



INHERITANCE RIGHTS, CUSTOMARY LAW AND FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

Succession and inheritance rights are established procedures of transferring economic, social and political powers in any given human societies. However, the problem in most patriarchal societies such as South-West Nigeria has been the unequal positioning of male and female children to inheritance. This paper examines the nexus of interaction between inheritance rights, customary law and poverty among rural women in South-West, Nigeria. The paper is anchored on functionalist and Vicious cycle of poverty theories. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to collect information from respondents. Three states from South West Nigeria were purposively selected namely, Ogun, Oyo and Ekiti states. For quantitative data, questionnaires were distributed to 250 respondents across the three states, while three (3) Focus Group Discussions and ten (10) in-depth interviews were equally conducted among the selected individuals across the three selected study areas for qualitative data. The quantitative information was analysed using simple percentage frequency distributions and logistic regression method, while qualitative information was analysed using content analysis and ethnographic summaries. The study found positive relationship between inheritance denial and the deepening poverty among rural women in the South-West Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that all obnoxious provisions of our customary laws should be expunged to allow for equal right between the male and female children.

KEY WORDS: *Inheritance-Rights, Customary-Law, Feminization, Poverty, Rural Women.*

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are moral principles that set out certain standards of human behaviour, and are regularly protected as legal rights in national and international laws. They are "commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being (Hauser, 2003). The fundamental assumption is that each person is a moral and rational being who deserves to be treated with dignity, honour and respect (UN, 2008). Inheritance issues varied across the length and breadth of Nigeria. The law of succession and inheritance is a reflection of the legal pluralism inherent in Nigeria. For instance, in cases of inheritance of property of a person who dies intestate in Nigeria, the customary law to which the deceased was subject, governs the distribution of his estate. The system of customary inheritance varies from one ethnic group to the other. The class of people who should benefit from intestate succession and the share of such beneficiary is not free from problem of discriminations (Oni, 2014).

Succession and inheritance rights are established procedures of transferring economic, social and even political powers in any given human societies. The law of succession involves the transmission of the rights and obligations of the deceased person in respect of the estate to his or her heirs. For instance, in cases of inheritance of property of a person who dies intestate in Nigeria, the customary law to which the deceased was subject governs the distribution of his estate. It should be mentioned here that generally, under the traditional customary law of any given community, factors such as age and sex often affect the scale of distribution (Oni, 2014).

Among the Yoruba of South west Nigeria, distribution of an estate of a deceased person, who dies without a valid Will, is per stripe, i.e. by the number of Wives the deceased had and not by the number of children. Where there is a serious dispute, the family head is permitted in some



parts of Yoruba land to have a final discretion by recommending the distribution of the estate, per capital; i.e. by the number of children and not by the number of wives. Put differently, the family play significant role in the determination of inheritance right particularly among the south west Nigeria as a group because it is a place where the rule of succession and inheritance rights is culturally determined.

Property rights, though, essential to women's daily survival, economic security and physical safety, majority of women are still denied access to and control over land, property and housing. while the males are regarded as heirs and apparent successors to economic and social powers. The right of females in this regard has either been outright denial or in part relegated to the background. However, these resources are widely accepted to be one of the most critical factors in the struggle for women's emancipation (Yusuff, 2014). In spite of social change which has swept all over the continent of Africa including cultural changes, the inheritance right remains resilient in this part of the society. This article argues that inheritance laws and traditions have not received enough attention in terms of their effect on questions such as the foregoing. Inheritance traditions may well be the most fundamental traditions of all kinds, across all cultures, and throughout all ages. In order to achieve the goal of this paper, very central and crucial are the answers to the research questions. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the questions at stake are: What is Inheritance Rights? What are the factors affecting gender differences in the inheritance rights and access to property rules in Nigeria? What are the attendant socio-concomitant effects of women's marginalization on their vulnerability in Nigeria? In what ways has this inequality affected the social and economic status of women in south west Nigeria? .

To achieve the general objective of this study, certain specific objectives shall also be examined. These include to:

- a. Critically examines factors affecting gender differences in the inheritance rights and access to property rules among the Yoruba of South West Nigeria.
- b. Examines the attendant socio-concomitant effects of gender inequality in inheritance rights in South West Nigeria.
- c. Suggests policy implications at local individual, community, and national levels for ameliorating the suffering of women arising from the discriminatory inheritance laws in South West Nigeria.

Brief Literature Review and Theoretical Orientation

Women Marginalization, Gender Inequality and Feminization of Poverty are widely acknowledged in the literature. Otite (2004) asserts that the family precedes the individual who is born into an existing network of roles and relationship. Relations between existing family members are shaped by the socio-cultural context within which they occur and the experience of the gender relations within the family will also be influenced by the type of norms and values operates in such family.

One major achievement of this 21st Century feminism is the placement of women's issues at the centre stage of global development concerns. However, what is glaring in Nigeria society particularly in the Southwest, is the issue of Inheritance and Succession rights. Males and females are treated and experience differently. The various experiences cumulated to either affect positively or negatively the individual involves depending on the position such an individual occupies within the structure of the society. Grieco (1998) described the situation in



the foregoing as a “development management perspective on gender”. According to her, a development management perspective draws our attention to (a) the differences in financial resources and (b) differences in social organization, which make the situation of women precarious in the developing world, particularly in Africa than in the (developed) high-income countries of the world. In their efforts to unravel some of the factors that have continued to perpetuate the phenomenon of gender differentials in inheritance rights in the society, both National and International organizations have drawn attention to the financial insecurities experienced by women all over the world and indicated how this vulnerability is produced out of social structures, which systematically give preference to males in inheritance rights. It has also noted how women, who frequently outlive their husbands, experience a distinct, drop in standard of living on the death of their spouse because much of their societal access to resources has been channeled through that spouse. This situation, experienced in the world's wealthiest societies, is also exacerbated in African society in general, and in South West Nigeria in particular. That is, a situation where widowhood practices frequently absorb the bulk of a wife/wives' resources, property practices remove the roof over her head and entitlement to land on her husband's death and where lifetime earning and saving potentials have been weak in any case given the structure of society (Grieco, 1998).

As a corollary to the above point, it would be germane to mention that the manifestation of the structural inequality is noticeable in the area of infrastructure deficiencies and women invisible/unpaid labour. There is a clear body of evidence coming out of agencies, such as the World Bank and even academic researchers that African women, particularly the Nigerian women, make good major infrastructure deficiencies by being carriers of the transport burden (Grieco, Apt and Turner, 1996). They are the carriers of wood/fuel, water, (household) goods into the household and for the removal of waste and excrement from the household. According to Gin), over 80% of the transport burden in rural Africa is carried on the heads of women. The absence of solar energy technologies or electricity in rural Africa at large and South West Nigeria in particular leaves women carrying the fuel/firewood burden on their heads; the absence of pipe-borne water or proximate wells places the load once again on women's head. Also, the poor penetration of rural areas by motorized traffic also places the loads on women's head; the absence of appropriately designed sewage systems in much of Africa adds to the transport burden of women in their contribution to household survival. All these activities formed part of women's unpaid and invisible labour within the household chores, which makes their situation more precarious (Ajiboye, 2011).

Women today constitute 49% of the total population in Nigeria, according to the 2011 census (NPC, 2011). As it obtains in every capitalist society, as a rule, women are marginalized and oppressed in Nigeria. In a capitalist society, a woman is doubly oppressed, first as a worker whose employer must maximize profit by exploiting her labour power and secondly as a woman in a patriarchal society. It has to be noted that women's oppression is rooted in class society; therefore it had been with us before the advent of capitalism when it has however reached its peak. Patriarchy exploits the labour of women; capitalism exploits the labour of the wage earners either male or female.

Further more, in Nigeria as elsewhere, religion and tradition are instruments of women's oppression. They constitute among others the ideology of the society, which is a superstructure on the socio-economic foundation of any class society. Many of the religious beliefs and traditions are dated back to the feudal era. They were designed to justify and sustain private property. They are retained until now because of the fact that feudalism might have come to an



end, the private property still remains except it has only changed its character. Patriarchy is a by-product of class society. It came into being along with the private property, as it is the case of state, in order to preserve the interest of the early beneficiaries of the then new socio-economic arrangement i.e. men. Traditions and religion support the patriarchal society along with the private property and class society.

The patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structurally unequal positions in families and markets by condoning gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and legal adulthood; by tacitly condoning domestic and sexual violence and sanctioning differential wages for equal or comparable work. Tradition or culture and religion have dictated men and women's relationship for centuries and entrenched male domination into the structure of social organization and institution at all levels of leadership. They justify capitalism's marginalization of women in education, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and inheritance.

As stated earlier, women's oppression is a global phenomenon since capitalism or class society is universal, but in Nigeria a neo-colonial country under shackles of imperialism and its multinational agents, the conditions of women conveniently compete for the worst in the world among other third world countries.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Any scientific endeavour must remove itself from the domain of myth, and position itself on a valid, theoretical realm. To some people, gender inequality is a myth and it is bandied about by a group of scholars who laze away their time at the academic shores. Having said the foregoing, effort shall be made to examine one or two relevant theories under the rubrics of the cultural determinant and the vicious circle theory of poverty.

The Cultural Determinism - The cultural determinant is a school of thought up in arms against the biological postulate. Culture, from the classical definition by Edward B. Tylor "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society", remains within the domains of "shared ways of thinking, believing and evaluating" human beings and the entire society (Broom and Selznick, 1977). Ortner believes that it is culture, not biology that determines gender functions in society. She argues, forcibly, that the thesis of women's subjugation and marginalization is culture. Although the woman is biologically the burden bearer of the foetus, provides lactation to the baby, supervises and enculturates it to fit properly to societal norms and traditions (holistic culture), she is the man's prey from the viewpoint of culture

The Vicious Circle Theory of Poverty - The vicious circle theory of poverty maintains that poverty will continue to be the lot of the poor because the "circumstances" in which the poor live tend to reinforce the continuity of their lifestyle. The circumstances are a euphemism for, and corroborated by, the theories of biology and culture earlier posited in this paper which demean women's status in society.

One major proponent of the poverty theory is Oscar Lewis, and American anthropologist, whose original work among the urban poor of Mexico and Puerto Rico entitled, "Subculture of Poverty", has supported the universality of the concept. According to Lewis, an individual affected with poverty has "... a strong feeling of marginality of helplessness, of dependence, resignation and fatalism" (Haralambos, 2000). Lewis's description of the poor illustrates the position of most women in society.

Engels' work on the institutionalization of private property is of relevance to the continued pauperization of women in society. He postulates that men acquired wealth to enhance their dominance of women before capitalism became the ideology of many societies. Capitalism has worsened women's position, because many societies are patterned after the patrilineal system of inheritance. Stressing the poverty theory further, Max Weber posits three main tools which men use to impoverish women. These include, power, wealth and prestige. Apparently, there are more men than women who possess power, wealth and prestige in society. Thus, from a hypothetical, inheritance rights, a male child is more favoured and this has been reinforced by the so called customary laws, when talking about the issue of inheritance particularly among the south west, Nigeria. This perhaps confirms the increase in the feminization of poverty and continuing widening gap of inequality among the people in the study areas.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Three rural communities were purposively selected in the study. This include, Iludun rural community in Ekiti State, Ado-Odo Ota community in Ogun state and Epe Local Government in Lagos state.. The choice of these rural communities was informed by the strict adherent to the traditional cultural practices and strict compliance with the customary laws in those communities. This therefore, provides a basis for a comparative analysis which we help to examine the extent or otherwise of discriminatory practices of inheritance rights and the role of customary laws on the matter.

Sources of Data Collection

Our sources of data collection consist of both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data included literature review on Inheritance, Customary Laws and Feminization of Poverty among the rural dwellers in the South West Nigeria and available statistical data from previous researches on the subject matter. While primary source was purely from the information elicited from the selected respondents on the field.

Methods of Data collection

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were adopted. Quantitative method consisted of structured questionnaires, which are made up of both close and open ended questions that were distributed among the various units that made up the study population. 300 questionnaires were distributed through multistage sampling techniques in three areas of study. Research assistants who were earlier trained and have experiences in data collections were of help in the distributions of questionnaires. 250 questions were however collected back from the field. While qualitative method consists of three (3) Focus Group Discussions and ten (10) in-depth interviews conducted among the selected individuals across the three selected study areas.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected were analyzed using Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the result. Inferential statistics used was correlation to establish the nexus of interaction between Inheritance Rights, Customary Law and Feminization of Poverty among the Yoruba of South West, Nigeria. Qualitative data were grouped into themes and analyze through content analysis and ethnographic summaries and the findings from the qualitative were used to compliment the results of the quantitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Respondents

Table1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-economic Characteristics (n=250)

Variable	Male (%)	Female (%)	TOTAL (%)
Age Range			
Below 20 years	9 (3.6%)	6 (2.4%)	15 (6%)
21 – 30	48 (19.2%)	32 (12.8%)	80 (32%)
31 – 40	28 (11.2%)	36 (14.4%)	64 (25.6%)
41 – 50	27 (10.8%)	22 (8.8%)	49 (19.6%)
50 Above	24 (5.3%)	18 (7.2%)	42 (16.8%)
Sex			
Sex	136 (54.4%)	114 (45.6%)	250 (100%)
Marital Status			
Single	6 (2.4%)	8 (3.2%)	14 (5.6%)
Married	98 (39.2%)	68 (27.2%)	166 (66.4%)
Divorced/Widow	32 (12.8%)	38 (15.2%)	70 (28%)
Religious Affiliation			
Christianity	38 (15.2%)	62 (24.8%)	100(40.0%)
Islam	90 (36%)	48 (19.2%)	138 (55.2%)
Others (Traditional)	8 (3.2%)	4 (1.6%)	12 (4.8%)
Educational Qualification			
No Formal Education	23 (9.2%)	27 (10.8%)	50 (20%)
Primary Education	28 (11.2%)	32 (12.8%)	60 (24%)
Secondary Education	69 (27.6%)	43 (17.2%)	112 (44.8%)
Tertiary Education	16 (6.4%)	12 (4.8%)	28 (11.2%)
Household Size (persons)			
Below 4	8 (3.2%)	7 (2.8%)	15 (6%)
4 - 6	64 (25.6%)	52 (20.8%)	116 (46.4%)
7 – 9	48 (19.2%)	37 (14.8%)	85 (34%)
Above 10	16 (6.4%)	18 (7.2%)	34 (13.6%)
Total Income (N'000) per month			
Below 10, 000	74 (29.6%)	58 (23.2%)	132 (52.8%)
10,000 – 20,000	32 (12.8%)	16 (6.4%)	48 (19.2%)
21, 000 – 50,000	18 (7.2%)	22 (8.8%)	40 (16%)
51, 000 – 100,000	8 (3.2%)	8(3.2%)	16 (6.4%)
101,000 – 150, 000	2 (0.8%)	6 (2.4%)	8 (3.2%)
Above 150,000	2 (0.8%)	4 (1.6%)	6 (2.4%)

Source: Field survey data, 2016.

The age distribution of respondents reveals that majority (32%) of the respondents were within the ages of 21 – 30 years. This was followed by the age 31 – 40 years with a total respondent of 25.6%. Next were those that fall within age category 41 – 50 years of age with about 19.6 percent of the total respondents. When juxtapose by gender, the table reveals that there are more male within age bracket 21-30 with a total of 19.2% of the entire male respondents as against their female counterpart, which has more respondents within age cohort 31- 40 with 14.4% of the total female respondents. The distributions above shows clearly that, majority of the respondents were young, experienced, and assume to be knowledgeable enough to understand what inheritance right meant and should be able to understand the scope and content of customary law in their various communities. It should be said that, since they are still young, they can be easily amenable to enlightenment and re-orientation which would afford them the opportunity to exploit a wide variety of information sources that could help them to



empower themselves to the extent that would help to eradicate the scourge of discrimination within the family system.

The sex distributions of the respondents also reveals that majority (54.4%) of the respondents were males while the remaining 45.6% were females. A very important observation that was made here is that, there are clear evidences that more men, not only that they are willing and ready to participate in this kind of exercise that their female counterparts, but are ready to discuss and divulge information on the issue of Inheritance Rights, Customary Laws, and Feminization of poverty in the society. Participation of more men and their willingness may not be unconnected with the fact that they are more favoured by the practices than their female counterparts. This was revealed by one of the female participants in the In-depth interview, when she said in Yoruba dialect "*awon okunrin o se ni po ju awa obinrin lo, nigba to je wipe awon na lonje anfani asa ibile wa*" which translates to mean, why would men not be ready and willing to participate, after all, the practices are more in their favour than the women. This was also re-echoed by the various female Focus Group discussants.

Effort was made to found out the marital status of the respondents included in the study, the table of distributions above equally reveals that about (66.4%) of the respondents were married, while appreciable number 28% were either Divorced or Widow/widowers. Only about 5.6% of the total respondents are still single. The researcher purposively included all categories in the study so as to get the general views and opinion of the people across various marital statuses as long as they understand the issue being discussed. One very important and unique thing noticed was that, those who are either widows or widowers were more experienced and spoke freely than the other groups. In fact, it was found that majority of them spoke about their personal experiences. This however, made the study very interesting because of the first hand information received from the majority of the participants.

Although, one of the several questions that may arise here is that, what is the relevance of religion to Inheritance Right related issue? There is clear evidence of direct relationship between religion and Inheritance and Succession Rights particularly in African societies. Many were of the opinion that, some religions helps to perpetrate and continues to support and strengthening the structure of inequality between male and their female counterpart in the society. Some religions maintain that, men are the representative of God here on earth, therefore, women should honour and respect them. A particular verse in the Bible says, any woman that cut her hair dishonoured the husband, while Islam also supported women keeping quiet when the husbands talks. This has been confirmed by the various participants in the Focus Groups and In-depth interview conducted across the study areas. The table clearly reveals that, 55.2% of the respondents were Muslim, 40% were Christians, while the small proportion of about 4.8% claims other religions. The observation from the distribution is that, more Muslims are included in the study and this may not be unconnected with the religion of the people in the study areas, however, when juxtaposed by gender, it was discovered that, more men were Muslim, while more women were Christian.

Although, most (44.8%) of the respondents had Secondary education an indication of some literacy level of the respondents. However, tertiary education recorded a very low percentage of 11.2% of the total number of respondents. In fact, those without any formal education were 20% of the total number of respondents. It may be argued that the total level of illiteracy is low judging from the distributions, however, it should also be made known that in percentage it may looks small but in absolute figure, this calls for serious concerns. The implication is that, substantial number of our respondents may not be able to source for adequate and very

important information due to their level of education. Hence, they may find it difficult to actually fight for their rights, when it comes to the issue of inheritance and succession rights in the society.

When the distribution was further disaggregated into gender, it was discovered that male respondents are more educated than their female counterparts. Few of the female participants in the In-depth interview said “*awa la nse ise, owo wa si ni awon obi wa fin ran awon egbo ati aburo wa okunrin ni ile iwe, won ko se ni kawe ju awa obinrin lo*” meaning that, we are (women) are the people who works and our parents used the proceed to send both our elderly and younger brothers to school, she then asked, why would they not be more educated and enlightened than us. Another very interesting thing to mention here was the case of a female participant who said she took up an housemaid job in order to be able to send her junior brother to school by their parents and today, the junior brother is well to do while she is living hand to mouth without any assistance from the same brother. Education is an important tool for self development and emancipation of the vulnerable group in any given society. There is therefore the need for education and re-education of our people particularly on the provisions of the customary laws as it affects the rights of individuals whether male or female in the family. Low level of education may also have accounted for the continuing subjugation and oppression of the female folks among the Yoruba of South West, Nigeria.

Constraints to Inheritance Rights in the rural areas of South West Nigeria.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by constraints to Inheritance Rights in the rural South West, Nigeria.

Constraints	Male	Female	Percentage	Remarks
Customary Laws	68(27.2%)	88(35.2%)	156(62.4%)	Multiple Entries
Poverty	85(34%)	95(38%)	180(72%)	“
Gender Discrimination/Inequality	48(19.2%)	57(22.8%)	105(42%)	“
Financial Constraints	33(13.2%)	53(21.2%)	86(34.4%)	“
Education	41(16.4%)	69(27.6%)	110(44%)	“
Family Background	28(11.2%)	44(17.6%)	72(28.8%)	“
Family Size and Number of Wives	62(24.8%)	26(10.4%)	88(35.2%)	“
Socio-economic status	80(32%)	38(15.2%)	118(47.2%)	“
Women Folks	18(7.2%)	37(14.8%)	55(22%)	“
Religion	34(13.6%)	35(14%)	69(27.6%)	“
Culture	83(33.2%)	108(43.2%)	191(76.4%)	“

Source: Field Survey 2016

Effort was made to find out from the respondents what they considered to be major constraints to Inheritance rights among the Yoruba of South West which constitute our study area. The responses from the various respondents were amazing as several constraints were mentioned. However, effort was made to regroup the various problems into a sizeable numbers for effective and efficient analysis to allow for proper understanding of the issue at hand. Also, worthy of mentioning is the frequency of the occurrences of the responses. Several of the problems were repeatedly mentioned by various respondents hence, the researcher included the remark column where the responses to the problems were described as multiple entries.

From the table above, the researcher was able to identify eleven major constraints from the various respondents as major challenges to Inheritance and Succession Rights among the Yoruba of South West Nigeria. These constraints include; Customary Laws, Poverty, Gender Discrimination/Inequality, Financial constraint, Low level of Education, Family Background,



Family Size and Number of Wives, Socio-economic status of the Respondents, Women Folks, Religion, and Culture of the people.

A respondent in FGD session sheds more lights on the problems of inheritance

It is our culture that do not favour women in our communities. Men are regarded as "Olori- Ebi" and they share properties more for male than female. Our men also believed that women should not inherit property because they will get married and go to their husband homes (Women/FGD/ 45yrs/ 23rd October, 2016)

It was generally observed that under Yoruba custom customary law, a woman cannot inherit directly from her husband however, she can inherit from her parents (father or mother) only the movable items, such as clothing, utensils, etc, while all the immovable items, such as landed properties, housing, etc goes to the male children. It should be mentioned at this juncture also that, there are two forms of succession under Yoruba customary practice namely, the "Idi – Igi" and "Ori Oju Ori". For instance, where a man has more than one wife, say, two or three wives, when he dies, irrespective of the number of children from each wife, the properties is shared to the children according to the number of the wives, this type of succession right is known as "Idi- Igi", while under the "Ori Oju Ori", the properties is shared according to the number of children and not according to the number of wives, irrespective of the number of children from the each wife, the children are summed up and the properties shared according to the total numbers.

Further more, interesting to mention here is that, the Yoruba customary law regards the wife herself as part of the property to be inherited and she is generally not expected to entertain any expectations vis a vis her late husband's property especially in the Southern Nigeria. Many customary law systems still deny women the opportunity of owning property, particularly, landed property to which women have only a right of usufruct. However, a woman can apply to use part of her father's land for farming purposes, however, she can not plant on the land tree crops, she is only allowed to plant arable crops such as yam, maize, vegetable, okro, etc and not crops such as cocoa, kolanuts, palm trees etc. This however, is a clear demonstration of marginalization and discrimination against womens' folks among the Yoruba of South West Nigeria.

Generally, under the Nigerian customary law, spouses have no right in each other's property whether during or after marriage. Neither spouse had the right to control the other's enjoyment or disposal of his or her property acquired before, during or after marriage. To further widen the gap between men and women, the husband's blood relations inherit the property of the husband if he dies without any issue and the property of the wife is inherited by her family if she has no issue. Among the Yoruba for instance, a wife cannot inherit her husband's property. This is because, where a man dies intestate under customary law, devolution of his property is by blood. Therefore, a wife or a widow not being a blood relation of the husband has no claim to any share. To attest to the above, recently, a former female Deputy Governor of a State in the South West Nigeria was arrested and charged to court for disposing off the landed estate of the husband by the family of the deceased husband. As we are talking now, this case is still in the court all in the name of customary laws. This therefore, is obnoxious, discriminatory and a total disregards to fundamental rights of women in this part of the world, which must be eradicated by every available tools at our disposal.

A respondent in IDI illuminated on this:

A wife cannot inherit from her husband, only the children can. Where the wife is childless, she cannot inherit anything. At times, the woman will be sent away empty by in-laws. Inheritance is a problem in this community. Sometimes, the Olori-Ebi takes over everything and use the property to train his own children. Also, where you disagree to marry your dead husband junior brother, your children might be excluded from inheritance (IDI/Women/52yrs/ 15th October, 2016)

Although, several constraints were mentioned by the various respondents, of significant important to discuss is the women folk mentioned as one of the constraints. When probed further to enquire what they actually meant, it was revealed that, majority of our respondents claimed that women are their own problems. Apart from the fact that they are timid and not ready to speak out, they also constitutes obstacle to themselves. For instance, where there is a competition between a man and a woman in the society, women are more favourably disposes to vote for men rather than their fellow women. This has been found to constitute very serious obstacles to women liberation in the society. It has been heard severally that women claimed that, it is our customs, so there is nothing one can do about it. As long as women goes around with this kind of belief, it will be so difficult if not impossible to liberate them from the shackles of marginalization and oppressions in which they currently find themselves, hence, the widening gaps between the two gender and the continuing feminization of poverty among female folk.

Relationship between Socio-economic characteristics and Inheritance Rights and Feminization of Poverty

In order to determine the relationship between Inheritance Rights and socioeconomic characteristic of respondents, a correlation analysis was carried out. The result showed that of all the socio-economic characteristics examined, Inheritance Rights is significantly related to Gender ($r = 0.192$, $P < 0.05$) but not significant related to Family size ($r = -0.127$, $P < 0.05$), level of education ($r = 0.093$, $P < 0.05$), income ($r = -0.070$, $P < 0.05$), Religion Practice ($r = 0.082$, $P < 0.05$).

According to Swanson *et al* (1997), socioeconomic characteristics such as Gender, Age, Family Size, Level of Education, income, Religion Practices influence Inheritance Rights among the Yoruba of South West Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that in considering Inheritance and Succession Rights, gender of individual must be given special consideration.

Table 3: Relationship between socio-economic characteristics and inheritance rights and feminization of poverty

	Age	Gender	Family Size	Level of Education	Income	Religion
Source: Pearson correlation preferred	1.00	-.192	-.127	.093	-.070	-.082
Sign.(2-tailed)	-	.036	.169	.312	.448	.374
N	250	250	250	250	250	250

* = Significance $P < 0.05$



Further Discussions

The degree to which economic status and inheritance is transmitted across generations determines one's life chances in society. Although many have linked one's social origins and educational attainment to life chances and opportunities, education cannot serve as the most influential predictor of economic mobility. In fact, children of well-off parents generally receive better schooling and benefit from material, cultural, and genetic inheritances. Likewise, schooling attainment is often persistent across generations and families with higher amounts of inheritance are able to acquire and transmit higher amounts of human capital. Lower amounts of human capital and inheritance can perpetuate inequality in the housing market and higher education. Research reveals that inheritance plays an important role in the accumulation of housing wealth. Those who receive an inheritance are more likely to own a home than those who do not regardless of the size of the inheritance. This position was further supported by the participants in the various focus group discussions that were conducted where about three-third of the total respondents agreed to the assertion.

Conclusions

The United Nations has done a lot to reverse the inhuman conditions of womanhood by sponsoring and propagating women alleviating programmes world wide. The Nigerian government, too, has made a giant stride by assisted in the drive to give women freedom in all sphere of life.

In spite of the various efforts both nationally and internationally, the distribution of inheritance is often unequal. It has been discovered from the findings that while male child or children inherit a large portion of the parent's properties, very little or fewer amounts are given to the female child or children in the family. The issue of gender inequality or women's subjugation therefore is akin to the mythical Augean stables that needed the strength of a Hercules to clear the filth. Without beating a retreat, this paper posits that no single human effort can take a head-on, or side, approach to rid humanity of the global structural injustice meted out to women by men. Hence, the current collective campaign vigorously mounted by the United Nations (UN) to eradicate gender inequality globally through instrumentality of laws, pressures, carrots dangling, moral suasions, education and, expectedly, outright condemnation of the invidious practice, is an effort that needs the affirmative support of every regenerated person.

Unfortunately, the global society is patterned along patriarchal lines, and many people who are loud in their condemnation of gender inequality are beneficiaries of the system. It is on the strength of the foregoing that a school of thought believes that the concept of gender inequality presently canvassed at various international for a is, paradoxically, referred to as 'de jure equality' (equality in theory) and 'de facto discrimination' (inequality in practice).

Recommendations

Women's subjugated position stretches far to centuries of man's existence on earth. Their position can be changed through concerted efforts, some of which are:

- Total Institutional change – This involve all and sundry. There is nothing concrete and far-reaching that can be achieved, except there is a total institutional change in the society.



- Social Conversion Method – Women are the primary custodians of the Nigeria people's values, and are active at the forefront of socializing infants to societal and familiar norms and values. They should be able to bring about gender-focused agenda and programmes to alleviate the various harmful practices against other women. This can be achieved through women's collective effort at realizing the goals of a sustainable human development by direct and indirect practical participation in political, social, economic and religious discussions.
- Cooption of Women – Educated and well-experienced women should be co-opted into high positions of trust in our body politic. This will afford such women the opportunity to translate into reality their thoughts and experiences to better the lot of women in the country.
- Pillow-Talk Diplomacy – Women are able to influence the anti-women policies of their husbands by the pillow-talk diplomacy. By this diplomacy, women can 'sell' status boosting initiatives on gender to their husbands while in bed.
- Total Grassroot Involvement – More women and men too reside at the rural areas of the country. These are the areas where female marginalization, oppression, discrimination, slavery and other obnoxious discriminatory practices such as inheritance rights, are still practiced by many Nigerians. However, about 98% of these evil practices are not reported. Therefore, everyone whether at the rural areas or in urban cities must be involved so as to unmask the evil of gender discrimination in the society.



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