

Education as a Principal Instrument for Women's Emancipation: Malimouna as a Case Study in *Rebelle* of Fatou Keita

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Abstract

The ultimate goal of education is change that makes society better, but societal view that women occupy a subordinate position in relation to men has been at the centre of academic discourse over the past decades. As women began to progress educationally, they were empowered to do certain things and gradually emancipate from some unpleasant and degrading positions. Education is a means through which one is made conscious and exposed to know all that is happening around oneself. In this work, we are going to see the role that education plays in the life of a woman whose name is Malimouna. She decides to fight against suffering and oppression of women at all levels and to reduce the absolute power of men against women. It is through her exposure and education that she is able to challenge the extreme hegemonic and patriarchal beliefs that men hold against women in her village. She shows that women are wise beings just as men; and as such that they are also capable of changing the political, economic and social situations at any time. The study supports the womanist theory formulated by

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Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Mary E. Kolawole who are proponents of liberation of African women from the patriarchal yoke while advocating for the compromise and conciliation between men and women. Malimouna believes that women should liberate themselves from the prison of total subordination and should not be yes-men to all irrationalities which the society, nature, phallogocentric system, or any belief whatsoever. Because of this, this article examines the role Malimouna plays to free herself and other women from the hegemony of men.

Keywords: Education, phallogocentric system, African womanism, oppression, liberation.

Introduction

Confusions and uncertainties concerning a woman's status in the society are numerous and deep-rooted. Women's education has always been a contestable issue in the entire world, especially in African societies. Some people believe that giving a woman formal education is a waste of money, time and energy because a woman is a weak creature and she cannot do anything even though she is educated; they usually believe that it is better to educate a boy than a girl. Supporting this common belief, Nwanunobi (2009) pointed out that women were forbidden to own property, to engage in politics, to pursue education or to engage in virtually any activity outside the walls of their domicile. A girl would be betrothed to a man when she was a child and she would have to marry that person when she grows up, whether she likes him or not. The worst is that girls were circumcised and most of them suffered serious injuries, which cause problems during childbirth and other social implications. Many women experience social and psychological problems due to the genital mutilation. However, through education women are emancipated from the social restriction (Otti, 2006). Emancipation of women through education culminated to empowerment.

The brief summary of the novel is given below to capture its moral.

The Novel, *Rebelle* and its Essential Lessons

The novel, *Rebelle* presents to us the life of a young beautiful girl, Malimouna, who refuses the long-standing ritual of her people, which is circumcision; she was given in marriage by her father to an old man because of the benefits the father gets from his friend. Malimouna ran away in the middle of the night of her wedding because everything was done against her will. After much travail in the journey of her life, she found shelter in the house of the Calmards (the French white couple who live in Saluma), and thereafter she found herself in France, where she determined to be educated, knowing that it is through education that her voice will be heard in the society. After her study, she got an employment which helped her to fight for the freedom of African women. She went back to her home to fight against the inhumane practice of circumcision through the creation of awareness aimed at the liberation of women.

Contemporary African writers, most especially the feminist writers show in their works that a major tool for the emancipation of women in education. It is through education that a woman can liberate herself or break the yoke hung on her neck by society. Furthermore, according to Flora (2007), women have started to redefine themselves; they have started to project themselves as they feel they should be presented. The woman writer cannot fail to see the woman's power in her home and society. She sees her economic importance both as mother, farmer, and trader. She writes stories that affirm the woman, and challenge the male writers while creating awareness of a woman's inherent vitality, independence of views, courage, selfconfidence, and, of course, her desire for high social status. The principal characters in feminist novels are usually females who play leading roles in fighting against maltreatment of women in the African and even Caribbean societies. The writers show that education is a major ammunition for fighting against injustice, oppression and inferiority of women in highly maledominated societies. Epitomising this treatment of the female character in feminist novel is *Rebelle* by Fatou Keita (1998) which presents to us Malimouna. Other texts in this category are: *Le Bistouri de larmes* of Ramonou Sanusi, which presents to us the protagonist Yetounde in fighting for the freedom of women in the society; *La Tache de sang* of Philomene Bassek, and Patricia

and Affiba in *Le Prix de la Revolte* of Regina Yaou (1997). All the women mentioned have a common factor. These mentioned works have a common theme which is education; it is through the acquisition of education that characters portrayed by these writers were able to bring social, political, economic and matrimonial changes to their societies.

Scholars have also long speculated about the social and political impacts of education, and many leaders have based public policy on beliefs about these impacts. Early modernisation theorists argued that education weakens traditional, strong attachments based on characteristics like gender, hereditary, position, ethnicity, or religion, in favour of achievement and merit (Levy 1966). Another view argues that education can serve as a tool of cultural indoctrination and social control, instilling obedience to authority and reinforcing existing political authorities. Gramsci (1971) and other social theorists (including Freire, 1972 and Fanon, 2005) advance related arguments on education's central role in bolstering the cultural hegemony of ruling elites, while simultaneously emphasising that alternative forms of popular education could be instruments for social change favouring the liberation of the oppressed.

According to Evuline (2015), the visible weapon of the fight against a woman is acquired as a result of feminist writings, particularly feminine feminist writing. In fact, for a good number of years, African writers have been vociferating through their writing against maltreatment and oppression of women in the hand of men. Mariama Ba (1980) is one of the avantgarde writers against women's marginalisation and sex inequality against women. Mariama Ba, the Senegalese indicates in her exhortation to women:

C'est à nous femmes, de prendre notre destin en mains, pour bouleverser l'ordre établi à notre détriment et de ne point la subir. Nous devons user comme les hommes de cette arme pacifique certes, mais sure, qu'est l'écriture. pp7

It is for us women to take our destiny in our hands to drastically change the established order to our detriment and we don't have to be subjected to it. We have to certainly employ writing, for sure like these armed pacific men. in order to destroy the established order to our detriment so that we no longer suffer it. We are worn out like men of this

armed pacific, but sure, that is a writing. pp7. (Our translation).

Theoretical Framework

Malimouna seems keys into the dream of women swinging into action by fighting for empowerment through the vehicle of a formal education. This leads us to the theoretical framework, African womanism as propounded by Ogunyemi and Kolawole.

African Womanism, propounded by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985 , 1996) and Mary E. Modupe Kolawole (1997), serves as theoretical framework for this study. African womanism is a feminist theory conceptualised specifically to analyse the condition of the African woman. The theory claims liberation for African women from patriarchal oppression but advocates at the same time the harmonious relationship and mutual understanding between both sexes. The theory also advocates complementary roles between the two sexes. Like all feminist theories, womanism recognises the importance of feminine solidarity in the struggle against subjugation of the woman.

Education gives autonomy to women because it is through it that solution is given to all sorts of problems. For example: solution to the malnutrition of children, sickness and reduction in mortality rate. Education plays a crucial role in allowing a woman to choose the number of children she wants to have and birth spacing. Giving qualitative education to girls allows them to be sufficiently confident in themselves and this will enable them to discuss about those who govern and be able to break the cultural bondage that exists in the entire world which girls and women suffer. In practical terms, literacy among girls and young women will have immense economic advantage in any nation such that the number of educated girls will not equal that of boys in as much as the population of women is more than that of men; and more women will secure stable jobs and they will be well paid.

Definition of Education

Education has been defined by Fafunwa (1974) as the gradual process of developing the inner dispositions of an individual to realise national goals and produce good citizens and a strong nation. Le dictionnaire Larousse (2006) defines it as *La formation de l'esprit de quelqu'un pour*

développer ses aptitudes intellectuelles, physiques et ses sens. According to Larouse Dictionary (2006), education is the formation of someone's spirit for the development of his intellectual aptitudes, physical and his senses.

Problems Confronting Education of Women

The challenge of girl-child education is not only peculiar to Africa, but pervasive in most developing nations. According to the UNESCO Report (2009), about 75 million children, of which 55% of them are girls, are not educated. Women do not benefit from patriarchal ethos because many literate men in Africa believe that educating a girl-child is a waste of time and resources. For them, girls are supposed to remain at home with their mothers to learn their future roles as wives and mothers. The belief is that education of young girls will affect the morale and traditional disposition that girls already acquired in the society. Yaou (1997) said that sometimes women themselves play negative roles in their marital lives and they also allow ancestral traditions to hinder the struggle for women emancipation. For example, the following indicates how Yaou shows that Effoua, the sister of Koffi, supports their father, Mensah, to chastise Affiba.

L'école dénature nos filles: elles deviennent effrontées, peu soucieuses des parents, parlent d'égal à égal avec leur mari, se permettant de limiter le nombre de leurs enfants comme si elles en avaient le droit. C'est terrible! pp 2

The school makes our girls to be rude: they are effrontery, they are unconcerned about their parents, and they speak as equals with their husbands; they allow themselves to have limited rather than several children as if they have the right to do so. This is terrible! pp 2. (Our translation)

Education in the Novel *Rebelles of Fatou Keita*

Keita presents Malimouna, a very dynamic, intelligent, assiduous and beautiful young girl. Coming from a small village, Boritouni, where nobody could neither read nor write. Malimouna was initiated to education by her friend, Sanita, a city girl who used to spend her holidays in the village. Malimouna loved Sanita and found her different from herself because of Sanita's exposure in the city. The following reveals this fact:

Malimouna voyait bien que cette fillette ne devait pas jouer comme elle pieds nus et s'asseoir à même le sol terreux comme elle aimait à le faire. p. 6.

Malimouna saw that this little girl could not play like her barefooted and sit on the dusty soil as she (Malimouna) loved to do. p6. (Our translation.)

Malimouna started to learn French language, the official language, through the help of Sanita. From there Malimouna was desirous to have formal education. She did not at all find it easy to be educated because she had no sponsor; the necessitated that she makes a lot of sacrifices. She was also determined to succeed against all odds of patriarchal influence or dominance against women through the acquisition of formal education, knowing fully well that that is the only weapon that can be used for the attainment of desired liberty for a woman. This dream of being educated spurred her to be reluctant to the forced marriage her father perpetrated on her by marrying her off to his friend Sando, who had already had four wives. In the night of her wedding with Sando she was able to run away because she could not imagine herself being a wife to the age-mate of her father. This action made her herself in a neighbouring village named Salumo. There, she was accommodated by the Calmards (They are French a couple who lives in the village). This couple loved Malimouna so much that they allow her to take care of their home and at the same time look after their children. It was during this period that she began to read and write with the help of her master's children.

Les jumeaux avaient décidé d'apprendre à lire et à écrire à Malimouna... Pendant leur temps libre, les garçons lui donnaient des exercices pour lui Faire mémoriser les lettres de l'alphabet, les chiffres, les couleurs ; tout ce qui leur passait par la tête et qu'ils estimaient important. p 57.

The twins were teaching Malimouna how to read and write... At their leisure time, the boys used to give her exercises for her to memorise the letters of French alphabet, numbers, colours and everything they thought was important for her to learn as regards the French language. (Our translation).

Unfortunately, Malimouna had to leave the Calmards family because the wife suspected that her husband was making an advance towards her. When she left, she travelled to France. Arriving in France, she was living in the black area where she was dressing hair to make a living. As a result of the little stipend she was making, she immediately enrolled for evening lessons. Because of that, she was able to read and understand the French language. She was very happy but she was not going to stop there. She wanted to be educated so she can help women by liberating them from societal suffering meted to them by tradition in Africa. The typical example of a woman who has experienced such suffering is the Malian woman, Fanta, who just landed in France to meet with her Malian husband and at an early age, she has had five children. The excerpt below shows what she passes through as an African woman under typical control of her husband:

Fanta passait le plus clair de son temps entre les couches, les tétés, la vaisselle, la cuisine et la lessive... La nuit, elle était constamment réveillée par les pleurs des bébés. Fanta avait les yeux cernes et maigrissait a vue d'œil. Elle avait besoin d'aide. pp 93

Fanta spent the best part of her time breastfeeding, washing clothes, cooking and washing plates...At night, she was always awakened by the cries of babies. Fanta had rings under her eyes and was emaciated and she needed help.
(Our translation.)

After Malimouna watched Fanta closely, she realised how much this woman needed help and she decided to assist her. Without Barou's knowledge, Malimouna introduced Fanta to the world of contraceptives to prevent her from having other children:

Prétextant qu'elles allaient faire des courses, les deux amies se rendirent un après-midi chez un gynécologue. Fanta portait le bébé sur son dos et poussait les jumeaux dans leur double poussette, tandis que Malimouna tenait Noura par la main. Malimouna avait accepté de garder les pilules et, tous les jours, Fanta venait frapper à sa porte pour recevoir son comprimé. p 94.

Pretending that they were going shopping, one afternoon, the two friends went to meet a gynaecologist. Fanta was carrying a baby on her back and was pushing the twins in their double pushchair, while Malimouna was holding Noura by the hand. Malimouna accepted to keep the pills every day, Fanta came knocking at Mailmouna's door to get her tablet. (Our translation).

Fanta's condition is an eye-opener to Malimouna. From that time on, she resolved to follow a course of action that will enable her to help women to confront their problems. She aimed to return to Ivory Coast to abolish patriarchal and traditional ethos that subjugated women, via practices like female circumcision and forced marriage.

She thus enrolled in an Institute of Social Studies, which prepared her to achieve her unique goal of helping women. In order to pay her school fees, she was working in a canteen on a part-time basis. Notwithstanding, she was not discouraged, but remained determined to be learned. Many a time, after the evening lessons, she would copy the entire pages of big textbooks in the library and when the Director of the Institute saw her doing this often, he was surprised. The Director wanted to know why she was re-copying the textbooks; she explained to him that she did not have the means to buy books. He was very touched and offset part of her tuition. Malimouna sat for the final examination and came out the best candidate. This allowed her to be offered a job at the Women Counselling Centre in her area where she was engaged with immigrant women having difficulties.

Importance of Educating Women in *Rebelle*

Education helps an average woman to be conscious of everything going on around her. When a woman is educated, she understands that tradition and not nature consigned her as second gender with inferior societal roles. With education, Malimouna understood that she was not inferior to any man, a realisation that raised her awareness of the possibility of attaining personal fulfilment without male endorsement. This kind of insightful knowledge emboldens a woman to refuse cultural practices that limit her progress. Malimouna from teenagehood refused to submit to any kind of ritual that came with physical and emotional pains. In the novel, the author advocated

for enforcement of the right of women to choose their own husbands and strongly condemned forced marriage as dehumanising to women. Keita rejects its acceptability through the act of her protagonist who fights back. Malimouna challenged not only the traditional practices of forced marriage but also kicked against female genital mutilation and the cultural system that firmly established it.

Malimouna, having escaped from female circumcision, firmly opposed the rite and worked assiduously to eradicate it. She forms “l’ Association d’Aide à la Femme en Difficulté” (AAFD) and she remained very active in it because she believes that there is no justification for women’s circumcision. She realised that the most effective way to end this practice is through mass mobilisation and the formation of an association that will enlighten women about its dangers. As the writer remarks:

Le dernier défi que Malimouna s’était lancé était de mettre sur pied un programme d’alphabétisation des ménagères. . . . Le nom de Malimouna apparaissait dans les journaux, on la voyait à la télévision, martelant à tous vents qu’il fallait que cessent les violences faites aux femmes. Violences qui, disait-elle, portaient de l’excision, en passant par le mariage forcé de très jeunes filles, l’étouffement de celles-ci dans leur foyer et les brutalités domestiques qui s’ensuivaient souvent. pp 183-189.

The last challenge that Malimouna brought under control is housewives’ illiteracy.... Malimouna’s name appeared in newspapers, she was seen on television, hammering with vigour that it was necessary to put an end to violence against women. Violence such as: putting an end to circumcision, forced marriage of very young girls, the suffocation of these at home and domestic violence which always followed. (Our translation).

As an educated woman, after her training in Social Studies at the Institut Social de Paris, Malimouna understands quite well the dangers inherent in female circumcision; she enjoined women to work with her and a friend named Laura to combat the practice of female circumcision. She also

campaigned through her organisation against all forms of violence against women. Malimouna understood that no individual woman, acting independently, could succeed in dismantling the social structures that relegate women. She devoted her entire life to the association she created to fight female circumcision to transform the society. She launched a massive campaign against “Les dangers de l’ excision” (194). Numerous women came out to support her cause and reveal how they had lost their daughters as a result of female genital mutilation. Malimouna herself spoke out openly about how she escaped being circumcised and was able to bear children nonetheless, thus dispelling the traditional myth advanced by some on the need for female circumcision (Sanusi 2005).

An illiterate woman sometimes can be likened to a “yes man” because she has no objection to whatever she is told by her husband as she is unaware of her right to take personal or independent decisions without being influenced. Fanta, Malimouna’s friend, is an archetype of an African traditional woman that believes she is living for her children and husband. On the contrary, an educated woman will not think in such a manner; she will know her rights and accord respect to everyone appropriately.

Reasoning Ability

An educated woman is conscious and aware of whatever happens in her surroundings. When a woman is learned, she will be able to understand things better. The way she will look at things will be different from her uneducated counterpart. Also, she will be able to question unfavourable societal practices. An educated woman will be bold and courageous to interrogate nocuous practices against the well-being of the people in the society, just as the protagonist, Malimouna did in questioning unpalatable and inimical acts against women. Malimouna single-handedly questioned and criticised an atrocious practise that everybody thought was normal. She was always asking questions that would be of help to womenfolk and she was trying to arouse their consciousness against societal nefarious practices that are capable of negatively affecting women’s development. The following corroborates this idea:

Il s’agissait disait-on d’enlever à la femme ce qui ressemblait à un pénis, de lui attribuer un statut différent de l’homme.

Mais les seins n'étaient-ils pas les symboles suprêmes de la féminité ? Alors pourquoi n'enlève-t-on jamais aux hommes cet attribut : leurs mamelons ? pp 198.

Dieu les avait créées avec un Clitoris. Pourquoi et au nom de quoi, un simple être humain pouvait-il décider que l'œuvre du Tout Puissant était imparfaite ? Comment pouvait-on croire à la fois en Dieu et en de telles absurdités ? p. 218.

One would say that the penis-like organ in a woman should be removed to ascribe to her a status different from a man's. But are breasts not perceived to be supreme symbols of femininity? Then why are nipples also not removed from men?

God had created females with a clitoris (a penis-like organ) why would a mere human being decide that the work of the Almighty was imperfect? How could one believe in God and at the same time believe in such absurdities? (Our translation.)

Financial Freedom

Education helps liberate women financially. An educated woman can easily secure decent and gainful employment. She cannot totally depend on her husband for all her needs and those of the children; she can even contribute to the household needs. Malimouna showed an example of this when she was seen working and earning a salary. Because of this act, she was able to create and fund an association. Meanwhile, the financial incapacitation of a woman is one of the reasons why a well-to-do man will likely oppress her in the society. A woman without any source of revenue may not be accorded full respect by her husband, because it is the man who feeds her all the time and also provides for all her domestic needs. This kind of woman cannot defend her rights at home and will not be able to challenge the husband for the fear that he might leave her. This is exemplified in the life of Fanta. She could not defend her right at home, and lived perpetually in fear that her husband, Barou might repudiate her:

Mon mari menace de me répudier avec... Il m'accuse de lui avoir montée la tête. Où vais-je aller, que vais-je devenir ? p. 103.

My husband threatens to divorce me... He accuses me of refuting his orders. Where will I go, what will I become? (Our translation).

Also, a non-educated and traditional woman sometimes remains subservient to her husband and oftentimes stays at home, taking care of the children while the husband goes out to fend for the family. Such a woman does not have audacity or courage to challenge or decline any obnoxious action from the husband. Let us see what happens to Fanta because of her illiteracy:

Fanta passait le plus clair de son temps entre les couches, les tétées, les vaisselles, la cuisine et la lessive.... La Nuit, Elle était constamment réveillée par les pleurs des bébés. Elle aurait pu se reposer quelques instants entre midi et deux heures... pp 93

Fanta used to spend most of her time for breastfeeding, washing clothes, cooking and washing plates.... She was always awakened by the cries of babies. Fanta had rings under her eyes and was emaciated and she needed help. (Our translation).

Malimouna in her struggle for other women pointed out that the first objective she was going to achieve was to help them understand that the only solution to their problems was enlightenment. Her belief is that women education helped them manage themselves better and become less dependent on their husbands

Malimouna avait beaucoup pleurée ce jour-là, de rage et d'impuissance. Lorsqu'elle se calma, sa décision était définitivement prise : elle lutterait pour aider ses sœurs.. Malimouna quitta le foyer et s'installa dans un petit appartement à quelques rues de là. Elle essaierait de trouver un moyen d'aider son amie. pp 95

That day Malimouna cried with rage and powerlessness. When she was calm, her decision was outrightly made; she would fight to help her fellow women. Malimouna left the public abode and stayed in a small apartment some streets away from the previous one. She tried to find a means to help her friend (Our translation).

Malimouna's negative experience made her to be determined to help women regain their prestige. She was orientating women and acting benevolently towards those in the association and later became president of the association. She organised a conference with the theme: "Dangers of circumcision." She did this to show Africans that though there are a lot of good traditions in the continent, it is necessary to recognise the need for changes in aspects of culture that are retrogressive especially as it becomes evident in the face of modern discoveries. For the first time, women were bold to talk in the public:

Cette foule avait entendu dire des choses qui n'avaient jamais été ainsi exprimées au grand jour. La pudeur autodestructrice des femmes se libérait tout d'un coup. Elles n'avaient plus honte de leur corps et se sentaient libres d'en parler, de le défendre. pp 217-218

This crowd had heard people saying what had never been said like that before on a good day. The self-destructive modesty of women liberated them all of a sudden. They were no longer ashamed of their bodies and they were talking of their felt liberation and defending it (Our translation).

It is through her participation in this association that Malimouna was able to put a smile on the faces of women, most especially in her village, Bourotuni. When she started the campaign against maltreatment of women. The audience, both men and women were flabbergasted by her action because such was never seen before by the people. This, she was able to achieve through her personal experiences.

Participation in the Development of One's Fatherland

Education enables women to participate actively in their family, village and country. Keita presents Malimouna who after her unpalatable mode of studies in France returns to her country, Ivory Coast to educate her female colleagues. She struggles vigorously against all forms of practices that hinder the progress of women in society. An educated woman will ameliorate the condition of life of her people. Malimouna created an association, L'Association d'Aide à la Femme en Difficulté (AAFD). This association opened a way for liberty and enlightenment of women who are in the majority in Africa. We know that education is the most important and number one empowerment tool for even development of human and natural resources in any society. Malimouna wanted illiteracy of women to disappear in all facets of life. The following corroborates this assertion:

Le dernier défi que Malimouna s'était lancé était de mettre sur pied un programme d'alphabétisation des ménagères { ... } Le nom de Malimouna apparaissait dans les journaux, on la voyait à la télévision, martelant à tous vents qu'il fallait que cessent les violences faites aux femmes. Violences qui, disait-elle, portaient de l'excision, en passant par le mariage forcé de très jeunes filles, l'étouffement de celles-ci dans leur foyer et les brutalités domestiques qui s'ensuivaient souvent. pp 183-189

The last challenge that Malimouna brought under control was household illiteracy...Malimouna's name appeared in newspapers, she was seen in the television, hammering with vigour that it was necessary to put an end to violence against women. Violence such as: putting an end to circumcision, forced marriage of very young girls, the suffocation of these at home and domestic violence which often ensued (Our translation).

Children Education

A mother is principally the one that gives care to her children when they are in their early years. She has a determinant influence on the children; assuming responsibility for them more than her spouse or any other person

to educate them before they start to go to school, as we alluded to in the introduction that the mother is a school. From infancy, she is the one who inculcates in the children good manners, good moral values and useful knowledge. In the novel, we see the wife in the Calmards' family spending half of her time with her children reading. We also see that the children, the twins and even the little Eric doing same; this was why they were able to teach Malimouna. They followed in the footsteps of their mother who is very educated.

Reduction of Infant Mortality Rate

Education helps in reducing the infant mortality rate. A clear link was established by UNESCO (2015) between infant mortality rate and level of literacy of mother. The more women have education the more the reduction in infant mortality rate. In *Rebelle*, many women lost their children after being circumcised as a result of serious injuries sustained. Children were dying as a result of circumcision; Noura, the firstborn of Fanta was a victim of this practice in France; she had a serious infection after circumcision. An educated woman will never allow her daughter to suffer this kind of genital mutilation. As a result of formal education, Sanita's mother quickly disallowed her daughter from spending her holidays in the village again so that she would never be circumcised when she heard that Sanita's group would be circumcised including Malimouna. She was able to prevent the imminent unhealthy practice that might affect her daughter negatively through the formal acquisition of knowledge.

Reduction in Maternal Death

Education helps to reduce maternal death. If a woman is educated, she will prefer to space her children or avoid unwanted pregnancy. She will know the essence of family planning to space her children or limit their number. In the text, Fanta, who was just twenty-four years, had four children already. She did not know anything about contraceptives and in four years she had borne three children because of her illiteracy. Malimouna noticed that she was having pale eyes and looked emaciated because of the enormous work volume.

Obstacles to Girls Education

According to UNICEF (2015), the factor that hinders most girls from attending school and consequently obtaining good results is the discrimination related to sex. Boys as well as girls are also confronted with these obstacles. But for girls, the obstacles are generally difficult to surmount, simply because they are girls. Other factors cited according to the organisation (UNICEF) are discussed below.

Poverty in the Family

Poverty is a factor that hinders the girl child from being sponsored to school. Many African parents place greater preference on educating their male children above that of the female. Many African parents believe that a girl child ends up in another man's house and thereby drop their fathers' names for another family. They send the boy child to school rather than the girl. The family concentrates its meagre resources on the education of a boy child; they believe that sponsoring a boy child is a long term investment.

The Problem of Insecurity of Girl Child from one Place to the Other

Many parents in Africa are not likely to allow their female children to embark on a long journey back to school with the fear of insecurity in school or where they cannot visit at will to ensure the girls' security. Physical violence in schools is one of the major problems that perturb parents from sending the girl child to school, most especially bullying and corporal punishment. This affects boys as well as girls. Girls are more exposed to sexual violence such as rape. Another problem associated with girl's insecurity is the traditional division of work between boys and girls in school; it happens that girls are more obliged to be exposed to risks and danger in school to the detriment of their studies, and sometimes they are subjected to sexual and psychological harassment. Also, traditional society sees women as objects of amusement by men.

Legal Framework

Some countries like Ghana, Gabon, and Mali among others did not adopt laws that advocate automatic schooling for the girl child. Also, marriages and early pregnancies are frequent among girls in a good number of countries; Sierra Leone and Tanzania are some of the countries applying laws that

interdict girls from attending school when they are pregnant or to return to school after the birth of their children.

Malimouna was able to conquer all the above conditions due to her undying determination to be educated and to liberate womenfolk from the patriarchal subjugation. After her graduation and her involvement as a freedom fighter, she became the voice of the voiceless even as at a time when female voice was not heard. She became aware of so many rights that women had immediately after she was educated and she immediately decided to make peace with the family of Sando to whom she was forcefully given as a wife as a little girl. Malimouna was conscious of her fundamental human rights through her enlightenment. The following conversation between Malimouna and the village's elders makes us understand her stand for woman emancipation:

Le conseil du village: Avant de te marier à ton mari actuel, tu étais d'abord la femme de Sando. Donc, ta famille est ici avant tout. Malimouna : A l'époque j'étais une enfant ! On m'a obligée à me marier et la loi condamne ce genre de pratiques ! Le conseil de village: La loi ? Quelle loi ? Insolente ! Est-ce que le gouvernement ne connaît pas nos Coutumes ? Jamais personne n'a été puni pour cela ! C'est notre vie, c'est nous que ça regarde ! Malimouna : Vous irez tous en prison si vous me touchez !(p 228).

Village counsellor: Before you are married to your present husband you were Sando's wife first. Therefore, your family is here before all. Malimouna: At that time I was a child! I was forced to marry and the Law condemns this type of practice! Village counsellor: Law? Which law? Impudent! Is the government ignorant of our customs? Nobody has ever been punished for that! It is our life; we are the people that are concerned! Malimouna: All of you will go to prison if you dare touch me! (Our translation).

Keita uses this heated debate between Malimouna and the village's elders to show the failure of certain Ivorian traditional practices. It is the tradition that when a woman is brought to answer charges against her, she

is to remain silent throughout the proceedings and simply obey. This is not the case with Malimouna. she threatened to send the elders to jail if they dare touch her. Typically, whenever the council of elders makes a decision, it is binding because of the power vested in the council as the highest decision-making body in the community. Malimouna is well aware of this practice, but she courageously spurned the decision of the council and criticised its authority as incompetent and irrelevant. Malimouna's victory symbolised victory for Ivorian women in particular, and African women in general. Malimouna overrides the council of elders' ruling and eventually calls the police, who arrested all the elders. Her victory is celebrated thus:

Après avoir pris quelques renseignements auprès de Malimouna, le commissaire décida d'embarquer les deux frères du vieux Sando pour le commissariat le plus proche. Malimouna monta dans la voiture de Laura sous l'œil vigilant de ses amies, après quoi, celle-ci regagnèrent leur car. Le convoi s'ébranla. Alors, les femmes laissèrent éclater leur joie. Des commentaires ponctués de rire allèrent bon train. (pp 231-232)

After taking some information from Malimouna, the police decided to carry the two brothers of Sando to the nearest police station. Malimouna entered the car of her friend Laura under the vigilance of her friends, after which, the convoy was shaken. Then, the women suddenly burst in joy. Comments of laughter were going at a good pace. (Our translation).

Modernity brings awareness that leads people to know their rights and to pursue them to achieve their dreams. Malimouna asserts her right and knows where to take her struggle to achieve her goal. In modern society, if issues cannot be resolved within the family or by traditional means, they may be resolved in a police station or a court of law. That is why she takes the matter to the police to seek redress for the situation (Sanusi, 2005).

Conclusion

Education helps girls and young ladies to resist social constraints and injustice in form of oppression, which impedes them from what they can do. Allowing girls and young ladies to be freed will not only be one of the biggest moral victories in our society; it is also a necessary practice. Women education should be encouraged in our society if truly we want to be developed sustainably. Education will help women to maximise their potentials. Women are not weak as tradition has made us believe. They are capable of pursuing a career and becoming important personalities in society. Malimouna was seen becoming the saviour of women in her country. Seeing how she vigorously delivered women from the discrimination being experienced by men, the young girls admired her and wanted to emulate her. With the help of Malimouna, the women to whom she had given a new joy to live said that they would begin to send their daughters to school and that they would no longer raise the girls with the mentality that they are inferior to their brothers; and they will allow them to pursue their ambitions in life, even to make choices for themselves in the area of marriage, so far the choice cannot jeopardise their future. This sensitisation aims at arousing the people's consciousness and finding liberating solutions to the scourge of oppression women suffer in African society.

The title of the novel, *Rebelle*, emphasises the position of the writer for conceiving the feminine characters as not weak victims but as strong women who rise against injustice and oppression. She shows that formal education and professional life have awakened women's consciousness. Therefore, the oppressors must recognise this change and put an end to injustice against women. Right to education is one of the human rights that everybody must enjoy or have for total societal development. In Africa, it is necessary to abdicate all cultures and traditions that are capable of impeding the progress of a woman or that which can destroy her life such as circumcision, among others. Also, women who have been emancipated already should fight for the freedom of others until victory is won, just as Malimouna did. If the education of a woman could bring victory to other women, then what would happen if all women were educated? We believe that the world would be a haven for everybody. Women should make sure that they attain positions of eminence in all sectors of the society such as politics, administration, religion, and academics just to name a few. Women must be respected because,

without them, life would not be beautiful! Educating a woman is opening doors for long-lasting and inclusive development!

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