

**PATRIARCHY AND CULTURE: THE POSITION OF WOMEN
IN THE RURAL IGBO COMMUNITY**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the tremendous setback that patriarchal culture has brought to the women in Igbo rural communities. The patriarchal ideology of the society has in no small measure influenced the stratification of jobs, skills, political offices and businesses. This began with the traditional gender roles in the pre-colonial period. However, rural women have been found to play an important role in agriculture and agricultural development. Indeed, Williams (1988) and Mahawonku (1998) have both emphasized the paradox that women are the nutritional bedrock of human society, who feed, nurture mankind and manage the home. Despite these realizations, rural women continue to suffer subordination and their abilities to fully realize their potentials are greatly hampered. Therefore, this paper critically discusses the historical perspective and analyzes how patriarchal culture determines the position of women in the rural Igbo community. This is a descriptive research. Findings reveal that women suffer some constraints as a result of patriarchy that rules the rural Igbo community. These constraints involve among other things financial strangulation. The researchers recommend that; there should be a push for a culture of excellence, to hold men accountable for their language and actions, where all people can make positive influences on the world.

Keywords: patriarchal, culture, rural women, subordination.

Introduction

Patriarchy is a social system that came into being approximately 10-12 thousand years ago (Ohagwu, Eze, et al 2014). It is largely recognized to have coincided with the advent of agriculture. It is far from being the only system, because for most of human history we have lived very differently. People lived together in small bands, subsisting as hunter-gatherers, sharing nearly everything as part of their survival strategy. According to Ozumba, (2005) "There is still this wider perception that hunter-gatherers are more macho or male-dominated. It was only with the emergence of agriculture, when people could start to accumulate resources that inequality emerged". A man can have several wives and as a result have many children from different women, whereas each woman has only her biological children in comparison with her husband. It pays more for men to start accumulating resources and become favourable to form alliances with male children. The question now is when did men gain power?

Traditionalists do believe that men are born to dominate women who are subordinates. They believed that this hierarchy has always existed and will continue. Like other rules of nature, this one too cannot be changed. Whatever its origins, a circular system of thought evolved. Men came to think of themselves as inherently superior on the basis of the evidence that they dominated society. Even today, patriarchy is always accompanied by cultural supports, designed to justify male dominance such as designating certain activities as "not appropriate" for women. As tribal societies developed into larger groups, men, who enjoyed their power and privileges maintained their dominance. Long after hunting and hand-to-hand combat ceased to be routine, even after large numbers of children were no long needed to maintain the population, men held onto their power. Male dominance in contemporary societies, then, is a continuation of a millennia - old pattern whose origin is lost in history.

Patriarchy is a social and ideological construct which considers men as superior to women (Chinweizu and Madubuike 1983). It is a social system in which men hold authority over women, children, and property (Emecheta, 1979). Patriarchy encourages male leadership, male domination, and male power. A system in which women are subject to economic dependence, violence, domestication, and the peripherals of decision making. It imposes structures that categorize some types of work as 'men's work' and some as 'women's work'(Amadiume, 1987).

Generally, gender inequality, sexism, and male domination, inter alia, are characteristics of a patriarchal society (Ukpokolo, 2010). These characteristics have hugely impacted various institutions, including marriage and family (Korie, 2017). Patriarchy implies that authority is vested in the male as head of the family. This means that he oversees the ownership and earnings of the household, and that he controls the household's preferences for work, leisure and the overall affairs of the family (Urama, 2019). However, different cultures give different degrees of significance to such issues (Igbo, 2003). For example, the patriarchal structures of Hausa and Igbo societies are stronger in terms of male domination over women.

A patriarchal society recognizes male dominance and superiority over females. This may well be the reason why Ekong (2010) described patriarchy as the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development. Patriarchal ideologists often exaggerate the biological differences between men and women. It often claims that men have masculine superiority roles, and that women always have the subordinate or feminine duties. This ideology is so powerful that 'men are usually able to secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress' (Ekong, 2010). Such men are able to do this through various institutions, such as the school, church and the family. This justifies and reinforces women's weaknesses and subordination to men (George, 1996).

Patriarchal systems and institutions are 'man made' (Oyekanmi, 2004). The patriarchal construct is real, and is embedded in culture. It imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society, which strengthen the iniquitous power relations between men and women. In some societies, culture and religion have imposed certain responsibilities on women regardless of their employment status and career. In African culture, for example, women, regardless of their status, and professions, are responsible for domestic responsibilities such as household chores, bearing and raising children, doing the laundry, cooking, etc. The domestic role of women in African culture is fundamental to the sustainability of marriage. Women play domestic, economic and social roles that are recognized by their society.

Women are not confined to domestic roles; rather they can seek positions of public authority (Bhasin, 2006). However, women face many challenges in their attempts to achieve work-life balance. They are expected to perform certain roles arising from the religious and cultural obligations that are associated with their gender. This gives rise to conflict between a woman's work and her domestic role in the family. This may be the reason why work-life conflict is very common among women, with their careers pulling them in one direction and their family obligations pulling them in the other (Mitchell, 1971). It may therefore be argued that the work-life imbalance experienced by women is as a result of the conflict between their domestic roles in their families and their careers. In other words, women often experience great difficulties when the competing roles of work and non-work domains clash (Walby, 1990).

Therefore, striking a balance between these two spheres of life has been a major challenge for women, especially those with household responsibilities (Walby, 1990). Women's efforts to maintain a balance between their work and non-work obligations are often thwarted by male supremacy, which is the basis of gender hierarchy in the contemporary society (Lerner, 1989).

Actually, the issue of 'subordination' of women to men is not peculiar to the Igbo people of Nigeria, nor to religious sphere. It is prevalent through the world. 'Subordination' refers to the attachment of more value and first place to the male than to the female; and a secondary or lesser status to the female. As a direct outcome of this, almost everything else about women is degraded, devalued; perceived as 'less' or taken as negative. Hence women are discriminated against, restricted, and prevented from doing certain things in certain cultures

and are given only marginal space in their society, to create more space for the male to flourish.

This paper therefore aims at analyzing patriarchal culture and women's position in relation to the Igbo rural community of Nigeria. To address its central theme, the paper looks at patriarchy and Igbo traditional culture, Igbo women and the economy, constraints facing the Igbo women in the Igbo rural community and then ends with the way forward.

Necessary Concepts

Certain concepts are necessarily used in this paper. This is done in order to give technical colour to the work by using the appropriate language. Because some people may not be at home with these concepts, it is very important that the concepts should be explained to make the understanding of this work easier. The concepts are as follows:

Patriarchy

The term 'patriarchy' originated from the Greek word *patriarkhes*, which literally means 'father of a race' or 'chief of a race'. Patriarchy therefore means 'the rule of the father' (Millett, 1977). Originally, it was used to describe a specific type of 'male dominated family' – the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants, all under the rule of this dominant male. Now it is used more generally 'to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways' (Anagbogu, 2001).

Patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres. Feminists mainly use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the power relation between men and women. Thus, patriarchy is more than just a term; feminists use it like a concept, and like all other concepts it is a tool to help us understand women's realities. The concept of patriarchy is defined by different thinkers in different ways. Udechukwu (2017), in her article, uses the word patriarchy "to refer to kinship systems in which men exchange women. Walby (1990) defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". She explains patriarchy as a system because this helps us to reject the notion of biological determinism (which says that men and women are naturally different because of their biology or bodies and are therefore assigned different roles) or "the notion that every individual man is always in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one.

Patriarchy, in its wider definition, means the manifestation, institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family. It is the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that "men hold power in all the important institutions of the society" and that "women are deprived of access to such power". However, it does not imply that "women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence and resources" (Ozumba, 2005).

Thus patriarchy describes the institutionalized system of male dominance. So we can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations between men and women, which have material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create independence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women (Cooper, 1997). Patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, ensuring that men always have the dominant or masculine roles and women always have the subordinant or feminine ones. The patriarchal system is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition.

According to Lerner (1989), patriarchy is a “historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly 2,500 years to its completion. He also states that in its earliest form, patriarchy appeared as an archaic state in which the basic unit of its organization was the patriarchal family, which both expressed and constantly generated its rules and values. While Lerner gives a more general definition of patriarchy, this work goes deeper in defining the term.

Patriarchy and Economic Development

Women’s position at the end of the twentieth century by Moghadam (1996) posits that, although around the world, women’s life expectancy, literacy, educational attainment, labour-force participation, contraceptive use, and political participation have all increased. In all but a few countries women’s life expectancy exceeds men’s; in some former state-socialist countries, more women than men attained university degrees; around the world, the working class and professional-managerial class are now female as well as men; family planning programme, women’s advancement and the women’s movement have led to postponement of marriage and increased control over fertility and more women are seeking major roles in national and international decision-making. Another achievement is that more and more women have entered the field of law, pushing for legal reforms and working to extend legal literacy to women. Women are also the new proletariat worldwide. This phenomenon has been termed the globalization of female labour and in a somewhat different vein, the feminization of labour. The role of women in manufacturing has been receiving considerable attention from scholars, if not always from planners and policy makers. The industrial performance of the newly industrialized economies suggests an important mutual relationship between women’s employment and overall development and industrial growth. Yet, major gaps continue between men’s and women’s advancement. In industrial countries gender discrimination continues in employment and wages, with women often getting less than two-third of the employment opportunities, and about half the earnings of men. The study did not consider women in the rural Igbo community hence this work is an attempt to cover the gap.

Malcolm (2007) in international journal of men’s health: “The Great Taboo” and the Role of patriarchy in Husband and Wife Abuse, discusses the role of historical memes such as the “Rule of Thumb” is explored and documented to illustrate how the notion of patriarchy defined as “male dominance over women” is deeply flawed. The “Rule of Thumb” as anything other than a rough and ready measure is shown to be both a historical myth and the result of sophistry by some women’s activities. The continuation of the ancient meme of

patriarchy as expressed is shown to predict the controversy over the existence of female-perpetrated violence and male victims, a controversy that saw academics who sought to expose such violence being subjected to intimidation and abuse. Patriarchy is proposed as an influence on the occurrence and prevalence of both husband and wife abuse, operating through the patriarchal meme that “men should not be victims.” The importance of these considerations for men’s emotional and physical health is emphasized. The study is relevant to the work at hand and will provide insight to the study of patriarchy and culture.

O’Connor and Drury (1999) in their work; “The Female Face in Patriarchy: Oppression as Culture”, discusses women’s complicity in patriarchal dominance and their role in fostering their own oppression. The authors began by asking tough questions; How does patriarchy deform a woman’s soul? How and why does a woman embrace patriarchy? What are the ramifications of female patriarchal behaviour? This work, the result of a two-year study, examines how and why women are participants and promoters of their own oppression in the Roman Catholic Church. Using the church as a model for society in general. The female face in patriarchy demonstrates how women, through centuries of conditioning have become both victims and perpetrators of their own oppression and how their cooperation with and submission to patriarchal dominance have been both conscious and unconscious. This work is relevant to the present study and hopes to adopt similar approach in studying patriarchy and culture: the position of women in a rural Igbo community.

Culture

Igbo culture are the customs, practices and traditions of the Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria. It comprises archaic practices as well as new concepts added into the Igbo cultural evolution or by outside influence (Achufusi, 2000).

Culturally, Igbo society is patriarchal in nature, where men’s decisions over issues are final and irrevocable. As a result, it is the men who say what should be and what should not be. The type of roles women should play in the society and those to be played by men. For instance, social custom upholds that women should not whistle and therefore, it is a rare practice for women. Women’s devotion to domestic affairs also limits their public activities. Female mourners spend more time than their male counterparts in events of bereavement. Generally, males overcome their sorrows with drinking and chatting at restaurants and even playing music, but women are confined for a certain period of time under which they lament and sing dirges for their late relations.

Even outside Africa, these gender distinctions persist. Among some Greek communities; “the restrictions placed on men on the death of a relative are much less severe of much shorter duration, and much less strictly enforced” (Auerbach, 1989). Men and women thus play contrasting roles due to their different dispositions to death and mourning. Women therefore tend to portray more emotions than men in situations of death and grief.

Masquerade (Spirit manifest) affairs are restricted to male membership and participation in Igbo culture. Titles like Nze, Ozo and Igwe are not for women, though women can be Lolo (a title given to the wife of an Ozo titled man). Ekwueme (2005) maintains that; "Gender functions have been so arranged and segregated that men arrogate superior functions to themselves and inferior functions to women". Over the years, these roles have been tolerated and assimilated by people and have become part of the people's custom and traditions.

Theoretically, the structural functional theory views society as comprising of inter-related and inter-dependent parts which function in a coordinated manner to ensure the survival of the society. Structural functional theory holds the view that human society has certain basic needs called functional pre-requisites as represented by the structural units or parts (George, 1996). Gender differences help to integrate society. This is achieved through the complementarity of roles between the females and males as culturally determined by the society.

Biological determinism, as a social theory of gender relations emphasizes the physiological differences in the make-up of males and females and how those differences have shaped social relationship between the sexes (Jagger, 1984). The biological determinist position holds that biology is destiny; that human nature and society are dictated largely or entirely by the demand of human physiology, and that there is an essentially unchanging difference between the masculine and the feminine (George, 1996). This theory is predicated on the male domination and assumed superiority of the male sex over the female in most human societies.

Similarly, cultural determinism, as a theoretical perspective, asserts that culture (that is the norms, values, beliefs and more) and society are the actual determinants of gender differences in societies. Though the process of socialization, the culturally approved patterns of behaviour, especially for males and females are transmitted to members of the society for purpose of forging appropriate gender identity in the society.

Discussion of the Body

Igbo women suffer some constraints in their lives because of the culture of their domain. The hinderances that reduce them include patriarchy, economic strangulation and other constraints. These are comprehensively discussed below.

Patriarchy and Igbo Culture: The Igbo are the original inhabitants of the southeastern part of Nigeria, and constitute the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria (Ohagwu et al, 2014). The traditional Igbo society is very gender-sensitive and patriarchal. This is captured in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which shows us the portrayal of the traditional Igbo family with its genderized roles and functions. In the family, if a child is born, and if the baby was a male, that means greater joy for the parents. For the man, joy, because he has a man who will take his place on his death and continue his family lineage; joy for the mother because that will properly entrench her in her husband's heart. Having a son means for her that nothing can uproot her from the family. A son further means having a voice to defend her in the family. However, if the child is a girl, the husband and wife receive it with mixed

feelings. And if the female child is coming as the third, fourth, fifth or sixth female in the family without a male child that is enough reason for sorrow. For the man, it brings sorrow because his hope of having male child to continue his lineage is becoming slimmer; the females will soon be married out to other men. Having female children is like “tending other people’s vineyard while yours is unkempt”.

Igbo society is a patriarchal one; men are the heads of families. Family inheritance is shared among the male children of the family. The female children are excluded because when a female child is married out of the family, her position shifts from her father’s family to that of her husband’s family. Her position in her husband’s family also depends on her bearing a male child for the husband. The implication of this is that a woman with no male child for her husband has no right of inheritance both in her father’s and husband’s house (Chinweizu, et al, 1983). This is why the birth male child is received with unprecedented jubilation and celebration than that of a female child in Igbo culture.

The Igbo ideology of male child dominance makes a man to get married to as many wives as he can to have a male child. A woman who is able to bear a male child for her husband is considered a fulfilled woman. She is also accorded greater respect in her husband’s house more than other wives who have no male children. Women therefore take the blame for not having male children for their husbands in Igbo land, even when the chromosomes that determine the sex of the baby are produced by men. A man who does not have a male child after marrying many wives performs some traditional rites and allows one of his daughters not to get married (Emecheta, 1979). She is to stay in his house and produce male children who will bear his name. Her parents arrange a man who would be putting her in a family way. In some part of Igbo land, the girl may be allowed to choose her own lovers. The ritual known as ‘*Nlụikwa*’ makes the daughter a “male daughter”.

Traditionally, childless women in Igboland also take the blame and are exposed to all sorts of ill treatments, whereas men are exempted from the blame. This makes a woman to accept any man who is able to put her in a family way. Motherhood makes a woman fulfilled in her marriage, especially when she has a male child, and she is ready to accept social and cultural practices that make her get a male child whom she can call hers. The childless wife or a wife who has no male child is given the legal right to marry another wife to produce male children to make the woman achieve recognition in her husband’s home (Amadiume, 1987). This would make the wife a “female husband”. An unmarried daughter of a man who does not have a male child also has the legal right to marry a wife who will produce children to bear her father’s name for the continuity of her father’s lineage. That makes her a “female husband” in her father’s home (Ukpokolo, 2010).

Same-sex marriage as practised in some Igbo societies implies that the children of the male daughter retain their mother’s patrilineage (Korie, 2017). The practice of male daughters and same-sex marriage among women in Igbo culture does not make Igbo society less heterosexual. All sorts of amorous relationships are forbidden among the same gender in Igbo culture. The bride of the “female husband” and the “male daughter” are exposed to physical, psychological, and health risks in having sexual intercourse with men to have

children. In most part of Igbo land, they are not allowed to choose their own lovers. The succession and inheritance issues that enforce male child dominance in Igbo culture therefore, form the basis for the “male daughter”, “female husband”, and same-sex marriage in Igbo culture that endangers the life of women (Urama, 2019).

Igbo Women and the Economy

The position of women in pre-colonial Nigeria obviously differed in the vast number of ethnic groups in Nigeria. A woman’s position varied according to kinship structure of the group and; role of women within the economic structure of the society. Common factors among women of different ethnic groups however, include the domestically oriented jobs and the range of economic activities that the societies reserve for women.

In traditional Igbo society, women’s activities went beyond the domestic domain. Apart from cooking, domestic chores, and child bearing and rearing, rural women armed with courage and self-confidence challenged gender limitations and were at par with men in local economy. The wives of both the rich and poor men were expected to work outside, support their children and contribute for the prosperity of the family. Hard working women were respected by their husbands and village community and were rewarded with gifts by their husbands, as a token of appreciation. Conversely, a lazy woman was subjected to ridicule.

Igbo economy is primarily agrarian so all the people including women were engaged in subsistence farming. They produce the food they needed, and the surplus was sold in the local market. There are two types of farm land in Igboland – compound farm (*mbubo*) and distant farm (*ubi*). Except yam, majority of the crops are referred to as women’s crops and are planted in the *mbubo*. The agricultural surplus is traded in exchange for the money or items in the local market by the women to fulfill their economic responsibilities. In some areas, enterprising women travelled to neighbouring village markets to purchase the items that were not available in the local market or in markets situated inland. To achieve economic independence, women were entitled to certain property rights distinctly different from men’s inheritance rights. The husband and his lineage allocated some trees, land and money to the wife so that the woman could start her economic ventures. Igbo women also owned trees appropriated to them by the natal home. Moreover, women were also allowed to purchase land. “A woman may appropriate these for direct use and raising income. She may use the proceeds from these as well as farm crops and trading activities for catering for the family (Achufusi, 2000).

Apart from marketing the field produce, Igbo inhabiting the riverine areas participated in fishing activities. In the absence of big rivers in Igbo inland, fishing was not the traditional occupation of the Igbo, but Igbo people who lived near the rivers, took to fishing and were known as riverine people (*ndi mba mmiri*). Various types of fish like crab, prawns, crayfish, catfish, sardines and oyster were netted. They either consumed them fresh or preserved them for future needs. Surplus cash was processed and sold off in the market.

It is important to note that economic division of labour was based on gender differences. The plantation of yam was the prerogative of Igbo men. They cut the stakes, nurtured the yam vines and build barns for the storing of the yam harvested, which is the staple crop that was to be consumed throughout the year. Men also climbed the palm trees to pluck palm nuts and gave them to the women to process nuts in order to extract oil that is sold in the markets by men. Men also tap palm wine that is sold in the market. However, the women assisted their men in the farms. They weeded and managed the farms during the growing seasons and shouldered the responsibility of bringing home the harvest. The farms that were allocated to the women were near the compound of the house. In these farms, they could cultivate anything except yam. Women grew cassava, maize, beans, coco-yams, peanuts, tomatoes, pepper and various vegetables. Thus they produced the largest part of Igbo diets. The agricultural outputs of the farms were used for feeding the family all through the year. However, they were allowed to sell spare crops in the local market. It is difficult to ascertain the reason for the distribution of labour on the gender lines. Some scholars believe it reflected the ambiguous ideology of Igbo society that makes provisions to empower women and encourage gender equality yet at the same time marginalizes them so that the ultimate authority rests in the hands of menfolk. But some other scholars are of the view that this splitting up of work was grounded in the practicability. Cocoyam and other crops could be grown in small spaces near the compound of the house. It offered flexibility to the women as they could manage farms and other household work at ease, without travelling long distances whereas the men travelled to faraway farms to plant yams that needed fertile lands. Nevertheless, women assisted their men in harvesting yams.

The period from November to February was non-planting and non-harvesting season and during these months women made handicrafts like baskets, calabashes, earthen wares and wood carving. Women also spun and weaved barkfibre that was later dyed and stitched to make traditional garments. Igbo women loved to beautify themselves and made ornaments like waist beads, anklets, ivory necklaces and bangles. Fashionable earrings and hair accessories were very popular among young women. These ornaments had certain spiritual and cultural affections. Charms were also worn by women to protect them from evil spirits. Facial marks were also etched on their faces to indicate their clans. Women had the right to sell agricultural surplus, craft and ornaments in the village market place dominated by women. Henderson (1969) says it all:

Symbolically, the market place was defended as outside the sphere of assertion by males, whether human or animal; or any cock that crowed during trading hours must become the property of women. The connection of men with market trade comes mainly through their individual sponsorship of their wives or daughters or traders.

There is no doubt that participation of women in Igbo economy ensured them economic independence, but here again gender related economic disparities diminished the economic power of Igbo women. Men inherited wealth, land, property ascribed to them by patrilineage. They monopolized over the more profitable and prestigious crops- yam and

palm wine. Elderly men received presents from the members of the lineage. Only men are entitled to apportion land to the women of the compound. They were also allowed to lease surplus land and earn profits. They also received a share of wealth profited by women's trade. Men also own the more lucrative long distance trade. These factors gave them a head start and constant advantage over women. In the Igbo society, women were allowed to in command of local and regional trading so that they could sell off additional agricultural produce, calabash, pots and other crafts. But the proceeds from these petty trading was relatively low. Moreover, the land allocated to them for farming was comparatively smaller than the farms of their husbands. Igbo women were also not entitled to property rights in her natal home apart from bride price. All these factors contributed to Igbo women's economic lag. This comparatively lower financial power acted as a barrier to their political ambitions. Title holding was mandatory for village wide leadership. But the cost of title-taking consists of payment of higher fees and organizing of feasts that were to be borne by the title seeker. Thus the financial restrictions of women debarred them from seeking the highest titles and as such most of the prestigious titles were held by men and they became the prime consultants, for village wide discussions and decisions. But women tended to participate in economy as Igbo culture bestowed respect to hard working women. Her political and economic participation brings to the fore the multifaceted personality of Igbo women well accomplished in various tasks - farming, making crafts, cooking, performance of household chores, sewing and trading. The overwhelming amount of work that every Igbo woman had to perform caused enormous physical and mental strain. Thus without complaints performed all the tasks as "Earning their own money and being valued for playing intrinsic roles in the lives of their families and the village gave Igbo women greater freedom and control over their lives. This economic autonomy accounted for a sense of self independence and confidence that one often finds among Igbo women" (Achebe, 1958).

Constraints of Igbo Women

Women face untold hardships which are often linked to their gender while gender inequality continues to be rooted in traditional practices, values and norms exemplified in women's productive and reproductive functions, especially those which underlie gender divisions of labour in the society.

The underlying causes of many of the challenges facing rural women are the negative cultural norms and expectations that permeate many aspects of their lives. They shape who they should be and how they should live, including their school attendance, workload, marriage, voice in the household, autonomy and overall well-being. Both women and men are products of their social upbringing, and consider many gender inequalities to be the natural order of things. Negative behaviours - held by the community, parents, spouse and the young women themselves - are more entrenched in rural communities, and are perpetuated.

Girls learn their ‘curriculum of chores’ from a very young age, and these responsibilities increase with age. Rural women experience similar workloads, tasks and labour intensity as adult women. The absence of basic infrastructure and the traditional division of labour means that a significant proportion of their time is spent in the daily tasks of collecting water and firewood, activities which are becoming more onerous with the impact of climate change and the degradation of the natural resource base. Their agricultural work is also highly labour-intensive and time-consuming (transplanting, weeding, carrying products, collecting fodder etc) as is the manual preparation of staples such as shelling maize or pounding flour. In addition, women are the primary carer givers for their children and other household members. All these demands considerably shorten the time women have available to engage in economic activities, study or even leisure.

Although, primary school education is almost universal, their attendance at secondary school continues to be low in rural areas. The significance of progressing into secondary education is not only in terms of basic educational skills (rural women have the lowest literacy levels) but also in shaping attitudes and behaviour towards family size, women’s voice in the home and negative cultural practices. Attendance rates at primary schools for rural girls and boys both range from 70-85 percent but drop to 15-30 percent at secondary school. (in comparison to 80-90 percent primary and 30-55 percent secondary in urban areas). On average, they complete four to six years of schooling (in comparison to six to eight years for urban girls and six to nine years for urban boys) (Plan International, 2012). Hence, there is a high rate of illiteracy among rural women in Igbo land and in particular the less developed countries of the world. Mutangadura (2005) noted that women are more likely to be less educated than men. This condition was predicated on the belief that the girl or women would end up in another family; discarding the father’s name for the would-be husband. Some fathers therefore concentrated on giving formal education to their male children at the expense of the female child.

Low level of education is one of the known hindrances to women development and active participation in community development. Ekong (2003) observed with dismay that most rural women do not understand even a display of instructions by line diagrams and are capable of adopting improved agricultural practices. It is so complicating that rural women cannot understand innovations and contemporary trends in most human endeavours. Apart from their inability to access credit and extension messages, they are unable to know their rights and identify economic support mechanism that are available (Ofuoku and Emuh, 2009).

It is true that over 90 percent of women live below the poverty line in Igbo land and Nigeria at large, and cannot own or inherit property even though the subsistence farming is predominantly done by the women. As a result of their financial base, women cannot run for elected positions, set up businesses, further education and engage in self-development that will enhance their participation in community affairs. The role of women in economic sphere is largely inhibited because of the lack of access to family land, capital and control over their own time and the product of her labour (Olabisi, 1998). Also Olabisi rightly noted, that most of the time, husbands manage the family farm, keeping the proceeds of cash

crops under their control while wives use earnings from vegetables and trading to meet the family daily needs. The ability of the women to participate in independent economic activities is thus limited by social obligations to their husband. Again, women have been confined to activities which were of secondary importance and spend a lot of effort on activities that aided household consumption rather than capital accumulation. Their products were mostly consumed within the household while they marketed the more important products for their husbands. Other constraints that affect women are lack of affirmative action quota, patriarchal modes and practices, women's legal status, property rights and inheritance laws, HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for women, etc.

Conclusion

The operation of a patriarchal system is not a story of unreserved male power and down-trodden women. Patriarchy is a lived system; it is a framework that people use to justify male superiority over women and it is one which survived through numerous social, cultural and potential changes over the last several centuries. Understanding it as a system for organizing gender and social relationships explains women's continued subordination over time, despite historical change in many other areas of life. This study demonstrates how it came about that, despite some radical transformation in how people conceptualized the world around them, women's social status remained unchanged over two centuries. This process was not about unchecked male force or on overt strategy by a group of men to keep women oppressed, but rather that the belief in a woman's subordination to her husband was so deeply ingrained within Igbo land and Nigeria's culture that people could not conceive of the world differently

The Way Forward

According to Hooks (2014), in "Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom", posits that patriarchy does not just describe male actions of domination, but also how some organizations and cultural narratives function. Challenging patriarchy is something that has been ongoing for countless generations, and it will take many more before it can finally be eliminated.

However, there are numerous options all of us can take to push back against the system of patriarchy. They are as follows:

- Push for a culture of excellence to hold men accountable for their language and actions where all people can make positive influences on the world.
- Support a spectrum of ideas of what a "real man" looks like, such as those that are compassionate and responsible. We need to stop holding up "macho" or the "tough, silent type" as the gold standard for maleness.
- Reframe patriarchy as an issue for everyone not just a woman issue". Men should take responsibility for altering both themselves and challenging men around them. As Bell Hooks puts it patriarchy has no gender," thus it is going to take all people to combat it.

- End the viewpoint that the traditional nuclear family as the ideal. Instead, we should accept and encourage loving, compassionate families of any style and form.
- Teach men how to authentically communicate their emotions and listen empathetically to others. From an early age, few people encourage boys to express their emotion, and many try to encourage boys to “hide their emotions” so whether you work with kids, have a child, or want to contribute to reducing sexual violence, we need to train males on how to express themselves.
- Train men and foster the attitude that men should be proactive in addressing patriarchy. Men need to challenge other men on their patriarchal and sexist ideas or actions. So it seems to be a much better mentality to stand up to one’s friends and community in order to help make them more conscientious people.

As long as men standby when these patriarchal events take place, they prop up the oppressive frame they “must be silent”.

Ending conservative war on women. Many conservative politicians try to say their policies are “not a war on women”, but the record levels of legislation limiting women’s rights and the impacts, says otherwise. We have to keep up the pressure on these regressive policies and highlight the implications of this conservative war.

- Hold the media accountable. Whether this is for male-dominated journalisms or movies, or for victim-blaming in cases involving sexual violence, we have to stop the media’s focus on dominant culture and instead reflect its viewers with all types of relationship and backgrounds.

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