



NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAM

**THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
IN FOSTERING GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA**

PAMELA PRINCESS EGHONGH OKOJIE

MASTER'S THESIS

NICOSIA  
2019



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MASTER'S THESIS

THESIS SUPERVISOR  
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NICOSIA  
2019

## **ACCEPTANCE/APPROVAL**

We as the jury members certify the 'The Impact of International Organizations in Fostering Gender Equality in Nigeria' prepared by Pamela Princess Eghongh Okojie defended on 22/01/2019 has been found satisfactory for the award of degree of Masters

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## DECLARATION

I, Pamela Princess Eghongh Okojie, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled 'The Impact of International Organizations In Fostering Gender Equality In Nigeria' has been prepared myself under the guidance and supervision of 'Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sait Akşit' in partial fulfillment of the Near East University, Graduate School of Social Sciences regulations and does not to the best of my knowledge breach and Law of Copy rights and has been tested for plagiarism and a copy of the result can be found in the Thesis.

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Date:

Signature:

Name:

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to every female who has experienced any form of gender inequality. Your story is my story.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Xxx. I would first of all like to acknowledge God Almighty for bringing me this far, for his mercies and grace throughout my academic year. To him be all the honor.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN FOSTERING GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA

The focus of this study is on the impact of international organisations, mainly the United Nations and African Union and their affiliated institutions in fostering gender equality on Nigerian women; the obstacles that hinder progress on equality as well as the issues that limit these women from reaching their full potential. The feminist theory with its focus on elevating women from the shackles of oppression, discrimination and inequality forms the basis of theoretical framework.

The main finding of this study shows that these obstacles are national rather than international. In the case of Nigeria, these obstacles include the patriarchal structure of the country, democratization, godfathers, long standing culture, traditions and customs, ignorance, poverty, illiteracy, pluralistic legal system of Nigeria among others. In other words, if the national institutions of the country can be changed, reviewed or amended and Nigerian women are empowered, all forms of discrimination on women will be eliminated and the efforts of international organizations will have meaningful impacts on the lives of Nigerian women and the world at large. Based on policy implementation, it is obvious that women are excluded in various aspects of the country, it also points out that special focus should be given to equality in education and participation of women in politics and economy.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Gender equality, societal problems, International Organizations, UN, AU, Obstacles and Discrimination



## ÖZ

### **CİNSİYET EŞİTLİĞİNİN SAĞLANMASINDA ULUSLARARASI ÖRGÜTLERİN ETKİSİ: NİJERYA ÖRNEĞİ**

Bu çalışmanın amacı uluslararası örgütlerin, özellikle de Birleşmiş Milletler, Afrika Birliği ve bağlantılı kurumlarının, Nijerya'da cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanmasındaki etkisini; eşitliğin sağlanması ve kadınların potansiyel toplumsal katkılarını en üst düzeye çıkarılması konusunda var olan engelleri irdelemektir. Çalışma, kadınların karşılaştıkları baskı, ayrımcılık ve eşitliksizden kurtulmaları hususuna odaklanan feminist teoriyi temel çerçeve olarak alacaktır.

Tez, Nijerya'daki cinsiyet eşitliği önündeki temel sorun ve engellerin ulusal kaynaklı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Nijerya örneğinde bu sorunlar arasında toplumun ataerkil yapısı, manevi babalık (godfatherism) demokratikleşme, hâkim kültür yapısı, gelenek ve görenekler, cehalet, yoksulluk ve çok düzeyli hukuki yapı birçok sorun arasında ön plana çıkmaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, Nijerya'daki kurumsal yapı değiştirilebilse veya yeniden düzenlenebilse ve Nijeryalı kadınlar güçlendirilebilse, kadına karşı tüm ayrımların önüne geçilebilir ve uluslararası örgütlerin çabaları Nijeryalı kadınların hayatının olumlu yönde değişmesine anlamlı bir katkı yapabilir. Politika uygulama süreci bağlamı incelendiğinde kadının ülkenin birçok alanında dışlandığını, bu durumun üstesinden gelinebilmesi amacıyla eğitim ve kadının siyasi ve ekonomik hayata katılımının güçlendirilmesi gerektiği söylenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Nijerya, Cinsiyet Eşitliği, Toplumsal Sorunlar, Uluslararası Örgütler, BM, Afrika Birliği, Mani ve Ayrımcılık

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ACHPR	African Court on Human and People's Rights
AFA	Alliances for Africa
AU	African Union
BLP	Better Life Program
BPA	Beijing Platform for Africa
CDA	Canadian Development Policy
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEDPA	Center for Development and Population Activities
CRA	Child Right Act
CRC	Child Right Convention
DEVAW	Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FIN	Females in Nigeria
FNWS	Federation of Nigerian Women Society
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GAD	Gender and Development
GADA	Gender and Development Action
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HR	Human Rights
GPI	Girls Power Initiative
IAC	Inter-African Committee
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and People's Rights
ICESCR	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



ICT	Information Communication Technology
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
KIND	Kudirat Initiative for Democracy
NDHS	National Development Health and Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NGP	Nigerian Gender Policy
NPW	Nigerian Policy on Women
NNCWD	National Committee on Women Development
NLC	Nigerian Labor Congress
NFF	Nigerian Feminist Forum
NWU	Nigerian Women Union
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
SCGA	Strategic Country Gender Assessment
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific Children Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAW	Violence against Women
WARDC	Women's Advocate Research and Documentation Center
WIN	Women in Nigeria
WID	Women in Development
WB	World Bank
WISCORD	Widening Scope for Rights and Development

“A woman with a voice is, by definition a strong woman”- **Melinda Gates**

“Today’s girls are tomorrow’s women leaders”- **Isabel Allende**

“Equality will be achieved when men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect”- **Beyonce Knowles**

“Let us unite for women and girls and demonstrate a United Nations that lives up to our ideals of equal rights of men and women, of human rights and dignity for all”- **Michelle Bachelet**

“The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are, imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn’t have the weight of gender expectations”- **Chimamanda Adiche**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of study**

In order for equality between men and women to be achieved, there must be a broad understanding of how women experience discrimination so that strategies and methods can be developed to stop this. Equality here means the equal participation and representation of women when compared to men. The United Nations (UN) as well as several international organizations, non-governmental and women organizations have since been involved in addressing women's human rights and have made notable progress and impacts but have also been greatly hindered by the domestic obstacles in the Nigerian society like the aspect of religion and Sharia law, long standing traditions and culture, illiteracy, corruption and poverty.

Women are seen as the back bone of a home as well as a nation. Every being on earth is born from a woman yet women go through unbelievable problems in the society, ranging from trafficking to gender issues to health issues to domestic violence to employment to education, the list is endless. A nation's best interest is determined by the women's worth and dignity, it is therefore appalling that women go through a lot of maltreatment from the society in which they bore. It is also expected that even as we inculcate the idea of fairness in our homes, it should also be fostered in the world at large by handling the rate of discrimination on African women. The basis of societal problems on African women comes from gender, therefore this work will be surrounded around gender inequality and the problems that arise from it. Feminist IR and gender and IR have established how essential gender is to IR. They are of the opinion that gender should not be observed in a biological or instinctual setting but as a social construct that blames society and culture for shaping gender roles based on the sex of a person and also that the difference between a male and female aside the anatomical differences were simply constructed from cultural training and socialization. The seriousness

of gender issues in Africa at large has gained the attention of academics and makers of policy world-wide, including scholars from different fields and backgrounds like political science, sociology, international relations, amongst others. The most distinctive issues on gender and human rights of women are discrimination, inequality, violence, practices that harm the health, mind and body of women, practices that humiliate and degrade widowhood, trafficking, sexual abuses and child marriages. However some organisations like United Nations (UN), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Centre for Gender and Social Development (ACGS) in United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the organization on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Labour Organization (ILO), the African Union (AU) and many others have been involved in handling these issues and have contributed a lot in Africa towards women issues. This is evident in the UN Charter that broadly states the reaffirmation of fundamental and equal rights of a human being, freedom without discrimination based on race, sex, religion, language or even educational qualification. The United Nations as well as the African Union and the different bodies under them highlighted in this thesis were focused on because they are the most active organizations that have participated in matters of gender inequality and have different treaties and regulations concerning this.

The goal of gender equality is transformation and just like every process of change, it may encounter challenges in form of interest of individuals, groups or organisations; the main argument in this research is that even though international organisations are involved in the elimination of discrimination against Nigerian women, there are still some major obstacles that interrupt and slow down their efforts and process and these obstacles are more domestic than international because they are rooted in religion, tradition, corruption, poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and funding. Nigeria has a pluralistic legal system consisting of English law, customary law, Islamic (Sharia law)

and Statutory law. The Customary law is common in the Southern part while the Islamic Sharia law is widely common in many Northern states like Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Yobe, Jigawa and Borno. The controversy between the secularism provision of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution and the Sharia law is another major issue that interferes with curbing issues like child marriage. The Sharia law guides the lives of Muslims as their complete way of life and protects them from being exploited by the government. It stands on section 275 of the Constitution that allows states to make their own laws and courts if need be but it also violates the Nigeria Constitution in Section 10 which states that “no state shall own any religion”, as well as section 38; right to freedom of thought, religion, conscience, belief, worship and practice. Thus, findings of this study will show that if the Constitution of Nigeria is properly reviewed and these domestic problems can be tackled, the efforts of international organisations will have a meaningful impact on the women’s lives and by so doing drastically reduce the rate of discrimination and gender inequality on Nigerian women.

The theoretical framework of this work is the Feminist theory which buttresses the message in this research work, it takes a feminist liberal stand where women should be allowed to make their own decisions and are against societies belief that women are by nature less physically and intellectually capable. According to World Health Organization (WHO), women face health issues that distort their reproduction, they face violence in their homes and are forced to undergo practices that put their lives in extreme danger like FGM and all this contribute to the mental health of a woman (WHO, 2015). The UN also defines the health of a woman as the condition to which a nation gets its social and economic development especially in Africa. The UN has also organised and collaborated with many NGOs in the past five decades to have conferences and conventions, a notable declaration is that of the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on improving the status of women throughout the world. Even with all of this, there is still great worry over the current situation of women in

sub-Saharan Africa. Feminist scholars, gender groups and policy makers remain undoubtedly concerned about this and leaves a nagging question as to why women are still misrepresented.

This study was specially thought of because of a friend from college who was forcefully circumcised by her father with reasons of curbing sexual urge. It was an eye opening occurrence on the issues women go through right from when they are minors and these issues are just not talked about enough yet they are increasing every day. Especially in Africa, women are dying in silence. Africa women have no time for relaxation, this started way back from the time of our fore fathers who saw women good for nothing else but making babies and staying in the kitchen. There was the belief that if women brought the finances, men will lack the respect they deserve. This was how some form of oppression and exploitation started for women (Rojas, 1990) and women became less educated than men and least recognised in the economy. Little has changed now due to development and technology but most African countries are lacking behind terribly and have refused to let go of some barbaric traditions and culture that limits women.

Today, the Nigerian society is carved in a biased way that portrays women as the weaker vessels and depicts them as inferior without considering their capabilities. It is evident that Nigerian women are growingly segregated from progressing in their career life and all this is due to societal and cultural obstacles that obstructs and frustrates their participation. Aligned with the principles of humanity, women's rights have greatly been trampled upon resulting to negative effects on the living standards of an average Nigerian woman. As earlier mentioned, the issue of gender inequality has attracted so many international organisations, with regards to this work, special focus will be on their efforts, contributions as well as the obstacles that interrupt and obstruct their progress. This thesis does not aim to belittle the importance of men in the society nor is it a proposal for formulation of policies, but to add to already existing works on gender and for the government of Nigeria in

conjunctions with international and domestic bodies to create social institutions that encourage the proactive participation of Nigerian women in order to aid and improve the development of the country.

**One may ask, “why International Relations (IR)?”**

This thesis is planned for the audience to be IR- oriented, even though IR has not exactly taken advantage of its broad nature and has been nowhere near spontaneous. The focus of IR has been on issues concerning war, conflict and politics, but recently societal problems like rape, gender gap in employment and education, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriages have been brought to the fore front through the rise of feminist IR which has shown that IR is a useful field to analyse these issues because it gives an international context.

The focus is on the women of Africa and the problems they face in the society, even so, it is difficult to evaluate the entire African countries, so this research is focused on Nigeria. The author was curious to discover what extent international organisations have gone to curb the aspect of gender inequality and what impacts their efforts have made, also what limited Nigerian women from standing up to their rights, why they won't have a say on what happens to their bodies, so this thesis will show how far international organisations have gone to curb these problems, the obstacles that hinders them, what still needs to be done, what policies have been put in place by these organisations in order to help the situation of women. Through this, this study will add to other related researches to prove that with the help of education, awareness, empowerment and intervention from both domestic and international organisations, women will and can be free from these situations (Coquery- Vidrovitch, 1997).

**Statement of Research Problem**

Since the early days, women in African countries have always been seen as secondary and for the home only, disregarded and not given a place in the



society that is highly dominated by men, they sacrifice their dreams for male children to get proper education. The problems to be addressed in this thesis are the issues Nigerian women experience that deprives them from functioning in a society and to what extent international organisations have and can still go to subdue these problems, additionally the difficulties that these organisations encounter while at it. The case of domestic violence, rape, human rights violation, gender inequality, child marriages and education have become paramount in the society and African women are subjected to a lot of this without being able to speak out, whereas women generally hold the bridges together but are hardly commended for it. Although several women organisations like the Women in Development (WID), Female In Nigeria (FIN) as well as various international organisations like United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and many others have invested a lot of efforts in protecting women's human right, the Nigerian women still experience constraints that hinder upon their right to enjoy human rights (Nuwakora, 2016).

Being a patriarchal society, cultural beliefs about gender differences have tagged women as followers and automatically assumed men the leadership roles. Because of fear of losing tradition, women become stuck with this beliefs (Goslin and Kluka, 2014), leaving them marginalized and limited, subjecting them to several forms of discrimination and inequalities. There comes a need for international organisations to overcome the religious, traditional and cultural constraints that limit them from intensifying their aids and help in order to get these women empowered and aware of their rights as human beings.

### **Objectives of the Study**

It is important to note that issues of gender inequality are deeply connected with all cultures; hence Nigeria is used as the major focus since it is the most populous nation in Africa. This thesis seeks to add up to existing evidence and to motivate women in general to be more active and also to challenge the government and international organisations to increase the percentage of Nigerian women that engage in activities by promoting gender equality in all aspects of the country. So this thesis will aim at:

- i. To show the extent international organizations under the United Nations and African Union have gone to curb gender inequality.
- ii. To show that gender inequality has a damaging effect on Nigerian women.
- iii. To show that the Nigerian Gender Policy through empowerment can have a positive impact on women.

### **Research Questions**

- i. To what extent have international organizations under United Nations and African union gone to curb gender inequality?
- ii. What effect does gender inequality have on Nigerian women?
- iii. How can the Nigerian Gender Policy and empowerment foster gender equality?

### **Significance of the Study**

In spite of the works of international organisations, this aspect of societal problems has been a hard nut to crack considering the magnitude of the problems. This research will be useful to the IR audience, students, international organisations, policy makers, men as well as women. From this work the IR audience will pay close attention to similar issues and their

environment at large. For students, it would be a great contribution to expanding their knowledge on these societal problems and even international organisations role in all of this. This work will give enable in- depth understanding of gender roles and the limitations of a Nigerian woman thereby aiding international organizations on how to deal with this obstacles hindering upon their efforts and good intentions towards ending gender discrimination. From the contributions of this work, the Nigerian policy makers will have the opportunity to identify essential factors necessary but not properly addressed in the issues of discrimination against Nigerian women and inequality. The focus of this study on Nigeria is aimed at generating new findings on the social phenomenon taking place in Nigerian communities as regards to gender inequality, these new findings will contribute to already existing works on Nigerian women and their lack of active participation in the society due to several barriers.

### **Research Methodology**

In order to achieve the aim of this research, the study used qualitative research method because it gives more room for manifestation and understanding with the aim of achieving an in-depth work (Letherby, 2003). It uses Nigerian women as case study and examines the areas in which these women are limited and what efforts international organizations have made to solve these situations. The selection of case is based on the fact that Nigeria is the most populous African country which experiences these issues greatly, Nigeria is now one of the poorest countries in the world experiencing harmful traditional practices and cultural norms that keep women restricted thereby slowing down the development of the country due to its patriarchal ways. Furthermore because of the researcher's curiosity to learn more about the reality of these situations, the researcher used secondary sources of data like videos of interviews which qualitative research permits (Thagard, 1998). Alongside views from some novels based on feminism, for example "The Color Purple" by Alice Walker (1982) were also used. Such sources are of

importance to this work because it explains how such events can turn into memory and give long term effects. The researcher relied primarily on articles, journals, news briefs, press releases, websites of international organizations, publications and statements from NGO's, humanitarian organizations, governmental websites, United Nations documents, human rights, literature reviews of research on women and gender issues, newspapers, internet pages, documents gotten from activists of women's right and even some African Nigerian movies which focuses on girl child marriage (child not bride, Wives on strike, Dry). Although qualitative research method allows only for a researcher to draw conclusions based on information gotten from a group which means that the work is influenced by subject influence of both the researcher and the researched and by so doing giving limited means of generalisation (Letherby, 2003). Different researchers may give different meanings to same questions but in order to avoid bias at any point, this research made use of several documents and different views, hence any source will be considered as valid. All this helped to reach conclusions for this research.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This work is limited to Nigerian women and the problems they experience due to gender-gap. It focuses on international organisation's activities in Nigeria and this work takes a feminist Liberal stand that says women should be treated as equals in all ramifications. Several organisations are involved directly with women but the researcher could only get second hand information from websites and materials because the researcher could not meet with victims directly but the researcher was able to access United Nations website and have online interaction with some human rights activists and non-governmental organization members. The researcher also had access to newspapers and views from friends who also walk the line of activist of human rights and who are also based in Nigeria since the researcher was unable to travel down there personally.

**Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of an introductory section and three chapters. The introductory section gives a general background of the study, explains the statement of the research problem, research objectives, research questions and the significance of study, the research methodology, scope and limitations and the definition of terms. The chapter one goes deeper into the review of related literature, the theoretical framework which consists of the emergence of feminism through the third debate, the feminist theory, African women particularly Nigerian women and how feminism started in Nigeria. It also identified the liberal feminism as the most preferred feminist theory which supports the decision on the topic of this research. The chapter two focuses on International organisations and policy reforms to handle these gender issues on Nigerian women and the challenges they face while at it, as well as how empowerment has fostered the reduction of gender inequality among Nigerian women. The chapter three focuses on Nigerian women and the different sectors in which they are marginalized i.e. political involvement, economic participation, educational attainment, health and wellbeing of the Nigerian women. The concluding part of this thesis gives a summary and conclusion of the entire work.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **1.1 Literature Review**

In recent times the issue of gender has become a paramount discussion among scholars from different academic background, of particular interest is the issue of gender (in) equality or disparity that exist between men and women, as well as discrimination against girl child and women in general. This discussion is not limited to the above mentioned only but also involves the different approaches and areas of interest by several organizations and programs put in by different institutions regarding the subject matter. For the purpose of this study, we look at different theoretical schools of thought (the liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist, post-modernist and critical feminism). All these schools of thought are important and broaden the understanding of gender equality and discrimination against women including ways to tackle them but this work takes a feminist liberal stand because it best explains the situation of oppressed women and emphasizes on their inclusion and ability to take full responsibilities if their decisions and actions.

A society needs women to be economically, socially and politically enlightened in order for the society to develop, because through sexism, women get oppressed (Robin, 2002). Unless international organisations discover methods to completely eradicate sexism, racism, exploitation and

the likes, gender discrimination will not stop. These issues have made women to be seen as social animals and are deprived from communication and reach of money or leisure in the society; this according to Eisenheuer, (2002) is unacceptable. Historically, biology has been blamed for the difference between male and female, in modern days, feminist use the term "gender", not particularly referring to biology teachings but to the characteristics in which society has classified masculinity and femininity. To be female or male definitely entails different things as regards to each culture, in most cultures; difference in gender depicts a form of inequality and oppression of women by men.

The first Charter of the United Nations in 1945 created provision for equality between sexes, between 1945 and 1975, international organizations made efforts to turn these prospects to actions by encouraging government and civil societies in all nations. The United Nations Assembly also made the year 1975 the International Women's year under resolution 3010. By December 1975, another resolution was passed as resolution 31/136, to make year 1976-1985 the Decade for Women. Subsequently there was the first world conference on women in Mexico in 1975 which led to the Declaration of women and how they contributed towards peace and development. Thereafter was the second world conference on women in Copenhagen in 1980, which noted the rights of women to be recognised and acknowledged their rights to education, health care and employment in order to reach the goals of the first women world conference. The third world conference on women was in 1985 in Nairobi, it focused on women's social and political participation, decision making as well as constitutional and legal measures, with the notion that women should be included in all sectors of human activity. The fourth world conference on women was in Beijing in 1995, this conference started the major move to stop different types of discrimination on women and fostered the promotion of women's rights and gender equality, development and empowerment (Beijing, 2005). The conference produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for women's advancement. It focused on

several areas concerning women's health, human rights, violence, poverty, education, environment and economy. The Beijing conference stated that rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancies, sterilisation, forced abortion and forced contraceptives all fall into the category of violation of women's right. It transformed women's activism on a global level and is reviewed every five years but still no country has completed the agenda as women still come under men in virtually all aspects of life. Alongside this, religion and culture have blinded the eyes of people and without bias, international organisations should be attentive to these difficult but true realities which turn women to slaves because no political, religious or philosophical reasons should justify the violation in the global world. Although there has been a reduction on these violence on women in the past two decades, there seems to be a lot of hidden occurrences in Africa due to culture, patriarchy system and stigma that comes with these female victims. This makes them stay quiet as the authorities tend to treat these issues as private, thereby preventing policy makers from making proper policy reforms and offer guidance to the affected people because only with proper information can the appropriate bodies increase social awareness and make sure nations are doing the needful to stop these societal problems.

The struggle of women's handling of discrimination and violence in Nigeria has been recorded since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When analysing the role of women in Nigeria's struggle for freedom in the pre- colonial period, it is best to look at it from the economic, political and social aspects that they engage in at that time. During the pre- colonial time, Nigerian women were active in both the public and private sectors and were in close reach of the resources they needed, except those women from the Northern part of Nigeria who were restricted due to their use of Islamic Purdah, but they still had a major part in the socio- political landscape of the region. Nigerian women tend to be the most hardworking in the country but still require the validation of their husbands or fathers status in order to be significant in social aspects (Amadi, 1982; Alemika and Ogugay, 2001).



UN former secretary-General Buotros- Ghali has emphasized the need to properly look into the causes of these societal problems and stressed the need for the cooperation between governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Buotros- Ghali, 1992). Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, (2002) stated that, special attention should be given to women's right because the issues of discrimination is on a rapid increase. Raven- Roberts, (2005) states that, women and men should have the same atmosphere for participation to take place as most developing countries have men in higher standings and society participation than women (UNRISD, 2005) which has made many women interested in bringing change and has given rise to several women organisations in the world, although they may all have different goals but one common thing is the fact that they want an improvement in women's position in the society and rights (Haynes, 1997).

NGO's are important in helping with opportunities for empowerment and participation (Baranyi, 1998). They are seen as relevant participants of development because they go through intervention programs to secure human rights (Hyndman, 1998). To participate means to take control instead of just being there physically. Women should be allowed to participate and make decisions (Riano, 1994) and increase empowerment. Empowerment means to equip individuals and allow them have or hold positions and make decisions in the society at large (Haynes, 1997), only with this is change possible (Riano, 1994) and in turn lead to development in Africa. The health of a woman is of paramount importance but challenge of mental health and violence has taken over developing African countries (Life course, WHO, 2015). African women make up for about 50% of human resource in the continent.

According to Schwarts, (1992), as women increase in the work force, the family or home no longer has a solid support. There has been increase on women in the participation of employment; on the contrary, men have not increased their participation in the house work (Evertsson and Nermo, 2004).

Even employed women still get home to do some work. Gender is as much an economic issue as it is a social issue and it is more in Africa than anywhere else (UNDP, 1995). National statistics may not give accurate documentation of the inequality rate that exist between men and women but many agree that women are disadvantaged compared to men (Quisumbing Haddad and Pena, 2001). The female gender in Africa are subjected to different forms of inequality in the aspect of education, inheritance, discrimination in employment, violence both at home and work place, politics and this greatly affects their ability to function in the society. Women will rather channel money to schooling, children well-being, anti-poverty issues, so therefore it is important for empowerment of women to be fostered.

Quite a number of organisations and international organisations have maintained consistency in working towards gender quality and issues that have hindered women from functioning in the society. But ever since Nigeria gained her independence, the country has failed to keep the promise of fair political participation of women, all the international agreements that Nigeria got involved in has not been kept and the actual laws meant to protect the rights of women and keep them away from injustice are still not being used. Tina Wallace, (1991) says that the equality of men and women was brought out by the UN Charter in 1945 which narrowed UN's major aim to achieving international cooperation by promoting human rights and freedom without favouring race or sex; this was evident in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Rights are seen as universal and apply to all human beings, the Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) says that "all human beings are born and meant to be free in equality, dignity and rights". UN and its other organisations have taken special interest in the issues that concern women. One third of women go through violence in relationships and just about 76% of girls attend primary school (Ibid). Right from 1950's and 1960's, women issues have been of primary concern in the sector of human rights. In 1975, women's issues became topmost priority and it was declared "international women's year". The "Women in

Development” (WID) strategy was brought up in 1979 as a way to integrate women completely into development process with the main objective of increasing the inclusion of women in order to foster development. It views the exclusion of women from development process as a major problem and leans towards women inclusion as a solution to the problem (Beall, 1998). Women can be seen as resourceful and having them can improve development (Pietila and Elide, 1990). Feminist argue that “justice between sexes” should be introduced through fairness and equity (Reeds, 2005). The issues of women became paramount when feminists movement made it an international issue in 1960’s (Carbone and Lister, 2006). African women in developing countries have fostered the WID approach because they know it will do them a lot of good and help stop the problems they face in the society if they can achieve equality (Carbone and Lister, 2006). By empowering women and ensuring that there is equal representation in the society and in politics gives relevance to democracy value (Reeds, 2005). If women are as empowered as men, there will be political, economic, social, cultural and environmental security (UN, 1995).

International organisations like United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union (EU) have supported the idea of ensuring gender equality because only through this can the issues of rape, violence, health and so on be handled squarely. UN member states are bind together by Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to the target of development (Holland, 2008), through the addressing and eradication of these issues, poverty is reduced (Painter and Ulmer, 2002). Among the women human rights violation is the practice of FGM, which requires that some or every part of the female genitalia is removed, this practice is common in African countries, infringing in their rights and posing as a threat to their health (WHO, 2016). African women are still the least educated in the world, about 70% of women in

Nigeria, are illiterates (UNESCO, 1998, Conway and Bourque, 1993; Njeuma, 1993). If these women had proper health education, they would not be forced into such damaging practices (Tahereh et al, 2016). With proper education, the health and nutrition as well as cultural level of families will be improved because women will be able to make better decisions (Bah, 1998; Kurz and Prather, 1998; Egbo, 2002). UN got involved in this case since 1952 when the human rights brought it up. The health of girls is very important and child marriage has posed as a threat to their growth into adulthood. It is most common in poor African countries, it hinders or affects a girl psychologically, physically, mentally and even affect her child bearing stage. The outcome of this affects the individuals and the society as a whole. Child marriage is another form of depriving girl child from having proper education (Sherman, 2014). Nigeria has a very high rate of child marriage especially in the northern part. According to UNICEF, (2015), about 720 million women living in the world today were forced into marriage when they were children, which leads to a lot more issues. There has been a question of whether education has anything to do with child marriage or the end of it. Since 1990, both United Nation's Population Fund (UNFPA) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have been major partakers on health issues (UNFPA, 2013).

Religious, cultural and traditional factors have given rise to gender discrimination, in several traditional Nigerian societies; the woman should remain a wife, a mother and a house keeper and a wife is seen as the property of the husband because a certain amount of money is paid on the brides head (Amadi, 1982). The Nigerian society has been brainwashed into believing that these religious and cultural beliefs are the right and normal way of life, thereby obstructing the tendencies of being freed from the shackles of such beliefs when help is rendered from international organisations. Women from the northern part of Nigeria are of the notion that these international bodies want to turn them against tradition and culture so most of them tend to be adamant to help and empowerment and would rather remain loyal slaves

to these practices. This aroused the minds of feminists in Nigeria who believe that gender discrimination limits women and makes them less able to develop their actual potential (Eisenstein, 1991).

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

The essence of using theory is to give us an image about something and teach us how best to react towards it. It makes us feel the situation and turns raw information into understanding and explanations (Pfohl, 1985). There will be no point of having empirical findings if it does not have a theory backing it (Harrison, 2001). The theoretical framework part of a thesis is one of the most important parts, it helps to explain, predict and aids understanding of an existing issue and also goes further to challenge already existing knowledge by bringing new ideas to change a particular issue. It holds or supports a theory in a research while explaining the problem at hand. Through the theoretical framework, the researcher may not only describe an issue from observation but also may generalise the aspects.

Due to the interest of this thesis, Feminist theory is best appropriate. This theory will help point out the inadequacies and limitations that African women face due to gender gap. The aim of feminist theory is “freedom”, setting women free from the hooks of men and oppression, no woman is free until the reasons why she is oppressed are terminated. Women are caught under oppression meaning “to be pressed or bullied” and caught under barriers that restricts them from functioning normally in the society. They become sex tools, slaves, limited, and lack proper education, exposed to discrimination, harassment, pressure and total dependence. Oppression makes women confined by the orders in which they live under. Feminist theory shows an understanding and gives possible outcomes for the disparity caused by gender in education, employment, health and so on. This theory will further be linked to the various international organisations and their contributions as

well as laws and policies made on the issue of gender. There will be a broad explanation as to why females lack behind in quite a number of activities. This theory was chosen because it is believed to best capture the condition of African women better than any other theory. Before going into the Feminist theory, there will be a brief explanation on how it came about.

### **1.2.1 Gender, Feminism and the Third Debate**

By 1960, scholars of International Relations moved away from the narrow view of security and national interest and started dwelling into other theories in a bid to help solve problems and bring better decisions. They expanded their studies by 1970 as they began to question how power was decentralised in the international system. Feminist International Relations theory criticizes the traditional theoretical foundations of international politics. Feminist scholars say that feminism provides a deeper and more in-depth analysis that brings up issues that were not seen before. They see the world as more dynamic and as a set of socio- economic structures. Feminist focus on the foundations of institutions and how they affect the marginalized groups.

International relations theory has several schools of thought; realism, liberalism, Marxism and constructivism. Realism gave rise to the rest two schools of thoughts (Tickner, 2014). Realism states that there is always a struggle for power, liberalism takes the realist stand of anarchy but disagrees with the part that says there must be constant power struggle and also feels that that anarchy can be handled through cooperation (Haar, 2009). Constructivism on the other hand disagrees with realism completely. From the perspective of critical theory, constructivism says that international system and relations existing between states is due to “constructed” behaviour rather than inherent characteristics. They believe that international system acts based on its actors and not an already built on attitude. While

critical theorist focused on challenging the realist approach, feminists took a gendered analysis to IR and sought to start a debate on “finding the women” (Tickner, 2014 and Enloe, 2014). Feminist IR was developed in late 1980’s and early 1990’s (Tickner and Sjoberg, 2011) during the third debate. The “third debate” is the reason why feminism has come into the context of international relations, it then expanded and brought up questions about the “theory” of IR and the assumption that gender is not important to understand the world, feminist IR agree that states are gendered because the men have shaped state attitude and the international system (Peterson, 1992; Enloe, 2014; Tickner, 2014). With constant confusion as to what the discipline of IR should address, the early scholars of IR took more of a realist stand and were focused on war, its causes and bringing peace. This idea was displaced after the Second World War when things went beyond just war. The third debate went further and has opened up discussions on nature, knowledge and existence which opened ways for new theories. Feminist IR scholars tend to show that bringing awareness that involve women and making gendered analysis a major part of IR theory would help to handle the link between international affairs and economics in areas of poverty and the likes. From the earliest times, feminists have been all out to analyse the patriarchal and engendered structures of life. Contemporary feminist say that feminism should not be about a woman but about women including race, sex, class, culture and sexual orientation.

### **1.2.2 Feminist Theory and Gender in IR**

Many writers see Feminism as a concept and as a theory. As a “concept”, it involves the reduction of gender discrimination to ensure that women have rights that are respected. It ensures that women are lifted out of poverty and early marriage, it empowers them to be active in the society, allows them to have a decisive say about their pregnancy and education. It is a fight for

gender equality, religious tolerance, political freedom and security (Banks, 1986). As an “approach” that started in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, its main aim was overturning gender discrimination and violence on women (Evans, 1981). Feminist works are always based on “injustice or the unjust” (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). The definition of feminism depends on society, norms, values and experiences but the feminist idea is never an open or shut case (Letherby, 2003). Women’s personal experience comes in when describing feminism (Letherby, 2003). I hope that this thesis with the use of feminist theory can add to existing knowledge and aid the transformation of gendered injustice in the society. IR basically deals with issues concerning state, war, politics that matters brought up by feminism did not arise because it did not affect interstate relations. This thesis among few others intends to make the discipline of IR less gender-blind and more open to issues of feminism. Gender issues are deeply rooted in the mainstream concerns of IR. Gender is the ideological and material relations that exist between men and women as in masculine and feminine. Elisabeth Prugl (2004) says Gender depicts dispensing power in international system with basis on differences and peculiarity attached to different sexes in the society. Simply put, gender is the meaning, characteristics and interpretation given to both male and female to distinguish them in terms of duties, behaviours and attitudes. However women tend to be on the receiving end of this because of the excess responsibilities put on them as well as girl child. Some feminist like Judith (2007) argue that in terms of human rights, this burdens infringe on the fundamental human rights of women. Feminist argue that roles of men were seen as more important and satisfying than that of women, e. g. the man is the bread winner who provides and keeps the family surviving while the woman is a mere house keeper. These left the status of men and women unequal. According to feminist, it is better to reflect the personality traits of men and women rather than use it to justify unequal treatment. Since history can recall, there has been the idea that women possess emotional and sensitive traits as against the aggressive and objective nature of men,



this has been used to justify the subordination of women which is greatly condemned by feminists. They are of the notion that theories which focused on the particular status of women in terms of their natural characteristics were plain ideological and in support of unjust social order which perceived men more highly than women. Individuals created found themselves in situations where they had to adhere to the social pressure of gender-stereotypical behaviour. Now feminism no longer looked at gender from the sex role perspective but from the power relations aspects and how biological difference became linked with sociological "masculine and feminine" concept which affected equality.

Feminism, most times is seen from view point of equality or in equality. Most people define feminism as the freedom of women or the state where a woman is free to enjoy equal rights and privileges as men, a state of "no discrimination". Feminism covers a wide range of perspective and practices but this research will focus on the equality and discrimination aspect. Gender gives feminism its true identity and peculiarity. Feminism focuses on how gender can be constructed and transformed to liberate women, but it is also difficult in reality to remove gender from other aspects of identity, social inequality and experiences which are rooted in social class. As a political value system, it sees the empowerment and direction of women's lives as very important. Joan Scott (2007) defines gender as a "constitutive element that exists between sexes and a way depicting power tussle". The western ways has made us to understand gender is based on set of culturally binary differences, such as self-versus other, being subjective versus being objective. When the difference between men and women are no longer seen as natural phenomenon, then examining how relations of gender inequality are formed in different aspects of life can be ascertained. Contemporary feminism gives itself to gender equality as a social goal. Feminist are after a home where everyone has its independent space but at the same time giving room for interaction.

According to Cockburn (1998), IR is a discipline that does not involve many women. After the “third debate”, IR then gave room for questions about involvement of women by IR scholars to bring gender and feminism issues. Feminist urge that the definition of IR terms such as power which have naturally taken the line of men and masculinity should be given a more neutral definition that does not concentrate on physical strength or tussle, hence fight for a new definition that includes women experiences (Tickner, 1993). Social movement, social values, liberation of women, norms and so on are the basis of contemporary feminism (Withworth, 1997).

Practically all the approaches of feminism were prompted by the urge to dissect the main causes of gender inequality and also seek ways to end the oppression of women. It is easy to categorise the approaches of feminism according to how they see the causes of women’s oppression. We will look at different feminist approaches that will back up the message behind this thesis; Liberal feminists is an individualistic type of feminist theory which centres on women’s capacity to maintain equality through their own behaviour and decisions. It says that women are being eliminated from public spheres of modern, social, political and economic life so they fight against the legal restrictions on women’s movement, although the rest contemporary feminists believe that the discrimination of women is deeper than just legal restrictions but in the social, cultural and social structures and do not necessarily end up with legal restrictions. They also state that it is the individual’s knowledge that allows the idea of choices to suit him rationally. They are not against individuals doing what they deem fit so long as they respect the rights of others. Liberal feminist used this argument to counter the manner in which women were mistreated back the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Liberal feminists contend that society holds the false conviction that women are naturally less mentally and physically skilled than men. They work towards sexual equality by means of political and legal reform. Mary Wollstonecraft’s (1759-1797) “Vindication of the Rights of Woman” comes in to play here, where she stated that the achievement of

sexual equality depended not only on granting equal rights to women just as men but also having same educational and opportunities access in order for them to discover their full potentials. She also argued that the form of patriarchy is a type of slavery that could no longer be overlooked. Nigerian's renowned feminist, Chimamanda Adiche alongside Nigerian musician, Gift Uwame Eke and many other feminists around the world have advocated consistently for equal rights and equal opportunities and participation for women. Together with these individual feminists are international organisations and non- governmental organisations who strongly hold against abuse of women in any form and support the idea of empowerment to enable women act and participate in the economy and not just stay at home. According to Susan Wendell (1987), the commitments of liberal feminists is to be included in politics and granted equal opportunity which is important to the liberation of women. Liberal feminism says that, if Liberalism actually practices freedom, then women should not be discriminated, mistreated or excluded from participation on the basis of sex or gender. The contribution of Liberal feminism is to show how much modern society discriminates against women.

Some would like to say that Marxist feminism is a critique of liberal feminism. Marxist feminist refuse to agree that women are oppressed based on bias or ignorance but as a result of social, political and economic standing that capitalism is linked to, they blame "class" for the unequal treatments of women. Capitalism came from the split between work and home. This was illustrated in Frederick Engels' work "The origin of the family, private property and the state" (1884). The era before the industrial time never depicted women to work but expected men to provide the basic needs of life, when the industrial time started, and capitalism too, production then shifted from home to work place and women came to be seen as men's property, where even the ones who managed to achieve formal right were regarded as second class citizens. Marxists blame the sexual division of labour as the cause of inequality of women. Marxist feminism is of the view that with the right

campaign and contest, women rights can be restored in the world. They choose to see feminism from a stand point and say that the oppressed will understand the causes of oppression better than their oppressors, as such oppression based on gender is closely related to oppression based on class. Nigerian writer Omolara Ogundipe (1992) criticizes the oppression of women and blames it on the roles of women as wives in the view of numerous identities. She also says that the colonial structures have shaped and placed men at the top of the society and blames the acceptance of this patriarchy on African women themselves. Another Nigerian Marxist feminist is Patience Ozor, she is a Nigerian ladies' rights lobbyist and representative, and one of the pioneers of the Bring Back Our Girls development that was formed for the return of the abducted Chibok girls in Nigeria in 2014. She has been known as an unflinching feminist has worked in the field of mold, assembling, promoting and advertising, and subsided into corporate interchanges and government relations in 2010. In 2014, Ozor was in Washington, D.C., as one of 23 ladies on a U.S. State Department Global Women's Mentoring program. She has built up the Florence Ozor Foundation, a non-legislative, non-revenue driven promotion association concentrated on administration and the strengthening of ladies and young ladies in Nigeria. Ozor was a speaker at the "Political Empowerment of Women in Africa and in Europe" gathering in Brussels in September 2017, composed by the Global Progressive Forum. Also Ayesha Imam is a Nigerian Marxist feminist, a previous Chief of the Culture, Gender and Human Rights bureau of the United Nations Population Fund. She late turned into the facilitator of a BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, a human rights backing gathering was the planning secretary Women in Nigeria, a women's activist association situated in Zaria. In 1996, she helped to establish BAOBAB, a ladies' correct gathering that gives legitimate insurance to ladies who are charged under classified Sharia reformatory codes, standard or mainstream laws that includes ladies yet were built up without the thought of the interests of ladies. Such codes manages flagellating or stoning of women. As executive of

BAOBAB amid the presentation of Sharia, the association held workshops on examining how Muslim laws can be deciphered to help ladies' rights. In a 2003 meeting, Imam takes notes that not all laws associated with Sharia are from Qur'anic stanzas like the part of wife batter to the point of death as punishment for infidelity or theft.

Realist feminism is formed from a realism school of thought. It is based on rationality and state-centrism and is said to be an analysis tradition that stresses the imperative state/goal to define, establish and achieve personal, political, economic and social equality of sexes using power politics of national interest. Most feminist in this category are involved in politics and other political motivated post. These set of feminists are criticized for adding too much value to state in terms of international relations without clarifying how well the state is structured both politically and socially and giving less importance to individuals. A feminist theory should put into consideration the manner in which the state includes or excludes the citizens and how the state's domestic views affect policies. This is the major difference between liberal feminist and realist feminists. Nigerian realist feminists Judith Ameachi is the leader of the Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI) which crusades against HIV/AIDS, advocates the privileges of the ladies and kids, and advances sexual orientation value and Girl Child instruction. She propelled the Empowerment Support Initiative, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), on 16 October 2008.

Postmodernists criticize the middle ground of Marxist, they argue that getting an equal or unified representation of women in class, racial and cultural lines is impossible. Postmodernists feel that feminists are in danger of determining the true meaning of a woman because they judge from the western women's experience which they see as limiting and risk taking because then women just want to duplicate characteristics (Smith, 2001). Postmodern feminism criticizes liberals for seeing women as unified set. This argument has been on between postmodernists, black feminism and third world feminism, which

has led to the different differences between women in modern age (Squires, 1999), the development of black feminism has emphasized how white and middle class women were presented as the faces of feminist theories. According to postmodernists, the term “essentiality” is not properly understood; therefore it causes problems because it is highly exaggerated on clarity and stability of an individual and the social identity. The problem with this approach is that it can lead to political paralysis (Steans, 1998). It is also important that patriarchy and sexism are not handled as the only reason to oppression because it gives a false tail that all women experience oppression the same way (Thompson, 2002).

Critical feminism focuses on the fact that women are not represented enough in the area of development (Steans, 1998). This approach is criticized because it limits women only to how they appear in IR and not why they actually appear or what they contribute (Ibid). It is important to note that gender does not particularly refer to just men or women but also to the ideological and material relations that exist between them, which from history has been quite unequal. Critical feminism aims at empowering women as agents of knowledge not just adding them in political aspects as mere subjects. They also say that International organisations, institutions and actors have a major role at informing on gender issues through social forces and practices, therefore gender relations should be looked at in the view of inequalities based on social class or race and social factors. Feminist theories must look beyond just inputting women’s lives and experiences but also challenge the disciplines too. Feminism, both from the social and political aspect are linked or intertwined to the concept of power. According to Sylvester (2002), the understanding of gender and power is based on inequality. As a social movement, feminist goal is to put an end to unequal power existing between men and women by empowering women (Ibid). According to Hanna Arendt cited in Tickner (1992), power is the ability to act in concert. This states that power does not belong to one person but a group of people bond together (Squires, 1999). This view of Hannah Arendt

counters the traditional view of IR that links power to domination and force and in most cases zero-sum (Steans, 1998). This concept is more after “power with” instead of “power over”. This view of Hannah Arendt is quite interesting to me especially in the view of this thesis. The meaning of “empowerment” is giving people the opportunity to choices to which they have been denied of. Power has the ability to deny one of choices (Kabeer, 2003). Women need to be empowered to have them included. Constructivism on its own is a strike between rationalism and critical theory and is based on the importance of normative as well as material structure. A constructivist feminist is of the claim that important aspects of gender based inequality are constructed in historical and social manners rather than the inevitable consequences of human nature or other essential characteristics of world politics and look to break that norm. Most feminist in this claim always oppose the norm and tackle the structure of gender inequality society has established.

From the various feminist theories mentioned, this thesis leans towards liberal feminism because it emphasizes on the removal of restrictions placed on women in the various spheres of life and is of the belief that women should be allowed to make their own decisions, take responsibility for their actions and be given equal opportunity to participate and be represented just like men. It is however important to note that basing all works of inequality on liberal feminism alone may not be adequate enough due to the broad nature of the issue, therefore it is important to look beyond to possibly a critical angle.

### **1.3 Feminism in Africa with special focus on Nigeria**

Women are a key contribution to the growth of a country’s economy, so it is expected that they are treated not as secondary to men but as equal partners and participants. As the most populous African nation, Nigeria has

approximately 180 million citizens (CIA World Fact Book, 2015). Nigeria is made up of 36 states and vast multicultural regions, about 90% of the citizens are Hausa- Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo and Niger delta tribes surrounded around Christianity and Islamic religion, leaving about 10% to traditional worshipers (Metz et al, 1992). Due to the multi-cultural nature of the country, it is not surprising that every culture and ethnicity will have its own principles and preferences, hence some women from one part of the country may be treated completely different from the other parts. Although about 49% of the Nigerian population are women, they still lag in all aspects of life be it economically, socially, politically and even intellectually. At least one in every three Nigerian women have either been beaten, forced into sex, marriage or abused in one way or the other. Domestic violence, rape, deprivation and female genital mutilation are the most common sensitive occurrences that have limited Nigerian women. Many Nigerian women do not enjoy the benefits of gender equality that their fellow women of other western countries do. This is not to say that western women are leaving a perfect life but it is undeniably worthy of emulation. The true potential of the Nigerian society is not maximized due to converse and rigid traditions which leave women in oppression. The concept of division of labour has been centred on gender, hence it is considered a conspicuous element of a society (Wharton, 2005).

Nigeria became a mini industrialized society after independence (Nigerian Industrial Revolution Plan, 2014). Until the introduction of compulsory education in the 19th century, it was somewhat normal for every member of African families to work to add up to family's income (Lyonette, 2007). Lower class women now have to work to support husbands and this makes some men feel incapable. The perception of gender socialization is different, likewise in Nigeria. According to Agunbiade (2014), certain factors led to the rise in gender inequality in Nigeria, factors like: limitations on culture, cultural rites, religious practices, politics and a whole lot more which will be discussed extensively in the later part of this study. A major cause of gender inequality in Nigeria is the statutory discrimination on women in Nigeria since the



municipal law and rules of Nigeria points out a woman as a secondary citizen (Agunbiade, 2014). An example of this will be the section(26 (2) (a) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution which states that a Nigerian woman is not allowed to claim residency rights to her non-indigenous husband. The patriarchal nature of categorizing citizenship in Nigeria led to the inefficiency of the constitution on Nigerian spouses or foreign men married to Nigerian women (Agunbiade, 2014).

In terms of education, employment and property ownership, Nigeria is the 118<sup>th</sup> country out of 134 countries the index of gender equality (British Council report, 2012) due to the partial opportunities regarding gender and class ranks. An example of this will be regarding opportunities, it is important to note that Nigerian females amounting to 80.2 million have a distinct appalling life chance than in similar communities. A male child in Nigeria is expected to conquer all the odds and come out wealthy and influential while a female child is taught to long for marriage and child birth (Adichie, 2013). The Nigerian society prepare children to carry out roles as either masculine or feminine with different expectations as the case may be. The discrimination that exists has now penetrated the civil and military service as well as appointments of high standing are purposely for men (Alemika and Agugua, 2001).

The United Nations formed a Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW) stating misappropriate violent act directed to a woman simply because she is female. It also includes acts on treatments that cause physical, mental or sexual harm and deprivation of liberty. The aspect of violence against women is regarded as an international violation of human rights no matter the actual occurrence. Gender discrimination in Nigeria has been encouraged and even fuelled by cultural, traditional and religious factors, thereby hindering upon the active participation of women in a society. As a large country, one will expect the existence of several laws and rights of anti-discrimination guiding women, which actually exists just like the 1999

Constitution, but these laws are difficult to enforce due to the tripartite system of laws (statutory, customary and sharia) laws that exist in the constitution. Nigerian constitution guarantees every Nigerian the fundamental human rights to life, dignity, personal liberty and freedom from discrimination but women are treated more based on traditional approaches rather than actual constitutional rights.

The protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on African Women was adopted on 11 July 2003 by AU with the bid to strengthen the promotion and protection of women's rights. It has an article which states that all forms of discrimination on women should be abolished and acknowledges the role of women in development and gender equality. The protocol listed a long list of rights which Nigerian women are entitled to:

- Right to life, dignity, security, peaceful existence and participation in maintenance of peace.
- Right to freedom from harmful practices that negatively affect women human rights.
- Right to benefit equally of the law.
- Right to adequate housing and widow's right.
- Right to health including sexual and reproductive rights.
- Right to education.
- Right to participate actively in politics and decision making.
- Right to equal inheritance and so many more.

There was a time when Nigerian women actually enjoyed certain rights they lack now, they had rights to own property, make decision and even rule, but this was just before colonialism. By 1999, the National commission for

women was given the task of making sure that women's rights were protected and that marginalization was eradicated (Ako- Nai). Then the formation of the very first organization started and was named Women in Nigeria (WIN), this organization had a great impact in making sure that this goal was realized (Ronke).

The struggle of women in handling violence and discrimination in Nigeria since 19<sup>th</sup> Century were recorded and Nigerian women have played important parts in anti-colonial battles. The social modernisation and national independence struggle also gave rise to the beginning of movements by women. The status of women at grass root, regional and national level was improved because of women's involvement in political and social landscape. Feminism first came to Africa by non-governmental organisations in 1970's and brought the rise of educational impediment on African women and also challenged the domestic roles that stopped women from leaving their homes (Emiehi, 2013). Then it became popular in Nigeria when various attempts were made to secure women's equal opportunities and rights. The emergence of feminism in Nigeria came out of the elimination of factors that deprived them of enjoying their human rights. The culture of patriarchy, anarchy and male sexism made women feel belittled and prompted the sign for inclusion of women causing a new beginning for feminism which meant human rights, class struggle, peace, inclusion and equality. At the early stages, Feminism prompted negative suggestions and Nigerian women desist from being called feminists. This was due to the fear of social exclusion of anyone who bared the name. Also what was portrayed by particularised sections of the press who labelled feminism a group that hated men with frustrated and unlovable women (Azuike, 2003). Africa is a diverse and multicultural continent so bringing up feminism in Africa can be misrepresenting. But this is not exactly the case because Africa is made up of different countries with different beliefs and cultures, what affects a woman from Somalia many not necessarily affect a Nigerian woman. However when it comes to gender relations, women face similar issues all round the world

(Atanga, 2013). Nigeria is a large country having 36 multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious states, all this require different approaches to tackle similar issues that women face. Some African gender scholars argue that feminism did not come to Africa through western feminism because Africa is known for one of the oldest civilizations and patriarchies (Salami, 2013). Maybe the feminism is imported but the aspect of opposing patriarchy is not new because these women have always been in such communities and have been fighting it through motherhood, politics, religion and so on (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000). African feminism came through experiences and conditions that African women went through during colonial era, slavery and oppression (Norwood, 2013).

The term, African feminism is used to depict African women, but also extended to African women beyond the diaspora (Reed, 2001). Feminism in Nigeria started with the rapid demand to improve the quality of Nigerian women's lives. There was active involvement of women in the pre-colonial and colonial eras as they took part in several movements even though they were not labelled with any names then. Women's liberation in Nigeria developed out of the need for them to be enhanced and remove incapacitating components that deny them of exercising their human rights. Truly Nigerian women are confronted with a range of issues hindering their progress. The way of life of men who controlled society as well as political agitation which has undermined the privileges of women resulting to minimization in issues of advancement. The breakdown of Nigerian women's role in the struggle for freedom during pre-colonial era is linked with social, economic and political activities that they focused on. Nigerian women took part in private and public sphere effectively and had access to assets, except in the northern side of the country involving basically Hausa-Fulani who were restricted due to the Islamic Prudah. Even with this, they established a solid connection with the political sector. Prominent women declared their rights and began their own women's activist developments. A notable woman was Zazzau's Queen Amina in 1576 who turned into a great leader of the Hausa

city of Northern Nigeria, labelled a fighter, she headed movements in months of being a ruler.

In the Southern part Nigeria, both in the old and new Oyo, the Oba, known as the Alaafin, built up a profoundly concentrated royal residence and women assumed different essential palace duties. The wives of the king were generally called ayaba, although had different positions. Sex separation was progressively articulated in different social orders in the south which made women form different groups. In Igbo and Ibibio land, women had control over their own undertakings and were politically in control based on combined quality. If these female organizations were absent, just as Ijaw, Edo, Kalabari, Efik and Itsekiri, women of high status practiced power politically and collectively through the ruler mother of Benin City or through their close association with ruling men. However in the Riverine, Igbo and Yoruba areas, women of high standing had political power through their associations with delegates, for example Iyalode of Yoruba land. The wars in Yoruba land, well known as Kijiri war required unprecedented administrations from women and men, entailing women to meet people's high expectations and were remunerated with prominent political obligations. The close of this century started the succession of notable moments which negatively influenced the political role of women. During the Colonial period, both Igbo and Yoruba women of southern Nigeria assumed major political duties. Women belonged to organizations depending on their age, sex and kinship. Women could get themselves organized through the likes of market women associations to battle a problem together. The Colonial masters had formulated particular restrictions that debilitated the freedom of economic, social and political privileges of women which lowered their participation, although they were allowed to vote during the 1950's election in the south and north. The women's war of 1929, otherwise called the Aba women's riot in which Igbo women protested against the tax put on them by the British was a prominent way they used their conventional power against Colonialists. Women's association in Nigeria kept valuing the women and men interests,

as reflected by Nigerian women to request positions in political offices. The 1948 protest of Abeokuta women preceded the Aba riots by almost two decades. Women rebelled against the taxes colonialist put on them and expressed their disappointments towards traditional rulers to guard their interest by tackling colonial rulers. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, who was head teacher at Abeokuta Grammar school at that time found out about the struggle of the women and formed the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) where the advanced Abeokuta women participated in solidarity with the market women of Egba land to figure out how to stop the issue of tax. They were able to question the governance of the colonialists and later developed into a movement that became significant to independence of Nigeria. Additionally, through this improvement, women developed a stand in scrutinizing the efforts of existing policies on the status of women. They utilized the distinctive social conventions to compromise the authority in order to bring change to their lives, like in the Abeokuta protest, women went bare at the Oba's palace, which was an abomination in Yoruba land. This ended the reign of the Alake for that era. It was through the anti-colonial opposition battles that numerous women organizations on freedom, equality and empowerment started, for example the development of the National Women's Union (NWU), which was the first national women's organization formed in 1947 and also the first Nigerian women organisation covering all ethnicity, religions and class. The union had notable pioneers like Margaret Ekpo and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who formed political corner for Nigerian women through individual women organizations and roles in politics (Okeke and Franschet, 2002).

In 1950, before Nigeria's independence, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti together other activist battled for women's rights and the nation's freedom together with the pioneer fathers. Margaret Ekpo, also a strong defender of women's rights persevered in gender equality issues, speaking to women fearlessly. In the northern part of the Nigeria, great women like Gambo Sqwaba had notable effects in the struggle for women's right and periodically mobilized

women for political participation. She alongside Magaret Ekpo, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and driving political pioneers like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Malam Aminu Leano and others were at the apex of Nigerian's freedom from Great Britain (Faseke, 2015). In 1959, the National Council on Women's Societies (NCWS) was made the shield for women associations in Nigeria (Okeke and Franceshet, 2002). The National Women's Union (NWU) transformed to the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS) in 1953, through the FNWS, women were allowed to ask for political representation in legislative houses, although these organisations acted only within traditional boundaries (Strobel, 2001).

Since the beginning of post-colonial time, women's development in Nigeria have led several rallies although only in big states like Lagos. Organizations centred on their activities on women interest including sexual and reproductive rights, rape, domestic violence, child marriages, and sharia law against women. They have effectively conveyed the violence of women to the international and national sector. Women of Niger-Delta have been very outspoken in creating awareness on the dehumanization they face and have fought against multi-national oil companies and the Nigerian military controlling their territories through organizations like the Federation of Ogoni Women Association which started in mid-1990.

As the most populous African country, Nigeria has so many women organisations aiming to attend to women's right in both public and private sphere. Nigerian feminist have withstood the name callings and denouncement and have remained positive by focusing on their main aim towards human rights in Nigeria and Africa in general, today's Nigeria has various wives of ex-presidents, state governors and some human rights organisations develop committees to handle these issues which include, among others, Women In Nigeria (WIN), Alliances For Africa (AFA), Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), Girls Power Initiative (GPI), Widening Scope for Rights and Development

(WISCORD), Project Alert , Violence Against Women (VAW), The Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF). Despite all these, the goal is yet to fully manifest in contemporary Nigeria (Olayemi, 2016, The United Nation's 1995). The country is still deeply rooted in its traditions and cultures and somehow the Nigerian people feel indebted to these practices and face different discriminatory acts in politics, women register as members of political parties but are not allowed to actively participate in the activities (Fatile et al, 2012). Even the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian woman is at a disadvantaged end in terms of influence of tradition, religions and culture (Okunna, 2002). A typical Nigerian woman cannot stand on her own economically without the presence of a man, Nigerian women battle illiteracy, self-esteem issues, poverty, dependency, lack of education and so on.

In recent times, women are beginning to see the need for their freedom from cultural and traditional practices led by males. Western feminism focused on sexual freedom while Africa deals with hunger, oppression, diseases, forced and child marriages, female genital mutilation, violence, widowhood and many more which will be discussed in the next chapter (Simon& Obeten, 2013). Books like Buchi Emecheta's "Destination Biafra" and "Go tell it to women" by Tess Onweme, a renowned feminist, depicts feminism and gender relations as city women not exactly understand the struggle of a rural Nigerian woman. According to Jekayinfa (2001), gender in Nigeria consists of a wide gap between female's unrecognised but high economic participation and their low participation and social involvement.

Nigerian Feminist and author Chimamanda Adiche, (2013) argues that the Nigerian woman is not given the opportunity to be as successful as men, in a statement that caused a lot of controversy on who the female Nigerian truly is:

*"We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be*



*successful, but not too successful, otherwise you would threaten the man. If you are the bread winner in your relationship with a man, you have to pretend that you're not. Especially in public. Otherwise you will emasculate him"* (Vialogue, 2013).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, GENDER EQUALITY AND NIGERIAN GENDER POLICY**

The commitments and effects of the United Nations on gender both globally, in Africa and in Nigeria specifically cannot be over emphasized starting with the preamble of the UN Charter where it expressly states its focus on reaffirming confidence in human rights and dignity of women and men equally. The UN has many specialized organizations and agencies for the purpose of gender as well as laws as it is a major factor in the development of international laws including treaties, resolutions and declarations on gender. This chapter will give an insight on laws that exist in order to curb gender inequality in Nigeria. It will also explain the Nigerian Gender Policy implementation process as well as the contribution of international organizations to empower Nigerian women and the challenges they face while at it.

#### **2.1 United Nations and International Laws on Gender**

The issue of gender inequality is expected to be at the fore front of things to be handled by international organizations. The effects of UN on gender issues both globally and in Nigeria cannot be over exaggerated, from the charter of the UN where it expressly states its commitment to sustain the hope in fundamental human rights and the worth and dignity of every being and equality of women and men in every nation, whether developed or not. The UN has created several organizations and agencies particularly for the purpose of gender, alongside conferences and conventions to enlighten people on these issues. The UN stands as a major factor in obtaining development of law, declarations and other aids on gender, so its commitment towards the improvement of gender equality, elimination of

violence on women and non-discrimination cannot be doubted. The values of UN are to ensure equality of men and women by eliminating all forms of discrimination that hinder women's fundamental rights. Since the adoption and proclamation of equal entitlement between men and women by the 1948 Universal Declaration of human rights, there was conscious use of the term "all men" and "all women" (i.e.) not excluding anyone despite sex or race.

The commission on human rights drew up arrangements on governmental issues, economy, and social rights which all make up for the worldwide human rights bill. A portion of the striking help the UN has given on this issue of correspondence and oppression of women is clear in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all types of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is a universal settlement embraced in 1979 by the General Assembly of the United Nations as a worldwide bill of rights for women, it was initiated on September 3 1981 and 189 states have confirmed it. More than fifty nations have approved the convention but the United States and Palau have not confirmed the arrangement. Nigeria signed this convention just in 2015. The Convention gives the premise to acknowledging equity among women and men through equal access to, and approach openings in, political and open life - including the directly to cast a ballot and to represent race - just as training, wellbeing and business. States parties consent to take every single fitting measure, including enactment and brief uncommon measures, with the goal that women can appreciate all their human rights and basic opportunities. The Convention is the main human rights settlement which attests the regenerative privileges of women and targets culture and custom as persuasive powers molding sexual orientation jobs and family relations. States parties additionally consent to take fitting measures against all types of traffic and misuse of women. The October 2010 commemoration of Resolution 1325 featured the expanding interest for responsibility to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Many communicated worry on the low representation of women amounting to just 22 Member States out of 192. This prompted the need to utilize outside

lawful components to reinforce the execution of SCR 1325, especially Convention on Elimination and Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The SCR 1325, CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security are imperative worldwide instruments utilized to upgrade their execution and effect. Goals 1325 and 1820 widen the extent of CEDAW application by illuminating its pertinence to all gatherings in struggle, while CEDAW gives concrete vital direction to moves to be made on the expansive responsibilities sketched out in the two Resolutions. CEDAW is a worldwide human rights arrangement that ought to be fused into national law as the most noteworthy standard for women's rights. It requires the UN Member States that have sanctioned it to set up instruments to completely understand the rights of women. Goals 1325 is a global law consistently embraced by the Security Council that commands the UN Member States to connect with women by guaranteeing women's interest on all dimensions of decision-making on harmony and security issues. Goals 1325 and 1820 and CEDAW have the following aim towards women's human rights and gender equality:

- i. To demand the participation of women in all levels of decision making.
- ii. The disapproval of violent actions on women as it distorts women's advancement and puts them in subordinate positions.
- iii. Equality of women and men under the law and ensuring the protection of women through the rule of law.
- iv. Protection of women and girls from gender-based violence.
- v. Including experiences, needs and perspectives of women into the political, legal and social decisions that determine the achievement of just and lasting peace.

A General Comment from the CEDAW board of trustees could fortify women's promotion for the full execution of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 at

the nation and network levels. Alternately, CEDAW's importance to struggle influenced regions will be underscored further by the two Resolutions. As it were, every one of the three global instruments will fortify one another and be considerably more viable whenever utilized together in utilizing women's human rights.

The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) is a mainland court built up by African nations to guarantee the insurance of human and people groups' rights in Africa. It supplements, strengthens and supports the elements in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. It was built up by excellence of Article 1 of the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, which the Member States of the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) received in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in June 1998. The Protocol came started on January 25 2004. Just eight out of of the thirty States Parties of the Protocol made efforts making the Court to get cases from NGOs and people. Nigeria falls under these 30 states. The Court has ward over all cases and debate submitted to it on the translation and utilization of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Protocol and some other important human rights instrument sanctioned by the States concerned. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) is the principle lawful instrument for the insurance of the privileges of women in Africa. Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol ensures women's entitlement to wellbeing, including sexual and conceptive wellbeing. Womens's rights to sexual and regenerative wellbeing include directly controlling their wealth, choosing the number of and the separating of their children, picking any technique for contraception, and having access to family planning. Under Article 14 (2) (c) of the Maputo Protocol, State Parties are called upon to take every proper measure to ensure the regenerative privileges of women by approving restorative premature birth in instances of rape, assault, inbreeding, and where the proceeded with pregnancy imperils the psychological and physical strength of

the mother or the life of the mother or the child. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights respects the confirmation of this vital instrument by most of AU Member States. In any case, the African Commission takes note that numerous nations are yet to embrace the vital administrative changes towards taming the important arrangements, incorporating into the region of women's sexual and conceptive rights. This commitment forces them to build up a national general wellbeing plan with thorough sexual and conceptive wellbeing administrations, conventions, rules and norms that are reliable with current proof based measures set up by WHO and States. Example of these will be the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on Children's Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All types of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as other specialized agencies like the Commission on the Status of Women, Violence against Women (VAW), Project Alert, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which is now UN women and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). All these state that discrimination is a crime that infringes on the dignity of a human and expressly orders that all forms and practices that encourage this be abolished. Regionally, in addition to international human rights rules, the inclusion of provisions for the promotion of women's rights is also added and in 1981, the African Charter on human rights was adopted by the African Union (AU), article 2 of this firmly stops discrimination of any kind and mentions the obligations of African states to make sure of the protection of human rights of women and girl child as stated by international declarations. There have been several international women conferences that have had positive impacts on equality, starting with the international women's year in 1975 in Mexico which led to the United Nations Decade for women between 1975-1985, then to the international conference on women in Copenhagen and the convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women which was held in Nairobi. All this conferences laid the foundation for

the most talked about Beijing World conference on women in 1995 and of course the recent conferences held in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Africa and particularly Nigeria towards curbing discrimination and reaching equality between men and women. These conferences include the Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND) which held on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2017, the 2017 Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) conference held on March 8 to mark the International Women's Day and the United Nations Women in conjunction with European Union conference held on August 9 2018. In addition to this, there is the International Plans of Action on Ageing in Vienna, 1982, it was called the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, and it focused on marginalized women like the aged or disabled women. These conferences were held to emphasize that rights of women are international issues under the stand that "women's rights are Human rights". With regards to violence against women, civil societies brought to light the issues which were previously treated as private issues due to tradition or respect for male counterparts. Majority of these conferences turned out successful in proving that rights of women and girls are an inseparable part of universal human rights and should be treated as such.

Another notable conference was the International conference on population and development, population meaning people; this was a major turning point for women's rights. It includes gender equality, reproductive health, family, birth control and family planning, education of females and health of females. The program states that by ensuring the effectiveness of all this creates an avenue for steady development. The Millennium Development Goals in year 2000 also included gender equality, education and empowerment of women and reduction of maternal mortality. This development focused more on education, while education is needed to reduce gender inequality, the actual issues of violence and discrimination were not addressed. The millennium development also focused on maternal mortality between 1990 to 2015 but by 2010, it was noted that this was the most unrealistic and unachieved plan, thereby leading the Secretary General to start a global strategy for women

and child's health and stating actions to improve the health of women and children worldwide.

Likewise, The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was another activity by the United Nations as per worldwide laws on sexual orientation and added to the shaping of CEDAW. The ICCPR is a bargain which was received by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16 1966, and started on March 23 1976. Article 49 of the ICCPR permitted that the contract takes effect three months after the approval date. The pledge submits its gatherings to regard the common and political privileges of people, including the directly to life, opportunity of religion, the right to speak freely, opportunity of get together, rights to appointment as well as fair treatment. As of August 2017, the Convention had hosted 172 gatherings. The ICCPR is a human rights bill alongside the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The ICCPR is under the United Nations Human Rights Committee, which surveys standard reports of States on the process of actualizing rights. There is a regular meeting of the Committee in Geneva three sessions for every year. Articles of the Convention where Rights to physical uprightness, Liberty and security of individual, Procedural decency and privileges of the blamed, Individual freedoms and Political rights. The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights hosts 167 states gatherings. Alongside the ICCPR, the United Nations likewise embraced The International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on December 16 1966 and became active from on January 3 1976. It submits its gatherings to move in the direction of the giving of financial, social, and social rights (ESCR) to the Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories and people, including work rights and the directly to wellbeing, the directly to instruction, and the directly to a sufficient way of life. As of September 2018, the Convention hosts 169 gatherings. A further four nations, including the United States, have marked yet not sanctioned the Covenant. The ICESCR is an International Bill of



Human Rights, alongside the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The Convention is checked by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The ICESCR has its underlying foundations in a similar procedure that prompted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its center arrangements covering rule of dynamic acknowledgment, Labor rights, Right to government disability, Right to family life, Right to a sufficient way of life, wellbeing, free training and investment in social life. An "Assertion on the Essential Rights of Man" had been proposed at the 1945 San Francisco Conference which prompted the establishing of the United Nations, and the Economic and Social Council was given the assignment of drafting it. From the get-go simultaneously, the report was part into an assertion putting forward general standards of human rights, and a tradition or contract containing restricting responsibilities. It advanced to the UDHR which started on December 10 1948.

The United Nations has several bodies that handle different parts and aspects. The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body of the UN that promotes and protects human rights. Since its creation in 2006, including 47 states, the council has held several special panels that strictly concern women's rights and gender. The council has the duty to call states to order to implement regulations on women and these discussions are essential in order to keep women's right on the international agenda. Alongside this, the human right council has the power to address human right emergencies and violations. The United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a procedure that was initiated when the council was created to give the opportunity to examine how states with their international obligations handle matters that relate with human rights. The human rights council selects special members to examine cases of human rights violations in countries and take part in dialogue between their governments to initiate forms to develop the international human rights law. Also the commission on the status of women which was established by United Nations Economic and

Social Council resolution in 1946 has the duty to prepare recommendations and reports on promoting women's rights politically, economically, socially, educationally and in any other relevant aspect. They tackle the gaps and challenges and also procure solutions. Since history, the commission has been of importance in promoting women's right. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) stands for resolutions of the UN and other international organizations, the declarations on gender issues by the UN General Assembly are termed as extremely important tools which should be intensified in states in order to improve the relations of gender equality in the country. Even with all these efforts of UN, Nigeria still lags behind and their males still have a major edge over the females in virtually every aspect of life, this shows that these international organizations have a lot of adjustment to do, first of with fixing the so called obstacles of religion, illiteracy, tradition, and then fostering education and empowerment of these women in order to close the gap that exist between men and women.

### **2.1.1 Nigerian Gender Policy and Strategies on Gender Equality in Nigeria**

A policy is seen as a course of action taken in the bid to achieve a particular goal, therefore it is imperative for every policy to have principles that guide it towards reaching its supposed goal. Recently, an important document emerged to reshape the aspect of gender equality, build a society free from discrimination, improved standard of living, a society free from sexual harassment and equal opportunity regardless of sex. Attaining equality of gender is not just a human rights issue or an end in itself but it is also a major stepping stone to development. Nigeria, just like other countries has a ministry concerning the affairs of women for the purpose of empowering Nigerian women. Years after the ministry of women affairs formed the National Policy on Women (NPW) from the Beijing platform on Elimination

and Discrimination in 2002 with the need to get women integrated, the condition of Nigerian women remain the same (FMWASD, 2000). The rate of women's participation is as low as 45.6% and Nigeria has emerged the poorest country while women's employment is 11% compared to the 30% of men (UNDP, 2006). The NPW faced a major challenge of not being able to stop or challenge the structural and traditional norms and practices that fostered gender inequality. Gender mainstreaming has become a major part of development in government from the efforts made by women's movement in raising awareness to merge women as major parts of development leading to programs at national and international levels in order to accomplish equality of gender which Nigeria owes to the nature of the government and the history of the country. Nigeria became an independent country in 1960 and since then was under the military regime for thirty four out of fifty eight years. Despite the authoritarian nature of the military regime, it had an instrumental role in the formation of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social welfare (FMWASW) in 1995 including both national and state structures. Programs enforced played political roles by show casing the military as having the interest of family and development, instead the role of women and wives as just home keepers was promoted in the programs (Pereira, 2005) and had no meaningful gender sensitive policy initiatives (Mama, 1998). The process of Nigeria's democratization had an impact on gender equality. The belief was the incoming government will pay more attention to the needs of the marginalized especially the women (Okeke-inejirika and Franceschet, 2002). The patriarchal nature of Nigerian government has been blamed for the extent of gender inequality in the country. Nigerian women are in subordinate positions and there is preference of male children over female children, mothers teach their daughters to be just like them while fathers teach their sons to be in charge (FMWASD, 2006). The implementation of the Nigerian Gender Policy (NGP) started in August 2006 by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) as a response to the anger of the women's

movement for the need of gender policy to correct the worldwide issue of gender inequality and discrimination caused by history. The aim of the Nigerian Gender Policy (NGP) is;

- Creating a policy environment for explaining government aim towards gender equality.
- Starting programs geared towards empowerment of women to transform gender relations in all aspects.
- Establishing institutional framework for the growth of women's status and the attainment of gender equality.
- Proposing the incorporation of new values, attitudes, behaviors and even culture that respect the rights of "all" human beings.
- Strengthening the voice of women in the civil society, parliamentary and legislature who have made impacts already in curbing the situation of gender inequality.

The Nigerian gender policy is based on a widespread of institutions at every level of national development and is framed up to pass through lots of stages of adjustment through communication, sensitization, gender education and empowerment. Having access to and having control of resources both politically and economically is rather very important if not mandatory, therefore improving and promoting gender equality is a crucial prerequisite to the development of a nation because people determine the progress of a nation. For this reason gender equality and the empowerment of women have remained an issues to be handled and discussed constantly. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, expressly stated the guiding principle which included almost every country of the world agreeing to basic fundamental human rights and disagreeing to discrimination based on sex, religion and race. Even as human rights is included in the national

constitution, it still faces obstacles in terms of tradition, culture and religion which practically takes over the human rights aims. The understanding that development now depends greatly on gender equality has caused a shift from basically human rights approach to a development oriented framework in order to understand the role men and women play. Due to already laid down traditions and customs, African countries remain glued towards violations of rights in terms of marriages, divorce, inheritance of property and widowhood. At the national levels, there are feeble institutions that support the implementation mechanism (NGP, 2006). From the low participation of women in paid employment, politics, decision making, leadership, high rate of sexual harassment, assault, trafficking, rape, forced marriages, harmful traditional practices against women and girl child, it is obvious that despite the existence of constitutional provisions at the regional and international level, the rights of women and girls are still being violated in Nigeria. The fact that the country has an actual policy document on women that is not capable of challenging this structure just increases the degradation of women.

The NGP has promised to improve lives of Nigerian women as the minister of women affairs Aisha Alhassan noted the repetition of discrimination on women both in religious environments, traditions and institutions (FMWASD, 2006). Gender policy intends to eliminate these barriers that interrupt the women's empowerment (FMWASD, 2006). Even though Nigeria signed the gender policy since 2007, there is hardly enough information on gender policy in Nigeria and this is due to the fact that most of the efforts and analysis on gender equality were organized by international development organizations and NGO's like the Women's Advocate Research and Documentation Center (WARDC). Gender equality does not show or reflect in most government documents. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2005) has provision for protecting women in the aspect of education, representation and decision making (NPC, 2004). The NEEDS could not challenge social and structural inequalities because it did not include gender issues and did not adopt a Gender and Development

approach (GAD) but used a Women in Development approach (WID). The Gender and Development approach (GAD) focuses on the disparities that hindered women's equal participation in areas of politics, education and economy. It handles the relationship between men and women and views the unequal gap in participation as a problem that hinders upon development. It leans towards empowerment of women as a solution to the problem. The GAD was brought up in 1980 due to the fact that the WID simply addressed women in development but did not tackle the actual problems causing disparity or unequal participation between men and women (Moser, 1993; Beall, 1998). This shows that these policies actually do not get down to the women who are more disadvantaged but still hovers around men thereby increasing the gender gap (Soetan, 2005).

The Nigerian government commissioned the World Bank in 2004 to take on the Strategic Country Gender Assessment (SCGA) in the country in order to monitor and ascertain a certain reduction of gender issues economically (World Bank, 2004). The UN terms mainstreaming of gender as a method which includes both women and men in the important areas of the country monitoring, evaluating and designing programs and policies in order to benefit women and men and to reach their ultimate goals of equality (UN/DAW, 1998). Some feminists like Subrahmanian (2007) are of the opinion that gender mainstreaming limits the whole idea of inequality with its restraining policy on women's advancement without adequate power to produce change (Beall, 1998). In order to actualize gender equality, the WID approach was adopted by the FMWASD, even though this method was kicked against for having focused on women and not gender leading to further segregation instead of joining women into development (Moses, 1993; Beall, 1998). Due to feminists concerns, Gender and Development (GAD) came up to ensure that the aspect of development is more gender conscious (Beall, 1998).

The NGP aims at equality between men and women in development process but focuses more on empowering them with limited attention to the actual injustice that causes inequality (FMWASD, 2006). The fact that the policy tends towards equal participation between men and women shows that it tilts towards liberal's perspective of equality (Squires, 1999) which looks at involving women in development process. The patriarchal nature of Nigerian society makes equal participation between men and women look unrealistic. The NGP recognizes the individuality of men and women, therefore it has the ability to create methods to handle the issues affecting women based on these differences (Rees, 2002). Feminists have focused on the issues of representation amongst women because women representing women does not necessarily cover the views of women (Squires, 1999). There has been meetings involving the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria at the national level including government representatives, private and professional institutions representatives and also civil society organizations (i. e) women group representatives (FMWASD, 2006). The GAD is an approach centered on the social duties of both women and men and aims at challenging existing roles and relations (Moser, 1989). Therefore the GAD must go beyond just gender roles in order to accomplish its role. This gender policy hopes to achieve policy link by integrating the principles, strategies and goals of gender equality together with the empowerment of women but due to the patriarchal nature of Nigeria, this seems a bit unrealistic (Jahan, 1995). The policy emphasizes the goal to change the gender perception through gender education at all stages in order to help increase awareness on gender issues, additionally foster the perspective women have about gender issues (Squires, 1999). By this, people remain in the know of the consequences women go through and also the fact that these consequences interrupt development in societies. However, it is imperative to note that most people refuse such training because they are of the notion that it destroys their religious, traditional and cultural beliefs. This can be avoided if the national machinery for women in Nigeria take on lasting advocacy in societal levels.

NGP challenges the already used structures of gender relations both in public and private spheres which affect gender inequalities (FMWASD, 2006). The NGP takes note of the Nigerian structural barriers that disrupt the achievement of gender equality and for that reason, it takes on a radical approach which questions existing structures that foster inequalities. It is important that the fact that inequality exist in both public and private sectors is known in order to develop strategies to terminate it because the patriarchal base and sexual division role in homes has created a serious consequence for women's roles (Okin, 1998). NGP is said to be transformative because it identifies the already existing issues that cause discrimination and creates ways to redesign and eliminates them (Rees, 2002).

The 1995 Beijing Declaration notes that the success or failure of a policy depends on how the framework is coined, it further states that; the national machinery and governmental bodies should be strengthened by putting the advancement of women welfare under the responsibility of the highest possible government level (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995). The NGP talks about establishing gender equality structures at community level in order to ensure proper dissemination of change to the women in grass root areas by touching all aspect ranging from education to health to employment and participation with the aim of scrapping the causes of gender inequality. There have been several conventions and plans after the international women's year in 1975 and the world decade for women between 1975 and 1985 to ascertain that women are empowered, like the Convention on the Elimination and Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and the African Charter on women's right in 2003. The major concern of the NGP was drawn from Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) with the focus on history and cultural practices (FMWASD, 2006). The principles of CEDAW and BPA should be added to the country's laws since Nigeria is a part of them but these laws still haven't been signed by the Nigerian government.



By recognizing other forms of inequality shows that Nigeria has diverse politics which determines equality and equity in employment by eliminating discriminatory practices and keeping women away from such in the employment sector. The things limiting this from coming to light is the fact that Nigerian women are seen as household ladies and some religions like Islam does not permit women to work outside their homes. Religion in Nigeria is seen as sacred and a personal choice which makes it difficult to challenge. Nigerian religious leaders see the fact that there are teachings on awareness as a sign of disrespect so there comes a form of resistance from religious and traditional leaders as they believe that gender issues are gotten from western nations hence this awareness is a way of turning women against religion, culture and tradition. The only way to get traditional leaders to support this is to enlighten them on the benefits of gender equality, without this there will be no way to achieve social justice. The use of experts to execute these plans will be useful in Nigeria in order to ensure that gender policy meets up to international level and is reflected in to map out different sets of women in order to figure out how to handle cases. The NGP also takes on the use of mass media in order to get the member of the public included in their actions (FMWASD, 2006). This type of approach maybe criticized because it fails to include women in grass root areas (i. e illiterate and poor women who do not have access to the media). To make sure that this participation allows women from all sectors air their opinions, it is important that methods that puts into consideration the marginal voices and diversity of men and women be used (Cornwall, 2005). The goal of these policies is to promote equity, equality and empowerment through freedom of women form male subordination (Saunders, 2002; Parpart, 2002).

## **2.2 United Nations/African Union Organizations and Women Empowerment in Nigeria**

Women empowerment has often become a common goal to development (Mosedale, 2005). Women empowerment first started with third world feminist and women organizations. It is expressly used to depict the struggle for social justice and equality of women by getting the economy, social and political structures of the country transformed (Bisnath and Elson, 2003). The need for women empowerment leans on the fact that women have the potential to foster a country's development but they are hindered by societal norms, traditional beliefs and values by which they are differentiated from men (Kabeer, 2000). These hindrances are formed by the social structure dominated by men (patriarchy), poverty rate on women and gender division of labor. It was the realization of the need to have women involved in all aspects of life that made the UN dedicate 1975-85 the decade for women (United Nations, 1975).

By handling women empowerment alone, a nation's problem of unequal gender persists thus a nation must first eradicate all forms of gender gap then promote and encourage a gender responsive atmosphere in the Nigerian Gender Policy and thereby promoting gender mainstreaming in all public and private sectors in Nigeria. By Empowerment, we mean a means to an end (Sen, 1999). A result that is weighed based on the expected progress (Rai et al, 2002). Kabeer (1999) says that empowerment should not be judged as a success or a failure but by how much it is capable of doing or not doing. To empower is to continue a process of decision making on issues that are of importance to lives (Mosedale, 2005), it is also a way of redefining their possibilities of ending a situation to which has restricted them. With these definitions, it will be easier to explore whether or not international organizations, NGO's, regional organizations as well as civil societies have helped women in the patriarchal society of Nigeria.

Gender equality has since become a matter of importance globally. The CEDAW which was adopted in 1979 shows the rights of women against discrimination and access to freedom. However the actualization of the millennium development goal on promotion of gender equality is limited by the wrong governance, political unwillingness, patriarchy and little or no competency to produce opportunities to empower and develop women. This explains why there is a constant rise of gender inequality in Nigeria (Ejumudo, 2008). Empowerment of women has now become a global matter in declarations, conventions and treaties geared towards education, reduction of poverty, improved standard of living, health care and good governance in the bid to produce equal opportunity for men and women. Equality between boys and girls has been met in most parts of the world except sub-Saharan Africa which Nigeria falls under. Gender disparity is still in favor of men in schools and work places, however globally the participation of women in politics is gradually increasing. Because of the obvious gender gap rise caused by marginalization and social injustice inflicted on women which shows a drop in development in almost all aspects of life, women are gradually having a place in public sphere (Akpoveta, 2008). There have been some commendable efforts put in place to foster the elimination of gender discrimination in Nigeria to guarantee respect of human right and gender parity. The Nigerian Gender Policy which took over the policy on women is mainly fractioned towards solving gender equality issues in Nigeria. From its inception after Nigeria got her independence in 1960, right from 1963, the policies guiding the country were said to be gender blind and biased in terms of economy wherever it concerned women and national interest, issues of gender were then seen as no issue, up until the adoption of the millennium development goals by the UN in 2000, more focus has been put on gender issues and better policies have been put in place both globally and regionally because the UN has made it known that if women are given their rights, the rate of development in a country will be on rapid increase and poverty and hunger will be sustainable. The efforts of UN in third world countries was

influenced by the urge for development (Miles, 2001). As a result of this, research scholars called for the inclusion of gender to aid development and this made the UN decade for women 1976-1985 start (Saunders, 2002; Parpart, 2002).

Feminist scholars have pin pointed several relevant factors to aid women's empowerment like including them in decision making and control other resources. Women's organizations have used the term "empowerment" to explain the struggle for women's equality and justice (Bisnath, 2001). Empowerment is about gaining power by those who are powerless and challenging the patriarchal nature that cause inequalities between men and women (Batliwala, 1994). Also Rowland, (1997) states that, it is important for development as well as international organizations to actually understand the different forms of power to know which one to channel towards achieving the right empowerment. Empowerment here is about helping women have access to challenge and have control of resources by transforming existing institutions to go in their favor by eradicating the laws that promote discrimination (Batliwala, 1994). In recent times, the concept of empowerment has been interchanged as international organizations now use it in isolations from a feminist perspective to mean the enhancing of a woman's productivity (Lutrell et al, 2009). They see it as a way to enhance the poor without changing the norms that are already existing. Bisnath, (2001) says that empowerment now focuses on individual self-reliance and entrepreneurship instead of cooperation in order to challenge the power structures that oppress women. Empowerment a tool for building the grass root women has become a very popular method organizations use to give women a voice (Lutrell et al, 2009). According to Human Development report 1995 (UN, 1995), empowerment involves giving people the full participation in decisions that shape their lives. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) promotes the political and economic decision making empowerment of women at both the household and national government level (UN, 2010). Rowland, (1997) however notes that, the reason empowerment fails in

countries like Nigeria is because development organizations have made women believe in just participation whereas it should include the ability to change negative structures and make women see themselves as people who can take charge of their lives. He says that agencies now focus on “power over”, whereas “power to” and “power within” are very important in order for empowerment to be achieved. The UNDP agrees that by increasing access to income and skills of empowerment, there is increase in self-reliance, decision making and provision of employment for women.

According to Asogwa, 1995, Nigerian women take part in all the strenuous activities from food processing, food crops production, child raising, household maintenance and so on yet they are made to do all this under extreme coarse conditions and with inadequate tools. Some agencies like the Women in Nigeria (WIN) which started in 1982 by women academics from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. They focused on raising awareness on people on the secondary roles of women in Nigeria, but were made to do so under government terms because of government assistance which hindered them from attacking government policies and due to the lack of commitment of these government officials, there has been little or no progress. Due to this, international agencies then found out other means that did not directly involve the government and came up with Women NGO's in Nigeria as a reliable way to use in empowering women for continuous development. Women NGO's are seen as very vital instruments for empowerment of Nigerian women. As a result of the several conferences organized, Nigerian women are now becoming exposed enough to form several NGO's to keep themselves empowered. Alongside the government organized programs that foster development, NGO's have taken the responsibility to handle issues of FGM, widowhood, women reproductive health, rape among others. The journey of ending gender inequality in Nigeria has been taken over by both government and non- governmental organizations. Among the documents and women organizations that halt women discrimination are:

- i. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- ii. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- iii. Women in Nigeria (WIN) - This was started by women academics in 1982 (WIN Document, 1985). WIN has been successful in raising awareness on the inferior position women held in Nigeria and it suggests the only redemption is if the social system is transformed.
- iv. First Ladies and Women Ngo's- After the UN Declaration and the Decade for Women, the Better Life Program (BLP) was launched by Mrs Maryam Babangida with the aim of empowering women in rural areas physically, socially and educationally (Arum, 2007). After her, other first ladies have taken example from this and have developed several similar organizations to tackle different areas to meet empowerment of Nigerian women. In 1989-1999, Mrs Lami Abubakar turned her foundation into a non- governmental organization to make it more effective and named it the Women Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA). Following this, former President Olusegun Obasanjo had promised to start up a 30% plan of women in political representation, even though this promise was not fulfilled, he was the only president who appointed many women in federal cabinet. Among the first ladies was Mrs. Stella Obasanjo who started her child care trust fund in 2001 to tackle poverty, nutrition, unemployment, education and health. The organization was a success in bringing a lot of girls out of suffering. The first lady between 2007- 2010, Mrs Turai Yar Adua launched a women empowerment program and signed an agreement with MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston Texas to assist Nigerian women battling cancer. She also mandated wives of governors to focus more on poverty alleviation of women and empowerment of women in rural areas (Daily Triumph, 2008).

- v. The UN Women- UN Women is a United Nations entity which started in 2010 July 2, it is fully dedicated to gender equality and empowerment of women. It was established to increase progress in order to meet needs worldwide as a global champion for females. This part of UN supports UN member states with the various global standards to achieving gender equality in conjunction with the government and civil societies as well as NGO's of a country in creating laws, policies, program and services which are needed to ensure that women and girls are benefited worldwide. The entity arranges and promotes the UN systems work in fostering gender equality and all items linked with the 2030 Agenda in order to put gender equality as a fundamental and sustainable development goal achievement. To celebrate 70 years of the UDHR, UN women started a 16 days activism campaign against Gender Based violence which started on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2018, it was tagged "Hearmetoo" and "HerStoryOurStory".

The UN has strategic programs and agencies put in place to monitor and uplift the status of women with the theme "Equality, Development and Peace towards the freedom and empowerment of women" with the aim of eradicating practices that discriminate against women and gradually increasing the number of women participation. All these are important processes in creating gender balance.

### **2.3 Challenges Faced in Actualizing Gender Equality and Empowering Nigerian Women**

There are several factors that hinder the effectiveness of gender equality and empowerment of women in Nigeria. Starting from the diverse nature of the country and its women in terms of religion, culture, tradition, occupation and residential differences. There is a lot of difference between a northern Muslim woman in her fifties living in the far north and a Christian Yoruba women in

her thirties living in Lagos. But such reason are not enough to disregard the issues of women, even so should be a major push for government to boost the position of women and gender equality round the world. Amongst the several challenges are Corruption, Legal restraints, Political restraints, Socio-cultural constraints.

- **Corruption/Wrong Governance** – Almost all the problems facing Nigeria has its roots in corruption and wrong governance, this is the misuse of power for private gains, and sadly this has become a culture in Nigeria. Corruption is not the only cause of gender equality but it is a major part and a great dimension to wrong governance. From corruption comes bribery, fraud and manipulation. It sinks deep into politics, the economy and then goes further to attending funds meant for empowerment, education and employment because public resources are siphoned to personal pockets instead of the actual purposes of programs and activities particularly meant for gender parity and women empowerment.
- **Godfatherism** - is a cooperative connection between two people, to be specific the guardian and the godson, where the backup parent utilizes his political influence and riches to anchor political position for the godson, who upon rising into influence consistently pays delight to his adoptive parent in kind or in real money or both. This is a form of politics readily found in 3rd world or developing countries such as Nigeria and is the place inconvenience of hopefuls comes in. This has even gotten down to grass root governmental issues like in the local government and counselor positions. You can't turn into a committee director or ward councilor aside from you are blessed by the neighborhood sub-adoptive parents who are liable to the focal back up parent at the middle. Godsons, in the wake of accomplishing power, they must choose between limited options other than to serve their back up parents to the inconvenience of the electorates and the general population. By so doing, they spread craving and starvation, disregard financial organizations, forsake



infrastructural improvements, poison common administration through cut off pay rates, unpredictable government employees' advancements, dustbin welfarism, exploitative approaches, cripple beneficiaries, joblessness while their back up parents drive them around and their relationship. This is a deadly hit to the idea of majority rule government and great governance. The women's activist development has affected change in Western culture, including ladies' suffrage; more noteworthy access to instruction; increasingly fair pay with men; the directly to start separate from procedures; the directly of ladies to settle on individual choices in regards to pregnancy (counting access to contraceptives and premature birth); and the directly to possess property but the sad truth still remains that if the godfathers don't give a go ahead nothing gets done and a good example of that is the Chibok girls which were intentionally not rescued because it didn't align with the Godfathers (In Nigeria's case the "Cabal") demands. Another good example of godfatherism in Nigeria and its effects on women equality is Lagos State where you have to be in good align with the former governor turned godfather of the state Bola Tinubu which has till now prevented the state from following the law to letter in gender based violence against women and also prevented any female governor from coming in.

- Patriarchy - is a social framework in which men hold essential power and prevail in jobs of political initiative, moral specialist, social benefit and control of property. This goes hand in hand with godfatherism in Nigeria as there are very few goddaughters and the ones who exist had to give a lot more than the godsons. Some man centric social orders are additionally patrilineal, implying that property and title are acquired by the male genealogy. Also, this type of system has prevent women from being heads of departments especially in the police and armed forces with president of the country recently saying women belong in the kitchen and other room. Man controlled society is related with a lot of thoughts, a man centric belief system that demonstrations to clarify and legitimize this

strength and credits it to characteristic normal contrasts among people. Sociologists will in general consider male centric society to be a social item and not as a result of natural contrasts between the genders and they center consideration around the way that sex jobs in a general public influence control differentials among people. Truly, man controlled society has showed itself in the social, legitimate, political, religious, and monetary association of a scope of various societies. Regardless of whether not expressly characterized to be by their own constitutions and laws, most contemporary social orders are, by and by, man centric. Verifiably, the term male centric society was utilized to allude to dictatorial principle by the male leader of a family. Most times even at the grassroots (villages) women are denied inheritance either from their father or husband by their brothers and uncles even though the Nigerian law states once legally married the properties go to the next of kin (wife) or the father's will it the daughter.

- Democratization - is the progress to an increasingly law based political routine, including substantive political alters moving in a vote based course. It might be the progress from a dictator routine to a full majority rule government, a change from a tyrant political framework to a semi-popular government or progress from a semi-tyrant political framework to a vote based political framework. The result might be combined (as it was for instance in the Assembled Kingdom) or democratization may confront visit inversions (as it has looked for instance in Venezuela). Distinctive examples of democratization would be Nigeria's switch from a dictative military government to a democratic government in 1999 but democratization itself is impacted by different components, including monetary improvement, history and common society so even with that switch women empowerment didn't really come to fore until 2007. The perfect outcome in an ideal setting from democratization is to guarantee that the general population have the directory to cast a ballot and have a voice in their political framework which wasn't really the case when

democratization came onboard in 1999 with there being widespread rumors of vote tampering and since then, although the number of women in power has gradually increased in the country, most of those women are marginalized and hardly listened because they don't have the majority needed to carry the vote in a democratic system or because they were just put there to sooth the people not for their political knowledge

- Legal restraints placed on women's empowerment – According to the National center for Women Development in Abuja (2005), there are many legal restraints on women empowerment as well as discriminatory gender- unfriendly rules in Nigeria. For example, in institutions like the police force where any lady who wishes to get married in the cause of duty must first take permission before doing so and any married or single police woman who gets pregnant will most likely be expelled from the force. Also the part of the constitution that states that only women who are married to Nigerian citizens can become Nigerian citizens but men who are married to Nigerian citizens cannot become Nigerian citizens simply because they married women. The federal labor law under the Act of 1972 states that “any citizen recruited to serve Nigeria is allowed to take along his wife and children”, this law affects just men and laid a base for gender bias in Nigeria public service. Also in the marriage Act where parental consent to marriage is needed for a minor, this is considered the role of the father except he is dead or unavoidably absent from Nigeria; with proof under the section 18 of the 1994 marriage act, can the woman stand in. The fact that Nigeria is made up of six geo- political zones (North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-East, South-West and South-South), one will expect that they share same legal traditions, but that is not the case, this is evident in the sharia laws that apply only in the North unlike other states in south that have just criminal code. Therefore there exist inter-state differences in terms of legal rights regarding women. The South-East states like Oyo allow women to own property and equally give out property, but in Northern states like Kaduna, Zamfara and

Sokoto, which permits married women only. In the North, girl child marriage is allowed but it is not tolerated in the South and East.

- **Political Constraints-** In order to have a gender balanced community, the need to have a completely supportive governance is needed especially by the Federal government. Nigerian women are conspicuously absent in the political sphere of the country. Even though now there seems to be gradual increase on elected females during elections, the difference is still quite large. There are several reason for this; it will be meaningful to split these reasons into "self- imposed constraints and systemic constraints. The self- imposed constraints are related to the actual unwillingness of the women to explore and be a part of electoral activities, but this unwillingness is based on the systemic constraints like male dominance and military dictatorship that has been present for a long time. This has kept women indoors and less willing to participate or challenge the male dominated society. In addition to this, the violent political activities in Nigeria is another major reason. According to the manual on promotion and participation of women published by Federal Ministry of women Affairs and Social Development and the UN Development funds for women "Nigeria has one of the most violent elections which scares women" (UNDP, 2011).
- **Socio-Cultural constraints-** According to Sani (2010), the patriarchal nature of the system and the inferior status society puts on women is a major reason why Nigerian women are disempowered. Alongside religious and cultural beliefs which have been added to customary law and affect the rights of women. Women in homes are being reduced to help only while the men take on the respectable duties; the overbearing attitude of men have put women in negative sides which has affected their identity. In terms of marriages, women are made to lose their last names and take on her husband's name, whereas in reality the women are never fully accepted by the husband's people. This is particularly common in the

Eastern part of Nigeria. This part of the country has unwritten laws on marriages. The male presence has led to overriding violence on women which is now seen as a normal attitude or as a form of correction by men on their wives, it is the female children that suffer several forms of practices like FGM, they are denied of standard education and are even less preferred at birth. Nigeria has more than 25% of circumcised women in the world and about 95% of these women are ladies who have no skills or personal hand work (Whyte, 2002). Traditional beliefs rooted on gender discrimination is the basis of the gap of social inequality that exist between male and female which is a major hindrance to women empowerment in Nigeria. In order for this situation to be addressed, it is expected that agencies in charge of women empowerment through the legislations and policy formation will be gender cautious in order to procure principles of social justice that serves everybody equal rights for development and self-actualization irrespective of sex, race, religion, class, ethnic background and disability.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **NIGERIA AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Nigerian women are impaired, deprived and underrepresented in different areas of the country due to the patriarchal nature as well as the customs and traditions of Nigeria. For the purpose of this study, this Chapter examines four key areas in which Nigerian women are affected. They are political participation, economic opportunities, educational attainment and health and wellbeing which further looks at the practice of female genital mutilation, rape and child marriage. This chapter also examines the contributions of international organizations and NGO's as well as treaties and laws on gender inequality as regards the four areas of concern.

#### **3.1 Nigerian Women and Political Participation**

Despite the fact that Nigerian women make up for more than fifty percent of the country's population (National population census, 2007), they are still being disregarded continuously and have been put as back benchers in terms of politics. A major reason is the patriarchal nature of the country which is supported by strong religious, social and traditional beliefs and unfortunately they all contribute to treating women as inferior (Nkoyo, 2002). This in turn makes women to walk behind men who are seen as the leaders even though they have same work experience, career path or academic qualifications as women. The fact that women are hardly involved in decision making process in terms of economic development and social justice advancement on issues pertaining oppression, empowerment of women and harmful practices has encouraged further marginalization of women in the political sphere, thereby becoming obstacles for active participation. Nigeria has several political parties but they all have very limited data that gives the accurate number of women participating in politics through them; by so doing

this interrupts the available chances for women's tickets to run for high positions during elections (Shamim and Kumari, 2002). This affects the possible chances a Nigerian woman has to be involved in politics and elections because she is caught in between the ego of men who refuse to let her have a place because of the belief that the responsibilities put on a woman from the domestic homes will not accord her the much needed time she needs to run political scenes (Shayo, 2005). The financial burden attached to politics has since become a strategy to scare women from competing actively against their male counterparts (Tripp, 2001). The Nigerian woman has been wired in a way that they believe their duties should end in the kitchen or the home, hence their ability to reason is boxed to the four walls of the home and nothing else, this stereotypical constraints on women have hindered their desires to attain political and organizational roles (Okafor, Fagbemi and Hassan, 2011). Besides there is the oppressive socio-cultural practices as well as harmful practices such as FGM (Mukumu, 2015). All these distract women from going beyond domestic duties and stops them from getting the needful education or career that puts them on the same level with men, by so doing denying them access to advancement, technology, information, wealth, land, skills and empowerment (Aina, 2012). This line of male supremacy is obviously rooted in tradition and folklore, example of this is in the northern and eastern part of Nigeria; females are not given the right to inherit property and most times should have no connection with education until all the male children have attained these, she is groomed for marriage only. Also gender based corruption is now rampant as women are sometimes forced to sleep their way to the top which is regarded as a form of token or an appreciation for something ordinarily meant to be normal, this situation has tampered with the idea of fairness and neutrality and has put women on the receiving end which is clearly the disadvantaged side.

One time military president of Nigeria, General Babangida 1992, said in a conference on women that "the numerical strength of women alongside their industrious and enterprising nature and managerial skills is a major reason

why women should be involved in politics and development processes". Supporting Babangida's statement is one time administrator of Jemaa's local government of Kaduna State, who stated that "if a government does not include or recognize women in its activities, it is a one sided government and cannot grow in terms of national development as they are major source of progress" (Oguonu, 2009). According to Rev. Fr. Onoyima 1986. If women are given a place in politics, their existence and place in the society is recognized. There has been a call for every government to restructure their constitution in order to ensure gender balance, this will give way to the confirmation of women's participation in Nigeria's political progress. Dibia (2004), stated that the great powers of the country should reduce the limitations put on women that hinder their political participation and ignore the long standing historical beliefs and traditions, thereby moving women on the same pace with men's development. With the financial, economic and political problems in Nigeria, it is not wise to keep suppressing the skills and talents of its women just to boost the ego of men as this is an obvious waste of resources that the country can no longer afford. President Olusegun Obasanjo with his party "People's Democratic Party" (PDP) made efforts to stop all the fees that women were made to pay in order to allow them participate in politics and elections, also attempts were made to notify women in rural and grass root areas of the opportunities before them in the political sphere through women organizations that constantly checked on their fundamental human rights. Obasanjo's tenure sent about 30 women to India to get them equipped on how to create small scale businesses in order to enhance the economic growth of the country (Egonmwan, 2002). The 1980 conference held in Lagos on the plan of action to get women involved in politics was an action taken by the African Heads of States and Government; they were advised to start up policies that will enable the full participation of women in politics. In response to this, different organizations were established in Nigeria to foster the political participation of Nigerian women. Nigeria fully activated the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination

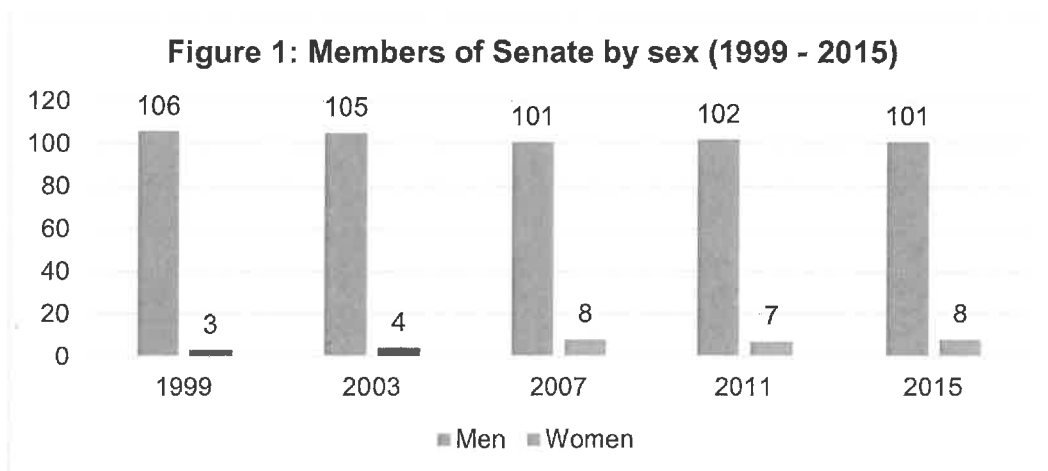


Against Women (CEDAW) in 2015 and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), alongside this there was also the formation of a National Committee on Women Development (NNCWD) which was set up in 21 states with the role of promoting awareness on women in politics (Peterson and Runyan, 1991; Akinyode- Afolabi et al, 2003; Akinbode, 2004; Rai, 2005; Omotola, 2007; Oyekanmi, 2004; Kukah, 2003). A commission for women was set up in 1989 by the federal government and worked hand in hand with the UN declarations of the decade for women, 1975-1985, this sprung up many women organizations formed by women to tackle their discrimination, example of these organizations is WIN (Women in Nigeria). Through Queen Amina of Zaria, Nigerian women became aware of the role and duties they could take part in during political elections. In 2002, a summit was held in Abuja following the poor performance of Nigerian women in the 1999 elections, the summit was organized by International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Gender and Development Action (GADA) in the bid to elevate Nigerian women's political participation (Akinyode- Afolabi and Arogundade, 2003). This paved way to a rise in women's participation in politics between 1999 and 2007. The era after this showed tremendous improvement in the participation of women in activities that were solely meant for men, development brought about worthy attention on women due to the fact that women's participation is seen as a ticket to a nation's growth. Even with this, Nigerian government cannot boast of having a female governor, president or even vice president, this shows that although there has been significant increase in the number of elected women, it hasn't particularly amounted to an increase in the decision making part of government as it is still ruled by men and god fathers.

There have been 4 presidents and administrations between 1999 when democracy started and 2015, during the last election held in Nigeria and all these administrations have been headed by men:

- 1999- 2007- President Olusegun Obasanjo
- 2007- 2010- President Umaru Musa Yaradua
- 2010- 2011: 2011- 2015- President Goodluck Jonathan
- 2015 till date- President Muhammadu Buhari.

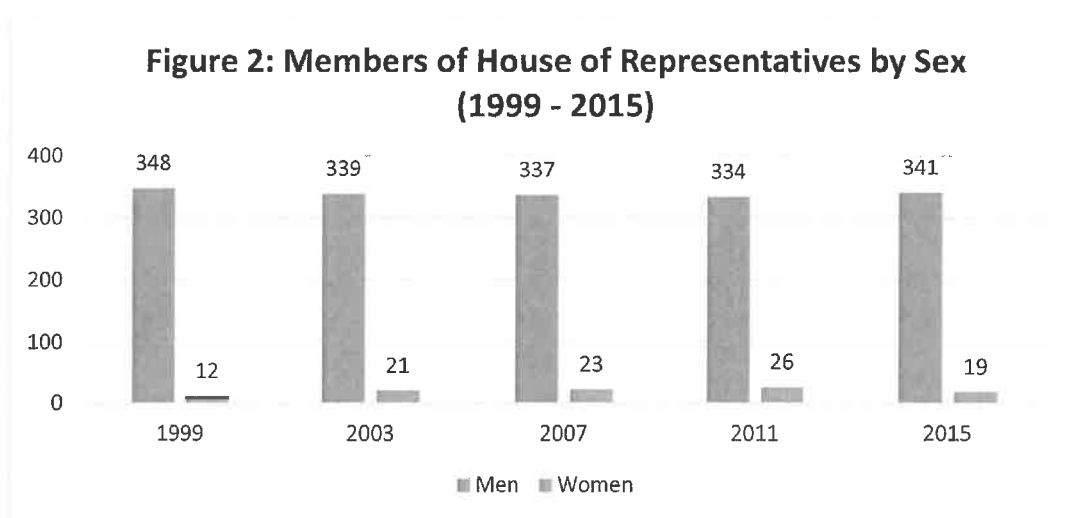
The vice presidents seats have also been occupied by four men since 1999. The senate has been dominated by men since the return of democracy in 1999, only 3 were women out of 109 members amounting to 2.8 percent of the entire senate members. In 2007, there was a slight increase to 8 women amounting to 7.3 percent, however by 2007, there was a decrease to 7 which amounted to 6.4 percent and 8 women in 2015 amounting to 7.3 percent. The table below shows the representation of men and women in Nigeria's senate house between 1999- 2015.



Source: Hundred Years of Nigerian Woman, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013 by Nse Etim Akpan

The House of Representatives members had just 12 amounting to 3.3 percent out of 360 members by 1999 but increased to 21 women (5.8 percent) in 2003 and by 2011, it had 26 women (7.2 percent), by 2015 the

number of women decreased to 19 women (5.3 percent) out of 360 members.



Source: Hundred Years of Nigerian Woman, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013 by Nse Etim Akpan.

Table 1: Elective positions from 1999 to 2015

	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seat Available	Women (%)	Seat Available	Women (%)	Seat Available	Women (%)	Seat Available	Women (%)	Seat Available	Women (%)
<b>President</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
<b>Vice President</b>	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
<b>Senate</b>	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	8(7.3)	109	7(6.4)	109	8(6.4)
<b>House of Reps</b>	360	12(3.3)	360	21(5.8)	360	23(6.4)	360	26(7.2)	109	19(5.3)
<b>Governor</b>	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
<b>Deputy Governor</b>	36	1(2.8)	36	2(5.5)	36	6(16.7)	36	3(8.3)	36	4
<b>State House of Assembly</b>	990	12(1.2)	990	38(3.8)	990	52(5.3)	990	62(6.3)		
<b>SHA Committees Chairpersons</b>	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887	—		
<b>L.G.A Chairpersons</b>	710	9(1.2)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	—		
<b>Councillors</b>	8,810	143(0.02)	6368	267(4.2)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	—		

Source: Hundred Years of Nigerian Woman, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013 by Nse Etim Akpan.

### **3.2 Nigerian women and Economic opportunity**

Nigerian women are the most marginalized set of a society with unequal employment and this can be blamed on the historical and cultural practices that promotes injustice on women. Gender equality is termed a crucial element in procuring a decent work for all men and women, to attain social and institutional change which in turn sprouts into national development. Gender discrimination in employment can be linked back to industrial revolution. Nigerian women are swindled out of employment opportunities (Adebayo and Akanle, 2014) due to the constant pressure women receive from their male workers because they see women as a threat to their employment, men tend to view women as competitors if they earn same wages as them so they battle to reduce this competition through economic, legal and ideological ways. There are some restricting laws against the employment of women, especially married women due to the fact that they believe their place should be in the home. These laws range from prohibiting women from working at night, stopping pregnant and most times married women from have entry to certain jobs (World Bank Group Report, 2016). Section 5 (1) of the Labor Act prohibits a woman from working at night in public organizations or agricultural corporations (with exception to Section 55 (7) allowing women nurses and women in management positions. Section 56 (1) prohibits women from working in the mining industry (Ashiru, 2010). Alongside some civil service rules that discriminate on women, Rule 03303 of Kano and Kaduna States Civil Service Rules states that “any woman civil servant, married or unmarried who is undergoing a training course within the range of six months shall sign an agreement to refund the whole or part of the course fee in the event that her course is interrupted on the basis of pregnancy” (Imasogie, 2010). Section 127 of the Police Act prohibits married women from seeking jobs in the Nigerian police force and Article 5 (1) of the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Act says that “all female applicants shall be unmarried as at point of entry” (Imasogie, 2010). It is almost impossible to ignore the rate of women employment in Nigeria even

though male employment is still on the rise. Despite the efforts to reduce gender discrimination against women in their places of work, the enormous gap still remains (Blau and Kahn, 2007). The aspect of gender discrimination in work places has to do with partial unfair treatment on women in terms of promotions, earnings, job description, sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination and various other reasons. Because of traditional and religious views that see women as home keepers, they are mainly pushed towards sectors like teaching, nursing, cleaning and small scale businesses that require little or no skills with the belief that this allows them time to shuttle between work and home needs (Fortin, 2005).

The idea of equality of sexes in employment is not common in Nigeria native law and custom. There is the belief that females are inferior to the males and cannot catch up with the speed in the business sector. In Nigeria, the discrimination against women in the employment sector is so visible mainly due to the high level of illiteracy and lack of skills on the Nigerian woman when compared to their men. The Nigerian constitution allows for the right to life and human dignity but this aspect of discrimination in employment violates that part of human rights of the constitution. Despite the fact that Nigeria signed the UN CEDAW, the country does not keep to the laws that focus on womanhood and dignity. International Labor Organization (ILO, 2007) states that equality between women and men in terms of work should have the following:

- Equal remuneration of work value
- Equal decision making participation
- There should be equal opportunity to obtain career development
- Everyone should have equal access to safe and healthy work environments as well as social security
- Everyone should be entitled to equal opportunity and treatment during employment

- There should be a favorable balance between work and home life for both men and women
- Equal association and collective bargaining

For gender equality to be promoted in the work force, there has to be special attention to women's needs being that she is usually disadvantaged. The ILO conventions are made for all women and men, however there are some that are specific for the purpose of promoting equality in employment:

- Maternal protection convention, 2000
- Workers with family Responsibility, 1981
- Home-work convention, 1996
- Employment Policy convention, 1964
- Part- Time work convention, 1994
- Night work women convention, 1948
- Migration for employment convention, 1949
- Termination of Employment convention, 1982
- Human Resource Development convention, 1975

With the support of ILO, Nigerian government reviewed the National Employment policy in order to address the issues of unemployment and developed a National Policy on Labor (ILO, 2016). ILO seeks to prove that discrimination in work force is also a human rights violation and that if women are not rewarded properly for work done, there will be ineffectiveness (ILO, 2009). Despite all this efforts by International Labor Organization (ILO), women's participation in the work force is still insignificant, they are made to work on low productive jobs due to the patriarchal nature in the Nigerian traditional society (Allanana, 2013). Women particularly make up for the portion of unpaid family workers (UNIFEM, 2000). According to Gender report (2012), there are recommendations for the government to focus on

agriculture and rural development because 54 million of Nigeria's 80.2 million women live their entire life in rural areas as well as work there and make up for 60- 70% of the work force in rural areas. UN states that recently there is noticeable improvement in women's employment but to what extent this will be sustained has remained a lingering question only time can tell, but in order for it to remain constant, there is need for a gender responsive labor policy to encourage the women. Among the factors that hinder upon the equality in employment are education, socio-cultural and political factors of gender discrimination, ideological factors, time, type of job and technology.

**Table 2: Economic Participation of Men and Women from 2007 to 2017**

Year	Economic Participation (%)	
	Men	Women
2007	61.32	48.26
2008	61.11	48.56
2009	60.89	48.87
2010	60.67	49.20
2011	60.42	49.54
2012	60.17	49.89
2013	59.91	50.24
2014	59.83	50.31
2015	59.79	50.36
2016	59.92	50.23
2017	59.80	50.46

Source: [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Nigeria/Female\\_labor\\_force\\_participation/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Nigeria/Female_labor_force_participation/)

### 3.3 Nigerian Women and Educational Attainment

Girl's education is a human right which makes it our duty to keep them educated as educated girls add positively to development and a healthy country which has vibrant and empowered citizens. According to UNESCO



(2017), over 5.5 million girls are out of school, over 40% of women have never attended school and nearly two-thirds of Northern girls have no education. Since 2008, Gender equality has been a major priority for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In May 2011, UNESCO started a global partnership for girls and women education known as "Better Life, Better Future" with the aim of increasing opportunities for adolescent girls in the educational sector (UNESCO, 2012). The organization aims increasing female literacy through investment in quality teachers and expansion of learning opportunities both formally and informally through the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT). Through this UNESCO believes literacy will empower women alongside help to eradicate poverty and reduce child mortality and improve gender equality to ensure sustainable development. Even with the aforementioned, gender gap still hovers around. Both the absence and presence of Nigerian females in schools is a major problem for them because their absence hinders them from participating and competing with male counterparts while their presence poses as a treat to their male counterparts (Robertson, 1985; Holles, 1998), whereas educational equity means having fairness in educational representation and given a chance at schooling (Dei, 1998). UN put up a plan for free and compulsory education under the 1970's implementation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE). This involved UNICEF and UNESCO, alongside other organizations which have sponsored conferences and researches in Nigeria concerning girls' education. UNICEF in partnership with Canadian Development Agency (CDA) have contributed to the support of guaranteeing females have access to primary education in order to promote participation, alongside United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and World Bank who provide financial support to girls education to reduce gender disparity. International Labor Organization (ILO) also introduced the "Learn and Earn" program because it recognizes the fact that some children need to work to survive. ILO protects female children by first of defining the age of a child as anyone below the age of 18, also reaffirming

the responsibilities of a state to grant free primary education and vocational trainings (ILO, 2007). Several years after the UN Declaration, it was noted that Nigeria still lagged behind regarding female education which causes gender disparity causing the government to bring up policies and also to eliminate previous policies that hindered girls from participating fully in education. In 1974, it was observed that there was an increase in girls enrollment although it was nothing compared to boys, ironically the number of girls drop out at this time doubled. By 2002, the enrollment of girls in both primary, secondary and tertiary was 57% compared to the 71% of boys. According to Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2001), the gender gap in literacy at the rural level between boys and girls was 18.3%, favoring boys, however between ages 6- 9 for primary school, it was 3.9 percent favoring boys, this analysis shows that Nigeria has a gender dimension in terms of educational attainment and development.

The completion of the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target which stated "Education for all" in 2015 is presently at a risk because the deadline has already been missed and Nigeria still has very appalling educational facilities which limits learning especially for women and girls. The United Nations Human Development (UNHD) says that Nigeria is classified as a low development country in terms of equality in educational access. Among the various causes of gender gap in education are:

- Culture, Value and Tradition- The cultural belief that women are better left at home to cater for her family is a major myth that fosters the gender gap. The Nigerian tradition puts more value on men than on women, it brings about male superiority over female subordination. Furthermore, the patriarchal nature that gave girls no traditional rights have encouraged boys education more. Also parents fear of unwanted pregnancies when girls reach puberty have made them give out their daughters to marriages earlier, it is also a way to make extra money and goods.

- Educational barriers, Accessibility, infrastructure, safety and security, teaching and learning- This distance to schools especially in rural areas scares girls and parents. Also as well as the poor ventilated classrooms with bad infrastructure alongside the risk of bullying, discrimination, harassment and sexual assault (Action Aid), an example of this will be the case of the Nigerian Chibok girls who were abducted in the school premises. Also the lack of well-trained teacher, despite the increase of teachers in primary and secondary schools between 1999 and 2009, less than half of them were females, thereby discouraging the girls from attending schools since most times they see only male figures (UNESCO, 2014).
- Colonial Policies- During colonialism, the rigid ideals on gender perceptions that was fixed on the African mind putting women as commercial sex workers, load carriers, field workers, baby machines and cooks disempowered and domesticated them fully, causing further gap in educational qualification on Nigerian women. With regards to this, the development in Nigeria is being hindered by all this unevenness in educational attainment and until there is equality in the number of boys to girls in schools, the issue of poverty, hunger, combating diseases and environmental sustainability will be on the loose.
- Socio- economic barriers- Despite the fact that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) states free education as the basis for its set up, there is hardly any school that offers free education. Education is now seen as a luxury in Nigeria due to the economic situation in the country, since Nigerian parents invest in education on their children according to sex, the family may not be able to afford education for all due to poverty and employment issues. So the boys are always the favored ones since it is believed that the female children have responsibilities in the home.

In 2007, UNESCO and UNICEF addressed the issues of education from a right-based approach and brought up three interrelated rights on education:

- The right to access of education- Education must be inclusive and accessible to all children, be it male or female.
- The right to respect in learning environment- Human rights must be put into play when rendering education with equal respect for culture, language, religion and free from all forms of violence and discrimination.
- The right to quality education- The method of education must be child centered, relevant and must include a broad curriculum with adequate monitoring.

UNESCO also said that about 11 billion dollars per year is necessary to reach the goals. Also the difference between what is needed and what is given is apparent. By 2005, developing countries like Nigeria were allocated 3.1 billion dollars per year, this brought up the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) in 2015 to set up partnerships between donors and non-governmental organizations together with the developing countries to put primary education at the forefront of their domestic needs to procure sound national educational plans. The CEDAW also realizes that the rights of women is also a major survival to development of children and to having healthy families and a nation as a whole. The CEDAW states that in order for there to be gender balance in Nigerian educational sector, there must be some conditions for career, vocational guidance, and achievement of diplomas in educational establishments in both rural and urban areas, access to same curricula, same examinations, and teaching staffs with same qualifications, equipment, school premises and standards, the elimination of stereotypical concept of the roles of men and women at all levels of education. There are several government policies that have affected girl child education in Nigeria:

- 1999 Universal Basic Education
- 2001 National Policy on Women

- 2002 Education For all Fast Track Initiative
- 2003 Strategy for Acceleration of Girls Education in Nigeria
- 2004 National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS)
- 2004 Universal Basic Education Act

It is important to note that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria started through the constitution in 1999 stating six years of free primary school education and three years of free junior secondary school education with the absence of discrimination. The government of Nigeria was committed to giving free and compulsory nine years of both primary and junior secondary school education to all children from age 6-15, also adult literacy and non-formal educational skills acquisition for children with disabilities. This law was signed by all 36 states of the country under the 2004 UBE Act. There was also the Child Rights Act (CRA) signed by Nigeria in 2003 which supported all children going to school for free and against all forms of discrimination, it was only in 2014 that this CRC was adopted in 24 states. The UBE and CRC are supported by the National policy on education launched in 1977 and updated in 2012 as well as the National Gender Policy (NGP) of 2006.

**Table 3: Participation in Education for Male and Female from 2008 to 2016**

Year	Education (%)			
	Primary		Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2008	88.99	79.03	38.52	32.12
2009	89.93	80.60	41.91	36.43
2010	89.08	80.92	47.13	41.17
2011	93.72	87.40	49.09	41.87
2012	93.23	90.80	49.32	44.93
2013	95.25	92.84	58.78	53.49
2014	90.71	89.38	48.13	42.98
2015	-	-	48.80	44.65
2016	87.13	82.18	44.08	39.80

Source: National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2013), the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) (2007, 2011, 2016) and <http://uis.unesco.org/country/NG>

### 3.4 Nigerian Women, Health and Wellbeing

The aspect of violence against women is regarded as the most common and socially tolerated of human rights violations, irrespective of race, ethnicity, sex, religion and class. It leaves a devastating effect on the health and mental physical wellbeing of the victims which are most times women as the case of this thesis implies. Additionally, the cost to women, children, families and even communities is an important obstacle to reducing poverty and achieving gender equality. Gender based violence in Africa is a very delicate issue even as it becomes very common in countries like Nigeria and keeps on creating further gaps between sexes. In as much as the health and wellbeing of Nigerian women have now been given much attention, it is still on great increase leaving people wondering if enough is being done. To reduce these violence that affect the health and wellbeing of Nigerian, the involvement of both national and international organizations as well as civil

societies and non-governmental organizations is required. It is difficult to quantify the extent and actual damage being done because these victims most times choose to remain silent and keep matters private thereby preventing the quick help that organizations may be able to render. The UN Declarations on the elimination of violence against women gave its first definitions of gender-based violence and how it affects women's health and wellbeing:

- Any action that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women which includes threats or deprivation of liberty be it in public or private.
- This acts may include spouse battery, dowry- related violence, rape, female genital mutilation, sexual violence on women and girl child, traditional harmful practices, child marriages, intimidation at work, exploitation, forced prostitution, non- spousal violence, forced sterilization, forced pregnancies and so on.

### **3.4.1 Female Genital Mutilation**

In 2016, UNICEF estimated at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have been inflicted with FGM (UNICEF, 2016). Female circumcision, female cutting or female genital mutilation (FGM) can be seen as one and the same thing. It refers to a situation where female's genitals are cut completely or partially, leaving the rest area closed with a tiny opening for the passage of urine or menstrual blood. FGM is mainly done for so called cultural reasons, Nigeria has one of the highest number of FGM cases in the world which is about one quarter of the approximated 200 million circumcised women in the world. This harmful practice was pointed out by Nigerian government and they have sought for corrective measures to put this barbaric practice to an end. FGM is common in about 28 countries in the world like Somalia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Egypt, Nigeria,

just to mention a few. The term FGM was coined during the 6<sup>th</sup> assembly of Inter-African Committee (IAC) held in Mali in 2005 (WHO, 2005). The actual origin of FGM is clouded with so much confusion as no one can state precisely why it started, at least there has been no justifiable reason to back it up. But the outrageous reasons given is that some say it helps to reduce the rate of promiscuous attitude in a female or they say it is a way of welcoming a girl child into womanhood stage, some even say it is a form of being pure (Bengstain and Baldwin, 1993). According to UNICEF, none of these reasons have basis in truth, the organizations says that this practice interferes with the women's reproductive system in a dangerous way, it violates her rights and integrity. They also believe that the methods and social dynamics behind this practice must be understood first, then be used to lure the people indulging in this practice to end it. The United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) made a launch to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) completely by 2030, this was made on the International day of zero tolerance for FGM. UNICEF's main aim is to see that the wellbeing and rights of children is kept. FGM disrupts women's health in different ways well as their physical and mental wellbeing resulting to so many complications like heavy bleeding, pain and shock. Other reasons like culture, myths, sexual pleasure for men, and preservation of virginity are also given for this practice (Squier and David, 2013). In ancient times, slaves underwent mutilation to reduce urge for sex, this was linked with the fallacious myths that have left a lasting effect in the record of FGM. Women were also made to believe that if a woman is not mutilated, her first born child may die (WHO, 2104). This practice is common in about 13 states in Nigeria, therefore it cannot be termed an Islamic practice because it occurs in states that are non-Islamic. Women who undergo female genital mutilation suffer long term agony, swelling, bleeding and even urinary retention as well as other complications which increases the chances of infection due to the



unsterile instruments used (Sauer and David, 2013). HIV is another long term complication of FGM (Maria et al, 2016).

According to Amnesty International (1997), female genital mutilation causes torture for women by making very painful and risky to their lives. USAID (2004) says that FGM was first discovered in the UN 1948 agenda with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and was termed a harmful practice in 70's and 80's during the UN year for women between 1975 and 1989. According to Efua Dorkenoo (1994), FGM is a plain act of gender-based human rights violation, that rules over the freedom of a woman's sexuality. It is a form of torture and violence against women and girls, as seen by WHO, UNICEF, World Association as well as the UN Population Fund. The WHO has made some efforts in the fight against FGM by disagreeing with the practice and expressly stating it as a human right violation. In 1993, UN passed a declaration to support the term "FGM" to mean clitoridectomy, infibulations and other related practices to FGM. Authors like Rahman and Toubia (2000), stated some human rights violations that FGM violates:

- Freedom from all forms of discrimination against women- The pain caused by the FGM process violates the right of women and also the first article of the women's convention on discrimination against women based on sex.
- The right to live and have physical integrity which including being free from violence- FGM disturbs the right to a free life when death occurs due to the FGM procedure, thereby violating the right to freedom and security of girls and women because this practice is carried on them without their will or consent before they reach the age where they can decide for themselves, thereby disrespecting the woman and her natural body since the practice alters it.
- The right of the child- Many researchers term FGM as a practice that violates against the right of a child, some communities perform this

horrible practice on young babies as young as two months up to 17 years of age.

- The right to health- The International Human Right and CRC notes the entitlement of every individual to enjoy the well-deserved mental as well as physical health state. FGM on the other hand messes with the mental, physical, psychological and emotional health of the victim, putting them at different kinds of risks of infections and diseases.
- The right of minorities- The International human right gives allowance to members of minority groups, ethnic, racial, religious or and linguistic alongside maintenance of their culture without any form of interference or discrimination. In Nigeria and Africa as a whole, FGM is done by minority groups, not by everyone in the community. Another example is in non- African countries, the people who suffer this are mainly immigrants who are minority in that country. By this the minority will need protection by law.
- The right to religious freedom- Religion is an important aspect of everyone's life as well as an important human right. The UNDHR protects the rights to freedom of the thought, conscience and religion. It is an issue because of those religions that actually practice this in name of religion and belief that FGM is part of the religion, in this cases interference of the practice in those religions to discontinue the practice is considered as a violation of their religious rights.

### **3.4.2 Nigeria and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) does not particularly refer to violence against women and girls or harmful traditional practices like FGM, but the Article 15 and 17 of the constitution prohibit discrimination and inequality of rights as well as Article 34 which says that "every individual is allowed the entitlement to respect of dignity and shall not

be subject to any form of torture or degrading treatment". The violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAAP) came into force on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2015 when the then President Goodluck Jonathan signed a law banning Female Genital Mutilation. This law is the first national law to attempt the stop of FGM in the whole country, the aim of this act is to eliminate gender based violence by setting out to punish and criminalize acts including rape, domestic violence and other degrading practices. For now, this law is only effective in Abuja, therefore it is expected that the rest states pass legislations to further prohibit FGM across the country. Section 6 of the VAAP Act states punishments for anyone who indulges in this act but although does not expressly address FGM carried out by health professional as 11.9% of girls aged 0- 14 and 12.7% of women aged 15- 49 who have had the FGM in Nigeria were cut by medical professionals, be it a nurse or a midwife (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2013). Before the May 2015 Act, some states had passed state laws that handle Child abuse, violence against women, rape and so on:

- Cross River State- The Girl Child marriages and Female circumcision (prohibition) law (2000)
- Edo State- Prohibition of FGM law (1999)
- Bayelsa State- FGM Prohibition law (2004)
- Rivers State- Child Rights Act (2009)
- Ebonyi State- Law abolishing harmful traditional practices against women and children (2001)
- Enugu State- FGM prohibition law (2004)

The Northern states like Zamfara, Kano, Kebbi, Kaduna and Sokoto have the Sharia penal codes of the states that protect children against forms of physical and psychological violence. Several authorities and strategies have



Despite the progress, FGM is still practiced in six states (Nwopara, 2015). In this cases, it seems education hasn't been able to do much because FGM is more common among educated women, but the Yoruba's and Ibo's who reside traditionally in the South West and South East are more in the Urban areas and have more educated women than in the Northern regions. This may be blamed on the fact this practice is majorly carried out when the victims are still very young and may not have attained a certain level of education (Okeke et al, 2012). Even though education hasn't exactly done a great deal, the 2013 Nigerian Democratic Health Survey (NDHS) still maintains that education is an important tool for empowerment because mothers with high level of education are less likely to have their daughters circumcised (NPC, Nigeria and ICF International, 2014).

**Table 4: Female Genital Mutilation sorted by age group from 2007 to 2016.**

Year	Female Genital Mutilation (%)						
	15 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 39	40 - 44	45 - 49
2007	19.6	22.0	24.6	26.7	29.7	31.2	40.3
2011	18.7	21.5	26.1	29.7	31.5	34.9	38.0
2013	15.3	21.7	22.9	27.4	30.4	33.0	35.8
2016	12.3	15.4	16.9	20.1	21.3	24.4	27.6

Source: National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) 2013, Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) 2007, 2011, 2016

### 3.4.3 Nigerian Women and Rape

According to Comoera (2004), Rape is often used as a weapon of war, as an attack on an enemy, punishment or just a mere act of domination on weaker people which are most times women which may come from an intimate partner or a stranger. Rape is a crime under the international and national law whether it is committed by a state actor or a non-state actor, it is a violation of women's right and freedom because it violates the right to be free

from torture, mental and physical integrity, liberty and security which prevents the enjoyment of rights of health, expression, employment and sometimes rights to life. Amnesty international suggests that this concept of rape should be applied domestically in order to increase the protection of human rights of women and girls. Rape cases in Nigeria cannot be overlooked, it has become an issue of utmost concern even though until recently it was rarely spoken of. It occurs in different places like homes, work place, streets, schools, in the military, during wars, in prisons or even in police custody. The Punch newspapers of May 2016 gave a horrific insight about what goes on with ladies who are sexually assaulted by inmates in police cells. Rape is defined by the May 2015 VAAP Act signed by President Goodluck Jonathan as “when a man has sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the following circumstances:

- Against her consent.
- With her consent, when her consent has been gotten out of fear of death or hurt.
- With her consent when the man knows that he is not her husband but makes her believe he is.
- With or without her consent when she is under fourteen years of age or of unsound mind.

In ancient times, rape was considered a crime against a husband if the victim was married and a crime against a father if the victim was unmarried. Due to several reasons, there has been advancement for the definition of rape to be gender specific since most of the victims are women and also to be able to tackle it from an angle of being a very serious form of gender specific crimes against women and girls. Rape is an abuse of power by the stronger person over a weaker and helpless person (Cooper, 2000). Rape is a crime under Nigerian national law as well as internationally a human rights violation, even with this Nigerian government has failed severally to properly take the

necessary actions against the agents of rape. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in its General Recommendation No 19 stated that “rape is a form of gender based violence and Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a form of discrimination against human rights. Alongside, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW), states that violence against women means any gender based violence that leads to physical, sexual or psychological harm or any form of suffering to women which includes threats. The DEVAW particularly says that rape falls under these categories and encourages the government to prevent and punish the victims of this act against women. Non-governmental organizations, police records and statements from the media show that rape in the family, community and by police and security occur at an alarming rate but there is still lack of comprehensive statistical data to back this up, this makes it difficult to tell the extent of direct state involvement in fostering GBV against women. Although lack of records is one problem, another major issue is the silence on the part of the victim. A 2005 survey conducted by an NGO “CLEEN FOUNDATION” showed that less than 18.1% which is 1 in every 5 out of some 10,000 victims actually report these offenses to the police for reasons like:

- The stigma that comes with being a rape victim
- Fear of no help
- Rejection from family and community at large
- Unwillingness of the police force to make official reports
- The nonchalant attitude to which the issue is handled.

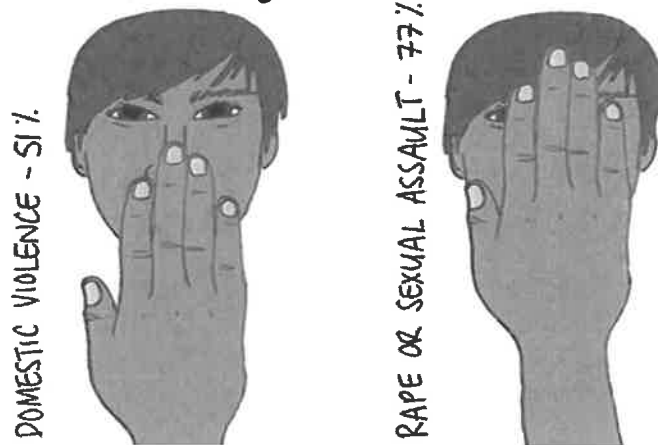
The UN women also backed this above statement with the diagram below.

**Image 2: Percentage of gender based crimes not reported to the police.**



unwomen

*∴ Not Reporting Crimes To The Police*



Source: United Nations Instagram page.

Among the many laws that criminalize rape is the violence against person's prohibition (VAAP). The law provides penalties from 12 years to life imprisonment for offenders older than 14 years. Almost 20% of school students have passed through a form of rape. In 2013, an NGO on HIV treatment "Positive Action for Treatment Access" mentioned that 3 in every 10 girls stated their first sexual encounter was rape. The most recent rape case in Nigeria Benue state that caused an outrage was the case of 13 years old Elizabeth Ochanya, who was a victim of serial rape from her uncle and his son. The abuse on the girl started when she was eight years old in 2013, by her cousin, she was said to have reported this situation to the boys' father, her uncle in question who instead of getting justice decided to continue this barbaric crime for the next five years and turned the minor into a sex slave. Ochanya was said to have lived with her uncle for educational benefits since schooling in her home town posed to be difficult, this education was then



given in exchange for sex by her uncle and his son. She started battling medical conditions and complications as a result of the series of rape, it was at one of these medical centers that she summoned the courage to speak out, she later died of vesico- vaginal Fistula disease. This sprout the anger of several Nigerians and many Non-governmental organizations and human right activists who further had rallies on Gender Based Violence (GBV) with the tag "JUSTICE FOR OCHANYA". The fate that befell little Ochanya was one of the reasons why the Child Rights Act was enacted. Another case is that of the Chibok girls who were kidnapped by Nigerian Islamist group "Bokoharam". These girls are raped and forced to marry fighters even at their young ages. Over 500 women and girls have been abducted since 2009 by the militant group, earlier in 2014, the group abducted 276 girls from a secondary school in Chibok town North East Nigeria. In Nigeria, most times the female victims of rape are victimized forever and it leaves effects like depression, anxiety, flashbacks, fear and so on (Akintunde, 2002; Akosile, 2007).

#### **3.4.4 Nigerian women and Child Marriages**

The concept of early marriages forces girls into adulthood faster than they should get there, before they are physically and emotionally matured, which leads to series of damaging effects on their health, education and development in general. In most nations, 18 is the accepted marriage age. Nigeria on the hand has battled to reach a precise marriage age. Child marriage is generally seen as a fundamental human right violation (UNICEF, 2014). The 2012 International Centre for research survey shows the large amount of girls married against their wish and consent (Child not Brides population council, 1995; 2004). The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) has the health and education of women as major factor of its realization. Women's health is the basis for a solid family foundation and community (Olasode, Olaogun, Fatusi and Mosaky, 2008), but child marriages put

women at more health risk (Anthony, 2013; UNICEF, 2001). According to Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), of 2016 and 2017 conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics together with UNICEF, child marriage also adds to the 53.3% of girls in North East and 46.2% of girls in South East out of school. Nigeria has the world's highest number of girls out of schools which makes them more vulnerable (Oduah, 2013). A girl's life is restricted by so many discriminatory attitudes, unjust economic and social structures and hinders her from realizing her full actual potentials. Women in developing countries make up for the one million people experiencing abject poverty worldwide. The plight of child marriage has gained noticeable international attention from the Children World Summit in New York 1990 and the Education for Girls' World Conference in Washington DC 2018 (Ouaggdougou, 1993). During the 4<sup>th</sup> Beijing women world conference in 1995, elements hindering women and girls from actualizing their potential was addressed and child marriage was topmost on the list which must be properly handled to improve the state of girl child in order to achieve sustainable development (UNFPA, 2012; UNICEF, 2013). The root of child marriage is the culture and tradition of the Hausa Fulani side of North West Nigeria, as well as patriarchal communities which often produce child brides where guardians and parents have important roles as protectors when choosing husbands for their daughters. Due to the strong norms that emphasize on virginity, parents give out their daughters early to ensure they remain virgins till marriage which is perceived as an honorable thing for the families. They also see child marriage as a means of keeping the girl child protected from sexual assault and pregnancies thereby negatively affecting the lives of the girls by shifting their focus to motherhood instead of exploring work and education (Mensah et al, 1998, Singh and Samara, 1996). The religious norms of Islam has a great role in the issue of early marriage as most child brides come from homes under the Mohammedan belief that girls should reach puberty in her husband's home with the start of her menstrual period. They also believe that child marriage increases her potential of child

birth. In Islamic communities, the new bride is given strictly domestic roles that keep her at home always. About 76% of Nigerian girls between ages of 15 and 19 are married, 43% of girls are married before age 18, 17% are married before age 15 while 80.8 % of adolescents' first births happen during marriage (Population council, 2017). Nigeria is the 11<sup>th</sup> highest nation in the world with child marriage issues (UNICEF State of the World's Children, 2017). From one of the few studies done in Africa to examine the experience of adolescents forced to marry early is qualitative study done in Senegal, girls in this study said that their major issue is the fact that their freedom is limited and so is their contact with friends and family members, as well as the fact that they are unaware of their bodies both sexual and reproduction wise before marriage leaving them totally clueless on motherhood which is staring them in the face (Diop and N'Dione, 2002, Population council, 2002). They face embarrassments and restricted or no health services. In Africa, early marriage is closely associated with the high level of HIV infection, as married girls have sex more often and it is always unprotected, risking regular pregnancies since there is no use of condoms (Glynn et al, 2001; Bruce and Clark, 2003). There has been fair attention to public health in Northern Nigeria due to the high rates of maternal mortality and other issues that come with pregnancies, the northern part of Nigeria records the highest maternal death rate worldwide as well as that of obstetric fistula (Adamu et al, 2003; Wall, 1998, Akpan, 2003). Studies have shown that early marriage relating to child bearing is a major risk factor. An advocacy NGO, Adolescent Health and Information Projects (AHIP) in Kano state has been involved in undertaking issues on adolescents in Northern Nigeria since 1989. It is a youth focused NGO that handles health, social and economic issues affecting women by training youth advocates, conducting adolescent reproductive health sensitization, organization of youth clubs and so on. Most of these activities are handled by unmarried adolescents.

Child marriage involves persons less than 18 years of age. It violates the 16<sup>th</sup> Article of the UDHR which states that "marriage should involve only people

who have given their free and full consent". Article 16 of CEDAW states that "women should be given same free right as men to select their husbands at their own free will" and that "betrothal marriage of a child shall be legally null". The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states a child's has the right to survive, develop fully and to be protected from harmful practices that abuse, exploit, as well as disrupt their right to full participation in family, social and cultural life". Nigeria signed this convention in 1990 but did not implement it until 2003 when the Nigerian government together with UNICEF developed a current Child Rights Act (CRA) in 2003. Therefore Nigeria has the obligation of making all the right measures to abolish this practice that is detrimental to the health and well-being of children but is experiencing difficulties doing so because only few states like Abuja territory, Ebonyi and Ogun States have passed the bill into law. Child protection in many Nigerian states is handled by NGO's because implementation of the CRA in Nigeria has been difficult due to the diverse nature of ethnicity and customs. A perfect situation is 14 year old Wasila (Tasi'u) Umar who was a child bride under trial for murder of her husband and his three friends, she was forced to marry 35 year old Umar Sani in Kano State in April 2014. Umar was killed through food poisoning by Wasila, she stated being forced to marry a man she hadn't known nor loved, she alleged that she was forced into the marriage to a man she did not love and had been tied up and raped by her husband on their wedding night. Another example of this will be a Nigerian film directed by Stephanie Linus who is amongst the active human rights fighters Nigeria has, the film is titled "DRY" and depicts a story of a young girl who was forced into early marriage and later died of Vaginal Fistula.

The issue of child marriage is complicated and has been examined based on different traditions, religion and differences between regions and ethnicity. There have been several international forums aimed at preventing child marriage in Nigeria, in 2011 December, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that made October 11 the International Girl Child day, having the first celebration on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of October 2012 with

the theme “End Child Marriage”. The first United Nations Human Rights Council resolution against early and forced marriage was adopted, it recognizes child marriage as a violation of human rights and aims to eradicate it as part of the UN’s post-2015 global development agenda. Also in 2014, the UN Commission on Status of Women signed a document in agreement to eliminate child marriage. These fall under the body of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states the freedom and equality of all humans including the right to dignity (UN, 1948 Article 1). For years, the UDHR has been the gatekeeper of Nigeria’s conduct. The Child Rights Conventions was adopted by UN in November 1989 and was ratified in Nigeria in March 1991, this convention is the most accepted and it is not only binding in Nigeria but serves as a guide for customary international law. The CRC gives a child’s definition as “every human being below 18”, thus it has set a standard for marriage since a child is not permitted to be married (Brimah, 2014). Article 21 of the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child which Nigeria is a signatory of has some in depth provisions for the prohibition of early marriage and betrothal of girls and boys, as well as the compulsory official registration of all marriages (AU Organization, 1999). The Article 3 gives particularity to the child’s best interest as the main element to be considered. This particular article is to nullify all the customs, traditions, cultural and religious reasons backing this practice which are detrimental to the wellbeing of the child.

In 2003, after so much controversies, Nigeria adopted the CRC alongside the African Charter for children, with Article 21 of the children Rights Advocacy stating the prohibition of valid marriages of persons below 18 years, therefore any such marriage is null (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2003). Also section 22 supports this by stating that no guardian or parent or person is allowed to force any child to be betrothed and any betrothal is considered terminated (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2003). Section 23 considers this act a criminal act with a penalty of 500,000 Naira or five years jail term.

**Table 5: Percentage of child marriage sort by age group from 2007 to 2016**

Year	Child Marriage%	
	Before Age 15	Before Age 18
2007	15%	39.6%
2011	18%	40.0%
2013	20.82%	47.7%
2016	22%	49.1%

Source: National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) (2013), the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) (2007, 2011, 2016) and UNICEF Database

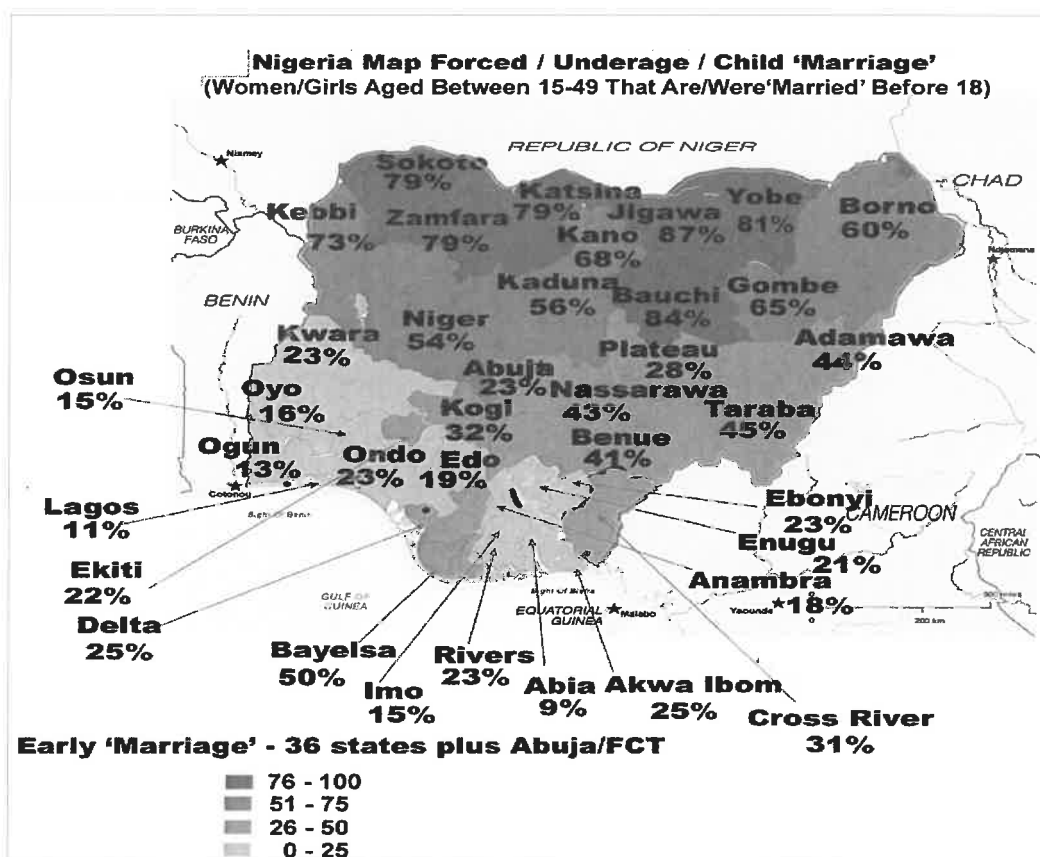
#### **3.4.4.1 Why Child Marriage is still on in Nigeria**

The issue of child marriage is still persistent in Nigeria despite the fact that the CRA has been in existence for over a decade, reasons for this are the loose ends in the constitution of Nigeria. The first is the Section 21 (1) that permits a Nigerian citizen of full age with the wish to renounce his or her citizenship, and to this full age means (a) anybody of the age of 18 and above and (b) any woman who is married shall also be deemed to be of full age, (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). This option was almost removed and restructured after a heavy debate, Senator Sani Ahmed Yerima, who initially married a 13 year old Egyptian girl in 2010 fought against the removal of this on the basis that it does not go against the standard rules for marriage in Islam and the Sharia law. The other loose end is in part 1 of section 61 of the constitution which explicitly states the “dissolution and annulment of child marriages aside the ones under Islamic and Customary Law” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), therefore such marriages are exempted from the prohibition. In simple terms, even though the entire country is bound by federal laws, it does not affect marriages under Islamic and customary law, thereby perfecting the ineffectiveness of the CRA even before it was formed. In today’s Nigeria, only 24 states out of the 36 states of Nigeria have taken up this CRA law as a state law, the rest 12 states have remained adamant,

unfortunately these states are the ones that record the highest rate of child marriages.

In November 2016, Nigeria became the 17<sup>th</sup> country to start the African Union (AU) campaign to end child marriage. During the same period, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development started a national strategy to end child marriage with the aim of reducing child marriage by 40% by 2020 and to end it completely by 2030. At the end of 2015, the Ministry of Women Affairs also headed a 30 member group including civil society organizations with the aim of developing and implementing multi-sectoral strategies to end child marriages, raise awareness, encourage behavior change and ensure evaluation as well as monitoring of laws and policies. (UNFPA, 2016).

**Image 3: Map of Nigeria showing Child marriage prevalence**



Source: Afri-Dev (2016)

### **3.5 OVERALL ASSESSMENT of UN and AU IMPACTS**

It is safe to say that the efforts of both international and regional organizations in curbing gender inequality in Nigeria has been positively above average. Even though there still lingers some loop holes and areas that are difficult to tackle due to the challenges surrounding the nature of Nigeria and its women. From the very first UN Charter which focused on human rights and dignity to the agencies particularly created for gender issues. The UN bodies alongside regional bodies have also had several enlightening conferences and conventions like the very notable CEDAW alongside the declarations like the UDHR. The CEDAW which was signed in 2015 in Nigeria is a major part of the elimination of discrimination process in the world at large. While the United Nations has helped the world accomplish advancement towards sexual orientation uniformity and women's strengthening under the Millennium Development Goals, women keep experiencing segregation and viciousness in all aspects of the world. Advancement is happening viewing harmful practices, for example, child marriage and FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), which has declined by 30% in the previous decade, yet there is still much work to be done to finish take out such practices. Giving women equal access to medicinal services, work, and portrayal in political and financial basic leadership procedures will fuel economies and advantage social orders and humankind on the loose. The Actualizing new lawful structures with respect to gender equality in the working environment and the annihilation of destructive practices focused at women is essential to consummation the sex based segregation predominant in numerous nations around the globe. Truly, it can in any case accomplish more by attempting however much as could be expected to inspire governments to separately uphold these law and acts it has built up. The objective is to accomplish a gender balance and engage all women and girls which the UN has completed to a reasonable extent. A lot of different bodies have been involved in gender equality issues in Nigeria as highlighted in this thesis but yet at the same time have to put some more efforts in



accomplishing the desired objective. Despite the challenges that these organizations face while trying to empower women, even though slow, there has been notable progress. In terms of political participation and representation more women are coming up to run for positions and taking up jobs that were initially meant for just men. Through the different contributions of the ILO, the government of Nigeria reviewed the National Employment Policy to aid unemployment and this increased the economic participation of women over the years from 48.26% in 2007 to 50.46 in 2017.

In terms of educational attainment, more females are given the opportunity to attend schools now, be it formal or informal as well as vocational trainings even though some Northern areas still restrict girls education due to the sharia law they practice and the increased case of child marriages. UNESCO and UNICEF have addressed issues of education rights from the right based perspective that shun the barriers of culture, colonial policies, socio-economic issues the likes. There has been an imbalance in the rise of girls attending schools between the years. Even though more women are getting aware, the aspect of patriarchy and oppression still holds them back from fighting issues like FGM and child marriage. After President Goodluck Jonathan signed the VAAP act in 2015 which prohibits the practice of FGM, there has been a noticeable decrease over the years, the FGM table shows that although the northern parts of Nigeria still has a lot of concentration. The aspect of rape however has been a hard nut to crack and data is difficult to get due to the unwillingness of victims to speak and share experiences. Several organizations both internationally and regionally have taken up the issue. Both the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) have sections that expressly prohibit this act and encourage government to attach punishments to this action. Generally these different organizations have been efficient in curbing or reducing gender inequality, although the challenges they face has greatly slowed down their progress. If the efforts from these international and regional organizations

can be merged with a willing government and have policies reviewed, the progress rate will have more impacts.

## CONCLUSION

This work aimed at answering the questions on the extent international organizations under the United Nations and African Union have gone to curb gender inequality in Nigeria, it also aimed at figuring out how gender inequality affects the lives of Nigerian women as well as what factors limited the active participation and representation of Nigerian women. This work also went further to explain why the issue of gender inequality needs the help of not just domestic or regional organizations but also international organizations, lastly this work showed that through the active gender policy and empowerment from international organizations, Nigerian women can overcome the issue of gender inequality.

To achieve this aim, the researcher used qualitative research method and feminist theory. Feminist theory aims at freedom of women and their ability to be included in the society. It also believes in equipping women through empowerment. Special focus was given to liberal feminist approach since it focuses on equal participation and representation of women as well as being able to take responsibility for decisions and not being hindered by legal restraints. Nigerian liberal feminists like Chimamanda Adichie and Gift Eke have laid concerns on the unequal rights and opportunities of Nigerian women when compared to men. The researcher focused on Nigeria since it is the most populous African country and faces the issue of gender equality to a large extent. It is equally one of the poorest countries in the world. The sources of data in this work were interview videos, novels on feminism, journals, news briefs, Instagram pages of UN women and Violence against Women (VAW), and websites of the United Nations, the National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) website alongside statements from non-governmental organizations and many more.

Gender equality isn't just a central human right but a vital establishment for a quiet, prosperous and maintainable world. Women's struggle as well as feminism in Nigeria is dated back to the pre-colonial days with notable

women like Queen Amina of Zazzau and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti during their fights against taxes placed on Nigerian women. Feminism started with the urgent need to improve the quality of women's lives in Nigeria. The Nigerian woman makes up for more than 48% of the entire population and the constant discrimination of the Nigerian woman through deep rooted patriarchy norms of the Nigerian social system, the practices, lack of effective participation in politics and the work force further creates gap in gender basis. To this effect, feminism has still not gotten the expected goal in empowering women because the low level of female education, high level of child marriage and increased rate of FGM and so on. The notion that a woman's place and desire is to remain in the kitchen or home is something that is still under debate for international organizations and women organizations. This research examined how international organizations have improved the aspect of gender inequality in every aspect of life which is caused basically by gender disparity and forms of discriminatory acts on women and girl child. The choice of United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) organizations for this study is due to the fact that the UN is the general binding body of the world while AU is a binding body for Africa. They both have different organizations, declarations, conventions and even policies that deal directly with the aspect of gender equality and human rights like the Resolution 1325 and the African Charter on Human Rights (ACHR) which acknowledges women's right to the law, education, freedom and education. Therefore their inclusion and participation in liberating Nigerian women from the issues of gender inequality cannot be overemphasized. The focus of the UN Charter on sustaining the human rights of every being as well as equality of women is in line with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) bill which also corresponds with the 1979 Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) against oppression of women. The October 2010 Resolution 1325 on peace and security of women and the CEDAW pushed for the equal participation of women in decision making and the protection of women and girls from Gender Based Violence (GBV). The

Nigerian Gender Policy (NGP) was formed with the aim of having a policy environment for the government to reach out to the people in terms of gender equality and to begin programs geared towards empowerment of these women. The policy also focused on bringing in new values and attitudes that respect all human beings and giving women a strong voice. Since 2007 when this policy was signed in Nigeria, it still has not been able to completely meet up with its initial goals due to the challenges of deep rooted culture and corruption.

Feminist theory leans towards empowerment of women in order to give them a voice to challenge the obstacles they face in the society. Organizations under the United Nations and African Union also recognize that empowerment of women can lead to development and eradication of gender inequality. For women's empowerment to be meaningful and successful, the UN and AU organizations realize the importance of eradicating the existing gender gap to promote a gender responsive atmosphere through the Nigerian Gender Policy (NGP) as well as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which promotes the political and economic decision making empowerment of Nigerian women. Scholars like Rowland (1997) say that empowerment fails in countries like Nigeria because these development organizations have made women believe in just participation without the ability to change negative existing structures. Alongside this is the challenge of legal, political and socio-cultural restraints faced by both the organizations willing to help and the women in question.

The outcome of this study revealed that indeed women are needed in all aspects of life in order for Nigeria to achieve sustainable development and this cannot be overemphasized, as population-wise, women constitute the labor force that move towards eradication of poverty within any society. Overall, this research has shown that all forms of gender inequality are deeply rooted in lack of adequate education which is completely detrimental to a nation's growth. Different international organizations like the UN,

UNICEF, UDHR, UNFPA, ILO, VAW, UNESCO, UNIFEM, UN Women and so many others have individually highlighted socio-cultural vices like patriarchy, religious and cultural barriers, long standing traditions, stigmatization, low education level, unemployment, poverty, democratization, godfatherism as well as the pluralistic nature of Nigeria's legal system as the issues that a Nigerian woman faces which hinders her from reaching her full potential. It is also evident in this work that Nigeria has a rigid government and some long standing laws alongside a corrupt system that makes it difficult for help to be rendered peacefully. The religious and traditional barriers that these women have gotten so used to, is a continuous imposing factor for international organizations to fully empower, enlighten and bring liberation to these women and girls. Gender inequality has been unaccepted worldwide, but to truly eradicate this, it has to go beyond just rallies, campaigns and the likes to actual actions and lots of enlightenment especially when dealing with issues that have to do with culture or tradition. Therefore, international organizations, NGOs and women organizations planning on tackling these issues have to properly understand other people's culture to avoid generalizing things, that is, the historical, economic, social, political and geographical factors of the place need to be considered because they are part of their way of life.

This research is important not just for the researcher but also for readers who intend to take part in the fight for gender equality and who wish to see women do more things and make more impact. Through this study, the researcher has been exposed to a lot of laws, conventions and practices going on in Nigeria which the researcher finds very appalling; amongst this is the contradiction of laws in the Nigerian Constitution which permits every states to have its own state laws despite the fact that these state laws infringe on the fundamental human right of the Nigerian citizens which the same constitution frowns against and the Sharia law which has left the issue of child marriage partly legal. Another will be the fact that international organizations are not exactly welcomed when they try to touch on issues that

affect culture and traditions. The study also brought to light several conventions, treaties, policies and acts geared towards gender equality. It also pin pointed the fact that the missing link in the successful actualization of the above mentioned is proper implementation, restructuring, amendments and possible annulments of the outdated ones. The concept of human right is basically to protect the human being no matter the color, gender, race, ethnic background, nationality or age. Through empowerment, willing individuals will be the starting point to the elimination of gender inequality and gender-based violence in Nigeria, because only through empowerment will Nigerian women and girls be enlightened enough to know what is good and what is expressly violating on their fundamental human rights. Also, women should be encouraged to speak up in the aspect of rape or violence and proper, faster and more willing mediums should be made available to these victims.

The researcher would specially like to give a personal recommendation, which is that in as much as we talk about the female gender, it is also very important that the men are properly sensitized and taught on issues like this because after all the issues that happen to women are blamed on the men and the patriarchy nature. Finally, it is note-worthy to say that this research has had a positive impact on the researcher's professional development in gaining knowledge on culturally sensitive practices, as well as conventions and laws on human rights, gender equality and various organizations that take part in the betterment of women's lives. This knowledge will be useful to the researcher in the future when working with NGOs, women and children in general. The researcher also proposes that "Gender Studies" be added to the academic curriculum in universities as this issue clearly affects every being.

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04.03.2019

Dear Okojie Pamela Princess Eghongh

Your project “**The Impact of International Organizations in Fostering Gender Equality in Nigeria**” has been evaluated. Since only secondary data will be used the project it does not need to go through the ethics committee. You can start your research on the condition that you will use only secondary data.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Direnç Kanol

Rapporteur of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee

*Direnç Kanol*

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