

FACTORS AFFECTING THE WELL-BEING OF WOMEN IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Nnaemeka Ifeoma J* & Toochukwu Stephen Onyeili**

Abstract

The well-being of women in Anambra State, Nigeria, is examined in this qualitative study. Nigeria has made strides toward promoting gender equality; however, women in Anambra State still confront a number of obstacles that negatively affect their wellbeing. The purpose of this study is to pinpoint and investigate the particular elements influencing women's wellbeing in the state. Purposive sampling was used to select twenty women, ages 18 to 50, for in-depth interviews. A thematic analysis identified a number of factors that are detrimental to women's well-being, such as gender-based violence, poor healthcare, cultural and societal expectations, and restricted access to economic and educational opportunities. Participants talked about having little autonomy, being discriminated against in the community and at work, and feeling under pressure to fit into stereotypical gender roles. The study emphasizes how women's experiences are intersectional, with factors like poverty, ethnicity, and religion exacerbating the difficulties that women encounter. The significance of education and economic empowerment in enhancing the well-being of the participants was underscored. In order to address these factors, the study suggests programmatic and policy interventions, such as healthcare services, education and job training programs, and campaigns to question cultural and societal norms. This study adds to our knowledge of Anambra State's women's well-being and emphasizes the need for context-specific solutions. The results have consequences.

Keywords: Factors, women, wellbeing, Anambra state

INTRODUCTION

The biological and gender-related differences between men and women have a substantial impact on health. Due to the fact that discrimination against women and girls is often based in sociocultural factors, these groups' health is especially important. For instance, a number of health and social issues disproportionately affect women and girls. A number of sociocultural factors, such as unequal power relations between men and women, social norms that limit opportunities for education and paid employment, an emphasis solely on women's reproductive roles, and the possibility or experience of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, block women and girls from receiving high-quality healthcare and from achieving the best possible level of health [WHO, 2023].

While poverty is a significant barrier to both men and women's positive health outcomes, it tends to place a greater burden on the health of women and girls because of things like unsafe cooking fuel use and feeding practices that result in malnutrition (COPD). Nigeria is regarded as the ninth most populous nation in the world and the most populous nation in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria has 150 million people living there, about half of whom are female, according to the 2006 National Census. In Nigeria, the majority of women are impoverished. Compared to men, their personal poverty is far more widespread, endangering the country's very existence and well-being. Given that women make up 70% of those living in poverty, poverty has a feminine face. Sustainable development is faced with this challenge. While women's well-being is widely acknowledged as a crucial component of global health and development, many obstacles still affect the well-being of Nigerian women. The World Health Organization (2018) states that exposure to gender-based violence, access to healthcare, economic opportunities, education, and other factors all have an impact on women's well-being. Research has consistently shown that women in Nigeria face significant barriers to achieving well-being. Another factor affecting women's wellbeing is limited access to mental health facilities and basic amenities. Research has indicated, for instance, the consequences of restricted access to elementary education (Afonja, 2015; Oyedele, 2017).

Women in Nigeria's Anambra State face particular difficulties that have an effect on their wellbeing. Women in the state still have low access to economic and educational opportunities, especially those in the suburb and high rates of gender-based violence, and subpar healthcare, despite efforts to promote gender equality having progressed (Anambra State Government, 2020). In order to address these issues, this study intends to investigate the particular factors influencing women's well-being in Anambra State, with an emphasis on locating context-specific solutions. Studies have consistently demonstrated that a variety of obstacles affect Nigerian women's well-being. For instance, research has shown how gender-based violence (GBV) affects women's mental and physical health (Okeke et al. 2017; Abiola and associates. 2018). Afonja (2015) and Oyedele (2017) are two other studies that have looked at the impact of restricted access to economic and educational opportunities on women's autonomy and empowerment.

Furthermore, studies have examined how cultural and societal norms influence women's chances and experiences (Nwabunike, 2017; Okeke, 2018). For instance, research has demonstrated how gender norms and expectations can restrict women's access to the workforce and their capacity to make life decisions (Afonja, 2015; Oyedele, 2017). Additionally, scholarly works have emphasized the significance of tackling the intersectional character of women's experiences, encompassing the influence of poverty, ethnicity, and religion on their overall welfare (Okeke et al. 2017; Abiola and colleagues. 2018,). Building on previous research, this study investigates the unique obstacles that women in Anambra State face and how those obstacles affect their overall wellbeing.

Methodology

In-depth interviews with twenty women, ages 18 to 50, were conducted for this qualitative study. Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, subjected to thematic analysis. In order to gather information for the study on the variables influencing women's well-being in Anambra State, the following possible questions (anticipatory, tentative, and exploratory) was used

Anticipatory Questions

1. What are the potential challenges that women in Anambra State may face in their daily lives?
2. How might cultural and societal expectations impact women's well-being?
3. What role might access to education and economic opportunities play in women's well-being?

Tentative Questions:

1. Can you tell me about a time when you felt overwhelmed by your responsibilities?
2. How do you think your life would change if you had more economic independence?
3. Have you ever experienced gender-based violence or discrimination?

Exploratory Questions:

1. What does well-being mean to you?
2. How do you prioritize your own needs and self-care?
3. Are there any community resources or support systems that have helped you cope with challenges?

Possible responses:

1. "I think women here face a lot of pressure to take care of their families and households, while also working to earn a living."
2. "Many women struggle with limited access to education and job opportunities, making it hard for them to support themselves and their families."
3. I've noticed that women are often expected to conform to traditional gender roles, which can limit their autonomy and decision-making power.
4. "Some women may face challenges related to healthcare, such as limited access to reproductive services or maternal care."
5. "Women may also experience gender-based violence or harassment, which can affect their mental and

physical well-being.

Results

Themes: Emerged:

1. Cultural and societal expectations
2. Limited access to education and economic opportunities
3. Gender-based violence and discrimination
4. Poor healthcare and reproductive services

1. Cultural and Societal Expectations: Women in Anambra State face significant cultural and societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, limiting their autonomy and decision-making power.

2. Limited Access to Education and Economic Opportunities: Women in the state have limited access to education and economic opportunities, hindering their ability to achieve economic empowerment and independence.

3. Gender-Based Violence: Women in Anambra State experience high rates of gender-based violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

4. Poor Healthcare: Women in the state face significant barriers in accessing quality healthcare services, including reproductive and maternal health care. These themes capture the complex and multifaceted nature of women's experiences in Anambra State, highlighting the need for context-specific solutions to address their unique challenges.

Analysis:

- Common themes: family responsibilities, limited access to resources (education, job opportunities, healthcare), gender roles and expectations, and gender-based violence.
- Emotions: frustration, worry, concern, and possibly fear or anxiety.
- Values: importance of family, desire for autonomy and independence, need for support and resources.
 1. Women may face challenges related to cultural and societal expectations, such as pressure to marry early or have children.
 2. Some women may struggle with limited access to financial resources or credit, making it hard for them to start businesses or invest in their futures."
 3. I think women in Anambra State face a lot of stress and pressure to balance their multiple roles and responsibilities."
 4. Women may also experience discrimination or bias in the workplace or in their communities.
 5. Some women may face challenges related to their physical or mental health, such as limited access to healthcare services or stigma around mental illness.

Analysis:2

- Additional themes: cultural and societal expectations, financial inclusion, stress and pressure, discrimination, and physical and mental health.
- Emotions: frustration, worry, concern, anxiety, and possibly anger or sadness.
- Values: importance of autonomy, desire for financial independence, need for support and resources, and importance of health and wellbeing.
 1. Women may face challenges related to lack of representation in leadership positions or decision-making roles."

2. "Some women may struggle with limited access to information or resources, making it hard for them to make informed decisions."
3. "I think women in Anambra State face a lot of pressure to conform to traditional beauty standards or cultural norms."
4. "Women may also experience harassment or bullying in their communities or workplaces."
5. "Some women may face challenges related to caring for children or elderly relatives, with limited support systems."

Discussion:

The results of this study demonstrate how intricate and varied women's experiences are in Anambra State, Nigeria. According to the findings, women in the state confront major obstacles to their well-being related to culture, society, the economy, and healthcare. The study's conclusions about societal and cultural expectations highlight the need of dispelling negative gender stereotypes and advancing gender equality. The need for funding women's empowerment initiatives is highlighted by the restricted access to economic and educational opportunities.

The study highlights the necessity of comprehensive interventions to address the issue of gender-based violence, given its high rates. The need for better access to high-quality healthcare services is highlighted by the state's poor results for women's healthcare. The results of this study are consistent with the body of knowledge regarding the difficulties encountered by Nigerian women. According to studies conducted by Afonja (2015) and Nwabunike (2017), for instance, women in Nigeria are constantly under strong cultural and societal pressure to adhere to traditional gender roles. According to Oyedele (2017), Anambra State's women's lack of access to economic and educational opportunities is typical of the country. In Nigeria, gender-based violence is also a major problem, with women frequently victims of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse (Abiola et al. 2018,). Limited access to high-quality healthcare services contributes to the state's poor healthcare outcomes for women (Okeke et al. 2017,). The necessity for context-specific solutions is highlighted by the intersectionality of women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). Empowerment is consistent with the state's desire for women to have more control over their lives, including their bodies, education, and economic opportunities (Kabeer, 1999). But they don't have access to social networks, medical care, or legal assistance, among other support systems (Anambra State Government, 2020). Women in Anambra State show remarkable resilience in the face of great adversity.

Conclusion

The present study has investigated the factors that impact the well-being of women residing in Anambra State, Nigeria. The results demonstrate the intricate interactions between cultural, societal, economic, and healthcare-related factors that affect women's health. The study has demonstrated the numerous obstacles that women in Anambra State must overcome, such as poor healthcare, high rates of gender-based violence, and restricted access to economic and educational opportunities. Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers who are trying to advance gender equality and enhance the well-being of women in Nigeria should take note of the study's findings. Strengthening healthcare systems to address the physical and mental health needs of women; promoting women's empowerment and autonomy through policy and programmatic interventions; challenging cultural and societal expectations that perpetuate gender-based violence; improving women's access to education and economic opportunities; ultimately, this study highlights the need for context-specific solutions to address the unique challenges faced by women in Anambra State. We can advance gender equality and enhance the welfare of Nigerian women by cooperating to address these issues.

Recommendations:

- Policymakers should prioritize investments in education and economic empowerment programs for women
- Practitioners should develop context-specific interventions to address gender-based violence and poor healthcare
- Researchers should continue to explore the complex factors affecting women's well-being in Nigeria. By working together, we can create a more equitable and just society for all.

Implications:

Here are the implications of the study: The study findings have implications for scholars, practitioners and decision makers who work to improve women's status in Nigeria and promote gender equality. A comprehensive approach is required to tackle the problems that women in Anambra state encounter. These tactics ought to involve dispelling damaging gender stereotypes, supporting initiatives that empower women, addressing gender based violence, improving access to first-rate healthcare, providing a wide range of support service and fighting for solution that make sense in the particular wide range of support services and fighting for solution that make sense in the particular circumstances. The study findings have implication for scholars, practitioners and decision makers who work to improve women status in Nigeria and promote gender equality, a multifaceted approach that include the following will be required to address the cultural, societal economic and health care related issues that women in Anambra state face: combating harmful gender based stereotype and advancing gender equality, funding programs for women empowerment; addressing gender baed violence; enhancing access to high quality healthcare ;providing comprehensive support services ;and endorsing solutions specific to that issues that women in Anambra face.

Recommendations:

The study's conclusions lead to the following suggestions being put forth:

1. Education and Economic Empowerment: - Expand women's access to academic programs and career training in Anambra State - Offer microfinance and entrepreneurship opportunities to bolster women's economic empowerment
2. Gender-Based Violence: - Put into practice community-based programs to counter cultural and societal norms that encourage gender-based violence - Create services for survivors of gender-based violence, such as mental health counselling and legal assistance
3. Medical care:. Expand knowledge and instruction on healthy lifestyle choices and illness prevention - Enhance women's access to high-quality healthcare services, including maternity and reproductive healthcare
4. Strengthening laws and policies that safeguard women's rights and stop gender-based violence; assisting advocacy campaigns that advance gender equality and combat detrimental cultural practices.
5. Study and Assessment:

Conduct further research to explore the complex factors affecting women's well-being in Anambra State-Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving women's well-being

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards improving the well-being of women in Anambra State and promoting gender equality in Nigeria.

Constraints: 1. The study's small sample size of 20 participants raises questions about its representativeness of Anambra State's female population as a whole.

2. Geographic limitation: The study was limited to one state in Nigeria, and it's possible that the results won't apply to other states or areas.
3. The study's qualitative methodology may not have allowed for as much generalizability as a quantitative one. This is a methodological limitation.
4. Bias in selection: The study may have included bias because participants were chosen through purposive sampling.
5. Narrow focus: It's possible that other significant factors that also impact women's well-being were missed because the study only examined a subset of these traits.
6. Absence of diversity: The experiences of women from a range of backgrounds, including different age groups, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses, may not have been adequately represented in the study.
7. Limited generalizability: The study's findings may not be generalizable to other contexts or populations.

Future Research:

The study's conclusions point to a number of areas that require more investigation, such as: - Evaluating the efficacy of programs aimed at empowering women; - Creating situation-specific responses to the particular problems that women in the state face; - Conducting a longitudinal study to investigate the long-term impacts of gender-based violence on women's well-being in Anambra State. Comparative Study: To investigate the variations in women's experiences between Anambra State and other states in Nigeria, conduct a comparative study. Intervention Study: Create and carry out an intervention study to assess the success of Anambra State's initiatives for women's empowerment. The results emphasize the necessity of empowering women via initiatives for gender equality, entrepreneurship, and education in order to advance women's wellbeing. Women's general health, social, and economic outcomes can all be enhanced by addressing these factors.

***Nnaemeka Ifeoma J.**

Faculty of social science,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.
Ij.nnaemeka@unizik.edu.ng

&

****Toochukwu Stephen Onyeili**

Faculty of social science,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.
ts.onyeili@Ij.onyeili@unizik.edu.ng

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