

HISTORICAL AND CURRENT PATTERNS AND PRACTICES IN PAID AND UNPAID LABOUR IN RELATION TO GENDER ISSUES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Gender which is used to describe socially constructed roles and behavior for males and females has a broad evolutionary record which dates far back into periods when our ancestors were hunters and gatherers. Then it was easily conceptualized that men are better adapted to some activities and women better adapted to others (Maiolo, et al, 1991). It is important to state that though cross-cultural studies show that ideas about what is appropriate masculine and feminine behavior vary widely, whatever the ideas, parents and others go to great lengths to distinguish girls from boys in the socialization process. This has been reflective of the labor situation in modern world, although modern world has shown that for most activities sex differences are irrelevant; ethnographic records suggest that this is not true and that gender based inequalities contribute significantly to the current patterns and practices in paid and unpaid labor world wide.

Keywords: disparity, gender, labor, paid, unpaid.

Introduction

Gender which is used to describe socially constructed roles and behavior for male and females has a broad evolutionary record which date far back into periods when our ancestors were hunters and gatherers. Then, it was easily conceptualized that men are better adapted to some activities and women better adapted to others (Mailo, et al, 1991). It is important to state that though cross-cultural studies show that ideas about what is appropriate masculine and feminine behavior vary widely, whatever the ideas, parents and others go to great lengths to distinguish girls from boys and socialize them in that context. This has been reflective of the labor situation in modern word.

Although, modern world has shown that for most activities sex differences are irrelevant. In most institutional frame work of society, there is still an intensive and pervasive sex role socialization which makes sex differences and relations greater than they are in urban settings. Consequently, gender based irregularities contribute significantly to the current patterns and practices in paid and unpaid labor globally.

Main Text

Calhoun, et al (1994), conceives gender as “...human traits linked by culture to each sex” thus, gender includes all culturally learned differences between males and females, including how people think about themselves, how they interact with others, and what positions they occupy in society as a whole.

Specifically, in most Nigerian cultures, gender roles are tied closely to biological differences and associated with the domestic sphere. Many domestic spheres are always biased against women and girls. In many of these Nigerian cultures, women’s status is first derived from their roles as a wife, partner and especially as a mother even when they are also producers and bread-winners. Hence, gender relations in many rural and urban communities in Nigeria are based on inequalities, bias and discrimination in cultural socialization. On the other hand, labor in sociological context is a term synonymous with ‘wage-labor’. However, in Marxism, attention is often drawn to the conflicting interests of ‘labor’ and ‘capital’. Also, in anthropological discussion of ‘laboring’ or sociological analyses of domestic labor, the term may be equated with work rather than the more restricted category of paid employment (Marshall, 1998). Consequently, in gender terms; it is important to highlight the decomposition of labor which is the process of differentiation within the working class, such that it is no longer a homogeneous group. In other words, the pattern of paid and unpaid labor is implicit in the biological determinations of sex-male and female in most known societies.

Gender Issues on Paid and Unpaid Labor

The issues in gender relationship as it manifest on paid and unpaid labor vary significantly from one society to another. However, the issues have common variables in large respect in many known Nigerian societies. These common variables are tied to the under listed points:

- The high level of illiteracy amongst females compared to males
- The high rate of unemployment amongst females compared to men

- The low status of women embellished by culture
- Poor health of the people especially women and deteriorating environmental conditions especially as it affects women
- High degree of poverty, accompanied by high levels of fertility, morbidity and mortality rate (Green, 2001). These variables engender unequal distribution of not only available resources, but social positions and economic policies of both paid and unpaid labor between men and women in the structure of most Nigerian institutional frame works.

Consequently, the issue of paid and unpaid labor is gender colored. In other word, gender issues and labor encompasses biological politics particularly, as it involves feminism. For instance most Nigerian rural communities still regard women as second-class citizens (do not have the same economic rights as men).

- Women can not aspire to certain levels in the economic structure of their communities,
- Women have no protective laws in the case of certain harmful traditional practices against them such as rape, female circumcision and other reproductive health rights issues like abortion, contraception, reproductive technology or the management of child birth as well as the politics of menstruation
- Women can not make legal wills in some societies.

Further more, in order to properly examine the impact of gender relations on paid and unpaid labor in Nigeria, it is important to address the existing institutional frameworks especially, the economic institution. One clear indication of gender relationship in this institution is the inherent manifest inequality which contributes significantly to the physical, socio-cultural and economic vulnerabilities of women to male positions in the society. For instance, most women labor are unpaid for, in both rural and urban settings. In cases where they are paid for, it is often under-priced. Again in the computation of the Gross Domestic product (GDP) of the nation, most women labors are not quantified especially those who engage in agricultural production and petty trading. Thus, there are growing recognitions that power in balances in gender relations in all social classes, are at the root of women vulnerabilities in the economic structure of society because of disparity of the assessment of labor in the context of wage compensation.

GENDER DISPARITY IN PAID LABOUR IN TOP JOBS (PRIVATE SECTOR) IN NIGERIA (1999)

TITLE	MEN	WOMEN
Chair /CEO	540	14
Vice Chair	139	8
President	190	3
Chief Operating Officers	50	1
Senior Executive VP	60	3
Executive VP	900	26
Total	1,779	55

Source: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Abuja (1999)

The above is a data showing the gender composition of men and women in paid labor as at 1999 in the Private sector. Most of the women in these positions are significantly found in feminine company works such as apparel, publishing, soap and cosmetics. While most men were found in oil servicing companies, banks and other consulting outfits in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Most unpaid individuals or sex are the women particularly found or who worked in the informal sector- particularly in the agriculture sector mostly in the rural areas. Thus, gender in rural society is used to treat men and women as pre constituted groups where domestic relationship is not symmetrical. Hence, the man is the authority and superior patriarch while the woman is the inferior and subordinate person whose sphere of control is linked to the home (Kitchen) and the man to the work place (formal and informal).

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