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**EXTENSION OF THE FUNCTIONALIST THEORY OF THE STATE TO GENDER  
DISPERITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The functionalist theory of the state is based on the works of Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton of the interconnected parts of the state structure and corporatism. They argued how society is a complex system whose component parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. In what follows then, the researcher is proposing that the female folks must in like manner be seen in this light as a part coming into a social system like the university to interact with the male character to achieve a common goal. To do the otherwise, is to do the contrary. This theory most probably is the underneath reasons for social conflicts. For indeed the researcher will like to argue that there are sectional units where the female figure will work more competently. Therefore, through content and conceptual analysis of this theory and other works, the researcher is proposing that their appointment should be seen in the perspective of the above theory and not with a patriarchal view.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Gender issue has been a focal point of discussion in many regional, national and international forums. Issues bordering on inequality and inequity are often addressed as well as forms of discrimination against women. The 1991 Nigerian constitution makes provision for equality of women, guarantees the rights and protects the interest of women considering the religious, traditional and cultural norms that govern the society.

The role of women as nation builder and in education cannot be underestimated. Education reinforces generally all human potential and it is a very critical factor in human life. Education is believed to be the most powerful and dynamic instrument for social, economic, political, scientific and technological development of nations. (Aghenta 2001). The World Bank experts observed that a country with more educated girls and women will not only heal her economy but will make it wealthier (UNESCO, 1985). Women have been seen to be astute

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Managers of the home and local economies and so are capable of playing important management roles in Universities globally.

It is not possible to ignore women employment even though the employment pattern in Africa still favours men more than women. (Mensah, Biney and Ashang, 2009). Sutherland (2008) submitted that women face serious challenges in gaining access to their daily resources and bargaining power. These adversely affect the women, hence they are considered in the world as the more vulnerable to socio-economic depression. All these have culminated into huge gender gaps in literacy, education, health and access to power. Despite all these women are still important and they constitute a visible force in terms of development and socio-economic changes of any society including the Universities systems. This then is the concern of the researcher that as a matter of extension with the functionalist theory, the female folk must be seen as a different segment for a definite function in the society, and not as a rival

Academic profession, like any other profession at the beginning of time, was a single sex profession. (Singh, 2002) cited by Egunjobi, (2009). But the World War II had actually opened the gateway to women emancipation in Europe and the USA before any University was introduced to Africa. Under the colonial imperialism, whatever operated in UK became law in Nigeria. Today in the Commonwealth Nations, the situation of women in academics has improved. The percentage of women employed as full time academic staff ranges from the highest of 50% in Jamaica to the least of 9.5% in Ghana, with a Commonwealth average of 24%. The smallest percentages were found in Ghana 9.5%, Nigeria 13.6%, Tanzania 11.0%, Zambia 10.9% and Zimbabwe 9.8% all in Africa, for example, University of Ilorin, also showed female/male ratio of 11.6% to 88.4% (Egunjobi, 2009).

Like in many professions, discrimination against women in academics in the past existed throughout the world. According to Egunjobi, (2009), women academic in Nigeria were denied maternity leave under the University Law and in some cases, they were not allowed to get married or have children. Some women were even refused employment despite the fact that they were qualified because it was felt that the women would be a distractive influence in the laboratory working in an all-male career.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The researcher intends to anchor the paper on the concern of the functionalist theory of the state; being an entity with component parts. This was as argued by Hebert Spencer and Emily Durkheim, that for the effective running of the state, each of the functional units has a definite role to play in the running of the state. For instance, while the church is with the concern of moral, the university is in dire role of the institutional needs of the state. That it is by this span of control would there be a smooth governing of the state and wherein there is no check in function, there is likely to be a breakdown in the social system.

And then in what follows, the researcher intends to propose that this theory could as well be applied in the appointment of the female character in the administrative system, especially in the generally management of crises in the university and in the state. Arguing that as a matter of labour behavior, job satisfaction and productivity of labour, that certain

Departments are more duty bound than others. For instance, it may well be said, by way of proposition, that certain professions and their units are more stress sensitive and crises bound than others and the woman character can fit in here. That on what follows, the appointment of labour cannot in anyway be far from mere chauvinism and the patriarchal structure of the state and which ought not to be.

Let it be said that the only industry in the nation is education. If this is so, what then is the composition of male and female employed in the academic sector in the south-south universities. Is there discrimination against women employment in lectureship position in tertiary institutions in the region where education is highly valued?

The highest percentage of female academics employed is in the College of Education. Even in the university, the faculty of education has the highest percentage of female participation. This result may be as a result of the fact that many of the women who had tertiary qualification in education courses, proceed for their postgraduate studies in education thereby having the opportunity to take up lecturing jobs after their postgraduate studies.

The faculties of Engineering in both university and polytechnic as well as the school of environmental studies have the least employment of women. They had fair standing in faculties of education, agriculture, law, school of languages, school of arts and social sciences. Generally men dominate in science and technical courses and only few female students usually enroll for science and technology based disciplines even at the first degree level. Only very few go in for the masters and PhD in the technical disciplines. No doubt this is because the University authority has not been able to adopt the factionalist theory of Spencer and Emily Durkheim in the management of the female character. They instead apply themselves more to the patriarchy.

Most women are found in the faculties of education, arts, law, social sciences and administration. They see the disciplines as the traditional professions that are considered to be the national extension of the natural roles of women as wives and mothers. This is but an error.

The study then revealed that the percentage of women in the upper echelon is low and poor indeed. The representation of women at the management position is also very poor. No woman has ever been a Vice Chancellor in the University. The present rector and provost in the polytechnic and college of education are females.

Currently, only one female is a Dean of Faculty in the university out of the nine Faculties; none in the polytechnic out of four schools and only one female in the College of Education. This confirms the observation of Singh (1993). In Dines (2008) that "women Deans are a minority group and women Vice Chancellors are still a rarity". Reports of the 1990 survey by Dine further support this finding that men outnumber women at about five to one at middle management level and at about twenty to one ratio at senior management level. Further reports on gender distribution among academic staff show that on the whole, women are found in academic positions than in management positions.

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The study further revealed that the poor representation of female professors and female chief lecturers at professorial level result to poor representation at the management cadre. This might be because of the challenges that women usually face. Even at times when women are qualified and available, the institutions are unwilling to take the risk of appointing women to top management positions because of women's multiple roles or dual career conflict between their professional obligations and home/family discrimination which have also contributed to the under representation of women on the academic staff of universities particularly at the top academic management positions. It is then wrong to see it in this light. There is need to extend their appointment to that of a functional thing.

According to Adegun (2012), gender disparity refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. (Not based on function) It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as the biological through chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical; gender binary systems may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed. (On differences between the sexes).

In the US, gender gap appeared to narrow considerably beginning in the mid-1960s, where some 5% of first year students in professional programs were female in 1965. By 1985 this number had jumped to 40% in law and medicine, and over 30% in dentistry and business school. Before the highly effective birth control pill was available, women planning professional careers, which required a long term, expensive commitment, had to pay the penalty of abstinence or cope with considerable uncertainty regarding pregnancy". This control over their reproductive decisions allowed women to more easily make long term decisions about their education and professional opportunities. Women are highly underrepresented on Boards of Directors and in senior positions in the private sector.

Additionally, with reliable birth control, young men and women had more reason to delay marriage. This meant that the marriage market available to any woman who "delayed marriage to pursue a career... would not be as depleted. Thus the pill could have influenced women's careers, college majors, professional degrees, and the age at marriage". Specifically in China, birth control has become a necessity of the job for women that migrate from rural to urban China. With little job options left, they become sex workers and having some form of birth control helps to ensure their safety. However, the government of China does not regulate prostitution in China, making it more difficult for women to gain access to birth control or to demand that the men use condoms. This doesn't allow for the women to be fully protected, since their health and safety is on jeopardy when they disobey.

A recent study in the USA demonstrated that when leaders at scientific research institutes were presented with otherwise identical job applications (a randomized double-blind designed with n=127) with either female or male names, faculty participants rated the male applicant as significantly more competent and hireable than the (identical) female applicant. These participants also selected a higher starting salary and offered more career mentoring to

The male applicant. The tendency to be biased towards the male application was expressed by both male and female faculty staff.

### **PERSPECTIVE OF INFLUENCE ON GAP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION**

The perspective of influence in the appointment of the female character is that of patriarchal rather than functional which is the concern of this paper. Closing the leadership gap between men and women is one of the central challenges of this country including the universities. Women are under-represented in educational management at all levels worldwide.

In late August 1995, some 25, 000 women from all over the world gathered in China. Their intention was to press their agendas upon government delegations from 185 nations who had been invited by the United Nations (UN) to debate a programme of action for women for the coming decade. All nations/delegates applauded the recognition by the UN that women's rights are human rights. The conference illustrated the widespread recognition of, and challenges to, patterns of inequality that generates gender disadvantages and committed them to see measures that might improve the educational standards of women across the world (Bilton et al, 1996; Reynolds, 1995).

Gender disparities in employment opportunities in Kenya are a real challenge to development. Despite their growing participation in the workplace, there are still very few women in the top echelons of public decision and policy making positions in Kenya (Suda, 2002). This may be much the same in school headship. As a member of the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, the Kenya government is obliged to align its policies with the international standards and requirements on gender.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In what follows then based on the content analysis observed by the researcher and the interpretation of functionalist theory, it is then worthy of commendation that for the gender disparity, their appointment must be approached with the extension of the theory as viewed by the researcher.

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