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Culture and poverty: Exploring gender inclusiveness for successful poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria

Amaka Theresa Oriaku Emordi
Department Of Political Science
Obafemi Awolowo University,
Ile-Ife Osun State

Abstract

Highly, gendered cultures perpetuate and maintain poverty through women's exclusiveness. The theory of patriarchy advantages the men and disadvantages the female folk. Culturally, members of a society acquire knowledge, beliefs, customs, capabilities, and behaviours that are generally accepted within society without thinking about them. Learned Material and nonmaterial cultures are transmitted through patriarchal traditions and passed along by communication and imitation from generation to generation. In patriarchal cultures, the male folk are cultured to be materially empowered while the female folk are socialized to be dependent on the male. This intersectionality causes poverty and importantly, feminization of poverty and hamper the realization of poverty alleviation program goals. This essay investigates cultural practices that perpetuate gender exclusiveness and deepen poverty for the understanding of specific strategies for promoting gender inclusiveness and combating discriminatory cultural practices. How effective are poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria? Has patriarchal history posed a big snag in the achievement of poverty alleviation program goals? Has culture sustained women's exclusiveness and hampered development? Including women in poverty alleviation programs is germane for poverty alleviation goals to be achieved without which efforts of poverty alleviation stakeholders would be like fetching water in a basket that can never be full.

Keywords: Culture, Poverty, Gender, Inclusiveness, Alleviation.

Introduction

Why do high culture-gendered patriarchal societies hamper the realization of poverty alleviation program goals?Patriarchy is a social system where fathers hold power in the family and society while women occupy subservient positions[1]. Highly, gendered cultures perpetuate and maintain poverty through gender exclusiveness by evoking traditional assumptions that underplay and relegate the role of women in development programs (Akoleowo and Oluwa 2022). In patriarchal cultural systems,women's agencies are not seen as integral and veritable parts of power and social development.Although gender impacts all groups, its effects are greater for women and girls as marginalized and vulnerable groups (The World Bank 2021).

[1]Ekwutosi Essien Offiong, EyoItamEyo, Asibong Essien Offiong, *Patriarchy, Culture and the Social Development of Women in Nigeria* journal of Art, Humanity and social studies Vol 1 No 4 2021

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Poverty is one of the forces militating against the social and economic development of Nigerian women. The level of poverty in Nigeria has continued to grow astronomically and is now politically embarrassing considering the enormous human and mineral resources the country is endowed with[2].To eradicate poverty successive governments have committed huge amounts of resources yet much success has not been achieved to that effect (Goodness 2022). For Nigeria to benefit from poverty alleviation programs, genuine, realistic, and workable interventions to address the ugly situation of women's exclusion become inevitable if poverty will not remain a vicious circle that could be inherited from one generation to another.[3] Evidence in Nigeria shows that the number of those in poverty has continued to increase especially among women. The predominant patriarchal culture in Nigeria fosters the subordination of women and therefore places women on the margins of society. Women experience marginal participation in education, politics, and virtually all other spheres of life because of their gender[4] stressed that although Nigeria has ratified and promulgated many policies and laws to eradicate gender inequality, the situation has persisted and seems to be waxing stronger[5]. This chapter explores how poverty alleviation programs have failed to achieve their lofty objectives due to patriarchy and cultural perception of women in Nigeria, a highly patriarchal culture.

My thesis, therefore, is to investigate how highly gendered cultures such as Nigeria help to sustain poverty through the exclusion of women in poverty alleviation programs such as SDGs in developing countries like Ghana and Nigeria especially in southeast Nigeria in particular. For poverty alleviation programs to be effective in Africa and Nigeria in particular. The patriarchal culture of women's marginalization and exclusion needs to be unlearned and expunged out of social systems and women be included in all poverty alleviation plans and implementation. Additionally, the chapter establishes how poverty alleviation programs have perpetuated gender exclusiveness and poverty through culture and explains what specific strategies can combat discriminatory cultural practices in Nigeria. The gendering of African societies and Nigeria creates overlapping interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Disadvantage to women and advantage to men) By understanding intersectionality, it becomes easier to understand how culture deepens and grounds the differences between the sexes in development and hamper the realization of poverty alleviation programs.

In high-context societies where women have been seen as vocal and instrumental in the resolution of conflicts and wars, they are still neglected and

[2]Abiola Georgina Adebayo, Olufunmilayo Afolayan,*Impact Of Foreign Aids On Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria International Journal of Advanced Economics*, Open ACCESS International Journal of advanced Economics (2019) Fair East publishersP-issn-2702-2134,
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid
[5]Aderemi Timothy Ayomitunde, SodeindeGbemi Moses, Yusuf Modupe Ololade, Aleshinloye Ibrahim Babatunde, Michael Otedaola2020, Official Development Assistance and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: An Error Correction Model Approach Volume XI Issue 1, January 2020 Indian Journal of Commerce & Management Studies ISSN: 2249-031

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marginalized[6]. Culturally, women are marginalized and subjugated in Nigeria and Africa at large given the constantly shifting social and cultural dynamics that shape people's identity by focusing on the intersections of gender, cultural identity, and at different historical epochs; on the way men and women define themselves. In Nigeria, poverty alleviation programs have been argued to perpetuate existing gender biases, by assuming that women are primarily responsible for caregiving and therefore only providing support for women in that role [7]. Historical contexts have informed actions and at some other times shaped interpretations given to historical facts on male and female. Religiously women are subservient as revealed in the historical trajectories of religion in Nigeria[8] Complex historical and religious traditional codes in Africa have shaped Nigeria's local and traditional context[9].

The significance of engaging women as veritable tools in poverty alleviation and sustainable development agenda is shown in the major role women play in work organization, disaster management, income, household maintenance, and mediation of knowledge. "Women" as a classification encompasses much diversity with many intersecting differences[10]Gender equity and equality is a necessary condition for the realization of poverty alleviation and sustainable development. This implies that the fundamental formula for a functioning society calls for partnership and a fair division of labour between the sexes. To date, a skewed approach has been used in which masculinity has taken precedence over femininity and women have constantly been left out of decision-making throughout history in various communities [11].

The realization of sustainable development relies upon an impartial appropriation of assets for now and for what's to come. It can't be accomplished without fairness in dealing with the sexes. Women's strengthening is a vital factor in accomplishing sustainable financial development, social development, and ecological maintainability. Women play an imperative part in ecological administration and development Sharma[12]. Their full interest is fundamental to accomplishing sustainable development. There is a double reasoning for advancing sexual orientation correspondence. Besides that, more noteworthy

[6]Bonny. (2021). Culture And Women Participation In Peacebuilding In Africa: Perspective Of National Culture And Social Role Theories. *Academy Of Strategic Management Journal*. London: Allied Business Academies

[7]Aina, O. Accelerating all-inclusiveness development; the Nigerian journey towards theachievement of sustainable development Paper presented at the Obafemi Awolowo University Faculty of the Social Sciences International Conference 2023.

[8]Akoleowo, Victoria Openif'Oluwa. (2022). African feminism, activism and decolonisation: the case of AlimotuPelewura. African identities. Routledge

[9]Akubue, Mary-Thecla Ebelechukwu. (2016). Exploring Women's Advancement in Top Management Positions in Higher Education in Southeast Nigeria. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

[10]Skjerven, Astrid; Fordham, Maureen, Gender *and the Sustainable Development Goals: Infrastructure, Empowerment and Education.* Milton: Taylor and Francis(2022).DOIhttps://doi.org/10.4324/9781003174257

[11] Ibid

[12]Sharma, M. (2022). Role of Women Empowerment in Sustainable Development ISSN:1938-5862, doi10.1149/10701.0683ecst The Electrochemical Society, ECS transactions. The Electrochemical Society, Inc.

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uniformity among women and men is additionally a precondition for sustainable individuals-focused development (Sharma, 2022)

Poverty Alleviation Programs

Women have historically been considered inferior to men and this inferiority has been a result of a consistent patriarchal political ideology. Traces of women's inferiority in society as a form of political ideology, which resulted in women's exclusion from political life can be found in every aspect of Western societies including the law[13]. An instance is the French Revolution. One of the advantages of the French Revolution of 1789, was that it breached the social limitations of gender, the emancipation of women, and the conceptual idea of the 'weaker sex'. During the Revolution that preceded the end of the old monarchial order and the inception of the modern French Republic, the active involvement of women in the Revolution was undeniable. The women were unapologetic in their demand for inclusion, participation in politics, and their social status. However, the laws that established the Republic and the political order that supported them disregarded the women's demands for equality[14]. In the ideology of *Political Exclusion*[15] . explored the origin and evolution of the political ideology that has kept women away from centers of political power - from the birth of democracy in ancient Athens to the modern era.

They demonstrated that two parallel tracks have since been established in the argument to advance in the discourse of women's question in 2500 years. They established that while male authority tried to construct an ideology that justified women's incompatibility with the political organization of the state, women tried to resist their exclusion and thwart arguments about their inferiority [16]. Women's exclusion in the spheres of life is ascribed as a barrage of flares of emotions and on femininity and women were seen to be dangerously emotional, wild, and uninhibited in contrast to the self-controlled, self-restrained, and rational men (Wollstonecraft 1792). Women were portrayed to be in urgent need of male control, and ritual performance, along with marriage and motherhood, provided mechanisms of such control. Consequently, women also have on different occasions tried to trudge for their inclusion using the legal institutions in 1830 and 1831 when 1,500 women successfully intruded into an exclusive discourse community by articulating an activist role that negotiated the tensions between conventional gender constraints and

[13]*Anna-Maria Konsta,Gender equality law in Greece and the European Union The trajectory from exclusion to inclusion* in Tsakiropoulou-Summers, Tatiana &Kitsi-Mitakou, Katerina. (2018). Women and the Ideology of Political Exclusion from Classical Antiquity to the Modern Era. Routledge Companions. Milton: Routledge.
[14]MetkaZupancic*Women and French democracy, 1789–1804Between the guillotine and the Civil Code limitations in Tsakiropoulou-Summers, in Tatiana*&Kitsi-Mitakou, Katerina. (2018). Women and the Ideology of Political Exclusion from Classical Antiquity to the Modern Era. 2018 Milton: Routledge.
[15]Tsakiropoulou-Summers, Tatiana &Kitsi-Mitakou, Katerina, *Women and the Ideology of Political Exclusion From Classical Antiquity to the Modern Era.* Routledge Companions,(2018), Milton: Routledge.
[16] Ibid

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unconventional political performance[17]. Since the human rights law became operational women's agitation for inclusion was then anchored and supported by a framework of an international order in which human rights were tied to visions of self-determination, social rights, and strong states, creating spaces for new subjects such as women to make their voices heard in international law. Nevertheless, in international law which revisionist histories of human rights as a neoliberal utopia are only one part of a more complex human rights history, women are seen primarily as victims of violence[18]With the inception of the International Order of Human Rights women have appropriated the language of rights to demand social inclusion. They were tracing the social erosion and exclusion of women's contribution from the glorious French Revolution which manifest in the exclusion of women in poverty alleviation programs in our contemporary world. Hence the contributions of women have been neglected while configuring poverty alleviation programs.

While configuring poverty women are veritable agents towards making history especially in the realization of poverty alleviation goals in Africa and Nigeria in particular. According to UNDP 2023, stakeholders of development programs like the MDGs are halfway to the deadline set by the 2030 agenda, and the sustainable development goals and the best and only chance of leaving the world better than it was found (UNDP 2023). SDG goal 1, eliminating poverty in all its forms, is believed to be the all-access key to achieving this lofty goal. Obada, in his work, *Poverty Reduction in Nigeria*: *The Way Forward*. argued that poverty in Nigeria is a paradox. The paradox is that the poverty level in Nigeria is astronomically high, negates and contradicts the country's immense wealth[19]. As far back as 1993 the former Secretary General of the United Nations identified dimensions in which according to him, poverty manifests itself in five different but intertwined dimensions first, when in the sphere of economy, it is called deprivation, secondly, in politics it is marginalization, in sociological issues it is discrimination, in culture is ruthlessness, and thirdly, in ecology is vulnerability. All these dimensions reinforce one another[20]. Koffi Anan 1993 poverty has no precise definition but, in its simplest form, it refers to a social condition characterized by inadequate access to basic human needs (food and non-food) to the sustenance of a socially acceptable minimum standard of living in each society. Poverty is a state where one is incapable of meeting his or her basic needs as identified by Sigmund Freud, in his motivational theory. This Freudian theory itemized the hierarchy of things that motivate people in life, explaining that basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter are vital for man as a biological being before he can think of other higher needs such as self-actualization and self-esteem. The World Bank Report (1999) described poverty as a condition in which an individual is unable to meet the basic social needs as

[17]Theodore, Alisse, *A Right to Speak on the Subject":* The U.S. Women's Antiremoval Petition Campaign(2002), Rhetoric &Public Affairs. Michigan State University Press.
[18]Celia Donert, Women's Rights as Human Rights after the End of History. *Gender & History*, (2023).*35*(3), 862–880. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12729
[19]Segun Oshewolo ,*Galloping poverty in Nigeria: an appraisal of government's interventionist policies journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* vol.12, no. 6. Clarion University of Pennsylvania, clarion
[20]Obadan, Mike I. (2001). Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: the Way Forward. CBN Economic and Financial Review. 39(4), 159-188.

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described by Freud and other social and economic obligations. When an individual lacks gainful employment, skills, assets, and self-esteem; has limited access to social and economic infrastructure such as education, health, potable water, and sanitation; and lacks all the above which will make him/her have limited chances of advancing his/her welfare to the next level.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (www.iisd.org) . Of what effect then, when development today fails to meet its development? The consequence is that future generations have bigger development challenges to face. To meet development today and sustain it for the future is to eradicate poverty through the inclusion of women the unsustainable development risk bearers. Attempting to eradicate poverty in the country, Nigeria has adopted and implemented both internationally and nationally oriented poverty reduction and national development programs. Yet the country still ranks top amongst the poorest nations in the world (Chukwuma, 2009). Factors that account for the failure of these policies and poverty in Nigeria using secondary sources of data through content analysis[21] assessed government programs and policies related to poverty in Nigeria and found that the top-bottom approach to tackling poverty includes inadequate coordination of various programs, the politicization of poverty alleviation schemes as well as inconsistency in policies and programs contribute to the failure of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Kolawole[22], maintains that internecine wars, ethnic strife, natural disasters, foreign debt, and corruption are among several other factors responsible for the underachievement of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Consequently, efforts of stakeholders to bridge the gap between inequality and poverty through poverty alleviation programs have shown abysmal failures in Nigeria [23].

Some of the measures adopted by different government regimes to deal with the problem of poverty are adaptation and implementation of some economy-strengthening and poverty alleviation programs. From the 1970s programs such as Operation Feed the Nation of 1978, the Green Revolution of 1982, the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructures (DFRI), the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), and the national poverty eradication Programme, (NAPEP). There are also regional development policies in the likes of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union (AU) and Agenda 2063, among others. At the beginning of the millennium Nigeria also joined other nations of the world for the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

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[21]Onimisi, Timothy , Aminu, Isa (2014) accounts Policy Implementation and The Challenges of Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies Vol 3 No 4 ISSN 2281-3993 , Doi:10.5901/ajis.2014.v3n4p295 MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy.

[22]Kolawole, R. J., (2021) Evaluation of Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria: The Demand Driven Approach Perspective International Journal of development and Management Review Vol. 16 No. 1 .

[23] ibid

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which also seek to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty by 2015 but could not realize its goals by the end of 2015. The unfulfillment of the MDGs led to the formation of the SDG goals to further the agenda of the MDGs goals.

These programs aimed at curbing the menace of poverty in Nigeria are limited in the realization of their full objectives[24]. Following a wide-ranging public debate on the state of the impact of these programs on the Nigerian economy, a consensus has emerged that the structural adjustment programs are irrelevant to Africa and Nigeria in particular[25]investigated the poverty alleviation program and realized that structural adjustment programs for economic development programs were not relevant and called for an alternative approach which is a deliberate inward-looking strategy that must start by putting the institutional house in order first.

Table 1: President Buhari's National Steering Committee for Nigeria's National Poverty Reduction membership gender spread 2021.

S/N	NAME	ZONE	GENDER
1	Governor of Ekiti State	Southwest	Male
2	Governor of Delta State	South-South	Male
3	Governor of Sokoto State	Northwest	Male
4	Governor of Borno State	Northeast	Male
5	Governor of Nasarawa State	North Central	Male
6	and Governor of Ebonyi State	Southeast	Male
7	minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning the minister of Finance,	National	Female
8	Budget and National Planning, Minister of State for Budget and National Planning	FG REP	Male
9	Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development	FG REP	Female
10	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Minister of Industry, Trade, and Investments	FG REP	Male
11	Minister of Labour and Employment, Minister of Education and Minister of Health.	FG REP	Male

[24]*Baghebo, M., Emmanuel, N. (2015) The Impact of Poverty Alleviation Programmes on Economic Growth in Nigeria 1981 International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 5, No. 10.*

[25]Khadija Ali, Eshya Mujahid-Mukhtar, *gender exploitation: from structural adjustment policies to prevent poverty reduction* strategies, the Pakistan development review (1990) Vol. 42, No. 4, Papers and Proceedings PART II Nineteenth Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists Islamabad, January

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https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/469407-buhari-inaugurates-

Yisau and Tunde [26]in co-integration, DOLS, and Granger Causality research contend that foreign aid has not led to poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Similarly, FDI harms household consumption per capita and is not significant at a 10% level of significance, this therefore confirmed that this implies that FDI does not reduce poverty in Nigeria. They argued that there is an existence of an insignificant positive relationship between the inflation rate and household consumption per capita in Nigeria. To them, policymakers should not depend on foreign aid as the only means of combating poverty in Nigeria. Therefore, a holistic approach to tackling the challenge of poverty in Nigeria is suggested and should be embraced.

Culture, the Nigerian cultural setting is skewed in favor of men against women. Culture is therefore one of the major ways of excluding women in major development agendas in Nigeria. The importance of women's involvement and empowerment in bridging the gulf of inequality was affirmed when the World Bank approved $500 million for NFWP-SU. They affirmed categorically, that the cash-up will help to ensure better economic opportunities for women which is essential for addressing gender inequality; guaranteeing better education, health, and nutrition outcomes for families; and building women's and communities' resilience to climate change. The World Bank also believes that women's empowerment is essential to their ability to build resilience to climate change and, by extension, the resilience of their households and communities. By building assets, women can better respond to family needs and mitigate risks and the effects of climate and other shocks on livelihoods. Gender disparities in earnings hold back the Nigerian economy (World Bank report 2023). Culturally, women are vulnerable to extreme poverty because they face greater burdens of unpaid work, have fewer assets and productive resources than men, earn less than men, are more likely to work in sectors that have lower average incomes, and are also likely to be engaged in part-time work due to the burden of unpaid work. Women's economic empowerment is central to realizing women's rights and gender equality, especially about access to and control over productive resources; access to decent work; control over their own time, lives, and bodies; and increased voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels. However, the progress in women's empowerment in Africa has been limited to [27]

Nigerian traditional environment: In traditional cultural environments, young girls and women are socialized culturally in a way that they grow up to be poor economically vulnerable, and dependent like their mothers. Girls in

[26]Yisau, T. M. (2017). Evaluation of Poverty Reduction in Nigeria towards Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 22, Issue 6, Ver. 7 (June. 2017) PP 69-77 e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845. www.iosrjournals.org

[27]Bernadette Mukhwana Wanjala, *Women, poverty and empowerment in*: Yacob-Haliso, O., Falola, T. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4_106

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Africa face a myriad of daunting challenges, including gender-based violence, in navigating life's journey, making informed choices, and overcoming obstacles in trying to attain safe, pleasurable sexuality, free from harassment, coercion, disease, and violence[28]. Culture, tradition, and interpretation of religious tenets objectify females to silence their voice and curtail agency, even in matters about their sexuality. Patriarchal power structures essentialize females to restrict life outcomes and opportunities, leading to the low status of females and increasing feminization of poverty. This further exposes females to violence (harassment, rape, and harmful practices). Unfortunately, there is no safe place for women and girls whether in their homes, schools, or streets where they have an assurance of protection and safety from violence [29], in culture women are socialized to be passive and helpless.

While the AU which came into operation in 2001, has surpassed its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), established in 1963 in its rhetorical commitment to women's rights and gender equity, there remains a gap between these commitments and changes in actions. With the entry into force of its Constitutive Act replacing the OAU. Contrary, to the OAU, the AU placed higher priority on women's rights issues. It adopted a range of gender equity initiatives but has struggled to live up to those commitments[30].Consequently, women's feminist movements and activities and their sympathizers have continued to pressure national and regional actors to place women and gender issues at the front burner of developmental changes and actions, diminishing rhetoric and commitments to gender equity, and empowerment. Reifying culture forecloses conversations and leads to reductionism, hence there is a need for the engagement with the social structures that shape the cultures of societies and through which we can properly engage in a process of mapping embedded, generated, and recurring inequalities and hierarchies[31]. Gender inclusiveness can shift social and cultural dynamics that shape people's identities with a particular culture at different historical epochs and how men and women define themselves.

Women's Inclusion for the Realization of Poverty Alleviation Programs in Nigeria

Mill (1869) arguing in favour of legal and social equality between men and women maintains that 'the legal subordination of one sex to the other' is 'wrong in itself and is one of the chief hindrances to human improvement'. As Mill further expressed in a bid to subjugate women men are making themselves poor and unwise. Women constitute a vital group in all known human societies. They play a very significant role in the continuity of society through

[28]DeeviaBhana,Shakila Singh, Thabo Msi, *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in South African Educational Spaces*, Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education Palgrave Macmillan; 1st ed. 2021 edition (April 21, 2021) ISBN-10, 3030699870, ISBN-13 : 978-3030699871
[29]Arit Otu *Women, poverty and empowerment*in: Yacob-Haliso, O., Falola, T. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4_106
[30]Lyn O., (2021) "Pedagogies of Feminist Resistance: Agrarian Movements in Africa," Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy, Centre for Agrarian Research and Education for South, vol. 10(1), pages 41-58, April.
[31] ibid

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reproduction and socialization and their economic, social, and political roles cannot be overemphasized. Yet this vital group has been mitigated with very harrowing challenges in their various respective societies and spheres of life through culture and cultural practices[32]. In Nigeria, women continue to face daunting and debilitating challenges in the face of culture[33]. Evidence from literature revealed that despite every effort made by the Nigerian authorities and other nonformal organizations towards poverty reduction in the country women's exclusion proved to be a drag in the achievement of the objectives and goals of such programs. Due to the social perception and status of women in Nigeria's patriarchal system, the initiators and planners of poverty alleviation programs have been mainly men[34]. Women are majorly seen as executors of poverty alleviation programs they hardly understand.

The lack of deep understanding of the programs by women resonates with minimal achievement of the program's goals and objectives. This confirms the popular maxim, "if the use of a thing is not known abuse is inevitable". Women's social status situation like a vicious circle has continued to prevent women from living happily and contributing their own very useful quota to national growth and development. By promoting gender equality and challenging discriminatory cultural practices Nigeria can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society for all. This is the reason women started to query social, political factors, leadership, and governance factors that are limiting women from bringing their feminine perspectives to the table. It is one thing to have poverty alleviation programs that are borne with good intentions, but it is another to marginalize half of the population that is supposed to implement the program because of cultural dictates[35]. The exclusion of women also limits women in offering their optimal contribution to the success of poverty alleviation programs and national development. This is why feminine epistemology is querying the traditional knowledge and knowledge production itself. To the feminists, you cannot see women through the eyes of men. Most of the poverty alleviation programs are initiated and passed down to women by men. The programs are usually not bad in themselves, they are just as good as the men saw it. The issue is that men cannot see with both male and female lenses[36]. That would be tantamount to contending with nature and subsequently starting a fight with the wind and tide to no avail.

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[32]Onyeka, C. Okongwu,*Are laws the appropriate solution: The need to adopt non-policy measures in aid of the implementation of sex discrimination laws in Nigeria*, International Journal of Discrimination and the Law (2021), Vol. 21(1) 26–46 a 2020 sagepub.com/journals-permissions DOI: 10.1177/1358229120978915 journals.sagepub.com/home/jdi

[33]Akinfala F.F. and Komolafe T (2017) Sexual harassment as a predictor of organisational outcomes. African Journal for the Psychological Studies of Social Issues 20(1): 60–73.

[34]Amadi E. I. (2017) Implementation of Nigeria's national gender policy, revisiting the affirmative action. International Journal of Political Science and Development 5(5): 145–160.

[35]Aina, O. Accelerating all-inclusiveness development; the Nigerian journey towards the achievement of sustainable development Paper presented at the Obafemi Awolowo University Faculty of the Social Sciences International Conference 2023.

[36] Ibid.

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According to Mill the lack of access to women's perspective often means that cultural stereotypes will continue (Mill 1869). Since men and women are not the same and do not see things the same way, there is a need to see things from both male and female perspectives for better results. What is important to women may not be important to men. Consequently, this quagmire of what is important to both sexes can only be unpacked by involving both genders from the starting point of development agendas. This move is important because it would be difficult to change the life of a woman without changing the lives and perceptions of those surrounding her especially the men and vice-versa. Whatever you do to a woman, if you don't touch the life of the man in her life, she will never become what you want her to become, and if you want the man to be the best, he can be then the woman in his life must be touched by removing harsh cultural perception of women in patriarchal societies like Nigeria.

Cultural and patriarchal perceptions of women impede development and delimit women. And sometimes the ultimate loss of lives for both men and women. For instance, it is women who oftentimes play the caring role and would have to administer prescribed drugs to their household, if not well informed there could be maladministration of food and drugs. The involvement of women cuts across all spheres of human endeavours, and this should be taken seriously. It is thanks to culture, that women are still dying in pregnancy and childbirth because in most patriarchal societies they were married out at the age of 12 or 13. At this stage of the woman's life scientifically, her pelvis is not yet developed and because society seems to hate her the culture of patriarchy sees a woman as something to be owned, as property, men have ownership and that is the culture, she has to be given out in marriage. All this resonates with gender inequality which has proved to be a big snag in development and poverty alleviation programs.

To bridge the gap of this globally established inequality the MDGs and the subsequent SDGs were initiated, unfortunately, only goal 5, the gender equality goal among the 17 goals basically targeted women. Feminists have long faulted the fact that only a goal was aimed at women who are supposed to be involved in the implementation of all other goals. Imagine the world without a woman? Or you can imagine this world without a man. We must appreciate we are made, and acknowledge we are different, just as our needs are different. We must have that in policy including running poverty alleviation programs. How can the village dwellers, subsistence farmers like Mama who sells amala (traditional Yoruba delicacy made from yam flour) and uses nylon, who does not understand channelization and erosion, work towards preventing flooding in terms of climate change? When you talk about clean water and sanitation, in this goal there is no indicator targeting women who use water more in the house. Women do the house cleaning and laundering. yet women are not targeted in such goals and their indicators. This is one of the reasons poverty alleviation programs failed to achieve optimally because women are excluded and, in some cases, seen from the eyes of the men in planning and implementing development agenda.

For there to be gender mainstreaming for economic development, that means that all the stakeholders especially women should be involved. For this to

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happen as quickly as it is needed, the right political system needs to be put in place involved then the right system of politics or governance must be in place. The truth is that even economic programming is a function of the type of politics you have in society. As Robinson posited prosperity or poverty is a determinant or policy of decision of choices we make in society. That is an economic decision, but economic decisions don't get propelled on their own except through a political process, and so a political process is key. Governance structures are very important to be able to make meaning of any poverty alleviation program that has the potential to achieve its goals. Unfortunately, that is missing and the lesson in that for Nigeria is that every country, particularly Nigeria, does not need to wait for SDG to know that we must reform our governance processes, to know that we must reform our polity to be able to deliver for the purpose of development. Exclusion is not just when you have physically been locked out of a place, it is also about the entire spectrum of activities of government and empowerment. How many people are involved? How many people's aspirations are being met? How many people's fears are we allayed for poverty alleviation programs to achieve their goals?

Achieving the goals and objectives of poverty alleviation programs requires that there is a need for a policy instrument to enable governments to have legal ground to implement measures that will ensure observance of policies that are put in place. In traditional public policy models, policy formulation is the stage before policymaking. This phase involves identifying and/or creating a set of policy alternatives to address a problem and reduce the number of possible solutions involved in preparing the final policy decision. One of the basic concepts related to policy formulation is policy design. Policy formulation and policy design processes have a decisive influence on the results of implementation[37].

Talking about gender is not even to challenge harsh traditional roles alone, but there is a need for policy that will support the demands of women. For instance, there is no policy that even policy supports affordable and clean energy that has anything to do with women but who uses energy in the house? And yet there is no single indicator. In the sphere of industry, innovation, and infrastructure, the SDGs have 12 indicators and there is no one talking about women. Finding solutions to the challenges facing the world and Nigeria appears to be at the edge without adequate engagement of women. This infers that government regimes and poverty alleviation stakeholders need to understand that women are key in ensuring the realization of poverty alleviation programs which will help in the improvement of the standard and quality of life of Nigerians. The world is moving, no country is moving without women. We need to bring women closer to every Nigerian development program. Men and women must be seen and be represented adequately in policy because they are not the same and their needs are not the same so that the country can get to where it wants to go at the committee of developed nations. With the proper engagement of

[37]*Demir*, Fatih. "*Policy Formulation*." In *Public Policy Making* in *Turkey*, 85–160. *Cham*: *Springer* International Publishing, *2021*. http://dx.*doi.org/10.1007/978* ...

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women in sustainable development and poverty alleviation programs Nigeria will record more success than ever in the poverty alleviation programs[38].

Evidence from research showed that the subjugation of women's rights, interests, benefits, and endowments is a key issue facing Nigeria[1] argues that when women have opportunities, a country's economic productivity and development are enhanced across the board. The representation of women in development and poverty alleviation programs is vital for the success of such initiatives and programs to realize their agenda. This lofty intention will, however, require active policy to drive it. National-centric policies are needed to replace the unwritten codes in gender relations prevalent in patriarchal cultures that limit women from full participation in development programs. there is a need for the government to promulgate and implement laws to counter such unwritten laws against women. Therefore, Nigeria's leaders would do well to pay urgent attention to five areas of concern: education for girls, gender-based violence, representation of women in politics, maternal health, and women's economic empowerment. This is a prerequisite to achieving that development that allows the present generation of women to achieve their needs and prevent the future generation of women from being subjugated and oppressed by any culture or patriarchal system. Hence the subjugation of women's rights, interests, benefits, and endowments is a key issue facing Nigeria[39] (The Conversation). Factors, which impede the Elimination of These Harmful Cultural Practices are imbedded in patriarchy and culture.

They include, firstly, cultural factors e.g., male superiority syndrome which is deeply rooted and entrenched in patriarchal culture. Legislative Intervention Law as an instrument of social change is poised to be an indispensable weapon in the hands of our legislators and policymakers to effect these much-desired changes in culture and tradition that delimit women from gainful participation in the development of their nations. Achieving development for SDGs in Nigeria is very crucial but for this to happen the issues of inequality and corruption must first be addressed. Education, infrastructure development, entrepreneurship, peace, and security must be taken seriously[40].

Conclusion

Women are the primary caregivers for their families and communities and play a significant role in ensuring development and household well-being. they also disproportionately face the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. empowering women through access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities can lead to more sustainable development outcomes.

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[39]Damilola Agbalajobi (2023). Women's rights exist only on paper in Nigeria: Five core issues a new president needs to address urgently. https://theconversation.com/womens-rights-exist-only-on-paper-in-nigeria-five-core-issues-a-new-
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women's participation in decision-making processes and leadership roles is also important in ensuring that policies and practices are gender-responsive and inclusive of diverse perspectives. Culture plays a significant role in shaping societal norms and values including the treatment of women. In some cultures, women may face marginalization and unequal treatment due to deeply ingrained gender biases and traditional beliefs. this can manifest in various forms such as limited access to education restricted employment opportunities, gender-based violence, and unequal representation in decision-making processes.

It is important to acknowledge that practices and beliefs are diverse and can vary greatly across different societies. While some cultures may promote gender equality and empower women, others may perpetuate discriminatory practices. In patriarchal societies, unequal gender norms typically mean that within any social group, women are likely to face additional barriers compared to men. The impact of electoral violence on women's political and domestic violence is regarded as a major impediment to economic growth and development. Violence committed against women is said to impede progress in achieving development and poverty alleviation is not an exception. Considering the prevalence of discriminatory practices and violence against women, gender equality has been internationally recognized as one of the sustainable development goals to be achieved by state parties before the year 2030[41].

Gender equality is a necessary condition for the fundamental formula for a functioning society with partnership and a fair division of labour between the sexes. A skewed approach has been used in which masculinity has taken precedence over femininity and women have constantly been left out of decision-making throughout history and in various communities. This narrative calls for change a a method that will profit the country. Women are routinely discriminated against within political structures. Culture and power are a few of the factors to be blamed for the present underdevelopment, marginalization, and imbalance that they bring about[42]. Eradication of poverty through overall economic and social development by ensuring equitable access to resources and skills, as well as by widening the opportunities for gainful employment to the deprived sections of the society, is enunciated as the principal objectives of all the rural development programs initiated by the government. It has assumed significance more so in the context of ongoing economic reforms due to the apprehensions that the short-run impact of reforms may not be favourable for the eradication of poverty. It is known that economic growth alone is not sufficient to reduce poverty and there is a need for direct state intervention for poverty eradication[43]. As a matter of urgency, women need to get involved in

[41]Odeyinde, O., Gender equality and sustainable development: evaluating the effectiveness of Nigerian laws and practices to guarantee the Women's Human Rights Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy (2021)Vol. 12, Issue 2.
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the development process as veritable tools for the realization of poverty alleviation program goals in Nigeria. For this to happen all harmful cultural and patriarchal practices that are delimiting to women need to be removed through policy formulation and implementation.

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