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Women Education as a Pre-Condition for Peace Culture in Nigeria

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Abstract: ***It is generally agreed that education is an instrument of change and development for an individual and the society, socially, economically, politically and technologically. A nation dominated with multitudes of illiterate women would definitely be retarded both economically, politically, socially, technologically and religiously. Women are the custodians of future leaders (the young ones). They care, nurture and nourish them and whatever knowledge, attitude and values imparted during this period determines to a great extent the personality of the child and his relationship with people. Consequently, to produce quality and reliable leaders with stable personality, the custodians (women) themselves must be stable, reliable and exposed in terms of quality and adequate knowledge of their immediate surroundings and outside world. This is only possible through education. This paper is pinned to the qualitative method of analysis, using the feminist theory. The paper finds out the imperative of women education as a pre-condition for peace culture in Nigeria. It concludes that women education, the family, society and country at large will be at peace as women are termed as "mothers of peace". There is the need to re-focus the educational system in Nigeria to reflect on women education. Hence, the relevance of women education for the attainment of peace culture in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized, factors militating against peace culture and suggestions for its realisation are also discussed as the recommendations of this paper.***

Keywords: Women, Education, Peace Culture, Peace, Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are many definitions of education as the number of schools of thought. But education, to say the least is as old as the day Adam and Eve had their first encounter with Satan in the Garden of Eden. Education could therefore be defined as the process of creating awareness to secure freedom from the bondage of ignorance. Satan educated Adam and Eve on the implications of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, which they ate and became aware

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of themselves and their environment. Education which Nigeria as a nation has adopted as instrument par excellence is also the process of inculcating the right type of values on individuals. It is a tool to attain socio-economic, political and religious harmony in a society. According to Okeke (2000), "women education, therefore, is the type of education received by women which would make them become aware of themselves and their capacity to exploit their environment" (p.94).

Since culture, embraces social, economic, political and technological aspects of the society, we can therefore encapsulate it and say education is an instrument of cultural development. It is also a popularly held opinion that development is greatly aided in an atmosphere of peace. Peace is described as freedom from war or violence or conflicts or disorders. It also means quietness or tranquility. Conflict could be physical, verbal or psychological – peace of mind is also well sort after. Peace thus embraces freedom from violence or conflict and fear and anxiety. In human society, this appears utopian. Culture as a social factor has received considerable attention in literature and has been variously defined. In this paper, we have adopted the definition provided by the Nigerian cultural policy that culture is: "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours" (Akinwale 2024, p.5). There are not only struggles over security in Nigeria, but also struggles over security within the communities and tribes in Nigeria. Accordingly Alade (2006) posits at a global level that "the use of the security label does not merely reflect whether a problem is a security problem, it is also a political choice, that is, a decision for conceptualisation in a special way..." (p.161).

2. RELATED WORKS

The paper states that women education is a pre-condition for peace culture in Nigeria. It identifies the educational deprivations of the girl-child from the home background which impede women's progress in Nigerian nation. In the same vein some studies are related to the findings of this paper and from available results, the women's performances in areas hitherto kept as a reserve for men calls for reassessment because women are a key to the peace culture in Nigeria.

Related to this paper, is Adarimamza and Olamide (2024) on the Role of the Nigerian woman in the improvement of childhood education. They highlight some of these roles woman have played in the upbringing of the children and made suggestions for improvement. Similarly, Oresile (2008) states that education is the best legacy any parent can have for his/her child, stating that it is the most valuable persuasion to have and a very important factor for changing an individual's life. According to him, women are agents of formal and informal education; they play key and crucial roles in their communities and nations. He concludes that women are "necessary evils" men cannot do without in the society as their role is seen beyond the traditional roles.

Otubelu (2024) opines that women teach children cooking, catering for the home, catering for the future husbands and wives, children and friends. Consequently, she states that, the task before women and mothers which may pose challenges to child upbringing may vary

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depending on the circumstances. Ogbugo (2005) sees teenage pregnancy as a major challenge that disrupts the girl-child education and parents the woman from exercising her responsibilities and duties as a mother and care-giver. According to him, this impedes the women education which is a precondition for peace culture in Nigeria. According to him, nobody would want to receive what he/she has no interest for, no matter how someone views. Madichie (1998) notes that Nigeria as a nation needs to develop a scientific culture making science popular especially among the women folk. His views are corroborated by Ebeh (2000) and Okebukon (1997) who observed that in 1985 illiteracy rate for men worldwide was 21% and 35% for women. Consequently, they submit that there is the dare need to equip women with necessary knowledge, skills and competence to pursue careers in science, technology and mathematics (STEM) which will enable them contribute to peace culture and national development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this paper is textual in nature, which is, qualitative research. Therefore, resources for this research are sourced from a content-based analysis, which is library-based materials, with no requirement for field work. It relied heavily on materials such as articles and essays in scholarly journals, books from library, online sources, magazines, observations, conversations, essays, unpublished works and e-books. Out of the sources outlined, the researcher chose to carry out interviews on women in the communities to find out their level of education and contributions to achieve peace culture at home and the society at large. The target population is engrossed in works that are concerned or related to women education. In addition, about fifty women were interviewed in the local communities of Ogba of Rivers State, Nigeria. Their responses point to the fact that they were not educated in the formal way but acquired the traditional education; they also attest to the fact that no matter their low level of education, they contribute to peace development and inculcate it as their culture.

Given the nature of our data, that is, information sourced from various sources, the main technique of our data analysis in this paper is the descriptive design method. We used a set of parametres such as (a) attitude to motherhood (b) attitude to sex segregation in the Nigerian context (c) conformity to the Beijing declaration, Nigerian cultural policy, Nigerian policy on education, etc against which we compared to other declarations, and drew our conclusion. In some cases, we could assign weights to the parametres to strengthen the basis for our conclusions in this paper. The expressions of the women being treated as property for possession by men are also considered as women are demanding to be treated as subjects rather than objects. Primary and secondary sources are used to enrich, verify and buttress the findings in this paper.

Culture and Peace Culture in Nigeria

Culture includes a people's peculiar patterns of values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviours, language and technology. It can be seen from the people's behavious, their lifestyles and hopes. It also depicts the different ways by which each society copes with similar problems. In other words, culture includes the way people in a society commonly

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react to situations they find themselves. It is not static but dynamic and persists. Education, especially women education as a veritable tool of development can play a role in promoting peace culture and this cannot be underestimated in Nigeria.

Generations of culture scholars have on many occasions elaborately done a great deal on the concept, etymology and episteme of culture. Therefore, one may not dissipate energy or lavish time on definition of culture. However culture according to Olu Obafemi in Ogundipe-Leslie (1984) is "the fundamental of human existence and human civilisation embodying in its dynamism, the totality of a people's response to the challenges of life and living in a given government" (p.79). It follows therefore that culture offers meaning, purpose and value to the socio-economic, political and aesthetic ethos of society. Culture is therefore at the core of civilisation. In essence, culture depicts the totality of the ways of life of a group of people having and sharing the same interest as it obtains in Nigeria as a nation.

According to Horton and Hunt (1984), culture is "a society's learned and shared manner of living by the members of society; a social heritage which the individual receives from the group and a system of behaviour shared by members of a society" (p.126). From these different presentations, culture could be seen as the system of norms and values acquired by individuals as members of a society. It is that complex whole of what people think, say and do. Culture has among others the following characteristics: (i) culture is learned (ii) culture is shared by a people (iii) culture is transferred from one generation to another through the process of socialisation (iv) culture is functional, regulative, adaptive and dynamic. The foregoing portrays culture as a product of human societies. Thus, putting the two ideas together peace culture as a product of human societies could be seen as the total system of living in society which reflects calmness, quietness, justice, fairness, love, understanding and togetherness. It is the complete shared patterns of norms, beliefs, values and skills that display humaneness, perfect orderliness, integrity, honesty, productivity and responsibility.

The concept of peace culture in Nigeria could be better understood in the context of woman education. Due to paucity of information on the concept "peace culture", a deduction would be made from clarifying separately the concepts "peace", and "culture". Chambers Universal Learners' Dictionary (1980) defines peace as "a state of quiet, tranquility, calm and stillness; freedom from disturbance, contention and war and ease of mind and conscience." These different perspectives on the meaning of peace are further expressed by the world book Encyclopedia (1971). It portrays peace as a condition in which there is no war between two or more nations, a state of agreement or friendliness among people living or working together, in addition to an individual at ease with himself, free from anxiety. Thus, peace entails a state of calmness within individuals, within societies, communities and between nations. It involves a condition where there is harmony among individuals and within various facets of society paving way for growth, progress and development. It is a vital ingredient for the proper operation of every facet of society.

If we could rely on what have been discussed so far, peace culture therefore connotes the adoption of a way of life that is conducive or promotes a sustainable co-existence devoid of hostility, rancour, etcetera among individuals or group of people irrespective of ethnic, political or religious divides. It is the inculcating of the right type of values, knowledge, attitude, orientation and aspiration in the citizens, young and old to co-exist in harmony and mutual understanding.

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Factor Militating Against Peace Culture

The following: Greed, frustration, intolerance and lackadaisical attitude have been identified as some of the factors that usually culminate to breach of peace in any society.

Intolerance: This is a situation where one person or a group of persons cannot accommodate an act of another person or a group of persons as the case may be if one cannot accept the other in attitude, utterances, interaction and many others; there is tendency for breach of peace. Intolerance takes over in religious, ethnicity and political sentiments. For instance, public disturbances in 2021 Endsars imbroglio, bloodletting on Nigeria's general elections 2011 – 2015, Wike and Fubara political crisis in Rivers State and other ethno-religious intolerances are issues of intolerance militating against peace culture in Nigeria.

Greed: The domineering tendency where a group of persons prevent the other group from participating in the fair shares of what belong to all also militates against peace culture. Such a situation could attract resistance and possibly results in breach of peace. The political god-fatherism crisis that characterises our present democratic dispensation in Rivers State where Barrister Nyesom Ezebunwo Wike, former Governor of the state wants to superintend over the state as Ex-Governor and that of formal Governor of Lagos State and current President of Nigeria Bola Amed Tinubu's feud with the Ex-Lagos State Governor Akinwumi Ambode in 2015 – 2019 are traceable to acts of greed with their attendant losses.

Frustration: Inability to achieve a desire leads to frustration. Such inability could be self-inflicted or due to environmental influence. Social background, economic problem such as unemployment could lead to frustration with accompanying social vices such as drug addiction, cultism, armed robbery and prostitution. All these are potential causes of upheavals in a society. For instance, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) National President, Joe Ajaero on 1st May, 2023 in Abuja, said that "unemployment remained the largest factor driving the youths into anti-social activities in the society. These youths in Nigeria, out of frustration of unemployment, openly threatened to tear the nation apart if their problem was not looked into. It is not that we are comfortable that we celebrate! It is not that we are not exploited neither is it that we are not emasculated! It is not that we are not denied, pauperised and afflicted".

Often conflicts have taken place against a general background of poverty, fierce competition for limited resources and general frustration among youths at their lack of opportunity and poor prospect for better life. In some cases, politicians or elite groups are thought to have manipulated such frustrations for political ends.

Lackadaisical Attitude: An act of indifference or complacence by government to issues of national importance which particularly bothers on the welfare of the general public mostly attracts mass reaction from the public. An instance is the failure of the federal government to heed to the federal high court ruling in 2023 ordering the release of Masi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). This incidence did not go without loss of human lives, economic losses and wanton destruction of property in Nigeria, particularly in the South-East geopolitical zone. The governments' inaction also led to Association of Senior

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Staff Union of Universities' (ASUU) strike 2020 – 2022. There has been complete breakdown of law and order and a state of anarchy in the country resulting from incidences of lackadaisical attitudes on the part of governments and individuals in Nigeria.

Relevance of Women Education to Peace Culture

The role of women in the development of any nation cannot be over-emphasised. Oresile (2024) describes the importance of women education, thus, "if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you are educating a family, a nation" (p.201). In developing countries, substantial amount of the resources is plunged into human development with particular regard to women both within and outside the family. When we look at the impact of women education in promoting peace, we would see the future of a society in the hand of mothers. One may like to ask a question such as, what impact has women education played and should play in peace building in a country like Nigeria? Before we probe into this question, let us catch a glimpse of the past and present situation of the impact of women education in promoting peace in Nigeria.

In every society, women are usually catalyst for change and development of peace culture, this view, reiterates Okeke (2002) was the "reoccurring view at the 1995 Beijing world conference on women which had its theme as "looking at the world through women's eyes" (p.102). In their roles as lovers, wives and mothers, women became most influential and indispensable in life and society. Most of the women activists fighting for the right of women and development of peace culture in Nigeria are highly educated and compassionate. They handle all sort of domestic violence during conflict in the community, especially when men are killed during the conflict and women and children are left alone. Women can also socialise by educating and bringing up children in the culture of peaceful co-existence. Most women Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) were established by women activists to check social vices and to promote peace in the society.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With quality education, women would be able to discharge their duties effectively as mothers, teachers, administrators and decision-makers within and outside the family enclave. As mother, a woman is more responsible for the upbringing and inculcating of acceptable attitude in the minds of the children. Respect for the elders and obedience to the norms and traditions of the society and constituted authority is encouraged by the mother. These trainings given to the children at the early stage of their lives will assist them to accommodate and live amicably with people from different backgrounds as they grow up.

The attributes of endurance and love are essential ingredients for the promotion of peace culture. Women who naturally are endowed with these attributes, could as teachers promote peace through songs, poems, story-telling to small children. Women have better appreciation of a peaceful society than men; therefore, they would be more inclined to the maintenance and promotion of peace.

Women, being the usual victim at the slightest breach of peace, have better appreciation of peace culture and therefore more inclined to the maintenance and promotion of peace and culture at every available opportunity. However, it becomes pertinent to remind ourselves

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that a woman cannot play all these roles effectively in any given society if she wallows in ignorance as an illiterate. A woman can only serve as an administrator if she is highly educated. Being educated would assist her to rise to the position of authority. The position will enable her to display her feminine qualities of being good administrators and partake in decision that would promote peace in the society.

5. CONCLUSION

Women are known to be good adherents of professional ethnics, an act that brings about love, mutual understanding and spirit of commandership in any organisation. Hence attention should be given to women education, so that women would have the opportunities to exhibit these traits in their places of work. Despite the fact that women and children have so much to lose from conflicts or disturbances, they equally have strong interest in promoting or restoring communal peace. In the midst of sweeping changes, family or domestic conflict had increased and as a result the family's balance or equilibrium had been threatened.
As education is the light to ignorance, if women are well educated, they would know their rights and privileges, certainly as rational human beings, they will behave properly to enshrine peace culture in the family and society. Peace is like a pearl that must be looked for with all might and zeal.

Suggestions/Recommendations
Home being the first port of call of a child and where social life beings, children must be conversant with their relationship with neighbours and other members so the family. Women in particular must endeavour to create a peaceful and serene atmosphere always. The home must show love, understanding towards the children especially female children which translate to their education. Mothers should imbibe the spirit of oneness, patriotism, confidence, constructive and objective criticism, while discussing domestic and national issues and problems to engender and promote peace culture.
Curriculum planners should include as many topics as possible that are women-oriented and of national interest which would eventually lead to the development of patriotic citizens and national consciousness. This will promote peace in the society. Finally, the paper recommends that media houses should desist from being parochial in the presentations of issues that can jeopardise the nation's peace, religious organisations and institutions should not relent in their efforts to instill peace and love while delivery sermons. The importance of love and peaceful co-existence should always be their watchword. By so doing as in Ohia (2023) "…women should strike a balance between the sexes or even replace masculinity; women should transcend the limit, exhibiting strong and assertive qualities" (p.34).

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