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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY: JUSTICE OR CIVILIZATION?

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Abstract: *The issue of gender justice has drawn the attention of gender scholars as does gender equality a justice or civilization. Because of this, the paper examined women and gender equality justice or civilization. In discussing these gender issues, several documents, reports, newspapers, magazines, archives, articles, journals, among others, were systematically reviewed to support the argument. Two theories were used in supporting the argument. These are Islamic Feminist and Liberal Feminist theories. The assumptions of these theories centered on gender equality and gender justice in society. The study found that gender equality is not civilization but justice. This is of the fact that both men and women are born equal and need equal justice for the development of the nation. The paper recommended that men and women should be given equal opportunity in all aspects of life in order to ensure gender justice. Parents and religious leaders should adhere to the principles of gender equality for the betterment of society.*

Keywords: *Equality; Gender; Justice; Civilization; Women*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, both genders possess equal intellectual and physical predispositions (Ishaku and Ali, 2018). However, state and its other establishments are man's establishment for the survival of both genders beside any other creatures by providing the conducive environment for each living being to pursue their goals and ambitions in a peaceful and more prepared means (Ishaku and Ali, 2018). They all noted that both genders are being controlled by custom and tradition, rules and regulations, physical strength, economic prowess, level of education, among other factors. Competing for the inadequate resources in the society is a common feature at both intra- and inter- gender equation levels. This leads to gender division and marginalization among both genders. A study by Irene Khan (2013) observed that by empowering women to claim their rights, women are better equipped to bring about change in their communities. She further added that when such projects are pursued in conjunction with legal and institutional reforms, we will finally make progress in making women's rights a lived reality.

The law is an essential tool for advancing women's rights and gender equality. When a society is governed by the rule of law, with an accessible and just legal system, women can thrive, contribute to the system and improve it for future generations(Ban Ki-Moon, 2011).Mores, UN News (2019) reported that gender based violence is a major obstacle to gender justice. However, gender justice and the law closely clarify their several forms, such as sexual, psychological, physical and economic violence, assessing laws and policies that affect gender equality and protection against gender-based violence. For instance, the punishment for committing offences such as murder, wounding and beating women differs from one nation to another. Gender justice and civilization are contradictory issues among the national and international scholars across the globe. The issue of gender equality, gender justice or civilization is drawing the attention of scholars at all levels.

Some scholars see it as justice while others see it as civilization. It depends on their perception and understanding. However, this issue of gender justice is confusing to many scholars. In line with the above argument, it is observed that Nigerian Trade Union approved policy on gender justice at its 8th Delegates Conference, the highest policy-making organ of the labor force, in February 2003. This is to ensure gender justice among both genders in the nation (NTU 2007). More so, a study by Badran (2001) noted that Islam stressed not only on gender parity but gender justice (Badran 2001). The central argument here is on Gender justice and civilization, which has drawn the attention of many gender scholars because of the wide vacuum among the genders in the society. This is especially in power allocation at national and international level, precisely in the African region where most of them are patriarchal in outlook that gave much power to men over women. Given this, the study examined women and gender equality: justice or civilization.

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THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this paper is to investigate women and gender equality: justice or civilization, while the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine women and gender equality as justice
2. Clarify women and gender equality as civilization.

THE ISLAMIC FEMINIST AND LIBERAL FEMINIST THEORIES

To support the above argument, Islamic Feminist theory postulated that the combination of Islam and women's movement has been supported the feminist treatise and exercise voiced in an Islamic standard; he observed that in 2000 Islamic feminists crushed their opinions in Islam and its traditions to seek the complete gender equality in the individual and public domain. This is because the beliefs of the Muslims Feminist theory is not on gender equity alone but gender justices (Badran 2001). Muslims Feminist theory emphasized not only on gender equity but gender justice in the society, this means all genders need to be treated not only equally but justly (Badran, 2001). The Liberal Feminist theory postulated that men and women are born equal and deserve equal treatment. It then added that no society would succeed if half of its resources are not properly utilized (Sha 2007).

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF GENDER JUSTICE AND CIVILIZATION

Gender justice means different things to different people. According to the Secretary to the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, gender justice refers to ending the disparities between both genders that are made and reproduced in the family as well as the community, the public places, and the state. Gender justice needs that conventional establishments from justice to economic policymaking are held responsible for embarking upon the gender discrimination and injustice that deprived and make several women poor and excluded from policy and decision making process at the national and internation orgainization, especially in the African and Asian regions which are patraichal in nature (Ban Ki-moon 2010).

Basically, gender justice is connected to human development. Gender justice entails ending and rectifying existing disparities between both genders, according to a high-level United Nations forum on the situation in the Arab States (UN News 2019). However, it further reported that gender justice is accomplished when men and women enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and freedom such as access to justice and to economic social benefits. Again the study found that sustainable development and developmental goals cannot be accomplished without sustainable gender equality in law and practice. The term 'gender equity' is often used interchangeably with 'gender equality'. There is a clear difference drawn between the two concepts. These concepts are imitating contrary understandings of gender

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differences and of the suitable plans to differences. Gender equality means women having equal opportunities in life as men; this includes the capacity to take part in public activities such as policy and decision making (Reeves and Baden 2000).

GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. While gender hasn't still been adopted in the Nigerian legislature, customary and religious laws continue to restrict women's rights. Nigeria being a federal republic has each state having the authority to draft its own legislation. The combination of the federation and a tripartite system of civil, customary and religious laws make it very difficult to harmonies legislation and remove gender discriminatory measures (Agbalajobi 2010). Moreover, certain states in the North follow Islamic Sharia law, which reinforces customs that are unfavorable to women. In this case, women are being denied gender justice in the name of religion and culture but gave much power to men over women (Ali, Zakuan and Mohammad 2018). The government has established a committee on the reform of discriminatory laws against women, which has drafted a decree for the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women. The decree is under review at the National Assembly (Adamolekun 2018).

Gender imbalance is not simply a problem associated with Nigeria alone. It is a phenomenon that affects all societies across the globe and it is found in all facets of our daily activities, with women more prone to poverty, maternal mortality, unemployment, illiteracy (Adeyemi and Akpotu 2004).

GENDER JUSTICE AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

To achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in national and international levels it requires gender justice, meaning to incorporate both genders in all spheres of lives, such as education, politics, public and private sectors, health care delivery, empowerment programs, skills acquisition programs. This is to remove them from the shackle of poverty and to make them independent so as to contribute to the national economic development. According to UN News (2019) gender justice rallies on accountability and gender parity. This finding is in line with the assertion of Liberal Feminist, which stressed that both genders deserved equal treatment. The theory believes that no society can develop if half of its resources are underutilized (women) (Sha 2007). In line with the above explanation, Ban ki-moon explained that:

> Social political and economic equality for women is integral to the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals. Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice, all our goals, peace, security, sustainable development, stand in jeopardy (Ban Ki-moon 2010).

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According to Reeves and Baden (2000) liberal feminist idea centered on gender equality and gender justice that helps in removing gender discrimination in opportunities for women and allows them to attain equal status like the men counterparts. They further added that progress in women's position is measured against a male custom.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Gender justice and equity is a right for all as the results of development. This can be attained through social transformation. A study by Reeves and Baden (2000) noted that the impression of 'social justice' as the outcome of struggles against social differences indicates change towards a 'free and fair' society. This necessitates the plans to restore gender justices, minimize violation of human rights or persistent economic and social equalities among men and women.

MODERNIZATION AND GENDER JUSTICE

Gender justice and modernization are the agents of social and cultural changes in society. Modernization through advanced educational levels helps in changing gender roles. According to Hussain, Ahmad, Manzoor and Hameed (2015) modernization in the developing period influences women's education and aggregate their responsibilities in society. However, they further observed that today women are more powerful than men, and are enjoying more freedom than ever; women have full freedom to take part in any movement and also in elections. In the most developed nations, it is understood that the highest management positions are manned by women because of gender equality and justice. They understood that today, internal violence is also lessening because of gender equality and justice (Hussain *et al.* 2015).

A study by Inglehart (2003) established that development leads to social and cultural change towards their individual. Similarly, Hussain *et al.* (2015) explains that modernization would bring changes in gender responsibility and lead to a better change in the women involvement in professional activities and by extension into various elected political positions in their constituency. They then proved that gender equality, modernization and gender justice help in minimizing crises and enhance human and national development.

GENDER JUSTICE AND WOMEN EDUCATION

To ensure gender justice in every society, UNIFEM (2010) noted that there are needs for equal access to women education. In line with this, the study observed that there are needs for strong attention on girls' equal access to education at all levels of education. This is to maintain development on all of the MDGs, including gender equality and women's

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empowerment. However, it is understood that there is evidence showing that girls' education prevents the intergenerational transmission of poverty and enhances progress on other MDGs. These include a reduction in maternal and child mortality and equal access to decent workforce. Education helps women to live peacefully with their spouses. It also helps them in planning their lives by producing a number of children that they can afford to take good care of. The study further disclosed that educated women have fewer children, later and are more likely to send children to school and sponsor them successfully (Rihani 2006). In information retrieved from world health organization, it is observed that gender justice is related to women equal access to educational attainment. This would help in reducing mothers and infant mortality rate, with a particularly marked effect for women with only secondary education background (WHO 2008). In view of this Rihani (2006) observed that:

> Secondary education enables the achievement of other rights by empowering girls to benefit from social and economic development. Studies have found that women with above average years of education earn wages that are 10 to 20 percent higher.

To justify the above, he disclosed that secondary school education is the key. In a related development, a study conducted on women in Pakistan found that women's workforce membership only increases after 10 years or more of schooling, confronting hunger, attaining universal education, reducing maternal and child mortality rate (UNIFEM 2010). However, gender justice through equal access to women education helps in reducing the mortality rate of both mothers and the infants. It also assists in promoting universal access to reproductive health, by extension stopping the wide spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, Gonorrhea, syphilis among others. These services are crucial to enable citizens to secure their basic human rights. Services can play an important part in achieving gender justice if they are responsive and accountable to women, and provide equal access and outcomes (UNIFEM 2010).

ENSURING GENDER JUSTICE ON LAND AND JOBS OPPORTUNITIES

Gender justice is not a civilization but rather equity and fairness among genders because it assists women to have control over land and resources, including chances for a decent job and the acquisition of economic power as well economic assets. All these are indispensable elements for gender justice. They enable women to profit and prosper from their productiveness, for their personnel and their families' well-being (Kabeer 2008; Pandaand Agarwal 2005).

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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER JUSTICE

To ensure gender justice, women empowerment has become necessary at all levels. However, women empowerment and improvement of their living standard is very much significant. In addition, empowering women is very essential because it helps in nation building. Women involvement and enterprise is essential in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of the family (UNFPA 1994).

A report from UNFPA (1994) disclosed that for gender justice to persist women must have equal access to employment opportunities and control over land. These are central in accomplishing the MDGs because they help to reduce poverty and increase food security. In addition, access to these resources also has other essential benefits for women: it is noted that where women have control over land and other material resources, they gain greater livelihood security and access to other resources, including credit and other financial supports, and products; such as loans, seeds and extension services. However, it is understood that where they earn their own income, women have more say in domestic decision making and may be less exposed to domestic violence (Kabeer 2008; Panda Agarwal 2005).

In discussing women empowerment and gender justice, the study found in a report from UNICEF that gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities, and protections" (Allanana 2013), this is to maintain equal gender justice. But it does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they are treated exactly alike (Allanana 2013; Miranda 2005). To justify the above submission, Jane Parpart (1986) disclosed that gender equality refers to the state of equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making; and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender (Parpart 1986). Shakers maintained the same pattern of gender-balanced leadership for more than 200 years. They also promoted equality by working together with other women's rights advocates (Allanana 2013; Parsitau 2011). To maintain gender justice in all spheres of lives, this is for the mere fact that gender equality is not a civilization but rather a justice to both men and women.

ACCESS TO LAND AND MATERIAL RESOURCE

Over the year's gender equality is one of the major issues women and gender scholars are clamoring for because they believe it is their right to have equal access to land and other social services and related activities. This is to ensure gender justice among both genders in society. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an

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international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination in order to sustain gender justice at national and international levels (United Nations 2009). For instance, out of the 112 nations scored in the 2012 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index, 86 were found to have unfair laws or practices in relation to property and inheritance (OECD Development Centre 2012; Khan 2013). The study showed that on average, women hold only 15 percent of land titles in countries where data is available

However, despite the guarantees in CEDAW, in many countries women lack influence over the land and other social economic activities that would help in enhancing national development. As a result of this, most of them rely on their parents, spouses and close associates to earn a living.

It is observed that even in countries where legislation guarantees women's land rights, implementation remains a major threat. For instance, in Madagascar, women's land rights are stipulated in a Constitution and the civil code. In addition to the fact that 83 percent of employed women are engaged in agriculture, they owned just 15 percent of small land, unlike their male counterparts that owned most of the land for their personnel and economic gain(Goldstein and Udry 2005).

They then noted that most women lack control or influence over land and this have knock-on effects on access to other resources. It is observed that without holding land as collateral, women often cannot access bank loans and other financial services, such as insurance and savings accounts, which enable them to accumulate assets and mitigate poverty. Insecure land tenure also contributes to environmental degradation, since women farmers, fearful of losing their land, leave it fallow for less time than men at significant cost to long-term productivity. To guarantee gender equity, women are supposed to have equal access to land (Goldstein and Udry 2005). These findings are measured by Liberal Feminist and Muslims Feminist theories. This is because the theory emphasized not only on gender equity but gender justice in the society. This means all genders need to be treated not only equally but justly (Badran 2001; Sha 2007)

Women discrimination is a blight that holds back progress towards social justice in developed and developing countries alike. The MDGs are interdependent and every one depends on making progress on gender equality to maintain gender justice among all genders. Scaling up investment and action on the gender equality dimensions of all the goals has the dual advantage of addressing widespread inequality and accelerating progress. Overall this is in line with the postulation of Liberal Feminist and Islamic? Feminist theories, which stressed on not only gender equity but gender justice. These theories believe that gender equality is justice, not civilization because both men and women are born equal in all societies.

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Every society has its owned culture, and it differs from one society to another, but no any culture that is naturally formed favor the interest of some group of people to the detriment of the others. A study by Goldstein and Udry (2005) disclosed that gender equality is justice, not civilization because both genders are born equal as measured from the Liberal Feminist theory. In addition to this, Muslims Feminist theory emphasised not only on gender equality but gender justice amont men and women.

Similarly, Maluleke (2012) observed that traditional cultural practices replicate the beliefs and values of many people in given communities they live at its transfer from one generation to the other. However, some of these cultural practices are harmful to women because of the gender bias that gave much power to men over women. These harmful traditional practices include early and forced marriages *(Ukuthwala* as practiced currently), virginity testing, widow's rituals (Maluleke 2012).

Despite their harmful nature and their violation of national and international human rights laws, such practices persist because they are not interrogated or confronted and consequently take on an aura of ethics in the eyes of those performing them (Maluleke 2012).

Traditionally, there exists a belief of 'strong women'. Despite being factual, it has its roots in reality, as women enjoyed certain liberties and had cultural and religious authority during the commonwealth period that remained on throughout the ages because of the gender justice (Magnea Marisnosdottir 2017).

Nevertheless, there was a wide vacuum between the liberal, rights-based law development and predominant cultural norms and societal reality, which kept men in their place of power enjoying their 'first-mover advantage' and continued to hold women back. This situation continued until a critical mass of educated women entered the strong hold surrounding the fortresses of knowledge, the academia, and feminism became a mass movement in the 1960s and 1970s, uniting women in their struggle for equal rights, gender justice and power and resources allocation (Magnea Marisnosdottir 2017).

In the last two periods, it is understood that globalization has had a huge impact on the lives of women, especially in developing countries. Globalization refers to a multifaceted political, cultural, economic, and geographic process in which the mobility of capital, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken a global or transnational form. The global economic institutions are seen to be privileging western culture and political norms, and present them as models of the rest of the world, while disregarding and relegating women's indigenous engagements in the Global South. Moreover, modern feminist's theorists struggle that neo-liberalism orders on economic growth, efficiency, and profit making over other values such as the promotion of economic justice and enhancing democracy and good governance through gender equality to ensure gender justice (Cheludo Butale 2015). For instance, In the United States today, men and women enjoy almost equal social standing so as to sustain gender justice. It is also noted that women in the United State vote and be voted for, own businesses of their choice, hold political office and

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have a full spectrum of rights like the men counterparts. Laws are in place protecting them from sexual assault and physical abuse because of gender justice(Violet K. Dixon, 2011). He then added that the United States is one of the nations established on women equality and freedom; women have had the opportunity to rise beyond their limited rights to demand and establish change for themselves.

GENDER JUSTICE AND WOMEN IN POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING

Gender justice depends on women's capacity to take part in and influence decision-making, whether in the family, the community or at the state, national, regional and international levels. To maintain gender justice, CEDAW specifies that women should be represented in political and public life on equal terms with men counterparts.

This is for the fact that gender justice helps in improving national and state economy. In addition, a report from UNIFEM (2010) noted that the presence of women in leadership increases the probability that their experiences are represented in policy, decision-making and encourages girls to aspire to such roles.

FINDINGS

Nevertheless, gender justice and the law closely elucidate its numerous forms, such as sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence among others. Gender justice depends on women capacity in influencing policy and decision making process. The study noted that globalization has had an enormous impact on the lives of women, in ensuring gender justice, especially in developing countries. It is noted that some of the cultural factors and cultural practices are destructive in maintaining gender justice to women because of the gender unfairness that gave much power to male counterpart over women.

The study established that women subjugation to domestic chores is a blight that holds back progress towards social justice in developed and developing countries. It is further noted that most women lack influence on land and this has knock-on effects on access to other assets. It is perceived that without holding land as security, women often cannot access bank loans and other monetary facilities, such as insurance and savings accounts. The study noticed that empowering women is part and parcel of women gender justice. Moreover, empowering women is very essential because it helps in achieving viable social and economic development.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that for gender justice to prevail women are to be given equal access to education like their men counterparts. Women are supposed to have equal right on land and other resources. This is for the mere fact that women too have a vital role to play at family, community, state national and international levels:

- Culture and traditions should not be considered in power and resource allocation among both genders.
- Patriarchal inclinations should be adjusted in line with the principles of gender equality. This is to minimize gender differences and ensure gender justice.
- Women should not be restricted to domestic responsibilities. This is because women too have an essential role to play in society.

To maintain gender justice, the paper recommends that women should have equal access to any kind of soft loan and other related services like the men counterparts:

- Government and gender stakeholders should adhere and adopt the principles of CEDAW. This is to accomplished gender equality that would lead to gender justice.
- The paper, in addition, recommended that both private and public organization should adhere to the principles of gender equality to ensure gender justice for the development of the national economy.
- Religious leaders and parents should preach on the importance of gender equality and gender justice in the society. This would help in enhancing national unity as well as the national economy.
- The study recommends for a penalty for any gender crime to minimize the rate of gender based violence in society.
- The study suggests for an alternative strategy to strengthen efforts to improve women's access to justice and to integrate legal empowerment components into broader law reform projects aimed at providing women with quality justice.

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CONCLUSION

The study concludes that gender equality is justice, not civilization; this is because both men and women are born equal as measured from the Liberal Feminist and Muslims Feminist perspectives. Therefore, men and women deserve equal treatment as human beings, especially in terms of empowerment, employment, and other social related activities. This is because women are believed to play an important role in every society if given the opportunity. The paper, furthermore, concludes no society can develop socially, politically, economically and educationally if half of its human resources are neglected (women). Many developing nations have succeeded in maintaining gender equality for justice reasons, not civilization. 

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