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Journal of Gender and Power is aimed at providing an international forum for discussing various issues and processes of gender construction. It is a scholarly, interdisciplinary journal, which features articles in all fields of gender studies, drawing on various paradigms and approaches. We invite scholars to submit articles and reviews reporting on theoretical considerations and empirical research.

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## Editor's Preface

In the introduction to the last issue of "Journal of Gender and Power" I wrote about the COVID-19 pandemic. Just the pandemic seemed to be a radical turning point in people's understanding of the world and society. I did not think there would be an even more tragic turning point.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine altered our vision of reality and our sense of global community instantaneously. The unbelievable tragedy of the Ukrainian nation is so sudden and unexpected, and the cruel military aggression against Ukrainian women, men and children, against Ukrainian sovereignty and culture is difficult to watch. The whole democratic world, especially Poland, is helping the Ukrainian people in every possible way. Therefore, this issue of the "Journal of Gender and Power" represents the colour of the Ukrainian flag to express our solidarity with the Ukrainian nation.

Of course, we must not forget the ongoing gender issues regarding contemporary societies. The articles included in this volume are devoted to various cultural, social and political issues of gender identity and gender inequality. However, we are sure that people worldwide, both men and women, support the heroic fight of Ukrainian men and women for their freedom.

The western countries have been providing a lot of support to the Ukrainian refugees including women and children since the beginning of the conflict. This is symbolic solidarity between people from different countries, irrespective of gender, political views, religion, education, or income. I sincerely hope that in the time of publishing the next issue of "Journal of Gender and Power", we will live in a peaceful Europe with Ukrainian freedom and independence.

Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik  
Editor-in-Chief





## ARTICLES







Vol. 16, No. 2, 2021

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## **The Pandemic's Effect on Children Globally: A Brief Perspective**

**ABSTRACT.** The COVID-19 pandemic is unique in that it exerts widespread and severe impacts on daily life without a predictable end date and presents a complex combination of stressors; yet, it has affected children around the world differently depending on the economic level of those children. In addition, girls may have been more affected than boys depending on the country they live in. Children in developed countries may have faced greater mental health challenges, but those from poverty-stricken nations not only felt the loss of their educational opportunities, but also extremely limited healthcare to aid those infected with COVID-19.

**KEYWORDS:** pandemic, global impact, stressors

### **Introduction**

During the current pandemic, school-aged children around the world have faced unprecedented life stressors never experienced by recent generations. Schools, clubs, sports, and churches were suddenly closed across the nation and people of all ages had to adjust to a new way of living. Fear and uncertainty clouded the nation, and the trajectory of the future was unknown. Yet, children and adolescents in developing countries who already live with chronic hardships may have experienced the 2020–2021 pandemic differently than those in developed countries. For instance, children in Haiti have faced natural disasters and extreme poverty throughout their lives including a recent earthquake in August of 2021; thus, the recent pandemic was another opportunity to demonstrate their ability to manage life difficulties.

This paper introduces the difficulties that school-aged children dealt with globally in 2020–2021 including the effect on males versus females. The idea for this topic came about due to the authors' involvement in service work in orphanages in Haiti and the realization that the pandemic affected children there very differently. These new stressors related to COVID-19 continue to put challenges on the daily life of all children. Around the world, these include limited or few social outlets, limited or no opportunities to attend school face to face, increased economic concerns in families, childcare issues for some parents who were required to work without their children being in school, and overall anxiety about the future. Thus, children's mental health, access to education, and health concerns are addressed in light of the pandemic and in light of differing economic stations around the world.

## **Mental Health**

Much has already been written on mental health and school-aged children during the height of the 2020 pandemic. Global lockdown in most countries around the world was instituted to drastically stop the spread of the virus and this has not been experienced in modern history. The last extensive lockdown was in 1918 with the Spanish Flu which lasted over two years infecting 500 million people (one-third of the world's population at the time). With severe job losses around the world affecting each member in a family, school closures, business as usual being shut down (restaurants, barbers, and the ability to conduct normal life), church closures, and the banning of sports, millions of people had to adjust to a new way of life. However, this was not the case in developing countries as the hardships already faced by the people there made this pandemic not as severe as other places around the world. For instance, in Haiti, due to the extreme poverty there, communities of people barely noticed the pandemic as their economic and health issues were already so extreme (Pierson, 2020).

In China, 1210 respondents from 194 cities were surveyed about the psychological impact and psychiatric symptoms of this pandemic (Wang et al., 2020). Females and students were significantly associated with a greater psychological impact of the outbreak and had higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. 75.2% were highly worried that a family member would get COVID. Anecdotes from children in Southern California

provide evidence of social and emotional difficulties in all grades and genders due to community lockdowns (Pierson, 2020).

## **Access to Education**

Globally, roughly a third of the world's schoolchildren, or nearly 600 million, were affected by pandemic-related school closures, according to UNICEF, the United Nations agency responsible for aid to children. During the most difficult part of the pandemic in 2020, approximately 463 million schoolchildren worldwide (by UNICEF estimates) lacked Internet, television or radio and were left with almost no access to education (Chauvin & Faiola, 2020). This would be most obvious in developing countries where technology is not a consistent part of life. "We are seeing very real disparities between those children able to access remote learning, and poor children, children in rural areas, adolescent girls and disabled children who just don't have equal access," said Robert Jenkins, UNICEF's education chief (Chauvin & Faiola, 2020).

In response to COVID-19, 107 countries closed schools nationally by March 18, 2020 (Viner et al., 2020). This has been proven to be an overreaction as recent modelling studies showed that only 2–4% of deaths could possibly have been prevented by school closures alone without consideration of other measures such as social distancing. Other less disruptive social distancing interventions should be considered before school closures occur again.

## **Health Concerns**

The obvious concern related to health and the spread of COVID-19 is the amount of illness and deaths that occurred which continue to impact society. Many children lost parents or caretaking relatives. As the pandemic wore on and new variants were introduced into society, children have become more and more affected by transmitting COVID-19 themselves with deaths in children increasing. COVID-19 spread to every country and infected millions and killed hundreds of thousands (Johns Hopkins University, 2020).

In addition, the imposed shutdown and confinement of people in developed countries led to drastically increased screen time, extensive use

of digital media, and an extreme rise in sedentary activity (Dutta et al., 2020; Pierson, 2020). Many families did not get the level of exercise they were used to since children's physical activities were stopped, and parents were not walking at work. For instance, at many school sites, children would need to walk upstairs to get to different classrooms, but with the requirement to stay home as much as possible, this extra exercise on top of after school activities and physical education classes did not exist (Pierson, 2020). Many of the typical activity patterns and sleep habits went through a noticeable transformation during this lockdown phase. It was observed that prolonged restriction on inherent practices brought about by this period of confinement may have deterred the health well-being of people (Wang et al., 2020).

Effects on different activity levels may not have been true in developing countries as their lives remained much the same; yet infection levels among children were similar as the variants increasingly infected younger and younger people around the world. Those in developing countries did not have access to healthcare and lifesaving treatment if infected with COVID-19.

## **Conclusion and Future Research**

Children around the world were affected differently during the 2020–2021 pandemic. Those in developed countries who saw their lives shut down were unable to attend school face to face or participate in their after-school activities the same way as usual. This led to mental health issues such as increased depression due to social isolation. Yet, children in developing countries who had been attending school no longer had access at all due to no virtual learning opportunities. Thus, their education levels fell behind by one year and possibly even two. This put children in poorer parts of the world at an increasing disadvantage for upward mobility and also affected their mental health.

Female children and adolescents in developed countries were affected more severely than males. They tended to worry more, have higher rates of depression, and verbalize their concerns about losing important aspects of life to the pandemic shutdown.

Children in all countries have been affected by the new variants that have increasingly infected younger people. Disparities in healthcare make this especially a concern for those in poorer nations. The social-

emotional, educational, and health effects of COVID-19 on children will long reverberate throughout the world until the pandemic ends.

Upcoming research should focus on children's perspectives on how the pandemic has affected them in these different aspects of life.

## Biographies of the Authors

Melinda R. Pierson, Ph.D. has been the Chair of the Department of Special Education at California State University, Fullerton for the past 15 years and a professor for a total of 22 years. She also directs the Center for International Partnerships in Education. She has written over 100 articles, book chapters, and grants in the areas of effective teacher training, affective characteristics (self-concept, loneliness, and social skills) for adolescents with mild/moderate disabilities, and literacy interventions. She has led numerous study abroad trips to Haiti and Germany where students have applied research-based teaching strategies in struggling schools. She has served as a Fulbright Scholar twice in Poland and Germany where she taught and conducted research with university faculty.

Brooke E. Pierson has served numerous times in schools and orphanages in Port au Prince, Haiti. She is interested in child welfare around the world and is looking forward to a future as a teacher. Her upcoming service will be with the children of the Appalachian region of the United States.

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**Mark Chingono**

# **The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women in the Informal Sector in Southern Africa: A Case Study of Lesotho**

**ABSTRACT.** Originating from Huan Province in China in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>, which is raging throughout the whole world, has disproportionately impacted on women in the informal sector in Southern Africa. Adding more burdens to the triple jeopardy of exploitation by patriarchy, capitalism and the state that these women already endure, the lockdown measures meant to curb the spread of the pandemic have been economically, politically, socially and psychologically negative. The pandemic has also exposed the weaknesses of the global economic system, the production and distribution system as well as consumption patterns. The alarmist responses adopted by panicky authorities have amplified the impacts of the pandemic and worsened the plight of women in the informal sector. This paper identifies some of the major challenges that the Coronavirus has presented to women in the informal sector as well as their coping strategies. The paper posits that the pandemic, although devastating in many ways, presents an opportunity to re-organize society by rethinking and reevaluating our core values and practices. It concludes by suggesting policy options to mitigate the impact of the pandemic while allowing the informal sector to thrive.

**KEYWORDS:** COVID-19, coronavirus, informal sector, gender inequality, pandemic, patriarchy, policy, women, traders

## **Introduction**

The 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), which causes the Covid 19 disease, is spreading with epidemic features in the rest of the world (Petrosillo et al., 2020), and has caused untold suffering to women in the informal sector in Southern Africa. The combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic itself and the lockdown measures meant to curb its spread have

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<sup>1</sup> According to 'conspiracy theories' circulating on social media, is a result of biological warfare between the emerging superpower, China, and the hitherto dominant one, the US.

been economically, politically, socially, and psychologically damaging. In accordance with lockdown restrictions, governments and businesses in the sub-region have scaled down their operations, closed borders and restricted public gatherings and movement. The ripple effects of these measures, dubbed 'a shadow pandemic', seem more damaging than the pandemic itself. Some of the negative impacts include a rise in: unemployment; poverty levels; crime; gender-based violence; early marriages; teenage pregnancies and unwanted babies; other infectious diseases; and premature deaths.

While almost everyone everywhere is feeling the pressure of lockdown restrictions, women in the informal sector are enduring far more than their quotient of lockdown induced misery, pain and suffering. This is precisely because, before the pandemic women in the informal sector were already poor, eking out a marginal existence and discriminated against in both the public and private sectors. As Moungar and Baldeh (2020, p. 3) aptly observe: "The pandemic has disproportionately impacted women and girls living in fragile contexts with ripple effects on education, livelihoods and nutrition, among others". For women in the informal sector, who are among the most fragile and vulnerable, the pandemic has presented a new set of problems to the myriad of challenges they already endured. Imposed with little or no regard of how the poor majority would survive, the lockdown rules have deepened traditional gender inequalities and exacerbated the fragility of poor women the informal sector.

Focusing on Lesotho, this paper discusses the impact of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions on women in Southern's informal sector. Lesotho's economy, with a paltry GDP per capita of 967.23 USD (which is equivalent to 8 per cent of the world's average) high unemployment rate of 24.40 per cent, inflation of 5.83 per cent and a debt-service ratio of 5.1592 per cent in 2021 (Lesotho GDP Per Capita, 2021), was already in the red. In such fragile contexts, "the burden of conflict, poverty and climate change falls most heavily on already marginalized groups" (Moungar & Baldeh, 2020, p. 3), women in the informal sector in this case. As with much of Africa, about 40% of Lesotho's Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)s are led or owned by women, and by July 2020 80% of these "had to temporarily or permanently shut down their business due pandemic restrictions" (Moungar & Baldeh, 2020).

The aim of this paper is to consider how these poor and marginalized women are enduring the brunt of the pandemic, identify some



of their survival strategies and propose policies for the protection and promotion of their rights. The paper contends that, there is need for a delicate balancing act between meeting the economic needs of the people and the healthy need to contain the pandemic. Sacrificing the economy on the alter of health is short-sighted and self-defeating in the long-run, for we need a vibrant economy to generate funds to purchase and/ produce medicine and to build hospitals. The paper also argues that COVID-19 can spur economic and sociopolitical change if policy responses embrace technological innovation and efficient and productive use of resources. It concludes by proposing short, medium and long-term policy options to assist women in the informal sector and to promote economic development.

## **1. Methods**

The COVID-19 pandemic induced restrictions on movement severely limited the research methods options. Visiting research sites to conduct in-depth interviews or opinion field surveys of female informal traders in Lesotho was not possible. Therefore, the paper is based partly on secondary literature, publications, TV, and social media. The most recent literature on COVID-19 has been reviewed, and statistical data on infections, recoveries and death consulted. The historical part of the paper uses results of an opinion field survey conducted in 2003 by the author. In a word, qualitative in orientation, the paper reveals subtle connections and processes that have coalesced to increase the marginalization and pauperization of women in the informal before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2. Women in the Informal Sector: A History of Marginality and Vulnerability**

Hitherto, the history of women in the informal sector of Lesotho has been a history of marginalization and vulnerability. Operating in a dependent and weak enclave economy which is completely surrounded by South Africa (SA), women informal traders are marginalized by traditional patriarchy, the state and primitive peripheral capitalism. As a consequence of this triple jeopardy of marginalization, women in the informal sector are the most vulnerable social group in Lesotho.

Historically, patriarchal traditions, idioms and ideologies have restricted Basotho women's participation in the public sphere, and instead forced them to remain invisible 'workhorses' of the household (Muel-ler, 1977; Gill, 1997). Traditional patriarchal and religious ideologies and institutions define and/or limit the rights, options and possibilities available to women. The traditional unequal power relationship between the sexes was redefined and buttressed, with ambiguous implications, during colonialism.

The post-independence state, patriarchal in orientation, has pursued gender discriminatory employment practices which have resulted in massive under-representation of women in both the private and public sectors. Mapetla and Petlane (2007, p. 30–31) observe, 'unequal gender relations' remain "a common feature of Lesotho society, in both the private and public spheres". In short, thanks to systematic gender discrimination in both the public and private spheres, and as in the pre-colonial and colonial eras, women continue to be marginalized in the political, economic, social, legal and cultural spheres.

With only water as the 'most significant natural resource', which is exported to SA, the Basotho state is a dependent weak state with limited resources and options. In other words, the country's heavy dependency on SA and foreign aid has limited its capacity and policy options for promoting gender equality, supporting the informal sector, let alone managing the pandemic. With their needs fading into policy insignificance, poor women have flocked *en masse* to the informal sector, which is now the most rapidly expanding sector of the economy.

Practically, the only vehicle for poor women's survival and empowerment, the informal sector is attractive primarily because of its easy entry requirements: capital, qualifications or experience are not necessarily required, though these are decisive of one's chances of success and prosperity. Indeed, today, and as in most developing countries, women constitute a majority in the informal sector and the majority of economically active women are in this sector (Women in the Informal Economy Global Organization, WIEGO, 2003). However, because "Lesotho does not have an informal sector policy despite rapid growth of the sector in the past two decades" Mapetla and Petlane (2007, p. 78), women in the sector face numerous challenges that make it difficult for them to realize their full potential. Among others, these challenges include: stiff competition; low incomes; the perishability of goods; the failure by debtors to repay; rising transport costs; unsupportive policies; and harassment by the police (Chingo-

no, 2016). To optimize the benefits of the informal sector policies should be based on a careful consideration of the benefits and costs of the sector.

### **2.1. The Benefits and Costs of the Informal Sector**

The informal sector, though denigrated by officialdom, bestows many benefits to society. These benefits include, among others: creating employment; providing incomes and livelihood for the poor; enhancing human security; creating wealth; contributing to national income and GDP; catalyzing gender equality; contributing to political stability and bolstering state security; supporting and subsidizing the formal sector; entrenching the much needed entrepreneurial spirit and financial discipline; and finally and especially important during lockdowns and restricted movement, provision of goods and services at the consumer's doorstep and at convenient times (Chingono, 2016). In other words, although not directly taxed, the informal economy offers employment and livelihoods to many, contribute to national economic development, and by absorbing the unemployed who could be potential criminals and rebels, it enhances state security

Notwithstanding its obvious benefits to society, the informal sector also has a 'dark-side'. Poor quality goods, unhealthy food, poor working conditions, oppression and lack of protection of employees, and even crime (especially the sale of smuggled or stolen goods) are some of the common features of the informal economy. This should not be surprising given that, the informal sector is not regulated and that the majority of its actors are semi-illiterate and not aware of some of the hazards that their activities may cause or the laws they may be breaking. A holistic policy framework should therefore seek to optimize the benefits of the informal sector while suppressing its harmful and criminal activities, and should be categorized in short-term, medium-term and long-term.

To recap, the history of women in Lesotho has been characterized by socio-economic and political marginalization. Traditional patriarchal ideologies, religions and gender discriminatory policies have entrenched the subjugation of women. In efforts to reclaim their right to survive, thrive and prosper, increasing numbers of women have become enterprising foot soldiers in the informal economy, where they face a multitude of multilayered challenges. These challenges have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and alarmist responses.

### **3. The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Women in the Informal Sector**

As of November 14, Lesotho had 44 deaths 2041 cases and 1056 recoveries, representing a 2.1 per cent case-fatality rate (Worldometers, 2020). This is relatively low as compared to fatality rates of over 10 per cent in “Italy, Yemen and two other countries” (de Best, 2020). With a world fatality rate of 2.3%, which is lower than 9.5% and 34.4% of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) respectively, “it can spread in the community more easily than MERS and SARS” (Petrosillo et al., 2020).

When the novel Coronavirus hit the country in March 2020, the government, and in an endeavour to curb the spread of the pandemic, imposed a strict lockdown. On 3 April the government released and gazetted lockdown regulations which stipulated the rules and expectations thereof regarding movements in Lesotho to curb the spread of the pandemic (Webber Newdigate, 2020). And on 6 May 2020 it announced the “Public Health (COVID-19) Regulations”, 2020 (2) (Laws, 2020). The lockdown rules, among others, restricted movement, confined people at home, banned all public gatherings, limited business activity, closed informal markets, sealed off borders and allowed only essential services to operate. Access to basic services, including food security, nutrition, health, education, and housing was limited. As a result of diminished economic activity and rising budgetary demands, government’s capacity for social protection amid the pandemic also diminished, leaving the poor even more vulnerable. Overall, these measures, implemented with no or little regard of how the poor majority would survive, have worsened the predicament of women in the informal sector.

#### **3.1. The Closure of Informal Markets**

The closure of informal markets on the fallacious assumption that they are the major source of Coronavirus infections has increased poverty vulnerability levels among the poor who work in the informal sector. Here it is important to stress that, the claim that informal markets are the major cause of the spread of the pandemic is spurious and not based on empirical scientific evidence. As Madonsela (2020) aptly noted during her SA Women’s Day, one is more likely to get infected with the Coronavirus in enclosed places like malls, supermarkets, and shops than in open air informal markets. In fact, ac-

cording to Japanese researchers, one is 20 times more likely to be infected in an enclosed space than in an open space (Russian Television, RT, News, 2020, 7 June). Clearly, the closure of informal markets is not based on empirical scientific evidence, instead it reflects the balance of political power: informal traders are being victimized because they are too weak to influence public policy decisions. If open air is 20 times safer than enclosed spaces, then it is supermarkets that should be closed and/or go open air.

The most immediate effect of the closure of informal markets on women—employers and employees alike—in the informal sector is the loss of income and means for livelihood sustenance. For the majority of women in the informal sector who were already poor and eking out a marginal existence, the loss of income has had many other negative economic, social, psychological and political impacts. According to Hunter and Shand 2020, some of the poorest cannot afford masks and are reusing old ones or even picking up used ones from bins. The loss of earnings have made it difficult for many to earn money to buy food, pay rent and support a family (van Blerk et al., 2020). Put differently, closing the informal sector, the main source of income and livelihood sustenance for poor women, has undermined food security and increased poverty levels among families dependent on the informal sector.

### **3.2. Closure of Borders and Disruption of the Supply Chain**

Completely surrounded by SA, all goods in Lesotho's formal and informal sectors are imported from, or pass through, SA. Not surprisingly, the closure of the country's borders with only neighbor, South Africa, disrupted the goods supply chain which is central to informal trade in Lesotho. The disruption has led to acute shortages of goods, which in turn, have led to a skyrocketing of prices, thereby further undermining the capacity of poor informal traders to survive in these hard times. In a word, alarmist responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to many more pandemics of unemployment, poverty, crime, and gender-based violence among others.

### **3.3. 'Pandemics Within a Pandemic': The Unintended Consequences of Lockdown Measures**

Jokingly referred to as 'house arrest', restricted movement, limited public transport and confinement at home have had many unintended consequences for women in the informal sector. First, unemployment and

loss of income have led to failure to buy enough good food. Lack of food has led to malnutrition and poor health, which in turn, made people more vulnerable to the Coronavirus. As van Blerk et al. (2020) observes, “drastically reduced incomes also increase the risk of contracting the virus”, for the poorest cannot afford to buy single-use masks for daily use, and as a result some of them “use discarded masks, exposing themselves to the virus”.

Second, closing the informal sector, restricting movement, and forcing people to stay at home with no income traps women in abusive relationships and subjects them to increased gender-based violence. According to the UN, “since the outbreak of COVID-19, all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, had intensified, with shelters at capacity and helplines in some cases seeing a five-fold increase in calls” (Aljazeera News, 2020, 1 December). As the UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, noted: “Last year, 243 million women and girls experienced sexual or physical violence from their partner...This year... domestic violence, cyberbullying, child marriages, sexual harassment, and sexual violence...” have increased (Aljazeera News, 2020, 1 December). Quarantine measures are “creating conditions for increased murders of women by family members in the same home” (Aljazeera News, 2020, 1 December). In SA too, as president Ramaphosa (News Room, Afrika, 9 August 2020) noted during his address on South African Women’s Day: “We are facing two pandemics, the COVID-19 and the gender based violence against women”.

In response increasing cases of gender-based violence against women, on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, women around the world demonstrated to highlight “how lockdowns due to the coronavirus pandemic have left many trapped with their abusers and exposed to greater danger” (Aljazeera News, 2020, 1 December): Here it is important to stress that, although women are the majority of victims of gender-based violence, some men too suffer gender-based violence from women (Chingono, 1996). Whether it is women or men threatened with violence or when home becomes a battleground of violent conflict, we must never look the other way.

Third, poverty and staying at home have led to rise in early marriages for young women, who could otherwise be fending for themselves through informal enterprising.

Forth, the socio-psychological stress caused by a loss of income has also led to an increase in separations, divorces and gender-based violence (van Blerk et al., 2020), crime and prostitution.

Fifth, limited access to health facilities and staying at home has led to unwanted pregnancies, especially among teens and school girls. It also resulted in a rise in other treatable diseases, and even premature death. Restricted access to health services, such as provision of sanitary pads and contraceptive medicine, effectively amounts to a violation of fundamental human rights. Sixth, as hunger and poverty rob man of civility, there has been a rise in crime and armed robberies. Finally, and even more worrisome, the rising disaffection and frustration could catalyze political instability and ferment rebellion.

To sum up, lockdown restrictions have disrupted the food supply chain, resulting in an absurd situation where many farmers are losing millions of dollars from wasted food crops that cannot be delivered to the market, while many more urbanites starve because they cannot access food. The measures also have entailed deprivation of economic rights, freedom, friends, and support networks. Inevitably, such deprivation led to pauperization, despondency, depression and mental health problems as well as a rise in crime, gender violence, sex work, premature marriages, unwanted pregnancies and teenage pregnancies. Clearly, the good-intentioned lockdown policies have had many bad unintended consequences, and this demonstrates that, good intentioned policies alone are not enough: to be effective and efficient policy needs to be informed by sound theory and science.

#### **4. Policy Options: A Holistic and Integrated Framework**

Experts, hiding in their intellectual silos, are divided on the best approach to ensure health while creating wealth and to save lives while sustaining livelihoods amidst the pandemic. Reflecting the intellectual and professional parochialism of the age, the biologist, psychologist, medical doctor, economist, sociologist, and political scientist are all shouting out different messages and recommending different solutions for the same problem. When experts disagree, as amply demonstrated in Southern Africa, it is the poor who suffer most. Indeed, poor women in the informal sector have suffered immeasurably through the closure of informal markets and restricted access to essential goods and services as well as increased violence. Perhaps, the major lesson learned from this sad reality is the need for a holistic approach that builds synergies, and not contradictions, between policies being pursued by different government ministries and recommendations proffered by experts in different fields.

#### **4.1. Health or Wealth, Lives or Livelihoods?**

A holistic approach is essential precisely because health and wealth, lives and livelihoods are interdependent and mutually reinforce each other: we need wealth to buy health, and health to create wealth. We need money to buy food, live a healthy life style, build hospitals and produce vaccines. In fact, without food, healthy is so compromised that even the best drugs will not cure a simple ailment, while poor health makes economic enterprising difficult. The challenge is to avoid being like the fool who destroys his health trying to acquire wealth and ends up spending all the wealth trying in vain to buy back his health. Choosing between health and wealth, lives and livelihoods is thus a false dichotomy, for we need both simultaneously. Put differently, undermining wealth creation, through the closure of informal businesses in this case, in an endeavour to ensure health is short-sighted, for we need both. Apart from that, prolonged periods of economic depression, notes Ramayandi et al. (2020), “can inflict significant damage to an economy’s productive capacity—a feature of business cycle ...succinctly dubbed... ‘hysteresis’—and undermine its capacity to recover”. Policy therefore needs to be re-oriented to strike a delicate balance between saving lives and sustaining livelihoods by re-opening the economy, lest the Coronavirus, like HIV, is here to stay.

### **5. Empowering Women in the Informal Sector**

A gender-sensitive policy framework to empower women in the informal economy should start from two interrelated premises viz: gender inequality endangers not only the health and welfare of women, but also of their families and society and that society can neither be democratic nor develop if women, who constitute half its population, are denied their rights. According to Mounzar and Baldeh, 3 (2020), “investing in women generates higher developmental returns”, and this precisely because, “women reinvest up to 90% of their income in providing a social safety net for their families, with a positive impact on health, education, and nutrition”: when they extra income, most men either drink more, buy luxury goods or get more women partners. Clearly, “...women are the backbones of African economic and can be key drivers of transformation as we strive to build back better, more resilient societies” beyond the COVID-19 crisis (Mounzar & Baldeh,



2020, p. 4). Remarkably, the 2015 African Union (AU) summit's theme, 'Gender Agenda', was about empowering African women. This vision should provide the broader parameters within which gender-sensitive and pro-informal sector policies to assist female informal traders during these trying times, should be crafted. Equally important, such transformative policy should be based on empirical scientific evidence and stakeholder consultation.

### 5.1. Creative Destruction and Development

Recessions, such as the COVID-19 induced one, can unleash what the economist Joseph Schumpeter called the "gale of creative destruction" (Ramayandi et al., 2020). Creative destruction implies abandoning old ways of doing things when they do not work anymore and replacing them with new innovative systems adapted to the new times. It involves, "incessant process of restructuring and reorganization of businesses that revolutionizes the economy from within, through entries and exits of firms due to innovation" (Ramayandi et al., 2020). They add:

Spurred by competition and changing conditions, continuous product and process innovation procedures lead to new and more efficient production units replacing outdated ones, resulting in increased average productivity in the whole economy (Ramayandi et al., 2020).

Creation destruction can also occur because, "lower returns during an economic contraction can lead entrepreneurs and banks to put more effort into selecting investment projects—thus improving the allocation of talent, financial capital and other productive resources in the economy" (Ramayandi et al., 2020).

In addition, recessions can also have a creative destructive effect on the economy: "as less efficient businesses—often referred to as "zombie firms"—are more likely than others to go bankrupt during a crisis, providing room for more innovative ones to flourish" (Ramayandi et al., 2020). Finally, "when times are hard, creditors and lenders typically exert more pressure on business managers to use funds efficiently and effectively" (Ramayandi et al., 2020). Overall, these developments can boost an economy's productive capacity and accelerate economic development in the short, medium and long term.

## **6. Short-term, Medium-term and Long-term Strategies**

Short-term measures should aim to offer immediate relief to the suffering women in the informal sector. Such measures include: opening informal markets; social distancing measures at informal markets; mobile shops; and on-line shopping. Medium-term gender-sensitive and women empowering policies include, among others: changing laws, especially on property inheritance and ownership; offering financial strategic support to female informal traders; offering training in entrepreneurship; and promoting gender parity in power of positions, both in the public and private sectors as well as in families and schools. Long-term policies should seek, through science, technology, and artificial intelligence, to transform the economy and society by changing our production systems and consumption habits. In the short, medium and long-term, as the World Health Organization (WHO) Secretary General has advised (Al Jazeera News, 2020), lockdown should not be used as the primary tool for containing the pandemic. Instead, the main thrust should on testing, tracing, isolating and treatment.

### **6.1. Short-term Measures**

Short-term measures should aim at immediately alleviating the plight of female informal traders. Opening informal markets, introducing social distancing (I wonder why it's called 'social' and not 'physical' distancing) at informal markets, using tri-cycle mobile shops, and on-line shopping are some of the immediate measures that could be adopted.

### **6.2. Opening Informal Markets**

The closure of open air informal markets is not based on scientific evidence, but is instead based on illogical assumptions and reflects the power imbalances in society: informal traders are too weak and powerless to influence policy. As noted above, one is more likely to get infected by the Coronavirus in enclosed places, such as supermarkets, shops and malls, and 20 times less likely to get infected outside in open air than in an enclosed space. The point is, contrary to claims by officialdom, informal markets are not the major source of the spread of the virus. Informal markets should therefore be re-opened in a more controlled and systematic way to curb the spread of the Coronavirus.

### **6.3. Social Distance at Informal Markets**

One simple way of maintaining social distance at informal markets would be, for instance, to allot numbers from 1 to 7 to all informal traders at each market, and then allow them to come to the market only on the day of the week corresponding to their number. Alternatively, even and odd numbers could come to the market on different days. Any other method should ensure that informal trader gets an equal chance to be a market for a few days a week. That way, all informal traders would get a fair chance to earn at least some income and be able to put some food on the table. It must be stressed that, for the poor who share rented rooms, with sometimes up to five people in one room, physical distancing is a luxury that they can hardly afford and can only dream of.

### **6.4. Tri-Cycle Mobile Shops**

Another way of curbing the spread of the pandemic while keeping informal trade alive would be to introduce mobile shops, preferably in the form of zero-pollution tri-cycles. There are many benefits of using tri-cycle mobile shops. First, they are relatively easy and cheap to manufacture, and therefore affordable. Second, their manufacture, servicing and hiring out creates employment. Third, they are environment friendly for they cause zero pollution. Forth, food can easily be delivered at the consumer's doorstep. Fifth, tri-cycles can deliver food to places where there are neither roads nor shops.

### **6.5. On-line Shopping and Service Provision**

On-line shopping using social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, short message service and the internet can considerably reduce the risk of infection. This method of shopping is increasingly becoming popular in Zimbabwe, where companies, like Malaicha and Mukuru, are making brisk business delivering groceries from SA to Zimbabwe; small informal businesses which deliver a wide range of goods—vegetables, fruits, groceries and clothes—are flourishing in Harare. For on-line shopping to take root, there is need to invest in the information, communication and transportation infrastructure (ICTI). Such technology and infrastructure development should propel Africa's rapid growth and economic transformation, as in Kenya where the bulk of trade and economic transaction is effected through cellphones.

In addition to selling and shopping online, many services are now available on-line, and informal traders can venture into these to avoid the risks of sole reliance on one business. Services, which represent two-thirds of global economic output, “more than half of the world’s jobs and about a quarter of direct exports” (Antunes, 2020, p. 1), are key drivers of the economy and can be used strategically to transform society. As Antunes (2020, p. 1) observes, ICT services “can increase efficiency and reduce costs, promote the digital transformation of farming, manufacturing and other sectors”. Digitization of services offered by informal traders, can only help them weather the storm of the pandemic, but can also “help turn the tide by creating opportunities for greater income, food security, productivity, employment, investment and trade (Antunes, 2020, p. 1). Clearly, the ‘forced’ shift to a online shopping and the digital economy is one of the positive unintended consequences of COVID-19 pandemic. In a nutshell, in the short-term, there is need for such innovative approaches to help achieve the twin goals of creating wealth while ensuring health.

## **7. Medium-term Policy Options**

Medium-term solutions to the many demands of female informal traders involve crafting gender-sensitive laws, extending strategic financial support and offering them training and skills.

### **7.1. Changing Laws**

Law is an important instrument for promoting gender equality and empowering women. Yet as a protestor in Turkey on the International for the Elimination of Violence Against Women decried: “The law does not protect women as it should” (Aljazeera News, 2020, 1 December).

New gender-sensitive laws should be crafted to protect and promote women’s economic rights, which are the key to unlocking Lesotho’s future development. Economic “empowerment of women is the link between trade and development” (EmpowerWomen.org, 2015). As Joaquim Chissanno, the former president of Mozambique and co-chair of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), stressed:

Women and girls are Africa's greatest untapped resource, and it is they, not diamonds or oil and minerals, that will be the foundation for solid, sustainable and equitable progress. ...Expanding the freedoms, the education and opportunities for women hold the key to kick-starting inclusive economic growth (NA, 2015, p. 45).

Customary laws and traditional practices that discriminate against women, for example on inheritance and ownership of property, should be abolished for they limit women's potential.

## **7.2. Financial Strategic Support**

Without assistance in accessing capital, technical know-how and the application of knowledge-based practices, the full potential of women informal traders will not be realized, and they may be doomed to 'boondoggling', that is, producing bad goods, with bad methods and tools and making bad returns (Lipkin & Gillis, 2000). Strategic financial support could help women become financially independent, and thus reduce gender-based violence. In partnership with the private sector and donors, the government could establish a fund or trust, like the Swaziland Women Empowerment Trust (SWEET), which offers credit, training and skills to its members. The informal sector could also be taxed, and thus expand and boost government revenue. Others have suggested a feminist business model, which is a social, and not profitable, business with a human face, and which is sensitive to women's needs.

## **7.3. Training**

The limited training and skills in the informal sector, its major attraction to the poor and unskilled, is also its major shortcoming. Lack of skills means poor quality goods, customer service, productivity and marketing, all of which undermine the profit base of the enterprise. Thus, training in, for example, business management and production of certain household goods like soap, sanitizers, and dish washes would immensely empower female informal traders. As Dewar and Watson (1991, p. 183) point out, there should be "a careful disaggregation ... to determine exactly where the possibilities of expansion or contraction are likely to be", and where training can be offered.

#### **7.4. Promoting Gender Parity in Powerful Positions**

Promoting gender parity in powerful positions in cabinet, parliament and private business has been identified as one way by which women can be empowered. Empowering women involves, “increasing women’s representation in government, in the judiciary and other public and private institutions and their participation at the tables in peace negotiations” (NA, 2015, p. 45). The point is, since women account for over half Lesotho’s population, development would be incomplete, and even inconceivable, without gender equality. Critics note, however, that, even if they are on the table, women are often side-lined.

### **8. Long-term Holistic Policy Options**

A lasting solution to the multiple developmental challenges facing Southern Africa in general and Lesotho in particular, should address some of the root causes of fragility, vulnerability and poverty, which force many into the informal sector. These include, among others: dependence and marginalization in the international system; population explosion; youth’s dislike of agriculture and preference for informal dealing and entrepreneurship; climate change; and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to these challenges should be coordinated at a national, regional and global level and should involve participation and reform of some multilateral institutions, such as the UN and its agencies.

#### **8.1. Break Economic and Financial Dependency on the West**

Lesotho’s economic, financial, scientific and technical dependency on SA in particular and the West in general, severely limits its developmental policy options and room for economic manoeuvre, thus leaving its poor with no option other than join the informal sector. Through colonial era multilateral institutions like the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the West controls small states like Lesotho. [The idea of veto power of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—a privilege that the most powerful five states that won the Second World War selfishly accorded to themselves—exposes the hypocrisy of the powerful states

in preaching democracy to the weak while practicing the exact opposite through veto power]. Continental level efforts, through the African Development Bank, which is still a weak infant player in global economics, should be directed towards breaking the yoke of dependency, democratizing international institutions, restructuring the international trade system and establishing a more equitable global economic order. When that happens, Lesotho's chances of economic growth, and hence capacity to create jobs for informal traders, will increase.

### **8.2. From a Raw Resource-based Economy to A Production and Knowledge-based Economy**

Excessive reliance on the export of raw materials which, due to deteriorating terms of trade, fetch less and less on the international market and cause budget deficits, imposes considerable economic constraints to the poor 'Kingdom in the Sky'. The country needs to diversify its production base and move away from a resource based to a production and knowledge based economy. In other words, to expand the economy and create employment, it is necessary to rethink developmental priorities and focus on industrialization and building smart cities instead of celebrating agriculture as the backbone of the economy.

### **8.3. Poor Governance, 'Politics of the Belly' and Prebendal Politics**

Poor governance and corruption, what Bayart (1993) calls 'politics of the belly', deprive a country of opportunities economic growth and development, and create unemployment, poverty and ultimately the informal sector. The colonial state, designed to exploit and oppress the indigenous people, was inherited intact at independence, and its enormous power has been used by the ruling elite to consolidate its position and accumulate wealth. To achieve development and create employment for the poor in the informal sector, there is need for better systems of economic and political governance and strong institutions. In particular, the core principles of good governance—accountability, inclusivity, participation, transparency among others—should be upheld to achieve effective and effective, and efficient government and economic development.

#### **8.4. Population Explosion and Resource Wars**

Malthus' theory of 'exponential population growth and arithmetic food supply' (Malthus, 2013) was severely criticized by many. In Africa, notwithstanding the critical critics, the evidence of Malthus' core argument is glaring: not only is population growing faster than food production capacity, but also urban areas are increasingly getting congested and the informal is burgeoning. Rapid population growth stretches the budget for social welfare, education and health as well as increase unemployment, crime, violence, the demand for land and resource wars. It also intensifies the conflict between man and the wild life—snakes, lions and elephants etc.—as human settlement increasingly encroaches on their natural habit leaving them with nowhere to go and threatening them with extinction, which in turn, causes tremendous ecological disequilibria. In a nutshell, rapid population growth, in a context of diminishing output from overused and degraded land, not only force many into the informal sector, but is also a recipe for political explosion. To avert this, policies should be crafted to manage and reduce population growth.

#### **8.5. Managing the Impacts of Climate Change**

Humanity is waging war against nature through, for instance, air and water pollution, land degradation, deforestation, farming, hunting, building new cities/settlements/industries and mining, among others. These have led to global warming and climate change, which is characterized by erratic weather systems of drought, flooding, cyclones and storms, all of which contribute to human insecurity, which in turn, is forcing many into the informal sector. In a vicious circle, the activities of some informal traders, such as cutting trees for sell as firewood, farming in wetlands and river beds, and poaching, also contribute to ecological degradation, global warming and climate change. To end this self-defeating war, better ways of producing food to feed a growing population without destroying the planet must be discovered. Agriculture needs to be revolutionized in order to produce enough food to feed everyone while saving the planet, keeping the climate cool, and limiting the spread of COVID-19.



### **8.6. Revolutionizing Agriculture and Food Production**

To combat the effects of climate change, it is vital to change the current system of producing food and our eating habits, both of which are not sustainable and are reducing land's capacity to sustain life. For example, agriculture currently uses one third of fresh water and contributes to about a quarter of greenhouse gases emissions, and "of all the greenhouses gases, two very deadly ones come from animal agriculture—nitrous oxide and methane" (Gray, 2019). Therefore, agriculture needs to be revolutionized through, for instance: new ways of farming; new types of farms; hybridization and genetically modified foods (GMF); and changing eating habits.

New ways of farming could involve transitioning from chemicals-based farming to organic farming, from ploughing to zero tillage, and from meat-farming to cricket farming, as in China. Agriculture could also be revolutionized through introducing new types of farms: houses that have veggie gardens at roof tops, balconies and indoors; and high-rise storey car park style farms that harvest water from the top floor to water crops in all the other floors. Such 'vertical farms', which have been introduced in urban areas in Sweden, and which involve growing crops on house and building walls (Al Jazeera News, 6 July 2020), would certainly de-congest the informal sector by offering alternative income opportunities.

Another way of de-congesting the informal sector and ensuring food security would be to build smart cities across the country. As people move from squatter camps and shanty towns to the new planned smart cities, service delivery, population management and census should improve too. The global movement in urban farming should therefore be supported, through for instance, urban council by-laws permitting, managing and taxing it, as well as by harnessing advances in science and technology. In short, such innovative farming, food production and efficient land use, will not only decongest the informal sector, but will also, and even more important, but will also help better absorption of greenhouse gases and slower global warming and climate.

### **8.7. Changing Eating Habits**

Our eating habits, and especially our voracious appetites for meat, are a major factor in undermining food security and driving many into

the informal sector. Necessarily, these eating habits ought to change and be aligned with the demands of climate change, ailing economies, exponentially growing populations and Coronavirus. Since meat production in general, and beef production in particular, is more harmful to the environment than vegetable farming (see above), there is need to move from meat-based diet to vegetables—Impossible Foods Company is leading the way in plant-based meat burgers (Al Jazeera News, 6 July, 2020). Also, we need to desist from wasteful consumption and throwing food away.

To recap, to effectively contain the spread of the Coronavirus and to deal with the many challenges facing Southern Africa in general and Lesotho in particular, there is need for a paradigm shift from a patriarchal and formalistic bias to a holistic gender sensitive approach that optimizes the potential benefits of gender equality and informal sector entrepreneurship. Optimizing the developmental potential of the informal sector requires reconciling and harmonizing, through policy, the needs of informal traders and the interests of the state in the short, medium and long term. As they reproduce themselves on an extended scale, these nascent capitalists without capital could graduate into formal entrepreneurs, and make greater contribution to human security, national development, and peace and stability. In a nutshell, the challenges presented to the informal sector by the pandemic require a sensitive policy that treads a delicate balance between saving lives and sustaining livelihoods.

## 9. Summary

As shown above, the Coronavirus has negatively affected food production, distribution and food security, especially in poorly governed states of Southern Africa. In particular, the closure of informal markets, the disruption of the goods supply chain, restricted movement, and lack of assistance, have been devastating for women in the informal sector. The effects of the pandemic have been compounded by the alarmist responses adopted by panicky authorities, which are probably more damaging than the pandemic itself.

Economically, the lockdown restrictions have disrupted production and distribution, leading to huge losses and even collapse of formal and informal businesses, rising unemployment and shortages of essential goods and services. Politically, the restrictions have shrunk the political space and led to the loss of personal liberties. Socially the restrictions

have led to a spike in gender-based violence, divorces/separations, sex work, early marriages, unwanted pregnancies and babies. Psychologically, cases of depression, mental illness and suicides have increased. The pandemic has also amplified the effects of climate change and exposed weaknesses in the global food supply chain in general, and the vulnerabilities of city dwellers in particular. Overall, the restrictions have led to a deterioration of the standards of living and quality of life, the loss of livelihoods and lives, and threaten an economic recession of unprecedented proportions in peace time.

Since the majority of economically active women are in the informal sector, society cannot develop or be democratic if these women do not have full economic and political rights. Therefore, policy must aim to give a positive form to efforts of female informal traders so that they can survive, thrive and even prosper during and after COVID-19. The challenge, therefore, is to optimize the benefits of the informal sector and strengthen female informal traders while curbing the spread of the pandemic.

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had catastrophic consequences for poor women in the informal sector of Lesotho. Marginalized by traditional patriarchal practices, the state, and the Bretton-Woods institutions, and now by the gender-insensitive alarmist responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, female informal traders are doing something to solve these problems. These capitalists without capital be praised not just for their resilience, but also for providing essential goods and services at the consumer's doorstep and at convenient times during these trying times.

As we seen, alarmist government responses are not only undermining these resilient entrepreneurs' efforts but are also spreading paranoia and consequently compounding the problem instead of solving it. To effectively address the many and multi-layered challenges posed by the pandemic for female informal traders there is need for a holistic and gender sensitive approach that aims to save lives, sustain livelihoods and promote sustainable development. The challenges of the new times demand that, informal traders and the nation as a whole be flexible, innovative, embrace technology, celebrate uncertainty, and avoid over-reliance on one product/service. Specifically, breaking the vicious circle of poverty demands a fundamental change in thinking about informal traders, from viewing them

as a 'nuisance' to acknowledging them as entrepreneurs with a potential to contribute to national development and combating the COVID-19 pandemic. In conclusion, coronavirus presents an opportunity to change the way we live, our values and practices and to transit to a new civilization based on different socio-economic and political arrangements and ethos.

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## **Parties Politics and Gender Preference in Nigerian Legislature**

**ABSTRACT.** Law makers on the legislative houses in Nigeria are elected by a party members and the electorate. The members of legislative chambers are constituted through competitive periodic elections to represent different interests recognised by the electorate. Interest desiring representation has included gender, environment, economic, religion, political party, ethnic, and many more. While there are diverse interests requiring representation, the issue of gender representation forms the basic interest of the study. The reason is due to the observed predominance of males over females in gender representation in elective governmental positions while the constitution allows for equal opportunity in democracy. The study appraised the role of political parties in gender representation on the Nigerian legislative chambers and gender preference by the electorate for political parties' performance in legislative elections was analysed. The study adopted a qualitative research design in which data were sourced from secondary sources. The study revealed that political parties do not have any reservation for gender in the presentation of candidates for election. The study noted that that the choice of voter is beyond gender. The study concludes that gender issues in elections may be one of the many factors influencing voter's decisions.

**KEYWORDS:** democracy, election, gender preference, legislature, party politics, Senate, State Assembly

### **Introduction**

Evidence in the extant literature on democratic governance has confirmed the continued relevance of political parties to the operation of democracy and access to political positions in the legislative and executive arm of government (Lapalombara & Weiner, 1966; Mair, Müller, & Plasser, 2004; Webb & White, 2007; Heller & Mershon, 2009; Innocent, Yusoff, & Rajanthiran, 2017). Political parties are the platform for the training of potential candidates. Parties' present candidates for elections under their

label, canvass for vote for the candidate from the electorates, and after elections, the people delegate the decision making power of the state to the political party and its candidate in power (Heller & Mershon, 2009; O'Neil, 2010). Hence, representation in government is a function of the choice of the electorate and government behaviour (Gerber & Lewis, 2004).

The conduct of government in a democratic state is by political parties and the free choice of the electorate. Interests are articulated and aggregated by political parties; mobilisation of the people to participate in elections and governance is done by political parties, and democratic government is party politics. Newton and Van Deth (2005, p. 221) supported the above position that democracy is political party driven, candidate competition in elections; decision making in the legislature is party activity. The best description of government is a party activity. Political party activities are felt in all ramifications of the state because political parties reconcile members of the state regardless of factors segregating the state such as gender, ethnic group, religions, region, interest, and so on. Patterson (2002) argued that political parties direct and strengthen the peoples' vote on various issues of governance.

The enacted Nigerian (1999) constitution, in section 1 (2), forbids the existence of government in the country and/or any of the unit in a way contrary to the spirit and letter of the law (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). The legitimate means of assumption and exercise of legislative and executive functions are either by election or appointment. To be elected to a political position, a political party is required to nominate a candidate to contest in the scheduled election. The candidate with the highest number of votes (that is simple majority electoral system) is declared a winner and presented with a certificate of return by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Thus, the candidate is returned as a member of government representing different interest such as the elected position in government, gender, political party, religion, ethnic group, and so on.

Nigerian constitution (1999) while allowing for a federal legislative house equally allows for the state legislature. The federal legislative house (also known as the National Assembly) is a bicameral house with the Senate (as the upper house) and the House of Representatives (as the lower chamber). Through Section 90, the States' House of Assembly was created by the constitution such that each state of the federation has a House of Assembly (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). Section 91 described the



composition of the Assembly in States such that member ranges between twenty-four (24) and forty (40) (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). Thus, the numbers of seats are expected to be allocated with the aim of reflecting equality in the population attribute of the areas within the state. How do political parties ensure gender representation in legislative houses? Does electorate gender preference influence the performance of political parties in a legislative election? The study described the role of political parties in gender representation in legislative houses in Nigeria and analysed gender preference by the electorate for political parties' performance in legislative elections in Nigeria.

The study in accomplishing its purpose was organised into five sections. The study was introduced through section one. Relevant literatures reviewed in section two. Section three described the methodology of the study. Section four presented and analysed data and discussed findings. The study was concluded in section five.

## **1. Concept of Political Party**

The relevance of political parties to democracy has encouraged a description of what the organisation should entail. With the absence of a generally accepted definition, scholars have explained the term in the context of their studies. Lapalombara and Weiner (1966, p. 6) defined political parties based on the expected attribute they must exhibit and differentiating them from pressure groups. Thus, a political party as an organisation must maintain a permanent structure and its existence must not be determined by the tenure of its current leaders, its presence must be at the local level and there is the need for established means of communication, the determination of the leader to hold decision collectively, and the strategy by the association to recruit members to support the manifestoes. It can be presumed from the definition that a political party must be a stable organisation (not changing with leaders), have a broad based member, be an involved member in the decision and running of the organisation, and seek members to support its manifesto so as to control the machinery of government.

Sartori (1976, p. 64) defined a political party as a political group that presents candidates for public office through elections. This implies that a political party must have ambition as to the sponsoring of a candidate

for political position. This differentiated political party from the political association. However, the definition of a political party as any party that sponsor a candidate for election may be expanded to include pressure groups. Pressure groups may assume political party function overnight as they may sponsor a candidate for the position of choice and win. Patterson (2002, p. 214) defined political parties as an on-going coalition of interests joined together in an effort to get its candidates for public office elected under a common label. The definition pointed to the fact that a political party will continue to aggregate diverse interests in the accomplishment of its end, which is the contest of election and controlling of the government machinery. Thus, Patterson (2002, p. 214) noted that a political party must have a member who identified with it, hence party operates as a candidate (contesting an election) and an organisation (maintain staff, member, and so on). A political party as a voluntary group of people with shared perspectives on the ways of organising government and controlling the states. Thus, political parties are objective or goal directed. The goal of a political party is on contesting and winning an election with the aim of directing the institutions of government.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (1999) defined a Political party as an association which as registered its constitution (and any alteration), name and address of its national office, headquarter of operation (situated in Abuja) with the electoral commission, operate open membership for all member of the country (without restrictions on religion, sex, and so on), and whose name and logo does not bear semblance with any religion, ethnic group, etc. Thus, a political party must be an association with the aim of unifying the state, promoting democratic principles and mobilising the people to participate in governance.

Ikelegbe (2013, p. 7) explained political party as a goal oriented group which aggregates perspective and opinion, and serves as a bridge between the ruled and the ruler. This implies that the goal of a political party is beyond the presentation of a candidate for election. The group is supposed to act as a linkage between the people and the government. Hence, the issue of representation is influenced by factors.

In this study, a political party is defined as an association of people with a shared political interest in contesting and an winning election, under a registered umbrella (recognised by the electoral commission) with the aim of forming the government.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Gender Representation in Nigerian Politics

The participation of gender in Nigerian politics has attracted the attention of scholars' overtime. Agbalajobi (2010), Nelson (2012), Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014), Anyalebechi (2016), Pogason (nd), Sibani (2017), and Adefemi and Agunbiade (2019) are some of the scholars selected within the space of a decade on issues of gender representation or participation in politics. Agbalajobi (2010) for instance noted that women enjoy demographic strength in that they constitute more than half of the population, perform roles including economic, social, maternal, and so on. It was argued in the study that the reasons for poor representation or marginalisation of women in politics with cultural, religious, traditional, and related practices. The study concluded that while issue of involvement of women in Nigerian politics is an important the issue, poor representation of women in politics has promoted poor representation of women in Nigerian politics.

Nelson (2012) examined factors responsible for the poor participation of women in Nigerian politics. The study identified factors such as the socio-economic condition of women, cultural beliefs, and state centred quota system to limit the involvement of women, violence, and so on. The study suggested a radical approach to the mobilisation of women from the grassroots level. Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014) identified cultural practice, which has become a systemic issue, has been responsible for poor representation of women in politics despite the chance for all to take part in politics. Anyalebechi (2016) supported the existing view in the literature concerning the low representation of women in politics with an attempt to proffer a solution to the gender problem in the country.

Pogason (nd) focusing on the 2011 general election in Nigeria against the patriarchal sway and the acceptance of the equal status of women with men. It was revealed that women involvement in politics through election runs contrary to the constitution. Thus, it was suggested that the illegality must be reviewed gradually through dialogue between men and women leaders, increased support for women involved in politics, the inclusion of the gender quota system, and so on. Sibani (2017) equally agreed that the discriminatory cultural practice with regard to gender issues is responsible for the preference of males over females in politics.

Adefemi and Agunbiade (2019) evaluated women law maker in state house of assembly of Ekiti, Lagos, and Oyo with the intention of identifying their problems, experiences, and contributions. The problem confronting women legislators has ranged from marital issues, inadequate education and many more. The study revealed that women law makers take an active part in legislative activities such as debate, sponsoring bills, and many more. Thus, female law makers have contributed to national development and the service of their respected constituencies.

## **2.2. Voters Choice (of Party and Candidate) in Elections**

In democracies, there is a raising concern on factors responsible for candidate choice or preference by the electorate (Kurtbaşı, 2015). The effort at understanding the reasons for a candidate or party preference in elections encouraged diverse studies; Guber (2001), Singh (2009), Kurtbaşı (2015), Dassonneville (2016), Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto (2018), Ogbe (2018), and Chukwujekwu and Ezeabasili (2019) are some of the extant work which has systematically addressed the issues of voters preference in an election. Guber (2001) studied the significance of environmental issues to elections in the United State of America given the raising concern on the issues. Using information from the National Election Study (NES), the implications of environmental concern on the attitude of American electorate choice of political parties and their candidates was examined. The study concluded that environmental concern is not a major influence in the electorate choice of candidate and political party in an election. Singh (2009) interrogated politics and voter's preference in Australia through the empirical spatial analysis. The study revealed that the electorate and political parties are organized along with a unidimensional socio-economic range. Thus, personal factors inclusive of party identification, ideology, geographical location of voter's, and many more informed voter's choices in elections.

Omodia (2010) studied the place of political parties in party politics in the Nigerian fourth republic and discussed the problem of a political party. The study adopted historical method of analysis to explain how the problem of malfunctioning of political parties has ensued. The study revealed that the gap between the operation of political parties resulted from the party elite and it was a deliberate mechanism to manipulate the masses in accomplishing their interest.

Kurtbaşı (2015) using surveying method of data collection evaluated voter preferences in a local election (conducted on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March,

2009) and observed that out of any ten electorates selected, about one was not concerned with the essence of vote casting. Prior to the elections, about 48.4% of the electorate did little or no findings on the candidate, manifesto, or political parties. On the possibility of winning elections, it was observed that out of every four voters selected, about one stated that their preference to cast their ballot in favour of the winning candidate. 28.7% of the electorate identified the factor influencing their decision with the ideology of the candidate. Increase in the level of income, education, etc. equally impacts level of participation in political party activities and involvement in elections. Dassonneville (2016) investigated the relevance of short-term factors as a major determinant of voters' choice in elections. The study made use of British election panels of 1992–1997, 1997–2001, and 2005–2010 and revealed that short term factors especially economic issues pose sway on vote choice of voters'. Thus, short term factors are gaining more relevance to the understanding of voter's choices in elections.

Olaiya (2016) argued the peculiarity of the party system to political practice and development in Nigeria, described the origin and peculiar nature of political parties in Nigeria. The study gathered data from secondary sources and noted that despite the practice of multiparty system in Nigeria, regional influence has largely been promoted through the formation and operation of political party. Gbolahan and Duruji (2017) examined the challenges of multi-party system in Nigeria's fourth republic and appraised the importance of multi-party system to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Data were harvested from secondary sources. Revelation made by the study identified problem of multi-party system to include the existence of ethnic politics, lack of party ideology, the place of godfather in candidate selection, mass poverty resulting from high rate of unemployment, party defection, and politics as investment by the elite, etc.

Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto (2018) using a conjoint survey experiment studied the Japan's mixed-member bicameral system. While agreeing to the fact that idiosyncratic attribute of politician remains a key factor in election outcomes, the study inquired the most relevant attributes shaping voters behaviour towards choice candidate and also, aim at establishing if the attribute varies across the electoral system. The study revealed that qualities of choice by the electorate are not consistent with the features of actual politicians. The study equally established that the choices of voters do not vary across the electoral system whereas the observed feature of politicians differs across systems. The finding established the importance

of factors beyond voters' choice. Ogbe (2018) examined the practice of candidate imposition in Nigeria democracy using observation and secondary data collection methods to source for information with and analyse the study with liberal theory of representation. The study made revelation that the imposition of candidates constitutes a threat to democracy in the country as the choices of the people are denied them. The implication of the practice is that people are easily lured into violence.

Chukwujekwu and Ezeabasili (2019) examined party politics and the practice of internal democracy (using the People's Democratic Party (PDP) Anambra chapter as a case study) adopting descriptive survey design and to source for data, and the analyses of data was done through simple percentage and chi-square. In the study, they find out that there is a link between internal democracy and godfatherism. Hence, internal democracy which is supposed to serve as a means of participation in politics is hijacked by the elite. Candidate in politics may not necessary be choice of the people. Ogunkorode (2019) advocated independent candidacy as a measure to curb the problem of partisan politics. The goal of the study was to identify issues of multi-party and examined the need for independent candidature in Nigeria. Information was sourced from primary and secondary materials. The argument put forth by the study was that in curbing the challenges of multi-party, there is a need for independent candidature.

### **3. Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative research design in which information was systematically sourced from secondary sources on party politics and gender preference in the State House of Assembly (SHoA) and the Nigerian Senate. Using the (2019) SHoA election results and the Nigerian Senate, six States were randomly selected using stratified random sampling; Nigeria was divided into six geo-political zones, namely; North East, North Central, North West, South East, South-South, and South West. From each zone, a state was selected through simple random sampling. Hence, Taraba (North East), Kwara (North Central), Katsina (North West), Abia (South East), Edo (South South), and Ekiti (South West) were states selected from each geo-political zone in the country. The composition of the Nigeria senate (through the 2019) senatorial election was then compared with the State House of Legislature selected. Content analysis was adopted in the explanation of data presentation and discussion of findings.



Figure. Map of Nigeria showing the grouping of Nigerian state along six geo-political zones

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of analysis adopted for the study was group theory developed by Arthur F. Bentley in the book titled 'The Process of Government' published in 1908. The formation of any group is based on interests. Political party is a group formed based on the interest of contesting for political power in a democratic state. Contest for candidacy within a political party for election entails diverse interests including gender, candidacy, nation building, and personal urge for political power, among others. To this extent, subgroups are formed within a political party based on societal reality such as gender issues, urge for political power, ethnic, environment, job creation, economic programme, educational policies, etc. and interests compete in the emergence of a political party candidate in any election. Also, there exists youth wing, women wing, contestants' faction/support, and so on within a political party. These subgroups influence the decision of political parties on the choice of candidate. The reality within any political party must conform to societal realities. The consequent con-



test for political power in the state is done by political power, which are the lawful groups allotted with such functions in any democratic state. The study relies on this theory to explain the subject matter of the study.

## **5. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

Information's gathered based on the stated objectives', and through sources stated in methodology is presented and discussed in this section.

### **5.1. State of Political Party Candidacy in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

The conduct of political parties' activities in Nigeria is guided by the provisions of the (1999) constitution with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as the execution agency. The (1999) constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in Section 222 (C-D) for instance, while highlighting the requirement for the formation of political parties did emphasised the registration of the constitution (and alteration) of a political party with the Electoral Commission as part of the criteria for the creation of a party. As such, it sufficed to argue that the constitution of a political party serves as a guideline for understanding its activities. Party constitution makes provision that is consistent with the provision of the constitution (of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). Items including tenure of office for party executive, criteria for candidacy, and many more are contained and defined in the (party) constitution.

The enacted Electoral Act (of 2010) stipulated that the process of selection of a candidate on a political party platform. In Section 87, the Act required all political parties to imbibe internal democracy in the nomination of candidates; the process of nomination of a candidate may either be by direct or indirect primary (FGN, 2010). The adoption of the direct and indirect primary requires that party members are equally treated and allowed the same right in the process of presentation of a candidate for election, thus, the choice of the people must reflect.

The All-Progressive Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won majorities of the positions on the Nigerian Senate and the State House of Assembly. Thus, the constitution of APC and PDP were analysed. APC and PDP constitution supported internal democracy as a prerequisite for the selection of the party's candidate for any election. The Article 20 of the APC's constitution for instance demanded that all party positions and



nomination for elections shall be by democratic means. Party members are required to take part in the selection of party member. However, it is necessary to take cognisance of the fact that the constitutions neither made special reservation for female nor male party members as contestants.

Table 1. Party Performance in State House of Assembly Elections in Selected States in Nigeria

S/N	State	Geo-Political Zone	Size of State Legislative House of Assembly	People Democratic Party (PDP): Seat won	All Progressive Congress (APC): Seats won	All Progressive Grand Alliance: Seat Won
1	Taraba (see Appendix A)	North-East	14	09	05	–
2	Kwara (See Appendix B)	North-Central	23	–	23	–
3	Katsina (See Appendix C)	North-West	22	–	22	–
4	Abia (See Appendix D)	South-East	24	19	02	03
5	Edo (See Appendix E)	South-South	24	–	24	–
6	Ekiti (See Appendix F)	South-West	26	–	26	–

Compiled by the Authors

Table 2. Political Parties performance the Nigerian Ninth Senate (2019–2023)  
(See Appendix G for details)

S/N	Political Party	Number of Seats won
1	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	39
2	All Progressive Congress (APC)	64
3	YPP	1
4	Vacant Seat	

Compiled by the Authors

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) constitution, in Chapter 8 Section 50, required that all elections for nomination of candidate shall be democratic. The member of the party must be involved in the process of the election. It suffices to note from the chapter that there was no special

provision or consideration for female or male party member for any elective position. It can be argued that based on the above result of gender representation and party constitution that internal democracy is the means for candidacy of political party and this is the manifestation of party members' and the electorate choice as required in democracies.

## 5.2. Gender preference and Political parties' performance in Legislative Elections in Nigeria

The preferences for gender in elections in legislative house elections in Nigeria legislative elections are summed below.

Table 3. Gender Distributions in State House of Assembly in Selected States in Nigeria

S/N	State	Geo-Political Zone	Political Parties					
			Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)		All Progressive Congress (APC)		All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Taraba	North-East	08	–	05	–	–	–
2	Kwara	North-Central	–	–	23	–	–	–
3	Katsina	North-West	–	–	22	–	–	–
4	Abia	South-East	19	–	02	–	03	–
5	Edo	South-South	–	–	24	–		
6	Ekiti	South-West	–	–	23	03	–	–

Compiled by the Authors

Table 4. Political Parties on the Nigerian Ninth Senate (2019–2023)  
(See Appendix G for details)

S/N	Political Party	Number of Seats won	Gender distribution of Seats won		Percentage of Seats won by political parties (109)
			Male	Female	
1	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	44	38	6	40.37
2	All Progressive Congress (APC)	64	62	2	58.71
3	YPP	1	1	–	0.92

Compiled by the Authors

## 6. Discussion of Findings

The presentation of candidates for the elective position is the obligation of political party in any democratic state. In Nigeria, the (1999) constitution confirmed this and the presentation of candidates for political position remains the responsibilities of political parties. The flag bearer for an elective position is expected to conform to the rule of internal democracy as declared in section 87 of the Electoral Act (2010). However, studies such as Gbolahan and Duruji (2017) had identified the problem of multi-party system to include the existence of ethnic politics, lack of party ideology, the place of godfather in candidate selection, mass poverty resulting from a high rate of unemployment, party defection, and politics as investment by the elite, etc. Ogbe (2018) studies on the practice of candidate imposition in Nigeria democracy and argued that the implication of such practice is that people are easily lured into violence. Chukwujekwu and Ezeabasili (2019) noted that there is a link between internal democracy and godfatherism in the selection of candidate in a political party and stated that candidate in politics may not necessary be choice of the people. Ogunkorode (2019) advocated for independent candidature in elections in Nigeria to curb the practice of candidate imposition. Contrary to the operation of internal democracy as a means of choosing candidates, other factors as the imposition of candidate by party elite, and so on are issues to contend with. There is the need to look beyond the neutrality of primary election as a major determinant of candidate selection in democracy, the presentation of either gender may be influenced by party elite among others.

The study noted that there is a high preference for the male gender in legislative elections in Nigeria. While the studies by Agbalajobi (2010), Nelson (2012), Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014) had blamed the poor representation or marginalisation of women in politics on cultural, religion, traditional, and related practices in Nigeria, thereby confirming the findings, Singh (2009) had argued that personal factors inclusive of party identification, ideology, geographical location of voter's, and many more informed voter's choice in elections. Dassonneville (2016) revealed that short term factors especially economic issues poses sway on choice of voters. Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto (2018) established the importance of factors beyond voter's choice. Studies by Singh (2009), Dassonneville (2016) and Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto (2018) refuted the findings of Agbalajobi, Nelson, Awofeso and Odeyemi. Rather, several factors other than culture

were identified as a factor influencing voter's choice in election. Cultural factor maybe one of the several factors influencing voters' decisions in elections.

## Conclusion

The study concluded that Nigeria has a democratic state has not requirements set aside for the consideration of gender representation in the legislature rather elections are held on the principle of interest and winning determined through a simple majority. The view that culture has impacted female preference in the election was accompanied as one of the numerous factors that determine elections outcome.

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## Appendix A

**Geo-Political Zone:** North East

**State:** Taraba State House of Assembly

**Source:** <https://tarabastate.gov.ng/state-hon-members/>

S/N	Name	Constituency	Political Party	Gender
1.	Rt. Hon. Mark B. Useni, PhD	Takum II	(PDP)	Male
2.	Hon. John K. Bonzena	Zing	(PDP)	Male
3.	Hon. Charles Ishaku Audu	Kurmi	(PDP)	Male
4.	Hon. Charles Maijankai	Karim I	(PDP)	Male
5.	Hon. Edward G. Baraya	Karim II	(PDP)	Male
6.	Hon. Hamman'adama B. Abdullahi	Bali	(PDP)	Male
7.	Hon. Tanko Maikarfi	Gassol I	(PDP)	Male
8.	Hon. Pius Sabo	Wukari I	(PDP)	Male
9.	Hon. Saleh Sa'ad	Jalingo II	(APC)	Male
10.	Hon. Barr. Mohammed Bashir	Ngoroje	(APC)	Male
11.	Hon. Umar Yusuf	Gashaka	(APC)	Male
12.	Hon. Nura Dantsoho	Jalingo I	(APC)	Male
13.	Hon. A. A. Gambo Mubarak	Bali	(APC)	Male
14.	(Unknown)	Takum	(PDP)	

## Appendix B

**Geo-Political Zone:** North Central

**State:** Kwara state house of assembly member

**Source:** [http://www.kwha.gov.ng/KWHA/Pages/\\_1stlegislatureMember](http://www.kwha.gov.ng/KWHA/Pages/_1stlegislatureMember)

S/N	Name	Gender	Constituency	Political Party
1.	Rt. Hon. Engr. Yakubu D. Salihu	Male	Ilesha/Gwanara	APC
2.	Hon. Adetiba-Olanrewaju R. O.	Male	(Oke-Ero)	APC
3.	Hon. Magaji Abubakar O.	Male	(Ilorin Central)	APC
4.	Hon. Yusuf Atoyebi Musa	Male	(Odo-Ogun)	APC
5.	Hon. Bello John Olarewaju	Male	(Lanwa/Ejidongari)	APC
6.	Hon. Jimoh Ali Yusuf	Male	(Ilorin East)	APC
7.	Hon. Owolabi Olatunde Razaq	Male	(Share/Oke-Ode)	APC
8.	Hon. Babatunde A. Paku	Male	(Ipaye/Malete/Oloru)	APC
9.	Hon. Aliyu Wahab Opakunle	Male	(Afon)	APC

10.	Hon. Abdulgafar Olayemi Ayinla	Male	(Ilorin North West)	APC
11.	Hon. Awodiji Omatayo Felix.	Male	(Irepodun)	APC
12.	Hon. Ojo Olayiwola Oyeboode .	Male	(Oke-Ero)	APC
13.	Hon. Yusuf A. Gbenga	Male	(Essa/Shawo/ Igboidun)	APC
14.	Hon. Ahmed Saidu Baba	Male	(Adena/Bani/Gwaria)	APC
15.	Hon. Awolola Olumide Ayokunle	Male	(Isin)	APC
16.	Hon. Abdullahi H. Danbaba	Male	(Kaiama/Wajibe/)	APC
17.	Hon. Mohammed B. Salihu	Male	(Okuta/Yashikira)	APC
18.	Hon. Ganiyu F, Salahu	Male	(Omupo)	APC
19.	Hon. Ndamusa M, Guyegi	Male	Edu	APC
20.	Hon. Ambali Olatunji Ibrahim	Male	(Owode/Onire)	APC
21.	Hon. Popoola S. A.	Male	(Balogun/Ojomu)	APC
22.	Hon. Abolarin Ganiyu Gabriel	Male	(Ekiti)	APC
23.	Hon. Hassan Abdulazeez Elewu	Male	(Ilorin South)	APC

## Appendix C

**Geo-Political Zone:** North West

**State:** Katsina State House of Assembly

**Sources:** <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/list-of-new-members-of-katsina-state-house-of-assembly.html>  
<https://www.von.gov.ng/apc-clears-all-state-assembly-seats-in-katsina/>

S/N	Name	Party	Constituency	Sex
1.	Ali Abu Albaba	APC	Katsina	Male
2.	Hon. Aliyu Sabi'u Muduru	APC	Mani.	Male
3.	Hon. Tukur Shagumba	APC	Batagarawa	Male
4.	Hon Mustapha Sani Bello	APC	Mashi	Male
5.	Hon Muhammad Kwamanda	APC	Dutsin-ma	Male
6.	Hon Abdul Jalal Runka	APC	Safana	Male
7.	Hon Nasir yahaya	APC	Daura	Male
8.	Hon Musa Nuhu Gafiya	APC	Kaita	Male
9.	Hon Abubakar Suleiman Tunas	APC	Ingawa	Male
10.	Hon Mustapha Rabe Musa	APC	Maiadua	Male
11.	Hon Lawal H Yaro	APC	Musawa	Male
12.	Hon Aminu Ibrahim Saeed	APC	Malumfashi	Male
13.	Hon Sani Lawal	APC	Baure	Male



14.	Hon Abubakar Muhammad	APC	Funtua	Male
15.	Hon Abubakar Suleiman	APC	Rimi	Male
16.	Hon Hamza Rimaye	APC	Kankia	Male
17.	Hon Ya'u Garba	APC	Kankara	Male
18.	Lawal Isa Kuraye	APC	Charanchi	Male
19.	Haruna Aliyu Yamel	APC	Dutsi	Male
20.	Abubakar Muhammad	APC	Funtua	Male
21.	Tasi'u Musa Maigari	APC	Zango	Male
22.	Shehu Dalhatu Tafoki	APC	Faskari	Male

## Appendix D

**Geo-Political Zone:** South East

**State:** Abia State House of Assembly Composition as at 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2019

**Source:** <https://puoreports.ng/2019/05/11/exclusive-meet-24-abia-as-sembly-lawmakers-elect-2019/>

S/N	Name	Constituency	Sex	Political party
1.	Hon. Emmanuel C. Ndubuisi	Bende South	Male	PDP
2.	Hon. Stanley Nwabuisi	Ikwuano	Male	PDP
3.	Hon. Onwusibe Ginger	Isiala Ngwa North	Male	PDP
4.	Hon. Chikwendu Kalu	Isiala Ngwa South	Male	PDP
5.	Hon. Solomon Akpulonu U	Obingwa East	Male	PDP
6.	Hon. Thomas Nkoro A.C.	Obingwa West	Male	PDP
7.	Hon. Mandela Egwurunu Obasi	Ohafia North	Male	PDP
8.	Hon. Ifeanyi Uchendu	Ohafia South	Male	PDP
9.	Rt Hon. Kennedy Njoku	Osisioma North	Male	PDP
10.	Hon. Nnamdi Allen	Osisioma South	Male	PDP
11.	Hon. Okey Igwe	Umunneochi	Male	PDP
12.	Hon. Munachim I. Alozie	Ugwunaagbo	Male	PDP
13.	Hon. Paul Taribo	Ukwa East	Male	PDP
14.	Hon. Godwin Adiele	Ukwa West	Male	PDP
15.	Hon. Chukwudi Apugo	Umuahia East	Male	PDP
16.	Hon. Kelechi Onuzuruike	Umuahia North	Male	PDP
17.	Hon. Engr. Chinedum Orji	Umuahia Central	Male	PDP
18.	Hon. Jeremiah Ogonnaya Uzosike	Umuahia South	Male	PDP
19.	Hon. Uzodike Aaron	Aba North	Male	PDP

20.	Hon. Chukwu Chijioke	Bende North	Male	APC
21.	Hon. Emeka Okoroafor	Isuikwuato	Male	APC
22.	Hon. Obinna Ichita Martin	Aba South	Male	APGA
23.	Hon. Abraham Oba Ukefi	Aba Central	Male	APGA
24.	Hon. Onyekwere. M. Ukoha	Arochukwu	Male	APGA

## Appendix E

**Geo-Political Zone:** South South

**State:** Edo state house of Assembly

**Sources:** <https://leadership.ng/2019/03/11/edo-apc-wins-24-assembly-seats/>

S/N	Name	Party	Constituency	Gender
1.	Chris Okaeben	APC	(Oredo West),	Male
2.	Crosby Eribo	APC	(Egor)	Male
3.	Henry Okhwarobo	APC	(Ikpoba-Okha)	Male
4.	Roland Asoro	APC	(Orhionmwon West)	Male
5.	Nosayaba Okunbor	APC	(Orhionmwon East)	Male
6.	Osaro Obazee	APC	(Oredo East)	Male
7.	Washington Osifo	APC	(Uhunmwode)	Male
8.	Ugiagbe Dumez	APC	(Ovia North East 1)	Male
9.	Vincent Uwadiae	APC	(Ovia North East 11)	Male
10.	Sunday Aghedo	APC	(Ovia South West)	Male
11.	Francis Okiye	APC	(Esan North East 1)	Male
12.	Emmanuel Okoduwa	APC	(Esan North East 11)	Male
13.	Victor Edoror	APC	(Esan Central)	Male
14.	Sunday Ojiezele	APC	(Esan South East)	Male
15.	Marcus Onobun	APC	(Esan West)	Male
16.	Ephraim Aluebhosele	APC	(Igueben)	Male
17.	Ganiyu Audu	APC	(Estako West 1)	Male
18.	Aliyu Oshiomhole	APC	(Estako West 11).	Male
19.	Emmanuel Agbaje	APC	(Akoko-Edo 11)	Male
20.	Yekini Idaiye	APC	(Akoko-Edo 11)	Male
21.	Eric Okaka	APC	(Owan East)	Male
22.	Micheal Ohio-Ezo	APC	(Owan West)	Male
23.	Oshoma Ahmed	APC	(Estako Central)	Male
24.	Kingsley Ugabi	APC	(Estako East).	Male

## Appendix F

**Geo-Political Zone:** South West

**State:** Ekiti State House of Assembly Composition

**Sources:** <https://ekitistate.gov.ng/executive-council/legislature/#sixth-ekiti-state-house-of-assembly>

S/N	Names	Party	Constituency	Gender
1.	Rt. Hon. Funminiyi Afuye	APC	Ikere I	Male
2.	Rt. Hon. Hakeem Jamiu	APC	Irepodun Ifelodun2	Male
3.	Hon. Gboyega Aribisogan	APC	Ikole I	Male
4.	Hon. Tajudeen Akingbolu	APC	Ekiti West I	Male
5.	Hon. Bunmi Adelugba	APC	Emure	Female
6.	Hon. Tope Ogunleye	APC	Ilejemeje	Male
7.	Hon. Toyin Lucas	APC	Ado I	Male
8.	Hon. Kemi Balogun	APC	Ado II	Male
9.	Hon. Lawrence Babatunde Idowu	APC	Ikere II	Male
10.	Hon. Adegoke Olajide	APC	Efon	Male
11.	Hon. Adejuwa Adegbuyi	APC	Ekiti East I	Male
12.	Hon. Lateef Akanle	APC	Ekiti East II	Male
13.	Hon. Yemisi Ayokunle	APC	Ekiti South West	Female
14.	Hon. Olatunji Joseph	APC	Ekiti South West II	Male
15.	Hon. Johnson Oyebola Bode-Adeoye	APC	Ekiti West II	Male
16.	Hon. Teju Okuyiga	APC	Gbonyin	Female
17.	Hon. Abiodun Fawekun	APC	Ido/Osi I	Male
18.	Hon. Akin Oso	APC	Ido/Osi II	Male
19.	Hon. Aribasoye Steven Adeoye	APC	Ikole II	Male
20.	Hon. Ademola Ojo	APC	Ijero	Male
21.	Hon. Ayodeji Ajayi	APC	Ise/Orun	Male
22.	Hon. Femi Akindele	APC	Irepodun/Ifelodun I	Male
23.	Hon. Adeyemi Rapheal Ajibade	APC	Moba I	Male
24.	Hon. Arubu Michael	APC	Moba II	Male
25.	Hon. Awoyemi Reuben	APC	Oye-I	Male
26.	Hon. Osatuyi Yemi	APC	Oye-II	Male

## Appendix G

### Nigerian Ninth Senate (2019–2023)

S/N	State	Senatorial district	Political parties	Senator	Gender
1.	Abia	North	APC	Kalu Orji Uzor	Male
2.		Central	PDP	Orji Theodore Ahamefule	Male
3.		South	PDP	Enyinnaya Abaribe	Male
4.	Adamawa	North	PDP	Ishaku Elisha Diff Abbo	Male
5.		Central	APC	Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed	Female
6.		South	PDP	Binos Dauda Yoroe	Male
7.	Akwa Ibom	North-East	PDP	Bassey Albert Akpan	Male
8.		North West	PDP	Christopher Stephen Ekpenyong	Male
9.		South	PDP	Eyakenyi Akon Etim	Female
10.	Anambra	North	PDP	Adaeze Stella Oduah	Female
11.		Central	PDP	Ekwunife Lilian Uche	Female
12.		South	YPP	Ifeanyi P. Ubah	Male
13.	Bauchi	South	APC	Lawal Y. Gumau	Male
14.		Central	APC	Dauda Halliru Jika	Male
15.		North	APC	Bulkachuwa Adamu Muhammad	Male
16.	Bayelsa	East	APC	Degi Eremienyo Biobaraku Wangagra	Male
17.		Central	PDP	Douye Diri	Male
18.		West	PDP	O. Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo	Male
19.	Benue	North East	PDP	Gabriel Suswam	Male
20.		North West	PDP	Emmanuel Yisa Orker-Jev	Male
21.		South	PDP	Patrick Abba Moro	Male
22.	Borno	North	APC	Abubakar Kyari Shaib	Male
23.		Central	APC	Kashim Shettima	Male
24.		South	APC	M. Ali Ndume	Male
25.	Cross River	North	PDP	Rose Okoji Oko	Female
26.		Central	PDP	Onor Sandy Ojang	Male
27.		South	PDP	Gershomo Bassey	Male
28.	Delta	North	PDP	Peter Nwaoboshi	Male
29.		Central	APC	Ovie Omo-Agege	Male
30.		South	PDP	James Ebiowou Manager	Male

31.	Ebonyi	North	PDP	Egwu Samuel Ominyi	Male
32.		Central	PDP	Obinna Joseph Ogba	Male
33.		South	PDP	Michael A. Nnachi	Male
34.	Edo	North	APC	Francis Asekhame Alimilhena	Male
35.		Central	PDP	Akhimienmona C. Ordia	Male
36.		South	APC	Mathew A. Urhogide	
37.	Ekiti	North	APC	Olubunmi Ayodeji Adetunmbi	Male
38.		Central	APC	Bamidele Michael Opeyemi	Male
39.		South	PDP	Biodun Christine Olujimi	Female
40.	Enugu	East	PDP	Chimaroake O. Nnanami	Male
41.		West	PDP	Ike Ekweremadu	Male
42.		North	PDP	Godfrey Chukwuka Utazi	Male
43.	Gombe	North	APC	Alkali Saidu Ahmed	Male
44.		South	APC	Amos Bulus Kilawangs	Male
45.		Central	APC	Danjuma Goje Mohammed	Male
46.	Imo	East	PDP	Ezenwa Francis Onyewuchi	Male
47.		West	APC	Rochas okorocho	Male
48.		North	APC	Benjamin Uwajumogu	Male
49.	Jigawa	South West	APC	Sabo Mohammed	Male
50.		North East	APC	Hassan Ibrahim Hadeija	Male
51.		North West	APC	Danladi Abdullahi Sankara	Male
52.	Kaduna	North	APC	Kwari Suleiman Abdu	Male
53.		Central	PDP	Sani Uba	Male
54.		South	APC	Dajuma Tella La'ah	Male
55.	Kano	North	APC	Ibrahim Barau Jibrin	Male
56.		Central	APC	Ibrahim Shekarau	Male
57.		South	APC	Ibrahim Kabiru Gaya	Male
58.	Katsina	North	APC	Ahmad Babba-Kaita	Male
59.		South	APC	Bello Mandiya	Male
60.		Central	APC	Kabir Abdullahi Barkiya	Male
61.	Kebbi	North	APC	Abdullahi Abubakar Y.	Male
62.		Central	APC	Adamu Mainasara M. Aliero	Male
63.		South	APC	Bala Ibn Na'allah	Male
64.	Kogi	Central	APC	Oseni Yakubu	Male
65.		East	APC	Jibrin Isah	Male
66.		West	PDP	Smart Adeyemi	Male
67.	Kwara	North	APC	Umar Suleiman Sadiq	Male
68.		Central	APC	Yahaya Yisa Oloriegbe	Male
69.		South	APC	Ashiru Oyelola Yisa	Male

70.	Lagos	East	APC	Osinowo Sikiru Adebayo	Male
71.		Central	APC	Remi S. Tinubu	Female
72.		West	APC	Adeola Solomon Olamilekan	Male
73.	Nasarawa	West	APC	Abdullahi Adamu	Male
74.		North	APC	Godiya Akwashiki	Male
75.		South	APC	Tanko Al-Makura	Male
76.	Niger	North	APC	Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi	Male
77.		East	APC	Mohammed Sani Musa	Male
78.		South	APC	Muhammed Enagi Bima	Male
79.	Ogun	Central	APC	Ibikunle Amosun	Male
80.		East	APC	Ramoni Olalekan Mustapha	Male
81.		West	APC	Odebiyi Tolulope Akinremi	Male
82.	Ondo	North	APC	Robert Ajayi Boroface	Male
83.		Central	PDP	Ayo Patrick Akinyelure	Male
84.		South	PDP	Nicholas O. Tofowomo	Male
85.	Osun	East	PDP	Fadahunsi Francis Adenigba	Male
86.		Central	APC	Surajudeen Ajibola Basiru	Male
87.		West	APC	Oriolowo Adelere Adeyemi	Male
88.	Oyo	North	APC	Buhari Abdulfatai Omotayo	Male
89.		Central	APC	Folarin Teslim Kolawole	Male
90.		South	PDP	Kola Balogun Ademola	Male
91.	Plateau	North	PDP	Gyang Dung Istifanus	Male
92.		Central	APC	Hezehiah Ayuba Dimka	Male
93.		South	APC	Ignatus Datong Longjan	Male
94.	Rivers	East	PDP	Thompson George Sekibo	Male
95.		South East	PDP	Barinada B. Mpigi	Male
96.		West	PDP	Jocelyn Betty Apiafi	Female
97.	Sokoto	East	APC	Gobir Ibrahim Abdullahi	Male
98.		North	APC	Aliyu M. Wamakko	Male
99.		South	APC	Shehu Abubakar Tambuwal	Male
100.	Taraba	South	PDP	Emmanuel Bwacha	Male
101.		Central	APC	Yusuf Abubakar Yusuf	Male
102.		North	PDP	Isa Shuaibu Lau	Male
103.	Yobe	East	APC	Gaidam Ibrahim	Male
104.		North	APC	Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan	Male
105.		South	APC	Ibrahim Mohammed Bomai	Male
106.	Zamfara	North	PDP	Ya'u Sahabi	Male
107.		Central	PDP	Mohammed Hassan Gusau	Male
108.		West	PDP	Lawali Anka	Male
109.	FCT		PDP	Tanimu Philip Aduda	Male

## Note

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**Imene Bouguesri**

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# **Algerian Female Breadwinners: The Impact of Financial Contribution on Marital Quality**

**ABSTRACT.** Recent changes in society have triggered a variety of rearrangements in individuals' lives. Women's access to the workforce and high educational and career aspirations paved the way for higher status and more visibility in Algerian society. Notwithstanding, it is worth mentioning that the patriarchal context where women live imposes norms that monitor the power interplay within the couple. The research work at hand aims to elucidate the impact of education, financial independence, and social visibility on marital quality among married working females in Algeria. We distributed a close-ended questionnaire form to 200 female respondents from the eastern part of Algeria. An intersectional approach was designed to draw a model that connects the educational level, financial contribution, asset ownership and social visibility with marital quality. The structural equation obtained represented in the model was designed and tested using the smart PLS program. The findings demonstrate a significant impact of financial contribution on the respondents' marital relations; it involves adjustments and balancing power relations and empowering the female individual within the household.

**KEYWORDS:** education, financial contribution, social visibility, marital quality, work-family conflict

## **1. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### **1.1. Empowerment and its Implication in Feminist Literature**

Empowerment is a concept loaded with epistemological ambiguity, both notion and empirical reality. It refers to the process of transferring political resources from the state to civil society, changing the relationship between, on the one hand, the individual as a political and social subject and the state, on the other. Hence, defining empowerment is inseparable from an analysis of the transformation of social and political ties as its implication extends to a more general debate on democracy and citizenship.

Empowerment articulates two dimensions, that of power, which constitutes the root of the word, and that of the learning process to access it. It can designate as much a state (be empowered) as a process, that can at the same time be individual, collective, social or political. Depending on the usage of the concept, the emphasis is on one of these dimensions or on their articulation. This implies a process of self-realization and emancipation among individuals, recognition of groups or communities and social transformation.

The work of Michel Foucault has been partly taken up by feminists. For him, power is not a “property”, a “privilege”, but rather a “strategy”, “an interrelated network”. In his analysis, Foucault considers that this microphysics supposes that the power exercised there is not conceived as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are not attributed to an ‘appropriation’, but to dispositions, to maneuvers, to tactics, to techniques, to operations; that one can decipher in him rather a network of always tense relations, always in activity rather than a privilege that one could hold (...) sum to admit that this power is exercised rather than possessed, that it is not the acquired or retained ‘privilege’ of the dominant class, but the effect of all of its strategic positions—an effect that manifests and sometimes renews the position of those who are dominated” (Foucault, 1975, p. 34).

There are many micro-level applications of powers that seek to normalize the behavior of individuals. Indeed, they are located at different levels: whether it is the powers of certain individuals over others such as parents, teachers, doctors, etc., of certain institutions, such as asylums or prisons, or even of certain discourses.

Concretely, it is following a relatively fragmented interpretation of his work, followed by a theoretical redeployment quite far from the anchoring of his own reflection that Foucault marked feminist literature in terms of empowerment, while he—even had not devoted his reflection particularly to gender relations.

## **1.2. The Empowerment Procedure**

The notion of empowerment therefore fits well into a vision of acquiring power, control over one’s life and the ability to make choices. This notion of “capacity to make choices” has been widely debated by Sen (1999) who broadened it to the notion of the ability of people to dispose of things and make choices.

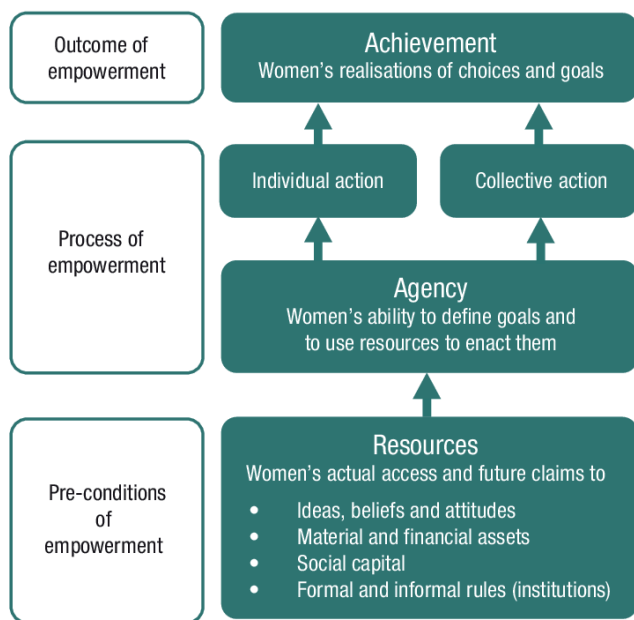


Figure 1. The Empowerment Procedure

The process of women empowerment has been subject to multiple applied research and analyses in a variety of settings, particularly, the third world.

### 1.3. Resources

Human resources are unique to the individual, and include their knowledge, skills, creativity, imagination, etc. Social resources are the constraints, obligations and expectations inherent in the relationships, networks and ties that exist in different fields, and which enable people to improve their situations and perspectives beyond what would be possible on their own individual efforts.

They are encapsulated in what individuals have access to, material and non-material resources and their distribution depend on the individual's direct relation with these resources. For instance, working women have financial resources available at hand that allow them to have agency, be autonomous and be involved in decision-making. However, waged work does not always reflect an empowered position occupied by women. It may not be more than a *distress sale of labour* that women opt for just for the sake of meeting survival needs (Kabeer, 2005).

Resources are distributed by various institutions and processes. Access to resources will be determined by the rules, norms and practices prevailing in different institutional spheres (e.g. family norms, patron-client relationships, informal wage agreements, formal contractual transactions, public social benefits). These rules, norms and practices give certain actors the power to determine the principles of distribution and exchange in a particular sphere, and thereby give them authority over others. The distribution of “allocative” resources is therefore often confused with the distribution of “authority” (Giddens, 1979), which can be defined as the power to define priorities and to assert one’s claims. The heads of households, the heads of tribes, the directors of companies, the leaders of organizations, the elites of a community are all endowed with decision-making authority in a certain institutional context by virtue of the position they occupy within these institutions.

#### 1.4. Agency

The second dimension of power is that of agency, the ability of everyone to define their goals and comply with them. The notion of capacity for action goes beyond visible action; it also includes the meaning given to the action, the motivation and the goals of the actor, in short, his sense of action, his “individual power”. At the operational stage, capacity for action is often translated into “individual decision-making”, especially in traditional economic literature. It actually encompasses more diverse actions with a specific purpose, such as bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion, resistance and protest, as well as cognitive and intangible thought processes. Capacity for action also includes reflection and collective action, as well as individual.

Bandura (1997) formulates a theory of self-efficacy that involves the individual’s capacity to engage in agentic actions, self-efficacy refers to people’s beliefs about their ability to achieve particular performance. It allows the determination of choices of activity and environment, the subject’s investment in the pursuit of the goals s/he has set for him/herself, the persistence of his/her effort and the emotional reactions s/he experiences when s/he meets obstacles.

Together, the resources and agency constitute what Sen calls ‘*the potentialities*’, i.e. the potential of individuals to live the life they want, to be and to act in a rewarding way. Sen uses the concept of “functioning” to designate the different ways of “being and acting” to which people aspire in a given context, and that of “results of functioning” to designate the

ways of being and acting. real individuals. These results, whether they are achieved or not, constitute our third dimension of power. The question of power is obviously irrelevant if an individual's inability to be and act as he wants is due to his laziness, incompetence or any other reason specific to him. But when failure reflects asymmetries in the underlying distribution of potentialities, it can be interpreted as a manifestation of exclusion from power.

### **1.5. Paid Work as a Representation of Agency**

Various meanings are attached to the concept of working women. It has proved to be significant in granting women more self-esteem and independence especially when it is self-fulfilling and gives them the opportunity to add value to society and earn them higher status and social visibility. Female wage earners have gained the power to negotiate their relationships and familial roles, despite facing conflicting situations. Empirical research on the correlation between women empowerment and paid work have revealed a deeply-entrenched disparity in conceptualization and interpretation, notably due to the cultural varieties and realities women live in, data collection methods, as well as economic and political factors. Research demonstrates that many cases represent an empowering means for women (Kabeer, 2005) as it may also stem from economic compulsion (Lee, 1998). Subjective dimensions such as self-esteem and agency are strong motivators for paid work, and they offer opportunities to create new dimensions for their identities (Kabeer, 2005).

According to Hoodfar (1997), intrinsic beliefs about female domesticity are determined by societal structures, regardless of their economic status or education. However, many women have succeeded in strategizing and securing a recognizable position to the workplace and the home, contributing in transforming degrading social practices and their implications in women's lives and building new identity patterns other than those ascribed by the family.

Women's independent economic activity may represent a real threat to male authority in the household. Although it has become common in our society that women access waged work, the male's response can in some instances be loaded with resistance and restrictions or even complete control over the woman's income (Vogel, 1999).

The factors influencing labor supply and demand are in fact diverse and complex. They are determined not only by the economic environment but also by socio-cultural factors which still weigh heavily on the labor

market today (Musette et al., 2003, Bouklia, 2010; ILO, 2015) by accentuating the inequalities that women face as evidenced by the significant gender disparities in access to employment. Indeed, cultural heritage constitutes a significant obstacle to the full participation of women in economic life. The MDG Report notes that “structural and cultural obstacles are the [main] cause of the large gap between women and men in the labor market [...] including the high proportion of women in precarious jobs” (<https://www.ilo.org/>). However, it is undeniable that considerable progress has been made by women in terms of changing business behavior as evidenced by official figures.

Table 1. Labor force participation in Algeria

Age	Male	Female	Total
15 years old and above	66.8	<b>17.3</b>	42.2
15-24	41.5	<b>7.8</b>	25.0
25-34	89.1	<b>32.1</b>	61.5
35-54	88.6	<b>21.3</b>	54.3
55-64	47.5	<b>6.5</b>	27.7

Source: ONS Statistics (2019)

## 1.6. Education

Education is an important indicator of empowerment. Educated girls and women have a greater capacity to lead relatively successful lives. They can form a mature understanding of the world around them, deal with conflicts and inconveniences in addition to their role as effective contributors to family income and decision-making (Sen, 1999).

Research on the impact of education in women’s lives in the third world has demonstrated a significant rise in these females’ awareness and ability to reflect upon life events and confront the world with maturity (Schuler, Hashemi, & Riley, 1996).

The government is investing a good deal in girls and young women that could be seen as the example of successful integration policies of a social class that was once secluded and underprivileged. There is an exceptionally high rate of activity among them in gaining educational degrees and qualifications to become more competitive and visible in the labour market.

With reference to the correlation between female education and labor force participation, there has been a significant increase in the acquisition

of higher education diplomas and employment rates (it dropped between 2012 and 2013 with 0.7 percent, reaching 14.3% employment rate among college graduates) (www.ONS.dz).

Indeed, education and access to income entail women's consciousness of their own status within the household. They allow her more control over family expenditures and autonomy in decision-making that may in turn reflect positively on personal and family well-being. The educated working female, thus, becomes a human resource capable of competitiveness in the labor market and assertiveness within the household which is an integral part and a prerequisite in building the future generations and the human capital of the country.

### 1.7. Family Roles

Working women adopt multiple roles in their lives that may be conducive to conflicting situations; to cope with these situations, they opt for strategies to compensate for any inconveniences that may occur. Hall (1972) derived three types of coping strategies from Levinson's role components:

- Type I** coping (structural role redefinition) involves agreeing on a set of expected roles fulfilment in accordance with structural demands.
- Type II** coping (personal role redefinition) involves setting priorities among roles themselves.
- Type III** coping (reactive role behavior) focuses on improving role performance presuming that roles are unchangeable, and the individual is obliged to meet them (Gregory & Connolly, 2008).

#### *The work-family conflict*

Social role theory posits that the genders' involvement in household chores is determined by their actual perceptions. At present couples carry a non-traditional trait; women seek education and highly achieving career paths leading their household responsibilities to reach a complex situation. A reevaluation of the family responsibilities and commitments becomes paramount among female breadwinners to ensure stability within the couple and prevent any intra-familial tension (Rao & Sekhar, 2002). Several factors are involved in work-family conflicts such as the total working hours and the nature of the job itself, in addition to family-related

factors such as uncooperative family members, interpersonal divergence within the family entity, and care responsibilities.

**Work-family conflict** may take three main forms: strain-based, time-based, and behavior-based.

**Time-based conflict** arises when the amount of time destined toward a specific family duty is taken by professional duties.

**Strain-based conflict** occurs when the responsibilities of the individual and the ensuing burden experienced in one role make it difficult to effectively and efficiently perform the other role.

**Behavior-based conflict** is associated with the incompatibility in roles and how the individual deals with the challenges both in the household or in the workplace.

## 2. Marital Quality

Cohen, Geron & Farchi (2010) and Chand (2008) consider marital quality as an ambiguous concept in social research as it carries a cultural and ethnic load. This is conducive to subjective definitions of the concept; it is highly determined by the environment and cultural context where the individual lives. Therefore, marital quality in the present research work is considered a multi-faceted construct that reflects the individual's sense of satisfaction with the relationship's overall functioning that leads to marital adjustment.

## 3. Research Method

The research at hand is conducted based on a primary interest in the possible impact of the breadwinner role married working females embrace on the power interaction within the couple. In order to elucidate this interplay, an exploratory design was assumed to be best suitable for this purpose.

We devised a structured survey administered to respondents through in person, social networks and email. In total, 250 married female workers were approached using random sampling, out of which only 200 completed and returned the questionnaire form.

Using a five-item Likert scale ranging from strongly agree=5 to strongly disagree=1 was included within the questionnaire form. Respondents were required to express their agreement or disagreement with the state-



ments provided regarding four main constructs: women's financial contribution to the household, assets, education, social visibility (independent variables), marital quality (dependent variable). Coding was designed so that higher scores are in accordance with positive responses. Measures of financial contribution, assets, education, social visibility were derived from Ronald Dworkin's Model of equality of access to resources and their relation with empowerment (Dworkin, 1981). The obtained data were analyzed using the Smart PLS program for statistical analysis.

## 4. Measurement Model Analysis

### 4.1. Convergent Validity

Evaluating convergent validity of reflective constructs is usually ascertained by examining the factor loading (the outer loading) of the indicators, composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). In the suggested model, most of the factor loading results were higher than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2016). The composite reliabilities were also above 0.7 and the AVE of all constructs higher than 0.5 as suggested by Hair et al. The following table shows the various indicators of convergent validity.

Table 2. Result of measurement model convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Financial Contribution	FC1	0.540	0.874	0.504
	FC2	0.58		
	FC3	0.608		
	FC5	0.778		
	FC6	0.785		
	FC7	0.858		
	FC8	0.756		
Assets	A1	0.856	0.866	0.746
	A2	0.892		
Education	EDU1	0.647	0.857	0.604
	EDU2	0.889		
	EDU3	0.835		
	EDU4	0.713		

<b>Social Visibility</b>	SV1	0.766	0.821	0.604
	SV2	0.786		
	SV3	0.78		
<b>Marital Quality</b>	MQ1	0.772	0.91	0.629
	MQ2	0.73		
	MQ3	0.827		
	MQ4	0.774		
	MQ5	0.834		
	MQ6	0.815		

Source: the author's work

## 4.2. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs by empirical standards. Thus, establishing discriminant validity implies that a construct is unique and captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model.

To measure discriminate validity, we relied on two measures. The cross-loadings are typically the first approach to assess the discriminant validity of the indicators. Specifically, an indicator's outer loading on the associated construct should be greater than any of its cross-loadings (i.e., its correlation) on other constructs. The Fornell-Larcker criterion is the second approach to assessing discriminant validity. It compares the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable correlations. Specifically, the square root of each construct's AVE should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct.

## 5. Cross Loading

Table 3 provides a different data set comparing correlations of each item to its intended construct (i.e., loadings) and all other constructs (i.e., cross-loadings). As Chin (1998) notes, going down a particular construct column, you should expect to see item loadings to be higher than the cross-loadings. Similarly, if you scan across a particular item row, you should expect to see that any item be more strongly related to its construct column than any other construct column. If this is found to be the case, the claim can be made for discriminant validity at the item level. Specifically, we can say

that each item loads more highly on their construct than on other constructs and that all constructs share more variance with their measures than with other constructs. The measurement has satisfied discriminant validity.

Table 3. Cross loadings

Items	Financial Contribution	Assets	Education	Social Visibility	Marital Quality
FC1	0.54				
FC2	0.58				
FC3	0.608				
FC5	0.778				
FC6	0.785				
FC7	0.858				
FC8	0.756				
A1		0.856			
A2		0.892			
EDU1			0.647		
EDU2			0.889		
EDU3			0.835		
EDU4			0.713		
SV1				0.766	
SV2				0.786	
SV3				0.78	
MQ1					0.772
MQ2					0.73
MQ3					0.827
MQ4					0.774
MQ5					0.834
MQ6					0.815

Source: the author's work

## 6. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

### 6.1. The Value in the Boldface is the Square Root of AVE

Latent variables correlation is generally considered to have acceptable discriminant validity if the square root of the average variance extracted for each latent variable is higher than any of the bivariate correlations involving the latent variables in question (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) Table 4 shows that the average variance extracted is higher than the correlation coefficient of the construct. These results indicated that the measurement had satisfied discriminant validity.

Table 4. Latent variable correlation

	Assets	Education	Financial Contribution	Marital Quality	Social Visibility
Financial Contribution	0.872				
Assets	0.272	0.777			
Education	0.639	0.534	0.71		
Social Visibility	0.418	0.546	0.531	0.793	
Marital Quality	0.428	0.592	0.489	0.75	0.777

Source: the author's work

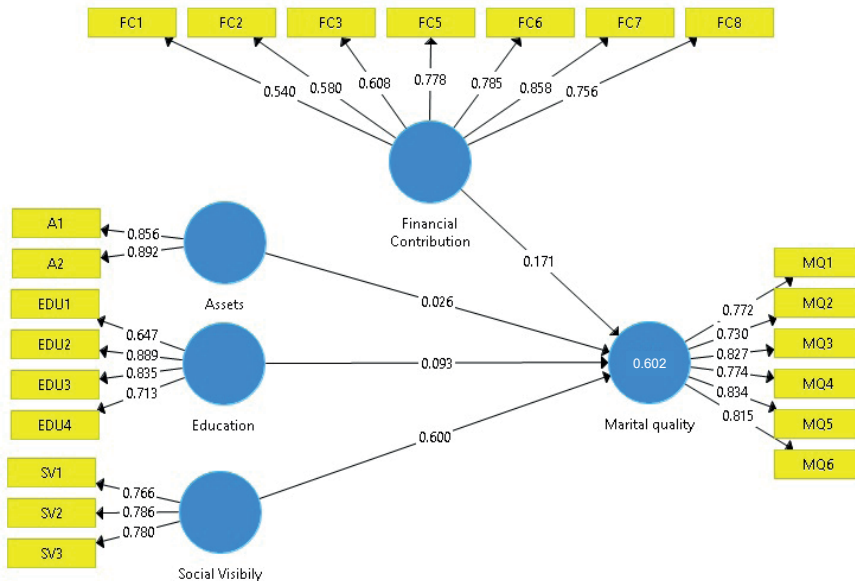


Figure 2. Measurement model

## 7. Assessment of Structural Model

The R squared represents the proportion of variation in the dependent variable that can be explained by one or more predictor variables (Elliott & Woodward, 2007; Hair et al., 2016). From table 5, it is notable that the value of R squared was 0.602 and this means that the independent variables (education, financial contribution, assets and explain the model by 60% and this value is very strong. By reference to Chin (1998) who suggests that R squared values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 in PLS-SEM can be considered as high, moderate, and weak respectively. In this study, the value of  $R^2$  was greater than 0.601; this means the Coefficient determinant R square is moderate.

Table 5. Coefficient determinant

R square of the endogenous latent variable		
Construct	R Square	Result
Marital Quality	0.602	moderate

Source: the author's work

## 8. Assessment of Effect Size $f^2$

Effect size indicates the relative effect of particular exogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variables using changes in the R squared (Chin, 1998).

Table 6. f Square

Constructs	Marital Quality	Results
Financial Contribution	0.517	large effect size
Assets	0.001	small effect size
Education	0.012	small effect size
Social Visibility	0.033	small effect size

Source: the author's work

The above figure and table 6 note that the value effect of **financial contribution** on **Marital quality** is estimated at 0.517, which is a positive impact. This effect according to the  $f^2$  values, which reached 0.35 is a large effect size. While the **assets, education, and social visibili-**

ty values' influence on **marital quality** had a value of  $f^2$  that amounts to 0.02–0.15, indicating a small effect size between these variables and marital quality.

## 9. Hypothesis Testing

From table 7 we note no significant relationship between the independent variables (assets, education, social visibility) and the dependent variable (Marital quality). Therefore, hypotheses (H1, H2, H4) of the model are rejected at  $\alpha=0.05$  level. But regarding (H3) the hypothesis is supported which means that there is a relationship between **financial contribution and Marital quality**. This could be interpreted by the fact that financial contribution is the byproduct of women's access to education and paid work which is conducive to a recognizable status within society and the household and, hence improving marital quality.

Table 7. Path coefficients

Path Coefficients of the Research Hypothesis						
Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Decision
H1	Assest -> Marital Quality	0.026	0.088	0.295	0.05	Rejected**
H2	Education -> Marital Quality	0.093	0.129	0.718	0.07	Rejected**
H3	Financial Contribution -> Marital Quality	0.600	0.098	6.135	0.01	Supported
H4	Social Visibility -> Marital Quality	0.171	0.091	1.847	0.1	Rejected**

Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

Significant at  $P^{**} < 0.01$ ,  $P^{*} < 0.05$

Source: the author's work

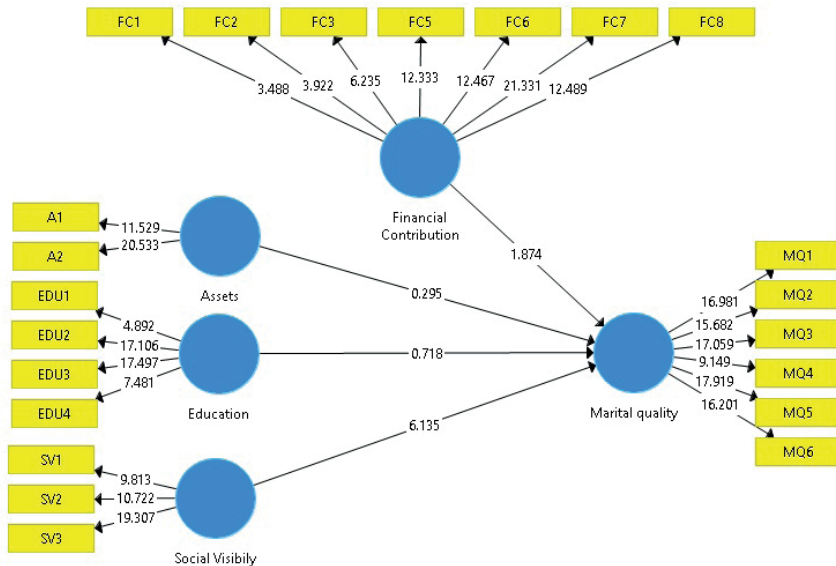


Figure 3. Bootstrapping results

## Conclusion

Women empowerment in any given society is a multistage process, initiatives into promoting women's status in Algeria allowed women to be authors of the scenario of their own lives and begin seeing new horizons for positive change despite the existing dragging forces of patriarchy.

The research paper at hand attempted to analyze the representation of empowerment in contemporary Algerian society on a micro-level. The selected dependent variables (financial contribution, education, social visibility) have proved to exert an impact on the dependent variable marital quality. Specifically financial contribution that encapsulates different aspects of women's lives which have eventually led to establishing the status quo. Notwithstanding, other variables including education and asset ownership exert an undeniable effect on women's marital relations. The woman's contribution to family income grants her the chance to be effectively involved in decision-making, strengthen the marital bond particularly if the partner has a limited income and contribute to personal and family wellbeing. Education symbolizes a huge leap for women on the road of empowerment, educated women are a huge gain for themselves and the com-

munity at large. They represent a long-term payoff for the government's investment in boosting the economy, and personal growth.

The disparity in income and education among couples has triggered a chain of gender role negotiation and even reversal to adapt to the existing economic and social transformations. The current condition, beyond its actual manifestation of women's true potential and creation of real opportunities for women, has on the other hand facilitated the incremental emergence of a category of men who suffer from a masculinity crisis that may be expressed as revenge either through aggression or dependence on the female partner or even being unfaithful in the relationship. Thus, the heralded equality obtained is only symbolic and the battle for authentic gender equity is yet to be fought.

Other aspects of marital quality need to be further researched to fully fathom the dynamics involved in gender relations and discern areas that require consideration and advance approaches to empowerment that promote healthy relations and productive citizens capable of collective agency.

We can think that there is no single linear model of evolution by which we can identify a "cause" of exclusion from power that affects women and modify this cause to elicit an expected "effect".

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## **Sexual Risk Behaviour among Waitresses in Restaurants in Ore Nodal Community, South West, Nigeria: Theoretical Perspectives**

**ABSTRACT.** Sexual risk behaviours are prominent among Africans viz-a-viz Nigerians. As a result, several studies have focused on the knowledge, attitude and practices of the phenomenon in very few and secluded areas in Nigeria involving key actors such as commercial drivers, hoteliers, students of tertiary institutions, and female bar attendants. Also, previous studies on the phenomenon in Nigeria have only been conducted empirically but with little emphasis on sociological theorising. Hence, there is a wide gap in knowledge on the dimension of understanding the phenomenon, the unit of analysis, and the study's location. This paper x-rays the knowledge, attitude and practices of sexual risk behaviours among female wait staff in Southwest Nigeria nodal communities using five sociological theories; Systems theory, Symbolic Interactionist Theory, Social Learning Theory, Exchange Theory and Social Action Theory. They were adopted, applied, and synthesized to provide a sociological explanation of the causes, practices, effects and approaches to understanding the peculiarity and dynamics of Sexual risk behaviours among female wait staff in the Ore nodal community in South West, Nigeria in tandem with current social realities.

**KEYWORDS:** female wait staff, Nodal Communities, Ore, sexual risk behaviours, sociological theories

### **Introduction**

Sexual Risk Behaviours (SRBs) are those behaviours that increase the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections and often lead to unintended pregnancies (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). These SRBs include sex at an early stage, unprotected sexual behaviours and having multiple sexual partners among others. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasised the need to address SRBs in every nation as tantamount to embracing sustainable development (WHO,

2004). This is because of the complications of SRBs which have overtime become a major challenge to health institutions in most developing nations (Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey, 2010). Several factors hinder and complicate the march towards sustainable development in African countries. These include: environmental, political, cultural, and most importantly, inclined health issues from which empirical studies on the complications of SRBs are domiciled.

Many studies on SRBs have concentrated frequently on street hawkers, female adolescents, and students of secondary and tertiary institutions, with little attention on highway female wait staff at restaurants who are predominantly adolescents and often have been victims of rape, sexual abuses and possibly involved in several sexual encounters which are mostly risky and detrimental to health. Studies have established increasing involvement of adolescents (within the ages of 15–24) in sexual activities (United Nations, 2012). The motivation for sexual activity among adolescents have been webbed around peer influences and socio-economic pressures (Bingenheimer, Asante & Ahiadeke, 2015) and is often prominent in rural areas and among people with low sources of income (Bearinger et al., 2007). Also, there is increasing curiosity on the sexual activities of female wait staff in nodal towns of sub-Saharan Africa because of the perceived prevalence of sexually transmitted infections and pitiable health care those areas are prone to (WHO, 2011). This paper provides an empirical insight on the motivations, dynamics and implications of sexual risk behaviours (FWS) among female plantain hawkers (FWS) in Ikire, Osun State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

United Nations (2012) revealed that adolescents (between age 15–24) constitute 19.6 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's total population (over 224 million). As a result of poverty, broken homes and lack of parental care or the death of parents, several adolescents in this category have mostly become involved in informal and vulnerable employment sectors because they cannot find a suitable form of economic survival (UNDP, 2011). However, Bingenheimer, Asante and Ahiadeke (2015) stated that there is a relationship between the prevalence of SRBs in Africa and the quest for the economic survival of the adolescents.

The situation of female wait staff in Ore nodal town is not unconnected with the facts discussed above. This is because the adolescents were into

informal and vulnerable employment such as highway hawking, which in turn put a lot of pressure is on the (female wait staff) FWS to have more sales to guarantee their profit and make them stand the chance of feeding their families and dependent relatives from their proceeds. As a result, the practice of the FWS resorting to having multiple sexual partners among the drivers, passengers and community dwellers (which mostly consist of different classes of individuals who are traders, artisans, blue-collar jobbers and farmers among others) in the highway community to assist in footing their daily domestic bills and financial needs is noticeable.

Many of these relationships were often solidified by sexual gratification, which often is either too risky for the FWS mostly because they are particularly young or perceived to have unprotected sex which place them at the risk of being infected with STIs and unwanted pregnancies which is consequentially dangerous because findings have revealed that significant portion of unmarried and sexually experienced girls aged 15–19 years in Africa was exposed to the use of contraceptives which indicates involvement in sexual practices at such tender age (Olukoya, 2002; Ross, Dick & Fergusson, 2006; Bankole et al., 2012) while their unmarried and sexually inexperienced counterparts are left to bear the brunt of their sexual actions.

Studies have shown that 16 million young women and girls between the ages of 15–19 give birth annually, accounting for approximately 11 per cent of all births globally (WHO, 2004). These births were characterised by several complications and negative societal labelling, which resulted in young women engaging in abortion, which is responsible for 13 per cent of all maternal deaths universally (WHO, 2011). Annually, sub-Saharan Africa records 2.2 million unintended pregnancies among adolescents and, all these empirical findings have a nexus with risky sexual behaviours (Guttmacher Institute, 2010). The literature further revealed that more than 50 per cent of females globally between 15–24 years old who have been involved in SRBs often suffer from reproductive health problems, early pregnancy, and induced abortions coupled with sexually transmitted diseases (United Nations, 2012; Bankole et al., 2012; Ogunyemi, Adisa & Adenuga, 2020).

Nigeria's nodal towns are known for highway hawking ranging from communities such as Ikire, Benin, Onitsha and specifically Ore (the focus of this study) among others. Ore highway is a commercial area with a heavy concentration of hawkers and female wait staff of restaurants and bars who are principally females and vastly between adolescent to early adult-

hood. Often, the FWS mostly comprise of teenagers and a few older folks of secondary school leaving age. They hawk on the highway with pregnancies of varying durations which partly is a reflection of the involvement of teenagers and adolescents in risky sexual relationships. Apart from adolescent FWS early exposure to sex, there was the prevalence of the FWS involvement in sexual risk behaviours which has numerous implications that previous studies have explored but with little or no sociological theorising. Hence, this empirical study intends to fill the knowledge gap.

## **Theoretical Perspectives**

A set of ideas to illuminate phenomena or proffer solutions to problems is the theory (Ritzer, 2008). It can also be defined as a body of knowledge that encompasses related variables, concepts, and format, specifically designed in the form of a statement to explain events, situations, or objects (Adenuga, Ogunyemi & Omojufehinsi, 2018; Omololu, 2017). A sociological theory refers to a web of thoughts and concepts carefully formulated, tested to explain and predict the precise occurrence, mostly those hinged on collective ideologies, which are independent of the social realities elucidated. Also, theories are formulated to analyse or explain social life issues affecting humanity (Hagen, 1962).

Various accounts have been offered throughout history to explain the prevalence of sexual risk behaviours in Nigerian nodal communities. Explaining sexual risk behaviours becomes central to sociological discourse especially when previous studies have only attempted empirical x-ray of the phenomenon. Many earlier studies of sexual risk behaviours in Nigerian communities partially explained how sociologically relevant the issue is. Hence, the need to fill the lacuna in knowledge. This paper offers theoretical explanations on sexual risk behaviours in Ore nodal community. The theories examined are Systems Theory, Symbolic Interactionist Theory, Social Learning Theory, Exchange Theory and Social Action Theory.

## **Systems Theory**

The Proponents are Talcott Parsons (1920–1979) and Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998). Systems theory is an interdisciplinary theory about the nature of complex systems, society and science. The theory is a frame-

work to investigate and describe any group of objects that work together to produce the result. This system can be a single organism, organization or society, or electro-mechanical or informational artefact. As a technical and general academic area of study, it predominantly refers to the science of systems that resulted from initiating what became a project of systems research and practice.

Systems theory explains that the intricate relationship of parts cannot be treated out of the whole context. Systems theorist rejects the idea that society or other larger-scale components of society should be treated as united social facts. The theory has five assumptions. These are:

- i. Systems theory emanated from the hard sciences and, as a result of the interdisciplinary plights of the proponents, it was incorporated into behavioural and social sciences because it possessed a common vocabulary to unify those sciences.
- ii. Systems theory is multileveled and can be applied equally well to the largest-scale and the smallest-scale, to the most objective and the most subjective aspects of the social world.
- iii. Systems theory is interested in the relationships of the many aspects of the social world and thus operates against piecemeal analyses of the social world.
- iv. Systems theory tends to see all aspects of sociocultural systems in process terms, especially as information and communication networks.
- v. Systems theory is inherently integrative.

Also, systems theory is macro as it attempts to explain how the entire social systems works and the key actors, which are the movers and shakers of such actions. The theory was adapted from science and, it further linked up with the Structural-Functionalist Theory, most especially, the contributions of Talcott Parsons, Emile Durkheim, Hebert Spencer and Ferdinand Tonnies which explains the process of changes in society. This explanation of change partly answers the question of how large scale societal behaviours become accepted by small groups.

In application to sexual risk behaviours in Ore nodal communities, Systems Theory explained that sexual risk behaviours are systemic. It is a function of the system nexus. The study did not explain how sexual risk behaviours originated but, it only attributed its spread to prevailing systems culture, which could be learned and adopted by indigent persons. The reality of the situation in Ore community is that the female wait staff at the restaurants are underpaid and multiple male sexual partners seem

to be the succour to afford meeting up with paying daily bills and taking care of themselves (although the practice is not directly linked to commercial sex work).

The systems theory was weak in considering the processes of thoughts, meaning system, identity pattern and sociological imagination the practice of sexual risk behaviours offer the female wait staff. The theory did not sufficiently provide socio-economic evidence of the need to engage in sexual risk behaviours. Hence, the adoption of Symbolic Interactionist Theory.

## Symbolic Interactionism

Hebert Blummer, Max Weber, George Hebert Mead and Erving Goffman are the proponents of the theory. Symbolic Interactionism, according to Ritzer (2008), thrives on three standpoints:

- Focus on the interaction between the actor and the world;
- Perception of both the actor and the world as dynamic processes and not static structures; and
- The actor's ability to interpret the social world.

According to Ritzer (2008), Blummer coined the term *symbolic interactionism* in 1937 and wrote several essays that were instrumental in its development. His works focused more on social processes precipitating human actions but, his works ignored the importance of meaning and social construction of reality. This school of thought further provides frameworks for viewing human beings as living in a world of meaningful objects. These objects include material things, actions, relationships and even symbols. Schaeffer (2018) stated that members of the society see symbols as an important part of communication and, they share the social meanings of symbols, materials, actions and relationships. Sexuality and female wait staff in restaurants, for example, have unique meanings attached to them in nodal communities. There is a general feeling that all girls working in restaurants are doing it for the money and will do anything to get the money including having sex with known and unknown persons. As a result, the female wait staff were seen as sex objects to some persons.

Meanwhile, George Hebert Mead gives priority to the social world. His works are mainly on the acts, gestures, significant symbols, mind, self and society. He identified four stages constituting human acts which are: impulse, perception, manipulation and consummation. Although Hebert Mead spearheaded a number of teachings in symbolic interactionism,



overtime the works of Erving Goffman on dramaturgical approach became popularized. The dramaturgist compares everyday life to the settings of the theatre and stage. Just as actors project images, human beings also seek particular features of their personalities while hiding other qualities. Thus, female wait staff in Ore nodal communities envisaged what they wanted the society to perceive about them and not who they are.

In application to the paper, since symbolic interactionism focuses more on the actor and the world, every aspect of human behaviour becomes the focal point of interest. On the practice of sexual risk behaviours in the Ore nodal community, the actors represent the female wait staff while the world connotes the restaurants. The point of interaction is the restaurants, clubs and issuance of money, material gift or kind gestures which is considered as a link to engaging in risky sexual behaviours irrespective of the health status of the male sexual partners.

The first assumption of the theory is the interaction between the actor and the social world. As identified above, the actor is the female wait staff whose job is to serve food and drinks at the restaurants in Ore nodal community. She is open to everyday communication and interaction with customers and other males in the restaurants' neighborhood. Many female wait staff sleep in restaurants and live their lives around the restaurants. As a result, they become open to travellers, commercial drivers and artisans who spend the night drinking and relaxing in their restaurants. From such interaction, they become exposed to interacting with strange persons and newer persons from all works of life.

The second assumption of Symbolic Interactionist Theory views both the actor and the world as dynamic processes and not static structures. This implies that with time the female wait staff and the customers (travellers, commercial drivers and artisans) gradually becomes integrated and begin to have growing interaction. his metamorphoses into sexual intercourse, usually mostly by mutual consent based on growing relationships and continuous interactions both parties have had, which has grown beyond the apparent static relationship. As a result, both actors (female wait staff and customers) have devised a dynamic process through which they can further get along rather than sticking to the customer-sales girl relationship (which is more of a static structure).

The third assumption that "the great importance attributed to the actor's ability to interpret the social world" is how both actors can further the interaction based on the existing realities around them. The last assumption of Symbolic Interactionists emphasised the importance attribut-

ed to the actor's ability to interpret the social world. This assumption places more responsibilities on the female wait staff whose role is to observe customers and the business environment and attempt to use the reality of the environment to make sense.

The theory was critiqued because it offers more explanation on social processes of interaction than consequences of the sexual risk behaviours of the female wait staff and their sexual partners. It is also very subjective in approach and may not provide universally acceptable and reliable templates on which subsequent theorists can apply to the same phenomenon in society. Despite its subjective nature, Symbolic interactionism did not adequately cater for a contextual understanding of the motivations of the actor's behaviour; it generalised that there can be frameworks for viewing human beings as dwelling in the world of meaningful objects. The theory did not also specifically contribute mainly to sexual risk behaviours but its model on the relationship between actors and society were adapted and situated around the study to offer a peculiar explanation to the study.

## **Social Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura is the proponent of Social Learning Theory. The theory assumes that individuals learn from their interactions with others in a social context (Bandura, 1977). Individually, by observing others' behaviours, people develop similar behaviours. New concepts of social learning are being formed as new trends in patterns of interactions emerge. The theory stated that learning takes place in people when they:

- Observe the actions of other people;
- Consider the consequences of the actions on those people;
- Rehearse what might happen in their own lives if they follow other peoples' behaviour;
- Take action by trying the behaviour;
- Compare their experiences with what happened to other people;
- Confirm their belief in the new behaviour.

Social Learning Theory has three key components. These are: observational learning, imitation and behavior modeling (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976; Bruner, 1990). Bandura stated that observational learning involves that humans often cannot learn for themselves. An alternative theory that

is not strictly constructivist or behaviorist is Bandura's Social Learning Theory. This theory emerges behavioristic cognitive psychology and reinforcement theory to depict the individual's learning process. Bandura stresses the personal and self-system which manipulates learning by influencing social processes, memory representation and reconstruction, cognitively-based motivation, schematic processing of experiences, psycho-biologic functioning, emotion activation and the skill which people deal in their everyday life experiences (Bandura, 1986 cited in Bandura, 1977). The learner has the capacity to change their learning in novel situations by controlling the environment around them whether it is imposed, selected or constructed (Bandura, 1977).

Food consumption and human interactions have encoded social meanings. With this in mind, relationships between Female wait staff, their service and customers (especially travellers, commercial drivers and artisans) provide all social learning necessary to instil a new mode of thinking, behavioral patterns and neoteric value system. This theory explains how influential the workplace environment can be on individuals in any society. Although the assumption is rooted in psychology, it becomes useful in sociology especially in the area of social interaction which has to do with sexual behaviours because the acceptance and eventual absorption of sexual gratifications are products of human social interactions with one another.

The theory further exposes that beyond the serving of food and drinks in the restaurants, new culture wrapped in several modes of behaviours, dressing patterns, slangs and physical appearance often manifest through interaction with fellow female wait staff from other restaurants and customers' acceptance and appreciation of female wait staff dress and hairstyles. In fact, many new female wait staff may want to emulate the character of older folks in the business. This theory explains how sexual gratification to customers becomes initiated, accepted and becomes a normal phenomenon.

The weakness of the theory lies in its overemphasis in justifying the motivation for engaging in certain behaviours rather than groups of people which Sociology mainly focuses. Since actions are learned and transferred, the theory gave little or no explanation on how the female wait staff becomes lured into taking a risk during sex. This partly explains the socio-economic pressures, which brews the involvement of female wait staff in sexual risk behaviours.

## Social Exchange Theory

The theory was propounded by George Casper Homans and Peter Blau. Social Exchange Theory emanated from Economics, Psychology and Anthropology. It was developed to understand the social behaviours of humans in economic undertakings (Homans, 1958). Social Exchange Theory perceives the exchange relationship between specific actors as actions hinged on rewarding relations from others (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1987).

Social Exchange Theory is that theory that had its roots in behaviorism, influenced intellectually by rational choice theory but differs from it by focusing on reciprocity in social relationships and not on individual decision making. The theory also known as the theory of rational choice has one basic assumption. Rational Choice is guided by the assumption that people are rational and base their actions on what they perceive to be the most influencing means to their goals.

For Social Exchange theorists, when the costs and benefits are equal in a relationship, such a relationship is defined as equitable. The concept of equity is a vital part of social Exchange Theory. The theory features all of its main propositions. All relationships have “Give and Take”, although the balance of this exchange is not always equal; the theory explains how human beings feel about their relationships with other persons as depending on their perception of:

- i. The balance between what is invested in the relationship and what is obtained out of it.
- ii. The kind of relationship people deserve.
- iii. The possibility of having a better relationship with another person.

In determining what is fair, there is a comparison of the outcome of the give and take ratio of every human relationship. This outcome varies, with some giving more and others getting more from the relationship. They also vary in what is given and obtained.

Social Exchange Theory has based on the premise that the exchange of material and social resources is an elementary form of human interaction. The outcome of an interaction is the combination of rewards and costs. These costs and rewards are assigned figures, any numbers will work as long as the scale is constant. Positive numbers are assigned to rewards and negative numbers to the costs. People strive to reduce costs and maximise rewards, as with economics and then base the likeness of developing a relationship with someone on the perceived possible outcomes. When

those outcomes are identified as higher, people disclose more and develop a closer relationship with that person.

The theory is premised upon the costs and rewards of a relationship. People base their decisions to develop or maintain a relationship on the number of profits that we could receive. Social exchange uses the equation: Rewards–Cost–Profits to figure out whether a relationship is worth the time. Usually, the typical person decides to pursue a relationship where the rewards are more than the cost. To get the rewards, there will be costs that will have to be dealt with.

In application to the study, Social Exchange Theory explained that economic gain is the sole reason female wait staff engage in sexual risk behaviours. As long as their sexual partner (who are the drivers, customers and travellers) can meet their financial and other economic needs, they can go any length in having sex with such persons. Meanwhile, the sexual fantasies to be desired by these male sexual partners from female wait staff without further strings attached opens them up to giving anything at their disposal to get maximum sexual gratification from the female wait staff. Moreover, in tandem with Homans' six propositions, when the exchange is beneficial and favourable, there is increased interaction until both parties do not need one another anymore.

This theory also explained how financial rewards and other fringe benefits female wait staff have gotten from their sexual interaction with their male customers, drivers and travellers propel newly recruited female staff to join the act. This theory did not see beyond the gains and pains of the female wait staff. It was equally silent on the other meanings attached to interaction between the female wait staff and their customers in the restaurants. The theory did not to combine the perception of the female wait staff on their motive for involving in sexual risk behaviours alongside the perspective of the customers, drivers and travellers on their motive. Hence, social action theory was adopted.

### **Social Action Theory**

The theory was propounded by Max Weber (1864–1920). Weber posited that before the cause of action could be ascertained, the need to understand the meaning attached to it by the individual is expedient. To this end, Weber coined the word "Verstehen" He distinguished between two types of understanding. First, Weber referred to direct observation-

al understanding (*Aktuelles Verstehen*), which is about observing what people are doing. However, observational understanding alone is not sufficient to explain social action. The second type of understanding is Empathetic Understanding (*Eklarendes Verstehen*). This explains that sociologists must try to understand the meaning of an act in terms of the motives that have given rise to it. This type of understanding would require you to find out why something is done. To achieve this, Weber argued for the need to get into people's shoes doing the activity to understand their intent.

The following are the assumptions of the theory:

- i. Observation alone is not enough to understand human actions; there is a need for considerate understanding. This can be done by gaining *Verstehen*, which is the main point of Sociology.
- ii. Understanding individual motives is central for discerning modifications to the social structure.
- iii. Weber identified that there are four main types of motive for action: value rational, instrumentally rational, effectual action and traditional action.
- iv. Different groups and societies focus on the relevance of the different types of general motive for action—so society still has a great influence on individual purposes in a general way.

In application to the study, Social Action Theory explains that the motive for action should be understood rather than picking up on the action and the actors without a prior understanding of the precipitating factors. In essence, the reasons female wait staff in the restaurants of the Ore nodal community engage in sexual risk behaviours should be understood. The literature revealed that reasons attributed to the rising involvement of female wait staff in sexual risk behaviours include peer pressure, prevailing socio-culture, means of socio-economic survival, pleasures, fantasy and desires, illiteracy, and others. Social Action Theory offers an explanation for the motive behind the actions of the female wait staff in the restaurants in Ore nodal communities than the effects of such actions on the individuals and the entire community. The theory was criticised based on its inability to sufficiently generalize and harmonize the intentions of the actors (female wait staff in the restaurants in the Ore nodal community) in engaging in a behaviour. It was also found to be weak for its losses in generality when it gains in specificity. The theory is also inductive and has offered very little to understanding arrays of culture on a singular phenomenon per time.

## Synthesis of the Theories

This paper cross-examined the perspectives of five theories on Sexual Risk Behaviours among Female Wait Staff in Ore nodal town. The theories adopted consisted of macro, micro and macro-micro level theories. The Systems Theory by Parsons and Luhmann is a macro-level theory which explains the phenomenon of sexual risk behaviours from a holistic perspective. It offered explanations on how the components of the society work together to get a result and preserve the whole (society). The Systems Theory offers an overall explanation from the systems perspective in an attempt to be objective but has no consideration for the views of the actors. As a result, the Symbolic Interactionist Theory was injected to cover for the inadequacies of the Systems Theory.

The Symbolic Interactionist Theory is a micro-level theory which explains the practice of sexual risk behaviours based on social processes precipitating human actions. This considers the acts, gestures, significant symbols, mind, self and society. It focuses on how people interact with one another and how these interactions are interpreted. If female wait staff gives certain seductive gestures, it is easily understood by those who have been in the business of patronising them for sex. Also, when a male customer is being too kind, generous and caring with certain suggestive comments and touches on female wait staff, it could be an attempt to attract the attention of the female wait staff for sexual interaction. Although the theory proposed that human beings cannot be reduced to objects to be subjected to scientific rating as intended by Systems Theory, the theory did not also specifically contribute to sexual risk behaviours. Hence, the Social Learning Theory was adopted.

Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura proposed that the involvement of female wait staff in the Ore nodal community was learned from other female wait staff based. The lean culture encompasses numerous modes of behaviours, dressing patterns, slangs and physical appearance which manifest as a result of interaction with fellow female wait staff from other restaurants and customers' gestures which may be acceptance and appreciation of their (female wait staff) beauty, dress and hairstyles. This theory explains how sexual gratification to customers becomes initiated, accepted and becomes a normal phenomenon. However, to what extent the female wait staff engage in the sexual interaction was not adequately addressed by the theory. This weakness brought about the adoption of the Social Exchange Theory.

Social Exchange Theory is anchored solely on the economic advantage gotten from relationships or any mode of interaction. For this paper, Social Exchange Theory explained that sexual risk behaviours are functions of fringe benefits which the female wait staff get from their male sexual partners. The female wait staff in Ore have multiple sexual partners to increase their chances of getting more money, date many people within the Ore community to foster fringe benefits and increase patronage in their restaurants, and engage in unprotected sex with male customers, drivers and travellers as long as they can offer them what they demand. Despite this, the meaning attached to risky sexual behaviours were not captured. Hence, the Social Action Theory.

The Social Action Theory advocated for the meaning of an action before taking an assessment side. The theory looked beyond generalising that sexual risk behaviour is systemic and a general phenomenon among the female wait staff in Ore nodal community. As such, it advocated for understanding the intention of the female wait staff and the sexual partners for engaging in sexual risk behaviours with direct observational understanding (*Aktuelles Verstehen*) and Empathetic Understanding (*Eklarendes Verstehen*) which Anthropologists conceived as Etic and Emic perspectives.

## Conclusion

Sexual interaction is an everyday phenomenon worldwide, but the practice of Sexual Risk Behaviours and its consequence is a burgeoning issue for social researchers. Despite the previous empirical attempts to curb the menace, a loophole was discovered, and this is webbed around the dearth of sociological theorising on the phenomenon of sexual risk behaviour among female wait staff in the Ore nodal community. This paper offered theoretical explanations from the macro, micro and macro-micro theories level. These were explained through five sociological theories; Systems theory, Symbolic Interactionist theory, Social Learning theory, Exchange Theory and Social Action theory. The conglomeration of these theories explained that sexual risk behaviours are systemic, a product of daily interaction, learned through groups and the actions of others, a function of the economic benefit and became a practice through the constant observation of others.



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## **Rejecting Stereotypic Cultural Vulnerability in the Works of Two Nigerian Female Playwrights**

**ABSTRACT.** Living in a patriarchal society can be challenging to women, especially those who have no income source. This makes women jittery, voiceless, vulnerable, aggressive and unassertive. Using Julie Okoh's *Our Wife Forever* and Stella Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy Chested*, this paper interrogates women's cultural vulnerability and economic sustenance within a society that makes most women dependent. Through the use of textual/content analysis, the paper uses Alice Walker's (1984) womanist theory as its theoretical framework to examine the gender issues in the selected play texts. However, the paper observes that the collaborative efforts of both genders in society can help bring economic, social, physical and psychological independence that can help build a less patriarchal society that limits the female gender. Nevertheless, the paper concludes that while gender issues in the society has always been a complex and cultural one, the female gender needs to accept their complimentary positions where need be and be competitive in order to create a public sphere that will accommodate them as well. Therefore, this paper recommends that the female gender needs more empowerment through education, funds, and psychological stability rather than sitting and attending to the private sphere alone that makes them vulnerable.

**KEYWORDS:** gender, female, womanism, femininity, culture

### **Introduction**

In any patriarchal society, economic sustenance is necessary for both sexes. Failure to have this economic independence and sustenance might lead to a collapsed family system that invariably affects society. According to Adeoye (2010, p. 149), he sees that some African men are dictatorial, domineering and gender sensitive in most of their social lives. Women are, therefore, seen as objects of sex and symbols to be permanently subjugated and enslaved. Adeoye's view shows the typical African society whereby men are seen as the Alpha and Omega which makes most women see themselves as less important. In Nigeria, the rift between the male and

the female gender over duties, responsibilities, views, opinions and rights have been in existence from time immemorial, but the need for the female gender to negotiate her ways through has become shortened. This is related to the economic situation in the Nigeria patriarchal system where the need for division of labour and collaborative effort is expected in order for the sustenance of most families. While both sexes' biological roles still remain different, the economic situation in Nigeria has almost made the financial responsibilities of the man and the woman among the labour force the same. However, for any woman with a source of income in the present-day Nigeria, she becomes a force to reckon with, a woman of substance and a woman of esteem who is able to take care of herself and at times, people around her.

In this paper, the cultural vulnerability and economic sustenance in the works of Julie Okoh and Stella Oyedepo are explored in order to show that women are better off when they have sources of income rather than staying at home being catered for by their husbands or family members. Enejere (1991, p. 49) sees that "the problem of women looms large. Economic backwardness, ignorance, religious prejudice and obsolete ideas about women's place at home and in society still tell on their position". This shows how culture plays a very significant role in the way and manner a woman is perceived and received within her own society. Cultural mentality that has been imbibed since childhood affects not only the woman but the man as well. This brings to the fore the gendered society that teaches the woman to be silent, passive, obedient and subservient, while the man is to be vocal, active, egoistic and outgoing. In this 21st Century, most of these gendered situations seem to be changing due to society's economic and modernised view. Utoh-Ezeajugh (2015, p. 134) observes that Nigerian female playwrights have over the years evolved a literary style that is unique in its committed presentation and representation of the African woman. Through such female writings, women are repositioned and given voices in order to fight any limitations such as cultural, societal, economic or religious issues that may come their way.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Although women may be said to vary globally, there are certain issues that are general to them no matter the age, class, ethnicity or belief. Using Alice Walker (1984) Womanist theory which seeks to acknowledge

and praise the sexual power of black women while recognising the history of sexual violence against them, this paper identifies three major features that are cogent. These three major features are audaciousness, woman-centredness and community-centredness which are often used as means for analysing black women's literature as it marks the place where race, class, gender, economic capability and sexuality intersect. Walker sees black women as people wanting to know more, people who are always in pursuit of knowledge despite their deprivation in a male dominated society. Although Walker's womanist definition has generated a lot of controversy, especially from the African feminist critics who at first believed that womanism as a theory may satisfy their search for a female discourse that is all encompassing, some still see it as a theory that analyses women's discourse and a new form of power that can end sexism, racism and classism. For this paper, womanism is seen as a commitment to the survival and wholesomeness of both male and female living in the same society in order to make a sane society. Nevertheless, the meaning of womanism seems to be deeply embedded in the religious and political tradition of empowerment whereby various ethnic and interest groups compete for equality of opportunities, rights, and respect to all groups.

While Okoh and Oyedepo's female protagonists (Victoria and Sharp), seek to redefine themselves outside their sexual/nurturing/cultural functions, and seek to reinforce the right to reclaim their own sexuality as they see it outside the demands of society, the gendered culture is put to the test. However, such actions may be identified as a form of the aesthetic of assertiveness which these female characters seek to help them re-engage with themselves. Employing the aesthetic of assertiveness as part of womanist struggle, the women are allowed to use their bodies, actions and languages as working tools to see potential ways out of the flaws their socio-cultural situations have caused them.

### Synopsis of Julie Okoh's *Our Wife Forever*

The play seems metaphorical with the title 'Our Wife Forever'. Although, it a simple sentence, yet, with deep meaning. The play presents the reality of levirate system in Nigeria and how disgusting it can be to a widow who should be left alone to mourn the dead husband. *Our Wife Forever* discusses the relevance of love, trust, financial capability and cultural vulnerability in marriage. Victoria, the main character, who has just

lost her husband, is troubled by her brother-in-law, Thomas, who wants to marry her in order to have all the late brother's properties. Ironically, Thomas fails to realize that no one can force a woman into such an archaic cultural expectation in this 21st Century, and the so-called properties have been worked for by both Victoria and her dead husband, Hector. Despite Thomas anger, pride and ego, Victoria wins the court case against him and falls in love with Hector's friend, Felix, who has been helpful from the beginning to the end of the play.

### **Synopsis of Stella Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy Chested***

*The Rebellion of the Bumpy Chested* by Stella Oyedepo discusses the plight of women incapability, vulnerability and subjugation within the society and the need for them to liberate themselves. Sharp, the leader of the women group "Bumpy Chested Movement" (BCM) is seen as a motivator, orator and assertive who is always in constant talk with other women (old and young) to see themselves as human and not as domestic slaves. While Oyedepo presents the women in the play as strong-willed by neglecting their domestic functions to behave like men, the men take it upon themselves to see a role-reversal by dressing like women, taking care of the children and domestic spheres and also hawking. However, Oye believes that there is no equality even in cosmic arrangements, so women should learn to understand their domestic roles. Sharp in her own way views that women should be given opportunities to act politically, socially, economically and religiously instead of being forced to obey the socio-cultural arrangement of gender.

### **Rejecting Cultural Vulnerability in the Selected Plays**

Culture is never static. Every social group has an identity that is peculiar to their way of life, which differentiates them from others and makes them unique. Tsebee (2011, p. 30) sees culture as that complete whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. This shows that culture exists and develops on people's preservation of certain perspectives. Eagleton (2000), as quoted by Yerima (2015, p. 16) says:

culture is not some vague fantasy of fulfillment, but a set of potentials bred by history and subversively at work within it. The culture which I speak about is one which emerges from civilisation—that is if we accept civilisation as a process of human development.

To Eagleton and Yerima, culture is an evolving process that people work towards in order to have a heritage. Due to the Nigerian patriarchal cultural practice, women tend to be vulnerable and subjugated. The economic situation in the country makes women see themselves as second class citizens who see certain jobs and professions as that of their male counterparts. However, things are drastically changing as women are negotiating themselves into what was previously considered taboo, cultural and unattainable sphere. This is visible in the works of the selected playwrights whereby women have deconstructed the cultural beliefs of the society that sees them as 'other'. According to McCann and Kim (2003, p. 33), the concept of other is that which represents a male-dominated culture that views women as the other in relation to man. While this is not the crust of discussion, Walker's womanism has been able to deal successfully with this concept and through the analysed selected plays, othering has been re-ordered so as to make women visible in their society. Okoh and Oyedepo re-present women as partners in cultural development whereby women can also speak for themselves rather than being spoken for. For example, in Oyedepo's *The Rebellion...* (2002, p. 40), Akanbi expresses his disgust and anger towards the women folk to his brother-in-law, Saka, that:

AKANBI: ...I no longer have any say in the affairs of my home. It's Tara who dominates everything. My house now has a single legislative member and that's Tara... if I want to take pounded yam, she declares that 'eba' will be more beneficial to my health... If I go right, she goes left,... you know it can be maddening! ...she has seized matrimonial power. And you would agree with me that power is not a right property to be found in a woman.

Tara's action shows her negotiating skill, which helps her maintain the dignity she feels her gender needs have been trampled on to a large extent due to cultural and social limitations. Oyedepo does not portray Tara as a "feminist" character per se, but as a woman who is human and is capable of getting tired at any given time and a woman who may want to do something else at that particular time when the husband requests pounded yam or something unattainable. To Oyedepo, women need to be treated with all sense of respect and dignity. Also, Tara is seen as a woman who is capable

of thinking and not be thought for. However, Akanbi feels scared and jittery due to his wife's audacious nature and her disdainful nature to culture, which has been in existence for long.

Meanwhile, in Okoh's *Our Wives Forever*, the heroine sees her economic situation as an avenue of liberating herself to the extent that she boasts about it to her brother-in-law. Being independent as a woman helps build the home, gives a woman the necessary voice and the negotiating power. Victoria in this play portrays this through her analysis of the brother-in-law who is bent on marrying her:

VICTORIA: When Hector died you wanted to take both of them from me, I refused. Since then, you have never given them any money, not even to buy soap. We have managed to survive without any help from any of you. We will continue to survive by the grace of God. As for their school fees, it will be paid as soon as I receive my salary (p. 51).

Victoria's oppression can be seen from three different categories which are, (i) as a wife (ii) as a woman and (iii) as a widow. Instead of Thomas to help her sustain the dead brother's legacy and catering for the children, he is more interested in having a relationship with Victoria because of the gains he expects. While widowhood can be frustrating especially if the woman in question is left at the mercy of the deceased, in-laws treatment of widowhood situation can be disgusting at times. Thomas in Okoh's selected to play is a man of pride who sees nothing good in his late brother's wife because she refuses to marry him, rather, he accuses her of engaging in illicit affairs with the brother's friend, Felix.

The issue of nauseating in-laws is dealt with in Oyedepo's play as well. Ashake, one of the strong women in the play clearly expresses her view that she is in charge of her husband and home as she proclaims that:

ASHAKE: May be you haven't heard the news yet. Women are no longer ready to tolerate nauseating in-laws like you who have been fed with fusty ideas about the place of women in the society... You think my personality is to be mauled and debased? And I should subject myself to all sorts of indignities all because I took pity on a lonely man by marrying your brother? But I say, I am no longer ready to tolerate dunderhead twerps like you!... I will send you out of here. You have no business being here... Even to grandpa's face. I am going to say it loud and clear that women will no longer tolerate the menace... As from now, you just must spend your holidays with your parents, if you aren't prepared to be serviceable to me... I shall brook no nonsense! I shall give orders and you must



obey. If you refuse to obey you must go back to the village... this is my domain and I am the despot here! (p. 22–24).

From protest against obnoxious cultural practices, opposition to oppressive machinery, to the affirmation of ideals, the works of Nigerian female playwrights read like signposts to political, social, economic and cultural emancipation. To her, the experiences of these women have gradually culminated in a radical edge to the plays of Nigeria female playwrights.

With the selected works of Okoh and Oyedepo, the shared roles of both genders are brought to fore but at the same time, the socio-cultural and economic factors that discriminate against women are presented. According to Akinwale (2010, p. 291), he attests that:

Women in Nigeria are beginning to step out of their cultural shells to excel in their chosen professions. Today, some are managers of big companies and banks, owners and medical doctors of several health clinics, professors in the academia and even presidential candidates of some political parties in the country... in theatre and entertainment world in Nigeria.

In Okoh's *Our Wife Forever*, the enthusiastic nature of a woman willing to work in togetherness with her husband is showcased:

VICTORIA: If we lose the case, will they really chase me out of this house? The house that I labored so hard to build! When we just got married, Hector and I used to live in a small apartment, behind their family house. After the birth of our first child, we felt the need to have a home of our own. Hector was very busy then, writing articles for his promotion. So, I took up the challenge. Apart from my official employment, I had a big poultry. I sold eggs, I sold chicken and occasionally I sold turkeys to raise the fund to buy every materials used for building this house. Now, Tom wants to take our house from me just because I am a woman (p. 65).

Victoria's lines show that when a woman is cherished by her husband, she is ready to do anything at all costs for the man to succeed. In Nigeria, which is the setting of the play, the gendered situation is clearly visible whereby the compatibility between a man and woman is not an easy task. This is due to the fact that women are often seen in relation to their biological capability and men are viewed from their social egoistic nature. Most women in the cultural Nigerian system have suffered from male ego syndrome which either leaves them at the mercy of any avail-

able man at one time or the other in their lives. The issue of gender that creates a stereotyped nature is not new but how the so-called 'weaker vessel' is able to deconstruct the social and cultural expectations matter. Although, some of Oyedepo's characters like Sharp and Tara are seen as the opposite of what the woman should be in the play, they still represent how a sane society should treat women regardless of gender. Nwosu (2004, p. 2) observes that:

No matter how gifted a woman is, no matter her ingenuity and political exploits, she can only be recognized in her society as a good and caring mother. Any other ambitious image a woman portrays outside this stereotype model earns her derogatory names like iron lady, domineering lady, or even the Biblical notorious name—Jezebel.

To a large extent, this is true in most patriarchal societies whereby women are often taken for granted and seen in relation to their biological roles; any attempt to operate outside these recognized roles is taken as disrupting the social order created by men and cultural values.

### **Womanist Perspective of the Selected Plays**

Womanist aesthetics main focus irrespective of race, ethnicity, cultural background, religious beliefs and social context is the struggle to have gendered-balanced society and fair treatment for women within the patriarchal system. In Okoh and Oyedepo's plays, the womanist view helps their main characters (Victoria and Sharp) to be socially, politically, economically and culturally independent. This helps them eradicate the perceived subjugation that they go through both in the public and private spheres that Ojediran (2012, p. 23) sees as "advocating equality for women; campaigning for women's capability and women's interests and sexuality in the society". Both playwrights show the ability of women to redress the abnormalities in the cultural settings that limit women's dignity within a relegating tradition. Despite Victoria's victimization by Thomas and the archaic tradition in *Our Wife Forever*, her womanist view helps her to choose what she wants for her life and children after the death of her husband. Also, Okoh uses Victoria's character to show the inhuman treatment women go through all in the name of widowhood and traditional customs which makes women subdued. In Victoria's lamentation:

VICTORIA: Oh, what a life! Suddenly, I have become a prisoner. As outcast! I shouldn't go here and there. I shouldn't do this or that. No one should come near me. No one should reach out to me. All types of laws are heaped on me. Just because I am a widow!... (p. 33).

Ironically, Okoh uses Felix to balance the gendered perspective of late Hector's family approach to make a woman relevant and be able to take decisions of her free will. In his reply to Victoria, Felix sees her as a woman who should not be disrespected, punished, subjugated or maltreated.

FELIX: Please don't get me wrong. You are certainly not an outcast. If you need me, I will never abandon you. Trust me (p. 34).

Felix is seen as a collaborator in the play. He helps Victoria who is the representation of female hood to attain her womanist goal. Felix refuses to see the woman as the subjugated entity or second fiddle who should continuously be deprived of her fundamental human rights regarding of freedom of speech, action and thought.

In Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy Chested*, Sharp, Ashake, Tara and Falilat are seen as women of substance, women who are ready to dominate rather than been dominated on, women who are ready to reconstruct the social structure of gender in the inter and intra-relationships they are. For example, Sharp observes that:

SHARP: This life of drudgery to which women have been sentenced throughout the ages must alter for a better one. Men should be asked to descend from the Olympic heights in which they have carved an exclusive niche and shake hands with women in the platform of equality. Women must emerge from a state of submissiveness to that of parity of not of dominance (p. 16–17).

Also, Falilat makes her intention known that she is intolerant to any misbehaviour from men. Falilat in her words sees that:

FALILAT: I have a right, a natural right to lead a free and fair existence. So man, I am not ready to take orders like a toady. Enough is enough!... which functions did the nature allot me? (p. 31).

All these women are the epitome of what Walker (1984, p. xi–xii) sees as womanish women who are ready to know, women in search of their identities, women who are ready to charge of their beings and women who want to re-other their existences within the patriarchal societies they belong.

## Conclusion

Walker's definition of womanism that it is:

...the black folk expression of mothers to female children, you acting woma-nish, i.e. like a woman... usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageo-us, or wilful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one... (A womanist is also) a woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's cultu-re... and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually... committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist... (Walker, 1984, p. xi-xii).

Nevertheless, this paper sees Walker's womanism as more of coalition solidarity which tends to forge the generalisation of unity, identity, capa-bility and justice that can hardly be mediated through the study of gender, culture and language. The analysed plays go beyond a feminist theatrical reading, but that which calls for personal and social recognition through their women narrations, dialogues and conversations. While the plays present cultural vulnerability, social subjugation and economic depen-dence of women at the beginning, these heroic women are able to navigate the public sphere which is male dominated to help build a balanced gen-dered society whereby women and men can live without either of them been seen as the 'other'. Although Walker's analysis of women's strengths, capabilities and independence considers men as part of women's life and calls for the collaboration of racial, economic, emotional and cultural di-vergences amongst all, women are to be conscious of the infringements on their rights at every point in time.

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## **Gender Imbalance, Romantic Inclinations and the Supremacy of Patriarchal Traditions in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price***

**ABSTRACT.** The paper investigates the notion of the female as an agency in the reaffirmation of gender and patriarchal cultural supremacy. It draws upon the different experiences of Emecheta's characters in the narrative, *The Bride Price*. Applying the gender theory, the paper notes that female individuals are the active agents of socializing gender imbalances in patriarchal African societies. African female authors like Emecheta unwittingly participate in socializing women to accept gender imbalances and female oppression. The aim of the paper is to examine the impact of cultural and economic orientations on female identity in *The Bride Price*. In effect, the paper shows the implications of gender resistance in the text. It argues that the narrative affirms conformity with culture and tradition. An obvious observation is that the narrative shows that the female is an active recipient of socialization and gender leanings in African culture. The major finding is that through the experiences of the major female characters as agents, Emecheta rejects revolutionary feminism and accepts masculinity and patriarchy as supreme. In the end, the paper reveals the implications of reading the narrative from the perspective of agency gender with a view to understanding how romantic inclinations can spur total gender balance in Africa and show how women have participated in the cultural oppression of women. What is remarkable is that this agency perspective to gender theory in African women writing has rarely been discussed. Finally, the idea behind this approach is to open up the various modes of feminist consciousness in African literature and contribute to the on-going debate on gender imbalances in African literature and cultural philosophy.

**KEYWORDS:** gender, patriarchy, agency, Emecheta, feminist consciousness, imbalance

### **Introduction**

Since the turn of the twentieth century, African female writers have used their writings to portray and liberate women consciousness and free women from the limitations imposed on them by patriarchal traditions. Women using their art as a form of expression against the injustices of the patriarchal tradition started with Flora Nwapa 1966 publication of her debut narrative, *Efuru*. Nwapa followed up with her most conscious femi-

nist expression; *One Is Enough* in 1981, which crystallized her vision of the new African women and her identity as fully emancipated, economically, socially independent and conscious of the woman's new identity in her desire to question, reconstruct and negate patriarchal male assumptions that seek to limit the woman in African societies. Since Flora Nwapa's entry into the African literary scene, other African female writers have consciously continued to use their arts as a form of expression against the patriarchal limitation of women and for the empowerment of the female gender through consciousness-raising and the recognition of the female identity. These female writers who have used their writings to express female consciousness in Africa include Mariama Bā, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Ama Ata Aidoo and Buchi Emecheta in *The Second Class Citizens*. One of the major contentions in this paper is that Emecheta's *The Bride Price* is a reversal of female consciousness which other female narratives have thus far achieved in Africa.

This paper examines the attempt by the Nigerian female writer, Buchi Emecheta to construct women's oppression in patriarchal Igbo culture through her narrative with particular focus on her novel, *The Bride Price*. It will be pertinent to take a cursory look at the gender assumptions which have penetrated the narrative structure of the novel in order to appropriately contextualize how the writer has depicted the female gender as the agency in the reaffirmation of patriarchal male culture, as well as the impact of this agency on the woman's emancipation on the woman trapped in traditional Igbo society. The study in particular examines how men and women negotiate and renegotiate changes within gender relations in patriarchal Nigerian cultures.

The paper further discusses the dynamic nature of the female individual and its implications as an agency in social interaction in the traditional culture. It reveals the actions of women in advancing Igbo patriarchal social institutions. In discussing the theory of gender, the embodiment of women as an agency is important in the interpretation of Emecheta's *The Bride Price*; this idea of agency is important if we must seek to understand gender in broader perspectives in the contextualization of female writing in Africa.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for articulating my position in this paper is based on the combination of gender and agency theories. Gender agen-



cy explains how women consciously prepare themselves for 'virtues' and 'ideals' of womanhood. Agency in female writing also means making self and group ready to meet up with the standard values set up by patriarchy. Therefore, Emecheta's narrative explores the way women are socialized into the cultural and social space of marriage through the prism of the 'bride price.' By agency in this work, I want to argue that women's acquiescence to patriarchal norms and culture are the grounds that subject them to capricious gender relations—in which case Emecheta's female characters consciously limit the consciousness and identity of the female gender. The paper explores the implications of the idea of agency theory of gender identity in African women writing and its relation with feminist consciousness as postulated by African feminist theorists like Helen Chukwuma, Omolera Ogundipe and Chioma Opara. The work assesses the theory of gender relations against the backdrop of the social relations between men and women in patriarchal tradition.

With the emergence of feminism in African literature and the increasing rise of the female voice in creative writing in Africa, the rise of gender as a category and mode of literary analysis and interpretation has increased. This is not surprising, judging by the increasing number of female writers in African since the 1960s. The application of gender as a literary analysis tool has also provoked vigorous debate within African feminist aesthetics. Feminist theorists have argued that "Gender in Africa is not a biological but a social/cultural construct..." (Ekpa, 2000, p. 33). The Nigerian feminist theorist Anthonia Ekpa is here alluding to the connection between gender and the socio-cultural economy of the cultural commodity. This view is in line with the postulation that "Gender is a category constructed through cultural and social systems" (Scott, 1990, p. 2).

To further interrogate the concept of gender in literary scholarship, it is necessary to consider the views of the American theorist Robert Stoller who posits that the term gender has a "psychological or cultural rather than biological connotation" (qt. in Millet, 1969, p. 30). Therefore, the concept of gender changes according to individual perception. For some scholars gender can be defined as a "set of ideas and expectations about femininity and masculinity" (Pennington, 2009, p. 366). However, as Connell has argued that the term refers to the "way in which social practice is ordered" (2005, p. 71). By social practice, Connell suggests the interference of the socio-cultural space distributing roles and duties to men and women in society. This socio-cultural meaning of gender takes its roots from Simone de Beauvoir's declaration that "one is not born a woman,

one becomes a woman" (qt. in Robinson, 1991, p. 1). The rooting of this concept in the socio-cultural tradition makes Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 31) to affirm that "Gender is not an individual matter at all, but a collaborative affair that connects the individual to the social order." In addition, they further argued that "Gender ideology is the set of beliefs that govern people's participation in the gender order by which they explain and justify that participation" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 35). As the paper has argued, these beliefs are a set of norms rooted in patriarchal assumptions, and women have become its most active proponents, hence the idea of agency. In Emecheta's narrative, the female characters including the heroine have come to anchor their belief on the authority of the bride price in the institution of marriage. In other words, the idea of participation in gender ideology implicates the idea of women as an agency—which in the process imposes the ideology of the inferiority of the female gender in the institution of marriage. Based on this Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi (1997, p. 17) defines gender as "...a system of meanings within cultures used to categorize male and female sexuality in hierarchical terms... and that as a result, women are trapped by their reproductive anatomy...". In other words socio-cultural beliefs totalize the woman as inferior in relation to the man whose values dictate the social norm and its relation to sexuality. As Teresa de Lauretis has argued in her essay "The Technology of Gender" gender is both a "representation and self-representation" (qt. in Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p. 14). In her attempt to elucidate the meaning of gender, Rosemarie Putnam Tong cites the authority of Nel Noddings who argued that women and "men speak different languages and that our cultures favour masculine ethics of justice over a feminine ethics of care" (Tong, 1998, p. 158).

### **Gender Imbalances, Agency in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price***

The narrative starts in the middle and gradually works its way back to the beginning. When the novel opens, its author, Buchi Emecheta informs the reader of the gender imbalances that exist in the text—Ma Blackie, Ezekiel Odia's wife despite already having two children, a boy and a girl, Aku-nna and Nna-nndo is considered to have problems. This problem the narrative voice reveals is that "She was very slow in getting herself pregnant again" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 2). The gender attitude here is that

the value of a woman's sexuality is tied to her proclivity in childbirth. The narrative voice seems to support and socialize this view among women themselves. Moreover, for this reason of slow proclivity, her husband, Ezekiel Odia "had sent her to all the native doctors he could afford in Lagos" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 2). Ezekiel Odia's attitude stems from the patriarchal assumptions of his society as he begins to worry about his wife's fertility status: "In despair she [Ma Blackie] decided to go home to their town, Ibuza, to placate their Oboshi river goddess into giving her some babies" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 2).

Ma Blackie's decision to travel from Lagos to Ibuza to placate "their Oboshi river goddess" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 2) shows that she has thoroughly socialized and internalized the gender bias of her patriarchal culture as a failed woman for having only two children for her husband, Ezekiel Odia and in the process becomes an agency for the perpetuation of gender attitudes as the aim of her trip to Ibuza was intended to "recharging her fertility" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 2).

Therefore, Emecheta here uses a female character Ma Blackie as the agency for the enthronement of patriarchal supremacy even when her husband, Ezekiel Odia was perfectly happy with her wifely duties and her two children. Ma Blackie is the one who is psychologically traumatized about her failure as a wife and mother. This proves that women by themselves are the agents of patriarchal oppression against the emergence of the new woman in this narrative. To show this, almost all the Igbo women living at Akinwumi Street, Yaba where Ma Blackie and her family lived all believed that she was childless simply because she had only a girl and a boy for her husband. This is relayed through Aku-nna's consciousness: "Many a time she had heard other women living in the compound make songs of her Ma Blackie's childlessness. She had heard over and over again her Ma Blackie and her Nna quarrelling over this great issue of childlessness" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 3).

In other words, just as Ma Blackie had accepted the patriarchal designation of being childless with two children, Aku-nna, as a female individual, is being socialized into accepting this patriarchal ideology of the woman being valuable based on giving her husband many children, especially male children. To show that the inability of the female to have many children is considered a kind of impotence and a tool of cultural oppression, it begins to dominate Aku-nna's consciousness: "Nna would go on and on...telling Ma...that he had had to pay double the normal bride price...before he was to take Ma as his wife...he would remind Ma Blackie that having paid this

heavy bride price he had had their marriage sanctified by Anglicanism. And what had he to show for it all—an only son!” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 3).

From this passage, we can see that Ezekiel Odia has conformed to the patriarchal ideology of his society. He expects to reap bountiful rewards in male children for the heavy bride price he paid on Ma Blackie, and not being able to give him these rewards in male children makes her a failure. Interestingly, despite his love for his daughter and the expected rewards in the bride, this passage is crafted to socialize Aku-nna into her gender conformity in line with patriarchal norms. In another respect the bride price payment seems to constitute a cultural tool of enslavement which the narrative structure endorses.

Ezekiel Odia’s premium on his daughter hinges on the bride price she would fetch him when she marries: “...but Ezekiel knew that except for the fact... that the only consolation he could count on from her would be her bride price. To him this was something to look forward to” (Emecheta, 1976, p.4). In fact, it was for this reason of expected bride price that “...he had named her Aku-nna, meaning.... ‘father’s wealth’” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 4). In other words, the value of the girl child in the traditional Nigerian society is tied to the wealth she would eventually fetch her father or step-father as Okonkwo would become to Aku-nna after Ezekiel Odia’s death. And this made Ezekiel Odia willing to allow his daughter to attend western education because girls who went to school fetched higher bride prices. More disturbing in this narrative is that women have been taught or socialized into internalizing these cultural values as we see Aku-nna reflecting: “She was going to marry well, a rich man of who her father would approve and *who would be able to afford an expensive bride price*” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 4, emphasis mine). Therefore, Aku-nna has come to internalize the values of the patriarchal culture very early in her life and see the payment of the bride price as a condition before: “...she would leave her father’s house” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 4). By aligning her consciousness to the patriarchal culture, Aku-nna without knowing has necessarily become an agency of the supremacy of cultural values. In all her life, Aku-nna has been socialized not to do anything: “against the dictates of culture” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 6). She has willingly come to submit herself to this requirement.

In the Igbo culture of the narrative, it is expected that children should not interrogate their elders and that was why Aku-nna could not bring herself to question her Nna on the day her father unexpectedly returned early from work to prepare to go to the hospital for a check-up in Lagos

Island. Ezekiel Odia had hidden his health from his children and Aku-nna felt betrayed: "Why, oh, why did he tell uncle Uche the truth and lied to her?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 11). As if she was beginning to understand the requirements of her tradition Aku-nna's dual voice begins to justify her father's actions:

... for was she not only a girl? A girl belongs to you today as your daughter, and tomorrow, before your very eyes, would go to another man in marriage. To such creatures, one should be wary of showing too much love and care, otherwise people would ask, 'Look, man, are you going to be your daughter's husband as well?' (Emecheta, 1976, p. 12).

There are a number of implications arising from Aku-nna's consciousness that suggests gender inequality. First, marriage is a social institution that denies the African woman the possibility of social inequality. Another implication is that the possibility of marriage gives the woman the social status of minus knowledge, people who are not worthy to be trusted with sensitive information. And finally, women are a people whose values are tied to the bride price that would accrue to their family of birth: "Despite all that Aku-nna knew she held a special place in her father's heart" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 12). Interestingly this knowledge is a product of a deep understanding of the patriarchal norms of her society.

The circumstances of Ezekiel Odia's illness and the method of its revelation to his children surprised Aku-nna as she reflects: "It still surprised her, though, that Nna had arranged it so that Uche, who he said was lazy and as sluggish as a woman expecting twins, was to be trusted with his children" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 12). However, in the context of the patriarchal tradition, uncle Uche, despite his supposed "sluggishness" is still a man. Therefore, his gender has earned him Nna's trust and Aku-nna in spite of being Ezekiel Odia's biological daughter cannot earn his trust because he is only a girl child and in the eyes of the culture cannot be trusted. To show the reality of gender imbalance when Ma Blackie sent a telegram to Ezekiel Odia's relatives in Lagos asking them "to confirm that her husband was ill" because Nna's family considered her a failed woman they "decided against telling her the truth" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 14). She is further told through Nne Beaty, a friend of Ma Blackie who was travelling back to the village at that time "not to worry.... She was strongly advised to direct her attention to the important work she had been sent home to do—to placate the goddess of the river Oboshi *into giving her more sons*" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 14,

emphasis mine). Here again, Emecheta uses the woman as agency in the reaffirmation of the supremacy of patriarchal conspiracy. Nne Beaty who knew the truth is willing to lie to satisfy the men-folk. Therefore, rather than encouraging female bonding the narrative uses women as agency in the re-affirmation of patriarchal gender ideology. Gender also assigns roles to the sexes. While it is the duty of the male to do manual labour to feed the family, the woman is expected to cook and gossip. Young Aku-nna begins to reflect on this reality: "It was time they finished off their gossiping because their men-folk would soon be home, hungry, tired... so the women would rush to their kitchen to prepare the evening meal" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 15). Therefore, the behaviour of the sexes is structured according to cultural gender beliefs—and this would be the reason Aku-nna would not marry early. There are ways of teaching and socializing the female gender into performing her gender roles and Aku-nna is being gradually indoctrinated: "... because Nna was not coming home at four; she could not hurry to cook for a husband because, though she was nearing fourteen, her father would not hear of marrying early" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 16). In her subconscious mind Aku-nna has accepted the custom and traditional roles of the two genders in her society: "It is one of the unwritten norms which are here to stay" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 17).

In the traditional Igbo society, women have no right of choice of spouse. They must accept the choice of life partners made for them by the men in their families. This is the case of Auntie Uzor, as Aku-nna narrates: "She was probably between the ages of sixteen and eighteen or nineteen. She had been brought to Lagos from Ibuza to be married to her husband, Dogo" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 18). It was Aku-nna's father, Ezekiel Odia who arranged the marriage. He had told Dogo, "who had been a driver in the army during the war against Hitler..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 18). The marriage deal was finalized when Ezekiel Odia informed Dogo: "My cousin's daughter is grown now. She comes from a very tall family too, so why don't you pay for her? She will give you tall sons" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 18). The consideration in marriage is the proclivity of male children. The fact that Uzo herself agreed to marry Dogo without seeing him for the first time shows that Emecheta's women in this narrative are agents of promoting gender imbalances in the narrative. Besides, there are clearly defined roles that every sex must imbibe. For example, while Aku-nna is busy preparing meals for herself and her brother: "Nna-nndo, however, like all boys of his age was busy playing in the unthinkable places" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 22). In every respect, the girl child is in a disadvantaged position in society.

Aku-nna is expected to learn according to the norms of patriarchal culture. Aku-nna expresses her readiness to live by those standards when she realized that Auntie Uzo was not holding her baby and her eyes like somebody who had been crying but could not ask her why because it would be considered bad manners: "Aku-nna was prevented from asking, because in her culture it would have been bad manners and if so many questions had come from a young girl like herself it would have been considered worse than bad manners" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 23). The insight we can glean from this is that Auntie Uzo and Aku-nna have internalized and accepted the limitations patriarchy has imposed on the female gender and affirm the supremacy of patriarchy. Even though it is now a reality that her father Ezekiel Odia has died, its realization hit the children differently according to gendered expectations. Nna-nndo wept about their loss: "We have no father any more. There is no longer any schooling for me. This is the end" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 24). It is curious to note that Aku-nna's moment of distress epitomizes her socialization into cultural norms. Even as Ma Blackie, their mother was still alive and doing well in the village, the young girl laments:

But Nna-nndo, you have got it all wrong Aku-nna said to herself. It is not that we have no father any more, we have no parents any more. Did not our father rightly call you Nna-nndo... So not only have we lost a father, we have lost our life, our shelter. Your mother is only a woman, and women are supposed to be boneless. A fatherless family is a family without a head, a family without shelter, a family without parents, in fact a non-existing family (Emecheta, 1976, p. 24-25).

Aku-nna's lamentation goes to confirm that Emecheta infuses gender imbalances into the narrative. In fact the extract above illustrates and depicts the huge gender imbalance in African culture which the women have been fully socialized into. It is important to comment that the acceptance of patriarchal gender ideology is relayed through Aku-nna's dual voice, which at this stage remains unquestioning and uncritical in contrast to most dual voices in narrative fiction. The reflections in Aku-nna's consciousness reinforces the importance of fatherhood in the Nigerian tradition and seems to suggest that it was better if Ma Blackie had died instead of Ezekiel Odia, Nna, and the narrative voice seems to support this engender disparity.

Buchi Emecheta, too, uses Ezekiel Odia's funeral to affirm the supremacy of patriarchal Igbo tradition. Ezekiel Odia's life epitomizes the



ambivalence that enveloped African culture at the turn of the twentieth century with the advent of Christianity and its western civilization: "... he would sing praises to the European Living God, he would force his children to pray every morning... but all this did not prevent him calling in a native medicine-man when the occasion arose" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 26). In line with the tradition of Ibuza people, Aku-nna and her brother Nna-ndo were expected to mourn their father loudly and she gladly did just that, as she mourned: "My father was a good Christian. He was a good husband to my mother Ma Blackie. He bought me many dresses. He spoilt me. He sent me to school" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 27). The last sentence implied that Aku-nna was not supposed to go to school because of her gender. In conformity with the traditional belief she, went on with her father's praises mainly because it was expected of her to do so: "Nobody could stop her, for this was what was expected of a daughter" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 27). In contrast Nna-ndo was required to weep privately because he was now the man of the house: "Nna-ndo did not use many words...". He soon finished crying but Aku-nna was encouraged to continue: "girls were supposed to exhibit more emotion" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 28).

It is to be noted that gender attitudes greatly inform the behaviour of members of the society. While the mourners began to disperse "Aku-nna persisted in her cries" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 28). This was what was expected of a good daughter. Her performance earned her praise in the eyes of the older women: "People later remarked that for a girl not born in Ibuza she did not do badly" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 27). The most unfortunate thing about Ezekiel Odi's death at this time was that he died "before he had time to enjoy the bride price his daughter would fetch" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 28-29). This underscores the fact that the girl child is valued in Igbo culture simply for the bride price she would accrue to the family and at the end of the narrative, the author, Buchi Emecheta agrees with this patriarchal philosophy when Aku-nna dies because Okonkwo, Aku-nna's stepfather refuses to accept her bride price from Chike's father Mr Ofulue.

To again show that the society is structured according to patriarchal gender attitudes, while women are encouraged to wail the death of their loved ones openly, men mourned in silence because "...theirs were like the sight of men who though defeated, have never let go of their dignity" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 29). In contrast, good women mourners were supposed to throw themselves to the ground. To show how women have



become an agency of affirming the supremacy of patriarchal tradition the women-folk urge Aku-nna: "You must cry a farewell for your father. You are his only daughter from his lions" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 34). This proves that women in Emecheta's *The Bride Price* are the agency of patriarchal gender supremacy of African culture. Because of her feminine gender, Aku-nna felt her father's death even more: "... the realization came to her again, now with even greater pain that they would never see their father alive again, and *she faced the shocking reality that his death would change her whole life*" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 35, emphasis mine).

Aku-nna's articulation of these feelings in her subconscious mind arises from the fact that she has been socialized into the gender expectations of her Ibuza society which would require her to marry early so that the bride price could be used to further the education of her brother, Nna-nndo. Auntie Uzo warns her:

...Then leave your blouse alone. Do you want to tear it? Can't you see that you have no father anymore? You are an orphan now, and you have to learn to take care of whatever clothes you have. Nobody is going to buy you anymore, until you marry. Then your husband will take care of you (Emecheta, 1976, p. 36).

The implication of Auntie Uzo's warning is that a fatherless girl's only option of existence is marriage, the only way of redemption and for Aku-nna, it would be sooner than later. This is what can be clearly gleaned from Auntie Matilda's speech when she expressed her concern for little Aku-nna: "The pity of it all... is that they will marry her off very quickly in order to get enough more to pay Nna-nndo's school fees" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 36). These pronouncements by Uzo and Matilda, both older women are geared towards preparing Aku-nna to accept the reality of the gender inequality in their tradition, and the fact that Aku-nna has already reviewed and accepted such an outcome in her life makes her an agency of perpetuating the supremacy of patriarchal gender ideology.

The women-folk generally believes that Aku-nna would marry a rich man because she has lived and schooled in Lagos. Auntie Uzo said this when she reminded Auntie Matilda: "...Most girls from Lagos are very quickly married away to rich and educated men because of their smooth bodies and their schooling" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 36). Here, there is a hint of the feminine body as an object of pleasure. The agency consciousness reaches its height when Auntie Matilda declares for the benefit of Aku-nna: "This is the fate of us women. There is nothing we can do about it. We just

have to learn to accept it" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 37). This goes to show that Emecheta's *The Bride Price* rather than promoting female consciousness and aspirations, has been insidiously used to limit female consciousness while promoting acceptance of patriarchal culture and Aku-nna now realizes that her two aunts were saying these in other "to prepare her for what was coming... intensified her fear of the unknown" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 37). In other words, they have succeeded in reversing the gains of feminist consciousness and female ideology.

Even though Aku-nna is older than Nna-nndo, it is he rather than she whom their uncles consult to decide on how they wish their father to be buried. Uncle Richard consults Nna-nndo and tells him:

...our brother lying down there is dead, but he is not dead. He has left a man behind him. He may be a very young man now, a little boy, but in a few years' time we shall forget the first Ezekiel Odia; we shall remember and speak of his son Nna-nndo because he will grow to do great things (Emecheta, 1976, p. 39).

There is a clear indication of gender bias here as Nna-nndo's sex gives him a very clear advantage and recognition over Aku-nna. It is his gender that confers on him the right to choose "...which group of mourners do you wish to stay by your dead father?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 39). Even though uncle Richard would have preferred traditional Ibuza mourners to stay with the body of Ezekiel Odia, they respected and accepted Nna-nndo's choice of a Christian funeral for Ezekiel Odia since Nna-nndo was the only heir according to the tradition and custom of Ibuza people. By implication even if Aku-nna had felt otherwise, she would have to accept his choice as sacrosanct because he is a male child and heir to Ezekiel Odia and her an insignificant girl who would be married off.

Ma Blackie's readiness "to go home to Ibuza to have her fertility recharged" smacks of gender agency (Emecheta, 1976, p. 40). It means that women in Emecheta's narrative are the agency for the affirmation of the supremacy of patriarchal tradition. The burial of Ezekiel Odia at the cemetery at Igbobi in Lagos was interesting; it was a mixture of the Christian and the traditional "... all became a confusion" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 42). Ozubu, Okonkwo's second wife's discussion with Ma Blackie is instructive after Ma Blackie returned from the dibia, native doctor where she went to recharge her fertility. Ozubu complained that her husband Okonkwo cares little about her since he married Ezebona:

I know that Ezebona is young and still new as his wife, but they don't seem to care what other people seem to think. When I was new, he had not had me all that long before I was pregnant with his son. I don't know where that dry stick Ezebona is going to get children from (Emecheta, 1976, p. 45).

There are several deductions from this discussion. The first is that pregnancy or the birth of a son soon after marriage defines the woman's identity. Another is that Ezebona should not be enjoying her wifely privileges for not getting pregnant quickly for Okonkwo. All these reflections coming from Ozuba, another woman implies that women in this narrative are an agency of patriarchal traditions. In other words, there is no active resistance from the female consciousness that resists patriarchal culture. In the face of male supremacy women are subdued as Ma Blackie in the presence of Okonkwo, Ezekiel's elder brother:

Ma Blackie, he affirmed, was to stay in Ibuza and have her system purified by the clear and unpolluted water from the Oboshi river; the river and the goddess of the river were gifts to all Ibuza people from the greater gods (Emecheta, 1976, p. 46).

It is instructive to note that men decide, and women can only affirm and obey. In this instance, Emecheta adopts the narrative technique of mysticism and spiritualism to comment on the authority of patriarchal culture in the subjection of women. This is one technique which African writers have exploited in imaginative literature, the use of mythology, magic and the fetish. The use of this narrative tool gives reality to the African world. As Elechi Amadi asserts: "Mysticism and spiritualism are integral and inseparable parts of the African epistemology; and treatment of African ideas in creative works must bear this fundamental fact in mind" (qt. in Ezeigbo, 2019, p. 12). This narrative technique of the mystic has its full expression in Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard*. Through this narrative tool of mysticism and spiritualism Emecheta comments on the supremacy of patriarchal gender order, which has also been affirmed by the female goddess Oboshi; because the authority is sustained by male gods who are "the greater gods" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 46). This makes women agency to the propagation of patriarchal culture. The shaving of the woman's hair that has lost her husband is one aspect of the culture of Ibuza people which women themselves endorse. For example, Ma Blackie returned to Lagos from Ibuzu to see what has become

of her husband and children "Busy hands unthreaded her hair. She was stripped of her clothes and given older, torn sets to put on" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 50). Here, the unthreading of hair and the wearing of old clothes is a metaphor for mourning which the writer uses to comment on Ma Blackie's change in marital status.

The fact that women themselves are the engineers of adherence to this patriarchal culture shows Emecheta's women are the agency of the supremacy of patriarchal ideals. Even young Aku-nna, the heroine of the narrative, at this time is willing to subject herself to the tradition of Ibuza people because "She knew she would have to marry, and that the bride price she would fetch would help to pay the school fees for her brother Nna-nndo... What she feared was the type of man who would be chosen for her" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 51). In this instance, Emecheta adopts the narrative tool of stream of consciousness technique to reveal what is going on in Aku-nna's mind and how she thinks her father's untimely death will alter her entire life and choices because of her gender. From this type of consciousness coming from the heroine, one can conclude that rather than empowering her women to resist patriarchal oppression and the traditional suppression of women's right to make choices in marriage, the narrative becomes a tool through which women are socialized into the acceptance of the supremacy of patriarchal tradition.

In most African cultural societies, the feminine flesh is always used as an object of pleasure for men and then mocked: Aku-nna wondered why girls along this road never bothered to cover the tops of their bodies, and mostly wore nothing except some coloured loin cloth. Of course, the traders composed lyrics about girls with mosquito legs, girls with breast like pumpkins, girls with hair on their chests:

...songs about this town, her wine and her young girls with breasts as big as calabashes (Emecheta, 1976, p. 59).

The narrative tools adopted in the above passage include figurative expressions mainly the use of figurative words like simile and metaphor. With these narrative tools Emecheta highlights the beauty of the female body as an object of adoration in Ibuza patriarchal society. As Aku-nna would observe Asaba and Ibuza women were out of touch with modern fashion because "... they wore their headscarves tied at what seemed to Aku-nna funny angles. They were out of touch with Lagos fashions..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 60).

As if Emecheta intends to use her narrative to socialize the female-folk into accepting patriarchal tradition, the male characters in the narrative use female consciousness to affirm male actions. As they approached Asaba in the early hours of the morning, the passengers saw some men on the road returning to their houses, Aku-nna noticed that all the men traders were all returning into the town. As if to school herself properly into the culture of male supremacy "Ma Blackie explained to her that most rich traders kept mistresses there, and when they arrived so early, they went to the houses of their girlfriends to spend the rest of the night" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 60). There was no condemnation in Ma Blackie's voice, little wonder "This revelation shocked Aku-nna a little..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 60).

Again, in furtherance of the role of women as agency in the narrative, the fourteen year old cousin of Aku-nna, Ogugua tells Aku-nna on arrival to Ibuza that: "...We shall be like sisters, especially if your mother chooses to be with my father" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 63). This shows that little Aku-nna has been well indoctrinated into the culture of her people. When Aku-nna expresses reservation at the turn of events following her father's death, Ogugua boldly tells her: "You're almost fourteen years old now and you still don't know the customs of our Ibuza people? Your mother is inherited by my father...just as he will inherit everything your father worked for" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 63). Note that Ogugua's personal narrative is told using the first person narrative style like one who has gained personal experience of the requirements of culture. The implications of Ogugua's perceptive assertion is that she and other women in the village have been schooled and indoctrinated into traditional Ibuza culture, and that Ma Blackie like any other item possessed by Ezekiel Odia before his death will now be inherited by his brother, Okonkwo. This outcome shocked little Aku-nna whose consciousness queried: "How can my mother fit into that type of life?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 63). The fact that Ma Blackie perfectly fitted into this arrangement without protest shows that women are agency in this narrative for lack of resisting consciousness. Ogugua even tells Aku-nna about a particular woman in their entourage who had only a daughter after eleven years of marriage before her husband's death. That woman has now been inherited "...by her husband's brother... she has everything she wants now, even a son" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 65).

The above sentiments from a fourteen-year-old female child confirm that the narrative sets out to socialize the girl child into the traditional culture. Here Ogugua's aim is to educate Aku-nna about their traditional Ibuza culture and to rely on that culture to tell her why they would be "...

like sisters..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 63). Again Ogugua uses this particular moment of self-awakening to educate her cousin who has never been to Ibuza about the importance of the male child in their society. Therefore, any marriage without a male child is failed marriage and the woman will not be "very happy" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 65). In other words, the girl child is socialized into accepting and conforming to the reality of gender imbalance in Emecheta's narrative.

Then returning to Ibuza after Ezekial Odia's death marked a romantic encounter in the life of the heroine Aku-nna. Buchi Emecheta has used the narrative structure to thwart to her romantic aspirations in order to confirm the supremacy of patriarchal tradition. Coming in contact with Chike Ofulue made her to begin to express her filial romantic feelings: "Aku-nna looked at the man. He had called them children, but he was not so old himself. Maybe eighteen or nineteen" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 66). Again, to justify that the female body is an object of pleasure, Ogugua tells Aku-nna when she refuses to bath at the Atakpo stream because the traders who offered to give them a ride that "...The teacher has seen scores of naked women having baths. Why should your particular body be more interesting... he has had lots of mistresses and girlfriends" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 70). From this perspective one can argue that Emecheta's narrative seeks to socialize the female gender into fulfilling the roles of satisfying male pleasure and therefore the narrative is an agency of patriarchal gender expectations.

In Ibuza culture, there are procedures to ensure the perpetual subjugation of women which women themselves willingly submitted to such as the cutting of a lock of hair from the woman to ensure ownership forever and Ezekiel Odia, despite his Christian upbringing ensured this about Ma Blackie:

... Ezekiel Odia, to ensure that his wife would always be his, had taken the precaution of cutting a lock of hair from Ma Blackie's head and keeping it as evidence. Once a man had taken this step, his wife could never leave him, for to do so would be to commit an abomination... if the husband died must mourn for nine moons (Emecheta, 1976, p. 71).

To show that women are an agency, it is the women who insist on maintaining the culture as they are the ones who quarrel over how Ma Blackie is to dress in her period of mourning: "She must never have a bathe... she must wear continually the same old smoked rags" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 72). The women in Emecheta's narrative are the enforcers of these traditions,

to properly place women in tradition. In other words, women participate in their own cultural oppression. Okonkwo is set on capitalizing on the role of women as agency to achieve his aims: "...the Eze title which could be his as soon as he had sufficient money. His sights were already set on his brother's wife, his brother's property and the bride price his brother's daughter would fetch..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 72). In essence, Okonkwo is already beginning to assess both Ma Blackie and Aku-nna in terms of their economic values to his chieftaincy ambitions and for this reason: "he decided that Ma Blackie should be allowed to have her way" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 72). And because of this compromise, nine months after Ezekiel's death: "she was visited at night by Okonkwo. She became his fourth wife" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 73). This is the scenario that Emecheta has been preparing his readers for and Ma Blackie herself accepted her new role, as a property to be inherited by Okonkwo. Okonkwo's other wives were active agents of female marginalization because they were not angry at their husband's behaviour. They were only angry because Aku-nna is going to school as they reasoned in their consciousness:

Ma Blackie... belonged to the elite, for her children attended school, and this was a bone of contention between Okonkwo and his other wives and children. They could stomach Nna-nndo's going to school for he was a boy, and also his father had left over one hundred pounds in savings and had joined a progressive Ibuza group called the Pioneer Association... (Emecheta, 1976, p. 74).

Therefore, as it seems the major worry of the other women in Okonkwo's household is that a girl child has been given the benefit of education. They only relented when they realized that it fitted Okonkwo's 'Eze' ambition because she would fetch a higher bride price to help Okonkwo realize his 'Eze' aspirations. In other words, the narrative rather than raising the consciousness of Nigerian women ended up preparing them for the social roles Nigerian society has assigned to women. To press home her opposition, Iloba, one of Okonkwo's wives had told her husband: "Yes, I know you can do nothing thing about the boy. But what of that thing... Aku-nna! Why waste money on her? (Emecheta, 1976, p. 74). In reaction one of his wife's protests, Okonkwo tried to pacify his wife's anger by telling her: "Her mother pays for her. And she surely won't be going on to any college" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 75).

Therefore, in Emecheta's narrative, it is women who are the obstacles to women advancement and liberation from cultural oppression. To fur-



ther convince his wife Iloba, Okonkwo tells her of how the strategy fits into his kingship plans: "Aku-nna and Ogugua will get married at about the same time. Their bride prices will come to me. You see the trend today, that the educated girls fetch more money" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 75). Therefore, allowing Aku-nna to attend school is only utilitarian aimed to promoting male ego: "His sons were pacified and wondered to themselves at the cleverness and experience their father had just displayed" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 75). So Aku-nna would continue to attend school: "...Aku-nna had had to be allowed to stay in school so that she could be married to a rich man..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 75). There is the use of the device of irony here. Ironically, it is women who attach economic value to women's education, as Iloba, reminds Ngbeke, Okonkwo's senior wife:

Did you not hear that the first doctor we have in this town is going to marry a girl from Ogwashi-Ukwu? And her parents are asking the doctor to pay nearly two hundred pounds for her bride price... She is a nurse and works in hospital looking after women who give birth to children... People who have seen her say she is not particularly beautiful... (Emecheta, 1976, p. 76).

From Iloba's tone of voice, there is a satisfaction from the women when the girl child fetches a higher bride price for the family as Ngbeke's contribution shows: "Ummm... but it is a great deal of money to pay for an ordinary woman... I won't mind if Aku-nna fetches such large sum. I could do with some money" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 76). It is Ogugua who informed her mother that Aku-nna is now her father's daughter and while doing so invoked the authority of tradition: "But, mother, Aku-nna is like a daughter to him now. In fact according to native law and custom, she is his daughter. Has our father not slept with her mother?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 77). According to this thinking, the fact that Okonkwo has inherited Ma Blackie transfers the right of the fatherhood of the children and so gives him unquestioning right to make decisions concerning their lives, especially the right to decide what to do with Aku-nna's bride price. That Emecheta's women have been socialized into this cultural code means that they are an agency of affirming patriarchal traditions.

For daring to think and look different from other girls of her age Aku-nna is being accused of being an "obanje" child by the womenfolk. Iloba verbalized this feeling when she asked Ngbeke: "mother do you think that girl might be an obanje?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 79). Aku-nna's crime at this moment is that she appears to be independent and assertive, a difference



from the docility of Emecheta's women in this narrative. That makes other women in Okonkwo's household to congregate and label her an obanje. Ngbeke was emphatic about her discovery when she stated: "YES, I am sure she is one... She is different..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 79). To be an 'obanje' in Ibuza is to be like living death, waiting for when they will pleasurably cause their mother pain and sorrow with their deaths. All these accusations coming from fellow women in this narrative classify women as an agency of patriarchal tradition that limits female aspiration. These limitations are meant to thwart Aku-nna's romantic and filial aspirations with Chike Ofulue, who is rejected in Ibuza tradition as a potential suitor because he is considered as *oshu* by tradition, but for Aku-nna Chike has captured her romantic dreams: "Chike Ofulue told her that she was valued, treasured and loved" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 83).

Surprisingly, from this moment Emecheta manipulates the narrative structure not only to defeat but also to destroy and kill Aku-nna's romantic spirit because it challenges the traditional belief that rejects any form of filial union between the daughter of a free born and the son of a slave (an *oshu*) and in the end, the narrative affirms this, thereby affirming the supremacy of traditional culture, despite the fact that: "We are all equal in the sight of the Lord" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 84).

The origin of Chike was abominable in the eyes of Ibuza people because his grandmother was captured from Ubulu-ukwu in the ages past into the household of the Ofulues: "By the time her master died and she had to be buried alive with him, she had already borne four sons and two daughters. The girls were sold, but the rightful son of Ofulue retained all the boys" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 84). By the consequences of this traditional wickedness, all the descendants of these boys and daughters became *oshu* or abomination in the eyes of the society. Not even the social advancement of the individuals involved can repair the social stigma: "Most of the slaves whom the missionaries took in were to become the first teachers, headmasters, and later their children became the first doctors and lawyers in many Igbo towns" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 84). It is for this reason that Chike is disqualified from marrying Aku-nna, despite being in love with her, and Emecheta uses the narrative structure of the text to affirm the supremacy of this cultural practice. For Chike, ordinarily his lineage from the "ashu" slave family did not worry him too much, for as he reasoned: "Had not his family produced many professional men? Did not his half brothers and sisters own the biggest and longest cars the town of Ibuza had ever seen?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 84).

Yet despite these achievements and more, the senior Ofulue, Chike's father understands the restrictions tradition has placed on his family because in the eyes of tradition: "...they were still slaves, *ashu*" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 86). Because he understands the intricacies of the tradition on the position of his ancestors, he fears for his son's romantic relationships with Aku-nna and seeks to discourage him because he knew that Ibuza culture would thwart their aspirations:

Now he cautioned Chike. "I went to school with Ezekiel Odia. I was a senior when he was still learning his ABC. I would not like a son of mine to bring shame on his only daughter. I saw the way you were looking at her in church—everybody noticed it. But I beg you not to spoil the girl!" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 86).

In other words, the senior Ofulue's concern about his son's romantic feelings towards Aku-nna is due mainly to the acceptance of the infallibility of the custom and tradition of Ibuza people. However, Chike and Aku-nna are willing to let their romantic spirit challenge this oppressive and obnoxious tradition. Try they did, but in the end, they are defeated because Emecheta insists on the supremacy of patriarchal tradition.

The pattern of events with his father worried Chike, and he angrily demanded of his father: "Is she not a girl to be married some day?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 88). Chike's reaction to his father's caution underscores his determination to reject and challenge the obnoxious designation of his person as '*ashu*' and the whole caste system contrary to his father's acceptance of his classification by the tradition of Ibuza people. Interestingly, Chike pins his romantic aspirations of success on the Western culture: "This was the age of the white man's law...if you did not want trouble for yourself or your family, you abided by the laws of the white man" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 89). Chike's love for Aku-nna was built on genuine trust, on helping her advance her educational career so that she could be socially and economically empowered in the society, and Aku-nna comes to appreciate this and so responded to his romantic feelings which were like a shield to her. Chike encouraged Aku-nna to work hard at her studies and pass her final examination so that she could become a teacher because if she failed, he told her: "...you know as well as I do that your people would never let you sit it again" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 91). Here, Chike's perception is due mainly to his understanding of the gender imbalance in the society where the male child is given more opportunities of education than the girl child. Chike's deep love and romantic

attachment made him resolve: "... to marry this girl, even if it meant breaking all the Laws of Ibuza" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 94).

As if nature was preparing Chike for Aku-nna, it was Chike who first noticed Aku-nna's first menstrual circle and nursed her: "You wait here, he said, letting her go gently. 'I'll get you something from the first-aid kit. Sit down where you were before. I shall not be long" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 94). In Ibuza culture, a woman's menstrual circle is an abomination: "And when a woman was unclean, she must not go to the stream, she must not enter a household where the man of the family had either the 'Eze' or 'Ala' title—her uncle Okonkwo had the latter" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 95). It is an abomination for the female child not to comply to these traditional rules because there are very severe consequences—the offending female individual might not be killed immediately: "... but Ibuza people had ways, psychological measures to eliminate those who committed the abominable alu" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 95). By implications Emecheta seems to be justifying the feminine body as a sports or object of pleasure for the male gender. The girl child is expected to accept this as part of her growing up and socialization:

...boys who came to their hut for night games would begin trooping in—their customs allowed this. Boys would into your mother's hut and play at squeezing a girl's breast until they hurt; the girl was supposed to try as much as possible to ward them off and not be bad-tempered about it (Emecheta, 1976, p. 99).

For Aku-nna, her romantic feeling for Chike was deep: "All she wanted was to make him happy, to make him realise that his being an outcast did not matter to her" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 100). But the narrative structure seeks to obstruct this romantic ideal and to affirm traditional values as supreme. For instance, Aku-nna and her age grade understand that:

Some youth who had no money to pay for a bride might sneak out of the bush to cut a curl from a girl's head so that she would belong to him for life and never be able to return to her parents; because he had given her the everlasting haircut, he would be able to treat her as he liked, and no other man would ever touch her (Emecheta, 1976, p. 106).

The conscious reality of this culture for the first time makes the young girls to band together to protect themselves against predatory males. Their bonding is not due to a conscious desire to resist this culture. In their consciousness, they have accepted this cultural value as supreme.

Interestingly, Chike's vision of love for Aku-nna is immersed in elemental romantic ideals. For this vision empowers him to challenge his father's alternative plans. He makes it known to him that: "... he was not about to leave for any university without Aku-nna". He had politely told his father "... to keep his money. He and Aku-nna would manage somehow. What was the point of getting a degree anyway... it would not necessarily make him a happier person" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 107). Therefore, Chike's vision for Aku-nna is steeped in elemental and romantic affiliations. For this reason, his father had begged his mother to convince him to give up Aku-nna because as he reasoned: "there were many fishes in water..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 108). When Aku-nna eventually became a full-grown woman, it was a thing of joy friends and family alike, especially to her cousin, Ogugua because "...Aku-nna would fetch a big sum because she had attended school so long" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 113). But Aku-nna pulled by Chike's elemental love knew that there would be no other man in her life: "She felt like boasting that... it was Chike and nobody else—they must all know about the friendship between her and Chike" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 113). And on the basis of this romantic love she is prepared to commit *ife ala* or abomination against patriarchal tradition if marrying Chike was what it meant, and she will stick with her choice of spouse: "She thought of Chike... of his gentle caresses and low sad voices, of his eyes which mirrored all the worries in her mind" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 114).

In the above extract, Aku-nna is responding to Chike's elemental feelings which she believes will dare and defeat Ibuza culture and usher in the era of modern liberal spirit. As the girls crossed the river on their way home, their attention was drawn to the scene where an old man was telling his audience the story of his life's misery: "My first wife ran away... because I beat her up. My second wife died when she was having a child. My third one had to go, because I fed her for seven entire years and she bore me no child" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 114).

The man's narrative typifies the agony of women in marriage in patriarchal Nigerian societies such as the Igbo tradition. In addition, there are important gender implications in the old man's story. The first is that the man has the right, conferred by tradition to beat his wife. The second is that a woman's value is tied to her proclivity in marriage. This is very clear when one of the female listeners told the old man he should not have sent his third wife away because she was a good cook. In reply to this comment, the old man affirmed: "Yes, she does cook well, but I also want a child.

*A male child as fat as a plum yam to inherit all my properties*" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 115, emphasis mine). There is clear stress on gender imbalance in the old man's discourse. The fact that Emecheta makes Aku-nna and other young female characters congregate to listen to the old man's narrative means that she probably uses the story to socialize the female sex into the supremacy of male values and to instil these cultural values into their consciousness. Therefore, the old man's narrative at the Atakpo stream smacks of gender bias and Emecheta as events would show uses it to endorse the supremacy of patriarchal culture.

Chike becomes more worried with time. Chike's source of worry or unhappiness is the possibility of Ibuza tradition thwarting his romantic inclinations for Aku-nna. And as if in equal elemental feelings Aku-nna begins to experience the same feelings of unhappiness:

Those brown eyes that had a way of reflecting everything around her now looked very frightened. She looked at him appealingly, then quickly began to stare at the cracked ground, aware that they were now being shamelessly watched as they were surrounded by human silence (Emecheta, 1976, p. 117–118).

Here, Emecheta captures Aku-nna's apprehensions using symbolic tools and the metaphoric expressions. The word "cracked ground" is a metaphor that reflects the difficulty in their journey to true love. It also symbolizes the obstacles imposed by patriarchal tradition of Ibuza society to the search for true love. As time progressed the elemental feelings of love between Chike and Aku-nna grew in regularity and intensity, dreaming of a place "... to where they would be all by themselves like savages of old, he hunting for their food, she waiting at their abode to receive his love and to give him hers" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 118). These outpouring of emotions typify the romantic spirit of elemental love which the Brontë sisters have so elegantly explored in their narratives. As if the narrative structure of the text is geared towards defeating these romantic outpouring of love: "The news of the happenings on the farm had preceded the girls home, as had the speculation that Chike Ofulue, the son of a slave, had looked at the daughter of a free-born Ibuza citizen with desirous eyes" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 118). The news of Aku-nna's maturity into womanhood pleased her step-father, Okonkwo, because he would soon have his bride price and to celebrate his good fortune, he "presented her with a hen that had been protesting violently in his clutch" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 119).

Again, the choice of hen is instructive. It is symbolic and gendered and Okonkwo exploits it as a symbol to show his symbolic power: "Now the entire bride price would come to him" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 119). This thinking is based on the culture because he has inherited Ma Blackie and has fulfilled Ma Blackie's dream of having a child again: "Had he not given Ma Blackie the child he had been craving for year?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 119). This seems to suggest that a woman's value is in relation to her proclivity and women themselves have been socialized to accepting this as normal that is why Ma Blackie seemed satisfied with herself with Okonkwo.

The only conscious female character who represents feminine gender is Aku-nna. She voices her frustration about patriarchal cultural restrictions because: "she was not allowed a say in her own life and was beginning to hate her mother for being so passive about it all. Fancy her mother advising her to forget Chike and do as she was told..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 120). The implication of this complaint is that Ma Blackie has become an active agency of the supremacy of patriarchal institution, and this is what worries Aku-nna about her mother. Because of this lack of consciousness in the life of Ma Blackie, Aku-nna begins to loathe her and became livid about the hen given to her by Okonkwo to celebrate her maturity into womanhood. For this other women began to criticize her. For instance, Okonkwo's second wife, Ozuba was angry with Aku-nna and "began to scold and tell her in a clamorous voice how ungrateful she was" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 120).

Again, it is Emecheta's women who want to quench the ember of female consciousness in Aku-nna in support of patriarchal tradition. Even Ezebona, Okonkwo's youngest wife told "Aku-nna to mind her ways... looked at her with so much hate that she was forced to assume a serious and concerned expression" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 121). Aku-nna's total rejection of Ibuza culture and tradition is tied to her earnest wish to be Chike's wife and no others. This is a strong romantic affiliation which is relayed in her dual voice that rejects the entire Ibuza culture that seeks to thwart her romantic aspirations: "Her heart ached and tears began to well up in her eyes again, this time because it looked as if she was going to be trapped into a marriage that she was helpless to prevent. God please kill me instead... rather than let this be happening to me" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 122). This wish shows that Aku-nna's heart is romantically attached to Chikes, so does her body: "Her mind ached for Chike, and so did her body" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 122). But in Ibuza tradition Aku-nna's romantic feelings for Chike "was the result of an infatuation she would grow out of...

For what sane person would ever consider sharing her life with a slave?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 123). It is in this area that Aku-nna seeks to transform Ibuza culture and tradition. Unfortunately, Emecheta's feminist consciousness fails her abysmally when she sides with tradition and defeats Aku-nna's romantic affiliations. And worst still, Ma Blackie gave Aku-nna no support in her determination to fight Ibuza patriarchal tradition, and this surprised Aku-nna "...that here now was this same mother of hers standing up and telling these people that Chike was not going to be the man for her daughter" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 126). At this point Aku-nna felt betrayed at her Ma Blackie's hypocrisy: "The bitterness Aku-nna was feeling had gone beyond tears. She had heard it said often that one's mother was one's best friend, but she was beginning to doubt it" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 126).

In doing so, Aku-nna's consciousness judged Ma Blackie guilty of fraud for initially encouraging her friendship with Chike that made both of them to invest their emotions, and now here was her turning against them because of patriarchal restrictions. She however, pitied her mother's helplessness, just as she rejects the entire primitive culture when she asserts: "Oh, what kind of savage custom was it that could be so heartless and make so many people unhappy" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 126). But, in spite of this Aku-nna's feelings belonged to Chike as her dual voice reveals: "...Chike was one of those men whom women would always feel like cherishing and protecting, whether they turned out to be murderers, smugglers, or even sons of slaves" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 129). In this context, Aku-nna moralizes her love for Chike and articulates why Ibuza culture must bend.

The kidnapping of Aku-nna for a forced marriage with Okoboshi was painful to Aku-nna upon realization: "The realization was so painful, and the men carrying her moved so rapidly... when she arrived at her new home in Umueze, Aku-nna was a limp bride in need of revival" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 131). Interestingly in this night of kidnapping, Aku-nna's and Chike's souls reunited in elemental romantic love. In another direction on his way home, the two hearts merged: "He stopped suddenly. He felt that somebody somewhere was calling out his name.... He shuddered and would have run, but the call came again. This time the voice was clear: it was Aku-nna's" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 135). And as a result of this feeling Chike wept bitterly into his father's chest as the old man understood the pain in his heart: "Every tear seemed to hit the older man like the sharp end of a hot needle" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 135).

To show that patriarchal society endorsed the shameful act of kidnapping women to be forcefully married: "... three male members of the Obidi



family came to disclose to Okonkwo that his stepdaughter Aku-nna was lying peacefully on the mud couch specially prepared for her and her husband Okoboshi" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 138). And after some kegs of palm-wine, and the promise of a reasonable sum of bride price Okonkwo was satisfied. In the end the visitors departed: "... as reasonably happy in-laws, whilst the women slept" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 138). Here as elsewhere there is a note of docility from Ma Blackie and the other women, whereas a feeling of satisfaction from the men folk. In the end, it was another woman, Okoboshi's mother who explained to Aku-nna the reason for her kidnap:

You are not to worry. We shall send a message to your mother... my husband decided to get you for our boy this way because we saw and heard of the part that slave boy wanted to play in your life. No girl from a family as good as yours would dream of marrying a slave (Emecheta, 1976, p. 139).

Moreover, to show that women are agency in this narrative, all the other women affirmed, not minding the psychological trauma they were inflicting on Aku-nna: "Oh, no, chorused the other women, shaking their heads. 'It is never done'" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 139). In other words, Aku-nna's kidnapping for Okoboshi is justified on the ground that: "... it was their custom..." (Emecheta, 1976, p. 141). Yet despite the authority of culture being deployed against her romantic aspirations, Aku-nna is determined to fight: "... she was not going to be a willing bed partner to somebody she did not love and who had never spoken a single kind word to her in her whole life" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 141). For Aku-nna her decision on a life partner hinges on love and romantic feelings.

Aku-nna's romantic feelings towards Chike can be deduced from her reaction when Chike whistled his love song from his hiding place: "Her numbed mind came alive. It was the one song which Chike always called her, it was their message and their love song" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 141). And the knowledge of this gave her strength and she resolved that "If ever she got out of this alive; there was no man for her but Chike, slave or no slave" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 142). Evidently it is her elemental love—the joining of her soul with Chike's soul that gives "her determination" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 142). It is this determination to belong exclusively to Chike that she used as a strategy to thwart Okoboshi from sleeping with her by lying to him that the supposedly slave boy, Chike had done so several times, hence Okoboshi told her, he never on his own wanted her but for his father: "My father wanted you simply to get even with his old enemy Ofulue, your slave



lover's father. So, you are not a virgin!" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 145). And for this Aku-nna became a mockery in the eyes of the people, most of them women who even predicted her death for going against the tradition of Ibuza culture, as they declared: "Nobody goes against the laws of the land and survives" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 148). Rather sadly, Emecheta in the end uses the narrative structure to affirm this stark patriarchal prophecy. Then Aku-nna's escape from hostage was due to her love attachment with Chike who had risked his life to rescue her from the Obidi hostage camp as she went to the latrine at the bush "near the *owele*... she was being held tightly by Chike—he seemed to breathe life into her, giving her exhausted body the energy, it lacked" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 151). This escape is due mainly to the elemental bond driving the lovers. They were able to elope to Ugheli, near Asaba in present Delta State to start life as husband and wife, a culmination of their romantic love. As Chike planned to leave Ibuza for good where tradition held sway, one thing was clear on his romantic mind: "he was leaving and he was taking Aku-nna with him, even if she had been married to twenty Okoboshis" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 154). This is the spirit of undying love which is the essence of classical romantic fiction. Chike's genuine love for Aku-nna is displayed in his willingness to bring Nna-nndo to live with them so as to continue his education and the desire to make Ma Blackie financially independent of Okonkwo. In appreciation, Aku-nna declared: "I shall always love and love you, in this world and in the next and the next after that until the end of time" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 156).

Aku-nna's responses and Chike's action towards her is defined by the bond of love between them. Their love shines like the sun and that makes the driver who carried them from the market to their new house to comment: "... he foresaw nothing but happiness for the two of them" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 159). This radiance of love made their host and neighbour, Adegor who came to help them to declare: "Therefore I christen this bed 'Joy'" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 159). Even in his moment of trial when Aku-nna was being kidnapped, Chike boldly tells his father "... that all he wanted was the girl's heart and happiness, and as long as he had those there was little else, he desired" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 160). During the night of their first love making as husband and wife, Chike discovered to his shock and elation that Aku-nna was still a virgin despite the stories being circulated in Ibuza, making Chike to ask: "And you suffered all that disgrace for nothing, knowing you were innocent?" (Emecheta, 1976, p. 161). Aku-nna's desire to suffer humiliation in Ibuza society was just to forestall Okoboshi and preserve her purity for her lover, Chike. In response to Chike's question Aku-nna replied: "I love

you, Chike—please teach me how to give you joy” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 161). The sincerity of her love awakened in Chike a deep sense of gratitude for the girl who endured shame to show him love. And he exclaimed to the injustice of it all: “Your people must know this... Your name must be cleared. My father must be told. This is scandalous!” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 161). In those few words Chike’s incisive mind indicts the patriarchal foundation of Ibuza tradition. In reaction to this Aku-nna wishes that Chike would just pay her bride price in line with Ibuza patriarchal tradition and tells Chike: “...Just give them their bride price in peace, because you know what they say: if the bride price is not paid, the bride will die at childbirth” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 161). Aku-nna’s reaction here is mainly due to cultural indoctrination and socialization and proves that her marriage to Chike is due to the romantic pole and stresses her agency to the affirmation of patriarchal values, which is what this narrative sets out to achieve.

However in Ibuza, it is believed that Aku-nna still belonged to Okoboshi because he had lied to them that he had slept with her and found her empty, meaning she was not a virgin and then proceeded to lie that “he had cut a lock of her hair—some stray curls were produced as evidence—and so, according to their laws and customs, she could not get away from her husband” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 162). This thinking rooted in patriarchal tradition made Okonkwo to reject Aku-nna’s bride price from the Ofulue’s family and Ibuza people sought consolation in the fact that Aku-nna had not married Chike because “... Okonkwo did not accept any bride price from the slave, the girl still belonged to Okoboshi” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 162). In their eyes and the eyes of their tradition, Aku-nna could never return to Ibuza “because she had committed an abomination” (Emecheta, 1976, p. 162). According to Ibuza custom and tradition Aku-nna would die during childbirth because Okonkwo had refused to accept Chike’s bride price. Nevertheless, her parting word to her husband on her death bed underscores the triumph of the romantic spirit over Ibuza patriarchal traditions, as she tells Chike:

... I told you that I would not keep our love a secret. Now with our little girl, everybody will know. They will all know how passionately we love each other. Our love will never die... Let us call her Joy too, the same name we gave to the bed on which she was conceived (Emecheta, 1976, p. 176).

Aku-nna’s dying word shows that romantic elemental love has in fact confronted patriarchal Ibuza culture. But that she should die during

her first childbirth because her bride price was never collected by her stepfather, Okonkwo means that Emecheta's narrative, *The Bride Price* has been used to question romantic love and affirm the supremacy of patriarchal tradition.

## Conclusion

The paper studies the role of women as an agency in the affirmation of male values in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*. It is observed that agency in this narrative undermined feminist consciousness, the ideology of female liberation and the positive aspirations of the female individual.

In the novel, marriage, especially the payment of the bride price in Igbo society, the narrative setting is a symbol of limiting the woman's choice in the institution of marriage, more so in traditional societies like Nigeria.

I have argued in this paper that women are integral parts of the society, who however have had their romantic aspirations limited and repudiated by patriarchal culture and in *The Bride Price* Emecheta used women as an agency to validate obnoxious patriarchal traditions which put women in check and discomfort, through the prism of the bride price.

Finally, as we have shown, Emecheta's narrative affirms patriarchal tradition, which inhibits the growth of female consciousness and romantic inclinations in marriage through the imposition of the symbolic totem of the bride price as affirmed by patriarchy.

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## **Representation of the Empowered Woman in Bode Ojoniyi's *Our Wife Has Gone Mad*: An Issue in National Development**

**ABSTRACT.** Bode Ojoniyi is one of the few male playwrights who have shown great interest in the female question in contemporary Nigerian society. The female protagonist in Bode Ojoniyi's play is an assertive, strong, educationally empowered woman who has transcended the private life to the fore of public life, where she contributes to the socio-economic and human development of the nation. This study examines the image of an educationally empowered female protagonist in the drama of Bode Ojoniyi and the methods used by Ojoniyi in representing her to determine the implication of the playwright's style and technique on both the audience's response as well as human and national development. To achieve the above objectives, Bode Ojoniyi's play, *Our Wife Has Gone Mad*, which emphasizes a professional female character, is critically analyzed to reveal the intricate relationship of character, subject matter and style in determining the overall message of the play.

**KEYWORDS:** patriarchy, gender, equality, oppression, farce

### **Introduction**

The biggest challenge facing women in the world today is patriarchy. This is especially obvious in the family where gender roles are clearly spelt out. Therefore, both men and women are expected to live up to their culturally assigned roles. Any attempt by women to break out from the chrysalis of patriarchy is usually frowned upon. Regardless of a woman's education, experience or abilities, the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society fosters the perception that women are less qualified and less competent than men. This is because, according to Nonyelum Chibuzo Mba (2015, p. 96): "Africa, precisely Nigeria has cultural roles assigned to both men and women". The social roles in traditional African society seem to position men at the centre of life where they wield unrestricted power in both public and private life. From the traditional point of view, according

to Helena Hassan (1992, p. 5) “women have been given specific roles, well defined as wife, mother, sister, co-wife, in-law, daughter, grandmother and widow which are supposedly subordinate and inferior to the man’s and they entail carrying out of all the daily burdens of life”.

The status of women too, all over the world, but particularly in Nigeria, has been undergoing rapid changes in the recent decades. This phenomenon, therefore, has drawn the attention of literary artists, theorists and sociologists. According to Ruby Davaseeli (2011, p. 30):

the change in the position of women in any society is a reliable pointer to social change in general. The modern woman has awakened into a new realization of her place and position in family and society, is conscious of her individuality. She has been trying to assert and ascertain her right as a human being and is determined to fight for equal treatment with men.

Irrespective of the changing status of women, studies have shown that although some Nigerian drama by men has strong female characters as agents of moral, socio-cultural and even economic reformers, it has remained silent or at best suspicious of the activities aimed at changing their subservient position in gender relation. According to Osita Ezenwanebe (2009, p. 190):

African plays on women in social relationship locate women within family circles. Yerima is the most outstanding male playwrights in Nigerian theater that concerns his plays with the female question in contemporary Nigerian society. The plays under study are on women, marriage and family life. Prominent among these plays are *The Wives*, *The Sisters*, *The Portraits*, and *The Mirror Cracks*. The female protagonists of these plays are economically self-reliant. Yerima’s drama on gender issues interrogates the role of educated women within the family. *The Wives* and *The Sisters* are exclusively of female characters with only references to male. *The Mirror Cracks* and *The Portraits* portray male and female in a battle of position and supremacy and its consequent effect on themselves and the children.

Most of these male authored plays ranging from Ola Rotimi’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Ahmed Yerima’s *Mirror Cracks*, *The Portraits* and Bode Ojoniyi’s *Our Wife Has Gone Mad* presents a farcical representation of women issues. The farcical-cum-comic style of these male-authored plays deflects its essence. The issues portrayed become means of vigorous entertainment instead of being catalyst for a rigorous

post performance discussion that can bring about revolutionary change as in the theatre of Shaw, Ibsen, or Chekov. Ezenwanebe (2009, p. 192) observes that:

Nigerian male playwrights are ambivalent about woman liberation, and they express their fears in their style., Though many plays by Nigerian male playwrights support the education of the girl child and denounce women oppression, for example, the oppression of widows as properties in Yerima's *Aetu*, yet the playwrights are ambivalent in supporting the programmes or activities that can liberate these women from their slavish and subdued position in the society.

In light of the above, this study is concerned with Bode Ojoniyi's *Our Wife has Gone Mad*. The play sounds like warnings to the reader on the dangers inherent in women empowerment through education that can change the traditional gender power structure. However, the female protagonist is undaunted in her fight for equal dignity, educational opportunity and privileges.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Radical feminist theory. Radical Feminism is a movement that takes its root from Western ideology. It is a perspective within feminism that singles out patriarchy as a system of power that oppresses women. It aims to challenge and overthrow patriarchy by opposing societal gender roles and oppression of women. This group argues that women's subordination is not rooted in relation of production but in specific relations to reproduction and sexuality that the use of word and language affect our psyche on the definition of men and women. According to Godiya Makama (2013, p. 119), "they point to the effectiveness of the capacity of language to shape our thoughts and desires...". This movement, therefore, calls for a radical reordering of society.

Radical feminists lay emphasis only on women's experiences and do not see anything virtuous in men. They advocate the need for women to unite in a common sisterhood that transcends class or race for a successful revolt against male dominance. They feel that the control of women by men extends from the public world to private life in homes, so man becomes the target. Ann Oakley (1975, p. 129) maintains that radical steps must be taken to liberate women:

First, the housewife role must be abolished. Oakley rejects less radical solutions such as payments for housework, which, she argues, will simply reinforce the woman equals housewife equation. Second, the family as it now stands must be abolished. This proposal follows from the first since the housewife and mother roles are part and parcel of the same thing. Abolishing the family will also serve to break the circle of daughter learning her role from mother, son learning his role from his father. Third, the sexual division of labour must be eradicated in all areas of social life.

Perhaps, this extreme stance explains why many scholars often misunderstand feminism and regard feminists as aggressive men-haters. This also explains why some African women do not want to associate themselves with feminist ideology. Accordingly, in condemnation of Western brands of feminism, they come up with many other concepts to advocate the emancipation of women from the African perspective.

Concerned with the issue of women's rights and freedom, dramatists and theatre scholars have employed several means of tackling the oppression and subjugation of women. Against this backdrop, the study examines the style adopted by Bode Ojoniyi, a Nigerian male playwright, in addressing social ideals and equality of men and women.

### **The Image of the Educationally Empowered Woman in Bode Ojoniyi's *Our Wife Has Gone Mad***

The play, *Our Wife Has Gone Mad* by Bode Ojoniyi won the SONTA-Olu Obafemi award for unpublished play. *Our Wife Has Gone Mad* by Bode Ojoniyi captures the plight of women as wives in the family. The story revolves around Daniela and her three husbands. Daniela is the first wife of Alhaji and a Petro chemical engineer whose money Alhaji uses to marry and maintain his other wives without her knowledge. When she discovers that she is being deceived, manipulated and exploited by her husband, Alhaji, she resolves to marry a second and a third husband—all three spread across Lagos, Port Harcourt and Beijing, China. She keeps secret affairs with them and bore each of them a son as well. The truth, however, is revealed when Daniela is involved in a ghastly road accident and is in a coma for sometimes. On her recovery from a coma, she confronts the three men whom she has also been the breadwinner for years. In *Our Wife Has Gone Mad*, Bode Ojoniyi takes the struggle for gender equality to the realm of the ludicrous. This is because, according to Ameh Dennis Akoh, "while it



is common to hear of women who are married to more than one man in a lifetime, it is normally after a divorce or death of the husband" (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 6).

Among the wives of Alhaji, Dr Daniela's economic empowerment through formal education is clearly emphasized. She is a Petrochemical engineer and has a doctorate degree. She has married two other men because of Alhaji's insincerity. It is revealed in the play that Alhaji kept her in the dark about his marriage to the other women since she was away on an assignment on the rig in Port-Harcourt. This is reminiscent of Lejoka Brown, the protagonist in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, who withholds the information concerning his marriage with other women from Liza, the American trained medical doctor, whom he met while was in Congo. In both plays, the men are represented as he-devils: vicious, reckless and deceptive while the two empowered women are represented as victims, but the styles of representation undermine the audience's sympathy for them. Beneath their pitiable experiences at the hand of the men is a gentle satire, which evokes not pity but derision. When Daniela learns of Alhaji's deceit, she sees their relationship as being washed up and gives him the push without delay. Daniela condemns Alhaji's deceptive tactics to force her into polygamy, and makes known her rejection of polygamy in clear terms when she addresses Alhaji in strong terms, saying:

Daniela: Just three months into our marriage, Alhaji! You did not even give me any breathing space. If I was not already carrying our baby, I would quit the marriage right then. I held on. And, to safe myself from mental degeneration because of the love you betrayed, I went to start my PhD immediately. I substituted your love for my studies, for books! Immediately I finished my PhD, I requested to be taken back to Port-Harcourt. I made up my mind to marry a second husband, this time around, not as playing any second fiddle role to any man! So, I went for this distrust Akpan. I brought him out of poverty. I spent money on him... (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 50).

The truth, however, is revealed when Daniela is involved in a ghastly road accident and is in a coma for sometimes. The comatose state of Daniela brings together all the men in her life: her three husbands, who all gathered to know the condition of her health. Initially, the matron thought it was wise to keep her secret by preventing the men from meeting each other during hospital visits. Surprisingly enough, Daniela turns down the matron's suggestion and insists that she wants the men to meet each other. Whatever mistakes she has made, she believes that no one will blame her.

Alhaji is astonished at Daniela's confession about other men in her life and even meeting them. He tries to know where he has gone wrong:

Alhaji: Wait, I am already coming out. I hope it will all just be a strange nightmare and nothing more [He steps out of the toilet] ... just a strange nightmare with no concrete meaning...

Daniela: Unfortunately, Alhaji, this is not a drama! This is a reality. I can agree with the fact that it could be illusionary somehow because you are just being confronted with its facts, but it is real, my dear Alhaji! It is real (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 49).

The reality of the situation hits Alhaji like a thunderbolt as he probes to find what and how his wife was transformed. At this point, the matron urges Daniela on, so as to find out what led her into the decision of marrying three husbands. Daniela says:

Daniela: No! Not really because of him. I did it because of myself. I did it because of our culture. I did it to rewrite the traditions. I did it to make significant contribution to our way of life. I did it to deconstruct and reconstruct reality. In any case, what really is a reality out of what you see or perceive? (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 52).

The above may look like a eulogy of women empowerment to an uncritical mind, but it embodies the playwright's style of gentle satire, a refined technique of subtly castigating what is disapproved of. Daniela's deceitful nature in the name of setting women free from their oppressive condition is undoubted, inconsistent with the ideological underpinning of African feminism, which aims at extolling the virtues of womanhood. An African audience is skeptical about this kind of freedom. Would deceit or revenge put an end to women oppression in the African context? She is guilty of committing the same atrocity men are being accused of. Her action suggests a lack of patience, heartlessness and intolerance. The African audience will never like to identify with her character. Osita Ezenwanebe (2008, p. 91) says that "Feminist theatre critics insist that creating strong female characters with whom the audience can identify with is one of the most important functions feminist theatre can perform in the hands of a feminist writer". Sadly, feminism is seen as a derogatory term in Africa. Numerous women and men who are sympathetic with the plight of women in Africa are too careful in using their dramatic works to pro-

mote gender equality. This ambivalence gives rise to all kinds of distortion in works that deal with the female question. It is gathered from Ojoniyi's *Our Wife Has Gone Mad* that patriarchy has done to convince people that a strong and intelligent woman represents a problem; a disruption to the social order rather than an integral part of it. The case of Daniela seems to affirm all that is unacceptable in African feminism. In representing this woman of high learning, the playwright blames her for the breakdown of her marriage and its devastating effects on her family. However, the presentation of Daniela by the playwright situates her as a representation of the woman more concerned with subverting the male character instead of being a solution to the leadership problem within the family nucleus and the society at large. Daniela undertakes a revenge mission on Alhaji, an action which will definitely create more unending problems and challenges in the family and society than bring a solution to the already existing problems. Alhaji laments "Daniela, you have ruined my life. You have ruined my home. See how I am losing everything" (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 53). Osita Ezenwanebe (2009, p. 199) says that "the art of repudiating learned or high educated women even when they are victims ... implies that economic powers through education is the bane behind marriage failures". In Stella Oyedepo's *On his Demise*, Pa Timo, Salli's father states this unequivocally while protesting how his son, Salli, is minding his baby. He laments: "See, this is the type of havoc education has done to this society. Women no longer know their responsibility just because they are educated" (p. 10). According to Ezenwanebe (2008, p. 200–201):

It is the style of the playwright that conditions audience response whether approvingly or otherwise one thing stands out in Balogun's apt observation; that is, the need to imbue the heroes or heroines of literary works with those qualities that attest to our aesthetic preferences. The 20th century saw an outburst of the reconstruction of African women, and it is important that it should be done in line with the womanist propositions. African women carved out of western feminism, principles that guide the reconstruction of African women so that the "new eve" is not alienated from the African context.

Surely, Daniela is not a good example of the "new eve" envisaged by the womanists. However, an artist is free to adopt any approach in recreating reality and may not really bother whether his art satisfies one ideology or the other. It is important that writers should note the argument of Abiodun Balogun (1999, p. 51) when he says that:

The heroes of the literary works of any group of people are a reliable source of ascertaining the aesthetic preferences of such people... In the second place, the society reveals its biases by the way it reacts either approvingly or disapprovingly of the characters and materials contained in a work of literature.

Drama, as Gurr and Calden (1974, p. 6), observe has “a double function in ... society. It records the present holding a mirror up to society and it paints a picture of the future, it offers a possible vision of how the present can be improved”. Hence, drama not only interprets the past and the present but also charts a way forward for the people. In her inaugural lecture, Ezeigbo (2008, p. 16) boldly asserts that “literature (a many the Humanities) is the most efficacious subject or discipline to provide the humanistic education this country needs to make progress...”. Hence an artist is visionary, charting the course for future development and equipping people with the right morals, knowledge, and aspiration.

Just like Daniela, Alhaji’s other two wives condemns in bolder terms, the patriarchal belief that results in a flagrant disregard of women’s opinion in decision-making even in matters affecting their lives. Alhaji deceives his other wives. He denies them the knowledge that Daniela is the sole breadwinner of the family. As soon as Alhaja and Segi realizes their unequal position in the house, they resolve to desert their matrimonial home. Alhaja says “Alhaji, it is a disaster to be married to a man who is not a man. We are going. If we are still at home when you return, we will hear how it is resolved” (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 53). In Ojoniyi’s *Our Wife Has Gone Mad*, Elder D, one of Daniela’s husbands, exclaims that “Indeed, our wife has gone mad” (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 51). Daniela is called a mad woman simply because she refuses to play along with the cultural dictates of society and accept a subordinate position within the family.

The play is set in a patriarchal society, with cultural expectations of what a man and woman’s role is. In this society represented in the play, we witness the unquestioning acceptance of male superiority as it is implied in Daniela’s statement when she says that “He is not a whore since his actions are sanctioned by Allah. I am a whore because I carried out my own decisions and desires... and invented my own culture. Matron than you for restraining the animal” (Ojoniyi, 2021, p. 54). Here, it is obvious that culture and religion play a very significant role in women oppression. According to Osita Ezenwanebe (2011, p. 284): “The man believes he has the right to sexual freedom. He can sleep around with as many women as possible, holding claims to the traditional culture of polygamy. Male infi-

delity in marriage is no news but even suspected female infidelity makes a lot of news". In the case of Daniela, she appropriates the same liberty or privileges given to men and marries the men. She does not cheat on the first husband; she merely legally gets married to the other two men and keeps them in their different cities.

## Conclusion

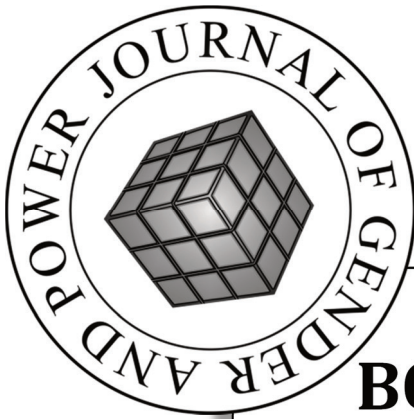
Bode Ojoniyi in *Our Wife Has Gone Mad* is concerned with the cultural oppression of women. In using the comic-farcical approach to feminism, Bode Ojoniyi trivializes its ideals. He achieves the ridiculing of feminist ideals by misrepresentation. He makes the ideals too confusingly ambiguous as to be objectionable. The technique of using an educationally empowered woman, Daniela to teach the ideals of freedom to African women in African society is wholly unacceptable to African feminists or "womanists". Daniela is a typical representative of all that is repulsive in women—she is deceitful, immodest and represents all that is abominable in the African mother and wife. Given the ideological underpinning of womanism, Daniela became a kind of liability in the course of strenuous efforts to objectify women as good, amicable creatures. Even when Daniela is portrayed in the play as a loving, caring and understanding wife and mother, since she caters for the welfare of the men in her life, her level of deceit is magnified, since she tries to lure Elder D and Chin Chung into marriage. This is surely beyond the limits of postulations of womanism which aims to extol the virtues of womanhood.

For the interest of human and national development, African drama should veer away from the farcical representation of women issues and see it as a serious subject matter for theatre recreated in line with womanist principles in order to portray educationally empowered women which the audience can identify with.

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# **BOOK AND JOURNAL REVIEWS**







**Piotr Chomczyński. *Activities of pupils in juvenile shelters and correctional facilities. Sociological analysis of group interactions*. Łódź 2014: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego. Pp. 324.**

Piotr Chomczyński, in his book *Activities of pupils in juvenile shelters and correctional facilities. Sociological analysis of group interactions* presents formal and informal determinants that influence the interactions of pupils, both towards each other and the staff. The perspective of an interpretative description of reality adopted by him allows to emphasize the symbolic layer of various processes taking place in groups of charges, which are, for example, status hierarchies, rules of functioning in a group, roles, defensive behavior and an emotional approach.

The book consists of twelve chapters in which the theoretical and methodological perspective is presented. The book also discusses formal and legal issues related to the functioning of the institutions studied by the author. This is to allow the reader to see the differences regarding informal stratification or "second life" and to understand the issues that were described in part of the research results. The last chapter discusses alternative approaches in working with young people that could be used to describe the issues of juvenile detention centers and shelters for minors.

The methodology and qualitative techniques adopted by Piotr Chomczyński focused on the symbolic layer, which is not easy to study, concerning group processes, hierarchization, gaining status in a group, relations between pupils, rituals of degradation in small groups. The direction of the research undertaken by the author focused on the assumptions of symbolic interactionism and theories of marking.

The book is addressed both to students, theoreticians and practitioners, as well as to representatives of the humanities and social sciences.

A significant part of the work is dedicated to the sociological analysis of behavior and ways of coping with emotions by the charges of institutions. It should be emphasized that this is a new subject on the Polish scientific ground. The described emotions have been diversified by the author through the presented photos, which convincingly arrange the image of the described phenomenon for the reader.

Piotr Chomczyński analyzes both the behavior of boys and girls, taking into account their criminal past, previous stays in care facilities, inclination to risky activities, having talents valued by the group, physical fitness, relations with staff, participation in conflicts or sexual behavior. The author has characterized the hi-

erarchies of roles assumed by the pupils in the group, dividing them into: significant pupils, minor pupils, pupils on the sidelines, unacceptable pupils. Each of these groups has been characterized and classified in detail.

The author draws attention to the fact that the research process, which is carried out in closed institutions, is accompanied by specific and typical difficulties for these institutions, caused by the unnatural nature of the environment.

The work is characterized by great professionalism and at the same time has a practical character. The last two chapters describe the impact of the institution's architecture on the interactions between pupils and educators, and also presents the possible theoretical framework in the light of selected macrosocial theories. The author referred to the sociological postmodern theory of Zygmunt Bauman, the sociological figuration of Norbert Elias, Michael Foucault's theory of power and Pierre Bourdieu's habitus.

I find the text inspiring and it has a significant impact for people who face practical work in correctional institutions or shelters for minors.

The book is written in a clear and legible way. The book is worth recommending to anyone interested in social rehabilitation and social maladjustment of minors. Finally, I would like to emphasize that the author separated and compared the determinants of status in a group of boys and girls.

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