

Women Education and Sustainable Development: A Panacea for Peace Building in South East Nigeria.

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Abstract:-The study discussed the importance of education of women in peace building. The study used primary data, the study was carried out in three local Government in Enugu State. The populations of the study was 33,000 using random sampling 204 samples were used and the findings showed that education encourages girl child education, enables women to participate in peace building and will lead to improved employment opportunities, inclusion in the political arena and decision making, peace building, and increase in the overall economic activities that will improve the development of any nation including Nigeria. Recommended among other things that girl child education should be encouraged from all cultural backgrounds to enable them contribute to the development of the nation.

Key words: *Employment Opportunities, Inclusion, Peace Building, Socio-cultural Practices and Women Education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The expanded nature of peace building has left the Nigerian women with a broaden responsibility. They now have a responsibility to rebuild along with a responsibility to prevent and react. The responsibility to rebuild includes a genuine commitment to lasting peace, to the protection of human rights and to the promotion of good governance and sustainable development. Regardless of how we choose to prioritize the issue of human rights in peace building, it must be addressed during the peace process if a society will ever be able to heal and reconcile in the aftermath of conflict. In order for justice and reconciliation to be successful, however, half of the population cannot be excluded due to discriminatory traditional gender roles. As women are important actors in peace building and the reconstruction of war-torn societies, the issue of women's rights cannot be neglected. Sustainable peace can help transform discriminatory values, ideologies and institutions and bring about peace. It is important to recognize that Nigerian women are not only victims during conflict and its aftermath [1]. Acknowledging women as actors, crucial for societal change, development and reconciliation can help bring about peace building and development. Nigeria women should ensure that there is a great need to establish a functioning judicial system and to improve respect for the rule of law. Education is the spring board for advancement and empowerment of women in different areas of human endeavour [2]. Education is the greatest investment that should be given to women in order to empower them to fulfil their roles and participate effectively in national development. The education empowerment of women in Nigeria is the foundation of all other forms of empowerment [3]. With the rapid technological advancement which the world is now witnessing and the continuous transformation of the world economics through globalization, there is a greater pressure than before on national governments to develop efficient educational systems to meet development needs of the 21st century [4].

Education drives economic growth by boosting productivity. Education is vital for the economic prosperity of a nation [5]. Education enables people to improve their social, cultural and economic situation and strengthens sustainable development. Education is often regarded globally as a potent instrument for introducing and sustaining social change in human societies as well as sharpening destiny. Education serves as a vehicle for enhancing upward social and economic mobility. Education imparts knowledge, teaches skills and instills attitude to the recipients [6]. Education promotes peace and stability amongst people in a locality.

Peace education on spanning issues ranging from issues from social security, gender equity, social justice and intercultural understanding is of paramount importance. Thus, education always remains a powerful tool for stability, equity for a sustainable development of the society.

According to Uya cited in [7], the present state of education in our country is antithetical to our quest for good governance and sustainable development in democracy. There is indeed an inextricable linkage between qualitative and development directed education and nation building. Peace has always been among humanity's highest values for supreme consideration at any price. The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war. Peace is the prime value in contemporary Africa today, the most valuable "public good" but yet the most elusive. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in the society and the resolution of conflict by non violent means. This is in agreement with later identification of peace [1].

Some see peace as a dynamic process of cooperation formulated on principles, development, and access to basic necessities of life, equality, human rights, as well as fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of the people [8]. It is to reduce or totally avoid conflict which is anti development that made peace and peace building of importance. For [9], conflict entails more than mere disagreement. It includes threatening the needs, interests and concern of parties involved. It is a clash in different points of view, which occur in the context of relationship between two or more parties. [10] argues that resolving conflict calls for the third party whose duty is to skilfully foster new acceptable relationship between the parties.

As old as creation, conflict is as inevitable social process which constitutes a factor that can induce change in society [11]. As a result, conflict is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. What matter most is the way and manner in which the society responds to the emerging conflict [12]. Since conflict is a complex and multidimensional fact of life of life, it comes with its challenges and it is incumbent upon people to put on effective measures/plans towards conflict resolution.

II. FORMS OF PEACE PROCESS

We can identify four forms of peace process namely; peace keeping process is a situation in which conflict processes are in low and the conditions for development are limited. This also entails the use of peace keepers to keep conflicting parties apart and keep conflict at current low levels. Peace enforcement however is where conflict is high and conditions for peace remain limited. Peace enforcement is needed to create the space for increasing development and reducing conflict. Peacemaking arises in situations where conflict is high but there are viable conditions for pursuing development. Peace building applies to a situation of low conflict and high prospects for development.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

In the area of acquiring education specifically, women in most cases are not given any preferential treatment. Ihuoma cited in [13], notes, male children are valued more than females. The males are considered first in terms of who should be sent to school. In a situation where the family is financially poor, the female child is dropped for other alternatives like early marriage and house-helpers while the male is preferred to be trained, no matter the female's potential and talent. [14] rightly remarked that if women are educated equally alongside their male counterparts, they would be able to develop national consciousness and contribute immensely to the development of their nation. In addition [13], posits that if development has to be achieved, educating women has to be every country's priority. Cultural factors, which are ideas, beliefs, dogmas and practices created and nurtured by the male-dominated groups to ensure that the society is organized in their interest. As observed by Obote as cited in [15]. It is generally believed that the family name is preserved in the lineage of the male child; hence the male child should be better equipped than the female in order to get a good job and provide for the family. It is believed that women are mainly for the purpose of reproduction and domestic activities hence, there is no need to educate them, as this is a waste of resources. The fear stems from the fact that one day the girl child will eventually marry out to a person of another family. Others believe that if they send a girl to school she will be more exposed and civilized and cannot agree to be under the authority of any man. They hold firmly too that educated women might not be willing to accept the woman's traditional place in society. The undemocratic nature of Enugu state women has a negative impact on peace building in Enugu state. In addition, Enugu state women sometimes engage in unhealthy competition quite often for access to resources and for promoting their different groups. This has contributed to the fragmentation of Umuada Ndigbo to the extent that they rarely undertake collective actions.

Another major challenge for Enugu state women is that of leadership that will help in restoring confidence among the women. Some people are of the opinion that people use women activism as a platform to enter into politics, hence the suspicion. The unwillingness of Enugu state government to create a space for women in the governance of Enugu state is a huge challenge that women have to contend with. This breeds unhealthy competition amongst the women, rivalry and related ills that do not augur well for sustainable economic integration, peace building and development in Enugu state.

Objective of the study

The overall objective of this study is to establish the fact that women education is a sin-quanton for peace building in Enugu state of South East Nigeria for sustainable development.

Specifically, the study amongst other things will:

1. Identify the extent to which education helps women in overcoming socio-cultural practices among women in Enugu state.
2. Identify the effects of education on peace building by the women in Enugu State.

Research question

1. How does education destroy the devastating effect of socio-cultural practices among women in Enugu state?
2. What are the effects of education on peace building by the women in Enugu state?

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research design is descriptive survey. Survey research design is chiefly concerned with the present, but sometimes considers past events and influence as they relate to current conditions [16]. The area of the study is Enugu state. Enugu state has three senatorial zones comprising of seventeen local government areas. The study was conducted in Udi L.G.A., Enugu North L.G.A. and Nsukka L.G.A. Population of the study include all the educated women in the three LGAs of Enugu state that were randomly selected. The population of women Udi L.G.A is 10,000, Enugu North LG.A. is 15,000 and Nsukka LG.A. 8,000 making 33,000. The sample size determination according to [16], for a population of 33,000, the sample size is 204, using $\pm 7\%$ precision. Thus, the samples from the three L.G.As. are 61, 93 and 49 for Udi, Enugu North and Nsukka L.G.A. respectively. Simple random sampling was used to select the samples needed. To select the samples, the women were randomly selected after every five houses from the population frame constructed by the researchers in the three LGAs respectively. The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire with 20 items. This is structured under four likert scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree. This instrument was distributed to the educated women in the three LGAs. The average of this point was 2.50. This was used as cut off point for acceptance and rejection of each research question. The instrument was validated respectively by three experts in Development Studies of University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. It was trial-tested on 20 rural women in two LGAs which were not part of the study. Crombach Alpha Analysis was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the items [17]. The reliability coefficient of 0.82 was recorded. Data were analyzed, using mean and Standard Deviation (SD) for research questions. Acceptance point for the items was mean of 2.50.

Results: The results were shown in the tables in line with the research questions.

Table 1: The effects of education on women in overcoming socio-cultural practices in Enugu state

s/n	Effects of education on the socio-cultural practices	Mean(x)	SD	Remark
1	Education enables women to participate in decision making	2.65	0.90	Agree
2	Education reduces discrimination against women in positions of authority	2.72	1.05	Agree
3	Education discourages women from being forced	3.20	0.90	Agree

	into early marriage			
4	Education stops parents from denying their female children in asset sharing	2.70	0.84	Agree
5	Education enables women to select their spouse	2.90	0.92	Agree
6	Education enables women to escape from obnoxious widowhood practices	3.22	0.80	Agree
7	Education enables families to accept women without a male child	2.72	0.81	Agree
8	Education encourages girl child education	3.30	0.84	Agree
9	Education helps women seek redress when their rights are abused.	3.01	0.87	Agree
10	Education encourages intergenerational girl child education	3.34	0.82	Agree
11	Education favour male child more than female child	2.01	0.91	Disagree

Source: (Author's field work, 2015)

Table 1 above shows the effects of education on the socio-cultural practices on women in Enugu States. These are seen in items 1 to 10 which were rated above 2.5; while item 11 was rated below 2.5 revealing that education does not favour only male child.

Table 2: The effects of education on peace building by the women in Enugu state

s/n	Effects of education on peace building	Mean(x)	SD	Remark
12	Education enables women to participate in peace building	3.25	0.80	Agree
13	Education exposes women to process of peace building	2.82	0.85	Agree
14	Education encourages women to peace building for production and sustenance of positive social change	3.30	0.92	Agree
15	Education is an instrument for positive peace in the society	3.60	0.86	Agree
16	Education remains a tool for stability, equity for sustainable peace	2.90	0.89	Agree
17	Education enables women to bring peace in their families	2.84	0.84	Agree
18	Education enables women offer advice to warring communities	3.21	0.83	Agree
19	Education encourages women groups to settle disputes in the society	3.25	0.91	Agree
20	Education distorts peace	1.34	0.87	Disagree

	building in the society			
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Source: (Author's field work, 2015)

Table 2 shows the effects of education on peace building among the women in Enugu State. The items 12 to 19 were rated high above 2.5, while 20 was rated low below 2.5. This is an indication that the women know that education is needed for peace building. Item 20 shows that they did not agree that education distorts peace building in the society.

V. DISCUSSION

The result from the table 1 revealed that education enables women to participate in decision making. The decision making could be in their families as well as in the society at large. This is in line with the study of [18] that dealt on the socio-cultural ethos; the limiting factors to gender equity in Nigeria. It also revealed that education reduces discrimination against women in positions of authority. This is equally in line with the study of [19] that argues that women are the bedrock of every nation. As a result, they should be encouraged to exhibit their managerial, creative and artistic powers on the world's stage which can only be achieved through education. However, it was seen that the respondents agreed that education reduces early marriage, enables women to escape from obnoxious widowhood practices, encourages girl child education, helps women seek redress when their rights are abused, encourages intergenerational girl child education as well as encourages women groups to settle disputes in the society and disagreed that education distorts peace building in the society. From these it shows that benefits of educating any woman are numerous. This is in line with [20] in the study of women education and empowerment on national development and the study of [13] in need for gender equity in national development. Table 2 revealed that education enables women to participate in peace building, exposes women to process of peace building, encourages women to peace building for production and sustenance of positive social change, Education is an instrument for positive peace in the society, Education remains a tool for stability, equity for sustainable peace, enables women to bring peace in their families. Women education will enhance their primary roles for effective home management in terms of attending to their husband's needs, performing household chores such as firewood and water fetching, effective home management and supporting their husbands in terms of provision of the family needs. Women stay at home more often than the men, this attribute keeps them very close to the children and reflect in the training given to the children in terms of inculcating the societal norms and values. This aspect of their role has been recognized in 2008 in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 according to the [21] in their meeting for achieving peace and security by women. Women education remains a tool for stability in government to enhance peace and security. Involvement of educated women in political positions will promote development programmes and projects that will lead to positive effect on the society which in turn will enhance development. They will likely advocate for legislations that will improve the standard of the living of the society. This will be achieved because any gap in the legislation that affects the women and the children will definitely affect the society in a negative way. However, the women education promotes equity for sustainable peace. In terms of involvement of educated women in entrepreneurship, this will enable women to own businesses and contribute to wealth creation, employment opportunities and self reliance [22]. This aspect of their contribution will help the society in poverty reduction and contribute greatly to the national productivity and economic growth that will promote development. In the area of peace and security, women education enables women to bring peace in their families and the society at large. Peace and stability are very important for economic development of any nation [23]. The efforts of educated women are seen in various talks such as the absence of women from peace and security initiatives has not given a full process to sustaining peace in Nigeria [23]. This therefore implies that women should be included at different social and economic engagements to reduce conflict situations and restore peace in the society. There are also many pronouncements that have shown that the contributions of women and women organizations both at local and international levels to stop violence and change situations for peace building [24].

VI. CONCLUSION

The importance of education of women cannot be overemphasised, since it brings about peace in the families and in the society at large to promote sustainable peace and development. Education of women will

lead to improved employment opportunities, inclusion in the political arena and decision making, peace building, and increase in the overall economic activities that will improve the development of any nation including Nigeria.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Girl child education should be encouraged from all cultural backgrounds to enable them contribute to the development of the nation.
2. The society should accept that women are as good as the men in any sector for both to jointly contribute to the national economy for enhanced economic development.
3. Advice offered by educated women during conflicts and crises should be adhered to in order to restore peace to the families and the society.
4. Gender discrimination in any sector of the economy by the society should be stopped for effective peace and sustainable development of the nation.
5. Free and compulsory education should be enforced and erring parents should be punished.

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