



Vol. 8, No. 2, 2017

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Gender Disparity and Psycho-sexual Violence: An X-ray of How Imbalance is Perpetuated by Sexual Behaviour

ABSTRACT. The author presents the problem of gender disparity and different forms of sexual violence and identifies the traditional roots of female inferiority in the society. The article shows how the gender roles assigned to each sex manifest not only in the inequity on the socio-economic field, but also in the sphere of sexual behaviours. The findings discussed in the present paper are based on a range of studies carried out across cultures as well as on the results of a Focus Group Discussion held among women of South Nigeria. The author focuses on how the submissive role of woman in a society remains upheld through traditions, religious beliefs and most of all by various acts of sexual violence, such as virginity testing, female genital mutilation, polygamy or early marriage. Furthermore, it is presented that not only are men the managers of women's sexuality but also women act out as wardens of the female docility. In conclusion, the paper recommends the possible ways of matriarchist approach that women can adopt in order to change their social role and presents actions which help to close the gap between genders, such as increasing educational opportunities and political awareness among women.

KEYWORDS: gender disparity, sexual violence, patriarchy, matriarchy

Introduction

The issues of gender disparity, sexual violence and male dominance are themes that transcend national borders, historical eras and social classes and appear in all spheres of life- religion, politics, and economy. Worldwide, extant literatures on gender dynamics abound, portraying men as superior and women as inferior or subservient. The basic tenets of the theory of gender power propose that sexual division of labour, sexual division of power, and *cathexis* (affective attachments and social norms) create social and economic environments that predispose women

to gender inequities in hetero-sexual relationships. (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). Unarguably, sexual division of labour creates economic imbalance between men and women; distinguishes professions according to sexuality and defines, with traditional precision, a man's role at home and in the public versus those of the woman (Mies, 2001; Hirut, 2001). For example, Ogunleye (2015) painted a scenario of women prejudice in labour as shown in this discussion between an Uncle and his Niece titled "old versus new order".

- Male Prof: ... Now to the most amazing part of the Lagos to Kenya trip! I slept, woke up to eat, watched a film and slept again; it was when we landed that I saw that it was a girl who flew us all the way from Lagos. If I had known that, I would not have slept a wink.
- Niece: Glad you had such a wonderful and relaxing trip... Slightly surprised to hear that you might not have enjoyed yourself so much had you known the pilot was a woman...

Most men will not approach a lady mechanic for car repairs just because she is female and some women will not also approach a male midwife for delivery not just because he is a man but for fear of another man seeing their husband's private property despite the toll it takes on them. Sexual division of power acknowledges gender power inequities ascribing to men a sense of superiority, risk taking potentialities and intelligence. It presupposes that men's role is to provide and protect women and children (weaker creatures). While *cathexis* accounts for the emotional investment one has in a relationship as well as the social norms men and women are expected to follow. There are many stereotypical beliefs about the differences between men and women based on biological politics and societal constructions (WIC, 2005) of what should be men's and what should be women's including sexual behaviours, attitudes, professions, ownership rights and inheritance. Scientific evidence, however, suggests that although many of these beliefs are, in fact true, others are clearly false depending on culture and context.

Biologically, there are some significant differences between female and male brains. For example, the language centre in the male brain is usually in the dominant (usually left) hemisphere, whereas females use both hemispheres of the brain to process language. This may explain why females seem to have stronger communication skills and relish interpersonal communication more than males and why, on average, girls learn to speak and read earlier than boys. Experts disagree on whether differences between males and females result from innate, bio-

logical differences or from differences in the ways that boys and girls are socialized. In other words, experts disagree on whether differences between men and women are due to nature, nurture, or a combination of both.

Beyond nature, males and females are socialized in gendered ways conforming to their respective gender roles enunciated by the society (Kabira & Masinjila, 1997). A gender role is a set of behaviours, attitudes, and personality characteristics expected and encouraged of a person based on his or her sex. In today's society, the colour pink is associated with females and the colour blue with males. As babies, males and females are dressed differently, according to what is considered "appropriate" for their respective sexes. Even parents who strive to achieve a less "gendered" parenting style unconsciously reinforce gender roles. The toys and games mothers select for their children are often unconsciously intended to socialize them into the appropriate gender roles. Girls receive dolls in an attempt to socialize them into future roles as mothers. Since women are expected to be more nurturing than men, giving a girl a doll teaches her to care for it and fosters the value of caring for others. While boys receive toy guns or cars, they are likely to be action figures designed to bring out the alleged aggressive tendencies and superiority in boys.

In traditional patriarchal societies like Africa, men and women are on parallel gender trains. Men provide security and protection for women and children; serve in the highest level in all areas of the society; and decide the extent of freedom women enjoy. The role played by women is described in relation to childbearing and sex. Interestingly, male dominance is enunciated firstly by nature, sustained by nurture through the enactment of socio-cultural and religious practices. Monagan (2010) states that "biological essentialism focuses on sexual differences to justify inequality and the safeguarding of male supremacy". If a woman engages in multiple sex partnership, she is branded promiscuous or a prostitute, but the man gets away with admiration and branded as smart, go-getter, lady's man or machismo.

All over the world, gender stereotyping is a commonplace. The man is the macho, strong, dominant and aggressive; and the woman is stereotyped as weak and subservient. Lending credence to this, Szasz (1998a) maintains that men are confident and forceful, while women are modest and innocent. Expectedly, the societal expectations of each gender predict the pattern of hetero-sexual behaviours each exudes.

Thus, men fight, compete, prove to be knowledgeable, earn money, provide and protect women in order to maintain their masculinity and match up to the “approved” model. In accordance with societal approval of what makes a real man in a hetero-sexual relationship, penetration is an important experience. In a society where sexual intercourse and particularly penetration has a high symbolic importance in masculine identity, men are under pressure to “prove” their masculinity to some extent and an important way to do this may be through demonstrating sexual prowess (Szasz, 1998b).

In contrast, pre-marital virginity is a highly priced virtue for women. Amuchlastegui, (1998) asserts that prevailing metaphors for sexual intercourse include “pollution, dishonour and shame”. A young woman starting her sexual life outside marriage risks being perceived as worthless, or of dubious sexual morals. Worse still, the primary objective of the expectation of a woman’s premarital virginity is not necessarily for her own but to the credit of the family, the father who is the owner prior to marriage or hand over to the secondary owner, the husband.

Socio-Norms and Sexual Violence

A critical analysis of the literature on gender dynamics suggests that gender roles are fluid and multi-dimensional concepts influenced by socio-cultural and familial contexts (Fiorentino, Marano-Rivera, 2000).

Socio-cultural norms build notions of masculinity and femininity which in turn create unequal power relations between men and women. This power imbalance impacts women’s and men’s access to key resources, information, and their sexual interactions. It curtails women’s sexual autonomy and expands men’s sexual freedom and control over sexuality.

These gender roles have mostly been described as rigid sexual scripts that are endorsed by norms. Among the Latinos, the *marianismo* is expected to be sexually naïve, maintain absolute fidelity and submit to their partners’ sexual directives. While the *machismo*, the counterpart of *marianismo*, is expected to be more assuming, powerful and dominating in a relationship, and permitted to be promiscuous (De la Cancela, 1986; Marín, 2003; Noland, 2008). The gender role prescribed for women, or ‘femininity’, demands a submissive role, passivity in sexual relations, and ignorance about sex. Consequently, Like Isla 2004 puts it “Because

women are thus constituted as a coherent group, sexual difference becomes coterminous with female subordination and power is automatically defined in binary terms: people who have it (men) and people who do not have (women).” Roles are then prescribed under the socially appropriate characteristics and behaviours, beliefs and values that prove male superiority and female inferiority (Mantjes, Pilley & Turshen, 2001).

Therefore, it cannot be over-emphasized that the degree to which hetero-sexual partners demonstrate the ability to negotiate the timing of sex, conditions under which sex takes place and the use of condoms are shaped by gender-related values and norms defining masculinity and femininity which evolved through a process of socialization starting from an early stage of infancy. Boys are brought up to be sexually aggressive, dominant and conquering, as a way of affirming their masculinity. According to Check and Malamuth (1983), men are taught to take the initiative and persist in sexual encounters, while women are supposed to set the limits. Catharine MacKinnon (2011) argues that men who rape share the same reasons with those who don't—identification with masculine norms and expression of sexual prowess. These values and norms determine and reinforce themselves through traditional practices such as virginity testing, female genital mutilation, polygamy, widowhood related rituals, early marriage, and the condoning of gender-based violence. Cultural practices, values, norms and traditions have strong influences on the visible aspects of individual behaviours and are important determinants of women's vulnerability to sexual violence.

In other words, a husband can commit an act of sexual violence against his wife. It includes rape, virginity test, physical force, psychological intimidation, blackmail or other forms of threats. A wide range of sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings. These include, for example: rape within marriage or dating relationships; rape by strangers; systematic rape during armed conflict; unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favours; sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people; sexual abuse of children; forced marriage or co-habitation, including the marriage of children; denial of the right to use contraception or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases; forced abortion; violent acts against the sexual integrity of women, including female genital mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity; forced prostitution and trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The World Health Organization (2002) defines sexual violence as:

any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

Sexual violence committed by men in most parts of the world is rooted in the ideologies of the social construction of the male and female bodies or the polarised gender relation as described earlier. The man has a prerogative to initiate sexual advances; the woman may object but the man should persist until he achieves his objective. Many men therefore, exclude the possibility that their sexual advances can be turned down by a woman. Such men simply refuse to accept that a woman's "no" to his sexual advances actually means "no" in real terms and should be respected. In many cultures, and nay African, women have little or no autonomous right to decide when and how to participate in sex especially in a marital relationship. Affirming this claim, UNFPA (2008) states that "a considerably high proportion of women all over the country still accept wife beating for some reasons and also believe that women are not justified in negotiating or in refusing sex with their husbands even if they are at health risk". Instead sex between couples is perceived as obligatory for the woman in marriage. This, images a popular setting for women all over Africa. A woman who participated in an FGD in Southeast Nigeria stated as follows:

Even when he knows that I am sick and truly very sick, he still comes back to demand for sex from me. When I resist, he describes it as lack of love and respect. And sometimes, he threatens that he would get it from another woman outside. So I am afraid to think of saying "no" to sexual demands by my husband. I am his property. That's what my mother taught me.

Agbonma, 44, Ifite-Ogwari, Southeast, Nigeria

Agbonma's case is an example of women (mothers) as agents of socialisation of violence; obviously her mother is building a platform of gender imbalance and inferiority complex which must be sustained if measures are not taken for correction. It is also a typical case of how tradition relegates the woman to social acceptance of violence, despite civilisation, the need to encourage the women to use their experiences (virtues) to moderate the expression of their feelings remains unchanged.

These belief systems grant women extremely no courage nor legitimate options to refuse sexual advances. Even when a woman knows it is not healthy for her to engage in unprotected sex, she has little no option than to deny herself the sense of risk because of the emotional investment involved in the relationship and the cost of refusal. Though, a woman might have the knowledge of her spouse's extra-marital sexual interactions, she is often unable to protect herself due to an imbalance of power within relationships created by economic and emotional dependence. Murray (2008) acknowledges that financial viability and other barriers can be limiting for any female who is victimised to seek freedom from violent situations. Another participant at the FGD describes her experience with tears:

I know my husband has a girlfriend outside our matrimony. Yet, my husband hated condom use. He never allowed it. He used to beat me when I refused to sleep with him without condom... He said 'when we are man and woman married, how can we use a condom?' ... It's a wife's duty to have sex with her husband because that is the main reason you come together. But he didn't listen to me. I tried to insist on using a condom but he refused. So I gave in because I really feared him and I don't want my marriage to break. If he sends me out of his house, he will bring in another girl. Besides, not even my parents will support me if I tell them that he sleeps other girls which make it unsafe for me.

Nwabugo, 33, Ifite-Ogwari, Southeast, Nigeria

There are other innumerable variables that lever the act of violence against women which are rooted in social norms. These variables have defied ecclesiastical and civic interventions and to regulate them proves difficult. Among these are:

Virginity Testing

Virginity testing is another form of sexual violence against women. It is a huge sensitive subject not only related to sexual behaviour of a person but is intrinsically associated with far more complex questions of gender, sexual politics, history, religion and culture. A virginity test is the practice and process of determining whether a female person has ever engaged in sexual intercourse or not (GSR & H, 2015). The test involves an inspection of a female's hymen, on the assumption that her hymen

can only be torn as a result of sexual intercourse. Because of the patriarchal basis of most societies, the concept of virginity in girls came to be laden with notions of purity, honour and worth. According to patriarchal constructs of female identity, a woman is a man's (her father's or husband's) possession who has the right to decide when and with whom she can have sex. Thus, the huge importance of virginity for women was one of the ways of gaining control of the sexual behaviour of women.

In some traditional societies around the world (Asia, Africa and Middle East), girls are still expected to remain virgins until marriage which is most often arranged by the elders of a family according to prevailing caste, religious and community principles. Among the Bantu of South Africa, virginity testing or even the suturing of the labia majora (called infibulation) is a commonplace. Traditionally, Sudanese Kenuzi girls are married before puberty by adult men who inspect them manually for virginity. Some cultures require proof of a bride's virginity prior to her marriage. The physical examination would normally be undertaken before the marriage ceremony, while the "proof by blood" involves an inspection for signs of bleeding as part of the consummation of marriage, after the ceremony. Depending on whether the girl in question is declared a virgin, the aftermath of the test can be joy or danger.

In the Zulu culture, there is a tradition in which girls of a certain age perform annual dance for the king of the Zululand to select his newest wife from among the virgins. If a girl is tested and declared a virgin, she brings honour to her family. If a girl is found not to be a virgin, her father may have to pay a fine for 'tainting' the community and the girl may be shunned from the 'certified' virgins (GSR & H, 2015).

It is not known in any culture that the male counterparts (boys) are tested for virginity prior to marriage. Hence, the practice is seen as sexist, perpetuating the notion that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is acceptable for men, but a taboo for women, and suggesting that women's sexual activity should be subject to public knowledge and criticism, while men's should not.

Early Marriage

Marriage is often used to legitimize several of forms of sexual violence against women. The practice of early marriage is found in many parts of the world. Although, this is legal in many countries it is a form of

sexual violence, since the young girls involved cannot negotiate sex with their much older husbands as they know little about sex and marriage. They therefore frequently fear it (George, 1997) and their first sexual encounters are often forced (Forum on MRWG, 2000). Early marriage is most common in Africa and South Asia, though it also occurs in the Middle East and parts of Latin America and Eastern Europe (Kumari, Singh & Dubey, 1990). In Ethiopia and parts of West Africa, for instance, marriage at the age of 7 or 8 years is not uncommon. The obligation of an under aged wife to submit to sexual relations and give birth in pains symbolized slavery and such might land her into having VVF-an ailment that her husband could ill afford to live with or take care of, yet the exercise of submission is required of her.

I hate early marriage. I was married at an early age and my in-laws forced me to sleep with my husband and he made me suffer all night. After that, whenever day becomes night, I get worried thinking that it will be like that. That is what I hate most.

*11-year-old girl from Amhara, Ethiopia;
married at age 5, first had sex at age 9.*

In Nigeria, the mean age at first marriage is 17 years, but in the Kebbi State of northern Nigeria, the average age at first marriage is just over 11 years (UNICEF, 1990). High rates of child marriage have also been reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Niger and Uganda (Kumari, Singh & Dubey, 1990). In South Asia, child marriage is especially common in rural areas, but exists also in urban areas. In Nepal, the average age at first marriage is 19 years. Seven per cent of girls, though, are married before the age of 10 years, and 40% by the age of 15 years (100). In India, the median age at first marriage for women is 16.4 years. A survey of 5000 women in the Indian state of Rajasthan found that 56% of the women had married before the age of 15 years, and of these, 17% were married before they were 10 years old. Another survey, conducted in the state of Madhya Pradesh, found that 14% of girls were married between the ages of 10 and 14 years. Elsewhere, in Latin America for instance, early age at first marriage has been reported in Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Paraguay. In North America and Western Europe, less than 5% of marriages involve girls younger than 19 years of age (for example, 1% in Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, 2% in Belgium and Germany, 3% in Spain, and 4% in the United States) (Demographic Yearbook, 1999).

There are other customs leading to violence in many places—uch customs other than child marriage that result in sexual violence towards women. In Zimbabwe, for instance, there is the custom of *ngozi*, whereby a girl can be given to a family as compensation for a death of a man caused by a member of the girl's family. On reaching puberty the girl is expected to have sexual intercourse with the brother or father of the deceased person, so as to produce a son to replace the one who died. Another custom is *chimutsa mapfiwa*—wife inheritance—according to which, when a married woman dies, her sister is obliged to replace her in the matrimonial home. The same practice obtains called *Nkuchi* in Ifite-Ogwari, Southeast, Nigeria.

Religion and Gender Disequilibrium

Besides socio-cultural practices, sexuality disequilibrium is also deeply rooted in religion and religious beliefs as the foundations of community life in many of societies. Religion offers an extant sexual division of power and prescribes sexual ethics and guidelines for many aspects of daily life and norms surrounding sexuality. Unfortunately, the majority of religiously tailored belief systems do not only condemn pre-marital sex, contraception including condom use, and homosexuality but promote sexuality disequilibrium between males and females even though it is believed that all humans are equal in the eyes of God. Some religions promote cutting-edge submissive role for women, foster gender inequality in marital relations, and promote women's ignorance in sexual matters as a symbol of purity.

With due respect to your religious beliefs and inclinations, permit us to take a few instances from the Bible to illustrate this point. Leviticus 12:1-5 stated that a woman who has given birth to a boy is ritually unclean for 7 days. If the baby is a girl, the mother is unclean for 14 days. "If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days... But if she bears a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks..." (Holy Bible, 1982)

It would appear that the act of having a baby is a highly polluting and the mother therefore requires more days for cleansing compared to giving birth to a boy. Deuteronomy 25:11: If two men are fighting, and the wife of one of them grabs the other man's testicles, her hand is to be chopped off. There is no penalty if a male relative were to grab the other

man. "When men strife together one with another and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets. Then thou shalt cut off her hand..." (Holy Bible, 1982). No equivalent punishment is prescribed for the menfolk.

Male pre-eminence ruled also in the satisfactions of the flesh. A formal recognition of polygamous unions in various cultures reinforces the patriarchal notion that women should passively accept their partners' sexual decision making. It broadens the scope of masculine sexual freedom and further limits the horizon of feminine sexual autonomy. Polygamy is permitted in the Old Testament and is covered by a number of statutes. A man was free to have as many wives and concubines as he could support. The great Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon all had more than one wife. A man could marry and literally "become the master of the woman as often as he desired. In Genesis 4:19, Lamech became the first known polygamist when he took two wives. Subsequent men who took multiple wives included: Esau with 3 wives; Jacob: 2; Ashur: 2 amongst others (Holy Bible, 1982).

Despite occasional exceptions, the woman's subsidiary role enforced in the Old Testament was continued in the New. Writing as mentor to Timothy at Ephesus and giving him instructions to be passed on to the Christian assembly there, Apostle Paul laid down these injunctions:

I direct the women to wear suitable clothes and to dress quietly and modestly; not with braided hair, gold, jewellery, or expensive clothes. Their adornment is to be the doing of good deeds of the kind that are proper for women who profess religion. During instruction, women are to remain silent and submissive. I permit no woman to teach or to tell a man what to do (Holy Bible, 1982).

His reason? "Because Adam was formed first, then Eve. Bear in mind, it was not Adam who was led astray and fell into sin, but the woman." Paul does concede, however, that "a woman may be saved through bearing children; provided that she remains modest and is constant in faith, love, and holiness."

Although, most Protestant churches today flout these instructions even as they hold that the scriptures are the inerrant Word of God. After many centuries, during which these edicts were more or less obeyed, most churches have bowed to the changing times. There is an increasing number of women clergy and a host of women teachers, although, com-

pared to men, the number remains small. But even this modest step, took the better part of two thousand years to achieve, and most of these changes are not yet widely accepted.

Priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church till today is the prerogative of the males. Women may counsel and assist but, they may not lead. They may be more numerous than men in the pews and more active in doing good works of God, but in the majority of the basic expressions of Christianity, women remain subject to and secondary to men.

Men as Psycho-Sexual Managers of Women's Sexuality

With a veritable ground nurtured by culture, ordained by religion and fated by nature, men thrive on the vulnerable, supposedly passive and sexually subservient women and even applying the October Man Sequence strategy to ensure unreserved submission.

October Man Sequence first gained public attention when Neil Strauss mentioned it in his bestselling book *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists* (Neil, 2003). Since then, it had acquired cult status amongst the underground seductive community. Expert seducers who have used the technique successfully first hand reported amazingly powerful results. There could be some hyperbole in the assumption of its efficacy, but the effectiveness of the technique has never been disputed. Ever since mentioned in 'The Game' by Neil Strauss, the **October Man Sequence** has become somewhat of a legend. It's purportedly able to make a woman want to go to bed with a man in as fast as 15 minutes.

According to men who are familiar with the technique, using the October Man Sequence to seduce women is like "bringing a machine gun to a stick fight". It's somewhat unfair, and certainly dangerous—yet nothing is done about it. Using the technique, master seducers are reputedly able to control a woman's feelings, and would often bend them to their will. This is dangerous because unsuspecting women could well be manipulated and in the process become vulnerable.

The basic premise of the October Man is symbolism. The sequence was designed around hypnosis and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) concepts such as framing, focus, intention and fractionation. The concept of symbolism in hypnosis is the idea of turning a particular feeling in a person into a symbol which is then manipulated. The symbol is

anchored towards another person (the hypnotist) and this is further used in order to invoke certain feelings (pleasure or pain) in the person. This symbol is the link into a person's unconscious. By controlling this symbol, it is therefore possible to control the person's feelings at will. Fortunately, many men adopt and apply the October Man sequence on a range of unsuspecting women. Perhaps this explains why sometimes you can't explain why you fell in love.

Women as Wardens of Sexual Docility in Hetero-Sexual Relationships

Women's sexual docility in hetero-sexual relationship is an age long product of gendered socialisation which starts as soon as a child is born. Gender socialisation is a more focused form of socialisation; it is how children of different sexes are taught what it means to be male or female (Condry & Condry, 1976). Gender socialisation begins the moment we are born, from the simple question "is it a boy or a girl?" (Gleitman, Fridlund & Reisberg, 2000).

The primary agent for gender socialisation in the family is the mother, followed by peer groups, schools and the media. We largely behave man-like or woman-like because our mothers' gender-socialised us from birth to think and behave in accordance with male or female gender norms. Mothers are the primary influence on gender role development in the early years of one's life (Kaplan, 1991). With regard to gender difference, the family in fact, unlike other groups, is characterized by a specific way of living and constructing gender differences through a process that is surely biological, but also relational and social. The family is "the social and symbolic place in which difference, in particular sexual difference, is believed to be fundamental and at the same time constructed" (Eccles, Jacobs & Harold, 1990).

Sexual violence, particularly female genital mutilation, breast-ironing practiced in rural parts of Cameroun and corseting are performed by women not men in most cultures of the world. These procedures are normally carried out by older women in the communities or traditional birth attendants.

Furthermore, the crave for gender balance by the womenfolk is not only skewwhiff but serves the selfish interest of few who are enlightened enough and so feel marginalised in the man's world. Women are

sympathetic to a system which adds to female power and privilege, so long as it does not dislodge or upset the existing power and privilege. This is why many matriarchic women organized to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment—a constitutional amendment that was supported by feminists, but which could have undermined traditional female privileges in many areas (such as the draft). Women in general supported the aspects of it that resulted in educational and economic opportunities, greater sexual freedom, easy divorce but insisted that female privileges be retained (“chivalry”, female child custody, male obligation in the form of child support and alimony, etc.). Gender balancing must be all inclusive to be comprehensive. We must learn to balance our drive for gender equality. Hence, equal recognition and female supremacist is achievable but only if it must radically alter current matriarchal order.

Way Forward

1. Matriarchist approach

As a way forward, this paper recommends that the women folk adopt the *matriarchist* approach expounded by Chinwezu (1990) in his book *Anatomy of Female Power*. Chinwezu, a Nigerian critic, poet, and journalist, author of the *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy* proposed three types of women in power terms:

- Matriarchists—women who believe men should serve women, and the most effective way to do this is for men to think they are “in charge” while actually submitting to female control
- Tomboys—women who wish they were men
- Termagants—women who insist on showing openly that they are “in charge”, and who take pleasure in openly bossing around and harassing men

Chinwezu stipulates that all three types have always existed, but that *matriarchists* have always been the vast majority of women. For him, *matriarchists* have mastered the art of making the menfolk serve women yet believing that the woman is under their whims and caprices. These groups of women do not roll out drums on the street nor challenge the authority of the man in accordance with culture and religion publicly, yet they rule world in which men falsely believe they are the masters having been created after the image of God and given divine authority to rule over the women. He postulates that every woman has

been imbued with enough natural prowess to rule over and overawe even the strongest man on earth including Samson the strong. The natural attribute possessed by every woman but utilized by the intelligent few include the man's stomach of which she is the custodian and traditionally prescribes what he puts in there as his meal; the woman's womb that bore the man (his mother) and the woman's reproductive tools which the man needs desperately for his sexual satisfaction and procreative gratification. Women who are women enough have used either of these or a combination of two or all to make the hard man soft.

The second class of women called the militant tomboys vent their frustration at not being men by expressing anger and outrage at "male privilege" and "male power", while the non-militant tomboy is glad for an atmosphere in which she can pursue male roles with less resistance than in the past—"she goes into previously all-male fields, and still uses them to the full advantage of the skills and weapons of female power."

And as for termagants, Chinweizu analyzes them as follows:

The termagant (the shrew, scold and harridan of old) is a misandrous sadist whose greatest pleasures come from man-baiting and man-bashing. She resents the matriarchist code which would have her pretend that she is not boss to her man. Under the banner of feminism, she can truly blossom. (...) The termagant claims for herself absolute freedom of conduct, and would punish any reaction, however natural, she provokes from men. She is the type of woman who would wear a miniskirt without panties, a see-through blouse without bra, and swings her legs and wiggles her arse as she parades up and down the street, and yet insists that no man should get excited by her provocative sexual display. Any man who whistles at the sight is berated for male chauvinism. (...) Under the guise of "radical feminism", some termagants, in their utter misandry, have retreated into lesbian ghettos, and from there attack, as traitors to womankind, those other women who are heterosexual, and who do not totally refrain from social and sexual intercourse with men. Under the banner of feminism, all this is treated as legitimate human behaviour.

Chinweizu's approach as suggested in this paper could be frowned at based on ecclesiastical reasoning or in the parlance of gender exigencies as a subtle way of maintaining the male superiority. But it is noteworthy that biblical women like Debora and Ruth adopted Chinweizu's matriarchist strategies successfully. Closer home, the likes of Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, one of the few women elected to the native House of Chiefs,

serving as an Oloye of the Yoruba people and a ranking member of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons out-smarted men in the quest for recognition without confrontation of the order of male supremacy. Many others like the Queen Amina, a Hausa Muslim Warrior Queen of Zazzau (now Zaria), who refused to marry like Elizabeth, the First Queen of England for the fear of losing power; the great Omu Iyasele of the traditional Onitsha society, whose exploits are well documented; and the leaders of the Aba Women Riot of 1929 are classical examples of women who stood shoulder to shoulder as contemporaries of men in a male dominated society. One character is common to these great women leaders. They all possessed and applied Chinweizu's *matri-archist* strategy in their quest to close ranks with men.

2. Education and Income as liberators

Generally, Richardson (1995) proposes that a critical predictor of gender balance is women's education and related income-earning. Increasing opportunities for girls' education has proven to close the gap between and reduce the tension between what the society hitherto considered exclusive rights and roles of men and women. It has also resulted in increase in the number of adolescent girls in school decrease in number of early marriages (Richardson, 1995). Another significant predictor of gender balance is participation (Cornwall, 1997) participation in political awareness, Improving the condition and status of women in the family, community and national level, freedom -from -violence workshops/conferences, men-women forum on freedom from violence (Jejeebhoy & Sather, 2001; Cornwall, 2011; Okam, 2015). All this creates empowerment necessary for correcting gender disparity. We can as well use other avenues like theatre as suggested by (Ogunleye 2015; Okam, 2015).

3. Theatre as a tool for re-socialisation

Ogunleye (2015) suggests a re-socialisation approach through the process of attrition in order " to destroy 'en-caging' propensities of long held fallacies... by raising our collective voices, -male and female-through the theatre and media" in areas where the woman has been ignored, discriminated against, legislated against, and oppressed. This could happen through the "Theatre of Reciprocal Violence—devoid of stones and cudgels, of reversed discrimination, of hatred nor blood and

gore, but of rationality and articulation of needs of women, wants of women and the freedom to exist in their own nature, to be free to express themselves and be comfortable in their own skin.” Or as (Okam, 2015) suggests, a theatre, forum where men and women equalling as oppressed and oppressors come together to discuss their issues and find a way out, in the same way that Andrea Cornwall (2011) has advised that men should be involved in any discussion of violence against women. Women’s actions must be reconstructed and their thinking and behaviour socialised within the context of the relations both sexes have established between themselves. Forum where it is possible to view the relations between men and women as nurtured whose past should and can be reviewed as needed.

Conclusion

This paper explores the socio-cultural, religious and environmental factors that created the ‘machismo’ and ‘marianismo’ and explicates how masculine stereotyping is created by the cultures but vocalized and sustained by religion and society at large. (Marín, 2003; Noland, 2008). A qualitative analysis of selected studies across cultures was triangulated with views generated through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among the womenfolk in Ifite-Ogwari, Southeast Nigeria. The findings of the paper will be informative for designing women emancipation programmes and gender balancing.

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