Women Empowerment at the Grassroots Level: a Panacea for Ending Dependency Culture in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study discusses women educational empowerment at the grassroots level and how it can help to end women dependency culture in Nigeria. Using the combination of documentary, analytical and descriptive method, the study considers the role of women empowerment projects at the grassroots with the single aim of ending dependency culture of women on men in the Nigerian societies. The study revealed that like many African women, Nigerian women have a subordinate role to their male counterparts. It further revealed that empowering women is a way of reducing women vulnerability and dependency in all sphere of life. It identifies factors militating against achieving government’s objective towards women empowerment and concludes that the aggregate of educational, political, socio-economic, health and legal empowerment are keys to end the dependency culture of women at the grassroots level in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends among others, that to end the dependency culture of women, discrimination against women in all ramifications should be strongly opposed by giving women equal representation in education, politics, socio-economic, health and legal matters in Nigeria.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Gender, Dependency culture, Grass roots.

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Background to the Study
Empowerment has been described as the ability to determine choices in life and influence the direction of change through the ability to gain the control over crucial material and non-material resources (Moser, 1993). Though, the issue of empowerment appeared first in gender and development debates in the writings of Moser (1993) and Sen (1987), these works, according to Parpart (2008), reflected a concern among feminists both from the South and North that women would never develop unless they could become sufficiently empowered to challenge patriarchy and global inequality.

In similar vein, McIntosh (1998) observes that feminists have argued that, “women are so often disadvantaged within heterosexual households, and that women should be allowed their independence, subject to the same tests of disability or availability for work”. They further argued that “dependence on a man was demeaning to women and made them vulnerable to abuse, that they often had to resort to all sorts of subterfuge and flirtation to get a new coat for the winter, or even to get children’s clothes and toys”.

Therefore, since the 1970s, many feminists have campaigned for women's independence in relation to their empowerment as many more wives are dependent on their husbands. The understanding of the term “power” from the concept of “empowerment” is to gain control or have control over ideology, values, resources, intellectualism, and assets of all kinds, leadership, labour and tutelage.

The lingering discrimination calls for women struggle to improve their status the world over in politics, economy, education, social recognition and acceptance. Thus women empowerment seeks to increase women access to the factors of production through special credit facilities and other modes of financial access (Yero, 2010). Women empowerment tends to reduce the incidence of poverty among women if well developed and managed. It also increases employment and household income, all for sustainable economic development among others (Alade, 2012). This grew out of the recognition that inequalities between men and women could continue to hamper social and economic development worldwide. The gender concern of poverty is gaining momentum in the country for it is evident that cultural barriers and government policies have done a big dent on the potentials of women in the past. This study examines the efforts that have been made by Nigeria government at least to reduce the high level of dependency among the women at the grass root.

Statement of the Problem
Women are the main victim of dependency problem in Nigeria. There are several factors that subject women into dependency culture; these include poverty, low levels of education, poor job opportunities, discrimination, socio-cultural barriers etc. It is often said that poverty has a woman face since 70% of poor people are women. A closer look at Nigerian societies shows that the survival of many communities depends heavily on activities associated with women in the informal sector. This notwithstanding, there are laws that deny women equal opportunities with men such as land ownership and opportunities to invest freely. These laws function as a handicap to women's economic capabilities and perpetuate a culture of dependence. The economic independence of women is a major stage in bridging gap of inequalities, preventing violence, fostering self-esteem and well-being. Economically independent women are more likely to assert and demand for their rights whenever they are violated. They are also likely to mentor girls and function as their role models.
Though gaps between genders in access to education have narrowed, but disparities remain among regions in all levels of education, particularly for the are most excluded and marginalized. despite increasing international recognition that the education of girls is one of the most powerful tools for women's empowerment. Gender discrimination continues to keep girls out of school (UN, 2013). Furthermore, the situation at the grass root level is that both old and young females are often exposed to poverty induced nutritional and health risks within households. Girls drop out of school to take care of siblings. This has resulted in low education and low paid jobs from one generation to the next. These limit their economic activities and autonomy (Ajakaye, and Olomola 2003 as quoted by Alese 2010). This premise thus necessitated an assessment of the influence of Women Empowerment projects such as National Poverty Eradication, Capacity Acquisition Programme on the culture of dependency at grass root level in Nigeria. So, major question in this paper is “do employment and poverty relief projects empower them and improve their lives?”

Objectives of the Study
The general objective of this study is to assess the impact of women empowerment activities at grass root level in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include:

(i) To ascertain and analyse the level of educational attainment by Nigerian women compared to their men counterparts.

(ii) To ascertain and analyse the implication of dependency culture of women empowerment in Nigeria

(iii) To make recommendations on how to resolve the identified problems.

Literature Review
Conceptual Framework
Women refer to the female gender, the opposite of male gender. There is the dependency syndrome that women are known to have been dependent on men. In order words, their roles are that of helpers to men (Luka, 2011).

Gender
Often times the term gender is misconstrued to mean “women”. Luka (2011) argues further that gender refers to social attributes that are acquired or learned during socialization and define activities, responsibilities and needs connected to being male or female and not to biological identity associated with masculinity and femininity. Such learnt or acquired attributes are expressed as power, roles, resources and priviliges of men and women. Gender relates to the social, economic and political differences between men and women. Whereas differences are naturally given, gender is socially constructed contextual. Gender is a complex and interacting construct representing struggles over the use and definite of power in the private and public realms. Like class analysis, gender is a fundamental category of political analysis, and not simply another independent variable representing biologic sex (Olojede, 2004).

Empowerment
Empowerment as a concept is very difficult to define. It is sometimes referred to as a goal for many development programmes/projects. It can also be conceived as a process that people undergo, which eventually leads to changes. Stromquist in Medel-Anonuevo (1995), for instance, defines empowerment as "a process to change the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society". It has also been described as "a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access
to a control over such means and resources”. It is regarded as a weapon for the weak and can best be wielded through participation in grassroot and community-based societies’ activities. Initially, empowerment was seen as a necessary ingredient for challenging and transforming unequal political, economic and social structures. However, empowerment is a flexible concept, and by the mid-1990s mainstream development agencies had begun to adopt the term (Parpart, 2008). Given the above, the term is therefore more relevant to the marginalized groups the poor, the illiterates, the indigenous communities - and of course, cutting across these categories, the women.

**Women Empowerment**

Is a multi-dimensional process involving the transformation of the economic, social psychological, political and legal circumstances of the powerless? In the specific case of women, empowerment entails not only positive changes in these critical respects but also the dismantling of the cultural norms and traditional practices that devalue, disempowered and dispossess women. It means giving traditional and legal status to the efforts of women to develop and contribute to the creation of wealth, taking and participating in decision making of their families and societies at large and to reduce their present state of vulnerability, decrease dependency and passivity and be at the centre, not at the periphery (Ojobo, 2008).

**Dependency Culture**

This has been defined in different perspectives and based on scholar cultural background. In developing nations, dependency culture simply means the phenomenon of granting help or aid (by state or an individual) then increasing the likelihood of the recipients being in adverse circumstances (www.thedailybeast.com...). It is a state of being dependent particularly on someone that is being controlled by another. In this society, dependency culture usually arises out of cultural or religious values. In a good number of African societies, women are to be weak and therefore, not expected to work but to depend on their husbands. However, in the developed nations like UK or US it refers to a system of social welfare that encourages people to stay on benefits rather than work. A dependency culture may arise out of a desire to reduce relative poverty, through means tested benefits and a progressive tax system. For example, in developed nations, if a person is out of work with several children, they may be entitled to:

i. Unemployment benefit
ii. Housing Benefit
iii. Means tested child tax credits
iv. Free prescriptions e.t.c

If they chose to work, they may lose these benefits and also pay more income tax and national insurance. Their net take home pay may be little different to that income received whilst not working (Pettinger, 2012).

**An overview of Women Educational Empowerment in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, literature has focused on rural women and empowerment. Empowerment in this case is described as the provision of adequate opportunities to women to develop their potentials and contribute to the development of the nation in particular and the world in general (Ovute, et al, 2015). In order to bring about improvement in the conditions of women, there is need for women educational empowerment. Education empowers women by improving their living standard. It is the starting point for women's advancement in different fields of human endeavor. It is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfill
their role as full members of the society. In fact, the educational empowerment of Nigerian women is the spring board to every other form of empowerment (political, social, economic etc). Experience has shown that Africa ranks high among the continents where women have the fewest rights and privileges. In the thinking of many people on the continent, the most disturbing problems facing Africa and militating against its democratization and development are illiteracy, ethnicity, corruption, poverty and religious intolerance (Akande; 2014). Few people give thought to the fact that sexism or gender oppression ranks as one of the most insidious problems plaguing the continent and slowing down its pace of growth and development (Ezegbe & Akubue 2012).

Other scholars have focused on women and their socio-economic welfare particularly in the area of education, employment, health, access to finance and entrepreneurship or self-employment (see Acha, 2014; Obamuyi and Sokefun, 2014). These studies reveal major differences between levels of educational attainment by men and women. They also show that, compared to men, women start their own business with less financial capital, less experience and fewer resources in terms of human and social capital. This causes many women to set up under funded businesses, which can have a negative impact on their long term performance. Thus the men/women differences are felt both with the structure (size of the firm, business sector) and with the profits. The performances outcomes (profitability, durability) of firms managed by women are generally lower (Sanusi, 2012).

Women's population in Nigeria is estimated at 80.2 million representing 49 per cent of the total population (UNFPA, 2012). About 54 million of Nigeria's female population live in rural areas where they provide 60-79 per cent of the rural labour force. There many challenges that keeps Nigerian women in perpetual dependency situation. Recent data from the 2009 Nigerian Education Data Survey showed that 1.5 million children (8.1 per cent of children aged 6-14) were not in school at the time of the survey. Of this, 1.5 million people, 53 percent were girls. While on the one hand, the survey shows a doubling of the net attendance ratio for female students between 1990 and 2010, it also indicates that most of these girls do not make the transition to secondary school. There has only been a marginal increase in the number of girls enrolling for secondary school over the 20 year period. Although there is a policy of free education, the literature suggests that there are still some significant costs that deter parents and cause pupils to drop out (Sanusi, 2012).

Thus, women constitute about half the country's population. However, trained women form an insignificant percentage of the total skilled forces in Nigeria partly, because they were not exposed to education early enough, a factor of incidence of poverty. Besides, there is high level of female illiteracy in Nigeria (Adelabu, and Adepoju (2007); Alese, (2010) and this explains why majority of them are engaged in the informal sector of the economy. In this paper, we address the issue of dependency culture by looking at ways in which women empowerment projects can serve as a panacea for ending the dependency culture among women.

The Implication of Dependency Culture on Women Empowerment in Nigeria

In this segment, we discuss how Nigerian women have fared in the face of cultural imbalance. So, the major question in this segment is that “where does the woman fit in the cultural framework of Nigeria”? Are we prisoners of our culture, blindly endorsing the values and following the rules that have been handed down to us? Or are we the producers of our culture, selectively adopting some aspects of our cultural inheritance and rejecting or amending others? Most scholars in Sociology would agree that the answer is both, as “culture shapes us and we shape culture” (Bourdieu, 1989).
Culturally, Nigeria like other African states is a male dominated society and the social relations and activities of Nigerian women and men are governed by patriarchal systems of socialization, therefore many of their cultural practices favour the interests of men above those of women. Male dominance is seen as a situation in which men have highly preferential access, although not always exclusive rights, to those activities to which the society accords the greatest values, and the exercise of which permits a measure of control over others (Friedl, 1975). The main point in Friedl’s definition is the recognition of men being favored in terms of accessing certain economically and socially significant materials and rights, such as access to land and property. These institutions and positions in communities play a role in elevating men over women.

The culture and traditions of many ethnic groups in Nigeria are full of obvious signs of gender stereotyping. Education for girl's right from the very beginning was designed to make them primarily effective mothers and housewives. Hence girls were brought up in the traditional family set-up to be passive, obedient, “ladylike” and always submissive to men. Boys on the other hand, were encouraged to be aggressive, competitive and independent. A woman is brought up to see marriage as her ultimate goal and ambition. From birth to betrothal, her whole life is just one long preparation for assuming the role of wife and mother. In some ethno cultures in Nigeria, for example, she is molded for a life of anonymity and sacrifice. One dimension of patriarchy which limits women's economic and educational activities is the prejudice of purdah or female exclusion, whereby women are confined to the house and are denied access by tradition and culture to participate in the socio-political development of their society (Ojobo, 2004).

The preferential allocation of rights may also be accompanied by attitudes and beliefs about gender roles. Indeed, Sanday (1981) looks at male dominance from two angles. First, is the exclusion of women from political and economic decision-making” and second, male aggression towards women. Sanday measures this aggression using five traits: expectation that males should be tough, brave, and aggressive; the presence of men's houses or specific places where only men may congregate; frequent quarrelling, fighting, or wife beating; institutionalization or regular occurrence of rape; and raiding other groups for wives.

In Nigerian societies, the roles assigned to men and women are significantly defined (structurally and culturally) in ways which create, reinforce, and perpetuate relationships of male dominance and female subordination. Through the process of socialization within the family and other social spheres, boys and girls are conditioned to behave in certain ways and to play different roles in society. They are encouraged to conform to established cultural norms by being rewarded or punished for their behavior. At times, the places women occupy in society are essentialized through claims of innate predispositions. This conditioning and stereotyping could easily have the effect of questioning the capability of girls and women to perform certain tasks. Repeated regularly, it may solidify and become difficult to uproot from the mental frames of people (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui, 2004).

The ability of males and females to participate in governance, policy formulation, and decision making from household to national level is rooted in gender relations. In some African States however, there are household, community and national level restrictions on individual females who aspire to participate in political or communal affairs. This is in spite of gender neutral legislation. The violent manner in which elections are conducted in Africa almost completely
excludes women from vying for elective posts. In general, African women have significantly little or no space to participate in governance as males do. In Nigeria for example, before 2007 general elections, out of 109 members in the Senate, only 3 are women. Also, there are only 21 women of 360 members in the Federal House of Representatives. No single state Governor is a woman. Only 30 out of the 400 delegates to the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) convened early 2005 were women (World Bank, 2004).

In Nigeria, like many other African States, patriarchy male hegemony and other socio-cultural factors also interplay to influence the interactions between the genders and social groups. These inequalities have resulted in some cases such as the exclusion of women, girls, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups from actively participating in certain sectors and at certain levels of the development process of the country. Therefore, more than men, women lag behind in political participation when half of the population cannot contribute appropriately to the decision making, the continent's growth is significantly hindered (ADB, 2013).

Here is a systematic analysis of women's political participation in Nigeria from 1999 to 2015. As analyzed by Quadri (2015) when the country returned to democratic rule, reveals same pattern and trend of women engagement in politics and outcome. The National Assembly in 1999 had three (3) (2.8%) female Senators and twelve (12) (3.3%) female House of Representatives members. 13 out of 710 (1.8%) local government chairperson seats and 69 out of 6,368 (1.1%) councillorship seats (Gberegbe, 2013). In addition, 1 woman emerged as deputy governor in Lagos State (Olojede, 2004). In 2003, four (4) (3.7%) and twenty-one (21) (5.8%) female members were elected respectively into the Assembly local government chairpersons, 15 out of 774 (1.9%) seats; and councillorship, 267 out of 6,368 (4.2%) seats (Gberegbe, 2013).

In 2007 the National Assembly had nine (9) (8.3%) female Senators and twenty-six (26) (7.2%) female members of House of Representatives. In 2011, the National Assembly had seven (7) (6.4%) female members and twenty-five (25) (6.9%) female members in the lower House. In 2015, the National Assembly has seven (7) (6.4%) female members in the Senate and nineteen (19) (5.2%) female in the House of Representatives. 27 out of 740 (3.6%) local government chairperson seats; and 235 out of the 6,368 (3.7%) councillorship seats (Gberegbe, 2013). In addition, 6 women emerged as deputy governors (Arowolo and Aluko, 2010). For instance, like other previous elections in the country, no woman won in the Presidential and governorship elections of 2011. Like in other elections however, women won 7 out of 109 seats in the senate; 25 out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives; and 68 out of 990 seats in the state Houses of assembly. Women's political participation in Nigeria is greatly affected by patriarchal values and the pervasive violence rampant in politics.

In 2006, Nigeria put forward a National Gender Policy, a framework intended to promote gender equality in order to encourage economic growth and development. The Policy sets a 35% target for women in elected positions by 2015. But in reality, women's political participation remains alarmingly low. Women currently occupy only nine out of 109 Senate seats and 24 out of 352 seats in the House of Representatives. 4 Deputy Governors across Nigeria’s 36 states. There are no female governors. There was only one (unsuccessful) female candidate for President. In the 2015 sub-national elections, women comprised: 87 out of 380 candidates for governor and deputy governor (22.9 percent), 122 out of 747 candidates for Senate (16 percent), 267 out of 1774 candidates for the House of Representatives (15 percent).
It is unlikely that Nigeria will reach its 35% goal, given that so few women are running for elected office. Yet, this is not surprising considering the political climate in the country.

Theoretical Framework
The theoretical construct for this study hinges on the dependency culture among women and the empowerment projects as a better governmental policy for ending dependency culture. To suit our purpose in this paper, we considered an extensive review and drawn from David Ellwood work. In it we adopted Ellwood models which are most applicable to dependency. Ellwood opines that three types of models seemed particularly helpful in attempting to interpret dependency: rational choice models, expectancy models, and cultural models. Each of these models, he argues further, emphasizes different factors and a different conception of behavior. In simple terms, they respectively emphasize choices and incentives, confidence and control, and values and culture. Thus, these models loosely correspond to the disciplines of economics, social psychology, and anthropology, respectively. The most important thing about models is that they all suggest that a preoccupation with the attitudes and behavior of the "dependent" is myopic, and that judgments about values cannot be made without understanding larger social forces (Elwood, 1987).

According to rational choice model, particularly in economics and policy analysis, long-term welfare use would be seen as a series of reasoned choices in light of the available options (Green, 2002). Naturally, both the characteristics of the welfare system and the nature of outside opportunities will influence such use. Thus, the choice is between looking at women with pity and putting them on welfare (which may keep them on perpetual dependency) or empowering them to compete for outside opportunities so that they can be independent. Rational choice models suggest that individuals (women) should examine the options they face, evaluate them according to their "tastes and preferences," and then select the option which brings them the greatest utility or satisfaction.

Elwood (1987) argues further that many who worry about dependency speak of perverse values and irresponsible behavior. In the popular mind, those on welfare are failing in their duties to self and society. Or the inhumane structure of the welfare system robs people of their dignity and self-esteem, reducing their ability and willingness to gain control over their own lives. Dependency thus often implies a change in values (preferences) as the more women continue to acquire the "welfare habit" the more it limits their motivation to strive and become independent. Furthermore, Elwood opines that “expectancy model on its own typically posit a two-way relationship between confidence and sense of control on the one hand and what actually happens to people on the other”. According expectancy theories, dependency may result when people lose a sense of control over their lives- when they cease to believe that they can realistically get off welfare. People become overwhelmed by their situation and lose the capacity to seek out and use the opportunities available.

The last category is actually a rather uneasy collection of theories (Cultural models) which typically emphasize that groups differ widely in values, orientations, and expectations. The most extreme version of these is the culture-of-poverty hypothesis. According to culture-of-poverty characterizations, those trapped by such culture are said to exhibit antisocial and counterproductive behavior. Auletta (1982) defines the under-class as a group that "feels excluded from society, rejects commonly accepted values, suffers from behavioral as well as income deficiencies."
In Nigeria, government sees women empowerment programmes as a panacea for ending dependency culture of women. Therefore, since 1980s some laudable efforts have been made to put in place the necessary mechanisms required to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women so as to ensure gender parity and human dignity. A few of the empowerment programmes in Nigeria have specifically targeted the women’s folk. These programmes include the Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLP), founded by ex-First Lady, Mrs. Miriam Babangida, the Family Support Programme (FSP) founded by another ex-First Lady, Mrs Marian Abacha and the Family Economic Advancement Programme by the federal government. Also, The National Gender Policy, which replaced and reinforced the previous National Policy on Women, is particularly targeted at the gender inequality problematic in Nigeria (Ejumodo, 2013). The World Bank assisted Fadama programme has also been of much benefit to rural women farmers in Northern parts of Nigeria (Asogwa, 2012).

Methodology
This research paper is a Situation Analysis Study (SAS); therefore, desk research format is used in gathering data from relevant Nigerian official sources. Secondary data from Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), Nigeria Demographic and Education Survey (NDES), and National Population Commission (NPC) were used. Employment, education and literacy rate were adopted as measures of women empowerment. An overview of the relationship between women’s level of education and other background characteristics was carried out. The data so gathered were analyzed in percentage frequencies. While graphs, bar charts and pie-charts were employed in the presentations for better appreciation.

Data Presentation and Analysis
To analyse our first and second objectives we adopt various National Demographic Surveys that have been conducted in Nigeria. These surveys which are presented in table 1 below shows women employment Status by background characteristics in Nigeria. Here, the philosophy behind this is that, employment status is seen as one of the sources of women empowerment, given that it enables them exercise control over their own income and by extension their lives. We therefore consider the employment status of men and women by presenting and analysing data from Census 1991 & 2006, Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008 & 2013. This is done with the view that the employment status of women goes a long way in determining their economic situation.

Analysis of Objective 1: To ascertain and analysis the level of educational attainment by Nigerian women compared to their men counterparts.

Table 1: Trend and Level in Age-Sex Educational Attainment by various National Surveys

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>27.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>59.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>13.2</td>
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Of the many indicators of well-being used to measure the success of social programmes throughout the world to better effect, none is used as frequently, after poverty rates, than the level of educational attainment rates. The data displayed on table 1 above show that the women account for lower level of educational attainment than men. It shows that in 2008, women between ages 45-49 recorded lower level of 5.7% in educational attainment; while the highest level attained was recorded in 1999 by those women between ages 35-39 at 35.1%. To better appreciate the level of educational attainment by Nigerian women compared to their men counterparts the, data in table 1 above is graphically represented in the 1 and 2 below.

Analysis of Objective 2: To ascertain and analyse the Implication of dependency culture on women empowerment in Nigeria

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of seats held in State/Federal Executive by type, Year and Sex

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>36(100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36(100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36(100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36(100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36(100)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep. Gov</td>
<td>35(97.3)</td>
<td>1(2.7)</td>
<td>34(94.5)</td>
<td>2(5.5)</td>
<td>30(83.4)</td>
<td>6(16.6)</td>
<td>35(97.3)</td>
<td>2(2.7)</td>
<td>34(94.5)</td>
<td>2(5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>36(85.8)</td>
<td>6(14.2)</td>
<td>36(85.8)</td>
<td>6(14.2)</td>
<td>34(81)</td>
<td>8(19)</td>
<td>29(69.1)</td>
<td>13(30.9)</td>
<td>31(83.8)</td>
<td>6(16.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Advisers</td>
<td>19(90.5)</td>
<td>2(9.5)</td>
<td>19(90.5)</td>
<td>2(9.5)</td>
<td>18(85.8)</td>
<td>3(14.2)</td>
<td>37(92.8)</td>
<td>5(11.2)</td>
<td>13(86.7)</td>
<td>2(13.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambassadors</td>
<td>96(90.6)</td>
<td>10(9.4)</td>
<td>96(90.6)</td>
<td>10(9.4)</td>
<td>96(90.6)</td>
<td>10(9.4)</td>
<td>96(90.6)</td>
<td>10(9.4)</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

Source: Ministry of Women Affair (2013); Anya (2004); www.fhc-ng.com

We provide here below a graphical illustration of distribution of seats held in State/Federal Executive by type, Year and Sex, as shown table 1 above for a better understanding.
It is not news that more men are in positions of power and authority in Nigeria than women; statistics in table 3 and 4 above shows it. Of the 42 Ministers in the federal cabinet in 2011, 29 or 69.1 percent were men while only 13 or 30.9 percent were women. The share of women among Ministers is 25% compared to 75% of men. There is no executive governor among the 36 in the country that is a woman. The situation is similar at the state and local government council level. In the private sector women are Chief Executives in some large companies but the number remains low relative to men. For the goals of the women empowerment to be fully realised, the current situation of women must be factored into policy formulation and implementation. Doing otherwise would not be in the interest of inclusive development.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of seats held in National Assembly by type, Year and Sex

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total seats</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Reps.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total seats</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>360</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both Houses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total seats</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INEC
The Table Above is Further Depicted with the Figure 4 below for more and better Understanding.

In politics women continue to be under represented in the National Assembly where 2007 has the highest total number of women that both Houses could ever have (i.e. 34 out of 469 available seats), representing only 7.6% while the rest 92.4% seats were occupied by men. 1999 and 2011 have the lower number on women representation in the National Assembly. The periods had 15 or 3.1 percent women representation while the rest 454 or 96.9 percent were occupied by men. Parliamentary seats at the National level are currently shared among the men and women in the ratio of 95.2 percent to 4.8 percent (i.e. 2015 to date).

Table 4: HIV Infections & Annual Death Estimates in Nigeria by sex and year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>198,198</td>
<td>88,742</td>
<td>44.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>192,000</td>
<td>86,178</td>
<td>44.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>181,774</td>
<td>81,728</td>
<td>44.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Federal Ministry of Health; NBS (2011)

HIV/AIDS has been a critical issue for women since it was recognized globally in the 1980s and later in Nigeria. Its effect on populations, particularly the working age, makes it a major cause of impoverishment in afflicted lands. The table above shows that more women are dying from the epidemic than men. In 2008, it was estimated that 55.2 percent of those who died of HIV/AIDS were women. In 2009, the figure was 55.1 percent while in 2010 it was 55.0 percent. This state of things may not be unconnected with the research based finding that women are more vulnerable than men to contracting HIV due to biological, social, economic and cultural pressures. Unequal gender relations within and outside the family often limit the ability of women to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. Lack of knowledge of HIV among young women may also be a contributing factor. On the average, it is estimated that 55.7 percent of New HIV infections in Nigeria between 2008 and 2010 were females (NBS, 2011).

Discussion of Findings
The first indices for ending dependency culture which can also serve as a catalyst for Women Empowerment, is a reasonable and appreciable level of attainment in education. It has been well observed and confirmed that “knowledge is critical for development because everything
we do depends on knowledge” (World Bank, 2012:17). Also, Fatile & Ejalonibu (2016) opine that it is mandatory for women to receive proper education as enshrined in Chapter 11 Section 17 (2) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where it was emphasized that “every citizen shall have equal rights, obligations and opportunities before the law”

There is every reason to believe that in every society, when women are empowered socially, economically and what a few, it enhances the quality of family lives than when they are culturally subjugated and perpetually thrown into dependent situation. The findings of this study indicate that challenges of women dependency is social-culturally induced, and comprise of such factor as family and cultural expectations, multiple roles in family and society, inflame of spouse, family and culture itself. Typically, Nigeria as in most cultures in Africa is built on the belief that men are superior to women and therefore, they should depend on their male counterparts. This means that only men have the ability to face greater challenges, therefore women are not to undertake risky ventures. This belief affects the attitude and behaviour of women that tend to be inimical to independent life.

In terms of employment, women are significantly underrepresented in secure wage employment in both public and private employment. Those who have formal sector jobs are constrained by the reproductive roles they play. As a result, majority of women occupy low-level posts that offer them the flexibility they need to manage their households while working in the formal sector. They spend most of their time doing unpaid household work, which undermines their business potentials (Sanusi, 2012).

**Conclusion**

As women's education has become one of the key development objectives in the nineties, this study is an examination of the assumption women educational empowerment can serve as a panacea for ending dependency culture in Nigeria. The findings of this study indicate that, as in other developing nations of the world, women in Nigeria are faced with numerous socio-economic challenges one of which is discussed in this paper (dependency culture). More recently, the concept of empowerment has been tied to the range of activities undertaken by and for women in different areas, education included. Self-reliance which to a larger extent depends on is undoubtedly a necessary condition for emancipation. Yet, it is by no means the only one, and certainly not a sufficient condition. A good number of discriminated and marginalized women, throughout the world, live in highly unfavourable socio-economic and cultural conditions. They can survive and help their households do the same because they are already highly self-reliant. Yet, they remain victimized as far as human rights are concerned.

**Recommendations**

The paper made the following recommendations among others.

1. There is the need for the empowerment of women for active participation in educational, political, socio-economic, health and administrative activities.
2. Finance has been identified as one major limiting factor to women entrepreneurship development. Skilled women are likely to access finance more easily. Therefore, a necessary step in enhancing finance for the women should be to ensure an upscale of their leadership, technical, entrepreneurial and managerial skills.
3. An important priority for governments should be increasing the enrolment of girls across all levels of education complemented by efforts to improve the quality of education that they receive.
4. For a meaningful contribution of women in the struggle to end dependency culture among Nigerian women, real women empowerment should be done in terms of making women to have a sense of self-worth; having right to have and to determine choices; right to have access to opportunities and resources; right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; as well as their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

5. Women should therefore be nurtured on innovative measures to overcome the barriers to their empowerment, such as women group that provide credit to members, the use of extensive family network to raise credit, seed money, and other supports for their business.

6. The women should be encouraged to join pressure-groups where they can be sensitized about issues affecting them like maternal health, infant mortality, HIV and AIDS, environmentally sustainable practices etc.

7. Government should provide more avenues to reach-out to women most especially in the rural areas and provide checks and balance to ensure that assistance provided really gets to the beneficiaries.

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