

Examining the 'Success Penalty' in the Marriage Market for Nigerian Women

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Doi:10.5901/jesr.2016.v6n2p19

Abstract

In the last few decades, there have been noticeable changes in the role of women in the society, shown in women acquiring more education and attaining career heights. However, an area of great concern has been the conflict/challenges women face in marriage due to the pursuit of a 'different' career. One major theme that continues to recur is the 'success penalty' (that is the penalty women face in the marriage market for choosing another career, attaining career heights or being successful in the labour market). Such 'success penalties' as limited opportunities to bear and raise children, difficult in finding a husband, among others have been pointed in past literature. Obviously, in our contemporary society, 'success penalty' in the marriage market for women is noteworthy. Thus, this paper seeks to examine the 'success penalty' in the marriage market for unmarried Nigerian women. Taking into consideration the social and cultural milieu in a typical African society, the major questions this paper seeks to answer are: is there really a 'success penalty' in the marriage market for unmarried Nigerian women and in what forms? What are the developmental implications for women?

Keywords: Success, Penalty, Marriage, Market, Nigerian, Women

1. Introduction

Over the last few years, studies have shown that African women are to a great extent breaking the so-called 'glass ceiling' walls in many fields. Women are now being increasingly educated and hold more jobs worldwide than ever before (Akanbi and Salami, 2011). For instance in Nigeria today, women make up almost 50% of the labour force (Akanbi and Salami, 2011). According to the National Demographic Health Survey data (2008), 54% of women aged 15–49 and 77% of men 15–59 are literate. This is an increase from the 2003 NDHS when 48% of women and 73% of men in the same age groups were literate (National Population Commission and ICF Macro, 2009). These present changes in women's career and educational attainment are quite impressive when compared with the 'backward' position of Nigerian women two decades ago.

Today, Nigerian women are found in every aspect of development and in every sector of the economy. Nigerian women are now Managing Directors/Chief Executive Officers, Professors, Pilot, Engineers, Accountants, Lawyers, Ministers and Doctors etc. There are also fields dominated by women such as Nursing, Secretarial work, Fashion Designing and other related jobs. Women are also in politics. In the past democratic administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, women holding political positions in Nigeria increased: 13 women Ministers were appointed,¹ 11 women Ambassadors (out of 93 Ambassadors), 7 Senators (out of 109) and 19 women (out of 360 members) in the Nigerian house of representative. In academics, Nigerian women are also represented even though men are still in the lead. For instance, in 2006 University of Ibadan had an academic staff strength of 3081, out of which 2574 were males and 507 females, Obafemi Awolowo University had 1207 academic staff members out of which 210 were females (Ogbogu, 2011). Even though the numbers of Nigerian women in all the fields are still minimal compare to men, there is still hope as more women are now attaining higher education. Clearly, more women are now being empowered to take

¹ Note that among the 9 ministers sacked by the President, Goodluck Jonathan on 11th September, 2013, four women ministers were involved: Minister of Education, Professor Rufai; Minister of Housing and Development, Ama Peppple; Minister of State for Defence, Olusola Obada; Minister of Environment, Hadiza Mailafia

the mantle of leadership in organisations, fighting to eliminate all kinds of discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice and unfairness that characterised the old order (Eagly and Carli, 2003).

Nevertheless, an area of great concern has been the conflict/challenges African women face due to the pursuit of a career. Traditionally, African women are expected to be seen at home and their jobs/occupation is not to go beyond the home front. With women seeking and struggling to change the status quo, there are now being confronted with many difficulties. One major theme that continues to recur is the 'success penalty' (that is the penalty women face in the marriage market for choosing another career, attaining career heights or being successful in the labour market). It can also be called the disadvantage career success pose to women in the marriage market. Such 'success penalties' as have been pointed include limited opportunities to bear and raise children, difficult in finding a husband, among others. For the married women advancing their career, getting promoted just like their male counterparts have been challenging due to care of home assigned to women in a patriarchal society, which Africa is one. There are gendered roles that have been socially constructed that men and women are to perform; where women are to do the household chores, and care for the children as well as their husbands; while men are meant to seek for jobs in organisations and 'fend for the family' (Osondu, 2012). It has been reported that such society gender constructed roles have delayed and sometimes hindered few married women that struggled to find a career from getting to the top positions in their workplace because of the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities and official functions (Osondu, 2012). According to Ogbogu (2011), in the academics, female academics have overtime published less than their male counterparts. This invariably means that their climbing up the ladder is delayed, and this is in no doubt penalty for them due to home chores. Indeed, women tending to advance their career face challenges from different quarters.

However, this study is to investigate how the marriage market in Nigeria penalises high status women or 'successful' women (in this case unmarried women). While some researchers have examined success in terms of income (for example, women earning higher income than men), this paper looks at women's 'success' in terms of education. And education here means women pursuing higher educational degrees beyond bachelors (graduate degrees) in Nigeria. While Nigerian women enrolment into University education is increasingly been accepted (especially in the Southern part of Nigeria) by men, the increasing educational advancement of women after the first degree may be frowned at (either by the parents, society or peer groups) especially before marriage is contracted. The societal pressure for adult women (especially in their 30s) to get married, due to the so-called 'age-timing' of women have helped to ignite the fire for marriage first, and career later.

In a typical African society such as Nigeria, the importance of marriage (union of man and woman, recognised legally or customary) cannot be over-emphasised. It is expected that a woman at a certain age (this differs between the Northern and Southern region of Nigeria; while in the North, marriage of a girl of 10 may be acceptable, the South frowns at it and believes at least 18)² should leave his father and mother and cleave to his husband. When this does not happen after the age of 35, the parents as well as the woman may become apprehensive and anxious that marriage market is eluding. While this has been challenged, and women at the age of 40 or more still marry, Nigerian society often terms it 'sheer luck' or 'divine intervention. The African culture where marriage is most times seen as should be the first 'goal' of every adult woman before any career could make marriage itself a penalty for career pursuit; because it invariably means that if marriage is not contracted, advancement in career should not be undertaken by women (although it is not necessarily so). The cultural stereotypes surrounding females continues to restrict the entire female gender from pursuing a worthwhile career, most that continue, do so at the detriment of getting married late, settling for a much older man who can accept a career woman. Some Nigerian are sometimes ready to give up their career or drop out from school for marriage life. As determined by Nigerian culture, marriage and career for women have become an issue of 'compromised allegiance.'

Indeed, marriage pressure or challenges rarely come up for men in their career pursuit as they have all the 'liberties'³ pursue the highest career and still get married at any time if they choose. The background to women challenges in career attainment in Nigeria no doubt originated from her traditional value system that is prima facie patriarchal, with socially constructed roles, where she is believed to be homemaker, and not 'bookworm' or 'bookmaker.' Women have ignored all the social, gender and cultural hindrances and have continued to advance their career and get to the top. Thus, breaking the "glass ceiling" (Hackney, 2010; Mordi, Adedoyin and Ajonbadi, 2011) or "glass wall" (Tlais and Kauser, 2010) enclaves are not without penalties especially for the unmarried women in the marriage market. Obviously, in our contemporary society, 'success penalty' in the marriage market for women is noteworthy.

Against this backdrop, the major objective of this paper is to examine the 'success penalty' in the marriage market

² Note that the current marriage bill (where early marriage is voted) in the Nigerian Senate has been an area of controversy.

³ Both cultural and age-wise

for the unmarried Nigerian women. Taking into consideration the social and cultural milieu in a typical African society, the questions this paper seeks to answer are: is there really a 'success penalty' in the marriage market for unmarried Nigerian women and in what forms? What are the developmental implications for women? With the introduction as Section 1, this work proceeds as follows. Section 2 examines the concept 'Success Penalty.' Section 3 examines women in African marriage: perceptions and importance. Section 4 analyses the various forms success penalty exist for Nigerian women. Section 5 analyses the implications of these penalties for women and society's development. Section 6 concludes and makes recommendations.

2. Success Penalty

Success penalty or simply the disadvantage of attaining a career success (Elaina, 2003) for women have been used and explained in various ways. It comes mostly in work places, where women face challenges of attaining high positions for the fact that they are 'women.' This is what has been identified as 'glass ceiling' or 'glass wall' (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010) penalty. The 'glass ceiling' or 'glass wall' is a form of gender discrimination in workplaces. The glass ceiling perspective denotes barriers which prevents upward movement of women to top positions. Fagenson-eland and Parker (1998) identified features of an organization with glass ceiling, and these include: one, those organisations are often non-supportive working environment for women; two, they tend to highlight gender differences, weaknesses and exclude women from group activities because of these differences, and third, they do not tend to help females to prepare for management position or prepare women workers on how to achieve or balance work with family and personal life issues.

In Sheryl's (2013) argument cited in Zenger (2013), women in leadership roles suffer from a 'likeability penalty', that is as women get more powerful, they get less likeable. According to Sheryl (2013 cited in Konisberg, 2013), 'success likeability penalty' makes women to hold back in their career advancement. Thus, different penalties exist for career women in many areas. The major difficulty has been in the area of marriage; when success has been attained in a woman's career, and such a woman is still unmarried. Today, there is what is called practise of 'hypergamy' in some societies, and that affects successful women. Hypergamy is simply a custom in some societies that requires a woman to marry man of a higher social class than the one to which she belongs. This has in some cases resulted to the inability of young girls to get 'suitable' husbands, as hypergamy is challenging for girls from higher social class to enter into marriage. According to Elaina (2003) a woman from a distinguished family compared to her husband is seen as one that will consider herself superior and act haughtily towards her husband. Miller (1981) reported that in some parts of India strong pressures for hypergamy imply a lack of suitable husbands for high caste girls, resulting in female infanticide.

While the hypergamy with regards to high social class in India is evident, hypergamy with respect to education and career attainment of women is noteworthy with the increasing entrance of women into key positions and with more women advancing their educational qualifications. Hypergamy with respect to education can lead to a success penalty as it tends to disadvantage women at the top of the distribution (Elaina, 2003). Elaina's (2003) argument is that as a woman's education increases, there is a tendency for hypergamy, that is for her to marry one in higher educational class than she is or that she is, 'which could be challenging in the marriage market.' Moreover, there is another argument that as number of successful women increases, the competition for successful husband intensifies (Elaina, 2005). And if the argument holds water, then it means that successful women would have to struggle and fight for men, if there must marry; but how true this is could be ascertained in further research. No matter from what angle or the view point is taken (whether women's need to marry higher class or men's fear of marrying women with higher career achievement, what is recognisable is that marriage market penalises women for their achievement, and that penalty grows with the higher women go in their career). For example, Hewlett (2002) reported that "the rule of thumb seems to be that the more successful the woman, the less likely it is that she will find a husband or bear a child. In line with that argument, Dowd (2002) stated that men veer away from 'challenging' women because they have an atavistic desire to be the superior force in a relationship. In a study conducted by Elaina (2003), marriage has changed substantially over the last several decades and one of the most notable changes is the overall decline. According to Elaina (2003), the decline in marriage has been accompanied by a surge in women's human capital accumulation and labor force participation rates, both in absolute terms, and relative to those of men. In all these, what cannot be ignored is that success penalty exists for women in the marriage market.

Thus, success penalty as used here means disadvantage (s) career success brings to women (the unmarried women) in the 'marriage market.' Marriage market is simply the world of marriage or the business of marriage.

3. Women in African Marriage: Perceptions and Importance

It is important here to give a brief definition of the term marriage. Simply, marriage is the union between a man and a woman, typically recognised by law - customary, civil or religious ceremony. George, Girgis and Anderson (2010) defined marriage both from a conjugal and revisionist perspective. From the conjugal view, marriage is the union between man and woman who make a permanent and exclusive commitment to each other of the type that is naturally fulfilled by bearing and rearing children together. The spouses seal (consummate) and renew their union by conjugal acts that constitute the behavioural part of the process of reproduction thus uniting them as reproductive units. From the revisionist view, marriage is the union of two people (whether of the same sex or of opposite sexes) who commit to romantically loving and caring for each other and to sharing the burdens and benefits of domestic life. It is essentially a union of hearts and minds, enhanced by whatever forms of sexual intimacy both partners find agreeable. While different arguments have been made both by the revisionists and the 'conjugalists' of what marriage is or is not, those argument and counter-arguments are beyond the scope of this work.

The marriage that is referred to here is the union of man and woman as created by God and recognised in Nigerian constitution. Before the state, before the church, God created the oldest institution in this planet- the institution of marriage. It is the oldest and most universal of all God's institutions which is practised everywhere in the world today. Whatever continent, whatever nation, men and women are seen joined together in bonds of matrimony. In traditional African society such as Nigeria, the institution of marriage is well recognised and respected. It has been part of the culture, custom and traditional practices of the people to contract marriage between a son and daughter whom they feel are of marriageable age.⁴ African marriage has existed since time immemorial and it is a cherished and celebrated rite of passage since the dawn of African civilisation. The marriage ceremony is an important ceremony in African culture and an event every grown man and woman wants to partake or witness.

In Africa, marriage is that cultural process which ushers in new life, as it is through marriage that procreation is 'expected' (that does not mean that procreation is not seen outside marriage). Even though there are instances the couple may be unable to have their own biological children, their roles as father or mother is expressed in African communal settings, where they help to raise their neighbours' children. Thus, the African proverb, it takes a village to raise a child.' Ordinarily, marriage is a journey through life because it enhances and enriches African communities. Lack of marriage is often said to be the death of people or nation. In African traditional setting lack of marriage represents the death of a lineage (especially for a man) as it is often believed that it is through marriage that children come legally take up the place of their fathers when gone. Hence the Yoruba saying, "bibi ni won bi e, iwo na bi ti e" (it is expected of matured children to marry and continue procreation just like their parents). While children born by men outside marriage could be claimed to inherit their father's wealth or take up their father's place (if the father pronounce them his children before death), children born by women outside marriage often has no 'basis' except if their so-called father decides to claim ownership.

There is the perception in African culture that marriage accords a woman a kind of respect and recognition. Most African cultures does not allow a woman inherit his father's property, because she is expected to be giving out in marriage. Thus, when marriage does not occur or delayed for a woman, such woman might be disregarded, disrespected and not recognised in her paternal family. Sometimes disregard seems to be more pronounced when the woman is disadvantaged financially and depend on parents for means of livelihood. Nonetheless, there have been instances where an unmarried woman has made it to the top with high income level, and such a woman then becomes the icon of the family and is highly respected. In this case, her money brings respect from all and sundry.

According to Okasi (2013), being an unmarried African woman in her child bearing age is tricky and odd because traditional African women are expected to marry early and marry well. While Okasi's (2013) view of 'early and well' was not clearly defined, there are certain degrees of agreement not only in Africa that being an unmarried woman may come with anxiety, especially with advancement in age. The right age where such anxiety may come in has been mixed. While some women at 25 may be anxious to marry, others at 28, 30 may want to get to the peak or certain stage in their career before marriage. That notwithstanding, there have been fear that women at 40 is approaching menopause and chances of bearing a child if a man does not show up soon may be low (argued medically as low or high fertility ages).

Although there may be many reasons (which is not the focus here), women may tend not to marry early or marry late, career attainment has been given as one disadvantage women face in the marriage market. It is a popular

⁴ Marriageable age here differs in different region of the country. While in the South a daughter that is less than 18 may not be given out in marriage, in the North, a daughter of 10 years could be given out in marriage. For the sons, the age of marriage has not been a controversy; they are often matured men that could be in authority of their homes and wives.

perception that the more successful a woman is, the less likely she will find a husband or bears a child (Hewlett, 2002). For Whelan (2010), there are now generation of SWANS- 'Strong Women Achievers, No Spouse.' These groups are sometimes seen as 'overqualified for love.' Without contending the above argument and with the acknowledgement that these studies are mainly done outside Africa, this study aims to investigate (through field research) whether there are plights high status women faces in the marriage business. With particular reference to Nigerian women, this study seeks to address these questions; do career pursuits penalise unmarried Nigerian women in the marriage business? And if there any penalties, in what forms do these penalties come? Using educational level (graduate or professional degrees that is going beyond Bachelor's degrees or first degrees⁵), this study is to find out if marriage market penalises unmarried Nigerian women that are advancing their career (since career advancement is seen as path to success)?

4. Method of Data Collection

This study makes use of qualitative method of data collection, mainly use of structured interviews. Structured interviews help the researcher to compare different respondents' answers and arrive at accurate conclusion. In this study, women in the advanced stage of their career (those pursuing graduate degrees- Masters degree and Doctor of Philosophy degree) in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife were interviewed. The interviewees were randomly selected regardless of their disciplines. The interviewees were made up of 10 Master's student and 10 Ph.D students (20 in all). Interviews were also conducted with purposively selected male respondents⁶ (20 in all), to help consolidate the data from the female respondents. The selection criterion for male respondents was that they must hold a Bachelor's degree. Their responses were recorded and transcribed and coded using the ZY index table as a basis for analysis.

5. Success Penalty for Nigerian Women: Forms/Contexts

In the marriage market, career women pay a success penalty, and this could vary for married and unmarried. For the unmarried Nigerian women, in what forms and contexts do these penalties occur? From the data gathered in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, these are discussed below.

6. Results and Discussion

Question 1: Do you think success penalty exist for unmarried Nigerian women advancing their degrees?

Responses	Female		Male		
	Master's	Ph.D	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.D
Yes, there are penalties or disadvantages that come with advancing educational degree for unmarried Nigerian women	++	++	++	++	++

Keys

- ++ Where opinion is strongly expressed
- + Where opinion is expressed, but not strongly
- Where opinion is not expressed

All the respondents agree that in a typical traditional African society such as Nigeria, high status women or women advancing their career face challenges in the marriage market. The respondents expressly strongly that even though things are changing where women's income are now important and appreciated for the support of the family, there are still disadvantages for such unmarried women in Nigeria.

Question 2: In what forms/ways do these penalties or disadvantages come for unmarried Nigerian women in the marriage market?

Responses	Female		Male		
	Master's	Ph.D	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.D
-Delay in marriage/late marriage due to career pursuit or difficulty in getting a husband	++	++	++	++	++
-Settling for older men (divorcee, widower) or someone that ordinarily they wouldn't want to especially due to family pressure	+	++	++	++	+

⁵ With due recognition of OND, HND holders or certificate of education holders

⁶ A complete discussion of marriage market cannot exclude men, since they are the expected 'partners or suitors'

Penalties that 'successful' unmarried Nigerian women face have been pointed strongly by the respondents as delay in marriage or difficulty in getting a husband. The difficulty in getting a husband could either be a problem from the woman due to female hypergamy- such woman tending to marry up because of her level, and the difficulty in getting such a suitable partner may delay marriage. There are also instances where such women have to settle for older men or someone that ordinarily they would not want to when pressure from the family or society arises. Nonetheless, some male respondents (those in Ph.D level) believe that settling for older men could be a choice from the women, and not a penalty; this is because in their arguments, such women may prefer older men than those that they are older than.

Question 3: What are the causes of these penalty/disadvantages for the unmarried Nigerian women?

Responses	Female		Male		
	Master's	Ph.D	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.D
-Culture which includes traditional beliefs and patriarchal nature of the society (the belief that men should be 'in-charge' and superior over women, and women are supposed to be home-makers, and not 'career-makers.'	++	++	++	+	+
- Artificial phobia from men	++	++	+	-	-
-The belief that 'such women' are uncontrollable and tend to challenge their husbands	+	++	++	++	+
Men going for women with lesser degrees	+	++	++	+	+
-Such women being 'choosy' (seeing some men as no longer their equals)	+	+	++	++	+
-Some of such women tend to be arrogant and look down on people	-	-	++	++	+

More importantly, culture and patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society have been strongly associated with the penalties unmarried Nigerian women face in the marriage market due to the advancement of their degrees or career. The belief that Nigerian men should be 'in-charge' and in higher position than their wives is also a major contributing factor. The female respondents are of strong opinion that the cultural environment have not been favourable. The male respondents maintained that a man should be in higher position than his wife to show that he is the 'head'; even though men agreed that they could settle for a woman with the same qualifications than they are, but it is not likely that they would go for a woman with a higher qualification (even though that may occur) than they have because such women tend to be uncontrollable and also challenges their husbands. The men viewed educational advancement of women as a zero sum situation in which the women acquired more education with higher status and income, while men lose control over the women. A typical Nigerian man does not want anything that will give the woman an advantage over him. Education says our male respondents could make a man accept a lady who is more educated than he is but it is not often that easy as the man may often see the woman as controlling.

Another cause of the penalty pointed by the respondents is that some of such women may tend to be too choosy and sometimes try to look down on men that are not in the same status with them; this opinion was highly expressed by the male respondents. They maintained that some of such women could be so arrogant and proud, and that drive men away from them. While the female respondents agreed that they could be 'choosy', their opinion of choosy was in the positive sense, as they maintained that it is not to look down on men but a way to really know who is the capable and right man. Given that they have acquired more education and are more knowledgeable about the society and relationships, they tend to openly critical of some behaviours in men, and that makes men to feel they are 'arrogant.'

Question 4: What then do you think are the implications of this career penalty for the development of women in our society?

Responses	Female		Male		
	Master's	Ph.D	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.D
-Most times women halt career pursuit for marriage	++	++	++	+	+
-Due to the the fact that unmarried women are open to scorn and disregard in our society, it makes women settle for men that may abuse the relationship.	++	+	++	++	++
-Such women tend to face depression due to family (could be from the mother) and society pressure (friends and peer groups)	++	++	-	-	+
-Conflict between individual goals and societal expectations	++	++	+	-	-

While pursuing higher educational degrees such as Master's and Ph.D is good for women, as they gain more experiences, knowledge and higher income, the penalties faced by such women in the world of marriage due to cultural and societal factors have negative implications on the development of women and the society in general. As the

respondents pointed, some women tend to halt their careers for marriage to the detriment of their personal development. Thus, such halting of career pursuit does not only lead to loss of trained talent in development of the society but also a loss of a major economic investment in the person. There are also conflicts between the individual goals that these women want to pursue and Nigerian society's expectations (which is marriage first for a woman), which could be confusing and a great dilemma for the woman as the woman is open to scorn due to what the society terms 'misplaced priority.' The female respondents expressly strongly that there are instances where depression may arise due to pressure from society and family, with such words as "bibi ni won bi e, iwo na bi ti e"(meaning the need to follow the footsteps of the parents and marry in order to continue procreation) constantly repeated especially by the parents. Ordinarily, family pressure invokes stress which may manifest in constant thinking and feelings of irritation, frustration and low self-worth which ultimately leads to depression. According to Avison and Turner (1988) and Thoits (1991), stressful experiences are expected to be particularly deleterious to mental health when they are chronic, negative, and unpredictable or signify a failure to achieve a desired goal. It is also said that such women may have to settle for men (settling for men they never bargained for) that may end up abusing the relationship, as such men may think they are doing them a favour, especially when age is not on the woman's side.

Question 5: In what ways do you think these penalties could be addressed?

Responses	Female		Male		
	Master's	Ph.D	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.D
- Women groups must have to take up these issues in workshops, seminars and conferences to enlighten the society on this aspect of culture that is not favourable on women's personal development.	++	++	++	++	++
- Nigerian men must have a turn-around in their thinking that women that are in higher positions are uncontrollable and challenging as there are no studies to prove that.	++	++	-	-	-
-It is good to balance career advancement and marriage (for those that want to marry) to avoid depression, which could lead to mental insanity.	++	++	+	-	-

In order to checkmate penalties in the marriage market for unmarried Nigerian women pursuing higher degrees or career advancement, the respondents are of strong opinion that the society should be enlightened on the negative consequences this has on the personal development of women and Nigerian society in general. In that way, 'Nigerian men' that see high status women as uncontrollable and challenging will have a turn-around in their thinking, as there are no research basis to that, except that it is the educational and career advancement of women that has taken 'psychological' toll on the traditional African man.

7. Conclusion

It is established that Nigerian women are now pursuing higher education unlike before, and their representation rates in lucrative professions are evident. More women are taking up graduate degrees (Master's and Ph.D), which in essence is advancing them to higher status and career. But success for unmarried Nigerian women is not without penalties. These penalties are due to Nigerian cultural milieu and societal norms. While the penalties could be due women hyper-gamy (women tending to marry up due to educational or career level), which in essence has decreased their chances to find suitable husband; there is also what we called men's 'low-pergamy' (being used as opposite of 'hyper...'), that is Nigerian men tending to 'marry-low', that is women from lower position or status than they are to due to the fear that 'such high status women' could be challenging and uncontrollable. It is important to state that most men preferred to marry women that are not higher than them, as many believe that their 'headship' in the family may be compromised when married to 'high status women.' A typical Nigerian man does not want anything that will give the woman an advantage over him, even though some are changing and are accepting that a woman should earn high income to support the family.

Also, due to the patriarchal and gender construction in the Nigerian society, women frequently face cultural barriers which emanate from the way society view the roles and the expectations ascribed to them. Women are expected to care for the home front first (marriage first), and career advancement (may be later). Thus, high status women are seen as people that are likely to fail in their home primary responsibilities and these make men to distance from such women in 'marriage.' Given the importance attached to marriage, the disregard to unmarried women (especially those that have reached marriageable age) in our society and with the pressure from family and society, career advancement for unmarried Nigerian women have negative implications for the women. Unmarried Nigerian women face depression and even sometimes have to halt their career for marriage. Ordinarily, marriage is a major factor that a Nigerian woman

has to contend with in advancing her career. Nonetheless, the study concludes that while the marriage market tend to penalise women due to cultural and social norms, and 'unfounded' perceptions of men, the such women's choice to marry with status have helped to increase such penalties. Indeed, even though things are changing with more women in education, and key professional positions, it is not likely that unmarried Nigerian women can have it all 'successful' as marriage as penalties surely exist.

Thus, the study then recommends a balancing of career and marriage for unmarried Nigerian women (especially those that intend to marry) to avoid depression (could be due to family and society pressure). Moreover, women group should look into this issue of unmarried Nigerian women and career advancement, and help enlighten as well as correct wrong notions/beliefs in the society through workshops and seminars so as to help the unmarried women continue on the success path they are towing without penalties in marriage market.

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