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NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRLS
THE ROLES OF WOMEN:
A CASE STUDY OF KWARA STATE

BY

Miss Olufunmilayo Mowaiye

(ABSTRACT)

Gender - role stereotypes are an important part of the socialization process of females. Females are said to be trained primarily for the roles of housewife, home-maker and mother. In modern times, the conception of the roles of women has been challenged by many men and women. In Nigeria, Government, through different forms of propaganda has been trying to raise the awareness of the female folks. It is argued by many that a woman can be more than just a housewife, homemaker and mother; that she can be more than what the "traditionalist" believers (i.e. that she can be a mother, housewife and also a career woman). This study was therefore designed to find out if there has been any change in the perception of the roles of women (more so, because of the nationalistic propaganda on women's role in the Nigerian society among the female Nigerians with secondary school female students in Kwara State as Nigerian as case study.

The results of the study showed that the secondary school female students still hold on to the traditional perception of the roles of women and it thus seems that efforts of government towards raising female awareness of the positive roles women can perform in the country need to be intensified.

INTRODUCTION

Gender role stereotypes play an important role in the socialization process of females. More often than not, the socialization experience of females are geared towards their future roles as mother and homemakers. In fact, it has been argued by Russo (1976) that a woman, being something else rather than being primarily a mother and wife, cannot be understood by many, even among females themselves. And, it has also been argued that gender role differentiation predates recorded history (Rothman, 1978).

In modern times, things do not seem to have drastically changed. In developing countries of the world, (of which Nigeria is one) the role expectation held for women according to Adams and Bjork (1969) is still replica of the old times. However, during the past few years, many men and women alike, have increasingly challenged such conceptions of women's roles. This probably accounts for why the traditional gender roles of women are believed to be in a state of flux, especially in the developing

f the world, where women have risen to be presidents and prime ministers. In a few countries, women have been elected to the highest offices of the state. In a few countries, women have been elected to the highest offices of the state. In a few countries, women have been elected to the highest offices of the state.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

ters and philosophers of old, like Plato, and J.J. Rousseau, i
orks portrayed women as being basically subordinate and inferior
in status. Jongeward and Scott (1976) postulated that it is th
ation experiences of females that make them accept the roles th
en assigned and that this makes them tend to believe they ar
ate to males. Furthermore, Hoffman (1977) postulated that th
ation process which females are exposed to, is not a conscio
one that has evolved to include teaching and encouraging so
n them. Jongeward and Scott (1976) affirmed that messages femal
relieve about themselves and their roles come from significan
n their lives. These messages may come in the form of values
on, limitations, encouragement or discouragement. In schools
nd texts help in portraying women in the traditional roles
nd Baker (1977) noted that government and private publishin
America almost without exception portray women in tradition
ns. Josephine Minor (reported by Trecker, 1975), prepared
sex bias in public schools in America. She examined a numb
r high school mathematics and science texts, and found th
mathematics and scientists of note were ignored. Illustration
to portray boys in a variety of activities like gardening
sports and painting, while girls and women were virtua
to sewing, cooking and childcare. Women were also said to b
from pictorial material. The language of the texts encourag
students to pursue their traditional roles. Few novels as
rs featured female protagonists. Topics of interest to wom
to have been ignored. Examples were given of young women wh
to be ignorant of the prejudice they face in education an
It was concluded that traditional stereotypes about th
k for women have combined with overt economic discrimination
strict the aspirations and opportunities of the femal
school student.

THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

The United Nations commission on the status of women had resolved at its thirty-fourth session to intensify efforts at raising and improving women's status by the year 2,000. The Federal Government of Nigeria has taken up the challenge and has taken some bold steps towards the realization of this goal. However, one does not know how far the different forms of propaganda going on in Nigeria are being assimilated by females, especially the young ones who are the future of the nation. In fact, Roper and Labeff (1977) noted that a renewed interest in changing women's statuses and roles has brought about a great deal of controversy within society and between men and women, but that while the feminist movement has received wide attention, little is known about fundamental changes in attitude that may be taking place towards female sex roles.

It is therefore necessary to find out if:

- (1) females in secondary school in Kwara State still hold to the traditional perception of roles of women or if there has been a change in that direction to the acceptance of non-traditional roles.

it is also pertinent to find out if there is any difference in the perception of the roles of women by female students from schools in urban settings and those from schools in rural settings.

(iii) and to investigate if mothers' level of education or the lack of it, has any influence whatsoever on the secondary school girls' perception of the roles of women.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

following research questions guided the study:

Are the roles of women as perceived by secondary school female students in Kwara State traditional or non-traditional?

Are the roles of women as perceived by the secondary school female students from urban settings and rural settings traditional or non-traditional?

Are the roles of women as perceived by female students whose mothers are literate and those whose mothers are illiterate traditional or non-traditional?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The perception of the roles of women by female students from schools in urban setting is significantly different from that of female students from schools in rural setting.

The perception of the roles of women by female students whose mothers are literate is not significantly different from that of female students whose mothers are illiterate.

METHODS

study used the survey method of research. The survey method of study has been described by Leedy (1974) as the research that looks for the accuracy at the phenomenon of the moment and describes it, what the researcher sees, making a careful record of what is so that he can analyse the meaning of the information. It has been described by Best. (1974) as a useful tool to employs when one is interested in the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of people.

The investigator designed a questionnaire for the purpose of this study. It was titled "Roles of Women Questionnaire" (RWQ).

INSTRUMENT

The investigator designed a questionnaire for the purpose of Section A. It was titled "Roles of Women Questionnaire" (RWQ). It was divided into two sections. The first part was designed to obtain background information on the students. Students were required to provide information on their school, (L.G.A.) and to state their educational qualifications presented in a hierarchical order in their educational background through primary school certificate. Section B of the questionnaire consisted of 25 items on roles of women focusing on different roles for women. The instrument was designed for their usability and reliability in all girls' secondary schools in Lagos metropolis. A test-retest method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument and it was computed to be 0.85. The person product moment method of correlation. The validity of the instrument was established by four experts in psychology - related to the study at the University of Ilorin. For the purpose of data analysis, the instrument was scored.

statements such as:

- Men do not make good leaders.
- Being is a woman's job.
- A woman must be a mother.
- A woman, a career is not as important as other interests.

Investigator personally administered copies of the

In the course of carrying out the administration, the located that a small number of girls were at the SS 3 level. The analysis revealed that more female students in the study still held

nd, the investigator could only get sixty-nine female traditional perception of the roles of women. Further analysis revealed that of the twenty-seven female students who had a non-traditional perception of the roles of women, 76.1% (20) of them (21) were

RESULTS

uses of the subjects were used to assign them into either "fictional" perception of the rules of women or a "non-fictional" perception of the rules of women. Since most of the students were on the questionnaire but had opinions, the investigator

either agreed or strongly agreed on any of the items on the questionnaire, while

assigned to those who disagreed or strongly disagreed the items in the questionnaire.

lowed that a subject had to disagree on at least thirteen he questionnaire before she could be said to have a "non-traditional" perception of women's roles. To test the hypotheses, a statistic was employed and the level of acceptance was $\alpha = 0.05$.

the first research question on if the roles of women as subjects could be said to be "traditional" or non-traditional, frequency count and percentage distribution were a summary of the analysis.

48

Group

Traditional

Non-traditional

137 117 16.3

To test hypothesis 1 the T-test was performed on the mean scores for female students from schools in urban settings and those from schools in rural settings. The results are as presented in table 2.

Table 2

T-test for difference in perception among urban females and rural females

Group	N	X	SD	Df	Calculated T-value	Table T-value
Urban females	95	33.0	6.0			
Rural females	69	31.7	4.8	162	1.86	1.86

$p < 0.05$

From table 2, there was no significant difference in the perception of roles of women among the female students from urban settings and those from rural settings, and though this was so, it was not in a non-traditional way as the investigator had assumed it would be. In view of this, hypothesis 1 was rejected.

To test for hypothesis 2, a T-test was performed on the mean scores for female students whose mothers are not literate and those whose mothers are literate. Table 3 is a summary of the analysis.

the primary and secondary school leaving certificate a high proportion (42.69) of those classified as literate; obviously because of their low level of education, may not have attitude towards gender role values, although one's level of said to be positively related to a liberal attitude towards le (Vanfossen, 1977).

CONCLUSION

Findings of this study have pointed to the need to intensify the programme aimed at raising the awareness of the females. There is the need to intensify such propaganda in the . It seems desirable for government to now make education not only tuition-free but also compulsory to at least the school level. Parents should be compelled to send their children to school, more so, since education is the bedrock on development of Nigeria stands. The mass media - radio, magazines and newspapers - should help complement efforts at having a new way of thinking about women and abilities. Publishers can help by publishing books having pictures of women achieving in various fields, especially called unfeminine vocations, so as to give inspiration and to the young females in the society.

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