

IMPPLICATIONS OF PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NIGERIAN WOMAN

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ABSTRACT

Patriarchal culture and gender discrimination continuously cause the Nigerian woman severe plights, which if all and sundry, especially concerned authorities and the agents of socialisation, do the needful, can be eliminated. Virtually all Nigerian cultures are patriarchal and exhibit different forms of discrimination against women. In view of the foregoing, this study is aimed at examining and describing the implications of patriarchal culture and gender discrimination against the Nigerian woman. Data, drawn from both primary and secondary sources, reveal that the Nigerian woman suffers gender oppression, familial and marital ills, relegation, battering, alienation, negligence, denial of rights to education and inheritance, dehumanising practices like widowhood and circumcision, exclusion from traditional politics, poor/misrepresentation in secular politics and other meaningful or lucrative ventures, poverty feminisation, social role dichotomy, and workplace gender politics, among others. The anomalies have development, social, political, economic, cultural, educational, religious, industrial,

Introduction:

Nigerian cultures encourage the members of society to internalise the differences in statuses with the accompanying obligations and expectations from both sexes (Nwanuobi, 2001:1). This socialisation, rooted in a patriarchal culture, leaves more burdens on women than men and accounts for the gender ills suffered by women in society, such as domestic violence, workplace and social relations gender discriminations. Patriarchal culture allows for sustained discrimination against women, which has grave implications for the women and the society alike. Patriarchy is the major factor responsible for gender stereotype and ills against women in the society. In nations like Nigeria, patriarchy is still very pronounced. Women in Nigeria and other parts of the globe, where

agricultural and personality implications. The study submits that patriarchal culture rouses gender stereotype and discrimination against women across cultures. It calls for a new world order, cultural reformation, attitudinal change and gender sensitisation, and enjoins government and all agents of socialisation to take up this important task of doing away with patriarchal culture and gender discrimination.

Keywords: *Implications, Patriarchal culture, Gender discrimination, Nigerian woman.*

Patriarchy is still pronounced, suffer different forms of discrimination at home, workplace, school, market, church/mosque, and in politics, marriage, socio-cultural and economic organisations, and what have you. The discriminations are shrouded in culture and religion. That is, references are usually made to the patriarchal detects conventionalised into the culture of a people, where patriarchy is the order of the day, and religious writs as the justification bases of the gender-based anomalies against women in general and Nigerian woman in particular. In view of the foregoing backdrop, this study rises to scholarly explore the implications of patriarchal culture and gender discrimination against the Nigerian woman. It concerns itself with the intellectual scholarly description of the anomalies of patriarchal culture and gender discrimination against women, which, to this work, have development, social, political, economic, cultural, educational, religious, industrial, agricultural and personality implications.

Implications of Patriarchal Culture against Nigerian Woman

The patriarchal setting, in which women occupy a low status coupled with their poor economic and educational background, worsens the status, image and woes of women in society (Omonubi-McDonell, 2003; Albert, 1996). Consequently, they are more vulnerable to abuse, murder and other social, economic and cultural constraints. A patriarchal culture is one that is characterised by chauvinism. Although virtually all cultures of the globe exhibit chauvinism in one way or the other, its extent and prevalence make the point of difference. Many cultures in Nigeria and most other developing nations are characterised by chauvinism. The existence of this phenomenon or practice among such cultures remains a prime source of their backwardness. This is

because it causes a setback to the cultures in different ways. In such cultures, women are grossly undermined, marginalised and given little or no place in virtually all spheres of life. The implications of patriarchal culture are of several folds: developmental, political, economic, social, cultural, religious, educational and psychological.

Patriarchy shapes the thinking about women, what matriarchy does to thoughts about men. The feeling of distrust and contempt lays the foundation for sour relations between two parties. This is why feminism rose to challenge patriarchy, following women's feeling of distrust and contempt and consciousness towards the ageing gender stereotypical views held and shared about them by men. Obviously, cultures like those of Britain and America that saw the need to get rid of chronic patriarchy from their systems and spheres of life have made significant progress over the centuries that followed the rise of feminism. This is not to say that patriarchal elements are found in contemporary British and American cultures. Many of the successive governments of these nations rightly, consciously and artfully examine the feminists' demands and keyed into them. They followed up with actions and worthwhile pragmatic measures, that yielded positive results, even though some of them wrongly keyed into the negative tenets and demands of the later day new phases of feminism, like radical feminism. In other words, by moving away from patriarchal culture, many erstwhile patriarchal cultures have experienced significant all-round development. As Nyerere (1997) admonishes and pleads with emerging African leaders, the future of the African people lies in unity. There can't be ideal unity where discrimination on the basis of gender difference is the order of the day.

Accordingly, a patriarchal culture is bound to be regressive in development and other spheres. This is because the exclusion or misrepresentation of women, the nucleus of every society, from meaning the ventures has grave implications for the culture. Patriarchy shatters development, manufactures avoidable issues and further compounds existing problems. Any development processes that exclude women are inconsequential and not meaningful. This is because where a patriarchy is the order of the day, women's contribution to development are undermined right from policy-making stage to development programmes and projects. Different programmes that ought to be evolved to develop women in different regards are undermined. They are not given the right chance to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of their

society, merely because of their biological differences, for which they are assigned certain domestic, socio-cultural, economic political and religious roles that are considered feminine. Efficiency and competition are thus shattered. Clearly, where women are excluded or misrepresented in development processes, the women interest are undermined. This is because women know what affect them, what they want and how to go about addressing issues affecting them better than men could ever claim they do. So, where women are neglected or relegated to the point of being merely assumed the beneficiaries of development programmes, any evolved development programmes are bound to be problematic or inefficacious. It implies that the exclusion and misrepresentation of Nigerian women in both traditional and secular politics, advanced education which many of them are deliberately denied on the grounds of cultural myths about women's prowess, talents, strengths and weaknesses, and the ageing wrong notion of not spending so much on the girl-child that would be married out into another family is deliberate and a calculated attempt to frustrate her general wellbeing.

Implications of Gender Discrimination against Nigerian Woman

Gender discrimination describes segregation arising from gender stereotype and prejudice for which men assume that they are superior to women and thus hold tenaciously to ageing patriarchal perception of and misdeeds against women (Dibie, Gotau and Robert, 2016). Every civilisation, society or culture assigns the two sexes different roles, responsibilities, rewards and presumed worth, with masculinity ranking higher. Consequently, men are generally socialised to be in charge of most vital aspects of life (Mudiare, 2013:241), while women are socialised to be subservient to the men. Any rejection of the patriarchal orientation by women, who are gender sensitive or conscious of or intolerable to gender stereotype, is considered indecorum. The differential ranking of the two sexes has implications for society at large, as it determines the different life experiences one is exposed to and to a large extent, determines one's access to education, health, work, skills, life expectancy, sexuality, decisions, relationships, freedom of movement and the position they occupy (Mosse, 1993). The maxim 'United, we stand; divided, we fall' best explains in brief the consequences of discrimination. United people neither discriminate against one another nor fall. It implies that if men and women are so united that neither of the folk discriminates against the other, they are bound to live more

peacefully and make more progress than what obtain where and when they are not united.

The strained emphasis on and the practice of gender differences as factors in socio-biological functions continuously cause gender discrimination between men and women. Men see themselves as superior to women. The prejudicing cultural orientation of patriarchal cultures has forced and keeps forcing some women to believe that they are inferior to men. This point has been given credence by Oyediran and Isuigo-Abanihe (2005), who note that in Nigeria, 64.4% of married women and 50.4% of unmarried women condone wife beating as normal. Influenced by their inherent patriarchal cultures in North-Eastern Nigeria, women of the zone are known to rank highest among women with negative perception of themselves with over 60% indicating tolerance for violence (Mudiare, 2013:245). In the same vein, in the Arabian world and Asia, violence against women is justified by the institution of honour and dowry killings (Sadaawi, 1986; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Jejeebhoy, 2004). This implies that most women condone domestic violence because of the patriarchal culture within which they live. They are compelled and remain bound by the patriarchal customs, traditions, norms and values of their patriarchal cultures.

Too often, many sexist men in all spheres of life hold on to religious injunctions as the bases for gender discrimination. It is common in Northern schools to have girls and boys separated even in the class, without considering the fact that there is every need for both sexes to learn on their own from each other. As far as women and men are humans created in God's image and both possess all human features alike, nothing makes either of them superior to the other merely because of sex differences. Regrettably, the Nigerian woman is perceived as the inferior human created, even though there is no holy writ that teaches that. The biblical admonishment of both sexes to be of help to each other; love and respect each other as one would love and respect God the creator; and the creation of man, Adam, first and God having charged him to take care of Eve, and the other like obligations, have been taken advantage of by sexist men as the bases of women relegation on the ground of their sex across cultures of the globe.

The Nigerian woman, like her fellows of other global patriarchal cultures, is also taken advantage of by her Nigerian male counterpart. The Nigerian woman suffers gender stereotype, familial and marital ills, relegation, battering, alienation, negligence, denial of rights to education and inheritance,

dehumanising practices like widowhood and circumcision, exclusion from traditional politics, poor/misrepresentation in secular politics and other meaningful or lucrative ventures, poverty feminisation, social role dichotomy, and workplace gender politics, among others. It is in view of the aforementioned problems arising from patriarchal culture and gender discrimination that Dibie, Gotau and Robert (2016) enjoin all and sundry to shun all forms of discrimination. In their words, '...We must do away with premonitions, prejudices and perceptions about others towards equal socio-cultural blending for national integration and development cum peaceful co-existence.'

Discrimination has lasting social and psychological effects on its victims. The personal dignity of those discriminated against is usually affected adversely. When reduced to nothing, rejected or denied opportunities, recognition, attention, friendship, unity, and so on merely because you do not belong to one folk (gender) or thereabout, as if in what secret groups do to non-members, the individual or group tends to have cold perception about self and those who have so discriminated against them. There could be posers like: Am I or are we less human or productive? Why am I so rejected? Why are we hated and marginalised by people of the other folk (men)? Are we not better than them? Can we ever unite with them?

When discrimination permeates every phase of a society, the people(s) begin to dread each one another; contempt sets in between/among them; enmity and ethnic/religious (ethno-religious) hate and despise as well as intolerance become intense; prejudices rise with deformation/derogatory, tendencies against each/other/one another. In such situation, a group hardly pleases or be pleased by another. The hatred and intolerance which make the discrimination high are most times born from the inciting foundational socialisation brainwork of the elites. Having had their hearts poised towards others outside their folk, group, tribe and/or religion the people often distant themselves from the others and vice versa. Each side begins to look at the other as a threat or an enemy that does not deserve anything good from them (Dibie, Gotau and Robert, 2016).

Social class differentiation gave rise to social class struggle and class discrimination, including gender discrimination, which had been institutionalised by patriarchy. Racial discrimination has gender discrimination as one of its phases. This is seen in the discrimination and relegation of Black women by the White since the colonial era up to date. Prah (2009:13) lends

credence to the foregoing fact, as he blames African indigenous elites who have continued to initiate and sustain both the bad, the good the ugly of their colonial (western neo-colonial) masters and predecessors, from who they learnt discrimination and class differentiation now widespread across all phases, groups, categories, sectors, manners, etc. of the society, and for which almost everyone now advances one reason or the other to discriminate against the other(s).

According to Ellens (1994), disproportionate male-female ratios in some professions make it difficult for several women to interact well with their male colleagues. The reason for this, being that, men tend to see women who are in the same profession with them as rivals and not colleagues. This is due to the social orientation of the men to regard women as primarily home makers who are biologically different from men. As a result of this assumed biological difference women cannot therefore be competent or have ability to perform in the male dominated professions.

Conclusion

Patriarchal culture and gender discrimination have grave implications. They adversely affect the growth and development of a people, polity, economy, social, education, religion, industry, agriculture and intergroup relations. Gender stereotype and discrimination are products of patriarchal anomalies. The anomalies have development, social, political, economic, cultural, educational, religious, industrial, agricultural and personality implications. The study submits that patriarchal culture rouses gender stereotype and discrimination against women across cultures. It calls for a very proactive and sincere approach, a new world order, cultural reformation, attitudinal change and gender sensitisation, and enjoins government and all agents of socialisation to take up the thankless task rise up to the urgent need of doing away with patriarchal culture and gender discrimination.

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