

Women Participation in National Development in Nigeria: The Imperative of Education

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Abstract

Women constitute an indispensable force in the quest for national development of any nation. In the developed nations, women have been able to play this important role. However, in Nigeria, women are still relegated to the background as they lack the educational, economic and political power necessary to actualize their innate potentials. The paper examines the important place of women education in the empowerment of women to enable them contribute their quota to national development. The study relied solely on secondary data and this was analysed using content analysis. The paper shows that women access to education is still low as the gender disparity in the enrolment of women into primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions is widening over the years. These problems are further compounded by the high rate of girls' dropout and failure among women that sat for 'O' Level examination. The implication is that many of them lacked the required minimum numbers of credits that qualify them to enrol or get admission into the tertiary institutions. The paper postulates that more pro-active actions need to be taken by the government and other stakeholders to ensure gender parity in education through special child girls education, scholarships and effective implementation of policies and programmes geared towards this..

Keywords: Education, Development, Gender, National Development, Women Education Women Empowerment.

1. Introduction

Across the globe, women constitute a very significant and indispensable portion of the population. No wonder in recent time, women all the world have come to positive focus. This was as a result of the realization of what the world might have been missing by not involving them positively in the development process of nations. Although a few countries, especially the developed ones, have appreciated and empowered to a large extent their women in order to play their roles and contribute their own quota to the development of their societies, many others, especially the developing countries have not appreciate fully the important roles women can play in the transformation of their countries when empowered. According to Orucha (2003: 34) the progress and development of any nation is the women in the society. Thus the women represent a tool for positive change, depending on how they are treated and the levels of opportunities given to them to actualise their potentials. The declaration of 1978 by United Nations' Organisation as the international year of women as well as decade for women, and the Beijing declaration of 1991 are positive focus towards the emancipation of women. These declarations also show the important place of women in national development and transformation.

National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the welfare of the people by providing social amenities, like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care, creating conducive political atmosphere and participation of citizens etc.

In Nigeria, the numerical strength of the women have been considered to be of great potentials that are necessary for the evolution of a new economy and good governance that accelerates social and political development. This, it is assumed could transform the society into a better one. According to the Nigerian population census of 1999, the country's population stands at 140 million, out of which 80.2 of them are women and girls (Gender in Nigeria Report: 2012: 45-48). Thus, over the years, scholars have emphasised on the importance of empowering women for National development. But one important ingredient for achieving this is through women education. Investing in women and girls child education as enumerated in Gender in Nigeria Report: 2012, will increase productivity in this generation and will promote sustainable growth, peace and better health for the next generation. However, statistics show that this important ingredient is missing in Nigeria. The Report (British Council, Nigeria) show that though much have been achieved in the area of primary education, the gender gap still widen in secondary and tertiary institutions. For example, as at 2008, the enrolment ratio between boys and girls was 68 to 59 (boys to girls respectively). The enrolment ratio for girls in secondary school is 22 and boys 29. All these statistics point to the fact that a lot is still required in terms of educating the women for them to participate and contribute their quota to national development.

The question now is that what is responsible for gender disparity in education and how can education be made more effective to achieve gender parity in education as stipulated in the National Policy of Education?

The objective of this paper is to explore the important place of education in empowering women thereby enhancing their participation in national development. The paper solely relies

on secondary data. The data was analysed qualitatively using content analysis.

2. The Role of Women in National Development in Nigeria

The role of women in national development cannot be over emphasised. Their contributions permeate all facets of the nation's economy. Women constitute an indispensable group in the development process of any nation.

Analysts believe that Nigeria with a population of around 140 million and huge population of women has the potential to transmute from a poverty stricken nation to a vibrant economy. Women in Nigeria are crucial beyond certain customary duties and procreation efforts. They have the potential of turning an ailing economy at the family, local, state or national levels, through their inbred economic strength, organisational skills and single minded focus to surmount obstacles posed by the environment, culture and stronger partners (the men) (Akosile, 2010: 30)

The steady advancement of women in contributing to the socio economic development of the nation's scheme of affairs have to a large extent impacted on the federal government and the federal government have responded positively in many ways. For instance, the late Maryam Babangida (First lady of Nigeria 1985 – 1998) was active in promoting gender related issues and interests during her husband's tenure as Head of State of Nigeria. Also the subsequent creation of National Commission for Women and the Ministerial post for Women Affairs provided additional avenue for the promotion of women related issues and the enhancement of the role of women to national development by way of statutory body and ministry.

Awe (1990 9-13) sees the importance of women from their roles as peace and stability at home depends largely on the managerial abilities of women. She further stressed that the women, especially the mothers plan, organise, direct and coordinate all resources at home to the benefit of all members of the family. Effective management of the home promotes national development. But wherever this is lacking, the reverse is usually the case (Lasiele, 1999: 132).

In the agricultural sector, women have made significant contribution to food production and processing. As far back as the early 1980s, the United Nation's report reveals that 60 – 90 percent of the agricultural labour force was women and they produce two-third of the food crops.

Olawoye (1985: 18-23) describes Nigerian women as a crucial factor of producing. To him they assume this status because they are largely responsible for the bulk production of crops, agro-based food processing, presentation of crops and distribution of yields from farm centres to urban areas.

Yet in spite of these, widespread assumption that men and not the women make the key farm management decision had prevailed. Sadly, female farmers in the country were among the voiceless, especially with respect to influencing agricultural policies. Their role in decision making process in agriculture has not been widely employed or at best, remains minimal.

Damisa and Yohanna (2007:141-145) using Zaria in Kaduna state, examine the level of participation of rural women in decision making in different areas of agriculture and studied factors influencing their participation in the decision making process in farm management they found that women's participation in decision making was quite minimal. In each of the

farm operations less than 20 percent of the women were consulted, except in the sourcing of farm credit; where about 28 percent were consulted: about 13 percent or less of the women has their opinion considered in each of the farm operations. However, only 1.0 percent and 2.5 percent took the final decision in all of the farm operations. Women's participation in farm management decision making process is said to increase with age, older women participating more in decision making in the different areas of agriculture than their younger age group counterparts. The high level of knowledge and experience about improved farm practices acquired by the educated women farmers had positive influence in that regard. Wealth status of women is also another major determinant of the role of women in farm management decision making: Richer women being more involved than their poorer counterparts. A report by NAERLS (2000:23) indicates that women in Anambra state of Nigeria contribute more than the men in terms of labour input in farming and are solely responsible for household management duties. In studies elsewhere in Nigeria involving the Jukun people, Nomadic Fulani and Kulka women farmers, Meek (1981:16), Ngur (1987:14) asserts that between 70 to 80 percent of agricultural labour force is represented by women. Also, a survey of peasant agricultural women in northern Nigeria revealed that rural women take part in the processing of agricultural produce. In a related survey, Simmons (1973:40-41) observe that in the food processing and cottage industries in three Zaria villages, 90 percent of the women were involved in at least one food processing activity or the other.

A separate investigation carried out by Agu (1994:45-58) amongst the Berom, women of Plateau state shows that all of the 800 women interviewed were aware and desired the benefits of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and tractors but none of them had direct access to it. They had to get such inputs through their husbands who do not get enough of such and must satisfy the needs of their own farms first. In the same study, it was discovered that none of the women had benefited from government loans because their husband would either not approve or when they do, would take the money from them. Again, the land tenure system permits women only limited (sometimes not at all) access to land ownership and use – an anomaly which the land use decree has not been able to correct.

A recent report (British Council, Nigeria, 2012:) shows that although many women are involved in subsistence agriculture and off-farm activities, men are five times more likely than women to own land. Statistics from the report show that women own 4.0 percent of the land in the north-east, 5.0 percent in the north-west, 8.0 percent in the north – central, 6.0 percent in the south-west, 11 percent in the south-east and south – south. Land ownership and land tenure gives women security and provides a key to access other resources and opportunities. Thus the report recommends that the Nigeria Land Administration Act should be operationalised to help to expand women productivity.

In the political and decision making spheres, women in Nigeria have also played important and vital roles. Our pre-colonial history is replete with the exploits of Queen Amina of Zaria, who led armies to drive out invaders from Zaria. Moremi of Ile-Ife, who sacrifices for her people speaks of selfless leadership that are bereft of these days. Our recent past speaks of prominent women leaders like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo and Hajia Gambo Sawaba who champion various causes of women emancipation.

The legacies of these women are at the risk of extinction. One, even though an increasing

number of women are finding their way into boardrooms of decision making and providing leadership for blue chip companies, the majority of women in Nigeria offer only minimal participation in economic development and/or politics. Female participation in decision-making is still far cry from the Rwandan experience where the economy rides to recovery on the backs of women (Washingtonpost.com 2008).

Also, Attuo (2010: 1- 4) traced the historical participation of women in politics and decision making from the pre-colonial period to the post – colonial era in Nigeria. He concludes that despite all that, it is evident that only few Nigerian women have participated and emerged in Nigeria's political landscape, in spite of the pioneering efforts of these women, especially since the 1950s.

Statistics show that at the April 2007 election, there were total 1200 women aspirants to 1532 offices. 660 of these aspirants won their primaries. Out of these 660 candidates, only 93 finally emerged as winners and these include 6 Deputy Governors, a Senator, 27 House of Representative, and 52 at various Houses of Assembly. As at 2011, we had 7 Senators, 25 House of Representative members and 65 at various Houses of Assembly. This indicates that only a percent of those who stood for elections to National Assembly were women. Out of the 360 members of House of Representative, only 109 Senate members, only 7 were women. Also only about 4 percent of Local Government Councillors in Nigeria were women (Eyinade, 2010:7 and British Council of Nigeria, 2012: 54-56).

Based on the statistics above, there is a declining trend in the number of women elected into various political offices between 2007 and 2011 and this is still a far cry from the aspirations of women. Women participation in politics is a strategic importance, not only for women empowerment but for other benefits and impact.

According to a fact sheet drawn-up by UNDP's Democratic Governance for Development (DGD) project and its coalition partners as part of its nationwide sensitization campaign for constitutional amendment in support of increase female representation, the Senate and House of Representative have 6.4% and 6.7% representation respectively. The same statistics shows that none of the 36 states Executive Councils met the minimum 35% gender representation recommended under the National Gender Policy (FMWAD, 2006).

However, there was an improvement in the number of women in the current Federal Executive Council (FEC). Out of the 42 ministers appointed, 14 are women, representing 33.3 percent. In the same vein, there are 11 female permanent secretaries out of 43 constituting 26 percent, and 5 female advisers out of 13 representing 38 percent. Also, another important milestone recorded by women under the present regime was the appointment of female ministers to manage key ministries hitherto managed by men, e.g. petroleum and aviation Ministries. However, despite the above achievements, the UNDP report concludes that women participation in politics and decision making is still inadequate. Factors responsible for the low participation of women in politics and decision making according to the report include money politics; indigene issues; lack of access to education; and other socio- economic opportunities.

According to the Gender in Nigeria Report (2012: 57) factors influencing women participation in politics include their low level of education (especially in the north)

requirement to have completed secondary education, lack of capacity in political and interpersonal skills and knowledge; public speaking: organising and coordinating campaign, advocacy and negotiation, financial constraints (candidates lack resources for registration fees, to establish campaign structures etc and productive roles: women need to be home in the evenings and at night who feed and care for their children etc.

Eyinade (2010:3-4) also have identified several impediments which to her limit the participation of women the political fronts. They include the cultural mores: social conventions, values and mores which combine to maintain the stereotype of women as kitchen dwellers and gate crashers outside their matrimonial homes, religion as an accomplish of cultural mores in reinforcing the barriers that prevent the women from participating politically, women's perception of politics as a dirty game the demands of politics which is time consuming, violence and threats in political activities, funding and poverty.

The need to include women as partners in development brought about the introduction of the term "gender sensitivity" here public offices and assignments are allocated to women. The greater the number of women in such position, the greater the gender sensitivity the leader or organisation is deemed to express the initial understanding of such development is that it is still the men that decides the positions and assignments to be handed to the women and most time, these women are appointed to exalted positions have excelled in various positions and their achievement is what attracted them to their sponsors or bosses. For example women like Dora Akinyuli excelled very well in her area of specialization as chief executive of NAFDAC. That was what promoted the government later to appoint her as a federal minister in Nigeria.

Presently there is hardly any area of endeavour that women are not found whether at the local or international level. They are found in the field of medicine, engineering, military, entrepreneurship, administration, management, banking and finance, police, judiciary, journalism, etc. Also in the past one decade (2001 – date) most states governors and the federal government have appointed women to position of greater responsibilities ranging from committee chairman and member, permanent secretaries, special advisers commissioners, directors, director-generals of important and sensitive parastatals. While this is commendable and tend to change the trend, many have argued that this development has by no means addressed the problem of marginalization of women in the area of employment (Agu, 2007: 2, Lasiele, 1999: 133).

To Agu (2007: 2) the percentage of women in development is like a drop of water in an ocean with regard to the population of women who should be employed whether in the public or private sectors. According to the National Bureau for statistics (NBS, 2010) in 2007 only 32.5 percent of women were employed in non-agricultural private sector. Even in the public sector which is seen as more progressive in terms of direct public policy intervention as it attracts gender composition, it is not any better. The public sector in Nigeria as at 2007, 28.5 it increased to 28.7 in 2002. It further increased to 30.7 in 2003. It dropped to 29.5 in 2004.

In term of top positions in the service, a similar lack of gender parity is evident. In 2001, only 16 percent of women were judges, 17 percent are permanent secretaries. In 2006, only 18.6 percent are women judges while 17.7 percent were women permanent secretaries. In 2007,

20.1 were omen judges while 20.7 were permanent secretaries. Also out of the 42 member cabinet of President Goodluck administration, only 13 are women. This is more gender sensitive compared to previous regimes when the numbers were insignificant.

The above statistics have clearly revealed the level of gender parity in the Nigerian public service. No wonder Lasiele (2011: 133) argue that this approach to gender parity needs to cascade down through the public service where women are still under represented. Thus we can conclude that, today the number of women in top jobs is still nearly insignificant.

The main barrier to women employment is not related to the educational level but that of the societal role and responsibilities placed on women as enunciated by the British Council, Nigeria Report (2012: 19). The under representation of women in formal sector jobs is job scarcity and other demand side barriers, rather than supply side labour market discrimination. According to the report, the demand side constraints mainly concern the reproductive roles that women play, which often lead them involuntarily to prefer low quality, poorly paid, part time but relatively flexible employment. The reproductive roles also mean that women often forego promotion to highly paid jobs if these involve anti-social hours or frequent travel away from their families. In situations like this, it says, education on its own does not necessarily improve prospects for better paid formal employment. Also, related to the above, Ezeigbo (1996:23) noted that most Nigerian women labour live under stress because they are overwhelmed by the responsibilities in their lives, those created by the society and themselves. According to him, the Nigerian women are expected to perform their traditional roles efficiently, run their homes, be good wives and step mothers. They are also expected to contribute to the family income, cater for the extended family members and perform efficiently in their jobs or businesses.

In terms of professional participation, WIN (2012:16) asserts that the Nigerian women have proved to be more than a mere bench-warming spectator even in the midst-of the male-dominated professional groups like the Nigerian Medical Association, the Nigerian Bar Association and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria. These organizations have been led in recent times by female presidents. These feats according to an accomplished professional, Chief Mrs. Kuforiji Olubi, was that apart from testifying to the resolute determination and unyielding “spirit” of women, cast in bold relief two useful and challenging facts. Firstly, that leadership trait is not genetically acquired and has nothing to do with gender. Women can effectively participate in policy making and governance, if given the chance. They can hold their own in very difficult and stressful situations and can do well, if not better than men.

Secondly, that man admires and respects women who wield power whether it is economic or political. This fact dismantles the confusing and misleading notion that successful women constitute a threat to the society and especially to their husbands and associates. According to Olubi, the foregoing implies that successful women need not to spun marital and family commitments in search of socio-political advancement. In other words, they have options and possibilities for foregoing a workable communal, political, participatory programme from the spring board of economic viability alongside their traditional responsibilities (WIN, 2012:13). Considering the population of women in Nigeria, a conscious or an unconscious under representation of Nigerian women in educational, economic, social and political programmes

could lead to a serious set-back and thus the need for women empowerment through education cannot be over emphasised.

3. Education: An Imperative for women empowerment

The importance of women education, especially their access to education cannot be over stated. This is against the backdrop of their level of participation and contribution to the socio-economic and political development of the nation.

Generally, the access of women to education is still very low. To Agu (2007: 34) the low access of women to education can be attributed to the concept of women” especially in developing countries, as chattels to be owned by men, socio-cultural teenagers who drop out of school or not allowed to go to school at all eventually grow into women on whom demand towards development will be made.

Furthermore, the policy document guiding women education in Nigeria remains flimsy (FGN, 2004). Besides Aderigbagbe (2004:98) asserts that the policy makers are predominantly men and so the women populace has remained largely illiterate. To Ojobo (2008:12), the plight of women education in Nigeria is such that provision for improving women participation had to be made in the Nigerian Policy on Education (2004) as stated in Section 3, Paragraph 11 thus: “with regard to women’s education, special efforts will be made by ministries of education and local government authorities in conjunction with ministries of community development and social welfare and information to encourage parents to send their daughters to school”

Apart from the above provision, several other practical steps have also been taken improve women participation in education over time. As indicated in the British Council Nigeria (2012: 27 – 28) report, some clear patterns indicates that in 1986 there was a blueprint on women’s education which intended to expand educational opportunities for women; discouraged withdrawal of girl children from school; Nomadic Education Programme (1986) aimed at providing primary education to children of nomadic pastoral communities; National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-formal Education (1991) aimed at reducing illiteracy by encouraging children to allow school; established functional literacy centres for women; Family Support Basic Education Programme (1994) which encouraged families in rural areas to accept education for girl children as a way to enhance child health and youth development; Universal Basic Education (1999), Boosted enrolment by ensuring that all children of school going age had access to primary and junior secondary education; National Policy on Women (2001) aimed at entrancing access by locating facilities close to communities; enhanced teacher recruitment; provided incentives for girls to study maths and science; Education for All –Fast Track Initiative (2002) aimed at increased support for basic education; Strategy for Acceleration of Girls’ Education in Nigeria (2003) which led to the launch in 2004 of the Girls’ education project: focused on an integrated approach to achieving gender parity; National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEED: 2004) which was a poverty reduction strategy that enhanced the integration of women in national development by increasing their capacity to participate in the economy and in employment and Universal Basic Education Act (2004) which provided pre-primary education; confirmed universal right to primary and early secondary education among other international initiatives to which Nigeria is a signatory. Some examples include the “Cairo consensus” (2004), Dakar

“Education for All” declaration (2000) and most recently the Millennium Development Goals which focuses on gender parity in school enrolment with the objective of achieving this by 2015.

Despite the above impressive policy initiatives and commitments, much still need to be desired Gender disparity in education is still high. This is evidenced in student enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. The same statistics show an increase in the rate of female students’ failure in “O” Levels examination. Also the disparity in the rate of admission into tertiary institutions is still high (see Table 1, 2, 3&4 below).

Table 1. Total Enrolment in Primary schools in Nigeria by Gender

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total Schools	60,189	60,189	34,434	54,434	54,434
Total enrolment	21,395,510	22,115,432	23,017,124	21,632,070	21,294,517
Total Male enrolment	11,824,494	12,189,073	12,575,689	11,683,503	11,483,943
Total female enrolment	9,571,016	9,926,359	10,441,435	9,948,567	9,810,575

Source: Culled from Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 p.29

Table 2. Total Enrolment in secondary schools in Nigeria by Gender

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total Schools	10,913	10,913	18,238	18,238	18,238
Total enrolment	6,279,462	6,397,343	6,538,038	6,068,160	6,625,943
Total Male enrolment	3,593,708	3,543,425	3,642,871	3,460,146	3,682,141
Total female enrolment	2,739,754	2,854,718	2,893,167	2,608,014	2,943,802

Source: Culled from Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 p.30

Table 3 Admission statistics into Nigerian Universities by sex from 2000-2008

Year	Sex	Application by gender	Total Application	Admission by gender	Total Admissions
2000	Male	238,456	416,291	26,665	45,766
	Female	177,835		19,101	
2001	Male	743,725	1,056,617	54,972	90,769
	Female	312,892		35,797	
2002	Male	580,338	994,380	31,942	51,845
	Female	414,042		19,903	
2003	Male	603,179	1,046,950	59,742	105,157
	Female	443,771		45,415	

2004	Male Female	486,539 355,339	841,878	59,742 45,415	122,492
2005	Male Female	526,281 390,090	916,371	45,2586 31,728	76,984
2006	Male Female	456,953 346,519	803,472	52,413 36,111	88,524
2007	Male Female	911,653 390,876	1,302,529	64,706, 42,664	107,370
2008	Male Female	598,667 455,393	1,054,060		113,110

Source: Culled from Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 p.35

Table 4. NECO examination results, November/December 2003 - 2007

	Number of candidates who sat the examination			Candidates with a minimum of five credits (including English & Mathematics)			Candidates with a minimum of five credits(including English & Mathematics) %		
Year	Male		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2004	212,196	122,395	335,311	16,388	17,275	33,663	7.70	14.11	10.04
2005	171,020	122,863	293,883	31,646	29,066	60,712	18.50	23.26	20.66
2006	149,018	117,887	266,905	19,117	18,083	37,200	12.83	15.34	13.94
2007	164,450	208,746	368,598	27,567	21,819	50,783	16.76	10.45	13.78
2008	214,095	146,836	363,931	16,403	5,100	21,503	7.66	3.40	5.91

Source: Culled from Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 p.34

Table 1 above shows that despite the fact that the gender gap is closing at the primary school level, the reality is that the gross enrolment ratio of girls is still low compared to that of the boys. In 2004, female enrolment ratio by percentage was 44%, it was 45% in 2004 and 2006 respectively. As at 2007, it increase to 46% and it remains 46% in 2008. As indicated in Table 2 above, at the secondary level, the gap is still significant as the net enrolment ratio for girls is 22%, compared to 29% for boys. Table 3 shows that in spite of the increase in the number of females who apply and those given admission into Nigerian Universities from year 2000-2008, the gender gap is still widening. For instance, out of the 416,291 total number university applicants in 2000, 43% are female, it decrease slightly to 42% in 2004, and as at 2008, and it was 43%. Also, out of the total number of candidates offered admission in 2000, 41% were female. It increase to 43% in 2004, and as at 2008, it decrease to 39%.

From the above statistics, the 50/ 50 enrolment ratio as envisage in the Gender Policy in Nigeria in line with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) has not been achieved. The MDG seeks to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015”. The male still have the highest enrolment ratio at the primary, secondary and the tertiary levels of education in Nigeria with

great implications for the empowerment and participation of women in national development. What further aggravates the above scenario is the high rate of female failure in O, Level exams that would qualify them for enrolment into tertiary institutions in Nigeria, especially to the universities. Table 4 above indicates that the percentage rate of female that passed the minimum five credits (including English & Mathematics) was 14.11% in 2004. In 2005, it increased abruptly to 23.66%, and started an abrupt decline in 2006 from 15.34% to 10.45% in 2007 and 3.40% in 2008.

Furthermore, the report shows that out of the 10.5 million out of school children, 42 percent of them are primary school age population. The 2009 Nigeria educational data survey also show that some 1.1 million children (i.e. 8.1 percent of children aged 6 – 17) who were enrolled were not in school as at the time of the survey and nearly 53 percent of those not in school were girls. Statistics show that Nigeria has the largest out-of-school children in the world.

Challenges identified for the low rate of enrolment and high-rate of girls' drop out of school (especially at secondary level) include the following; distance to school, harassment, bullying, discrimination or punishment at school, sexual harassment or other dangers at or on the way to school, expectations of doing chores at school (e.g. water collection and finally, costs, levies and charges.

The implication of the above to national development is not far-fetched. As rightly asserted by Babangida (1986:4)

“a nation cannot truly develop, if her women remain illiterate, unskilled and unable to harness resources in their environment and improve on such environment that is hallmark of development and most women cannot contribute effectively to development with limited or basic education they acquire and other discriminatory practices against them”.

It is therefore pertinent to note here that investment in women education is not a matter of choice, but an obligation that must be undertaken by the government and other stakeholders. It is only when this is done that the women would be put in the right pedestal to effectively participate and contribute their quota to national development.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Education is the bedrock of the development of any nation. Thus, for any nation to achieve its developmental objectives, every citizen must have access to effective education. The study shows clearly the importance of empowering the women through education considering their numerical strength in Nigeria. The study reveals the high rate of gender disparity in female enrolment in the three tiers of educational institutions, high rate of female dropouts, especially at the primary and secondary levels, high rate of female failure in 'O' Level examination, and the widening gap in the admission of female students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is so despite the various measures put in place by government overtime.

- Thus, gender parity in education must be ensured in all the educational levels in the country.
- Special consideration should be given to women in deciding admission quota in all the levels of education in Nigeria. 40 percent should be allocated to female students

- Special scholarship should be given to female students to encourage them to go to schools.
- There is the need for effective surveillance and monitoring in these schools to reduce or curtail sexual harassment of female students. Perpetrators of this immoral act should be severely dealt with.
- Effective implementation of the various policies of the government geared towards encouraging women education is required to achieve developmental objectives.
- Attitudinal change is needful, especially those traditional and religious beliefs that are stereotype which impede on women rights and opportunities.

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