliable and complete information on education has for a long time proved difficult. The development of a national database for education statistics has been slow and various data generating agencies (including the Federal Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission, National Population Commission, and National Bureau of Statistics) have often used different sample designs, methods of data collection, analysis, and reporting; different modes of disaggregation; and definitions of indicators. The absence of rudimentary data collection, analysis, and reporting at schools and local levels in many areas is often viewed as a crisis inhibiting the development of effective education planning, monitoring, programming and policy-making²³.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics 2011 report, Nigeria's population in 2010 was estimated at 193 million people with women accounting for 49.2 percent and men accounting for 30.8 percent, with a sex ratio of 102 men to 100 women²⁴. According to the 2009 Nigerian Population Commission report (cited in the British Council 2014 entry), 40 percent of women and 28 percent of men have never attended school²⁵. The Net Enrollment Rate at the primary school level is 56 % for girls and 61 % for boys²⁶. For National Bureau of Statistics (2016) and UNESCO (2014) the percentage of girls' enrollment in primary school was less than 50 percent, it was 48.6 percent in 2014 but decreased in 2015 and 2016 to 47.4 percent and 47.5 percent respectively. The completion rates for girls in primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools for 2016 were 64.8 percent, 38.9 percent and 33.2 percent respectively. Literacy rate among young women and men aged 15-24 years were 59.3 percent and 70.9 percent in 2016 respectively²⁷.

The Role of Women in Fighting Corruption

A large body of academic and policy research has emerged that highlights the importance of adopting a gender perspective in the analysis of corruption and in anti-corruption policymaking. It has been speculated that women could actually play a decisive role in reducing corruption, and it is arguable that women are less involved than men in bribery and are less likely to condone bribe-taking. Although this is purely based on speculation, the debate on whether policies that promote gender equality in positions of power can effectively reduce corrupt practices has gained momentum in recent years.²⁸

The Nigerian public sector employs more men than women, in particular in managerial positions, which means that men largely outnumber women in many areas of public administration. A significant population of women are still academically untrained and unemployed in sectors that could enhance their opportunity to compete for positions

²³ British Council. *Girls' Education in Nigeria: Issues, Influencers and Actions*. Abuja: British Council. 2014.

²⁴ National Bureau of Statistics. 2011 Annual Socio-Economic Report. Abuja: The NBS Publication. 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng>.

²⁵ British Council. *Girls' Education in Nigeria: Issues, Influencers and Actions*. Abuja: British Council. 2014.

²⁶ UNESCO. Education for All: Global Monitoring Report. *Teaching and Learning for All*. 2014. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225660>

²⁷ UNESCO. Education for All: Global Monitoring Report. *Teaching and Learning for All*. 2014. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225660>

²⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Gender and Corruption in Nigeria*. Vienna: UNODC. 2020.

in the country that could bring about national development or that can influence actual policymaking. Women are also significantly underrepresented in positions of power and decision-making in Nigeria. In 2020, they occupied only 7.3 percent of parliamentary seats, with just 8 women in the Senate and 26 in the House of Representatives²⁹. In many cases, where there are women representatives to represent their various constituencies, they do not have the required educational qualifications to be represented. Some of them are made up of women leaders whose voices cannot be heard beyond their various constituencies. However, in other aspects of the public sector, women are better represented, with the most recent available data indicating that almost half of teachers/lecturers (45.8 percent), more than a third (34.0 percent) of doctors, and just under a third (29.4 percent) of judicial officers are women³⁰.

The contributions of women to national development cannot be overemphasized because of the dual role they play as mothers and as contributors who are making impact in nation building and as supporters to their families. What a nation needs to move forward are the concerted efforts of every individual toward the development of the country, not discrimination against a particular sex. Jaja opines that to achieve development in Nigeria, women should be systematically included in development efforts in order to change their subordinate status in society³¹. The educational disparity between men and women could hinder national development because this inadvertently implies that women will be disenfranchised of their right to contribute meaningfully where their opinions are needed. Equal educational opportunities for both men and women is the bedrock of nation building. There are many women out there who have contributed in one way or the other to the development of Nigeria.

Since the return of democracy in Nigeria, i.e., from 1999 to date, the impact of women ministers of finance has shown that educated women can hold the ace for national development as much as the men, if given a level playing field. Of the seven ministers of finance between 1999 and date, four are women, and the level of reform introduced by one of them has successfully curtailed financial corruption and leakages in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government. The reforms outlived the administration that introduced them and have been maximally applied by successive administrations irrespective of political party affiliation. According to Isa, in the face of losing huge funds to ghost workers through unsubstantiated salary and wage bills, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in 2007, under the watch of former Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala introduced two information technology-driven payment mechanisms- the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), and Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), for budget management and accounting in the public sector³². Also introduced as part of the reform measures across MDAs for prudent financial management was the Treasury Single

²⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Gender and Corruption in Nigeria*. Vienna: UNODC. 2020.

³⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Gender and Corruption in Nigeria*. Vienna: UNODC. 2020.

³¹ J. M. Jaja. Gender Equity, Education and Philosophy for Sustainable Development. *European Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 1, No. 1. 2013. P. 18

³² A. A. Isa. IPPIS: Blocking Salary Leakage in MDAs. *New Telegraph*. July 18, 2019 <https://www.newtelegraphng.com/ippis-blocking-salary-leakage-in-mdas/>

Account (TSA) whose implementation took off in 2015. From April 2007 when these reforms were introduced in February 2018, over 288 billion Naira was saved as a result of the indifference between the amount the government would have released to MDAs and the actual amount released through the IPPIS payment scheme³³. According to the Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, the Federal Government between 2017 and 2018 saved N273,809,842, 071.99 on the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) platform, money that otherwise would have been lost to ghost workers and leakages³⁴. The AGF further noted that prior to 2015, the total number of Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) on the IPPIS platform was 288 with a total staff count of 235,858, but as of today the total MDAs on IPPIS platform is 561 with a total staff count of over 755, 422³⁵. This robust and magnificent development in the wage bill system of the federal government is the unquestionable contribution of a female minister to the national development of Nigeria. Since 1999, there seems to be no other obvious reform that has cut cost, curtailed financial theft, eradicated corruption and promoted public accountability that transcended administrations beyond political party lines.

There are other notable contributions by women in other fields, but to mention a few, history will not forget Dora Akunyili in a hurry for her well-known fight against corruption in the pharmaceutical and food industries by waging war against the proliferation of counterfeit drugs up to when she was appointed Director General of National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Likewise, Ameyo Stella Adadevoh sacrificed her life for Nigeria when she identified Patrick Sawyer, a Liberian national as a carrier of the deadly Ebola virus and successfully prevented him from having contact with anyone outside the walls of the First Consultant Hospital, Obalende, Lagos even when there were high level plans to have him moved elsewhere³⁶. Her quick thinking, tenacity, resilience, doggedness and sacrifice prevented the spread of the deadly Ebola virus in Nigeria.

Mariam Aloma Mukhar was the first woman to rise to the top as the head of the Nigerian Judiciary in the Court of Appeal. She was also the first female Justice of the Supreme Court. As the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), she has been very resourceful, making an impact in the judiciary by sanitizing her noble profession. She was the first female magistrate in Northern Nigeria. She is a life bencher, a Fellow of the Nigeria Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and a Fellow of the Nigeria Law School. She has been honoured with the three highest Nigerian national honors, namely, Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON),

³³ A. A. Isa. IPPIS: Blocking Salary Leakage in MDAs. *New Telegraph*. July 18, 2019 <https://www.newtelegraphng.com/ippis-blocking-salary-leakage-in-mdas/>

³⁴ C. Agabi. Integrated Payroll: FG Saves N274bn in 24 Years. *Daily Trust*. June 19, 2019. <https://dailytrust.com/integrated-payroll-fg-saves-n274bn-in-2yrs>

³⁵ C. Agabi. Integrated Payroll: FG Saves N274bn in 24 Years. *Daily Trust*. June 19, 2019. <https://dailytrust.com/integrated-payroll-fg-saves-n274bn-in-2yrs>

³⁶ P. Ezinna, O. C. Ugwuibe and C. J. Ugwuoke. *Gender Equity, Women Education and National Development in Nigeria*. Unpublished Thesis. 2021.

Commander of the Federal Republic (CFR) and Grand Commander of Order of the Niger (GCON)³⁷.

The importance of educating women as a vital tool for fighting corruption cannot be overemphasized because women play a critical role in building peace and economic stability at home and in their societies, Women, especially mothers, plan, organize, direct and coordinate available resources and have good managerial abilities needed to develop all aspects of the economy, which can effectively checkmate corruption.

Factors that Constitute Barriers to Women Education

From existing literature, there is a plethora of barriers to women education such as poverty, religion, socialization, insecurity, culture, etc.

i. Culture: Some tribes in Africa hold cultural beliefs that women should be heard but not seen beyond the family front. This is a fundamental barrier to women's education. For instance, the belief that a girl child born into a family is in transit and her final destination is the husband's family is a major cultural barrier. It is for this reason that the male children who are considered the heir are usually better equipped for the future through education and other necessary means. This may not be the case for the educated and wealthy families that educate their girl children. However, the cultural limitation still manifests itself in the organized socio-economic and political systems of our society, in which women are usually seen to play second fiddle to men. The effect of culture on women's education in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, is complex. Complex in the sense that generally, some cultures appear to limit women, but there are specifics with regard to region, tribe, etc. In northern Nigeria, which is predominantly Muslim, education has yet to liberate the women as much as their counterparts in the south, who are predominantly Christians. In the North, there is no separation between culture and religion, but in the South it exists. Culture reinforces religion, and when there is no separation between the two, it constitutes a barrier to education, especially when it is not a civilized culture^{38 39}.

ii. Government attitude towards education: How civilized, modernized, liberalized, or developed a society or country is, is a function of education, particularly that of women. The government's attitude towards education has the capacity to either sustain the already existing barriers or whittle down their effect to create a gender balance in education and bring about national development by liberating women through education. According to Odunsi, liberating society will help reduce the level at which women face economic challenges⁴⁰.

³⁷ A. H. Ajibola, B. K. Abimbola & M. U. O. Tawakalitu. Gender and National Development: Position of Educated Women in Nigeria. *Al-Hikmah Journal of Education*. 6(2). 2019. Pp. 66 – 73.

³⁸ British-Council. *Gender Equality in Nigeria Report*. Abuja: British Council. 2012
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/british-council-gender-nigeria2012.pdf>

³⁹ British-Council (2014). *Girl's education in Nigeria Report 2014: Issues, Influencers and Actions*. Abuja: British Council. 2014.
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/british-council-girls-education-nigeria-report.pdf>

⁴⁰ W. Odunsi. Amaechi, Saraki Speak on Challenges Nigerian Women Face. *Daily Post*. September 26, 2019.
<https://dailypost.ng/2019/09/26/amaechi-saraki-speak-challenges-nigerian-women-face/>

The general attitude of the government towards education, expressed through budgeting, is not encouraging and does not demonstrate the fact that education is the basis of all civilization. According to Iyoha (2019), the annual government budget is a mirror of the culture of a country⁴¹. Therefore, anyone who desires to understand the culture of a country should take a look at the annual budget and especially the education component thereof. This is because education is one of the things of greatest importance to the welfare of any society. There is no country that can rise above the quality of the education it provides. He further reiterated that in the quality of education in a country lies the answer to the miasma that beclouds the sensitivity of people in all areas of life. As such, he averred that in Nigeria, there is no meaningful development that can take place unless and until the education sector is redeemed from its present state of chaos. Issues concerning education in Nigeria are currently at the short end of national discourse.

Budgetary allocation for education in Nigeria has continuously fallen below the 15-20 percent minimum of the entire budget recommended by the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)⁴². Nigeria in 2017 budgeted N550 billion (i.e., 6 percent) for education; in 2018, it was N496.9 billion, but it was later raised to about N605.8 billion (i.e., 7.04 percent) by the National Assembly. Incidentally, the budget was later cut as part of the agreement for the Independent National Electoral Commission to prepare for the last general elections. In the 2020 budget of N9.45 trillion, education is expected to be allocated N652.94 billion, representing 6.9 percent of the budget⁴³. According to the National Chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, Biodun Ogunyemi, education budgets indicate the ruling class in Nigeria do not prioritize education⁴⁴. A cursory look at the education budget in Nigeria indicates that it sometimes reflects the perception of the regime involved or the idiosyncrasies of the man at the helm of control.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are measures to redress the present academic and occupational imbalance between men and women for an effective anticorruption campaign:

1. All inhibiting cultural and religious beliefs and practices should be discarded, while all available channels of communication should be explored to change societal attitudes to girls' education.

⁴¹ F. Iyoha. Education and the 2019 Federal Government Budget Proposal. *Business Day*. 2019, March 13, 2019. <https://businessday.ng/opinion/article/education-and-the-2019-federal-government-budget-proposal/>

⁴² UNESCO. Education for All: Global Monitoring Report. *Teaching and Learning for All*. 2014. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225660>

⁴³ A. Adamu & E. Osagie. 2020 Budget: Health, Education in Familiar Territory of Neglect. *Punch*. October 20, 2019. <https://punchng.com/2020-budget-health-education-in-familiar-territory-of-neglect/>

⁴⁴ Ameh, J. & O. Aluko. 2019 Budget. Education Gets N620.5bn, Against UNESCO'S Advice. *Punch*. January 4, 2019. <https://punchng.com/2019-budget-education-gets-n620-5bn-against-unescos-advice/>

2. Sensitize parents and the society at large to the importance of educating women highlighting the accruable benefits of women's education to the individual and the nation.
3. There is a need to establish policies to encourage female enrollment in educational institutions.
4. The Federal Government and other corporate organizations must work towards employing more women.
5. There should be a sensitization drive to encourage more women to contest for elective positions.
6. More women should be involved in planning and policymaking positions in all facets of our national life and development. Given the necessary education and incentives, Nigerian women are encouraged to contribute more of their quota to fighting corruption.

Conclusion

There is a lot that still needs to be done in the context of achieving gender balance and furthering women's rights. The achievement of equal status in educational attainment by men and women, has continued to be elusive. This is due to many factors, ranging from a faulty educational system to cultural and traditional practices that are inimical to women's education. Empowerment for women can only be truly achieved through an understanding of the complex relationship between corruption and gender equality issues, and efforts that are targeted at promoting women's rights must take cognizance of strategies to fight corruption

Women can also do a lot for the anti-corruption crusade if they come together to take a stand against corruption in society. They can bring change to the system by demanding accountability at every level of governance and insisting on things being done right. History tells us of Nigerian women who, before the age of social activism as we know it now, brought changes into the socio-political landscape by sheer force of determination. Notable examples are the women of Aba, the famous Aba Riots in the days of colonialism, and Amazons like Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, etc.

In spite of the foregoing, it is incontrovertible that women are a key part of the solution to corruption because of the very important role they play in society. In their role as mothers and caregivers, women are the pivot of sustainable societal values. Greater participation of women in governance and other aspects of public life can help in the design of gendered approaches to anti-corruption, which can help prevent corruption experienced by women and allow them to resist it, report it and seek redress whenever it occurs.

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