

# Patriarchy and Colonization: The "Brooder House" for Gender Inequality in Nigeria

Journal of Research  
on Women and Gender  
Volume 10, Pages 3-22  
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## Abstract

The battle for women's suffrage at English Parliament in 1866 marked the earliest recorded legal battle for equality between men and women. Since then, the issue of gender equality has grown to become a global concern. While it is generally agreed that human rights apply to all human beings (men and women included), women's fundamental rights and freedom have been limited by patriarchal practices and traditions. The situation is worse in many African societies where colonial legacies and patriarchal culture assign superior roles to men and subordinate roles to women. In Nigeria, these practices have reduced the status of women to be inferior to their male counterparts. This in turn makes it difficult for women to fully participate in as many social, political, and economic activities as men do. Patriarchal culture has brought tremendous setbacks for women in Nigeria, which is the focus of this paper. In addition, stereotyping and stratification of jobs, skills, political offices and businesses have become so deep-rooted in patriarchy because of the cultures and ideologies of the society. This began with the traditional gender roles in the pre-colonial era and was reinforced during the colonial era when women were forced out of commercial farming and trading to do food-crop farming and petty trading, which both bring in less money. Presently, this practice keeps women under glass ceilings and in low paying jobs, which contributes largely to most Nigerian women being in poverty, experiencing poor health, and suffering from various abuse due to the inequality of social status between genders. Therefore, this paper critically discusses the historical perspective and analyzes how colonial legacies and patriarchy are nurturing gender inequality in Nigeria using hegemonic and Nigerian masculinity as the theoretical frame work of analysis.

## Keywords

Patriarchy, gender inequality, Africa, colonialism

## Introduction

In its 2014 report, the World Bank claimed that gender inequality gaps are gradually closing globally. For example, in Nigeria in 2006, the percentage of women's participation in national economic activities such as government and private employment and entrepreneurship was 56%, but when measured in 2014, that percentage had grown to 60%. Also, in Cameroon, a neighboring country to Nigeria, it was recorded that in

1999 the elementary enrollment ratio was 85 girls to 100 boys, but in 2008 it had moved to

91 girls to 100 boys (WEF, 2016). Despite these noticeable improvements, there are still many gaps left. In many parts of Africa, women still suffer complications and death from childbirth and other reproductive health issues. The World Bank reported that 1 out of every 31 women dies of maternal issues in Africa compared to 1 out of 4,300 in developed countries (World Bank, 2015). Moreover, in secondary education enrollment, girls still lag behind boys. This is due to many factors, which include traditional practices that prefer a boy child above a girl child, early and forced marriages for girls, and domestic and sexual violence (Olawoye et al., 2004). For instance, the abduction of over 250

Chibokk's girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria in 2014 was a clear indication of prejudice against female children (Okebukola, 2014), which consequently led to reduced enrollment of girls in schools in Northern Nigeria. Additionally, women and girls are subjects of the social construction of inferiority to boys and men (Nealon & Giroux 2012; Leon-Guerrero, 2009) that further places them in an unequal status with men and boys. Patriarchy manifests in every area possible, whether in employment, or access to resources, or domestic and corporate roles, constraining both women and girls in a marginalized lifestyle. Presently, women face challenges of glass ceilings at workplaces, poor political representation, no reproductive, legal or inheritance rights, and limited access to education (Olawoye, et al., 2004). Reviewing relevant literatures on this subject provides succinct background and theories crucial for understanding the patriarchal culture, its attendant relations to colonialism and the concept of gender inequality in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper critically discusses gender relations in Nigeria through the lens of hegemonic and Nigerian masculinity and the historical perspectives of the colonial activities; although, the account does not depict the chronological order of events, but it shows the evolution of the present gender position in Nigeria.

# Theoretical Framework and Contextual Perspective of Gender Relations in Africa

## Hegemonic Masculinity, Nigerian masculinity, Gender inequality

Masculinity is a set of attributes, behaviors, traits and roles connected with men and boys in varying contexts and locations, which attests to their quality of manliness. While these traits are socially constructed, it also has some biological and cultural factors (Voices 4Change, 2015). The expressions of these traits and attributes are accompanied with patriarchal power between men and women (Connell, 2005). Nevertheless, when these traits are passively expressed it is referred to as subordinate masculinity, which is devoid of power and does not meet with social expectations of being the ideal man (Gurfinkel, 2012).

However, hegemonic masculinity refers to an ideal masculinity, a normative masculine identity that all men are either directly or indirectly taught by individuals as well as socializing institutions — such as the media or school, community, and the cultural value expectations — to adhere to; however, these traits of the ideal man is actually never achieved (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity positions men as superior to women, not allowing for any sort of weakness or ‘feminine’ emotions i.e. nurturing, sadness, sensitivity, and caringness/kindness (Uchendu, 2007). There are central aspects of hegemonic masculinity by which all males are

measured. However, it must be made clear that the performance of masculinity differs by race or class and time (Gurfinkel, 2012; Omadjohwoefe, 2013). This concept of hegemonic masculinity is a model that expresses male dominant roles over female. Fundamentally, hegemonic masculinity is mostly attained through institutions or inclusion into a set of cultural practices, which exclude or oppress females (Connell, 2005).

Since the performance of masculinity differs by race, class and time, it is certain that there will be a Nigerian dominant masculinity performance based on Nigerian culture, race and a particular period different from any part in the world. Thus, masculinity is dynamic. Nigeria is diverse in religion, ethnic culture and economic class, which may make it difficult to specify the type of masculinity in performance (Omadjohwoefe, 2013). So, the type of masculinity adopted by the Nigerian male is largely influenced by the colonialization of more than 250 ethnic groups by the colonizers with several tribal affiliations, cultures and religions (Aransi, 2013). The British colonizers imposed a form of a dominant, masculine culture on Nigerian men when they removed women from public spaces and denied them access to Western education; this was later reinforced by patriarchal culture and a neo-colonization agenda. This masculine culture prevented the women from having roles and positions in society and could not work or earn money. Women became dependent on men who were referred to as bread winners. However, Nigerian masculinity is largely formed along the tribal origin, but there is dominant masculinity traits common to every man. Because there is an expected

code of masculine conduct reinforced by the society that is operative virtually everywhere, each father tries to instill this code into his young son through masculine clothing, hair style, types of job and associations, traditional recreation types and expected levels of violence that support masculinity (Adu, 2013). Men feel it is a form of femininity when others have different attitudes toward established masculine conduct. For example, it is taught to a boy to begin to develop qualities of a man through bravery, a job through physical skills with less or no display of emotion or military enrollment, a good education, devotion to religion, ability to control and be strong; these are regarded as masculine role models (Uchendu, 2007).

In addition, masculinity in Nigeria varies slightly from culture to culture in performance, but it is commonly expressed at every interaction to limit the role of women and their benefits during the development process (Adu, 2013). It is believed that women are to operate behind the scenes — not seen in public spaces, further making men act superior and isolating women from active roles and decisions. Men in Nigeria discriminate against and dominate women because they live with the neo-colonized masculine ideologies of the colonizers, treating women as inferior. Nigerian men enact this dominant attitude to perpetuate inequality. One of the resultant effects of this inequality is a restricted access for women from opportunities for self-development and growth (UN Women, 2011), and formidable barriers are produced that hinder social, economic and political development. Consequently, Nigerian women and the country at large are led into poverty (Metcalf & Afanassieva, 2005).

Nigeria is ranked 152 in gender index by the United Nations report, one of the poorest nations but with huge resources because of the high level of gender inequality (UNDP, 2016).

The crux of this discourse on gender inequality is Nigerian masculinity which came as a result of the dominant culture of men. Women suffer beyond exclusion, and they also bear the impact of modern conflicts and civil wars which often include rape, domestic violence, subordination, trafficking, abductions and kidnappings, forced marriage, forced labor, and sexual violence (O'Connell, 2009). While all these are global concerns and need to be ultimately eliminated (Wotipka & Ramirez, 2007), the United Nations Millennium Development Declaration of 2000 was a timely response which placed gender equality as a goal for all nations by year 2015 and by extension to 2030 (UN, 2006; UN, 2015). However, much effort and many resources have been placed into this eradication process, which is commendable, but the outcome has been minimal due to many reasons. These reasons include cultural context of gender inequality, post-colonial legacies and globalization building up into many cultural barriers. Although gender inequality is a global phenomenon (Leon-Guerrero, 2009), it has different meanings in many regions since it is a social construct (Adu, 2013; Hadebe, 2009). Therefore, it will be appropriate to contextually define gender inequality using cultural interpretation and the roles society assigns to women. Each society acquires peculiar knowledge based on the meaning constructed by their society (Barker, 2012).

## Contextual Perspective of Gender Relations in Nigeria

Gender inequality is the space and role that society assigns for each gender and their expected behaviors (O'Connor, 2016). Therefore, the space and role that African patriarchal culture has assigned for women and girls in African society and the expected behaviors are imposed on them and reinforced in their subordinate positions to men in an African context (Adu, 2013; Fatile et al., 2017). The assigned roles of women in Africa are subordinate to the roles of men. For instance, under the traditional patrilineal system which has influenced present society, women are not allowed to make decisions at home because Africans mostly live in homesteads under the authority of a male family head who makes all decisions (Adu, 2013). In an African homestead, which usually comprises of several households, each household is made up of the husband, wife (or wives, as polygamy is allowed in Africa) and children. Several households constitute a lineage and several joint lineages form a community, which makes up a village or township; this is the arrangement in the traditional social unit. The community, or the village, is ruled by a male chosen from a lineage and supported by other elderly men from other lineages. From this type of traditional setting, women do not occupy leadership positions in any level of the groups and are not given any decision-making rights on matters concerning the homestead, family, or the community. Sometimes women outnumber men in the community and townships, but the men who are fewer in

number make decisions for women about everything including how women should live their lives (UNDP, 1999; African Development Bank, 2010). This cultural practice that bars women from decision making at home and at the community level also denies them a choice and voice in national matters. Again, in Nigeria, women do not have reproductive rights because it is culturally acceptable for men to decide the reproductive agenda of the family. The man dictates how many children to have and when to have them, without considering the interests of the woman (Olawoye et al., 2004). However, most women have accepted that such decisions are a man's right, and they wait for that to happen. Culturally, women are not allowed to use contraceptives or other methods of protection against sexual diseases caused by multiple sexual partners in polygamous or extramarital affairs. Furthermore, only men can engage in this type of activity (Smith, 2007).

So, in general, gender refers to the roles and behavior of men and women in daily social, cultural, economic and political relationships (Adu, 2013). Thus, gender in an African context is socio-culturally constructed, and it socially positions biological females and males as women and men, as feminine and masculine. Gender issues are not just about women but are everyday societal issues which affect both men and women in their endeavors (WHO, 2010; Connell, 2005). Thus, gender relations in African society have been molded by a combination of common daily factors which include customs, cultural practices, education, social economic status, traditional and modern laws, patterns of social organization, infiltrations of cultures and globalization.

## Historical Background to Gender Inequality in Nigeria

Nigeria is populated by over 250 ethnic groups with three dominant ethnic groups and two dominant religions. The dominant ethnic groups are the Hausas who are the most populous, predominantly Islamic by religion and occupy the Northern region. Then, there are the Igbos who occupy the Eastern region and the Yorubas who occupy the Western region. The Igbos and Yorubas are both mostly Christian (Omadjohwoefe, 2013). The coming together of these three dominant ethnic groups and other minor ethnic groups was a result of the 1914 amalgamation by the British colonial imperialists for their administrative convenience as the colonizer. These three main ethnic groups had previously constituted different kingdoms, caliphates, empires, languages and cultures, with different names. These factors have direct influence on gender relation in the country. Remarkably, the name *Nigeria*, which was the unifier for all these distinct nations, was the brainchild of Flora Shaw who was the wife of Lord Lugard — the colonial administrator of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). Presently, Nigeria is made up of 36 states and a federal capital city. The population in 2015 stood at 183 million people, of which over 90 million are females and 92 million are males (NBS, 2015).

### The Pre-colonial Era

In the pre-colonial era, Nigerians, like many other people in other African countries, lived in communities in their traditional settings and gender roles. In these communities, both men and women worked together for the socio-economic

and political development of their families and the communities, but they had different roles as assigned by each community. There was no term like 'housewife' as it is commonly used now because both men and women participated actively, taking on different roles as much as they could to complement each other (Ako-Nai, 2013). The cultural ideology is expressed in this common saying in Yoruba (A Nigeria native language): *bi okunrin ri ejo, ki obinrin pa, ki ejo ti ku ni*, meaning literally that "If a man saw a poisonous snake and a woman killed it, the important thing is that the snake was killed." This statement means that domestic work or community services were not gendered; rather, the important thing was that the task was accomplished. However, this does not seem to be the same across other ethnic groups, especially the Igbos' culture where masculinity is expressed like it was exemplified in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958). Although women were not generally relegated to the background in the pre-colonial era, they were denied the honor and respect given to men of the same status or that performed the same tasks. For example, in the pre-colonial era, Nigerian society had a good number of female leaders who ruled over empires and kingdoms, and there were women who were warlords and exhibited great military heroism. Some of the women who occupied such positions include BakwaTuruku and her daughter Queen Amina who both fought wars. Amina founded the present city of Zaria in the Kaduna state in northern Nigeria and started the famous traditional systems of building walls around cities, which is common in northern Nigeria to this day (Udodinma 2013). Other prominent women include Madam Tinubu of Lagos,



EfunsetanAniwura, princess Dauranna of Bayayida, princess Inkpi of Igala, queen Kambasen of Ijaw, and queen Quari of Ilesha (Adu 2013). In the southwestern part of Nigeria where the Yorubas are settled, women were members of town and village councils, which is where top decisions were made. There were reserved political positions for women, e.g. Iyalode, a high-ranking chieftain in the community, Iyaloja (head of all market squares), among a host of other offices. Women who held these two positions wielded much political power and influence that was on par with or greater than men in some cases in their communities. Women were appointed as regents (acting kings) after the demise of the ruler in the towns, while some were active kings, like Luwe, a female Oni — the title for the kings of Ile Ife. They were also spiritual leaders as they held the offices of chief priests to some of the goddesses of the lands and rivers (Udodinma, 2013). Some of these prominent community services and family roles were done according to hierarchy of age, not by biological sex because the roles were not absolutely seen as gendered (Udodinma, 2013). Men were considered superior to women because men were mostly used as footmen combatants because of their physical body structures. Patriarchal society disregards the intellectual prowess of women and prefers to recognize men's superior physical strength. However, women participated in the strategic planning and execution of wars. According to Yoruba history, Moremi Ajasoro — a queen of Ile Ife in the present Osun state in southwestern Nigeria — bravely proved that a woman could win a war through military tactics. She used her beauty as a weapon of war. She allowed herself to be captured and served as a slave to spy on

tormentors. She succeeded and escaped to her homeland after learning the military secrets of Ile Ife's enemies. Though she did not fight in the war, Moremi Ajasoro shared those secrets to her people and brought them permanent victory (Harris, 2012). She was neither made the king nor the captain, but she remained one of the wives of the king on her return. Women did not have full control or the same control as men in this era; they were marginalized and oppressed but not to the same degree of the post-colonial era, as will be discussed shortly. While women had limited voice, they could be a part of the community with an active role in the community's affairs, such as Efunsetan Aniwura, the Iyalode of Ibadan and Tinubu, Iyalode of Egba. However, there were demarcations and boundaries which women could not cross as designed by patriarchal domination. These limitations became the practice that has defined gender relations in Nigerian society (Harris, 2012).

### **Colonial Incursion**

The colonial incursion which came in 1884 brought many changes to Nigerian traditions and practices in terms of religion, political arrangement, education, and gender relation (Udodinma, 2013). The incursion of the British colonists had a significant effect on existing power relationships. It stripped women of the roles and power they had before colonization. The British colonists came with the practice of isolating women from socio-economic and political activities. The women's protest in the West for suffrage and political representation is an example of women fighting against this (Fawcett Society, 2016). Likewise, the waves of feminism in the United States of America and the founding of the feminist

movement were a result of women's marginalization and male dominance in politics and economic activities (Udodinma, 2013). In Nigeria and other African communities, women were removed from public and political domains and confined solely to their homes. Men were given access to Western education for ease of communication and to assist with colonial administration; thus, men became clerks, teachers, mission workers, cooks, and took other roles in the offices. This further established class structures as men became the new working, lower middle class, but women were still not allowed to work (Adu 2013; Udodinma, 2013). This action further reduced the status of women because men earned money from work while women could not work and had to rely on men for financial support. Women thus began to carry the extra burden of colonization and inequality due to marginalization and segregation.

Similarly, the colonists introduced cadres of trades to Nigeria that were beneficial and further marginalized women. During the pre-colonial times, Nigerians were cash and food crop farmers, and there was no segregation of farming duties. Both jobs were done either by women or men according to individual abilities and access to resources. Although, more men did the cash-crop farming while women did more food-crop farming because of family feeding concerns. The British colonizers withdrew women from the farming of cash crops, such as cocoa, rubber, cotton, and coffee that were exports to England for industrialization. Women were left to farm food crops only to feed the family and got less cash income because almost no one bought food then (Ako-Nai, 2013). Ultimately, women were a lower rank than

men. With this deliberate disruption of pre-colonial socio-economic and political systems in Nigeria, men were positioned for the leadership roles in politics and in the economy, as well as in other social and religious circles. This marginalization soon became a way of life in Nigeria and in Africa in general. Men became more dominant in every institution, including the home (Adu 2013; Udodinma, 2013).

Most Nigerian daily activities such as religion, politics, business, recreation, entertainment, economy, education and culture are male dominated. The culture presents males as the most significant and dominant figures because policies and discourses are constructed around masculinity, further encouraging men to dominate women psychologically, emotionally, financially and violently (bell hooks, 2004). Consequently, toughness, anger and rage became acceptable social behaviors for men which shaped their lives and encouraged them to demonstrate power over women (Johnson, 2005). Subsequently, this culture entrenches gender inequality in African society.

### **Post-colonial Era**

The British colonial rule in Nigeria ended in 1960, but the British have already passed on their cultural practices to the communities they left. These African communities relinquished most of their original culture and embraced British colonial culture. Furthermore, the amalgamation of the three protectorates of Niger, by the colonizers for administrative convenience, was a major fracture to these ethnic groups which were not socially, culturally and linguistically connected. Barker (2012) claims that language is culture; therefore, the imposition of the



English language upon Nigeria was a disruption to a host of existing linguistic practices and brought a change in culture. Through the teaching of their language, the British colonizers also taught skills mostly to men, and thus the men gained more power. These cultural transfers also influenced clothing, food, social interactions, and enforced respect for educated men. Women began to feel inferior for not being able to participate in the 'new world' setting. Through this new language and the learned business skills, many women could not participate because of the skill barriers and segregation of trade classes. Moreover, the Nigerian public service administrative structure was patterned after the colonizer's civil service systems, which were male dominated with few females holding public offices. This adoption of the colonizer's culture created a new male elite structure and led to more gaps within the social and working rank systems (Adu, 2013).

After the final exit of the British colonial officers and administrators, they left behind a class of Nigerian men who had been educated and served them. These Nigerian men then assumed their offices. The men relinquished low-paying jobs to women who had been attending schools by then, although not as many as men (Adu, 2013). These low-paying jobs did not require much formal education and have been stereotyped as women's work. This unfortunate belief permeated the school systems and led to a segregation of subjects and roles in sports where girls could participate. Furthermore, stereotyping has become one of the tools for entrenching patriarchy and gender inequality.

### **Overview of Patriarchy in Nigeria**

bell hooks (2004) describes patriarchy as a social menace and disease that plagues the life of men in both body and spirit. It is the dominant character exhibited by men using the socio-political systems and institutions to maintain their supremacy above females. Patriarchy makes men also consider themselves weak to the point of being psychologically terrorized. It is simply a system to exclude females. This description of the patriarchy pattern exists in Nigeria, and this oppressive situation has become the norm.

Patriarchy in Nigeria is associated with authoritative, domineering masculinity and characterized by social supremacy that is generally identifiable in men. It is a social, psychological, political and emotional weapon that makes women see themselves as a weak object of subordination, fear and victims of hard and high-handedness (Idowu, 2013). Patriarchy is reproduced in Nigeria by teaching young males to understand and demonstrate that they are in control, while women are taught to submit to the authority of men. Also, men learn to assert authority by force, and violence is an acceptable behavior for them; in contrast, women must remain calm and submissive (Adichie, 2012; Idowu, 2013). Patriarchy is a social system organized around some societal institutions that are male dominated, male identified and male cultured. This system's construction is used to demean women and exalt men and masculinity (Johnson, 2005). After colonization, the system showed that Nigeria was purely built for men because it was redesigned for men's domination. For instance, governance in Nigeria was militarized for more than three decades by males in the military. The administration, economy, educational and public

institutions and councils were so masculine that women could not work in most organizations except in primary schools and a few girls' secondary schools as teachers. In some cases, military personnel were sent to some schools to enforce law and order on children. Patriarchal culture is dictatorial (Johnson, 2005). The patriarchal system has labeled men as the breadwinners that women must depend on. Society has stereotyped men to be in the army, to act as security, or to do construction and other physically hard jobs. Recreation and sports are also stereotyped based on gender in Nigeria, as men traditionally play soccer, drink alcohol, visit the bars and drive cars around the streets. The women are culturally required to be stay-at-home mothers and homecare providers; they must engage in sex with their partners at any time, be friendly and gentle and never be firm or rigid. A woman must not express her sexual desires and must see men as superior (Adu, 2013). In Nigerian patriarchal society, men who show signs of weakness or are not aggressive are ridiculed for behaving like a woman because the culture sees a woman as weak. Having socially constructed women in this manner, Nigerian culture believes that it is unacceptable to see a woman as being agile, exhibiting high physical strength and having outstanding intellectual capabilities. This belief is because patriarchy in Nigeria always regards women's reasoning as non-constructive compared to men's (Adu, 2013; Johnson, 2005). However, Adichie (2012) argued that women should show their ambitions and display their skills and talents. The world is no longer about physical strength but rather intelligence, which women also possess. This statement argues against traditional and cultural

beliefs that are still popular but not relevant to this age. Unfortunately, African women also reinforce patriarchy by culturally reproducing the elevation of men and inferiority of women in young women. Older women teach the girls to respect gender traditions that make them inferior and promote the boys' power (Bvuktwa, 2014). These traditions reinforce masculinity. Nigerian society prefers male children to female children, so women desire to bear male children. Therefore, female children see themselves as inferior, while males see themselves as a better and higher form of a human. African society gives more recognition to women who bear male children and mocks those who do not. Thus far, hegemonic masculinity positions men as superior to women and explains the Nigerian masculinity present that promotes patriarchal dominance. Hegemonic masculinity serves as a theoretical expression for the consistent and historical societal preference for male children in Nigeria.

### **Patriarchy in Politics and Governance**

The colonial administration brought Nigeria a new political structure which favored men. Women had been removed from public spheres during the colonial regime; therefore, women had a double burden of marginalization and colonization from British colonialists and Nigerian men (Oni & Iyanda, 2013). During the first Nigerian republic in the early 1960s, no woman was appointed to the parliament and none sat in the federal cabinet; they had no place in the political order of the day. This is contrary to what happened in the pre-colonial era before colonization, when a few women still had a place in the community. The first post-colonial national government was overthrown by the

military in 1966 (Nigeria, 2017) who were in control of the country until 1979 when the second republic was inaugurated. The military government had no woman in any of its cabinets and leadership offices. This was also the case in the second republic, where there were no women in political leadership cadre. The three decades of military rule were male dominated. This pattern had continued for too long for upcoming generations to remember that women and men had led the community together in the pre-colonial era. However, it was only in 1999 in the fourth republic that 13% of women were appointed into the country's leadership capacities in the parliament of Nigeria. In 2007, a woman speaker was elected for a few months, but she was later removed to be replaced by a man in what was essentially a conspiracy plot; This was because Nigerian masculinity and ego could not bear a woman leading a majority of men (Oni & Iyanda, 2013). The political outlook, policies, and practices are masculine in structure and even the few women in government were perceived doing something that was not approved, as the society is biased against women in power. There are constructed roles for women in the society but not in power or leadership (Napikoski, 2017). Nigerian society is shaped for male dominance. But feminists fight against these ideologies and agitate for change in society to end male dominance and give women the same recognition for tasks accomplished and authority like men (Lewis, 2017). The national government in Nigeria, which was elected in May 2015, is no better than the previous — it has males as the president and the vice-president, and only 7 out of the 109 senators across the nation are women. In the lower house there are 15 women out of the 360 members. There are

6 states with female deputy governors out of 36 states, and not a single female governor (Nigeria, 2017; The Scoop, 2016). Again, this section has explained how dominant Nigerian masculinity and colonial legacy had reposition women to act behind the scenes and mostly put women out of decision-making offices and roles. In the patriarchal Nigerian culture, woman's place is said to be in the kitchen. Feminism therefore has become a global advocacy where gender inequality and women marginalization are discussed

### **Patriarchy in Marriage Contract, Childbearing and Home Responsibilities**

Nigerian traditional marriages are contracted between the families of the man and woman. The woman does not have the power to decide who and when to marry. Rather, at an appointed time, the man's family would bring the specified bride's token, according to the tribal culture, which includes some amount of money as decided by the customs in the family. This suggests that women are taken as an exchange for the gifts and appreciation to the bride's family for their gesture; hence the man owns the woman and she is a property of the family, and they see her as a commodity (Adu, 2013). Although this process is gradually changing in this post-colonial age, oppression and domination is still in practice. Men violently abuse women and leave them to fend for themselves and children. In the polygamous family setting, the first wife, who is the senior, coordinates and manages other wives; she makes the younger co-wives take on the daily household chores while the senior wife handles the financial responsibilities for the family. This places much burden on women as homemakers and keepers and as a possession of the man who denies her

right to pursue her career goals (Adu, 2013). Andrea Dworkin wrote that women have been robbed by men of the potential for human choice, thereby women have been forced to conform in body, behavior, and values to become object of men's desire. She further states that there is no room for women to make variety of choices for themselves since they are not free (Lewis, 2017). This is true of African women. Unfortunately, the society sees a woman as a child bearer, and she is held responsible for that failure to have one. She is further oppressed if she does not bear a male child. In African society, the more children a woman has, the more respected she is, and she is given even more respect for having male children. (Opara, 2005). Because of this cultural intimidation, every married woman desires to have male children. Although these cultural practices are declining in some urban areas, there is still considerable humiliation and derogatory treatment given to both urban and rural women who do not bear children; culturally, they are labelled and most times forced out of marriage (Adu, 2013). Similarly, gender stereotyping begins as soon as the sex of a child is identified. The female children become affiliated to the mother and her several traditional gender roles in the house, such as fetching water and wood, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and completing other domestic chores. The male children are expected to do chores like farming, gardening, and completing other related jobs called 'boys' jobs' and are encouraged to take after a man's way of life. Oftentimes, boys take after their father's professional careers, while girls are left to take on any of the stereotyped 'jobs for women,' thus perpetuating this aspect of patriarchal society (Ako-Nai, 2013). Moreover, in

many homes, the male child is given preferred nutrition while the girl child is less catered for and may be subjected to hard domestic chores. The girl child sometimes is sent to a wealthy home as a house helper in exchange for money for the family or to pay school fees of the male child (Adu, 2013).

Furthermore, it is the belief of men that a woman's place is in the kitchen, whatever her status. Unfortunately, this patriarchal tradition has become a norm for women (Adu, 2013). This makes men not invest too much on the girl child on training or education, while they keep the boys away from the kitchen. An example of this is found in a social response to a woman who contested for a governorship seat of a state in Nigeria in 2015 April, as stated below (Vanguard Newspaper Nigeria, November 11, 2015):

*However, not everyone supports Ms. Aisha Al-Hassan as some people believe that a woman's place is in the kitchen and it would be a disaster to have a female governor. . . [according to] comments about Ms. Al-Hassan circling around social media.*

This is typical of the social inequalities entrenched in a patriarchal society which portrays males as the dominant figure in all areas. Women are denied leadership positions and denied decision-making powers in all spaces of society (HDR, 1999; ADB, 2010). Thereby, women have limited say in matters that affect their lives such as marriages, career, education and thus are victims of masculine dominated policies emanating from culture and colonial legacies which have stereotyped and reduced women to a subordinate role of homemakers, child bearers and voiceless

citizens (UN women, 2011). The patrilineal culture disallows a woman the right of inheritance to the family assets in the occurrence of the death of her husband or father in a homestead, usually referred to as the family head. Instead, the eldest son takes over no matter his age and position in the family. If there is no male child, a male relative of the deceased man takes over the household. In some cultures, the male relative also inherits the wife (Adu, 2013). This section shows how hegemonic masculinity is passed down directly and indirectly through the institution of marriage and homes. Gender socialization towards cultural expectations of boys and girls are built into the acceptable norms and practices in a society, corporate offices and in religious places. These practices have become the Nigerian masculine cultures which every man wants to attain to oppress women.

was given mostly to men who benefited greatly from that ahead of women (Adu, 2013; Fagunwa, 2014). This is a major factor responsible for women's low participation in the nation's development activities. In 2006, the percentage of women's participation in national economic activities, such as government, private employment, and entrepreneurs, was 61.2% of the population. A national report from Nigeria shows that 40% of men that are literate are employed in the educational sector compared to 13% of women, and this is the trend across all sectors of occupation in Nigeria (Acha, 2014). This also establishes the huge gap between men and women in academic positions in Nigerian universities. From the table shown below (Ukertor, n.d.), only a few women compared to a much higher number of men rise to top academic positions such as dean, provost, president, or

**Table 1: University Governance Structure**

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
HODS	30	02	40	05	45	08	50	10	52	15
DEANS	25	03	28	05	35	07	40	10	45	12
SENATE	130	08	158	13	175	20	200	22	222	27
COUNCIL	40	05	43	05	50	10	61	10	65	15
President	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	0

### **Patriarchy in Education/Academia**

Historically in Nigeria, formal education was introduced by the British colonizers and missionaries, but the access

serve in the council. The data was taken from random sampling of male and female academia in five universities chosen in the North Western universities for five years. This shows the masculine culture



manifesting in university system jobs. There are more men than women holding top academic positions, and this is common all around the country. Men were positioned for dominance with colonial legacy and they kept the structure and policy in leadership and all decision-making positions. This is not an indication that women are incapable of performing these roles efficiently, but men's ego denies women access to power because of patriarchal culture (bell hooks, 2004), which also assigns the traditional socially constructed stereotyped low paid jobs for women, such as nursing, day care, and elementary school teachers (Ukertor, n.d) Here, Hegemonic masculine explains the social structure in Nigeria, its culture of women exclusion and gives reasons why men are in every place of power, authority, and places of work, including the academics.

## Conclusion

So far, this study has opened up masculinity, African feminism and gender inequality as frameworks of analysis. Masculinity is used to explain the social construct in Africa imbued with men's patriarchal power, expressed as a behavior of social superiority over women. In Africa generally and in Nigeria specifically, this culture has resulted to hegemonic masculinity of being 'manly' where men are seen to be superior to women. Often, women are rendered as exhibitors of the emotional features of sadness, sensitivity and caringness. This perception explains the male dominant roles present in African role analysis. This work has explained gender inequality via the framework of masculinity. Historically, Africa's and Nigeria's patriarchal culture were

reinforced by a colonization agenda. Culturally, to date, roles and positions in the society are differentiated by the stereotyped characteristics of gender. In this regard, women are expected to operate behind the scenes where they are isolated from active roles of decision making. In the analysis, African feminism has become a strong response to this societally imposed discrimination and is more of an advocacy to challenge male dominance in patriarchal Africa. This situation has received global awareness and attention championed to correct women's marginalization and male dominance. Arising from these frameworks, the history of gender inequality in relation to Africa from the pre-colonial era is reinforced by colonization and sadly has a strong impact on African documented history.

The imbalance in the social structure in Africa has a negative effect on national development, because the patriarchal ideology entrenched in Nigerian society creates a divide that keeps women at home, in the role of a mother and wife or in low-paying jobs which impoverish them and their families. They live with low morale which inhibits them from aspiring to reach their potentials or professional career goals, as in the case of academia shown above. This structure that reinforces gender roles destroys potentials and capabilities, which results in a loss for the nation's economic, social, and political development, among other area. Moreover, the patriarchal society does not expect women to have life ambitions and aspirations for greater roles and positions as men do in all areas of their lives, including careers, sports, politics, and leadership roles. Similarly, the long-standing African tradition that brought in

popular African feminism proponents of Neco feminism — a strand of popular African feminism — argues that African women are expected to be satisfied and settle with positions and titles that are of collateral status to their husband's professional or social attainment. In other words, women should earn their social statuses by their husband's title, such as first lady, wife of president or the wife of the chief, among others (Fagunwa, 2014; Udodinma, 2013). This practice reduces women to the shadows of men and does not make women aspire to reach their goals. To attain gender equality, this paper recommends that men should engage in the struggle for equality. Hopefully, this will lead to a social reform that changes the patriarchal structures that view women as subordinates into structures that promote women's rights (Freedman & Jacobson, 2012). Gender inequality will quickly disappear if men who benefit from the inequality stand up and advocate for a transformation, while encouraging fellow men and boys to engage in the process of change and challenge the dominant practices of masculinity (Connell, 2005).

This study advocates that policies and structures should be deliberate to remove traditional gender roles and other barriers that keep women from career paths and spaces that inhibit them from attaining their goals and aspirations. For example, there should be a paternal commitment to childbearing, equal to the maternal commitment, as part of employment and a labor policy for men. So, men could take turns and commit to the same length of time out of work to allow their wives to stay at their job. In addition, Molaria Ogundipe's Stiwanism, an intellectual strand of African feminism, advocates for women's inclusion in social transformation. Thus, women's voices and choices should be part of social, economic and political development in the society (Ogundipe, 1994). This means that women should not be relegated or marginalized, but rather they should be actively involved in all forms of decision making towards overall development. Involving women in the decision-making process would disrupt the brooding of gender inequality when the system of masculinity collapses.■

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