

**AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER INEQUALITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION  
IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Poverty is a global phenomenon and a fulcrum of sustainable development agenda that has attracted attention of scholars in attempt to reduce it. The Nigeria's position on the global poverty index is at the worrisome level, as against numerous fiscal commitments to various poverty reduction programs and available resources. The paper, through egalitarian theory and qualitative method, identified gender inequality arising from feminization of poverty, socio-cultural stereotype of women's roles and poor legislation on women representation as core threat to poverty reduction efforts in Nigeria, using Ogun State as case study. It recommends advocacy for girl-child education, employment of more women to high paid income in formal sectors and implementation of 35% active positions for women in government as panacea to poverty reduction.

**Keywords:** Feminization, formal sector, gender equality, poverty reduction, poverty

## INTRODUCTION

Equality, fairness and justice are strong ethos of democracy, a political firmament with which majority of countries struggle to associate with. It has been observed that achieving gender equality would remain utopian, if there is no urgent reversal from the economic deprivation, discrimination and indignation many females have been subjected to over the years. The aged stereotype of confining the roles of females to the kitchen has limited their economic prosperity, political activism, representation from other spectrum of opportunities which includes better income. The wholesome of these ugly experiences of women have stiffened their economic power and impoverished them the more, when compared to the opposite sex. The experience cum systematic unequalled treatment has great causative reduction in the prosperity of the general population, whereas the arrays of opportunities for women have been left unharnessed, leading to high poverty rate for all. United Nation Development Programme (2019) reports that women form the largest population of the poorest gender in the world, having been conditioned primarily as home manager, producers of food, dispenser of sexual pleasure, shouldering the burden of agricultural pains and manual labor. Igbuzor (2008) cited in Uchechukwu, Ucheria & Rejoice (2015) noted that girls accounted for majority of the children out of school in Nigeria and almost two third of women work in informal sectors as unpaid workers at home or low income earners in other sectors as against the opportunity available for male counterparts. A very few number of these women are engaged in professional career; elected or either serving in government position of authority as appointees (Fatile, Akhakpe, Igbokwe-Ibeto & Oteh, 2012; Fodabe, 2017; Olojede, 2019)

Ogu (2014) referring to the prevailing gender inequality and repression of female rights, poverty has remained pervasive with attendant daily hardship that are difficult to ignore in Nigeria. This was better established by Akamidu's (2004) exposition that Nigeria reeks of endemic, misery, destitution and malnutrition. The National Bureau of Statistics (2019) flagged poverty situation to the high heaven when it declared that the poverty situation in Nigeria is making it difficult for people to eat, shelter and cloth themselves. Glaringly, these exacerbated effects of poverty in Nigeria and in other places have evoked attention of not only the Nigeria's government and global institutions; many civil societies and philanthropic individuals have also intensified efforts towards poverty reduction, through series of programs to make life more abundant. However, practical evidences abound that efforts to eradicate poverty are not likely to show significant progress if gender inequality persists through the current Nigeria's socio-economic, cultural and political arrangements. Poverty reduction is contingent on the index of gender equality achievement. Igbuzor (2008) asserts this opinion when he emphasized that gender inequality intersects with economic deprivation to magnify the impoverishment of men and women. Significant to note is that, the informal sector is a major source of employment for women, not excluding Nigeria and Ogun State in particular where women get involved less in formal sector that has high income. It should be noted that the informal sector in Nigeria is characterized with job insecurity and low earnings, leading to the exclusion of women from impactful policy (Bridge, 2001; Onah 2016 & clabert, 2019).

In essence, the envisioned oasis intended if poverty reduction efforts succeed, rest on the significant number of women that can be economically empowered, protected from cultural stigmatization and systematic limitation of their innate capacity from contributing to national development. The dimensions of challenges against poverty reduction and the gains of sustainable

development cannot be efficiently dealt with, without gender equality (Uchechukwu, Ucheria & Rejoice, 2015). To further stem the intricate relationship between gender equality and poverty reduction, Kabeer (2013) posits that gender inequality is the feminization of poverty and that if poverty has to be reduced, equal treatment of all gender must be demonstrated and domesticated in Nigeria's policy measures. While many research attention has been beamed on the causes of poverty and copious literature abounds on the concept of gender equality through sustainable development goals, not much has been done on how equilibrium opportunities to women can accentuate and accelerate reduction of rising poverty in the country. It is in the need to establish the role of gender equality on the various attempts to reduce poverty and to also interrogate the effects of women deprivation and restrictions of their capacity on the high rate of poverty in Nigeria, using Ogun State South Western Nigeria as a case study that this paper was undertaken. The paper is a qualitative insight into the role of gender equality and Poverty reduction in Ogun State, using egalitarian theory as it expository analysis.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Strategic planning to reduce all the incidence of poverty and its attendance effects has not been factored in the place of even distribution of resources and development over the years. In furtherance, Macbeth, John & Penkah (2017) argued that there has not been poverty reduction because gender discrimination persist e has not been poverty reduction because gender discrimination persist in the allocation of economic opportunities, placing females at a disequilibrium level. In response, researchers, civil society groups, national and international organizations have exerted efforts on poverty reduction through gender equality advocacy. It should be noted that since 1998 World Bank has had many strategic plans support for poverty reduction in at least 15 Africa countries. In contrast, only few African countries paid attention to the fact that the growing gender inequality is a propensity for high poverty rate. It suffices to say that if poverty would be reduced in Ogun State and in Nigeria, there is a need for a rethought approach to gender sensitivity.

The women folks have been subjected to artificial inequality, deprivation and various vicious treatments as influenced by socio-cultural and religious constructs that confer the status of weaker vessels to females from birth. It is observed as aged belief in the Africa traditional settings that the roles of women are confined into the kitchen, as agent of procreation. Hence, female children of school ages are preoccupied with cooking, running menial jobs and keeping the home clean. While many of them are used as laborers on farmlands, against the usual freedom accorded to their male sons who are seen early in life as the potential head of the family and providers. By this extension, they are allowed to attend schools to be educated and take more important roles that better their lives. Another manifestation of the problem is rooted in the rural urban migration restrictions against females. The females are deemed so important for unofficial family work; managing the home and taking care of the children. The women are not encouraged to migrate to urban areas and other metropolitan locations where job opportunities and empowerment are available. In contrast, the male are the ones who are found migrating into these areas where industries and other high income opportunities are available. This is a systematic exclusion of the women from viable opportunities available in formal sectors with regulated high income and legitimate request for better conditions of living (Jacinta, 2020 & UNDP, 2010).

The popular Yoruba aphorisms that " Ile Obinrin ki pesu" in technical meaning that women's reproductive days end speedily ,has made early marriage the socio-cultural norm in Nigeria and in Ogun State in particular. The opinion gained prominence, citing the early biological development of females' body system and since women are much touted to be instrument of procreation, the society habitually gets them married at early stage. It has become worrisome that innate energy, creativity and resourcefulness of the women that could have been useful to creating personal and general prosperity for Nigeria are basically deployed into raising family and becoming dependent on their husbands (Aboyade, 2017). Another problem is the might of religion as it concern the Muslim women who are put in seclusion or purdah for chastity and obedience to Islamic law. This practice is popular in the state of Osun, Oyo State predominantly in Ibadan and Ogun State respectively. The secular nature of Nigeria politics has not only cut these women out from active socio- political engagements, it is a limitation to their key involvement in critical economic opportunities and formal employment. In the alternatives, a large number of them are restricted to informal labour; home trading and heavily dependent. In essence, poverty level rises on when the full potential of the citizens are not harnessed.

The overall implications of these problems are that poverty reduction efforts by government or civil societies have not yielded substantial success since gender inequality issues are not well attended to. Glaringly, the ostracized women and the ones who have had their economic development limited by socio cultural beliefs constitute the largest population in Nigeria. In essence, the persisting gender inequality is a precursor to growing poverty and general economic doldrums. The emerging global socio economic reality and the economic shocks of covid-19 have proven that evolving needs of the family and the society have become burdensome for men to solely shoulder as bread winners. The observed growing syndrome of full housewives is a challenge to poverty reduction efforts, as more women have become heavily dependent on their husbands and vulnerable to many socio political economic exclusion.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of this study is to examine the extent to which gender equality affects the level of poverty in Ogun State. The other specific objectives include:

- (i) To examine how equitable distribution of resources for all can spread the spectrum of wealth and employment opportunities in Ogun State.
- (ii) To access how even opportunities for all can improve the standard of living in Ogun State

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

For better clarification, the following research questions guide the conduct of the investigation

- (i) Would the equitable distribution of resources for all spread the spectrum of wealth and employment opportunities in Ogun State?

- (ii) Can even opportunities for all improve the standard of living in Ogun State?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The paper examined the role of gender equality on poverty reduction in Ogun State and sources for the research were drawn from secondary data using qualitatively approach such as text books, journals, articles and other publications.

## **CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION**

### Gender Equality

Gender equality is a way of assigning same values to male and females in the socio, political, economic and cultural contestation in ways that such values confer equal life chances and opportunities to all, not minding sexism. This is why Uchechukwu, Uecheria & Rejoice (2016) posited that gender equality is a reflection of balance treatment by the law and entitlement to same life opportunities, taking into account the differing biological compositions. It means the society and political structure must take the peculiar needs of each gender into account while creating a leveler for all to thrive. It means no woman should be denied a job she is well qualified for just because she is a nursing mother on the excuse that the establishment does not have child care facility. In contrast, gender inequality is the opposite of gender equality. Gender inequality is socially constructed practices through societal laws, norms, understanding and unwritten statues that have remained the cogwheel of real development, putting women at disadvantage in all social, economic and political strata.

### Poverty

Poverty is the incapacitating conditions of people wherein they are unable to provide for self basic needs like food, cloths and shelter. It includes lack of effective ability to participate in critical decisions regarding to self dignity and societal prosperity. Poverty is not limited to reduction in the purchasing power of people to afford the basic needs of life; it affects the strength and dignity of such individuals to actively participate in any given activity of the society (Onah, 2006)

### Poverty Reduction

Poverty Reduction is a collection of strategic efforts by individuals, government agencies, international institutions and civil societies as directed towards reducing unbearable indignation conditions of life. It is rooted in multifaceted approach to removing incidence of poverty through government policies, empowerment and palliative programs. In the area of policy directives, it could mean granting of tax waiver or reduction of taxes for small businesses and granting of loans to industrialist who could create jobs for teeming population. One may wonder while attention is on poverty reduction instead of tradition. The answers exist in the two realities; that the growth level of poverty has become an overarching issues whose global effects cannot be swiftly expunged and that the gap between the haves and the haves not is a natural phenomenon, its total eradication is utopian but its reduction is a great possibility as greatly advanced through Sustainable Development Goals (Moliki & Oyekanmi, 2020; Oyekanmi, Moliki & Dauda, 2019).

### Poverty Feminization

This is a developed concept from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on income, assets, time, and health deprivation, socio-cultural and political exclusion of females. It is a trend that typifies an increasing inequality in the quality of life between men and women. The reflection of this occurrence is not about lack of income alone, it is prominent in the deprivation of capabilities and widespread gender sentiments in government and in all societies. Many females live under the poverty line in many parts of the world; Asia, Africa and some part of Europe where women are deprived of high income and important capabilities (Goldberg, 2010; Bianchi, 1999)

### **CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA**

Causes of gender inequality has proven to be self-reinforcing, interrelated and multifaceted. Some of the factors are discussed herein:

#### Socio Cultural Norms and Mindset

Irrrespective of formal policies, rising number of gender activists and legal domestication of gender equality by government and relevant agencies, there has always been pushbacks by the many prevailing social norms and sentimental cultural values. This is a clear message that the orientation of the society has far reaching impacts on gender inequality on employment, political representations, healthcare, legal rights and other socially constructed opportunities. A significant example could be drawn among the Yoruba who have assigned weaker status to females' children at birth, with their preference for male child and the social values attached to having male sons. This patrilineal consideration gives male all the parental attention and other opportunities like education and technical skills which allow them to sit at the table of decision making, favored for political positions and high paying income. Ostensibly, these norms have discreet effects on the economic power and social roles of women, in a society that ascribes greater value to sons over daughters, resulting to poor investments in the education and health of girls. Somali & Franscesca (2012) were assertive in their claims that social norms and cultural values of society play key roles in determining opportunities for girls via discriminatory mindsets that in turn place females at the vulnerable conditions.

#### Early Marriage

Early Marriage for girls limits high educational achievements of females. This does not mean all females who got married early never had opportunity to continue their education; however the numbers of the lucky ones are insignificant. Wide age difference between couples is also adduced for many low educational attainment of girls-child (Lloyd & Mensch, 2008). This practice is rampant in Nigeria, the Northern and Southern part have their own share of blame in this practice. Many of the young girls are either married out early or put in the family way by fellow teenage boys, leading to high rate of school drop outs. Unfortunately, the society and the parent stigmatized the girl or turn her to economic vessels as hawkers; the male with whom the act was committed with is given higher chance to continue with the studies (Ambrus & Field, 2018).

### Unequal Educational Opportunities

Animasahun (2020) notes that the African society and its prevalent archaic belief that female education is a waste constitute a greater threat to equal capacity building of the girl-child unlike their male counterparts. Undoubtedly, some of the earlier mentioned interrelated discriminatory issues have contributed to the unbalanced educational access of female child in Ogun State. Ogundeko (2019) argued that not less than 32% of female students within the ages of 7- 10 years old in Ogun State rural areas would not complete primary education while he also opined that many of these female children are deterred from education through child labour. Alimaka (2020), notes that the African society and its prevalent archaic belief that female education is a waste constitute a greater threat to equal capacity building of the girl-child unlike their male counterparts. Throughout the world, men have greater access to education than women, with ¼ females between the ages of 15-24 not being able to complete primary education. According to Soetan (2018), that group make the 58% not completing basic education in Nigeria and that of the illiterate people in the world, women are the 2/3. The inference here is that when girls do not have the same educational opportunities, it limits their decision power and other socio-economic advantages and that of the entire country.

### Religious Activities

Religious precepts have assigned some peculiar roles to women and places restrictions on their freedom from venturing into some activities that are dominated by men. These religious rituals most especially in Islamic societies create encumbrances on the innate expression of women talents. For instance, the prevalent of women in purdah in the Northern and Western Nigeria like the State of Osun, Ibadan city in Oyo State and in Ogun State where women dress in Islamic ways, have surely created certain discrimination for them in the society. Many are inhibited from working in the formal setting with their dresses, as it could mount fear of Islamization in the minds of the Christian. The fact being raised here is not a conclusion that Islam forbids freedom for women; it's a religion that dignifies women more and equally advocates that society should treat them with courtesy. However, the social interpretation of how the women should dress has placed these restrictions on them (Dauda, 2018)

## **IMPLICATIONS OF GENDER INEQUALITY ON SOCIO- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

A cursory look at the societies with higher gender equality shows appreciable level of socio-economic improvement of members. Although, improving gender equality may be viewed as intrinsic values that every modern societies could be proud of, it also leads to achievement in other development goals in health, education and socio economic prosperity. It is pertinent to situate clearly within the prism of economy, politics and social harmony that prevailing gender inequality is a further ditch to the attainment of the aforementioned goals. Gender discrimination is not only inequitable treatment, it reduces economic performance from all index. There exist a broad correlation between gender inequality and human development, with the low ranking countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) performing poorly on gender equality measurements than high-HDI (UNDP, 2019). Wide gap in employment opportunities between women and men is a shortfall on the general Gross

Domestic Product of the citizens, thereby deepening underdevelopment currently ravaging the third world countries and Nigeria in specific. Pervading inequality has restricted women to low paying employment opportunities, while many have been condemned to fulltime housewives by the social constructed values of taking care of the children and managing the home. In consequence, almost all the financial responsibilities of the family are left for the men to shoulder, even in cases when women are employed, the income is usually low and it affects the expected contributory values to the economy from women who constitute higher percentage in total population (Macbeth, et al. 2017).

Development comprises of human capacity development and available resources and that development begins to suffer when the human capacity and innate talents of the most populated segment in the society is restricted and underutilized. Adding to this assertion, real development should be collaborative and cumulative without leaving any segment of the society behind. Hence, the more the society close up employment gaps between male and females, the better for accelerated development as asserted by UNDP (Idowu, 2018; Aboyade & Kabee, 2017). The perverted inequality has restricted women to low paying employment opportunities, while many have been condemned to fulltime housewives by the socially constructed values of taking care of the children and managing the home. In consequence, almost all the financial responsibilities of the family are left for the men to shoulder, even when women are employed, the income is usually low and it affects the expected contributory values to the economy from women who constitute high percentage in total population. In another perspective, since development comprises of human capacity development and available resources, development begins to suffer when the human capacity and innate talents of the most populated segment in the society is restricted and under utilized. In the opinion of Adejo (2019), real development should be collaborative and cumulative without leaving any segment of the society behind. Hence, the more the society close up employment gaps between male and females, the better for accelerated development as asserted by UNDP.

Educational equality increases female literacy and reduces child mortality and in furtherance, qualifies her to hold political positions. Herein, advocacy for female schooling improves; it raises female enrollment and higher education opportunities for females, whereas, if inequality persists, an even educational opportunity for all is a setback. Gender Inequality in education has negative effects on socio-economic development in Nigeria. Lower fertility rate is also associated with increased educational opportunities for women, with positive results on growth while gender inequality undermines educational development (Udochukwu, Eucheria & Joy, 2019) Gender Inequality is crystal to disjointed economic drives and national development. When development plan is not encompassing, the neglect in one area have ripple effect in other areas.

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

The paper adopts egalitarian theory to explain gender equality as it deals with development and poverty reduction efforts. The concept of egalitarianism is widely espoused by many scholars such as Ikedima, Johnson, Taylor & Isaac (Kelly & Kerry 2019). This theory is useful to accentuate vision that men and women should be treated equally in social, economic and all other aspects of society, and to not be discriminated against on the basis of their gender, being one of the objectives of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). The premise of egalitarianism is that all men; males and females are essentially equal. Egalitarianism is assessed via a social periscope on measures to reduce economic inequalities or from

political inclinations that advocate for alternatively to ensure equal treatment and rights of diverse groups of people. The theory stems from philosophical perspective that preaches equality and equal treatment across gender, economic opportunities, religious practices, and political leanings. From economic view, it emphasized abolition of income inequality and unjust distribution, the fulcrum ideas that have shaped the growth of many political and economic systems. The notion of egalitarianism was well advanced for by Karl Marx in his foundation of Marxism and John Locke when he romanticized the rights of people to own personal property and enjoy self liberty irrespective of their gender (Klinton, 2019). There are various strands of egalitarianism, extending into various spheres of life; economic, political and socio- cultural values. Gender equality as it were, presupposes that men and women should be subjected to equal economic, educational and political opportunities and legal protection. It is undeniable that poverty is on the high rise in Nigeria and in Ogun State in specific. While it is believed that opportunities have being stiffened against women, which explains why many women have remain politically disadvantage and economically poor, it suffices to stress that the ensuing inequality has further widen poverty lines among women and mounted greater challenges for economic development. Hence, egalitarianism as a theory has been advocated as a leveler against various gender discrimination identified as cog wheel of poverty reduction efforts.

Reflecting on the central themes of the theory, unequal opportunities for all gender remain a strong problem to achieving poverty reduction, despite the floating of many empowerments and poverty alleviation programmes at the national, state and local government levels. However, this model of egalitarianism has not reveal an encompassing reality of gender issues behind the veil. There have been plethora of instances where males have skewed most economic, political and social values to themselves, leaving the females in disadvantage positions. Female's representation in Political offices and active participation in key decisions on which the welfare of the people are decided are said to be at the dwindling level. The theory support previous work and argued that gender inequality have contributed to the impoverishment of women and reducing the envisioned development of government.

Conversely, a key gap or lacuna that most works on gender issues and feminization of poverty have not focused on is the need to investigate how the surging population of females has become a threat to men and opportunities to gainful employment, fair and equal political contest. One of the key areas to be examined is the emerging trend in unemployment. While it is a consensus opinion that unemployment is a precursor to poverty, the biological composition, appealing appearances and persuasive temptation of women are getting them more juicy jobs in high income establishments over men. A look at telecommunication, entertainment, hospitality business and other corporate organizations and service providers show that many of the jobs available have been taken over by females, leaving many males out of jobs. The new trend have multiple consequences on the economy and marital harmony. In political contest, females are always advocating for preferences against other equally aspiring men. Such is a big question on what equality stands for, after all, both gender are God's creatures. There is a need to investigate the reversal of financial responsibility amongst couples. Now that women are getting employed more than men, many husbands have become helpless in fulfilling financial duties at home, turning the women to bread winners, a situation where men now stay at home to tender to the children while the wives are away at work. This would create new monster husband, a possible propensity for marital abuse and high rate of divorce due to the posturing irreconcilable differences among couples.

## **GENDER INEQUALITY AND EFFECTS ON EMPLOYMENT AND STANDARD OF LIVING IN OGUN STATE: AN EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Gender Inequality remains a troubling issue within the confines of development agenda and a popular index of measuring global economic growth, on the reality that the less people are discriminated against, the better to ensuring accelerated development across all board (Oyekanmi, et al. 2019; Klassen & Claudia, 2002). While it is agreed that gender issues are both global and national concerns, the need to take Ogun State as case study was informed by the mixture of its rural -Urban population and significant boarder line with Lagos State. This characteristics, give it a tapestry of educated population majorly residing in major cities like Abeokuta, Obafemi Owode, Ado-Odo Ota, Ijebu Ode while the majority of the people with low literacy achievement reside in the rural suburbs in villages and towns. This variables offer simple comparism to how gender equality have feared in the state. Abiodun, B. (2020), asserts that women in Ogun State, especially in the rural areas have continually suffer from socio political and economic exclusions owing to their disequilibrium educational level when compared to the male counterparts. She emphasized that gender inequality has restricted females to petty trading in household's items, reducing their purchasing power and making it difficult to escape the poverty line. Hence , she offered her support to a soft loan programme tagged " Okowo Dapo" an initiative that offer start up loans to women, most especially market woman to increase their business capital and live above poverty line.

While investigating poverty and unemployment rate in Ogun State. Abegunde, (2019) declared that poverty has become the flashpoint in Ogun State villages, especially in areas dominated by women and petty traders. He cited that, the females are excluded from higher educational opportunities available for the male, consequently limiting survival chance from poverty. In consequence, a great percentage of women suffered from gender discrimination; disadvantaged educational opportunities and condemned to casual work and peasant farming. The reality herein is that Sustainable growth can only be achieved when it addresses the core issue of equality and opportunity for females. The need to create equal opportunity for women remain the fulcrum of Ogun State, most especially through various activities of the Ministry of Women Affairs, given the mandate to; build a just society devoid of discrimination against women, ensure continuous empowerment and protection of the Rights of Children; invest in women, men, young and old in a gender responsive manner through participatory approaches for sustainable development of the State and build a sustainable livelihood for women, promote integration for vulnerable ones and discourage Gender disparity and all forms of Child abuse( OGSG,2020)

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The research was able to establish close relationship between the prevailing gender inequality and rising level of poverty in Ogun State. The Perverted uneven treatment of women in economic cultural and political opportunities have been linked to poverty reduction challenges in the state. Women are the most violated, disempowered and excluded gender in the society. Through the paper, it was reeled out that women are dislodged from high formal income employment opportunities, as their socially imposing responsibilities on child bearing, upbringing and home tendering. The foregoing exclusion and unequalled

treatment has a telling effects on the educational achievement of the female, the consequence which limits their employment in key formal sectors with more rewarding income. It was noted that these burdening responsibilities as conferred on the women are not imposed on male counterparts. Hence, men have unfettered educational opportunities, giving them vantage position in the nation's economic hub and the ease of escaping poverty lines. The finding asserted that gender inequality against women furthers the rise of poverty, as many women could not explore their enterprising and industrious values beyond subsistent- rural economic activities which are not sufficient to live decent life. In summary, the capacity to driving sustainable economy, improving national wealth and reducing poverty is hampered due to exclusion of women from the table of decision making.

In the same trajectory of poverty reduction efforts and the role of gender equality, the research finds out that gender in equality have created far reaching uneven distribution of economic opportunities and socio-political, cultural and legal freedom in the society, leading to the new concept of feminization of poverty. The Perverted strands of injustice and inequality against women have restricted them to the status of rural dwellers, inhabitants of squalors and shanties with unimaginable indignation. The men have access to urban and cosmopolitan cities where economic development exists, hence are able to live decent life and escape extreme poverty as against their female counterparts. Citing Ogun State experience on poverty and inequality, it was found out women have been frozen out from wider spectrum of opportunities. In few instances where women were empowered educational and economic wise, they were able to raise the bar and contribute to local and international efforts to reducing poverty and also improving Nigeria's economic development. The flagship of the paper is that, gender equality efforts would help to speed up result oriented poverty reduction efforts and that if inequality persists in the dimensions discussed in the paper, poverty would continue to grow geometrically. It also discovered that wealth would not grow and the global war against poverty is far from being won if few people as men monopolize and skewed available resources to themselves alone, noting that female as the most populous gender segment need to play critical role in the development drive and fight against poverty.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Gender equality is a global topical issue and a strong parameter on which nations of the world are categorised on developmental index. It is a moral persuasion that opportunities such as education, political participation, economic empowerment and other inalienable rights should be evenly enjoyed by people without special concession to gender leaning. The paper observed that the prevailing inequalities against women have placed them at disadvantage, the consequence which is the rise in poverty level. In response to improve the economy of the state and further development, the need for gender equality was emphasized to retooling poverty eradication and creating a fair, just and developed society. Inequality is tantamount to injustice and development cannot thrive when the most populous gender is subjected to unfair treatment. Therefore, there is a need for further study on how the downturn job opportunities for men are turning same men to victims of gender inequality. For instance, when male and female applies for job in the same establishment, females have recurring chance of getting the job over the male, even with lesser qualifications with the male, due to feminism attraction (Soetan, 2018)

The research concluded that poverty would continue to rise among women, especially with low literacy level and urban settlers who are deeply enmeshed in low income jobs if inequality persist in socio political, economic and educational opportunities. Development of a country is dependent on how fast they are able to reduce gender inequality gaps. This is a prefix that there

has been vocal commitment to gender equality in developed countries which explains why they are ranked above developing countries in Africa where women are subjected to socio cultural and political stereotypes. It is safe to conclude that if development is to be total and encompassing, bifurcation between sexes is to be discouraged and that if women are allowed access to opportunities like men, GDP would improve and the economy would be in good standing. The paper also stress that when adequate attention is given to the girl-child educational initiatives, including adequate monitoring to limit the high number of drop-outs via teenage pregnancy, early marriage, child labour and increased higher education achievement of females, many females would escape the poverty line and in furtherance contribute to the economic growth of the country

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