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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is a rapidly urbanizing Country with tremendous potentials for a more sophisticated urban labour market. This paper examines issues that limit women's access to formal jobs in urban sector, identifying issues like domestic responsibilities, education and gender roles amongst others as casual factors to the existing situation. I conclude by advocating for an easier access for women into formal urban labour market.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization is highly related to industrialisation., so is there a close correlation between the level of urbanization and the level of development i.e. the richer countries tend to have a greater proportion of the population living in urban areas. Coming to most third world countries, like Nigeria, industrialisation is said to be limited. The existing factors in such countries provide little employment, compared to those in developed countries. The industries also import technology development in the west. In Nigeria today, there is the problem of rural –urban migration, causing inequalities. Rural families send their sons and daughter to cities, so that they will be able to partake, however little, of its riches. The urban connection.

Women in the formal sector

The labour force of the formal sector can be enumerated and has shown that the number involved is very minute when compared to the total population of women. Women have been found to be very productive and hard working but this is not so in the formal sector, which could be attributed to some constraint. In the rural areas, women play prominent roles in agriculture, and in addition to farm work, process food, fetch wood and water, cook food, take care of children and husbands and engage in retail trading which becomes a source of income (WIN, 1987).

In the urban areas, formal education is regarded as a license for participating in wage employment i.e. joining the urban labour force). (Mundi 1996). According to Mundi (1996), in a study carried out, reported that data revealed that the majority of the women in the labour force attained low educational and skill training, causing them to be employed in low skill occupation where they put in high man-hour for inadequate remuneration.

The general employment situation in urban areas force women to accept jobs for which they are under-utilized and underpaid, resulting into what ILO (1992) referred to as the "working poor" people, who are working very hard and strenuously but the employment is not productive in the sense of earning them income which are up to modest minimum their primary concern is to earn a little money in order to contribute to the family budget.

Table 1: Distribution of Women Labour Force according to main occupation and mean man-hour input per day.

Occupation type	No. of Women	Mean Man hour input/day	%
Trading	157	11.2	35.6
Farming	68	11.7	16.0
Clerical	34	10.4	8.0
Civil Servant	31	10.5	7.3
Teaching	29	10.3	6.8
Nursing	27	9.9	6.3

Seam stress	12	9.6	2.8
Others	73	8.8	17.2
Applicant	Nil	6.4	Nil
Total	425	10.2	100.00

Sources: Mundi (1996), Characteristics and utilisation of women Labour force in Jos

Women have been found to be very useful in production in informal sectors but not in the formal urban labour market. There are indeed constraints to their performance.

Urban Labour Force

Arowolo (1985) has defined labour force or economically active population to be that part of the population between (15 and 65 years) that work for pay or profit including those looking for such work. Despite the rising rate of increase in the labour force as a result of the rising growth rate of the population and school enrolment, there has been no relative increase in job opportunities.

In tropical Africa including Nigeria now, there is mass unemployment among primary school leavers and increased unemployment among leavers of tertiary institutions (Oluwole, 1993). It is however, difficult to give an accurate estimate of the extent of urban unemployment in Nigeria because of lack of reliable census information. Bos et al (1992) projected a female urban labour force of about 28 million for Nigeria in 1994 with majority living in the urban environment. While the fourth National Development plan account for about 3 million of these workers holding paid position in the modern sector of the economy.

Constraint

The women's position in the family and the community is determined by traditional practices and customs. They are seen to perform the reproductive role of wife and mother as well as productive role of wage earner. They are therefore hit harder by under – and unemployment than their male counterparts as the very few openings in the industrial sector is offered to men first. There are instances where a female performs very well at an interview but for the fact that when she is employed, she will have to go on 'maternity' leave, 'casual leave etc believes to slow down the pace of work and perhaps require transfer to follow her husband, as excuse prefer her male counterpart but is it a crime?

Religious practices/tribal beliefs

In Muslim societies, they have the practice of protecting their women from the outside world, known as Purdah (the wearing of veil), so they are rendered useless or rather unproductive and probably wasting away especially if they are good materials for a certain job. Some are quite intelligent and will perform as good as their male counterparts, (if not better if given a chance).

Political Constraints:

The political science is invariably dominated by men women are encouraged to get involved and are terminated if they do so, what can women do to be saved? Now that the nation is returning to democratic rule, even where women have equal voting right few women are represented in government, there will be a few or none at all to represent their interest. Hence, their needs are not met, as men are not aware of them. Women also lack necessary information concerning opportunities.

These consequently are not being involved in planning or decision-making processes. Mitter (1989) justified the continual exclusion of women, by the stereo typed notion of the roles of men and women in the home and economy.

Discriminative Policies

Even the few employed women are discriminated against, where there is no allowance for children or housing allowance.

Like Irukwu (1987) noted, that if a woman obtains a senior position, she has to work hard to prove that she got it on merit and deserves to keep it. Because they are few and far between, society has yet fully to accept women in the management position as matter of routine.

Educational Constrain

In the past, girls were not given the same opportunities in homes as the boys when it comes to education. This affected the number of women in the formal sector for a long time until the awareness came that they should be given equal chance. Hence, the gap is reducing.

As much as women are intelligent and willing to go on ahead, there is a limit to which this can be done. They still need time to manage their homes, take care of their husband and children. The child bearing and rearing ages of these women ties them down, so they cannot really go on to further their studies. Those that forge ahead, testify to the understanding of the man and children, so where this is not, it was crises all the way some even lost their homes, as they struggle to become; career' women.

In our society, no matter what achievement you have without a 'successful' home to show, is nothing and lesser respect is accorded such women, which of course have been why they opt for the comfort of a 'successful' home.

Conclusion

The world population is increasing very fast, while that of developing countries is even at a faster rate with its concentration in the urban areas, hence increasing the labour supply, policies should be formulated to get more women of the total percentage into the urban labour force.

For where women have legal and social rights – to paid employment in the modern sector, political power, family planning – they tend to have smaller families, which is the most cost effective way of attaining a goal of smaller and healthier families Onah, 1996). Women should be given a chance to prove their worth, so that she is given the ability to control her own destiny in the formal urban labour market.

This allows them, like the man, to show that they are capable and competent. It will get them more interested and involved in the nation building process as well the move towards democracy. Enabling them to see it as 'our' duty to make it work.

"Involve a woman, you have gotten a nation". They encourage their own children especially daughters, for they have a great influence on them. They should also be given a chance.

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