

## Condition of Women in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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### Abstract

Nigeria is the Africa's most populous nation with approximate 180 million citizens (CIA World FactBook, 2015) and diverse. Around 50% of them are Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo tribes. These tribes dominated two main regional parts of the country namely: North and South. Muslims majority from the North and/or minority in the South account for more than 50% of the entire population, 40% are Christians mainly in the South with significant amount in the North. 10% are traditional African believes. Despite various efforts and concerns show by local and international human rights groups, women, who account almost half of the entire population, are generally lagged behind in all aspects of life (economically, socially, politically and intellectually). The current dimensional studies lead to discover that modern Nigerian women are on the lowest rung of poverty condition. Intellectually, higher proportion of Nigerian men goes to school than that of women, thus neither their participation in forming nor administering the government is yet matured. Perhaps, religion and tradition are used as instruments of women oppression in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Status and condition of women in Nigeria; Challenges facing by Nigerian women; Women and violence; Women in religion

### Introduction

Despite strong religious adherence of the Nigerian people, the country secured no difference between the laws that govern the secular and spiritual realms. The basic formula of norms formation in Nigerian society seems to be in compliance with the God injunctions. The relations between the customary life and religion, especially in the northern part of the country, seem very much strong. Categorically, the 1999 constitutional amendment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provided and mainly focused on triumphing the basic human rights to all citizens, and thus, chastised and allotted no place for gender discrimination within the country's spheres. Ethically, neither Islam nor Christianity accommodates discrimination or marginalization. The Nigerian community never out of these two religions. This article will look into the condition of women in contemporary Nigeria. It will nevertheless, try to highlight some issues such as nuptial related cases: marriage, divorce, custody of children, polygamy, and participation of the Nigerian women in political life. Nigeria has been encountering aberrant and eerie leadership, military dictatorship, tribal and semi-tribal unrests, failure to make precise decision against economic policies altogether brought about many problems to the Nigerian being.

### Geographic Nigeria

Geographically, Nigeria is located in the western region of the Africa, borders Niger Republic from the north; Chad from the east, Benin from the west and Cameroon from the south. In the economic ground, the significant dominance of Nigeria in Africa is very high, since it exports its oil worldwide that coaxed the most immediate neighbouring countries to engage themselves with the country in different economic diversity. North and West Africa; from Morocco to Egypt, Mali to Niger, share a single ideological belief with the most populous northern part of Nigeria. Perhaps, the condition of women in Nigeria could be traced in correlation with the religious entity. For example, a kind of women dresses in northern region of the continent like Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Mauritania can easily be considered as sample to that one of western region like Mali, Niger, Chad and eastern part such as Sudan, Somalia and that of northern Nigeria. Nigeria has 36 states; Abuja is the Capital city of administration replaced former Capital city, Lagos. Some of the major cities of Nigeria include Kano, Ibadan, Port Harcourt and Maiduguri. The country has total length

area of 923,700 sq. km, and 356,700 sq. miles it occupied land area of 910,770 sq. km/351,650 sq. miles (rest is water); its land boundaries are 4047 km/2,514 miles, while coastlines is something around 853 km/530 miles. Because of the geographic separation of ethnic groups, Nigerians are identified based on languages and cultural traits. These groups vary tremendously in size, and only three of them – the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo are particularly numerous and influential in the country's internal politics.

### The Condition of Women in Nigeria

Traditionally, naturally, women remained mothers, sisters, daughters and wives, and thus women generally are playing a significant and important role in both societal phase and home affairs. Apart from that, throughout Nigerian history, women stood as sine qua non to the household incomes that are generated from obvious works like small business crafts, house to house commercial exchanges and/or bilateral agreement of contributions. Addition to that, women's roles are initially leading by their respective ethnic differences, which have basement from the religious teachings. In the north for example, Islamic norms are generally shaping the common way of life of the people, women are confinement to the households, and they are not allowed to willingly perform unnecessarily roaming beyond premises nearby. As far as tradition is concerned, once they get married, they cannot grumble any disturbances simply because marriage in Islam is misinterpreted absolutely. Women in urban areas are partially sold cooked foods, usually by sending young girls out onto the streets or operating small stands in public places. In the south, traditionally women had economical important positions in interregional trade and the markets, worked on farms as major labour sources, and had influential positions

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in traditional systems of local organization. From the opening years of nineteenth century when the Sokoto Caliphate was established in northern part under the great-Fulani Scholar Ustman ibn Fodio, Islam became a major force in the process of community formation in the area In Yoruba tribe from southern region of the country, who mostly live in the south-western part, women had received Western-style of education in latter century before twentieth, so they occupied positions in professional skills and to some extent in politics. In addition, women headed households, something not seriously considered in Nigeria's development plans. Such households were more numerous in the south, but they were on the rise everywhere. Igbo occupied the south-eastern territory, and known for their deep engagement with Western culture and Western system of education. Aggressively they sought to advance in modern commerce and civil service. Igbo people also immigrates throughout the country, they are employed on the basis of their qualitative education and skills anywhere in the county, including north, despite being southern Christians, that opposes northern belief and which also brought about panic and grounded civil strife between these two communities, dozens of years back. Nigerian's community had adherence to religion since ever before influx of Muslim-traders and Christian-missionaries to northern and southern parts respectively, and that was the principal ideas behind transformation from northern traditional belief to Islam and southern classical faith to Christianity. Nevertheless, each of these groups identified above had traditional religious institutions and beliefs in place long before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. Of course, Nigeria has male-dominated society where women are subordinate, whether they are rich or poor, urban or rural, educated or un-educated. Women face discrimination and oppression from males. Domestic violence has been reported as a matter of significant concern [1]. Though, marriage is a highly valued institution in the country, adultery is extremely ashamed. The onus of making a marriage successful falls on women alone. That is the idea of Celestina that Nigerian women sacrifice a lot to keep the sanctity of marriage, to avoid rebuke and dishonour, and the disgrace of divorce. And a successful marriage means, in effect, providing sex whenever their husbands demand it [2-5]. The economic situation plays an important role in the spread of AIDS. Currently, Nigeria produces around 100,000 graduates every year. Of these, 90% join the teeming mass of unemployed youths. Nigeria is richly endowed with human and natural resources. But mismanagement, misappropriation and embezzlement in government circles have led to the masses being reduced to abject poverty. The proportion of the population living on less than \$1 a day has gone beyond 70% and is increasing, exacerbated by religious and ethnic upheavals that result in death and the destruction of property. In all this, women are worst affected. Girls are forced into prostitution to escape poverty. Their choice is a stark one: die of starvation now or run a high risk of contracting AIDS and dying a few years on. While the threat of hunger remains, no amount of preaching against prostitution will change the situation. In a country with an AIDS pandemic, their route for survival becomes an instrument of death. In health sector where obstacles are epidemically general, healthcare facilities addition to other social amenities are highly poor and inadequate in quality and quantity. Lack of access to prenatal and postnatal care, obstetric services and family planning information, contributes to the high maternal mortality rate. Nigeria has the world second highest maternal mortality rate (1,100 per 100,000 births in 2007). Other contributing factors include unsafe abortions, inadequate post-abortion care, early and child marriages, early pregnancies, high fertility rate and inadequate family planning services, the low rates of contraceptive usage, lack of sex education [6-9]. Owing to the corruption, which is deeply disturbing stability of the

country, Nigerian government failed with all the means to adopt upon the signed ratification of Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 25 years past for the ratification, which Nigeria managed to signed along with international and regional countries.

### The Challenges Facing by Nigerian Women and the Way Out

The above paragraphs are enough to highlight the challenges facing by Nigerian women. Decades back, women are really facing a number of challenges in modern Nigeria, which Nigerian government need to intervene. Women from general view points, are facing marital-challenge; girls have no personal right to exercise and/or demonstrate before her marriage take place (and that have special provision in both Islam and Christianity) and they don't have choice by themselves; whom they will marry and when. Divorce challenge also is semi-factor, many girls destined to marry uneducated somebody, who considered nuptial relations as merely source of sexual pleasure and satisfying their orgasmic needs, as a result, they are misguided and never care to make any woman divorcee. Marital-rape is another factor through which many husband use to beat, criticize their wives and finally divorce them, reasoning that, that is not crime. The issue to them remains as a matter of choice between superior (husband [male]) and inferior (wife [female]). It is advisable that to combat and eliminate the discrimination against women particularly in Nigeria, the most important thing to do is trying to battle corruption through installing a strong institution to ensure is no more corruption. That would optimistically lead to good governing in Nigeria, and thus, each and every kind of discriminations will automatically evacuate from the country. However, religious leaders and scholars also must engage themselves enlightening their respective followers according the precise teaching of their religions. To nevertheless, mobilize people about the human condition and the rights he/her deserve in such religions that would low down the discrimination pressures. Meanwhile, governments have to be more conscious about marital segment of the citizens by identifying a governmental institution, which will directly be dealing with registering new marriages that will be easier to track misconducts against women and marital-rapes. Strengthen legislation and other measures to protect women from violence and support victims, including by adopting specific legislation to criminalize domestic violence, marital rape and other crimes of sexual violence; and reforming the evidence requirements to prove rape; removing obstacles to victims' access to justice; ensuring effective prosecution and punishment of offenders; implementing training for all law enforcement personnel; and establishing shelters for women victims of violence (Fidh report 2009). Improving health facilities are desirable not favor. maternal and infant mortality must be minimized. using enlightening method especially to the young adult and juveniles about the safe sex, and giving special consideration to these recommendations.

### Concluding Remarks

Corruption in Nigeria is extremely corrosive of good governance. Nigeria was listed as the world's most corrupt country by Transparency International in 2000. It manifests itself in patronage, improper policies, weak bureaucracies, inadequate supervision and illegitimacy of laws and regulations. Attempts to curb corruption have been made in the 1979, 1989 and most recently the 1999 Constitutions. The 'vampire' state has seen the elites enrich themselves at the expense of the populace. There is conspicuous consumption by the privileged few, shown by their opulent lifestyles. There was reported looting of 3 billion

of state funds by the family of the former military dictator, General Sani Abacha. In Lagos, for every five contracts awarded, funds of four of them end up in the pockets of contractors or government officials. The enormous amount of money flowing from oil has facilitated corruption. In the meantime, the three oil producing states-Mid-West, East Central and Rivers- have had to prune their spending [10-12]. It's now clearly known and no one doubting that, corruption is a responsible aspect for the unfortunate condition of Nigeria. Is there any way smash it down? It's only way available that is, government official and file members have block their egocentric behavior, and it's their reasonability to work toward better Nigeria by laying equality basis on the ground and forget competition in aggrandizing money from confiscated wealth of the poor. Sincere leadership is a unique rout to support that.

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