Key gender issues in the military education in Nigeria and a call for gender-sensitive security sector reforms

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Abstract

This paper is based on a study that investigated key gender issues that impact access to and participation of female naval personnel in the continuing professional education (CPE) of the Nigerian Navy. It also draws on a published report on sex-role socialisation of female personnel of the Nigerian Navy. The central argument of the paper is that women personnel are not adequately represented in all specialisations of the Nigerian navy. Consequently, they are not able to easily ascend to senior positions that could enhance their opportunities to participate in national decision-making processes on security and other matters of the state. The nature of continuing professional education in military education in Nigeria has a significant role to play in this. However, this has not been adequately explored in the literature on continuing adult education in Nigeria. To bridge this gap, the study explored the lived experiences of female personnel of the Nigerian Navy, concerning how and why they are (un)able to access and participate in the CPE of the military; the challenges that the experiences present; and the policies and institutional frameworks that guide and support the CPE of the Nigerian Navy. This was a qualitative e case study design and was framed within critical theory. In-depth interviews and document reviews were used to collect the data; Phenomenological content analysis was used as the method for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that women personnel of the Nigerian Navy experience gender-based discriminations and participation in CPE. Besides, the study revealed that the Nigerian Navy did not have any CPE policy nor internal gender policies. Furthermore, the institutional frameworks that guide and support the CPE of the Nigerian Navy were not gender-sensitive. The paper concludes that there are gender issues in the Nigerian Navy that impact female personnel's participation in CPE and that these issues call for gender-sensitive reforms in the navy.

Keywords: Adult Education•Continuing Professional Education•Gender•Military-Education•Gender-Sensitive Security Reforms

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Introduction

Historically, and in contemporary times, the issue of equal access to learning and education opportunities has not been the same for different groups of people – women and men; the rich and the poor (Avoseh, 2006; Bhola, 2006; Global Campaign for Education, 2011; Mejiuni, 2012; Oduaran, 2006). In the workplace settings, including those of the military, women

personnel experience low representation at the higher rung and in certain specialisations as a result of limited access to continuing professional education (Akpomuje, 2015; Mejiuni, 2010; Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2011).

Military personnel undergo professional military education (PME) to keep themselves updated on emerging concerns on matters of national and international security and stability (Idris, 2015; Jalili & Annen, 2019; Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2012). It is expected that PME is made available to all personnel, irrespective of gender, religion and socio-economic status. Gender is often generally described as the socially and culturally ascribed attributes of women and men that give them unequal privileges and opportunities (Fapohunda, 2017; Fasting & Sand; 2010; Guzura, 2017). Nigeria's women have significantly worse life chances than men and also their sisters in comparable societies (British Council, 2012; Fapohunda, 2017). Women's sociopolitical engagements are also impeded by different cultural and institutional barriers (Dayil & CLEEN Foundation, 2011; Muoghalu & Eboiyehi, 2018). Violence compounds and reinforces this disadvantage and exclusion...Given the prevailing gender stereotypes in the military, like other gendered workplaces in Nigeria (Mejiuni, 2010; Boldry, Wood & Kashy, 2001; Davis & Mckee, 2004), this study was conducted to comprehensively understand the gender issues in the continuing professional education (CPE) of the Nigerian Navy– the arm of the Nigerian military.

Military Education (ME) comprises military training instructions to provide personnel with the intellectual grounding and the cultivation of wisdom and judgement they require in responding to socially complex situations in the society (Jalili & Annen, 2019). Professional development for civilians who serve in the military is an important component of the structure of the Nigerian Navy (Idris, 2015; Jalili & Annen, 2019; Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2012). Angelevski and Smileski (2013) argued that providing security in a rapidly changing and unpredictable world depends to a large extent on the military's morale, motivation, and specialised skills which are influenced by their academic background, professional education, and special military training.

However, the success of the development of military personnel through military education has over the past two decades, been challenged by complex issues of diversity, and gender (Akpomuje, 2015; Akpomuje, 2017) Questions of diversity, respect for human rights, and sensitivity to personal, social and collective identities and their intersection with security and development challenges continue to fuel the need for the military to insist on the cultivation and deployment of sound judgement and intelligence among its own. Given this, the relationship that exists between gender and development issues can no longer be ignored. We can also no longer ignore this relationship within the context of the continuing professional education of the navy. This includes their ascension to decision making positions participation in security sector reforms (SSR) and security challenges in the country.

This study sought to answer the following questions:
1. What are the lived experiences of female personnel of the Nigerian Navy, concerning how and why they are (un)able to access and participate in the CPE of the military?
2. What challenges do the lived experiences present?
3. What policies and institutional frameworks guide and support the CPE of the Nigerian Navy?

Some Contextual Issues about Nigeria's Military

Nigeria faces a lot of development and concomitant security concerns which continue to place a reminder for the need for security-sector reforms. Many of these concerns have been attributed to military intervention in governance through a coup d'état in 1966, which

culminated in a civil war between the Nigerian government and the secessionist Biafran soldiers between 1967 and 1970 (Onodugo, Amujiri & Nwuba, 2015). During the pre- and post-military regimes, the country has had to grapple with daunting tasks of development; yet, human development indexes still rank Nigeria among the poorest countries of the world in terms of socio-economic development (Onodugo, et al, 2015). The combined factors of an ailing economy, and the subsequent structural adjustment programme (SAP), high-handed and divide-and-rule tactics the military used to maintain power; ethnoreligious clashes, and repression of protests by oil-producing communities in the Niger-Delta area among other factors, led Nigerians to demand that the military return to the barracks (I-IDEA, 2000).

Besides allegations of violation of human rights and dignity of persons levelled against the military, little or no action at all was taken. Still, women in the communities provided the narratives of how three generations of women were raped by military personnel who were deployed to their areas and communities (Mejiuni, 2013). In many of these regions, forces deployed to quell unrest became participants in the war economy. Many of them were implicated in abusing and exploiting women in ways that resemble the actions of the forces they were mandated to control, acting more as predators than as the liberators. They inflicted horrific sexual violence and saw to a widespread and systematic rape and assault of women and girls along with mutilation and massacre of civilians (Mama and Okazawa-Rey, 2012). After the military handed over power to civilians in Nigeria in 1999, ethnoreligious clashes, most of them thought to be politically motivated, continued. Fresh protests in the Niger-Delta region around resource control took more militant hue.

From 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency became a high-level security challenge for the northeast of the country, carrying out sophisticated attacks on different targets. The Nigerian military tried to repel many of the attacks but was unsuccessful (Mejiuni & Bateye, 2016). Sadly, the Nigerian military who are often esteemed for being professional and skilful in peacekeeping duties outside Nigeria became marred by allegations of large-scale pilfering of military funds (especially those earmarked to purchase arms for the military) (Onuoha, Nwagwu & Ugwueze, 2020). One failure that would mark the contemporary history of the Nigerian military is the failure to protect and rescue school children, for instance, the over 40 school boys killed at a Federal Government College in Yobe State (northern Nigeria) and the abduction of over 200 school girls from their school hostel in Chibok (a town in Borno, northern Nigeria) in February and April 2014 respectively. There is also the recent abduction of 110 school girls from a Government Girls Science and Technology College at Dapchi town of Yobe State in February 2018. Some other major attacks by the insurgent groups from 2010 to 2016 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Major Attacks by Boko Haram Insurgents from 2010 to 2020

S/N	Date	Location	Nature of Casualty
1.	December 2010	The bomb attack in Jos	80 people killed
2.	December 28, 2010	Christmas eve bombing in Jos	38 people killed
3.	May 29, 2011	The bombing of Army Barracks in Bauchi and Maiduguri	15 people killed
4.	June 26, 2011	Bomb attack on a bar in Maiduguri	25 people killed
5.	August 16, 2011	The bombing of the United Nations office complex in Abuja	Over 34 people killed

6.	December 25, 2011	The bombing of St. Theresa Catholic Church, Madalla	Over 46 people killed
7.	January 21, 2012	Multiple bomb blasts rocked Kano City	Over 185 people killed
8.	February 26, 2012	The bombing of Church of Christ of Nigeria, in Jos	2 people killed and 38 injured
9.	March 11, 2012	The bombing of St. Finbarr's Catholic Church, Rayfield, Jos	11 people killed and many injured
10.	April 26, 2012	The bombing of three media houses: (a) This Day, Abuja (b) This Day; The Sun and the Moments, Kaduna	5 people killed and 13 injured in Abuja 3 people killed and many injured in Kaduna
11.	April 29, 2012	Attack on Bayero University, Kano	16 people killed and many injured
12.	April 30, 2012	Bomb explosion in Jalingo, Taraba State	11 people killed and several others wounded
13.	March 23, 2013	The attack in Kano, Adamawa, Borno. Banks, Police Station	28 killed and several others injured
14.	June 22, 2013	The attack in Yobe in Bama town	40 policemen, 13 prison warders, 3 soldiers and several other civilians killed
15.	September 29, 2013	The attack in Yobe State College of Agriculture in Gijba	78 Students killed
16.	June 1, 2014	The attack in Mudi Bornu State	40 people killed, many injured
17.	July 24, 2014	The attack in Bornu State	Over 26 people killed, many injured
18.	April 14, 2014	Attack in Abuja	88 people killed, many injured
19.	September 20, 2015	Attack in Maiduguri	54 people killed, many injured
20.	December 10, 2015	The attack in Kamuya village, a border town between Bornu and Yobe State	Killed 7 civilians and burned down the entire village
21.	January 2016	Attack in Maiduguri	85 people killed, many injured
22.	April to September 2017	The attack in the Lake Chad Area	360 people killed
23.	October 2018	The attack in Villages in Borno	Villages burnt down, many killed
24.	January 2019	The attack in Rann, Maiduguri	At least 60 people killed and many injured
25.	January to February 2020	Attacks in Villages in Borno	At least 68 people killed and many injured

Sources: (Wikipedia, (n.d.)., The Guardian, December 13, 2015; Vanguard, April 5, 2013).

Other prevailing security issues that call for reform of Nigeria's security sector include kidnapping, rape, herdsmen pogrom, armed robbery, ethnic and religious crises, regional conflicts, and political instability. According to Akpomuje (2017), in many of these attacks, women and girls who are softer targets suffer the most because the majority of the attacks occur at marketplaces, farming and fishing areas (common sites of attacks by herdsmen and Niger-Delta militants respectively), all of which often dominated by women in developing economies, and schools (as in the case of the Chibok and Dapchi girls).

The prevalence of these multifaceted security issues should compel the country to re-assess the education of her military personnel, including incorporating perspectives that mainstream gender in CPE and other military engagements. This has become a necessity since the military has begun to admit females as regular cadets at the nation's military University, The Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), which used to be a male-only institution (Akpomuje, 2015). There is a need for a gender-sensitive security sector reform, which will mainstream gender into the CPE of the military, and other military engagements.

Nigerian Military Education and the Continuing Professional Education of the Navy

Nigerian military education is education for personnel of the Nigerian army, air-force, and navy. The National Defence College, which is the apex training institution for personnel of the Nigerian armed forces, the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), and the Armed Forces Command and Staff College are the major institutions that provide education for the three arms of the military (Akpomuje, 2015). Each arm of the military has its different institutions for the CPE of personnel. This study focused on the institutions that train personnel of the Nigerian navy.

The Nigerian navy has the task of protecting the country's maritime environment. It provides PME/CPE for its personnel through several training institutions across the country. Akpomuje (2015) identified the institutions shown in Table 2 below as the major training institutions of the navy in Nigeria:

Table 2. Institutions for Professional Military Education/CPE of the Nigerian Navy

S/N	Name of Institution	Location in Nigeria
1.	Nigerian Navy Finance and Logistics School	Owerrinta
2.	Nigerian Navy School of Health Sciences	Offa
3.	Nigerian Navy School of Music	Otta
4.	The Nigerian Navy Engineering College	Sapele
5.	Nigerian Navy Underwater Warfare School	Apapa
6.	Nigerian Navy Above-Water Warfare School	Apapa
7.	Nigerian Provost and Regulating School	Makurdi
8.	Nigerian Navy Intelligence School	Apapa
9.	Nigerian Navy Centre for Education Technology	Apapa
10.	Physical Training School	Apapa
11.	Nigerian Navy School of Armament Technology	Kachia

Source: Akpomuje (2015)

These institutions admit and train personnel depending on their specialisations. Given the view that the research from which this paper emerged investigated the key gender issues that impact access to and participation of female naval personnel in the continuing professional education (CPE) of the Nigerian Navy, it became important to document the different institutions where the naval is trained across the country.

Issues of Access and Participation in Adult Education

The interlocking issues of gender, class, and the creed of prospective learners have had an impact on the access to and participation in adult education in Nigeria (Bhola, 2006). Avoseh (2006) said "access" encapsulates several different concerns such as the right of entry, right of admission, and the right of usage. Lekoko and Maruatona (2006) noted that the debate on widening access to education turns on nothing less than equality, inclusion, and most of all, fair distribution of and accessibility to educational resources and facilities. Indabawa (2006) broadened the concept of access to education in the educational discourse as getting an opportunity for education and reaching out unhindered to educational resources, including knowledge, physical, and other cognate facilities.

Class and gender, and their intersections are placed at the centre stage in analysing the power dynamics in access to any adult education setting (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). These interlocking factors shape people's experiences of accessing and participating in adult education programmes. In a development context, where patriarchy thrives, such as Nigeria, gender remains a factor that affects access to different forms of (adult) education and other work-related engagements (Mejiuni, 2012, 2010).

Oduaran (2006) noted that when researchers take an interest in access in the context of widening access to education as social justice, they are likely to consider gender-discriminatory practices across the globe. Global Campaign for Education (2011) argued that gender equality in education refers not only to access and progress but to safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. To achieve equality in education in an androcentric space like the military, there must be a gender-sensitive reform in the military education, which is a part of the security sector reform (Angelevski and Smileski, 2013).

Gender-Sensitive Security Sector Reforms

Hendricks and Hutton (2008) noted that security sector reform is an important component of peace-building, democratisation and development. Gya (2007) indicated that we must integrate gender into the security framework because, first, gender mainstreaming and equality is a globally mandated requirement; second, it is important to use a pool of humanity, not just half of it. When men and women participate in decision-making, better results are achieved. Finally, from the practical side, involving gender perspectives and mainstreaming is 'operationally strategic' for efficiency and effectiveness. Besides, Niemanis (2005) highlighted the goals of gender mainstreaming in military and defence institutions as elimination of discrimination on the sole basis of gender within defence and military institutions; and integration of a gender perspective into research, policy and practice of defence and military institutions. Barnes (2009) posited that to ensure that security sector reform is gender-sensitive, there should be collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex; collaboration with women's organisations; increased recruitment and retention of women in the security sector; gender training for security sector personnel; and integrating gender analysis into security-related policies.

This means that if the military discriminates against female personnel, they deprive them of their rights as persons, and their ability to connect and win the confidence of the civilians in their service delivery. Also, if the military discriminates against women, it inevitably socialises

personnel into the culture of disrespecting women, thereby setting the stage for male personnel to rape women in conflict areas and exploit vulnerable girls, boys and women in refugee camps, which has become very common nowadays (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

In Nigeria, women account for between 3-10% of total personnel of the armed forces (Dayil and CLEEN Foundation, 2011). It is recorded that like other military establishments around the world, masculine ethos would be pervasive, for instance, in some Scandinavian countries, and in the United States (Fasting & Sand, 2010; Persson & Sundevall, 2019; Pinch, MacIntyre, Browne & Okros, 2004; Trobaugh, 2018).

Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory

This study aims to investigate the key gender issues that impact access to and participation of female naval personnel in the continuing professional education (CPE) of the Nigerian Navy. This is aimed at facilitating an appropriate understanding of the phenomenon of access to and participation in continuing professional education of female personnel about that of their male counterparts. This study adopted the critical theory as its theoretical framework. The critical theory originally developed from the works of Marxist German intellectuals namely - Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Freidrich Pollock, and later, Jurgen Habermas, all of whom were from the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (Rush, 2004; Finger, 2005).

During its earlier development, the theory was concerned with the discipline of philosophy and the political-cultural understanding of fascism (Finger, 2005). The theory later became relevant to the field of adult education in response to the construction of social identities that limit access to education including race, class and gender (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). Some adult education researchers such as Paulo Freire, Jack Mezirow, Stephen Brookfield, Michael Welton and Olutoyin Mejiuni have embraced the theory, either by just reviewing the theory's implications for adult learning or by adopting the theory, in part or whole. in adult learning.

Brookfield (2001) argued that a critical theory of adult learning should focus on how adults learn to recognise and challenge ideological domination and manipulation. He further argued that such learning is necessary if adults are to counteract the continuous reproduction of blatantly unequal structures and create more inclusive democratic arrangements. This argument proves symbolic for this study which focusses on the lived experiences of military women about those of men and military education system that is structured around masculine ethos and masculinism, which is a hegemonic ideology. A hegemonic ideology is a form of dominance, which according to Brookfield and Holst (2014), comprises the set of broadly accepted beliefs and practices that frame how people make sense of their experiences and live their lives. When a hegemonic ideology works effectively, it ensures that an unequal, racist and sexist society can reproduce itself with minimal opposition. This is with the primary aim of convincing people that the world is organised the way it is for the best of all reasons. Brookfield and Holst (2014) opined that critical theory regards this kind of ideology as inherently manipulative and duplicitous.

The contribution of critical theory to adult education, which this paper finds interesting, is the notion of "system". Merriam and Caffarella (1999) noted that the "system" in a critical theory analysis is an institution (such as government and education) that functions to reproduce the status quo; in particular, the existing social class structure. They also noted that the strength of critical theory lies in its critique of existing economic and social structures and resultant power dynamics. Brookfield and Holst (2014) put forward that a critical theory of adult learning is a theory of social and political learning which studies the systems and forces that shape adults' lives and oppose adults' attempts to challenge ideology, recognise hegemony, unmask power, defend the lifeworld, and develop agency. Such a theory must recognise its

explicitly political character; it must focus consistently on political matters such as the way formal learning is structured and limited by the unequal exercise of power. It must not shy away from connecting adult learning efforts to the creation of political forms, particularly the extension of economic democracy across barriers of race, class and gender.

The key elements of a critical theory approach to understanding or explaining access to and participation in adult education would, from Brookfield's (2004) perspective, include: (a) ability to perceive and challenge dominant ideologies and the effects on access to and participation in adult education programmes; (b) learning ability to unmask power and contest hegemony (including hegemonic discourses) that shape the context of adult learning; (c) following from a and b, overcoming alienation and pursing liberations, and (d) reclaiming reason (but not overemphasising rationality/rationalisation) and practise democracy. Also, Welton (1991) made a case for critical theory as a theory of history and society which is driven by a passionate commitment to understanding how societal structures hinder and impede the fullest development of humankind's collective potential to be self-reflective and self-determining historical actors. The relevance of this theory to this study, therefore, rests on the fact that Nigeria is a patriarchal society, and workplaces, including the military, are gendered (Mejiuni, 2010).

Specifically, the relevance of critical theory to access to and participation in continuing professional education for the naval personnel could be viewed from Brookfield and Welton's perspectives. Bearing in mind the elements of the critical theory, the study carried out: (1) a critique of the dominant ideologies that are reflected in CPE policies and institutional frameworks; (2) an exploration of how CPE policies and frameworks (or a lack thereof) have shaped women and men's experience of accessing and participating in CPE; (3) an interrogation of power dynamics that characterise women's relationships with their male superiors and counterparts in continuing professional education programmes; and (4) an exploration of how women have resisted hegemonic tendencies and taken full advantage of CPE. Whereas item 4 was the guiding element for Akpomuje (2017), the analysis of data for this current paper was guided by items 1-3.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study design. It purposively sampled 22 naval personnel and two trainers. The naval personnel were distributed by gender as (10 female and 10 male) who were undergoing CPE at the Nigerian Navy School (NNS QUORA), Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria. This particular school was chosen because it is the central base that coordinates all Nigerian Navy professional training courses. Two (2) trainers, a male and a female, were also interviewed. Since the navy is made up men and women, and that the male personnel would likely view their female counterparts from a gendered perspective, it became imperative that the researchers take on board both sexes as a sample for the study. The data for the study were collected through a semi-structured interview guide which focused on the question of women personnel's experiences during CPE in the Navy about those of their male counterparts. The study also used a document review to check for policy and frameworks that support the CPE of the Navy. The interviews were tape-recorded with each lasting an average of 25 minutes. Pseudonyms were used to represent the participants in the study for anonymity. They were anonymised according to gender: female personnel as F1 to F10; male personnel as M1 to M10; female trainer as FT, and male trainer as MT.

Data collected were analysed using content and phenomenological analysis which involves a context-based interpretation of information. Bearing in mind, the key elements of critical theory, the use of phenomenological analysis in this research helped to (1) identify the explicit and implicit recurring issues and themes, which are shaped by hegemonic ideologies

in the experiences of female personnel, about those of their male counterparts, in accessing and participating in continuing professional education; (2) interpret what these themes mean, about the policies and institutional frameworks, or a lack thereof, that support the continuing professional education of the navy; and (3) describe and explain how female personnel of the Nigerian Navy make meaning of their lived experiences concerning their recognition of the power dynamics that play out, and how they unmask power and contest hegemony that shape the context of their learning during continuing professional education. In doing this, the researcher followed the five essential processes for carrying out a phenomenological analysis as pointed out by Healy (2005). They include (1) epoche (2) phenomenological reduction (3) imaginative variation (4) development of individual and composite textual themes (meaning and structures) and (5) synthesis of these textual and composite structural descriptions. This paper is a follow-up of the seminal paper (Akpomuje, 2017) that explored gender-role socialisation and academic performance of female naval personnel in Nigeria; hence, both papers draw from the same fieldwork, data-set, and participants.

Data Presentation, Findings and Discussions

Data regarding answers to the questions that this study raised are presented and analysed in this section. The presentation of data and discussions are done based on research questions.

Research Question One: *What are the lived experiences of female personnel of the Nigerian Navy, concerning how and why they are (un)able to access and participate in the CPE of the military?* Participants' lived experiences at work and in the private sphere, and how these relate to their participation in the CPE as well as other military interactions were analysed. From the analysis of data, these experiences were categorised into themes which are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

i. **Perceived similarities and differences between the two genders in the military**

Female and male personnel provided information regarding how women perceived themselves and how their male colleagues perceived them. These perceptions shape the career advancement choices and opportunities of female personnel. Participants gave different views about the sameness and difference between women and men in the military.

Data indicated that score sheets and attendance sheets used for personnel undergoing CPE did not carry gender markers; records did not show 'male' or 'female'. Participant FT said: *"personnel are identified by their official number."* This implies that personnel are not distinguished by sex but by number. FT also argued that there is no need of treating personnel differently because they undergo similar training rigour. She said: *"I trained with the men, they flogged us the same way; they put us in the gutter the same way; they didn't separate me from the men."* Another female participant (F10) avowed that women in the military see themselves as men rather than as women. Also, participant F4 indicated: *"I think I've started seeing myself as a male. Most times, I don't even remember I'm a female until I get home. It's because of the environment; being around all the male personnel and their masculinity."* Some women in the military give up their femaleness to be able to adapt to the military space. Participant F9 said she had already taken herself to be a "gentleman" to get along with her career. She gave this opinion of herself, not because she had become a man but because the context of her work does not recognise feminine ethos.

Male trainer (MT) added that there is no difference between male and female personnel. He said: *"Maybe the unique difference would be in dressing."* All male personnel avowed that there is 'no man and no woman' in the military. Their responses indicate that the military's view of equality is typically concerning military duties rather than social roles and identities of women and men. Some female personnel opposed the views about being same. They averred

that the military is a man's world and that women are seen and treated differently. Participant F8 said: *"We that joined as women know there is no 'she' – everybody is 'he'"*. Data showed that there are some specialisations in the Nigerian navy that women do not go for because the navy had no arrangements for women to function in those specialisations. Participant F7 said:

> *"Women don't go to sea because there is no provision on ships for women to stay. The ships have no cabin provision for women. Before 2012, female personnel of the Nigerian navy did not have the opportunity to be on ships because the ships did not have female cabins. As a result, CPE courses that relate to serving on ships were strictly meant for males. The navy did not see any need for having ships that made provisions for females because only men's interests were served. This influenced women's full participation in CPE".*

Another implication for CPE is that no record indicates maleness and femaleness. Consequently, the personnel are drafted, posted/ and enlisted for courses without consideration of whether they are male or female. This is done without a consideration of the different natural and social roles, responsibilities and differences that these two sexes have that may affect their full participation. This means that gender should be centred and de-centred in Nigeria's military because, the military is shaped by male norms, ethos and practices.

ii. **Women and the Military Profession**

Participants gave different opinions on whether or not the military is a good profession for women. This notion is foundational and provides an important context to understand how women are perceived in the military, and how these perceptions impact their participation in all military activities, including CPE. Being a qualitative study, and given the principle of phenomenology about valuing all data, this finding is important. It gives a voice to important contextual issues regarding women's presence in a male-dominated profession. FT said, *"the military is a good profession for females because it offers discipline in many aspects of life."* Another participant noted that the issue that people have about women in the military is their being in the company of more men compared to women. She said:

> *"There is nothing odd about being in the military with so many men and only a few women. We all relate one on one daily except for the very few which you can find in any profession who are chauvinistic and can't quite deal with a woman being in charge".*

Some female participants indicated that whether the military is a good profession for women or not, would depend on factors like having an understanding husband. Participant F4 said:

> *"It is tasking on the family because, for a woman, family comes first. Being in the military, you will not have time to do that unless you have a very understanding husband".*

Given that Nigeria is a patriarchal society where women do more of the domestic chores, this view shows that androcentric spaces like the military would be difficult for women to strive. Some male participants opined that the military is a good profession for women. A male participant avowed that the military is not a bad profession for women since they have unique roles they can play in the military. MT said: *"a person coming into the military must have the passion, capacity, determination, and focus."* Another participant (M10) said:

> *"It is a good profession for females because there are some operations that male officers cannot go to because it will be seen as harassment on female citizens. But if a fellow woman goes there to carry out the operation, there won't be a problem".*

This view buttresses the assertion that women appear to be more comfortable approaching female peacekeepers, especially about issues of sexual assault and domestic violence. While some male personnel believe that the military is a good profession for women, others argued that it is not a good profession for women. M9 said:

> *"Well I believe that women should not even have to work because looking at it from the religious and societal points of view, men are supposed to provide the needs for the family, whereas women have to take care of the family".*

M9 gave socio-religious perspectives to the opinion about women's involvement in the military. In some cultures and religions, women are forbidden from engaging in certain professions. Another participant (M3) said, *"the problem is our culture and tradition that has infiltrated a lot of things."* This participant advanced the position that cultural and traditional ethos is prevalent in a lot of aspects of our lives. This could include our educational system, religion, the workplace, and even the social fabric of society. He also opined that the infrastructural situation of the Nigerian military is not favourable for women military personnel.

Participant M8 referred to women as weak and noted that they cannot do a military job. He said: *"Military is a very hard job, and it is designed for the strong men and not women".* However, participant M6 shared that while the notion that women are physically weak is sloppy, it is a moral responsibility of even their male colleagues to support them. Some participants were of the view that women's presence in the military help to douse tension and reduce high-handedness of the military. Some other participants viewed this as weakening and softening the military.

The accounts and/or experiences that personnel shared in this section help to understand the perceptions of different groups of persons regarding women's presence in a male-dominated profession such as the military. The issue of similarities and differences in the Nigerian Navy discussed in the preceding section, and that of discrimination and sexual harassment during naval CPE discussed in the following section take their roots from the notion of whether the military is a profession catered to women. The challenges women faced during CPE as well as the matter of the navy having a CPE policy and gender-sensitive institutional frameworks, or a lack thereof, are also rooted in this notion.

iii. Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Discrimination and sexual harassment of women were identified as part of women's experiences during CPE. The discriminations were concerning specialisations and training courses during CPE. Women were not allowed to go into some core specialisations such as underwater, navigation and direction, and engineering; and they were generally found in support units that included education, medical, music, communication, and legal. Whereas their male counterparts were in all specialisations, including education, medical, music, communication, and legal. Usually, persons who become Chief of Naval Staff come from these male-only (core) specialisations. Hence, no woman has become Chief of the Naval Staff in Nigeria, and only one woman has risen to the position of a Rear Admiral.

Concerning career progression, female participants averred that women are not able to easily convert from serving as support staff to serving as regular staff when compared to their male counterparts. For personnel who were recruited through the Short Service Commission

(SSC) to become regular staff, they will have to take certain courses at the Nigerian Defence Academy. The SSC is a system of recruiting graduates to serve in the military for a short period. When they convert to regular staff, they have a longer period of service and can rise to the highest rank in the navy. Concerning quota, more men were recruited and this fed into enlistment for CPE courses. Participant F2 gave an atypical view that there is no discrimination based on quota because more women in the navy would amount to more problems for the navy. A male participant, M4, noted that there should be no discrimination at all, that women and men should be given equal opportunities in all respects.

Some female participants reported that they had experienced sexual harassment during CPE. Participant F6 said:

> *"Here, there are silent challenges like sexual harassment that we are not allowed to say. We also suffer some victimisation, which often leads to inferiority complex".*

Some females said even though they had not experienced sexual harassment, it cannot be ruled out. Some male participants also shared this view. Two male participants M5 and M3 gave atypical views about sexual harassment. They argued that if at all there is sexual harassment, it is the female personnel who harass the male personnel with their dressing. From a critical theoretical perspective, their views represent some of the hegemonic discourses that male personnel use to indicate their disapproval of women in public spaces that men claim to be 'theirs', and that women's presence in such spaces is distracting.

Research Question Two: *What challenges do the experiences present?*
From the analysis of data, participants shared some of the challenges that female personnel have concerning participating in the CPE of the navy. These challenges are presented in the following themes:

i.   Family responsibilities
Participants identified family responsibilities as part of the major challenges that female military personnel face. All participants agreed that female military personnel, like civilian women, are more affected by this challenge. According to F2,

> *"The challenge of family responsibility sets in immediately any female military personnel get married. Specifically, one does not remain as active as before because of the added responsibilities of marriage. There's no way I will be very happy carrying a baby and transferring to another location".*

Additionally, F3 said that,

> *"You cannot say you want to be the most perfect naval officer and your family doesn't suffer. So, all you need to do is to try and balance it. The only problem I had during my courses is where to leave my children; who to leave my family with".* Furthermore, F7 said,

> *"If you are up for a course may be for six months or a year, you let your family be prepared".*

These views point to the idea that married women are not eligible for enlistment into the Nigerian military, and those who join as single ladies are not allowed to get married unless they

attain a minimum of three years in service (Dayil and CLEEN Foundation, 2011). Data also showed that men in the military who are no longer married but have family-related roles such as looking after under-aged children are also affected. Besides this, the participants agreed that men are less-burdened compared to women.

Women who stick to traditional gender roles and wish to balance such with their professional roles do not move fast as those who focus on their career. Data showed that women who try to balance their roles are oftentimes burdened financially as they are forced to employ the services of drivers, cooks, and nannies to help with sorting out domestic chores. This applies to women in all formal work settings.

ii. Sexual harassment

It was reported that sexual harassment affects women's participation in CPE because they become emotionally destabilised. Data showed that reporting cases of sexual harassment have not been very successful because it is either that victims are afraid of doing so, or that they do not have good evidence to do so.

iii. Drafting and posting procedure

Drafting and posting procedure of the navy was identified by participants as a major challenge that personnel encounter. It involves the posting of personnel from one station to another either for work or course. Personnel do not stay beyond 18 months at a particular station. Participants noted that women are also more affected by this challenge. F4 said: *"If there is any way they can make the posting of female officers friendly, that way both the home and the job are balanced."* Lack of proper record-keeping was identified as one of the major causes of this challenge. Participant F8 said:

> *"Government should improve on the welfare scheme of the Draft Office and ensure that any person who occupies this should be married and display a high level of maturity. Additionally, there should be proper record-keeping particularly for every female married personnel".*

iv. Distance, resumption time and general welfare

Participants identified these as challenges they encounter during CPE. Participants like F1 said:

> *"There are challenges concerning distance for women because the majority are mothers. We start classes at 6:30 am and if the navy thinks they want to consider women, classes should start by nine at most".*

Also, M7 said,

> *"Men who are no more married and their kids are still with them will also use that time to do one or two things for the kids before rushing down".*

Furthermore, F7 indicated that,

> *"Allowances for courses should be paid and the food they give should be improved. The learning environment also…like the room I stay, there is no light. They should make everywhere conducive for learning".*

All participants admitted that women personnel were more affected by these challenges which pose institutional, situational and dispositional barriers to successful access to and participation in CPE. The participants affirmed that the challenges affected their health, self-concept and self-confidence. Consequently, their overall participation in CPE is adversely affected.

Research Question Three: What *policies and institutional frameworks t guide and support the CPE of the Nigerian Navy?* Participants were asked if there were frameworks in the Nigerian navy for addressing the identified gender-related issues. Deskwork review was carried out to check for existing policies that support CPE. The findings are presented in the following:

i. **No CPE policy and no internal gender policy**

Data showed that the Nigerian navy did not have a CPE and training policy. The military has two major policy documents (The Armed Forces Act and the Harmonised Terms and Conditions of Service [HTACOS]). It is not clear whether the HTACOS is gender-sensitive because copies were not made available to the researchers for assessment. However, FT said,

> *"We don't need any internal gender policy because we have the HTACOS. It's harmonised because army, navy and the air force use it. That's the document that guides whatever we do".*

MT revealed that the HTACOS has references regarding marriage, pregnancy, and inter-rank marriage. Some participants believed that a review of the available policy documents of the military would be a good idea. It will even be better to have a new gender policy, especially now that women are now being taken as regular officers through the Nigerian Defence Academy. However, they expressed concerns over the content of any gender policy or gender-sensitive CPE policy. While some participants pointed out that the policy should not make the military lose its core values and standard of operations, others noted that any policy to be drafted must take on board women's social and natural roles and how these affect their full involvement in military interactions, including CPE.

ii. **No adequate gender-sensitive infrastructure**

Before 2012, the navy did not have some infrastructural support for the full inclusion of women in all naval activities. It was in 2012 that naval ships in Nigeria began to have female accommodation on board. This affected female personnel's involvement in some specialisations in the navy, and it excluded them from taking some courses during CPE. This issue is being addressed.

Women personnel also identified lack of crèches at naval bases and CPE institutions of the navy across the country for nursing mothers in service and on courses. M3 said, *"A female personnel cannot bring her baby to a training school because the infrastructure is not there."* To solve this concern, F2 said,

> *"The navy can have a crèche and it will be very perfect. For example, when I was nursing my babies, I introduced them to day-care as early as two months because I knew that my leave would come to an end in the third month".*

Whereas all the female participants agreed that crèches will enable women's full involvement, the male participants gave contrary views, noting that it is not necessary.

iii.   **No gender-sensitive drafting and posting procedure**

The findings of the study show that the drafting and posting procedure of the navy did not favour personnel specifically concerning CPE. Interviewees noted that this particularly affects the female personnel because of their natural and social roles and responsibilities. They suggested that there is a need to assess the personnel who are appointed to the draft office of the navy and to ensure that there is proper record-keeping for female personnel in the draft office. Additionally, the findings show that the navy is making efforts to start posting women where their husbands are. This is not yet a rigid law because it is still being implemented on compassionate grounds.

iv.   **No effective platforms for addressing sexual harassment and discrimination**

The study revealed that the navy did not deem as important the cases of sexual harassment and discriminatory practices and that such are not being reported formally. It was speculated that it is on this assumption that the navy did not have effective platforms for addressing the issue even though the Armed Forces Act prohibits sexual violence and abuse. The navy has two mechanisms which female participants described as 'ineffective' – the staff of the regulatory unit, who are meant to maintain law and order in the naval bases, and the divisional hour (a one-hour weekly meeting of personnel undergoing CPE) where the trainees and were told and reminded of the rules and regulations. Participant F7 said:

> *"The navy disapproves any form of sexual harassment, but leaving such issue to the regulatory unit to handle may not make the handling process effective".*

It was also reported that the navy did not have a counselling unit that could provide support to personnel who experience sexual harassment and other post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). The foregoing paragraphs explored the key gender issues in the continuing professional education of the Nigerian Navy. It was found that women in the navy experienced different forms of challenges that affect their successful participation in CPE. Consequently, many women in the military in Nigeria do not progress to top positions in the military hierarchy. For instance, only one woman has risen to the position of a Rear Admiral in the Nigeria Navy since her history. This suggests a very small percentage of women that could be represented at high-level decision-making in the Nigerian military. Low quota system in the recruitment of women into the military, restriction in career specialisations which also limits access to CPE courses in the core specialisations were identified as limiting factors to women's participation in the CPE of the navy. Burdensome family responsibilities, sexual harassment, absence of institutional infrastructure that support women personnel, lack of CPE and internal gender policies, and lack of gender-friendly drafting and posting procedure were also identified as factors that impede women's chances of participating effectively in CPE. The authors argue that these issues can be addressed if the Nigerian armed forces consider carrying out a gender-sensitive security sector reform that will fuel the enunciation of internal gender policies for the armed forces, and mainstream gender into military CPE and all military engagements. The reform will also ensure that the combined interests of women and men are served in a military whose tasks is to protect the lives of the civilian population made up of women and men.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed at investigating the key gender issues in Nigeria's military education (using the Naval CPE as a case study). The essence was to point out ways in which these issues affect female naval personnel's participation in the CPE of the navy and how this could limit their career advancement opportunities and capabilities. This study concludes that if women

personnel are going through CPE as easily and fast as their male counterparts, and are represented in all specialisations of the military, they will progress fast to senior positions in the military, they would feel fulfilled in their choice of career, and they would contribute better to national development. Also, if there is adequate female representation in all specialisations of the military, and if more women progress to decision-making positions, more attention may be channelled towards the alleviation of challenges that the female Navy face during the CPE of the navy.

Recommendations
The study recommended the following reforms that the Nigerian military should:
1. come up with a functional CPE policy in hard copy that will guide and support the continuing professional education of all personnel;
2. endeavour to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure for female personnel to serve in all specialisations in the military, especially now that women are entering the military through the Nigerian Defence Academy. By doing this, the military should take on board, women and men's different experiences;
3. reconsider the drafting procedure of male and female personnel, especially for the female. There should be proper record-keeping for women, and draft officers should be married, mature, and accessible;
4. reconsider the issue of leave for personnel. Work without leaving seems unrealistic (as in the case of this study where it was reported that there is no room for leaving the Nigerian navy). This will benefit both male and female personnel;
5. make crèches available in all military training and CPE institutions and military bases for female personnel who are still nursing, and establish and or equip existing secondary and primary schools with boarding facilities for the children of personnel. This will help address the problem of moving school-age children around from one posting location to the other;
6. harness the potentials of ICTs and Distance Learning and incorporate such into military CPE, especially for courses that do not require physical training;
7. properly address cases of discrimination, sexual harassment and other gender issues through the appropriate frameworks; and periodically organise seminars, lectures and forums to sensitise female personnel on how to deal with issues of sexual harassment.

Acknowledgements

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