The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: Education and Empowerment of Women in Focus

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Article History: Received: 10 November 2020; Revised: 12 January 2021; Accepted: 27 January 2021; Published online: 05 April 2021

Abstract: This paper focuses on gender inequality in the area of education and empowerment of women in Nigeria. This has become significant in this time of novel global wealth coming with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIR). It was discovered through a doctrinal research that, Nigeria, aside from having many national legislations on gender equality, is also a signatory to major international human rights instruments on gender equality. However, the workability of these legal frameworks has remained doubtful as there are wide range of gender inequalities which makes it difficult for Nigerian women to achieve their full potentials. Intellectually, higher number of Nigerian men goes to school than women. It follows from here that, men in Nigeria are undoubtedly gainfully employed than the women. Women in Nigeria are often circumscribed to low distinction of any kind. One of the ways of measuring gender inequality is "All human beings are born equal free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood". Article 2 of the UDHR re-emphasizes the equality of human beings where it provides that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitations of sovereignty".

Keywords: Equality, Fourth Industrial Revolution, Gender, Nigeria, Women

1. Introduction

Gender inequality can be referred to as the uneven treatment or inking of individuals based on their sex or gender (Ewubare&Ogbugu, 2017, p. 12). It can also be said to be the unequal treatment of individuals totally or partly on the basis of their gender. Gender inequality can occur from variations in socially construed features which are basically based on ideology. People’s view on masculinity and femininity, to a very large extent, have a great influence on the ideology or perception of gender identities (Okere, 2017).

This is quite different from the conception and teaching of the Universal Declaration of Human Right (UDHR) of 1948. Article 1of the UDHR stipulates that “All human beings are born equal free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood”. Article 2 of the UDHR re-emphasizes the equality of human beings where it provides that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitations of sovereignty”.

To emphasize the point that all human beings, male and female are viewed as the same in the face of the law, Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Right (Banjul Charter), which has been adopted by all African countries including Nigeria, restated the aforementioned Articles of the UDHR on equality of all persons where it provides that “Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, color, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social, origin, fortune, birth or other status”.

Despite these provisions above, the case for Nigeria with regards to gender inequality is a very sad one. Discrimination between both sexes has been acknowledged by most scholars as a major causation of absence of development for the past two decades. In Nigeria for example, one of the ways of measuring gender inequality is to consider the disparities between both sexes from the point of view of economic and educational prospects in areas such as job opportunities etc. (Egbulonu&Eleoum, 2018, p.159). In all these identified areas, women as well as girls are not given a fair deal, and in this time of the FIR, when everything is most likely to become automated, when STEM (sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) courses are the in-thing (in vogue),
when repeated and boring jobs which Nigerian women are known for might go into extinction, one wonders what the future holds for Nigerian women.

It is against this backdrop that this researcher seeks to showcase the dilemma awaiting the Nigerian woman with regards to education and empowerment in the wake of the FIR, highlighting the prevalence of gender inequality, and reiterating the fact that development, which encompass the FIR cannot be reached in Nigeria until the legal frame work encompassing gender quality is put into adequate and comprehensive use.

Consequently, this paper is divided into four parts which gives a general analysis of the subject under discourse. This is the first part dealing with introduction, the second part dealt with methodology. The third part focuses on discussions and results, with discussions centering on the WID (Women in Development) theory, lessons from other jurisdictions and regions on gender equality as well as the legal frame work of the law on gender equality in Nigeria. The part on results showcases the present state of gender inequality in Nigeria, the FIR and the relationship between the FIR, gender inequality and Nigeria as a country. The paper wraps up in the fourth part by giving a holistic conclusion on the dangers associated with gender inequality, the importance and benefits of gender equality, the role of the Nigerian government in order to achieve gender equality, the expectations of the women folks themselves in order to be relevant in the FIR; hence, giving some sorts of recommendation.

2. Methodology

The use of a doctrinal research, also referred to as the pure legal research was employed in the course of this work. This is so because by the nature of this research, it provides a methodical explanation and revelation of the guidelines of a particular legal group, evaluates the relationships between these guidelines, analyses and exposes areas of complications and perhaps, forecasts and profess future development (Pendleton, 2007, p.159). Furthermore, doctrinal research seeks to understand legal changes from within the discipline of law itself, i.e. internally (Cheng-Hang, 2010, p.67). Consequently, while consulting several relevant materials in the guise of books, journals, internet sources etc., the researcher was able to identify concepts relating to the FIR, as well as issues relating to the legal framework on gender equality. These identified concepts and issues, are abstract or general ideas, which are important to how we think and reason about particular subjects or issues, like the one under consideration in this work (Blaxter & Tight, 2006). Conceptual thoughts, views and ideas are said to revolve around classification and interference (Langakau & Nimtz, 2010). In order to achieve this, the researcher was able to analyze the concept relating to FIR, as it will affect gender inequality in the areas of education and empowerment by using a library-based research, which involved the use of references in developing a critical survey of an existing area of research writing. This is otherwise referred to as using documents for research (Mahdi, 1998; Yaqin, 2007).

3. Discussions And Results

Discussions

Women in Development (WID) Theory

Gender equality is not only a women’s issue. It can be referred to as a development issue as well (Phumaphi, & Leipziger, 2008). The economic emancipation of women is very critical for economic development. The training women and girls is very crucial to economic development. In this regard, Dr. J. E. Kwegyir Aggrey, a prescient Ghanaian educationalist opines that “the surest way to keep people down is to educate the men and neglect the women. If you educate a man, you simply educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a family” (Cited in Phumaphi, & Leipziger, 2008). In short, Gender inequality cannot aspire when women are educated and gainfully employed.

Hence, the WID theory has become very relevant as far as education and empowerment of women is concerned (Chauhan, 2014). A popular and instructive theory in respect of women empowerment and education is the “Women in Development (WID) theory. WID theory became prominent in 1970 and was embraced by the United Nations agencies like United Nations Development Program and the World Bank (Muyoyeta, 2004).

WID is grounded in the inkling that education brings about economic development and thus, advances the idea of incorporation of women in economic and education blueprints towards bringing about women
empowerment (Mose, 1993). WID method believes in the existence of a synergy between education and employment in the formal sector as education aids women to gain skills which will facilitate employment (Muyoyeta, 2004).

The WID strategy has facilitated representations, as well as laws which has led to women equal access to education and jobs, and thus giving preference to gender equality.

Commitment of Regions on Gender Equality and Laws on Gender Equality from Other Jurisdictions

In most recent years, there has been accounts of concerted efforts made by different regions around the world on the issue of gender equality. Most regions of the world are committed and unified in their resolution to earn for the women folks the same standard and quality of living as that given to the men folks.

Top government officials and policymakers from 45 nations within the Asia-Pacific Region have promised to priorities the fulfillment of women’s right generally and the right to equality specifically. What is being alluded to here is the Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+25, which was reviewed and implemented after extraordinary discussions at a 3-day ministerial conference in November, 2019 (Asia Pacific Conference, 2019). The significance of the conference highlights clear strategic actions and plans to be taken to address the gender agenda. Countries also agreed to ensure that women are economically empowered and integrated into the formal economy. The Governments of theses region further agree to take all necessary steps in order to ensure that legal, as well as social protections are widened for all women and girls. It was also agreed that governments should ensure that women and girls are given equal opportunities in the area of education, entitled to decent work, and expose to favorable conditions of work and financial considerations.

The equal status of both sexes is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union (EU) (Bego, 2015), with the gender equality principles enforced and strengthened by laws which permits member to guarantee equal treatment and opportunities for both sexes and to fight every discrimination regarding gender disparity. With the endorsement of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the EU together with virtually all European countries began supporting laws on gender equality in different subjects such as equal pay and access to services and resources.

In Ireland for example, there are several stakeholders’ authorities in the guise of Tribunals and Commissions which are saddled with the responsibility of fostering gender equality. Examples are, the Equality Authority created by the Employment Equality Act of 1998 which was established to fight discrimination and promote equal opportunity in areas within the scope of the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act 2000-2015, which particularly forbids discrimination in the provision of education among others (Potter, 2015).

In Norway, one of the Schengen countries, which has a powerful affiliation with European countries, has promulgated the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act which came into effect in 2018. The Act shall seek to encourage non-disparity regarding gender and shall aim at promoting the position of women and minorities. Since coming into operation, the Norwegian Equality Act requires that public authorities promote gender equality in all areas of the society. The obligation to work towards gender equality suggests a requirement to avoid gender discrimination and to actually implement concrete plans to promote gender equality. Direct or indirect differential treatment of women and men is not allowed under the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act 2018 (Skjeie&Langvasbraten, 2009, p.513).

The Arab region is not left out of this dedication to gender equality. In the wake of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the United Nations development Program (UNDP), Population Fund (UNFPA), the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) and the Women’s Fund (UNIFEM) organized the conference that examined discrimination and criminal personal status and labour laws throughout all the 18 Arab states. Indeed, laws that promote gender equality and anti-discrimination will certainly help the development of the in terms of equality and justice for the female gender. The most significant part of the conference is to stress that there are still prospects for the Arab nations to realized women’s equality (United Nations Forum [UNF], 2019).

The Africa Union’s (AU) resolution on gender equality has its foundation on the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development endorsed by all the heads of African states and governments in 2006 further reinforces the
resolution (African Union [AU], 2009). One of the landmark resolution which highlights AU’s superintendence regarding equality of gender and empowerment of women is the Declaration on Promotion of Gender Equality as a major principle of the AU. The Constitutive Act in Article 4(L) specifically provides that the AU shall function according to its aim to promote gender equality. The AU general assembly thereafter adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in July, 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique (African Union [AU], 2009).

The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights in Article 2 provides for the right against discrimination in respect of sex, and mandates all state parties in Article 18(3) to extinguish any kind of discrimination fashioned against women and ensure the realization of all women’s rights. Article 60 further directed the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Right to emulate other international laws in its dealings regarding the promotion and protection of human rights.

Furthermore, Agenda 2063 which encapsulates the future of Africa is also fully dedicated to gender equality in its ‘Aspiration 6’, which envisages an African society whose progress is people-oriented and focuses on the capabilities of the African people, particularly women and youth. Agenda 2063 encourages us to dwell in a more inclusive environment where all citizens will be actively involved in making decisions, and where no one, be it child, woman or man, will be left behind on the grounds of sex, political peculiarity, locality, age or any other factors whatsoever (African Union [AU], n.d.).

On several fronts, the AU’s strategy in the promotion of women’s right and gender equality has been promoted by the United Nations frameworks and particular needs of the African continent (African Union [AU], 2009).

**Legal Framework of the Laws on Gender Equality in Nigeria**

Nigeria, as a member of the international community, has signed and ratified some international and regional treaties dealing with gender equality, which promotes and develop women’s right in education and economic empowerment. These treaties are comprehensive in the way and manner they promote, *inter alia*, the socio-economic rights of women. Some major examples of treaties to which Nigeria signed and ratified my Nigeria includes: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which provides for the equality before the law and the right to equality protection of the law in Articles 2(3) and 3. It further directs states to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, etc. Article 26 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) also makes similar provisions on non-discrimination. Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also stipulated that all humans are born free and equal in dignity and in rights.

Article 2 and 18(3) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights provided for freedom against discrimination and inequality. It stated under Article 15 that all individuals shall possess the right to work under equitable and satisfactory conditions and shall collect equal pay for equal work done. Under Article 2 Maputo Protocol, elimination of discrimination against women is provided for, while Article 12 provides for right to education and training of women. Article 8 enjoins access to justice and equal protection under the law. This provision frowns at, and prohibits forced labour.

However, according to section 12 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN), an international instrument has to be ratified and domesticated before it is applicable in the country. Many of these international instruments specifically adopted to foster gender equality, especially in the areas of education and economic empowerment are yet to be domesticated in Nigeria. Hence, they are yet to be implemented and applied.

In addition to the international treaties Nigeria has adopted, domestic laws promoting gender equality abound. They include:

(i) Chapter II CFRN 1999 on the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy. Section 17(1) of the CFRN provides that the nation’s social order is established on the basis of freedom, equality and justice. Section 17(2) provided that, in respect of this social order, all citizens shall possess equal rights, opportunities and obligations under the law. The implication of this provision is that discrimination of whatever kind should not be allowed. All citizens, female or male, are entitled to be treated equally which means that men should not dominate the women in all areas of endeavors.

However, this constitutional provisions of Chapter II has been held by many as not justiciable. That, they are
mere policy guidelines and that they do not bestow any legal rights to Nigerian citizens or concomitant obligation on the government, especially women whose gender equality rights have been violated. It is the general belief that the breach of Chapter II of the CFRN cannot be redressed in the court of law. I beg to disagree with this popular opinion because, reading section 13 CFRN, it provided that, “it shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of the government, and of all authorities and persons exercising legislative, executive and judicial powers to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of the fundamental objectives and directive principle of state policy”. By this provision, I humbly submit that any citizen of Nigeria can seek for redress in the court of law for any violation of section 17 CFRN (my opinion). Aside this, In Attorney-General of Ondo State v. Attorney-General of the Federation & 35 ors (2002) 9 NWLR pt 772 at 222-381, the Nigerian Supreme Court held that the above provision not only imposes a sacred duty on all organs of the government and all authorities and persons exercising executive, legislative and judicial powers to respect the provisions of Chapter II, but also on private individuals too. This statement by the Supreme Court has shown further that the breach of Chapter II CFRN can be redressed in the court of law. This Supreme Court decision has also buttressed the justiciability of section 17 CFRN. However, the general belief of its non-justiciability is the order of the day and the Nigerian public need to be sensitized about this.

Recently, sensitization of the Nigerian public is already yielding favorable and good dividend as a Federal High Court in the Federal Capital Territory declared as justiciable the right of every child to free and compulsory basic education up to the level of junior secondary school. This is based on the fact that the Compulsory Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004 promulgated by the National Assembly had elevated the right by bestowing it with an enforceable status. This is going by the provision of section 2(1) of the 2004 Act.

(ii) Section 42 CFRN 1999 prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex.
(iii) Chapter II of the CFRN 1999, provided for “equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels”, “to promote science and technology” and “to eradicate illiteracy”. This is applicable to all Nigerian citizens in respect of their sex. This is the provision under section 18(3) CFRN.
(iv) Section 6(2) and (1) of the Children’s Act 1998 stipulated that every child, in respect of their sex, shall have a right to life, dignity, respect, education, leisure, health, liberty and shelter from his parents.
(v) Section 15(2) CFRN also encourages national integration and discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, ethnic or linguistic ties, status shall be prohibited.
(vi) Section 17(3)(a) provides that the state shall focus its policies and strategies towards making sure that all citizens enjoy equal opportunity for attaining adequate sources of livelihood as well as sufficient opportunities to get suitable employment without discrimination.
(vii) Section 17(3)(e) provides that there shall be, without discrimination on the basis of sex or, any other grounds whatsoever, the same pay for same work.

As laudable as these provisions on gender equality may seem, Nigeria is still very far behind in implementing these provisions. There has been notable violations of all these provisions. International, regional and even domestic laws are far from being complied with in Nigeria as seen in the wide range of gender inequality that persists and exists in the country. A Bill, meant to eradicate gender inequality in politics, education and employment has been sitting idle in the Nigerian Senate House for the past 8 years. The Nigerian Senators who are mostly men, have refused to let the Bill scale into law because of their dominance in the house. Also, the Nigeria National Gender Policy targeted at promoting women educationally is not making any significant difference in the area of gender equality as many women and girls lack education. See the discussion on results.

4. Results

The Present State of Gender Inequality in Nigeria

In developing and emerging economies like Nigeria, it is usually a huge challenge establishing an evidence-based causal links between the effect of gender disparity on economic progress and development because of the unavailability of sex-disaggregated data. However, according to United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) (1994), women accounts for more than 50% of the population of the world. They are said to perform two-third of world’s work, and yet achieve one-tenth of the income of the world and own one-hundredth of properties in the world. Women signify an astonishing 70% of world’s one billion poverty-stricken people.

This is the reality of the development in our world today (Egbulonu&Eleonu 2018).

Nigeria’s population is higher than any other country in Africa, with a whooping population of above 186 million. Nigeria is the 7th most populated country in the world (Ogbubor&Onuigbo, 2018). It is apposite to state that 49% this huge population size are females. In comparative terms, 38% of women in Nigeria are without
formal education, as against 25% for men and only 4% of women can boast of higher education, against 7% of their male counterpart. Nigeria is rated 118 out of 134 countries in the Gender Equality Index (GEI) (Egbulonu & Eleonu 2018).

A review of the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) 2012 Gender Report in Nigeria shows that females who make up about 80.2million of Nigeria’s population have worse life chances than men and their sister in similar societies (Egbulonu & Eleonu 2018). This shows the disregard of people of Nigeria and their government in dealing with issues regarding gender inequality.

Within the employment and labor sphere, men earn far above their womenfolk for the same work, especially unorganized or casual labor which is the principal area where women are employed. Based on statistics National Bureau of Statistics in 2015, women account for an estimated half of the population of Nigeria, and thus, more than half of the population work strength of Nigeria consists mainly of female workers. However, the type of work and activity, as well as women’s work condition and access chances for improvements and developments greatly differs from men. Women are discriminated more when it comes to access to employment opportunities, access to finance and condition of work among others. This situation, has resulted in the reduction in economic growth as well as its determinants (Ewubare & Ogbaru 2017).

Several hazards are associated with gender inequality. For instance, in the area of economic development, there is a very low level of female participation in the manufacturing sector. So far, women represent just 24% of jobs in the manufacturing sector and are more likely to access very low-paid, low productivity and vulnerable jobs with no basic rights, voice or social protection (Egbulonu & Eleonu 2018).

There is currently a wide gap between boys and girls in Nigeria. The economic repercussions of these inequalities are immeasurable. There however exists a clear proof that no appreciable development can be achieved by any Nation, except girls and women are considered as key and considerable endeavors should be geared towards investing in them in order to achieve the Sustainable development Goals and also to guarantee a better world in the incoming FIR in Nigeria.

**The Fourth Industrial Revolution**

Human beings are presently caught within the web of a period of an unprecedented technological development. The coming 20 years or more, will showcase significant make over as well as opportunities. The private sector, government agencies, people in academics and entrepreneurs are searching for blueprint to navigate these important makeovers in the world of work and labor. Such blueprint must be collectively worked on by all stake holders.

The above gives us a clue to the emergence of the FIR, a term that was fashioned out by Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum to portray a world where people shuttle between the digital spheres and the offline peculiarities while making use of connected and secured technologies to help manage their lives (Xu & David, 2018). However, the FIR is unique and quite different from all the other three hitherto industrial revolutions. This is because information technology and artificial intelligence (AI) will play a very critical role in enhancing wealth formation and productivity and will invariably alter the obligation of human species. The FIR will also boost globalization, and in this respect, technology will become very critical as regions that manage positively with the technological impact of the FIR will have a more economic and an enviable social future (Schafer, 2018).

The previous three industrial revolutions gave birth to electricity, steam power, water and digitalization. Each industrial revolution brings with it, a redefined restructuring of social, economic, environmental as well as political systems that actually tilts the cause of humanity. Some of these restructuring are anticipated, while the others are not (Hinton 2019).

As the FIR unfolds presently, we see a FIR which invites technologies that closes the gap between the physical, the digital as well as the biological arenas across the major segments of the society. Like artificial intelligence (AI), technologies, nanotechnology, synthetic biology, quantum computing and robotics will swiftly take over any digital initiations available in the last 60 years and produce happenings which most of us never thought was possible. Such happenings will actually change the business representations of every industry (Hinton 2019).

One of the most immediate result of this technological revolution is its wide promotion of automation. As
each and every day passes, more and more manual works are becoming automated, and as technology proceeds to fasten up, so shall automation. Consequently, the demands of the world of work and labor market are changing quickly. According to Mckinsey, about 375 million employees may have to consider a change in their specializations by the year 2030 and digital work is likely to contribute $2.7 trillion to global GDP by 2025 (Hinton 2019).

Apart from this, the most latest and the most powerful impending lunch of the fifth generation (5G) wireless network, which has the capability to handle about 1,000 times more data volume with accuracy and speed than the systems in place as at today, is also envisaged during the FIR (Vestberg, 2018). It is worth to note that, as technology evolves and progresses, our educational system need to buckle up and prepare people for the opportunities brought about by 5G and other FIR breakthroughs and innovations. Hence, education most obviously, will have to instill in both genders (male and female), the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) expertise needed to effectively meet the demands and aspirations of our rapidly advancing technological society. Education, also, while taking into cognizance the importance of STEM expertise, need not underrate the ethical and civic understanding that will enable the humans to display these potent technologies with insight and intelligence and respect for the wellbeing of others. In short, in order to become the best beneficiaries of technology, an integration of STEM with core humanities subjects is of essence. With this is done, technology will be able to deliver on its assurances of human progress in the FIR (Vestberg 2018).

From the above, it becomes vividly clear that in the FIR, there are three major areas where humans’ beats machines and these are important to future job creation. These areas are; creative and original endeavors (scientific discoveries, creative writings and entrepreneurship), social interaction (robots are deficient in emotional intelligence possessed by humans) and physical dexterity, agility and mobility. In all these mentioned areas, it becomes imperative to note that both STEM and humanities are essential in the FIR.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, Gender Inequality and Nigeria

Although every child in Nigeria has a right to education (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004), the proportion of male and female students reveals a significant bias in favor of the boys. These boys today, to become adult men tomorrow, are considered providers of the family, while the women are required to carry out low or unpaid duties like, household obligations, agricultural work etc. (Adamu, 2014).

Bias in the curricular affects girls’ regressively, while viewing mathematics and the sciences as “male” subjects, while “females” are taught literary arts and home economics. This way of thinking is perpetrated by teachers themselves (Adamu2014). One must not ignore the importance associated with science and technology in respect of the development of any human society in this modern times. It is the foundation of national development and social transformation. It is therefore, supposed to be developed fully in all areas, and amongst all citizens and citizenry, both gender inclusive, in order to attain the required achievement. In Nigeria, it is not developed equally, with female gender at the losing end (Opara, 2015).

The National Competitiveness Council of Nigeria (NCCN) identifies as severe, the discrimination and gender inequality within the nation’s labor force. The Chief Executive Officer of NCCN, Chika Mordi made it clear that the findings of a new report showed that female participants in labor force in some selected states in Nigeria is less than 2% (Elusoji, 2017). Altogether, women did similar work with men and sometimes even more, but the natures of the work, the circumstances under which these women work and their (women’s) access to prospect for development varies from that of men (Fapounda, 2017).

Women in Nigeria are classified as belonging to the secondary market sector of labor, which mostly requires no skill and little or no training at all. In this labor category to which women belong to, there are no obstacles to job mobility due to the poor wages and terms of conditions of the job making such jobs very unattractive. As far as women are concerned, there is lack job security and prospects for promotion. This cannot be said of men, who belong to the primary market sector of labor, which is made up of high-grade, high-status, better paid jobs and better terms of working condition (Ewu bare&Ogbaru & Oyedeji 2017). In Nigeria, very few women are participants in the manufacturing sector. The still represent as low as 24% of jobs in the manufacturing sector. Nigerian women are typically engaged in casual or unorganized labor (Egbulonu&Eleonu 2018). In Nigeria, women account for less than 5% of managers. Compared to men, women are largely unrepresented in managerial positions. Unlike their male counterparts, female managers are severely restrained by strong dissenting stereotypes, separating them from the males in work place (Okafor, Fagbemi& Hassan, 2011). The kind of jobs performed by women in Nigeria can at best be classified as sweat-shop works. Some export-
oriented and labor-intensive companies such as the toy and clothing industries are renowned for utilizing quite a number of young female workers whose ages are between 13 and 25 years. This employment strategy is as a result of the dissenting perceptions and belief systems that females earn lesser than men, while acknowledging that, the hard working qualities which they (women) possess make them more effective than their male counterparts at these jobs (Ogunrin, Iyayi & Eghafona 2011). It was discovered that by the time these young women getting close to 35 years of age, they are already seen as worn-out physically, and are almost immediately routinely substituted with youngsters (Ogunrin, Iyayi & Eghafona 2011).

If these are the predicaments faced by Nigerian women, it beats one’s imagination to think of how this segment of the Nigerian nation will fare in the much talked about FIR. And, like the progenitors of the modern bird, whose sole survivor, survived one of the most acute mass extinction in world’s history, the women in Nigeria are equally at the risk or verge of becoming extinct, because in the FIR, human workers (which is constituted by a majority of Nigerian women) are at the verge of being thrown into the waste bin (Naffi, 2019).

This is mainly so, because the FIR will bring along with it a drastic reduction or reallocation of huge population of workers. Mckinsey has estimated that about 800 million people may be displaced as a result of automation by the year 2030 (Hinton 2019). Note that most women in Nigeria perform manual and unorganized labor (Egbulonu & Eleonu 2018), which is most likely to become automated by 2030. It should also be noted, that most Nigerian women are largely occupied in subsistence agriculture and comparatively unlikely to be engaged in professional, managerial and technical fields than men (Ewubare & Ogbanu 2017). Again, women are largely credited for producing between 60-80% of food in most developing countries of the world. Hence, they can be said to produce half of the world’s food (Egbulonu & Eleonu 2018). Sadly, these are mostly small size and medium-size businesses which cannot compete with global industries in this time of FIR. These small and medium-size businesses, which are mainly owned by women will not be able to confront competition with large sized businesses in the global landscape competitiveness (Hinton 2019).

Education and training is another major area where the FIR will make a tremendous influence on Nigerian women. Training can be described as the learning of activities by which the skills needed in an occupation are obtained (Ogunrin, Iyayi & Eghafona 2011). This is absolutely lacking in Nigerian women. Very closely related to economic advancement is the ability to access training for employment. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria (1998) gives special importance to equal opportunities in education to all citizens regardless of their religion, ethnic affiliation, gender and social class (Sec 18(3) (a) CFRN & Sec 2(1) Compulsory UBE Act). However, the on-ground situation and realities in Nigeria reveals wide gap between attainment of education by men and women, as women are seen to be at a disadvantageous position. For example, in the eight Northern states in Nigeria, more than 80% of women are unable to read. In Jigawa State, for example (one of the Northern states), 94% of women are stack illiterate. Women in Nigeria are seriously educationally disadvantaged. They cannot be seen to be able to take the advantage of the facilities and opportunities available for training. This, as pointed out by researchers, indicates the poor access for women to employment opportunities (Egbulonu & Eleonu 2018).

One then wonders how Nigerian women will fit into this time of the FIR, where systematic alterations are happening in the field of education, where majority of students are no longer interested in static curricular and are more willing to undergo shorter and skills-based trainings that are more useful and appropriate for the contemporary workplace, and where employers are directing necessary skills to achieve their business aims and remain ambitious and competitive, which demands that all their employees acquires the required skills to fill these gaps.

Majority of women in Nigeria lacks basic education. The few ones that are educated are not well vast in the careers that are paramount in the FIR. Thus, in the areas of education and employment opportunities, females in Nigeria might become irrelevant in the face of gender inequality in this era of the FIR.

5. Conclusion And Recommendations

From the above analysis, it can be gathered that gender inequality emerges as a result of gendered stratifications in the wider society. The gender inequality discourse, in particular, focuses on the perception that biological differences between the men and women have been modified and converted to the advantage of the men and the disadvantage of the women (Ogunrin, Iyayi & Eghafona 2011). This kind of arrangement is not very good for any country willing and aspiring to have a strong economic base.

The major determinant of a country’s competitiveness is its human talent- the expertise of productivity of its
workforce. There is in existence a value-based judgement for gender equality. Females who comprises of more than half the population of the world and even half of the Nigerian population deserves equal access to education and economic participation. Gender equality is thus, fundamental to the thriving of every society in this time of FIR.

In this wise, a better world which has been promised by the FIR can be achieved by Nigeria, a nation highly endowed with human and material resources, only if women and men are treated equally especially in the field of education and economic advancement. Any attempt to neglect women in the field of education and economic advancement will certainly result into partial use of the available human resources (Adamu2014). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2004), has maintained that development that is not engendered is endangered. Engendering industrial development through gender equality suggests the efficacy economic policies, institutional development and vibrant policy measures which will foster equality between men and women (Asante, 2002). Nigerian government, should also engender the development of Nigeria through the workability of the laws in order for there to be equal treatment amongst women and men.

Since the FIR is capable of affording an opportunity to acquire new expertise, create new jobs demanding unique expertise, Nigerian government is advised to encourage women to key into these areas by making the laws of the country workable. The Constitutional provisions as well as the educational policies relating to gender equality, if put into adequate and proper use could cater for Nigerian women in this time of FIR. The Nigerian government, can also move a step further to see to the documentation and subsequent implementation of all international treaties relating to gender equality to which it is a signatory. If this is done, Nigerian women will see a better world in this time of FIR.

To achieve this, collaboration is very essential amongst private sector, academia and policy makers in order to navigate the prospects with public sector and businesses to formulate suitable curriculums and to concentrateon skills in teaching. Government is required to make use of advanced technologies and insights on labor market in order to create policies, programming and budgeting that will cater for the concerns of women in Nigeria. Efforts must be geared and concentrated towards sustaining small and medium scale businesses predominantly owned by women (Hinton 2019).

The empowerment of women in economy and bridgingthe gender gap and disparity in the world of work are very important to realizing the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development as well as realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, most especially goal 5 (Dhar, 2018), to realiaze gender equality as well as goal 8, to promote full and dynamicemployment for all.

If Nigerian women will have to be seen as relevant in this time of FIR, Nigerian government must take up the opportunities and advantages afforded by the FIR. Nigeria as a country, must be seen to benefit from the FIR. The Nigerian government, according to the past Minister of Science and Technology, Chief OgbonnayaOnu, should move swiftly with all sincerity to reinvigorate the education industry (Oyebanji, 2016). Nigerian government should live up to expectations by actively involving in the investment to boost the standard of education, create new opportunities for employment and more importantly, drastically reduce the obstacles togender inequality in access to education and employment so as to create an atmosphere favorable for the incoming FIR in order for Nigeria to attain the desired and necessary growth, noting specifically that, when more women work, economies will grow. The efforts of women in the growth of the Nigerian economy cannot be taken with levity because, the inclusion of women in the management of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) has been associated with better performance (Ayadi, Ojo, Ayadi&AAdetula, 2015).

Nigerian government must also be ready to put in placemeasures and instruments to assist femaleworkers in efficientlymanaging family demands and work. Female workers on their part, must take the bull by the horn by being prepared and ready to kick-start the process of change by seeking relevant training and re-training, amongst other measures that will assure their relevance and importance in the forthcoming FIR.

In order for women to be relevant in the FIR, Nigerian government must also address the challenges and obstacles being faced by Nigerian women by ensuring and insisting that equality in terms of education and economic empowerment is achieved not only by legislation and laws, but also in practice. Efforts must be concentrated to see to the passage of the Bill to eradicate gender inequality in politics, education and empowerment. If the Bill is able to sale through, it will put in place a specific and targeted legal framework to enforce, promote and ensuregender equality and non-discrimination in the areas of education and women empowerment in Nigeria.
The development of this single and specific legislation on gender equality in Nigeria, like when the Gender Equality Bill, eventually passes into law, has a great potential to standardize and regularize the level of protection running across equality grounds. The Gender Equality Bill, in the eventuality of its being passed into law, may be less complex, and may be easier to understand and comprehend. It may also tend to be easily amendable whenever such situation arise.

6. Acknowledgement

This work was supported by Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET-FUND) Overseas Conference Grant, 2020 vide an approval by the Centre for International Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

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