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**Behavioural Examination of Activism: Nigerian Women and
Preparedness for Accompanying Social Change of Gender
Equality**

Eesuola Olukayode Segun

Department of Political Science

University of Lagos

Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Department of Politics and International Relations

North West University, Mafikeng

Republic of South Africa

E-mail: foomoterribly@yahoo.com

Abstract

In this paper, we examine the attitudes and behaviour of some women and gender activists to the social change that may result from gender equality when, and if it is achieved. Since it started in the 19th century, gender activism has always focused on the issue of equality between the genders, to the extent that the society eliminates all policies and practices that have, hitherto, prevented the women from operating at the same level with men. The aspiration of gender activists is that when this occurs, women will play all the roles that men play without restrictions, but, as this study reveals through quantitative inquiry, not many women, even the hardliners of gender activism think of, let alone want to bear the social changes that may result from gender equality. This promises to shift the focus of the debate of gender activism as well as feminism.

Introduction

The neo liberal developments around the world changed a lot of games in the way the society is run. Because it promotes the efforts of the individual towards achieving desires goals to no limited extent, neo liberalism has provoked actions and reactions from individuals and social groups who now lay claim to what they 'can' do, rather than what the society proposes that they can, or, should do. One of such neo liberalism provoked reaction is gender activism, which essentially concerns itself with equality of everything between women and men: access to resources and opportunities within the dominant means of production, making the entire scenario dependent on culture, rather than nature (Orock 2007).

The focus of gender activism is to reverse and change the status quo in which men in the society are deemed to be superior to women in certain issues and have more opportunities to do certain things than women. As the world stands today, even with the age long agitation for gender equality complemented by some global institutional efforts such as the United Nations Resolution 1325, things still hang largely in the dorminant hands of men. For example, of about 197 countries of the world out of which 173 are members of the United Nations, only 22 are led by women (www.jjmccullough.com).

Most professions in the world are still male dominated: medical, educational, engineering, journalistic and what have you; and even at the level of religion, very few women are clergies who lay claim to spiritual leadership in the world.

This is what gender activists and their activism intend to change. Gender activists believe that men and women are equally created and have equal capacities and capabilities, so, women should do everything that men do comparatively and competitively. Because what they do is activism, gender activists often ignore certain physiological and anthropological reasons that have for many years accounted for the imbalance between the genders, instead of that they consistently preach, sometimes along with aggressive action, that man - woman equality is the only way in which the world can be a better place. Gender activists want equality between men and women, and this will inevitably create some social changes.

The reason is not farfetched. All social actions generate social reactions, and every change that occurs in the society comes with its own contradictions. As activists campaign for gender equality, they often are silent upon what could become of the society in a century after their activism, and how that will fare with themselves as women, and the rest of the society. This is what this chapter explores empirically, through a survey conducted in the University of Lagos, Nigeria, and among young girls

and the freshly married ladies, majority of whom are quite passionate about the idea of gender equality but are not in any way prepared to live with the consequence it may ultimately bring in the future.

Gender Activism

On its own, and in its generic term, activism refers to the intense activities of a person or group for the purpose of gaining certain values that are laden with social, economic and political flavours, and, from the point of view of political behaviour, activism often manifests in anti establishment or radical group actions such as protest demonstrations, rallies and strikes. It consists of consisted efforts of man to promote, impede, or challenge certain social issues in the establishment while calling for reform that may engender some differences. Activists often operate through complaint letter writing to appropriate offices, ministries and departments, but it is possible for their actions to prevail in other ways.

Whether they operate at the level of individuals or group, activists often utilise many means to agitate and make demands, amongst which such means including but are not limited to the social media, especially the Facebook and the twitter; to facilitate certain collective actions and forms of activism (Eesuola 2012, Obar *et al.* 2012, Obar 2014).

Gender activism refers to the plethora of activities, actions and inactions exhibited by those who care especially passionate about the issue of gender - often called gender activists- towards promoting, impeding, or challenging, as earlier adduced, the establishment and dominant practices in gender relations within the society, while calling for those reforms that they envisage will catalyse some improvements or completely change the status quo. Unlike scholarship, gender activism most of the times go by protest demonstrations, strikes and riots and as well as different other means.

What gender activism does mainly is agitate for the situation in which men and women have the same chances in political and administrative offices, as well as sports and the popular culture. Gender activism is also very much concerned about gender discrimination, and it is commonsensical to liken it to a political project that targets what Mukhopadhyay (2001:13) calls "the culturally determined privations of one social sector - women", so that the women as a group can have access to opportunities and resources just as their men counterpart. Valk (2001) argues that gender activism, gender equality as well as gender equity, as far as Africa is concerned, are seen by many organizations and agencies for development and finance, as well as non-governmental organizations such as Oxfam, ...as forming an extract of 'good governance' ventures embarked upon in a bid to enhance a balanced and egalitarian society.

Majority of the women who agitate for this often occupy top posts in their careers, posts that often require very advanced academic and, or professional trainings. Coming from

this background, one will probably find it understandable that the women gender activists agitate the way they do, and those who agitate for gender equality, because they are well educated and work in high places where they have easy access to institutions and instrumentations of the media and justice, are often less plagued with the kind of gender discrimination and oppression that the less educated and less placed women, most of whom are rural dwellers, face. This explains why in order to promote their self-interests, internal images as well as secure development aids from international organizations, a lot of the governments of African countries have welcomed equity and equality of gender without necessarily being committed to it. Thus, gender equality is increasingly being politicised around the world with certain members of the elite using it as a platform for self actualization and professional developments. Put differently, such people use their gender equality agitation and activism to maximise personal openings, and it is also in this group that the intellectuals are located. One can pose at this juncture, what are the intellectuals actually writing to fill the literature and gap in knowledge about gender? Does it agree with what activists are doing and craving for, and to what extent? To what extent is the project of gender equality represents the minds and opinion of women? Do the women ever sense the social change that equality of men and women will bring? How can issues and methods be synergised in order to ensure the achievement of gender phenomenon? These questions are concentrated upon and will be answered by this paper.

It has been widely noted that those who engage in gender activism, gender activists, are often of the feminine gender, and most of them are upper middle class women who work in high places and often live and work in the city centres and metropolis. What activists really want is gender equity and equality, something that is common but is also not unconnected with the notion that neo-liberalism holds towards the link between competition and achievement, especially in the periods after the 19th century. Consequent upon this, employments become a function of distribution based on merit and other factors instead of the factor of gender and sex, as well as age and ethnicity which used to be the criteria. However, mainly, those who claim the accolade of gender activism are of the female species of homo sapiens, often belonging to an array of professions as practitioners, and what they do, is engage the society on gender issues using activism, not intellectualism (Akande 2007). Gender activism has done more of agitation for gender-equality (if not superiority of the feminine gender), and its agitation is relatively more successful within the rank of gender-sensitive societies and organizations, especially in the ministries, departments and agencies, as well as the private sectors. It is mostly those women who are able to develop to the top echelon of their career and who can 'prove their worth' within their workplaces, environment and as well as in politics, that often lay claim to quest for equal opportunities that gender activism often represents. As this chapter explores certain issues that characterised

gender scholarship in its earlier part, in what follows it does the same on gender activism.

Gender activism is most conspicuous in the formal sector, and it is more common amongst urban and highly educated women than their rural and grassroots sisters. By implication, especially in most parts of Africa, inequalities of classes and gender get deeper by the day, especially because to the ordinary woman, especially those who are poor and working in the country sides are often basically abandoned. Quite often, gender activism operates through organisations that are created through individual and groups efforts towards overcoming discriminatory practices at home and in work places, as well as to ascertain that voices of women are beginning to be heard in all social strata. Majorly, one must note here, attempts in such directions have often been limited to making cases for women so that they can be allowed to do same things, perform same tasks and given same opportunities in politics, as well as other highly lucrative engagements in all sectors.

Women form the bulk of those who embrace and call for gender equality, and they have done many things to ensure its occurrence. Although when many think about gender activism and equality, what they see is a movement of women for the sake of women, perhaps because the axe of oppression, domination and marginalization has been on women for long due to the action and inaction of their men counterparts, it has been alternatively argued that gender equality benefits both men and women. This means that the entire humanity stands to benefit from it when men and women become equal (Mandisa 2015) as the problems of poverty, illiteracy and abuse, in form of rape and harassment are likely to have been solved.

Gender activists also argue that gender equality, when achieved, will give the feminine gender her inalienable right, helping the world to witness representation of women in more professions that have hitherto been dominated by men: Law, Engineering, Military and Medicine; though this can also be the other way round: Nursing, buaticianship, and preschooling. All these will be when rigid gender roles have been broken, and when they do, an array of advantages will come to men.

Notably, as asserted by (Tille 2009), not again will men undergo pressure as protector and caretaker of women as they currently do. Empowered, women can now protect and care for themselves, saving their men a lot of stress. On the logic of when one is oppressed all are oppressed- because every man has a daughter and every woman a son- "everyone, irrespective of the shape of his body can pursue any discipline, act and appear the way he or she wants, and the chain of oppression based on gender will ultimately break. Tille (2009, p. 112) concludes that "where genders are not treated equally, it is impossible for the society to utilise its human resources to the maximum capacity".

Gynocrist, Maxwell (2013), also advances that with gender equality, women will have better job opportunities and this will benefit the economies of communities in such a way that will trickle down to individuals and the family. He argues that women will definitely upgrade household values and investments if they have independent income and the result will manifest positively in children education and health, as well as nutrition. Maxwell (2013) so declared perhaps because, all over the world, the labour force has lower number of women than men, and the fewer women are found more in the informal sectors of nations' economies where their reward is significantly lower than that of the men even when similar or same efforts are invested.

On the general note, it can be synergised that the advantages of men women equality will ensure that employers of labour hire and remunerate with equal opportunity, and this will create an environment where staff members are well motivated to give their best, an environment where evaluation is gender neutral and measurement of what has, or has not worked well is easy; an environment that has vast and diverse human resources at its management team and that is most likely to be more successful as researches have shown (Binta 1999, 2013); and that working environment that will enhance good employee-employee, as well as employee- employer relationship. In addition, gender equality will challenge women to do the best they can because they had hitherto been technically labelled winking, compared to men. There will be a system that guarantees transparently fair system of career progression which ultimately will lead to increased workers' morale, massification of skilled labour force, and attractive career development drive.

But from misogyny and antifeminism point of view, it has also been asserted that the equality of men to women is nothing but what Adekoya (2012, p. 11) calls "skirt rascality, populated and driven by a few, rather character questionable individuals who cannot succumb to the discipline of marriage and family". Adekoya believes that nature, not the society, places women under men and any woman who intends to change the status quo jeopardises the future of the family as well as that of nature. Adekoya's opinion is not unconnected with the view of John and Malik (2011), that gender activists are those who read too much of books and concentrated too much on career building than settle down, only to realise that they had selfishly led their lives, and now decide to save their faces through gender equality, encouraging other women, especially in the grassroots, to fall into the trap that swallow them.

Aside from the views of the antifeminists, what is clear from the above review is that gender equality is a project that people, mostly women, advance to challenge the dominance of men in the social structures, and gender activism is the front with which they address the problem and seek the change. It is also clear that while some scholars have argued that gender equality is in the interest of women, so they can have equal status and equal opportunity with the men, other opinions, there are, that maintain that gender equality is in the interest of men themselves, and by extension the entire society.

Misogynists, that is those who hate women, or others who best describes as antifeminists because their disagreement for gender equality appeals more to logic than emotion, have consistently maintained the position that gender equality is a product of a few, sectionalists women rather than the agenda of many women.

While there may not be a particular agreement on such a socially sensitive issue, attention has not been given to the fallout or consequence of gender equality when it eventually materialises to maturity. This is the lacuna that the current chapter intends to explore, and through empirical investigation from women themselves. In the core interest of the chapter is the location of who gender activists are, and whether or not their activism and philosophy of gender equality is popular among their fellow women who do not belong to the high class that do the activism, as earlier discussed in this chapter. It will be then explained what the likelihood of the consequences of gender equality is when it becomes fully manifest, and whether majority of the women who support gender equality will equally support the radical social change that may follow it.

To systematically establish all these, the following hypotheses were raised:

- Gender equality is driven mainly by high class urban women
- Gender equality is supported by majority of women
- Majority of women don't envisage the social change that gender equality may provoke
- Majority of women forbid the most social change that gender equality may provoke

Using the foregoing hypotheses as base, a questionnaire was constructed for use in an open survey among a population of one hundred female students in the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Women who responded fall within the ages of 22 and 32, and were individually served the questionnaires to provide individual responses. Strong ethical considerations were made, with the researchers ensuring prompt privacy and confidentiality of respondents, as well as using the responses only for the purpose of the study. A total of one hundred and twenty questionnaires (120) was distributed and 99 retrieved, but the researches deliberately sent out one more and ensured its completion and return in order to have a simple figure that would make analysis easy. Babie (2013, p. 24) asserts the discretion of a researcher to do this 'if for the reason of time and other constrains that may be considered as limitation of his work, he prefers a rounded figure that can be easily subjected to mathematical processing'.

Rated close open ended questions were used, because it is most appropriate when a study intends to deduce the rate at which people accept or reject certain phenomenon for which they are part but in which they may not necessarily involved (Ahonsi and

Soyombo:1996). The case under study is clearly similar to this as many women are part of the sentiment and movement of gender equality but they are not directly involved in it. Thus, rating was done to ascertain the intensity and view of respondents on the issues raised in the questionnaires. Analysis of data was made in simple percentage form since the issue under investigation is not complex and does not require advanced statistical analysis.

Restating the Hypotheses

- Gender equality is driven mainly by high class urban women 61 of the 100 responded agree with it and the hypothesis is validated.
- Gender equality is supported by majority of women 94 of the 100 agree with it and the hypothesis is validated
- Majority of women envisage the social change that gender equality may provoke 34 out of 100 responded agree, so the hypothesis is rejected.
- Majority of women will love most social change that gender equality may provoke 23 of 100 responded agree so the hypothesis was rejected.

Interpretation

The basic interpretation of the foregoing hypotheses testing is that many women merely learn about gender equality through the media and by the efforts of highly placed career women, top civil servants and politicians, it has never been a consultative or democratic drive. However, in spite of not being consultative, majority of women key into the sentiment of gender equality since it is central to the yearnings and aspirations of today's women. In doing so, they often think of equality in terms of opportunities, not in terms of future consequences and by the time they explore the social change that may be the consequence of gender equality, majority of women become comfortable.

What Is the Social Change that Continued Gender Equality Will Provoke?

As the society currently runs, anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists will agree, men take the lead in many things, not only in African which is often considered backward, but also in the developed world of Europe and the United States; what differs is the degree of lead the men have (Haralambos and Holborn 2013). This implies that men still drive nations' economies, they have the highest number of jobs and are responsible for settlement of bills more than the women. This implies further that in the majority, husbands still provide for wives and children. Though this may be in conjunction with the wives, the financial part is often done by the husband. Wives see this as normal and equally enjoyable.

However, as the campaign for gender equality by gender activists continues to gain more grounds, more and more women are getting educated, and are being placed in

high paying employment. Women are turning to what used to be men - only works; very fast, but the same speed is not recorded in men turning to jobs that only women used to do. If this trend continues, it is asserted by Akanbi (2008), work places will be structured 70/30 in favour of women. Women's incomes automatically fall within the same structure. Consequently, this will provoke a major shift in the structure of the society, in which women will now have to care for, provide for, protest and drive men, including their husbands to work. This also means that with women more empowered than men, they will have to shop and entice men to marry them. Also, most easy jobs such as cab driving, trail pushing and other menials will be taken over by women while men sit at home awaiting wives for feeding and payment of children tuition.

Do Women Find the Change Desirable?

There is a very provocative conclusion made by Nick Neave (2006), when it comes to the issue of gender equality and the struggle that characterises it. Addressing women generally, Nick concludes that "not only do they need men, they are fundamentally programmed to depend on them" (www.dailymail.co.uk/femail). The opinion of Nick Neave is in line with the result of the survey conducted in this paper. In his view, the twenty first century women can, for all they want, boast that they are equal to and not dependent on men. They enjoy financial independence and command a retinue of men as servants, and may even form nuclear families without men, especially using certain medical technologies. Neave maintains that they are wrong, and states that "quite simply, women are pre-programmed to feel dependent on men".

Political musician and African cultural activists, Fela Anikulapo Kuti also thought in line with the foregoing. Putting the original pidgin English in italics with the English equivalence in front, Fela, in *Lady* (1972) would sing...

<i>If you call am woman</i>	If you call am woman
<i>African woman no go 'gree</i>	African woman will disagree
<i>She go say, she go say, "I be lady, oh..."</i>	She will insist she's a lady
<i>She go say him equal to man</i>	She claims equality to man
<i>She go say him get power like man</i>	She claims she 's as energetic as a man
<i>She go say anything man do himself fit do</i>	She equates her competence to man's
<i>She go want take cigar before anybody</i>	She wants to take cigar before everybody
<i>She go want make you open door for am</i>	She wants you to open door for her
<i>She go want make man wash plate</i>	She wants you to do the dishes
For am for kitchen	For her in the kitchen
<i>She want salute man</i>	She greets a man
She go, sit down for chair	Seated in a chair

<i>She want sit down</i>	She wants to take a seat
<i>For table before anybody</i>	In the table before everybody
<i>She want a piece of meat</i>	She want a piece of meat
<i>Before anybody ...</i>	Before anybody...

Fela's foregoing lyrics need to be understood in terms of the immediate target society, Nigeria, and its dominant value as at that time, 1972, a period immediately after colonialism in most parts of Africa. That was the period when as a result of western values and education, more women got materially empowered in the Nigerian and indeed African society and they began to assume the dimension of the cultural values of western women. That is why a lady wants to take cigarette, sit, take meant and do all things before everybody, as contained in the above lyrics; and that is why she sits greeting a man, all which were uncommon in the culture of the Nigerian and African people before the post independence period.

But in all these, we interpret, the lady still knows that her behaviour is unreal in line with her personality. So, after putting up such 'artificial, colomentality in the public places, the lady knows she 's and should be under a man. That is why Fela concludes the song thus:

<i>She know him man na master</i>	She knows his man is the head
<i>She go cook for am</i>	She cooks for him
<i>She go do anything he say</i>	She does everything he says
<i>But lady, no be so</i>	But that's not a lady
<i>Lady na master...</i>	A lady is a master...

(Anikulapo Kuti, Fela, 1972)

However, a few contradictions have been observed in the above lyrics, which makes it difficult if not impossible to understand the enigma Fela Kuti and where he really stands in the world of gender equality. In the first place, the way Fela portrayed the African woman in Lady appears laden with his personal, not really African values and subjectivity. This is because it was the same Fela who said that women generally are witches (Aje) in what he calls the Spirit world, and that they posses tremendous powers that in most cases control the affairs of men.

But same Fela refers to women as instrument of enjoyment for men, and in another interview, he says his ability to sleep with two women a day and everyday is a sign of masculine superiority. Fela's lifestyles with his many women, put aside the lyrics of Lady (1972) brings the first contradiction. Fela's mother, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti was a woman, and by all standard, she could not be seen as inferior to any man due to her globally acknowledged antecedents of braveness and courage. Fela's mother was an

unrepentant anti colonial and cultural activists but who had very rich educational background in the west, so can she be considered inferior to men?

In fact, to challenge Fela's notion, one of the thesis of Ifa, in Yoruba cosmology, attests to the acclaimed superiority of women over men.

Alaraka nii tibi huru huru gungi

Alakan nii teyin wosa

A difa fobo, ti n ko omo irunmole bo wa saye

Ti o fi pataki ete mun won mole

Ti o fomi tooro darii won

Obo pele, alamo,

Orisa pataki ti o jokunring o gbon

E je ka juba fobinrin, obinrin lo bi wa.

(Osa Eleye: A. Ifafimihan, personal communication. 1999).

Summary and Conclusion

So, as neo liberalism changed the paradigm in the way the society is runs, because it promotes the efforts of the individual towards achieving desires goals to no limited extent, it has equally provoked actions and reactions from individuals and social groups who now lay claim to what they 'can' do, rather than what the society proposes that they can, or, should do, and this is what manifests in gender activism. The focus of gender activism is to reverse and change the status quo in which men in the society are deemed to be superior to women in certain issues and have more opportunities to do certain things, than women This is because as the world stands today, even with the age long agitation for gender equality complemented by some global institutional efforts such as the United Nations Resolution 1325, things still hang largely in the dominant hands of men.

But every social action generates social reactions, and every change that occurs in the society comes with its own contradictions. As activists campaign for gender equality, they often are silent upon what could become of the society in a century after their activism, and how that will fare with themselves as women, and the rest of the society.

From the findings in this study, the summary of hypotheses testing is that many women merely learn about gender equality through the media and by the efforts of highly placed career women, top civil servants and politicians, it has never been a consultative or democratic drive. This means that the women in the grassroots, villages and other sub urban areas merely hear about gender equality struggle from their elite city

counterparts. However, in spite of not being consultative, majority of women key into the sentiment of gender equality since it is central to the yearnings and aspirations of today's women. So, though the initiative of gender activism hardly ever comes from them, rural women fully support their city partners in the idea of gender equality which they propagate as the only thing that can free them and change their economic fortune for better. In supporting the struggle, the women often think of equality in terms of opportunities of job creation, appointments to political offices and access to electoral posts. As the research here reveals, they hardly think in terms of the future consequences that will change the role of women to what men presently have. By the time the women are exposed to this aspect of the social change that may be the consequence of gender equality, majority of them become comfortable and will rather have a rethink about the whole idea of gender equality.

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