

LANGUAGE USE **AND** PRESERVATION

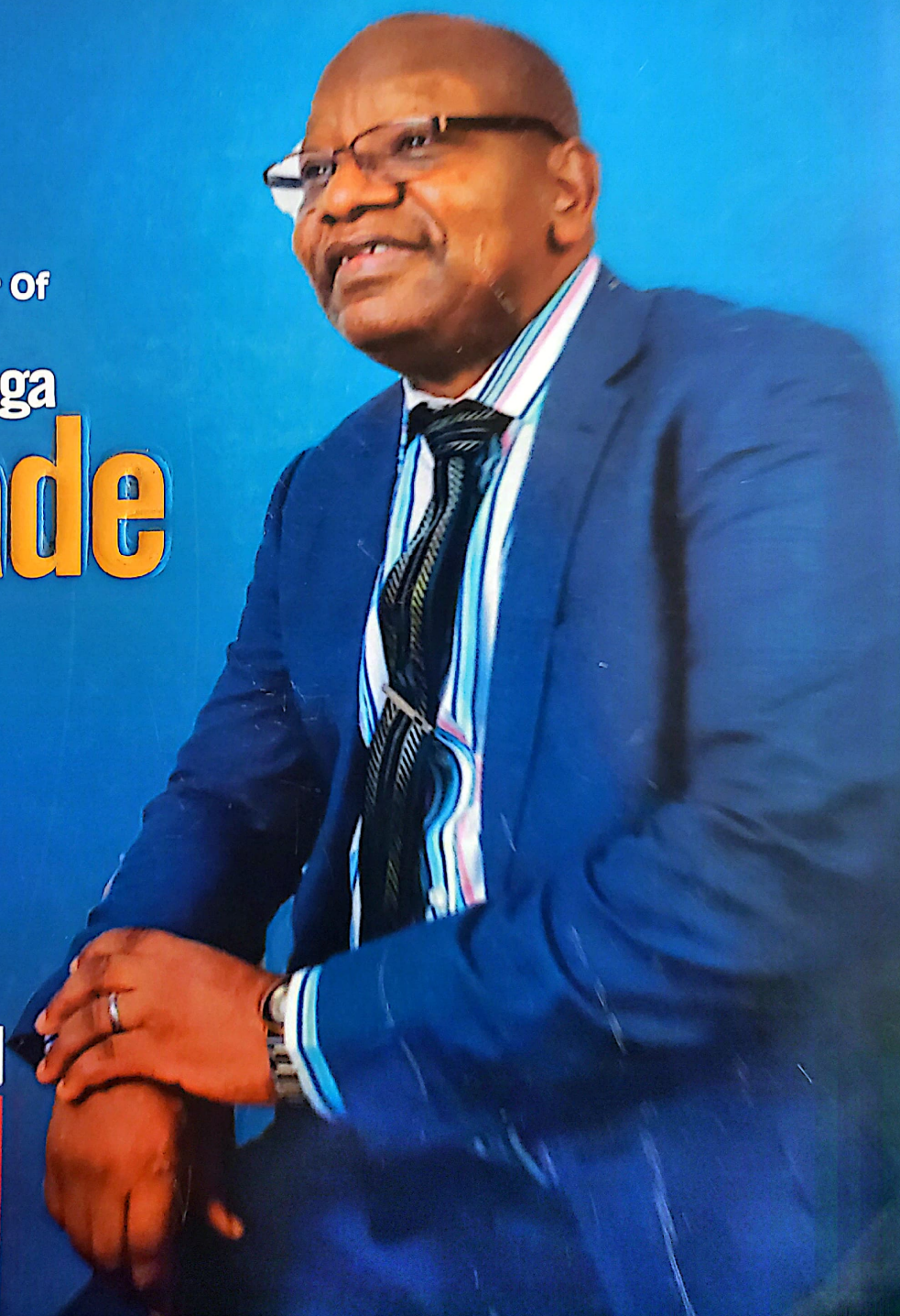
A Festschrift in Honour Of

Prof. Abel Gbenga

Fakuade

EDITED BY:

DARE OWOLABI
JOSEPH FRIDAY-OTUN
ABDULLAHI S. BASHIR



**LANGUAGE USE AND PRESERVATION: A Festschrift in Honour of
PROF. ABEL GBENGA FAKUADE**

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PROF. ABEL GBENGA FAKUADE

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SEXISM IN IGBOLAND: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study conducted an inquiry into socio-cultural factors which encourage the practice of sexism in Igboland. Sexism as a phenomenon in Igbo society has continued to attract flak, especially from feminists, who equate it with racism. The paper adopted Hillard's "persuasion theory to confronting sexism" as the theoretical framework. Both primary and secondary sources of data collection were used in this paper. The interview method was adopted in gathering the views of about 40 respondents between the ages of 50 and above, who are traditional leaders, village heads, and elders in the five Igbo speaking States of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, which constituted the sampling frame. Their views, that is, data collected from them were analyzed using the inferential data analysis technique. The analysis indicated that the Igbo society is a patriarchal one, where discrimination and inequality against women persist. It was also discovered that women also contribute to some sexist practices against them because of their "subordinate complex" mentality. This paper concludes that sexism is the foundation upon which other oppressions against humanity are built. The study recommends that feminist activists in Igboland should mount and sustain aggressive public enlightenment programmes to sensitize the public on the ills of sexism.

Introduction

In the Igbo worldview, practical evidences abound to suggest that the people's social and cultural attitudes revolve around a sexist orientation. This has led to agitations against sexism by the women folk, especially since the advent of the 21st century. Sexism, according to Hornby (2000, p.1080), is the "unfair treatment of people, especially women because of their sex". In other words, sexism denotes gender insensitivity, discrimination or inequality against the womanhood. Sex, in this context, means "a state of being either male or female" (p.1079).

Till date, the issue of sexism in Igboland remains a sore point among feminists. It has continued to generate resentment and heated arguments from the advocates of feminism, who argue that all human beings are born equal irrespective of their sex, and should therefore, be treated equally. This school of thought contends that discrimination against women, their subjugation or subjecting them to play second fiddle to their menfolk is anachronistic, imperialistic and offends the various Charters on human rights and dignity by the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and other international organizations. They aver that various cultures of different human societies in the world, ought to preach equality rather than male freedom and women submissiveness. But, the proponents of sexism in Igboland, counter that it would amount to neo-colonialism and anti-Igbo to use standards outside or alien to Igbo socio-cultural beliefs to try and justify actions which may

ultimately ridicule the socio-cultural norms and values for which the Igbo society is known. They opine that "culture traits and culture complexes are unique and do not make much sense outside relevant converts. It therefore becomes necessary to begin by specifying our notions and conceptions of culture and outlining what we regard as the defining characteristics of Igbo culture" (Eweama, 1997, p.21). Okeke (2010, pp.3-4) is of the view that till date, the Igbo are patriarchal in nature and that it is for this reason that polygamy is still practiced (and even considered prestigious) in traditional Igbo Society. Corroborating Okeke's view, Orjiakor (2010, p.65) posits that:

over the centuries, women in Igbo society have been discriminated against by cultural and societal norms.

The Igbo woman comes into this world already marked for a subordinate position. The Igbo father gives preference to his son whom he looks upon to carry on the responsibility of the lineage. Thus, a goat is slaughtered to celebrate the birth of a boy, while a chicken is used in the case of a baby girl.

Despite these arguments for or against sexism in Igbo socio-cultural milieu, it is the aim of this paper to holistically, and without bias, appraise the concept of sexism in Igbo society. To achieve this, an inquiry vide an interview with selected Igbo traditional leaders and elders was conducted. The intent was to provide further reliable insight into the controversy surrounding sexism in Igboland.

Conceptual Perspectives of Sexism

It is imperative to note that sexism, as it occurs in any human society, could be political, educational, institutional, occupational, religious, social, cultural or even linguistic. It is the society which determines the sexist attitude or belief system prevalent in it. As earlier pointed out in this paper, sexism refers to prejudice, discrimination or gender inequality, especially against women. The phrase "especially against women", is suggestive that even the male folk could also be vulnerable to sexism. MacMillan (2007) lends weight to this assertion when he notes that either sex may be the object of sexist attitudes...however, it is commonly held that, in developed societies, women have been the usual victims. Foster (2011) corroborates MacMillan's view, by stating that both men and women can experience sexism, but sexism against women is more pervasive.

The above overviews notwithstanding, (Napikoski, 2019) avers that it is incontestable that sexism is discrimination based on sex or gender, or belief that because men are superior to women, discrimination is justified. Such a belief, she argues, can be conscious or unconscious. In sexism, as in racism, the differences between two (or more) groups are viewed as indications that one group is superior or inferior. Napikoski further contends that sexist discrimination against girls and women is a means of maintaining male domination and power. The oppression or discrimination can be economic, political, social or cultural. According to Shapiro (2007), the term "sexism" was coined on November 18, 1965, by Pauline Leet, during a "student Faculty Forum" at Franklin and Marshall College, New York. Leet, Shapiro points out, compares sexism to racism and goes further to posit that when you argue that since fewer women write good poetry this justifies their total exclusion, you are taking a position analogous to that of the racist. She adds that both the racist and the sexist act as if all that has happened had never happened, and both of them make decisions and come to conclusions about someone's value by referring to factors which are in both cases irrelevant.

Shapiro further hints that the first time the term "sexism" appeared in print was in Caroline Bird's speech, "On Being Born Female" published on November 15, 1968, in *Vital Speeches of The Day*. In that speech, Shapiro quotes Bird as saying "there is recognition abroad that we are in many ways, a sexist country. Sexism is judging people by their sex when sex doesn't matter. Sexism is intended to rhyme with racism".

Napikoski (2019), in tracing the origin of sexism, agrees with Shapiro that it evolved in the 1960s. According to her, the word "sexism," became widely known during the women's liberation movement of the 1960s. She explains that during that period, feminist theorists mounted campaigns that the oppression of women were widespread in nearly all human societies, hence, they began to speak of sexism instead of male chauvinism. To them, while male chauvinism was associated with individual men, who expressed the belief that they were superior to women, sexism referred to collective behavior that reflected society as a whole.

Some sociolinguistics scholars concur with Napikoski by defining sexism as an ideology based on the belief that one sex is superior to another. Sexism to them, is stereotyping and prejudice against women. It is characterized as the hatred for women or entrenched prejudice against women (CNN, 2012). The sociologists are of the stance that sexism is perpetuated both at the individual and institutional levels. Sociologists describe parallels among ideological systems of oppression such as racism which they contend, also operate at both individual and institutional levels (Hughes, 2009, p.247).

The psychologists subscribe to these views. According to Crawford and Unger (2004, p.9), sexism is a form of prejudice held by individuals that encompasses "negative attitudes and values about women as a group", while Glick and Fiske (2004, pp.59-60), coin the term "ambivalent sexism" to describe how "stereotypes about women can be both derogatory and negative, and that individuals compartmentalize the stereotypes they hold into hostile sexism". Similarly, feminist authors, Hooks (2000, p.48) and Marilyn, (1983, p.41) respectively define sexism as "a system of oppression that results in disadvantages for feminists" and "an attitudinal – conceptual – cognitive – orientation complex of male supremacy, male chauvinism and misogyny".

Theoretical Framework

Sexism, as noted, is a universal phenomenon. It is not peculiar to any particular society, and none may be completely absolved from any form of sexist practice. In this work therefore, Amy Hillard's "persuasion theory to confronting sexism" was adopted for the discourse. The theory opines that silence when confronted with sexism is self-damaging. It rather advocates that people should speak up when confronted with sexism (Hillard, 2011). According to Hillard, "speaking up about or confronting everyday prejudices creates more positive attitudes towards groups. She posits that one goal of confronting prejudice is attitude change and that a persuasion framework provides a theoretical model for research.

Based on an integration of the confronting prejudice and persuasion literatures, Hillard developed and tested three hypotheses about effects of confrontation, and elaboration of confrontation messages on observers' attitudes and behaviour in the short and longer terms. 361 participants were randomly used during the 14 days experimentation period, out of which 161 participants completed

the exercise. The result indicated that observing a confrontation (vs no confrontation) resulted in more positive feelings towards women and less discrimination in the short and longer terms, but there was no significant reduction in sexism. Contrary to predictions, elaboration of confrontation messages did not reduce prejudice or discrimination more than confrontation alone. In addition, elaborated confrontation did not cause attitude change to last longer over time. On a final analysis, Hillard's study suggests that confronting prejudice persuasively reduces prejudices and discrimination in the longer term, but that this effect is not enhanced by elaborating on confrontation messages.

Methodology

In addressing the thematic thrust of this paper which centres on the issue of socio-cultural practices of sexism in Igboland, both primary and secondary sources of data collection were used.

Three traditional rulers (Ezes/Igwes or Kings) in each of the five South-Eastern States of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, were interviewed on the subject matter of this paper. Additionally, five other persons from each of these States, consisting of village heads, elders, President Generals of communities and opinion molders, between the ages of 50 years and above, were also spoken to. Their views were recorded vide a GSM mobile phone and later transcribed for analysis. In other words, interview and library materials constituted the instruments of data collection.

Berger (2000, p.111) defines interview as "basically a conversation between a researcher (someone who wishes to gain information about a subject) and an informant (someone who presumably has information of interest on the subject)". It is also, "the systematic recording and documentation of responses coupled with intense probing for deeper meaning and understanding of the responses" (Wilson, Esiri and Onwubere, 2008, p.133).

The five Igbo speaking States, thus served as the sampling frame for this study. The 40 persons purposively interviewed provided the sample size, and were deemed to be representative of the subsample, especially as the study sought to explore only the socio-cultural aspect of sexism in Igboland.

In analyzing the data, the parametric or inferential data analysis technique, which involves making generalizations about the whole population based on information or data obtained from the population sample was deployed. Consequently, on the basis of analyzed data using the inferential data analysis technique, generalization can be made about the overall population from which the sample was originally drawn (Olaitan, Ali, Eyoh and Sowande, 2000).

Sexism in Igbo Society

Before delving into the issue of sexism in Igboland, it would suffice to identify who the Igbos really are. This is because the Igbos are the fulcrum upon whom the central focus of this paper, sexism, rests. According to Okeke (2010, p.1), "the Igbos are an ethnic group in Nigeria, who claim exclusive ownership to a part of the territory of Nigeria and whose claim to a separate ethnic identity is recognized by the Nigerian state and non-Igbo Nigerians." Okeke goes further to point out that the term "Igboland" is "simply a part of the territory of Nigerian State, which Nigerian

citizens belonging to the Igbo ethnic group claim to be their homeland and whose claim is recognized by the Nigerian State and non-Igbo Nigerians”.

Culturally, the Igbo share homogeneity in many aspects, except perhaps, in few areas. This slight variation notwithstanding, the Igbo culture still maintains its unique characteristics, especially on the issue of sexism. A man's position in a typical Igbo society, cannot be subjugated to the whims of a woman. Uchendu (1993, p.13) agrees with this assertion by positing that “women in traditional Igbo society were trained to be obedient to their parents and husbands, their life style was thus, socio-culturally predetermined and any departure from it was considered unbecoming.” Toeing Uchendu's line, Orjiakor (2010, p.65) stresses that “the Igbo woman has been made to regard herself as inferior to her male counterparts. Her social importance is measured by her ability to bear male children just as she must act according to the dictates of her husband.”

Both Anyanwu (1993) and Mere (1996) agree that there is the prevalence of sexism in Igbo socio-cultural attitude. According to Anyanwu (p.116), “the Igbo society views women as help mates (not equals) to their male counterparts, and as positive agents in the evolution of the latter civilization,” while Mere concurs that Igbo women occupy just a lowly status in the society. According to her, Igbo culture not only assigned low status to women in relation to men, but also carefully conditioned them to play their role with a minimum of manifest conflict.

Mbajunwa (2017, p.86) identifies the right of inheritance as a key area women are discriminated against and treated with humiliating inequality in Igboland. She describes inheritance as “hereditary succession to a title or an office or property”. She states that under customary and native laws relating to marriage, a lot of unjust practices, especially on inheritance, are meted out to women which in her view, are “repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience”. She accuses traditional rulers and custodians of these laws of manipulating them to suit their whims due to the fact that most of the laws are unwritten. However, she expresses optimism that the obnoxious native laws militating against a woman's right of inheritance in Igboland may have been permanently rested by the Supreme Court judgment against the native custom of Umuahia, Abia State, in Suit Number: SC3041/2010, delivered on April 11, 2014, between Mrs. Lois Chituru Ukeje & Anor V Mrs Gladys Ada Ukeje. In her words, the apex court stated thus:” the Igbo native law and custom which disentitles a female from inheriting her late father's estate is void for being unconstitutional”. She therefore, advocates that any cultural practice in Igboland which is repugnant to natural justice and equity, should be discarded.

Despite the drawbacks women face in their socio-cultural relationship with the male folk in Igboland, they have, from the pre-colonial era, continued to struggle to extricate themselves from such cultural strangleholds, especially in the areas of politics, governance and religion. In Igbo communities such as Nnobi, Osomari and Onitsha in Anambra State, for instance, there are indications that in the pre-colonial days, women were involved directly in the routine or formal governance (Anyanwu, 1993). Anyanwu reports that in Nnobi, in particular, patriarchal and matriarchal ideologies, juxtaposed in the indigenous political structures, pointing out that this made it possible for women to serve as ritual elites, title holders, and equally provided women with access to wealth, and participation in the community's economic activities.

Afigbo (1980, p.421) attempts equating the Nnobi case with the participation of women in the political structure and organization in Obowo, Imo State and Ohuhu in Abia State during the same era. He opines that in the communities mentioned above, women also served in the Council of Elders. In the words of Afigbo, "in the Council of Elders, the views of such women leaders were listened to with respect and taken seriously into account when decisions were being reached." Other Igbo Communities where women were accorded a pride of place in Igboland during the pre-colonial era up to post civil war era included Ohiafia, Afikpo, Ogbaru, Oguta, Nkwerre, Abariba, Awka, Nsukka, Ishiagu, Uturu, Okigwe etc. These communities reflect the five Igbo speaking States in South East, Nigeria.

Regrettably, however, the situation in recent times seem to have retrogressively changed, forcing the women to the back stage again. Orjiakor (2010, pp.82-83) attributes this development to what she calls "subordinate complex mentality". She pushes forward the argument that "this complex which is deeply fixated in the consciousness of most Igbo women derives from the fact of creation". She cites the Holy Bible in Genesis, Chapter 2 Vs 23, wherein it was quoted that, the man said, this at last is the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man". To Orjiakor, this provision has made the women to see men as superior being, and has in turn, created a feeling of complex in them for the men. Though a feminism advocate, Orjiakor nonetheless, blames the women folk for confining themselves to reproductive and home making roles in the family, and allowing the men to dominate all aspects of life including politics, economy, commerce, tradition (culture) and religion in Igbo Society.

As it is now and despite efforts being made globally by United Nations (UN) and other international bodies to eliminate this gender insensitivity and discriminations against women, through seminars, symposia and international women conferences, such as the Beijing Conference of 1995 amongst others, most Igbo women still regard themselves as inferior to men. To them, politics and struggle for power, and leadership, remain the exclusive reserve for men. No doubt, this low self-esteem mentality has increasingly undermined Igbo women (except a few) and also diminished their socio-cultural status in Igboland (Ojiakor, 2010, p.83).

Elements of Socio-Cultural Sexism in Igbo Worldview

In Igbo worldview, the disparities between men and women are simply taken as givens, which are reinforced by certain socio-cultural practices that often seem neutral on the surface, but which in fact, disadvantage, oppress and discriminate against women. Such discriminatory practices can be classified as elements or characteristics of sexism. In Igboland, these elements or characteristics include the following:

- a) **Obnoxious widowhood practice:** In most Igbo communities, a woman is compelled to shave (or barb) her hair on the demise of her husband. For the first 40 days in her mourning period, she wears only white apparel and is made to isolate herself from the public. She neither goes to the market nor buys from or sales to anybody. In some cases, to prove their innocence about the man's death, some are forced to sleep beside the corpse at night (Ashimole, 2016). Unfortunately, the Umuada (the women folk) in the community enforce these harsh rules against fellow women and by extension, themselves too. The men on the other hand, are free from all these restrictions and practices.

b) Right of inheritance: This is one thorny issue in Igboland which the male folk still cling to as their exclusive right. Women are excluded from participating in the sharing or inheritance of their late father's properties, especially lands in the rural communities. This has been an age long tradition among the Igbo. However, recent developments, particularly the Supreme Court judgment of April 10, 2014 in Suit No. SC304/2010, between Mrs. Lois Chituru Ukeje & Anor V Mrs Gladys Ada Ukeje, as it relates to the native custom of Umuahia, Abia State, on inheritance, seem to have addressed this matter (Mbajunwa, 2017, p.86). Ironically, most women in many Igbo communities, as a result of their gullibility and illiteracy, are still deprived of their rights to inheritance, the cited judgment of the Supreme Court notwithstanding.

c) Ezeji title: The Ezeji title (i.e. king of yams) is bestowed only on Igbo men, who have proven to be great farmers with many yam barns to their credit. No woman has ever been conferred with such prestigious title even though the women do the farm work the most (Iwuji, 2019). They toil every day in the farm alongside the men and still prepare the meal they eat in the course of the farm work, but the recognition as a great yam farmer goes to the men alone. The woman is not recognized for her efforts.

d) Girl child education: Despite the feminists' slogan of "train a girl, you train a nation," the place of girls in some Igbo communities till date, is still reserved for the kitchen and the bedrooms for the adults. Igbo culture prefers the training of the male child to the female child. This is because Igbo are patrilineal in nature (Okeke, 2010, p.4). Much emphasis is placed on the up-bringing of the male child because of the Igbo belief on "Amamechina", meaning "let my lineage not be closed". The male is regarded as a symbol of continuity in the family while the female is most often seen as a product marked for sale.

e) Kingship: It has never been heard anywhere in Igboland that a woman was crowned King (Eze) of any community either in the past or in our contemporary time. Because of the patriarchal nature of Igbo society (Okeke, 2010, p.3), the men are permanently positioned to rule over women. This is why any family with many girls but no male child, especially royal families, do anything possible to ensure the birth of a male child in such families. If eventually the male child is born, he is welcomed with pomp and pageantry unlike the female child. Similarly, women are not allowed to hold sensitive positions such as Palace Secretary and cabinet chiefs in the Eze's cabinet. These positions are strictly for men.

f) Prestigious titles: Igbo culture also extends its discrimination against women to conferment of prestigious titles. Titles such as "Ozo, Ichie and Nze" which are highly respected, are reserved for men (Alaribe, 2019). Women may be allowed to receive only chieftaincy title in rare cases in some Igbo communities or in certain circumstances, but that is all. The three titles mentioned earlier are no-go-areas for women.

g) Polygamy: This is the idea of a man marrying more than one wife. It is allowed in Igbo culture. Okeke (2010, p.4) states that "traditional Igbo society is polygamous; a man could marry more than one wife, and it is prestigious to do so". Conversely, no woman that is legally married, is allowed to practice concubinage in her husband's house. In fact, it is forbidden.

h) Burial of titled men with female virgins: This is perhaps, the most savage aspect of sexism in Igboland. In some Igbo communities, when a King (Eze) or a revered titled man dies, the heads of certain number of female virgins may be required to perform the man's burial rites (Alaribe, 2019). Where these virgins are not procured, the corpse might remain unburied for a long time. Though public outcry against this form of barbaric culture seems to have led to its abolishment in some areas, some communities still secretly indulge in it till date.

i) Osu caste system: This remains a subject of controversy in Igboland. The Osu caste system originated from the dedication of men and women to gods either by individuals or communities, or by voluntary act of free born citizens, who willingly dedicate themselves to gods for protection of their lives. When people willingly dedicate themselves to gods, they establish covenant with the gods. This dedication is a covenant with blood and is hereditary (Ashimole, 2016). The irony is that a man regarded as an Osu, can marry a woman (who is not an Osu) and still live freely within his community. But a woman, who marries a man considered as an Osu by her own people, is easily ostracized by her people. Her action is considered an abomination.

j) Council of Elders: This is the decision making body in most Igbo communities. No woman is allowed membership of this Council. The women, in other words, do not participate in the decision making process even on issues affecting them. They only receive or implement decisions taken in the Council. Ojiakor (2010, p.66) posits that "it may be very tempting to conclude that the Igbo political system was exclusively the affair of men." Even when the women gather as in the annual "August Women's Meetings" to take certain resolutions, such resolutions are still subjected to the Council's ratification, especially when such resolutions affect the entire community.

k) Kola-nut: Kola-nut, botanically known as "cola nitida", is well revered in Igboland. According to Anika (2016, p.70) "kola-nut is grown in commercial quantity in the South-West, consumed in large quantity in the North, but revered and celebrated most in the South-East." It is forbidden in Igboland, for a woman to present kola-nut to visitors, bless it, break it, or even deep her hand into a bowl containing kola-nut and take a piece of it in the presence of visitors. This is never done and such action attracts atonement from the woman because the ritual of kola-nut breaking is regarded as a sacred communication between the men and their ancestors (or gods). The woman is permitted to only bring the kola-nut and hand over to her husband for further actions. This is where her role in the whole process ends.

l) Libation: Pouring of libation is another form of socio-religious communication between the man and his ancestors. As in kola-nut ceremony, it is men's affair. No woman pours libation to her family's or community's ancestors (Anufuro, 2019). This is because of the Igbo's belief that the man is the head of the family, whom the woman should always be submissive to. Other forms of sexist practices in Igboland, especially as they affect women are as discussed below.

- a. Women participation in masquerade performances is strictly forbidden.
- b. they are from prohibited from climbing certain trees such as kola-nut tree, palm wine tree and palm tree.
- c. Segregation in treatment meted out to people might indulging in promiscuity. For instance, if a man catches his wife in the act, she suffers great social or public humiliation; that is, if not even driven out of her husband's house. But if the woman catches the husband, the Igbo

society trivializes it. However, the woman is at liberty to leave her matrimonial home if she can't condone the man's immoral behaviour.

- d. The act of female circumcision otherwise known as female genital mutilation subjects women in Igbo land to unnecessary pain. This practice however, seems to be on the decline in recent times.
- e. Heaping blames on young girls, who indulge in abortion while leaving the male, who may have lured them into such pre-marital sexual activities in order to satisfy their lustful desires.

It might perhaps, be pertinent to point out that the sexist practices enumerated above may not be exhaustive, but suffice it to state that they have given an insight into some of the ways sexist practices occur in Igbo society. It can also be inferred that while some practices are done with a conscious sexist attitude, others may be an unconscious cooperation in a system which has been in place already, in which one sex (usually female) has less power and is vulnerable as in the Igbo society.

Summary of Findings

After a careful consideration of information gathered from interviewees as well as studies by other researchers in related areas, the following findings were discovered:

- i. The Igbo society is incontestably, a patriarchal society where women are subjected to the whims of the men. Women are seen as help mates and not equals with men.
- ii. Women are also conscious or unconscious collaborators in their own oppression or suppression in the hands of men not just in Igbo society alone, but also across the globe.
- iii. Speaking up rather than keeping silent when confronted with sexist practices minimizes sexist prejudices or discriminations against women.
- iv. Sexism is a universal phenomenon not peculiar to Igbo society alone.
- v. The practice of sexism in Igboland is as old as the Igbo society itself and still persists till date.
- vi. Sexism is a deliberate creation of inequality in human society to promote a group (males) and suppress the other (females) on account of their gender or sex.
- vii. Though sexism is as old as the human society, the clamour against it began in earnest in the 1960s.
- viii. Feminist scholars equate sexism with racism.
- ix. In the Igbo worldview, male children are celebrated and accorded priority over female children.
- x. In some cases, sexist practices occur due to a conscious attitude, while in some others, it may be an unconscious cooperation to an already established pattern or way of life of a given society or milieu.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to unravel the circumstances which give rise to sexist practices in Igboland and what sexism as a concept implies. In doing this, consultations were done both orally and literally. Although Collins (2006), a male chauvinist, has attempted playing down the issue that sexist practices are not against women alone, when he asserts that both men and women are victims of sexism, his assertion however, does not whittle down the general position that sexism in any society is most commonly against women. Sexism perpetuates patriarchy or male domination, through

socio-cultural, ideological and material practices of the individuals, collectives, and institutions that oppress women and girls on the basis of sex or gender (Masequesmay, 2008). The above positions notwithstanding, this paper is inclined to agree with feminists, who argue that sexism in Igboland is the primal or first, a form of oppression to humanity and that other oppressions are built on the foundation of oppression of women.

Recommendations

- a. All forms of sexist practices against women in Igboland should be abolished forthwith in order to give women more sense of belonging.
- b. Male and female children should be accorded equal recognition in Igboland as both are born equal in the sight of God, the creator.
- c. Women should speak up against any sexist practice in their communities as silence means self-condemnation or acquiescence to discriminatory practices against them.
- d. More campaigns against sexism should be carried out in Igboland through seminars, sensitization workshops and women conferences by feminist activists.
- e. Igbo women should shake off the "subordinate or inferiority complex" mentality and regard themselves as partners to men and not subordinates.
- f. Egalitarianism rather than male freedom and female submissiveness, should be advocated in every Igbo society.
- g. Women, especially the non-literate ones in the rural (that is, Umuada) should exercise utmost care in their dealings with fellow women to avoid inadvertently aiding and abetting the practice of sexism by their irrational conducts.
- h. Igbo culture should accord patrilineal and matrilineal lines of descent in families equal status and recognition as doing so would encourage the principle of equity in the families and the society.
- i. Any cultural practice in Igboland which is repugnant and contrary to natural justice and equity should be discarded.

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