

Patriarchy and Gender Inequality Among Undergraduates

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Received 10 October 2021; accepted 20 November 2021

Published online 26 December 2021

Abstract

Patriarchy and gender inequality among undergraduate students has damaged and still damaging the psyche and academic potentials of female students in our tertiary institutions, notwithstanding strides made with regard to gender equality in our institutions, gender disparity is still very visible mostly in our academic environments. It is obvious that patriarchy and gender inequality has become a transmittable norm in our society, patriarchy as a culture playing a decisive role in constraining the uptake of gender responsive behaviors and practices. This paper examines the underlying mechanisms that constrain gender equality among undergraduate students of Kogi state University, Anyigba and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The work is premised on the eco-feminist theory of (1974) by a French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne. Participant observations and interviews were the means for data collection and the data collected were analyzed using descriptive and analytical tools. From the analysis, the work among other things discovered that some female students are completely unaware and unconcerned of the disparity occasioned by this cooked human philosophy. The work concludes that gender disparity is common among undergraduate students in our tertiary institutions. The work recommends that a department be set aside to deal with this situation in our respective institutions in order to build a society where both male and female students will exercise equal rights for a sustainable development and national cohesion.

Key words: Patriarchy; Gender inequality; Gender

equality; Undergraduate students and Sustainable development

Joseph, O. S., & Ezeugo, T. J. (2021). Patriarchy and Gender Inequality Among Undergraduates. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 17(4), 22-26. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/12330>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12330>

INTRODUCTION

It has become a common Phenomenon that at this 21st century, the society has actually gone very far in its affirmative actions against various forms of discrimination in our various communities on the basis of sex, gender and race. The message against male dominance which communicates into gender inequality has gone virile that to hold a different ideology is to be seen as not fully aware of the current reality on the issue of gender imbalance. No doubt, this consciousness seems to have been solidly built at the male and female adults in our society but social settings to our young males and females, particularly at the undergraduate levels where societal values and practice are mostly transmitted, the issue of patriarchy and gender inequality is not properly addressed thereby creating a window for this belief to strive.

Generally, Nigeria Universities are obviously afflicted by a number of social problems which impede the full realization of equal dominance among male and female folks. The Kogi state University, Anyigba and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa may not be different as there are obvious practices that show gender inequality and patriarchalism among the undergraduates. Today in our universities so many positions of trust are not to be vied for by our female students. This today gradually builds inferiorism in the process or system and a pointer that women are subservient to the male counter parts. In classroom some opinion and suggestions sponsored by

female students are always considered inferior by their male counter parts and are always to accept their will are theirs course captainship or representation ship are usually reserved to men while female students are made to believe that they are assist or load in a complete absence of men.

THEORETICAL BASE

The work adopts the letters of Eco-Feminism by a French writer, Françoise d' Eaubonne of (1974). The theory is a branch of feminism that sees environmentalism and the relationship between women and the earth as foundational to its analysis and practice. According to the author, Eco-feminist thinkers draw on the concept of gender to analyze the relationships between humans and the natural worlds. He asserts that a feminist perspective of ecology does not place women in the dominant position of power but rather calls for an egalitarian. Collaborative society in which there is no one dominant group.

Today, there are several branches of ecofeminism with varying approaches and analysis, including liberal ecofeminism, spiritual centurial ecofeminism and social / socialist ecofeminism (or mentalist) ecofeminism (Mort, 74). Interpretations of ecofeminism and how it might be applied to social thought inclusive ecofeminism art, social justice and political philosophy, religion, contemporary feminism the poetry (Trancorse, 13)

The theory seems appropriate for this study because it explores the connections between women and nature in culture, region literature and iconography, and addresses the parallels between the oppression of nature and oppression of women in our social environment.

These parallels include but are not limited to seeing women and as property, seeing men as the curators of culture and women as the culture of nature, and how men dominate women and humans dominate nature. The theory ecofeminism emphasizes that both men and women are elements of the nature and must be equally respected; the rise of patriarchy religions and the establishment of gender hierarchies along with their demand of immanent trinity is anti – women ad must be condemned.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN HUMAN HISTORY

The problem of gender inequality in Nigeria has been rising in for decades, as the modern society has redefined the role of a woman which is vastly different from what is used to be in the middle ages. However, patriarchy and gender inequality is always a touchy topic when it comes to Africa because it is largely influenced by religious beliefs and the diverse cultures.

As far back as the history of man, religion views women to be subordinate of man. This religious theory of how the world came to be may be wholesome and harmless, but beneath the surface, a darker narrative

prevails. God created animals and send them to Adam who named each. But there animals were not suitable company for Adam. Therefore God made Adam to sleep. God removed his ribs and created the “first” woman, Eve (Genesis, 2, pp.21-23). Here began the systematic oppression of women for if religion tells humanity how to structure their lives so that they live according to God’s will. God’s will make it abundantly clear that women are subservient to men. Women must be so, because man was made from God and woman was made from man.

In other way round, culture has played a serious part in the subjugation of women in our society; it is understood as a way of life of the people. Olabode (2009, p.136) is also affirmative that Oduyoye’s view is that African culture has been a ling tale of discrimination and injustice to women as there has not been equality in the opportunity, dignity and power between men and women. Her reason is that there are various aspects of Africa culture which restrict them from attaining equal status with men. These factors according to him are inheritance, proverbs, taboos, sexual fidelity, morality, widowhood, practice etc. to show where culture placed men over women.

Women are nearly non-existent on the Nigeria political scenes, more so at the federal and state levels. Male domination of decision making and violence has led women to engage in political matters. Additionally, successful political advisers are not likely to support female candidates so it could be difficult for them to have a part in politics.

There are major differentiations when it comes to starting business and getting credit loans for men and women in Nigeria. When women in business have fewer employees and shorter longevity than men, this gender gap becomes even wider. Within countries of Tunisia and Zimbabwe, women business owners worked in time intervals throughout threat. The time involved maintain a business with little pay was undesirable restrictive and directly conflicted with their family responsibly (The Republic, 2017)

In Nigeria, educational statistics have been used as an indicator of gender inequalities versus women’s empowerment (Akudo, 2013). The population census conducted in 1991 by Federal Government of Nigeria found out that 61% (41 million) of Nigeria women “suffer from intellectual poverty” (James, 2008). Report shows that Nigeria is not favored in the revolution of educational system in the country. In 1965, 37.75% of populations in primary schools are girls while only 9% of undergraduates were females. By 1974, the percentage of female undergraduates increased to 25.5%. The major enrollment from girls were only teaching and social courses. In absolute terms, there were 138,334 male and 50,652 female students in Nigeria universities during this period. The challenges faced by females were due to the perception of the society on gender qualities (Fredrick, 2005).

Despite the above, solutions to patriarchy is far from reached in the society.

MODERN PATRIARCHY

In the modern era, the concept of patriarchy is asserted to manifest itself in institutionalized control, rather than simply being about an individual's sexism. Feminist theorists have written extensively about patriarchy either as a primary cause of women's oppression or as part of an interactive system. Shulamith Firestone, a radical-libertarian feminist, defines patriarchy as a system of oppression of women. Firestone believes that patriarchy is caused by biological inequalities between women and men e.g. that women bear children, while male do not. Firestone writes that patriarchal ideologies support the oppression of women and gives as an example, the joy of giving birth, which she levels a patriarchal myth, for Firestone, women must gain control over reproduction in order to be free from oppression (Gerda, 1986, pp.8-11). Feminist historian Gerda Lerner believes that male control over women's sexuality and reproductive functions is a fundamental cause and result of patriarchy. Alison Jaggar also understands patriarchy as the primary cause of women's oppression. The system of patriarchy accomplishes this by alienating women from their bodies. According to Hartmann, the term patriarchy redirects the focus of oppression from the labour division to a moral and political responsibility liable directly to men as a gender. In its being both systematic and universal, therefore, the concept of patriarchy represents an adaptation of Marxist concept of class and struggle (Richards, 2014). Audre Lorde, an African American feminist writer and theorist, believed that racism and patriarchy were intertwined systems of oppression (Tong, 2017). Sociologist Joan Acker, analyzing the concept of patriarchy and the role that it has played in the development of feminist thought, says that seeing patriarchy as a universal, trans-historical and trans-cultural phenomenon where "women were everywhere oppressed by men in more or less the same ways (.....) tended toward a biological essentialism" (John, p.235).

Playing a critical role in the development of the brain and behavior, testosterone and estrogen have labeled the "male-hormone" and the "female-hormone" respectively as a result of the impact they have when masculinity or feminizing an individual. Sociologist tend to reject predominantly biological explanations of patriarchy (Nations, 2012) and contend that socialization processes are primarily responsible for establishing gender roles (Henslin, 2001, pp.65-67, 240). According to standard sociological theory, patriarchy is the result of sociological construction that are passed down from generation to generation (Sanderson, 2001, p.198). These constructions are most pronounced in societies with traditional

cultures and less economic development (Macionis, John, Plummer, and Ken, 2000, p.347). Even in modern developed societies, however, gender messages conveyed by family, mass media and other institutions largely favor males having a dominant status (Henslin, 2001, pp.65-67, 240).

Biologist Richard Lewontin asserts that patriarchy persist through social and political reasons, rather than purely biological causes. Opponents of gender feminism, such as Christiana Hoff Sommers, have argued that patriarchy has its origin in biological factors (1995, p.320). This is called biological determinism, which looks at humanity from a strictly biological point of view. This, the evolution of science in a patriarchal society's focus begins with man and woman. The male testosterone hormone is, for instance, known to greatly enhance risk taking behavior which can generate increased status in groups if successful (balanced with an equal increase in number of failures, with potential losses of status or death as result). The potential magnitude, frequency and longevity of the increased status from a hormonally driven risk taking success depend on opportunities, which increase rapidly with societal complexity.

A hypothetical patriarchal culture based primarily on a hormonally driven increased rated male successes, this require a certain critical level of societal evolution before it could evolve. Other proponents of this theory posit that because a woman's biology, she is fit to perform roles such as anonymous child rearing at home, rather than high-profile decision making roles, such as leaders in battles. Through this simple basis, "the existence of a sexual division of labor in primitive societies is a starting point as much for purely social accounts of the origins of patriarchy as for biological" (Richard, et el, 1984 p.157). Hence, the rise of patriarchy is recognized through this apparent "sexual division". Sociological Sylvia Walby has composed six overlapping structures that define patriarchy and that take different forms in different cultures and different times:

- The state: women are unlikely to have formal power and representation.
- The household: women are more likely to do the housework and raise the children.
- Paid work: women are likely to be paid less.
- Sexuality: women's sexuality is more likely to be treated negatively.
- Culture: representation of women in media and popular culture is 'within a patriarchal gaze' (Sylvia, 1990, p.20).

METHODOLOGY

Participant observation and interviews were the major source of data – gathering technique in this research. The researchers are conversant with the two universities under

observation. The researchers are both graduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Azkwa and one of the researchers serves as a lecturer at Kogi state university, anyigba. They are very friendly with the undergraduate activities, policies and unionism. They equally knew that the system that graduated them as undergraduates upheld the poetry of patriarchy in student's leadership and association. The two university as (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa and Kogi State university, Anyigba both admit male and female students but so not observe female students subjugation by their male counter parts at the students levels. The researchers have thus selected some samples of data that best illustrate patriarchy and gender inequality among understands in dominant position of power female students in dominants position of power, but rather a call for an equalitarian collaborative institution in which there is no dominant group among the undergraduates in the Nigerian Universities.

Data Presentation and Analysis Patriarchy and Gender Inequality at the SUG Level in both Universities from 2010 – Date.

Table 1
Samples of Name and Sex of SUG Presidents in KSU from 2010 to Date

S/N	Names of Students	Sex	Year	Office	School
1	Abimaje Kingsley	Male	2010	SUG-President	KSU
2	Eneajo Omachi	Male	2011	SUG-President	KSU
3	Shaibu Ebije	Male	2012	SUG-President	KSU
4	Solomon Ominibige	Male	2013	SUG-President	KUS
5	Peter Ochem	Male	2014	SUG-President	KUS
6	Danlavi Joshua	Male	2015	SUG-President	KUS
7	Danda Amali	Male	2016	SUG-President	KUS
8	Philips Omepa Shaibu	Male	2017	SUG-President	KUS
9	Iko – Ojo dominic	Male	2018	SUG-President	KUS
10	Lucky Shaba	Male	2019	SUG-President	KUS

Tables 2
Sample of Name and Sex of SUG Presidents in UNIZIK from 2010 to Date

S/ N	Names of Students	Sex	Year	Office	School
1	Omenugha Nelson	Male	2009/2010	SUG-President	UNIZIK
2	Umejiburu Onji	Male	2010/2011	SUG-President	UNIZIK
3	Onuegbu victor	Male	2011/2012	SUG-President	UNIZIK
4	Hilary Ugwu	Male	2012/2013	SUG-President	UNIZIK
5	Ibe Michael	Male	2013/2014	SUG-President	UNIZIK
6	Eyisi Noble	Male	2014/2015	SUG-President	UNIZIK

To be continued

Continued

S/ N	Names of Students	Sex	Year	Office	School
7	Noble Eyisi	Male	2015/2016	SUG-President	UNIZIK
8	Henry Nwabueze	Male	2016/2017	SUG-President	UNIZIK
9	Joseph Okafor	Male	2017/2018	SUG-President	UNIZIK
10	Ejiofor Maduka	Male	2018/2019	SUG-President	UNIZIK

From the data above, it is Obvious that even in our tertiary institutions where it is supposed to be gender equality Centre is comfortably becoming where patriarchy and gender inequality is encouraged. The data above show the measuring attitudes towards female students' presidents as well as attitudes towards the concepts of hostile and benevolent sexism and support for patriarchy. The attitudes of male undergraduates towards their female counterparts on who to rule them as president of the Student Union Government (SUG) have become a household belief in most our tertiary institutions. Our female undergraduates undergo different forms of oppression and marginalization in our institutions.

Table 3
Sample of Name and Sex of Class Representatives of Final Year Students, Department of Arts Education Faculty of Education Kogi State University, Anyigba from 2012 to Date

Names of Student	Sex	Year	Office	School
Mark Ojile	Male	2011/2012	Class Rep	KSU
Omale Unuku	Male	2012/2013	Class Rep	KSU
Onuh Micheal	Male	2013/2014	Class Rep	KSU
Japhet Ekele	Male	2014/2015	Class Rep	KSU
Abdullahi Jemile	Male	2015/2016	Class Rep	KSU
Thompson Ameh	Male	2016/2017	Class Rep	KSU
Ogonugwu Solomon	Male	2017/2018	Class Rep	KSU
Arome Itodo	Male	2018/2019	Class Rep	KSU

Table 4
Samples of Name and Sex of Class Representatives of Final Year Students of Department of English Language and Literature Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka from 2012 to Date

Names of Student	Sex	Year	Office	School
Nnadi Nkemjika	Male	2011/2012	Class Rep	UNIZIK
Okafor Chukwuma	Male	2012/2013	Class Rep	UNIZIK
Henry Oganze	Male	2013/2014	Class Rep	UNIZIK
Nnemake Okwudile	Male	2014/2015	Class Rep	UNIZIK
Ojukwu Joseph	Male	2015/2016	Class Rep	UNIZIK
Obinna Ikemufuna	Male	2016/2017	Class Rep	UNIZIK
Obina Okpara	Male	2017/2018	Class Rep	UNIZIK
Chukwuemeka Midrael	Male	2018/2019	Class Rep	UNIZIK

This research studies patriarchy and gender inequality

among the undergraduates, and from Table 3 and Table 4, it is obvious that the concepts of patriarchy and gender inequality are evidently practiced either knowingly or unknowingly in our tertiary institutions. The primary function of education is to help both men and women claim their rights and realize their potentials in economic, political and social arena and it is the most single most powerful way to lift people (women) out of social and economic poverty. Yet many people especially woman are still excluded from participate in students leadership at the undergraduate levels. Students' politics and leadership should be an intrinsic part of any strategy to address the end the gender based discrimination against women and female students in our various tertiary instructions still very evident.

DISCUSSION

From the data generated above, it is clear patriarch and gender inequality is part of student's politics in our institutions. Unlike in some tertiary institutions in Western countries where the practice of eco-feminism is upheld and practiced, Nigerian institutions are yet to come to the realization of the fact that exposing female students into position of trust and authority from this level builds confidence in them to confront challenges as they grow up and becomes managers of homes tomorrow. The effect of patriarchy and gender inequality on our female students now and here after is colossal. Patriarchy affects lives of millions of female students in our tertiary institution particular in socio-economic and education processes. This ugly practice cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of woman to participate fully in society and even in schools. This manifestation of this patriarchy and gender inequality on our female student dismaying variety of forms, from domestic abuse and denial of social rights to non-inclusion of their feelings into students' politics, which threaten the existence of female students as independent entities in our tertiary institutions.

CONCLUSION

The meaning of patriarchy and gender inequality and the balance of power between men and women, male students and female students in our tertiary institutions must be reviewed. Combating violence and social inequality against female students requires challenging the way that gender roles and power relations are articulated in our various societies and institutions. It is obvious that changing people's attitude and mentality towards women will take a long time at least a generation, many believe, and perhaps longer.

Nevertheless, raising awareness of the issue of marginalization of our female students in our various institutions and educating boys to view girls as valuable partners in life, in the development of a society and in the attainment of peace are just as important as taking legal steps to protect women's rights.

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