

Ibadan Journal of Peace & Development
Vol. 10 No. 1 February 2020 pp. 22-42

Patriarchy at Home: Responses of Yoruba Women of Southwest Nigeria

Funmilayo Idowu Agbaje

Abstract

The conflict of male authority versus the right of a female to control her own life and to be free of male domination is a recurring theme in scholarly works on feminism and specifically applicable to Yoruba women. In modern times, patriarchy refers to social systems in which power is primarily held by adult men. The notion has thus transcended just the power wielded at home into a more critical social issue. Recent responses by women to patriarchal oppression has shown that both males and females have the capacity to participate in non-violent as well as violent actions. This paper is expedient at this time when feminism and its diverse schools of thought are seeking the abolition of patriarchy in the society. It provides and documents the various ways in which women have responded to patriarchy from cases drawn from relevant African feminist literature and media and internet sources.

Key Words: Responses, Domestic Subjugation, Patriarchal Oppression, Yoruba Women, Nigeria

Introduction

The misrepresentation of women's identity and rights in the domestic sphere is a long-debated issue in African scholarship (Makama, 2013; Ann, 2001; Aina, 1998). Specifically, among the Yoruba of the Southwestern part of Nigeria, women have contributed to the economic and social development of their families (Aluko, 2015). However, this has not yet translated into equity in decision making in the homestead. Marriage among Yoruba people serves as the foundation of a family (Adesina, Ovugbo & Oladokun, 2011). Marriage is a union not only of the two spouses but of the two extended families to which they belong as well. For a man or a woman who has reached the age of marriage to remain single is against the norms of the Yoruba. Men get married even when they are sexually impotent to save either their faces or the faces of their immediate relatives, as well as to get a woman to look after their domestic establishment (Fadipe, 1970).

The ability to satisfy the hierarchy of human needs is critical to the Yoruba evaluation of the individual's readiness to be united in marriage. They ought to be able to provide food and shelter and safety. They ought to have the level of commitment and patience needed to inculcate a sense of belonging and self-esteem in their children (Babatunde, 1992). The test of the level to which one has internalised a sense of belonging and self-esteem is manifest in the desire to excel and find self-fulfilment in the

service of the family. Yoruba socialisation ensures that the daughter learns, from the age of six, to serve as a little mother and child-caregiver to her younger siblings. By the time she is preparing for marriage, the Yoruba woman would have learned some of the preliminary skills she would need to be a wife and mother from her mother and other women in her family.

Indeed, the conflict of male authority versus the right of a female to control her own life and to be free of male domination is the everlasting theme in feminism literature and more particularly in the case of Yoruba women (Awe, 1999). Historically, the term patriarchy was used to refer to [autocratic](#) rule by the male head of a family. However, in modern times, it generally refers to social systems in which power is primarily held by adult men; hence patriarchy has transcended the power wielded within the four walls of a home to become a more critical social issue. In feminist theory, the concept of patriarchy often includes all the social mechanisms that reproduce and exert male dominance over women (Kioko, Kagumire and Matandela, 2020).

Patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, religious and economic organization of a range of different cultures. For example, insights from postmodernist feminism in Zimbabwe reveals how patriarchal theories have imposed certain restrictions on women in the domestic arena (Parpan, 1996). Similarly, scholars (Sikweyiya, Addo-Lartey, Alangea,

Dako-Gyeke, Chirwa, Coker-Appiah, Adanu and Jewkes, 2020) have linked patriarchy and gender-inequitable attitudes as drivers of intimate partner violence against women in the central region of Ghana. The constant attacks on women's right to land and property in Kenya have also been attributed to patriarchy (Comaroff, 1980; Adams and Mburugu, 1994). Even though it might not be explicitly defined by the constitutions and laws, most contemporary African societies are, in practice, patriarchal.

The word "patriarchy" comes from Greek; Patria means father and arché means rule, and thus patriarchy means 'rule of the father'. The anthropological definition of patriarchy is that men tend to dominate in society through their positions of power; the majority of higher economic, political, industrial, financial, religious and social positions are governed by men. Olausson (1992:102) uses in her work mentions that 'Patriarchy is a social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the class of family in both domestic and religious functions, the legal dependence of wife or wives and children and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line'. The crucial elements of patriarchy as it is currently experienced among the contemporary Yoruba are heterosexual marriage, female child-rearing and housework, women's economic dependence on men reinforced by arrangements in the labour market (and when it is not so, the woman must act otherwise to cover her

husband's status), the state, the numerous institutions based on social relations among men-clubs, sports, unions, professions, universities, churches and corporations. It thus becomes evident, that the importance of alleged patriarchy lies less in biased choices people might make and [sexist](#) attitudes and more about structures of established gendered authority. Moreso, it is given cognition to by a popular adage among Yoruba people which says: "Ile la a tiikoeso re ode" - charity begins at home - (Ogundoku, 2015), it is a reflection of how important family is in the structure of the Yoruba society, hence individuals can only give what they have acquired from their family backgrounds to the society. Thus it is more germane that patriarchy at the domestic sphere, and the multifarious responses and reactions by modern Yoruba women to this social and pressing issue, be properly articulated.

Despite the various forms of resistance, the recent responses by women to oppression through domestic patriarchy has shown clearly that both males and females have the capacity to participate in non-violent as well as violent actions. At the chief level of communal structures, as seen in gang conduct and sorority and fraternity hazing, both males and females are seamlessly able to become sexist entities, and be involved in hateful and discriminatory conduct based on others' gender; hence the issue of gender-stereotyping is not limited to women and it is being challenged daily. Suffice to say at this point that women have, over the years,

employed both the aggressive and lenient measures of responding to patriarchal oppression in the society (Kim and Motsei, 2002; Meyers, 2004). The high prevalence and intensity of the violence and aggressive response in recent times, mostly arose as a result of local customs, religious taboos, traditional beliefs and value system. Unfortunately, the executive and judicial systems do not offer much protection against women. The civil organisations' efforts are not given sufficient prominence within the inefficient system of governance especially where the issues of family are concerned. The ugly trend is further accentuated by the culture of silence among women. In the contemporary times, however, the trend in women's refusal to conform to a patriarchal spouse and society at large contributes to determine a very different future for women within the society by depicting opposition to the oppression. Besides, the attributes hitherto ascribed to women, such as affection, obedience, responsiveness to sympathy and kindness, have gradually given way to tenacity, curiosity, ambition, competitiveness and sometimes very aggressive identity. Thus, this paper is expedient at this time when feminism and its diverse attendants' schools of thought are seeking the abolishment of patriarchy in society. Germane to this discourse is African feminism because it brings to the forefront, the experiences of the African woman as being significantly different from the western woman (Nkealah, 2016). It is, therefore, necessary that the various ways

women have responded to patriarchy be properly documented for future scholarly referencing and government policymaking.

Problematique

The patriarchal norms have become gradually part and parcel of the collective consciousness which made them sheltered from dauntless criticism. The French sociologist Durkheim (1984) defines the collective psyche not only as of the sum of beliefs and sentiments common to members of a given society but mainly as a self-contained system. Systems are engendered through interactions between its various components and agents. Most systems are rule-governed and they observe either a vertical hierarchy or a horizontal distribution. Thus, hierarchy in the patriarchal system entails discrepancy of power and subordination either in labour division or privileges and prerogatives. Thus, it can be assumed boldly that the patriarchal system has been operating within a consistent canvas without betraying its male-dominated ideals among the Yoruba. As a result, the subjugation of women in that conservative society is manifest in labour division, moral accountability and male patronage. Despite the pronounced commitment of the international community to gender equality and the bridging the gender gap in the formal political arena, reinforced by the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action, women are highly marginalized and are poorly represented in all sphere of life especially within

the family unit where women virtually have little or no respect in the scheme of events (UNDP Report, 2005). What remains unarticulated, however, is the various techniques through which women have been responding with and the factors responsible for those techniques.

Thus the focus of this paper is to ascertain the extent to which patriarchal oppression drives women into aggressive or non-aggressive behavioural responses. This study thus elaborated on how oppression affected women's mental health and drive them towards responsive actions which could either be aggressive and/or non-aggressive and the connection between their actions and patriarchy. Some characteristics of a patriarchal system include male dominance, male identification, male centeredness and obsession with control. In a patriarchal system, men make all decisions in both society and their family unit, hold all positions of power and authority and are considered superior. Men are concerned with identification that includes qualities of control, strength, forcefulness, rationality, strong work ethic, and competitiveness (Makama, 2013). Each of these qualities contributes to male identification in a patriarchal system. In a patriarchal system, the centre of activity and progression is on men and what they do to move the society forward. Men living in a patriarchal system or society must be in control at all times. They have a desire to control all social and family situations and must

make all decisions regarding finances and education. Moreover, in a patriarchal society, the oppression of women is emphasised. The term oppression means to push down or restrict; therefore, women are not allowed to rise to leadership levels or make decisions. Women are also not allowed to demonstrate independence or suggest changes to any social order. In essence, women also have a role in a patriarchal society, but only in a sense that is submissive and subservient to men.

There are different ways through which patriarchy is manifested in Yoruba society, including through culture, religion and media. All these amplify patriarchal viewpoints and accentuate patriarchal ideas and thoughts through numerous ways within the communal system. It is hardly difficult to go through three Yoruba movies today without being assaulted with narratives that perpetuate violence and aggression against women. These stories are especially disturbing because their anti-women violence is hardly ever interrogated. Instead, women's pain is represented as some kind of necessity and a self-denial that ultimately induces moral resolve or higher virtue. Abuse portrayed is often needless and oppressive and it diminishes people's dignity. Also, women themselves tend to accept abuse as inevitable because they have few options. They are bracketed on all sides by their relative lack of economic empowerment, socio-cultural expectations, religion, and legal infrastructures that do not guarantee their rights. It is baffling

to see women further victimise one another by telling other abuse victims to seek spiritual help when physically and emotionally abused by their spouses. They tell the victims to pray so that God can change the hearts of their men; to lower their own ego and maximise their husband's ego so that the manlier he feels, the less likely he would be violent (Adelakun, 2017). They teach one another to live with demeaning situations because, somehow, society has tied their ideas of personal virtue to being coupled. All these seemingly harmless beliefs and suggestion have grown within women's reach and hence have metamorphosed to a high level of disillusionment and frustration. The outcome is the various reactions being recorded daily on how women respond to domestic patriarchy. Although the non-aggressive response from women is reported, the prevalence of violence and aggression is clear. The point needs to be made that although abuse of women has become part of the social order, it is neither an inevitable nor natural part of that order.

Conceptual Clarification and Literature Review

The word "patriarchy" has been recreated in the past two decades to analyze the origins and conditions of men's oppression of women (Dogo, 2014; Kamarae, 1992; Omodjohwoefe, 2011). Originally used to describe the power of the father as head of household, the term 'patriarchy' has been used within post-1960s feminism to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination

(Kamarae, 1992; Stacey, 1993; Aina, 1998; etc.). The term has been defined as a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. Feminists theorists have argued that in any of the historical forms that patriarchal society takes, whether it is feudal, capitalist or socialist, a sex-gender system and a system of economic discrimination operate simultaneously. They characterize patriarchy as an unjust social system that is oppressive to women. As feminist and political theorist Carole Pateman posits, the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection (Carole, 1988). Feminist theory typically characterizes patriarchy as a social construction, which can be overcome by revealing and critically analyzing its manifestations (Ann, 2001). Okpe, (2005) submits that patriarchy in Nigeria is a broad network or system of hierarchical organization that cuts across political, economic, social, religious, cultural, industrial and financial spheres, under which the overwhelming number of upper positions in society are either occupied or controlled and dominated by men. Thus, any system that operationalizes an order that accords men an undue advantage over women is considered patriarchal. It is observed in the literature that the establishment and practice of male dominance over women and children, is a historic process formed by men and women, with the patriarchal family serving as a basic

unit of organization. The present Nigerian society, like most of Africa, is patriarchal in nature, with attendant unequal gender relations (Omoregie and Ikensekhien; 2009 Dogo, 2014) which cast women in a subordinate position (Hooks, 2004; Akintan, 2013). Patriarchy is considered the head of the household and within the family, he controls productive resources, labour force, and reproductive capacities based on the notions of superiority and inferiority and legitimized by differences in gender and generation (Oyewumi, 1997; Okome, 2002). Patriarchy is a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women labour-power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality (Prentice and Carranza, 2002). Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do housework or rear children, in having access to women's bodies for sex, and in feeling powerful and being powerful. The crucial elements of patriarchy as it is currently experienced are heterosexual marriage, female child-rearing and housework, women's economic dependence on men reinforced by arrangements in the labour market), the state, the numerous institutions based on social relations among men-clubs, sports, unions,

professions, universities, churches, corporations and armies (Hartman, 1997; Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, 2004).

Germane to this study is Aina's (1998) opinion that traditional Nigerian society, like other traditional societies, has been patriarchal in nature. Patriarchy is a major feature of a traditional society. It is a system of social stratification and differentiation based on sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females (Stacey 1993; Kramarae 1992; Lerner 1986). Different writers in literature raised their voice against women oppression such as Wollstonecraft (1792:68) she defended the rights of women and encouraged women to free themselves from men and social oppression. As she said, "I do not wish them [women] to have power over men but over themselves". In a patriarchy family setting, the man is the superior and educated being who tutors his ignorant wife and not the other way around. Friedan (1963) also penned down about women liberation from men and social oppression. She explores the unhappiness of mid-20th century women and describes women's unhappiness as "the problem that has no name." Women felt this sense of depression because they were forced to be subservient to men financially, mentally, physically, and intellectually. According to Ketty(2010) and Brewer (1984), the feminine mystique is the idealised image to which women tried to conform despite their lack of fulfilment and that

those variants of socio-biology, genetic makeup, evolutionary psychology, genes that determine sexual behaviour, oppression against women, seem to justify systems of exploitation, oppression, domination, class hatred and the like as something inescapable, unchangeable, and inevitable. Cooper (1978:51) writes that “one does not go mad but is driven mad by others”. It is argued that because women are expected to function under narrower behavioural constraints than men, they are more likely and had more opportunity to commit the offence of madness (Koscher, 2006). Tyson (1999) explains that patriarchy employs forces that undermine women’s self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally, self-effacing and submissive. Furthermore, Kella (2005) points out the fact that women are not part of patriarchal power structures and are therefore more vulnerable than men. In Patriarchy dominant society, women are bound to the domestic sphere, subservient and relegated to the background while men were free to move between spaces: the domestic and the public spheres (Morgan, 2007).

Methods

This study is essentially qualitative, involving the collection of data from published works on the topic of Yoruba women’s responses to patriarchy at the home front, including books, journal articles, newspapers and the internet. These data sources were examined critically for these responses, with newspaper and internet

sources also supplying data on more recent experiences. The report of the analyses and discussion of the data so collected are detailed below.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Non-Aggressive Reactions to Patriarchal Oppression

This can be identified as some of the age-long practices among women in responding to male dominance at every sphere of the society, especially those practices embedded in culture and religion which emphasised the status of women as subjugating to that of their male counterparts (Egun, 2014). Women, therefore, have devised some lenient and very subtle ways of coping with patriarchal oppression over the years. Noteworthy is the African feminist theory of social transformation including women in Africa (Stiwaniism), which is deeply rooted in the experiences and realities African women face and articulates some of the coping mechanisms devised over the years in addressing them (Nkealah, 2016).

Satires and Songs

Scholars have noted the fact that present at the core of the debates on the system of patriarchy is notions that perpetuate women’s suppression (Mudau and Obadire, 2017). In response, Yoruba women have devised some coping techniques that further suppress its effects. One of those mechanisms that have surfaced in the literature is the use of satires and songs (Durham, 2017;

Okumade, 2010; Babalola, 2001). This is a long-practised measure against patriarchy in society. Music has been discovered to be a therapy for depression and other unpalatable situation of life (Ansdell, 1995 and Erkkilä, et al, 2011)). It has been documented among Yoruba women, as a popular practice to dress their goats or rams along with men's fashion to react to a policy that is too harsh on women (Joseph, 2005; Ajibade, 2005; Barber, 1991)). Songs are used to subtly react to male subjugation by emphasising their beliefs in the social, economic, and political equality of the sexes, portraying women as persons who possessed their desires than an object of someone else's and exposing the sad truth that, despite all the advice women are given to stay out of trouble, the only way to truly protect their daughters would be having sons instead (Familusi, 2012). Among the Yoruba people of the western part of Nigeria, there were songs which provide a good niche for gender construction, negotiation and contestation among the women. Below is an example of such songs among traditional Ekiti women:

Boko mi koyan ale ma wenusi o

Tikolokoti/2x

Boko mi koyan ale,

Ma sasode

Ma sasode tan ma gunyan je,

Ma gunyan je tan ma jeun omo o

Tikolokoti

meaning:

If my husband refuses sex, I do not care

If he refuses me sex, I will go all the way, eat and find consolation in my child.

(Weir, 1933)

Moreover, among Ibadan women, one of the largest Yoruba tribe in southwestern Nigeria, the use of songs and satire has been engaged to express their displeasure against patriarchy. An example is given below:

Alabeidioro

Ororotabetabe

Faralofegbana mi

Komopemonitemi

meaning:

An embittered man, who lives in idioro (an area in Ibadan City)

Suddenly, beats me with his cane

He might not know that I also have mine.

(Intelligence and Assessment Reports: ÒyóProf. Ibadan Div. I. files 1372, 133 and 203. ii. CSO 26)

Protests and Procession

In an attempt to deal with the pressure and pains caused by the male oppression, scholars (Ukpokolo, 2005; Onayemi, 1999) have discovered that women have different ways of expressing their feelings and respond to their

situations, among which are the use of protests and procession (Agbaje, 2017; 2019). The use of protest can either be private or public which procession against patriarch oppression is usually carried out in public. In a private protest, a wife might reject sexual advances from her husband, refuses to do what pleases her husband and more particularly, in some tribes among the Yoruba ethnic group, she might go through a painful experience of putting her body under the knife by inscribing words that reflects her resistance to male oppression. In some under tribes, the wife might refuse to take her bath or refuse to cook a delicious meal. In recent times, women in some other parts of the globe are coming out to protest against rape, gender-bias inheritance system, female genital mutilation and sexual violence within and outside the family among several other factors militating against womanhood (Omvedt, 1986). Furthermore, in several cultures across continents, women have used their bodies as instruments of protest and the nude procession to express fearlessness and sexual security. This fete has been carried out among local and urban Yoruba women to oppose cultural and religious sentiments which often portray women as inferior and weak creatures, their bodies as dirty and shameful and their souls as guilty. For example, it is a common practice among Ekiti women to tie their wrappers and wear clothing in unfashionable ways attributed to women for them to express anger and resentment against a

policy that undermines the status of womanhood in the family and the society at large (Agbaje, 2017). This is symbolic and also very significant in a way that is reflecting that women are more than a glamorous personality who only dresses up to appease men. The body of a woman has also been expressed as a social entity that is very much aware of its environment hence, has been used for public criticism of anti-social behaviour.

Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

Not only have some scholars linked patriarchal oppression to alcoholism and drug abuse among women (Randal, 1996), but have also revealed the major factor responsible for this as depression stemming out from patriarchy and also the notion and belief that there is no good way of being a woman and remain so. (Margarete, 2007). Moreover, it has been discovered that patriarchal oppression is responsible for increasing substance abuse among women in Nigeria (Oloruntimehin and Ogedengbe, 1992). Some women, therefore, when encountering difficulties in interpersonal relationships, especially within the family, a life crisis, difficulties on the job or the pressure of economic instability, all stemming from male dominance, may resort to substance use and become dependent on drugs (Barbara, 1994). In southwestern Nigeria, factors contributing to substance and alcohol abuse by women are related to the unequal social status of men and women as reflected in the social, political, economic and cultural aspects of women's lives

(Adebowale and Bawo, 2018; Popoola, 2020). In the formal sector of the Nigerian economy, women do not have equal job opportunities, and there is discrimination at the workplace which often results in slow career progress (WHO, 2019). In the informal economic sector, women face exploitation by husbands and male colleagues (Oloruntimehin and Ogedengbe, 1992). In Nigeria, the National Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC, 2018), issued a warning for women against drug abuse. The reason for this warning is not far-fetched from the prevalence of drugs abuse among women. The agency discovered the use of codeine and/or tramadol laced soft drinks as prominent among females in Nigeria. Due to the stigma associated with drug abuse, especially if the perpetrator is a female, women who for one reason or the others, are involved in drugs, do it clandestinely to prevent people from suspecting them. Even though this has been used as a form of cushioning against patriarchy and its attendants' effects, it has been described as dangerous and detrimental to both the physical and psychological health of women (Dumbili, 2014).

Aggressive Reactions to Patriarchal Oppression

Aggressive reactions to patriarchal oppression have increased in society today and have attracted the attention of some scholars and policymakers (Oloruntimehin and Ogedengbe, 1992). Noteworthy at this point is the fact that some of the aggressive actions carried out by

women against men were rooted in jealousy and impatient attitude. However, there are several cases of aggressive reactions traced to sexual subjugation and long-time silence due to patriarchy and its attendant challenges. Most of these cases have not been given adequate attention in peace and conflict scholarship. Spousal abuse is still prevalent and it continues to take a toll on partners, either male or female. The focus of this paper, however, is on some of the aggressive measures women are taking against domestic patriarchal oppression.

Violence

Violence is defined by WHO (2020) as the intentional use of physical force or [power](#), threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. Violence includes those acts that result from a power relationship, including threats and [intimidation](#), [neglect](#) or acts of omission. Such non-physical violence has a broad range of outcomes including psychological harm, deprivation and mal-development (Koss and Cook, 1993; Blume, 1996; Kruttschnitt, 1994). Violence may not necessarily result in injury or death, but poses a substantial burden on individuals, families, communities and health care systems worldwide. Many forms of violence against women, children and the elderly, for instance, can result in physical, psychological and social problems that do not necessarily lead

to injury, disability or death. These consequences can be immediate, as well as latent, and can last for years after the initial abuse. Defining outcomes solely in terms of injury or death thus limits the understanding of the full impact of violence.

It has been discovered (Adebayo, 2014) that some Yoruba women resorted to violent actions out of frustration. An instance was a housewife, Beatrice Safiu, who poured acid on her husband at OPIC Estate Annex, Agbara, Ogun State on March 30, 2010, when she heard that the concubine of the deceased had been delivered of a baby. Similarly, a middle-aged woman in Ibadan, Kafayat Adalokun, on March 23, 2017, poured boiling water on her husband's manhood which seriously injured him (Okogba, 2017). However, violence against women is also rampant (Kelly & Radford 1998). It is worthy to note at this point that there is scanty literature on the phenomenon of domestic violence against men, with women as the perpetrators or aggressors (Chan, 2011; Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998). However, a dive into some of the reasons behind women's aggression may not be far-fetched from a long-term endurance of male's domination. This is not to justify the act of violence but rather, to articulate some of the rare findings in scholarship (Dienye and Gbeneol, 2009; Adebayo and Kolawole, 2013).

Suicide

Patriarchal legal, moral, familial, and political systems have been portrayed as having the potentials of allowing even the most disadvantaged men to dominate and control the women and children in their lives (Hooks, 2004). In some culture and religion, men's domination over women is absolute. Men decide whether women will go to school if they will work, and when or to whom they will marry (Carroll 2000). The fear of these patriarchal relations create in women's lives has been intrinsically linked to their suicidal behaviour (Alabi, Ayinde and Abdulmalik, 2014). Patriarchal societies are obsessed with controlling female sexuality (Accad 2000). Although the control tactics vary, they all serve as a form of subjugation (clothing restrictions, forced virginity tests, bloody sheet or underwear tests after the first night of marriage, genital mutilation, arranged childhood marriages and marital violence).

As noted by Vijayakumar (2015), suicide is a global public health problem. However, he posits that women tend to make more suicide attempts than men, but men are more likely to die in their attempts than women. Perhaps, this is responsible for the many oversights on the parts of researchers and policymakers on females' suicidal behaviours. It is further explained that wife abuse is one of the most significant precipitants of female suicide. Research (Bertolote and Fleischmann, 2009) suggests that if a woman's support group does

not defend her when she is the victim of violence that passes the bounds of normative behaviour, her suicide may be revenge suicide, intended to force others to take vengeance on the abusive husband (Canetto and Lester, 1995).

Some women have been reported to have taken their own lives after rape during robbery incidents, discovering the husband has impregnated or married another woman or when faced with a disillusion while in a marriage due to incessant violence and maltreatment from their spouse (Biju, 2018; Agbaje, 2020). These among others are the discovered reasons women decided to commit suicide as a means of ending it all. On the 14 June 2017, a 52-year-old woman identified as Opeyemi Babatola reportedly committed suicide by hanging herself at her residence. On January 18, 2017 (Gbadamosi, 2017). There was another instance where the wife of a Naval Rating committed suicide over a misunderstanding with her husband at Igando area of Lagos State. Even though suicide is an individual act, there are several indications that it is a socially contagious problem worthy of more scholarly attention.

Murder

The phenomenon of wives killing their husbands seems to be more prominent in recent times in the southwestern part of Nigeria (Okogba, 2017). Unfortunately, the realities for most women in Nigeria are that murders are only a minute fraction of the daily domestic

violence. For each spousal murder reported there are hundreds of unreported spousal battering cases. Social commentators clam that women are becoming the perpetrators of spousal murder in retaliation for a history of abuse (Enahoro, 2017). With the lack of marriage guidance counsellors, the unwillingness of family and friends to get involved in other people's relationships, and the characteristic philandering of African men, and the assertiveness of the modern African woman cases of wives murdering their husbands can only be expected to increase. For example, a 38-year-old man named Lowo Oyediran Ajanaku was brutally stabbed to death allegedly by his wife Yewande Oyediran nee Fatoki, at their Akobo Estate home in Ibadan after a domestic dispute (Banjo, 2016). In a similar incident, a woman, Folashade Idoko, stabbed her husband, Lawrence, to death with a knife after the latter allegedly received a telephone call from a suspected female lover at their home in Ayetoro, Oto-Awori, Lagos state, Nigeria. In the same vein, a female teacher, Mrs Rafatu Agboola, was nabbed for allegedly killing her husband in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti state. These are but few out of the increasing murder perpetrated by women across southwestern Nigeria.

Matricide has been interpreted to be an aggressive response to the long term patriarchal oppression (Pearson, 1997). It is suspected that those two factors have made female aggressive incidents compelling to the point that men feel vulnerable in a way they have never done before.

It has been argued that if men are afraid that women too can kill them, they might begin to understand the conditions under which many women have lived for long (Cook-Daniels, 2008). If men understand the fear of spousal abuse the way women have lived its reality for many years, then the society might finally have a much-needed enlightened debate around domestic violence and hopefully make some progress (Radojka, 2000). Women have borne the brunt of the unevenness of power and which has predisposed them to domestic violence for so long that their suffering is frequently downplayed, normalised, and even rationalised (Adelakun, 2017). In essence, there is a need for women to stop holding up machismo as a gold standard for maleness. Re-framing of patriarchy should be an issue for everyone (not just “women’s issue”) since men should also take responsibility for altering both themselves and other men around them (Serres, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Patriarchy is a social system that has been ongoing for countless generations, and it will take many more before it can finally be eliminated. This paper has delved into some of the elucidated responses of women to domestic patriarchy, especially among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. Challenging patriarchy is essential for all gender identities. However, numerous options can be taken to push back against the system of patriarchy, no matter what the field or time of life may be.

To change the patriarchy narrative, there should be a push for a [culture of excellence](#) to hold men/boys accountable for their language and actions both in the home and in the society at large. The society should be such where all people can make positive influences on the world irrespective of their biological features. Since conflicts in homestead are inevitable, there is a need to look back into the Yoruba history and bring to the contemporary, some of the peaceful and non-aggressive ways through which women and men in the past, were able to resolve conflicts and live in peace with their spouses. Violence and aggressive measures, therefore, should not be an option for both men and women.

Furthermore, societal obstacles of religion, tradition and other obnoxious beliefs must be broken, women should not be domesticated, and they have to enjoy the right to work and associated benefits as men. All these are parts of what can create level playing ground for both men and women. However, the reality is that those stated preconditions could only ultimately be secured when patriarchy is challenged. Some scholars (Walby, 1990; Igbuzor, 2012) suggest that patriarchy is located in six relatively autonomous structures namely domestic production, paid employment, culture, sexuality, male violence and state. This paper is in agreement with these scholars as there is a need to attack these programmatic sites where patriarchy thrives in Nigeria.

Finally, ending patriarchy requires that gender roles are reconstructed to be an all-inclusive phenomenon in narrative and actions. Fixed ideas about what constitutes masculinity (force, breadwinners) and femininity (nurturing, care-giving, mothering) in the society need radical deconstruction. These ideas are potentially harmful to both men and women. Because men also can be nurturing, and women can be the main breadwinner. Women and men, therefore, should complement each other in the efforts to eliminate patriarchy and all the negative hold it has on the society.

References

- Adams, B. N. and Mburugu, E. (1994). Kikuyu Bridewealth and Polygyny Today. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 25(2), 159–166.
- Adebayo, A.A. (2014). Domestic Violence against Men: Balancing the Gender Issues in Nigeria. *American Journal of Sociological Research*, 4(1), 14-19.
- Adebayo, A.A. and Kolawole, T.O. (2013). Domestic Violence and Death: Women as Endangered Gender in Nigeria. *American Journal of Sociological Research*, 3(3), 53-60.
- Adebowale, O.O. and Bawo O. J. (2018). Psychoactive Substance use and Psychiatric Morbidity among Pregnant Women Attending an Ante-Natal Clinic in Benin City, Nigeria. *Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 25, 1
- Adelakun, A. (2017). “Nigerian Men are Afraid Women will Kill them”. Retrieved from: <https://punchng.com/>
- Adesina, O.I., Oyugbo I, Oladokun, A. (2011). Prevalence and Pattern of Violence in Pregnancy in Ibadan, South-West Nigeria. *Erratum in J ObstetGynaecol*, 31(5), 461.
- Agbaje, F. (2017). Tribunals as Instruments for Peacemaking among Ekiti Women in Traditional Settings in Southwestern

- Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced and Multidisciplinary Social Science*, 3(3), 55-66.
- (2019). "Women Networks and Symbols of Peacemaking among Ekiti Women of Southwestern Nigeria" in Sharon Omotoso, & Mutiat Oladejo, (eds.), *What Should Women Want? Before and Beyond*. Ibadan: WORDOC.
- (2020). Suicide among Female Undergraduate in Nigeria; Causes and Interventions. *Lapai Journal of Humanities*, 11(2), 109-118.
- Aina, I. O. (1998) "Women, Culture and Society" in A. Sesay and A. Odebiyi (eds.), *Nigerian Women in Society and Development*, pp.3-32. Ibadan: Dokun Publishing House.
- Ajibade, G. (2005). *Is There no Man With Penis In This Land? Eroticism and Performance In Yoruba Nuptial Songs Performance*. Kyoto: The Center for African Area Studies, Kyoto University.
- Akintan, O. A. (2013). Powerful and Powerless: Women in Religion and Culture in the Traditional Ijebu. Society. *Journal of Social Science*, 3(7), 57-74.
- Alabi, O.O., Ayinde, O. and Abdulmalik, J. O. (2014). Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour in Nigeria: A Review. *Dokita*, 37, 12-19.
- Aluko, Y. (2015). Patriarchy and Property Rights among Yoruba Women in Nigeria. *Feminist Economics*. 21, 1-26.
- Ann J.T. (2001). Patriarchy. Routledge Encyclopedia of International Political Economy: Entries P-Z. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 3(4), 1197-1198.
- Ansdell, G. (1995). *Music for Life*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Awe, Bolanle (1991). *Writing Women into History: The Nigerian Experience*. UK: Ford Press.
- Babalola, E. A. (2001). Literacy Acquisition and Cultural Awareness. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 432-442.
- Babatunde, E.D. (1992). *Culture, Religion and the Self: A Critical Study of Bini and Yoruba Value Systems in Change*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Banjo, T. (2016). "Lawyer Brutally Stabs Her Husband to Death in Ibadan" Retrieved from: <http://www.nigerianmonitor.com/>
- Barbara, W.L. (1994). Alcohol and other Drug Abuse among Women. *Alcohol Health Research World*, 18(3), 212-219.
- Barber, K. (1991). *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bertolote, J.M. and Fleischmann, A. (2009). "A Global Perspective on The Magnitude Of Suicide Mortality" in Wasserman D, Wasserman C, (eds.), *Oxford Text Book of*

- Suicidology and Suicide Prevention* pp. 91-98. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Biju, D. (2018). *Opinion | Suicides of Married Women: A Problem Long-Ignored*. Retrieved from: livemint.com/Opinion/2i6seWy0ojv01D383RpwYN/
- Blume, T.W. (1996). Social Perspectives on Violence. *Michigan Family Review*, 2(1), 9-23.
- Canetto, S.S. Lester, D. (1995). "The Epidemiology of Women's Suicidal Behaviour" in Canetto S.S and Lester D (eds.), *Women and Suicidal Behaviour* pp. 35-57. New York: Springer Publication.
- CEDAW (1979). Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Articles. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/ceaw/>
- Chan, K.L. (2011). Gender Differences in Self-Reports of Intimate Partner Violence: A Review. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 16 (2), 167-175.
- Comaroff, J. L. (1980). *The Meaning of Marriage Payments*. New York: Academic Press.
- Cook-Daniels, S. (2008). Female Perpetrators and Male Victims of Sexual Abuse: Facts and Resources. *Victimization of the Elderly and Disabled*, 11(4), 1-8.
- Cooper, D. (1978). *The Language of Madness*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press.
- Dienye, P.O. and Gbeneol, P.K. (2009). Domestic Violence against Men in Primary Care in Nigeria. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 3(4) 333-339.
- Dumbili, E. (2014). Use of Mixed Methods Designs in Substance Research: A Methodological Necessity in Nigeria. *Quality and Quantity*, 48, 2841-2857
- Durham, Y.O. (2017). Satires of Power in Yoruba Visual Culture. *African Arts*, 50(1), 92-93.
- Durkheim, E. (1984). *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Ebun, D. O. (2014). Reflection on an African Traditional Marriage System. *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Affairs*, 4(1), 94-104.
- Enahoro, E. (2017). *The New Trend in Spousal Murder*. Retrieved: <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/>
- Erkkilä J., Punkanen M., Fachner J., Ala-Ruona E., Pöntiö I., Tervaniemi M. (2011). Individual Music Therapy for Depression: Randomised Controlled Trial. *Br J Psychiatry: National Center for Biotechnology Information* 199(2): 132-139.
- Ezeifeka, C. R. and Ogbazi, I.J (2016). Feminist Undercurrents in Selected Traditional Igbo Songs: Contemporary Igbo Women's Voice. *Studies in Literature and Language* (12)5, 1-15.

- Fadipe, N. A. (1970). *The Sociology of The Yoruba*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Familusi, O.O. (2012). African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, (5)1, 299-313.
- Ferguson, K. E. (1999). Patriarchy. *Women's Studies Encyclopedia*, 2(1), 10-48.
- Friedan, B. (1963). *Feminine Mystique*. Retrieved from <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/hts>
- Gbadamosi, H. (2017). "Housewife Hangs Self in Ondo." Retrieved from: <https://tribuneonline.ng/>
- Haralambos, M., Holborn, M. and Heald, R. (2004). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. Hammersmith: Harper Collins.
- Hartman, H. (1997). "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union" in L.Nicholson (ed.), *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, 1-33. New York: Routledge.
- Hooks, B. (2004). *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinities and Love*. Retrieved from <https://www.genderspectrum.org/>
- Joseph, A.A. (2005). A Feminist Analysis of Song Texts in Okun Yoruba Marriage Ceremony. *International Journal of African & African-American Studies*, 4(1), 33-40.
- Kella, N., (2005). *Controversial 19th-Century Feminine Ideals and Creole Community Values*. Munchen: GRIN Publishing.
- Kim, J. and Motsei, M. (2002). Women Enjoy Punishment: Attitudes And Experiences Of Gender-Based Violence Among PHC Nurses In Rural South Africa. *Social Science & Medicine* 154, 43-54.
- Kioko, C., Kagumire, R. and Matandela, M. (2020). *Challenging Patriarchy: The Role of Patriarchy in the Roll-back of Democracy*. Nairobi: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.
- Koss, M. P. and Cook, S. L. (1993). "Date and Acquaintance Rape are Significant Problems for Women" in R. J. Gelles and D. R. Loseke (Eds.), *Current Controversies on Family Violence* pp. 104-119. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Kramarae, C. (1992). "The Condition of Patriarchy" in C. Kramarae and D. Spender (eds.), *The Knowledge Explosion*, 1-24. London: Teachers College Press.
- Kruttschnitt, C. (1994). "Gender and Interpersonal Violence" in A.J. Reiss, Jr. and J. A. Roth (Eds.), *Understanding And Preventing Violence; Social Influences* pp 293-376. Washington, D.C.; National Academy Press.
- Lerner, G. (1986). *The Creation of Patriarchy*. London: Oxford University Press.

- Makama, G. A. (2013). Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(17), 115-144.
- Malti-Douglas, F. (2007). *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender*. Detroit: Macmillan.
- Margarete, P. (2007). *Social Work Perspectives on Human Behaviour*. Berkshire: Open University Press
- Meagher, M. (2011). "Patriarchy" in Ritzer, George and Ryan, J. Michael (eds.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology*, pp. 441-442. New Jersey: Wiley Publisher.
- Meyers, M. (2004). African American Women and Violence: Gender, Race, and Class in the News. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 21(2), 95-118.
- Morgan, S. (2007). *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Tauris Academic Studies.
- Mudau, T.J. and Obadire, O.S. (2017). The Role of Patriarchy in Family Settings and its Implications to Girls and Women in South Africa. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 58(1-2), 67-72.
- Muscato, C. (2003). *Patriarchal System: Definition and Overview*. Retrieved from <http://www.study.com>
- Nkealah, N. (2016). (West) African Feminisms and Their Challenges. *Journal of Literary Studies*, 32 (2), 61-74.
- Ogundokun, S. (2015). The Role of Orature in African Socio-Cultural Space. *Journal of English Language and Literature*, 6,179 - 185.
- Okogba, E. (2017). Housewife Pours Boiling Water on Hubby's Manhood in Ibadan. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/>
- Okome, M. O. (2002). Domestic, Regional, and International Protection of Nigerian Women against Discrimination: Constraints and Possibilities. *African Studies Quarterly*, 6(3), 33-63.
- Okpe, O. (2005). *Mainstreaming Gender in the African Development Process: a Critic of NEPAD and the Women Question*. Nigeria: BSU Press.
- Okunade, A. A. (2010). Pedagogical Implications of Yoruba Folksongs as Instructional Materials. *Nigerian Music Review*, 11(12), 31-41.
- Olanipekun, T. (2017). "52-Year-Old Woman Commits Suicide in Ondo." Retrieved from <http://www.dailypost.org/>
- Olaussen, M, (1992). Three Types of Feminist Criticism. Åbo: The Institute of Women's Studies Åbo Akademi University.

- Oloruntimehin, O and Ogedengbe, R.O. (1992). "Women and Substance Abuse" A. H. L-N. WHO/PSA/1992 Report in Nigeria. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- Omodjohwoefe, O. S. (2011). Gender Roles Differentiation and Social Mobility of Women in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Science*, 27(1), 7-74.
- Omolewa, M. (2002). "Education", in Africa Atlases. (Nigeria). Paris-France: Les Editions J.A.
- Omorie, N., & Ikensekhien, O. A. (2009). *Persistent Gender Inequality in Nigerian Education*. Benin: Benson Idahosa University.
- Omvedt, G. (1986). "Patriarchy:" the Analysis of Women's Oppression. *Sage Journals* 13(3), 30-50.
- Onayemi, F. (1999). "The Other Woman in Classical and Yoruba Culture" in Ifie, E. (Ed.), *Coping with Culture*, pp. 46-54. Ibadan: Oputuru Books.
- Oyewunmi, O. (1997). *A Critical Analysis of Oyeronke Oyewunmi's The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota
- Parpan, J.L. (1996). "Gender, Patriarchy, and Development in Africa: The Zimbabwean Case" in Valentine M. Moghadam (ed.), *Patriarchy and Development: Women's Positions at the End of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 92-93. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pearson, P. (1997). *When She was Bad: Violent Women and the Myth of Innocence*. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc.
- Popoola, F.A. (2020). *Better Knowledge for Better Care: Changing Substance Use Treatment and Prevention Narratives in Nigeria*. Retrieved from: <https://www.issup.net/knowledge-share/publications/>
- Prentice, D. A. and Carranza, E. (2002). What Women and Men Should be, Shouldn't be, Are Allowed to be, And Don't Have to be: The Content of Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26, 269-281.
- Radojka, S. (2000). "Damaging Females: Representations of Women as Victims and Perpetrators of Crime in the Mid Nineteenth Century," A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of History, University College, London. Retrieved from: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/>
- Randal, R.V. (1996). "Taking a Community Approach to Preventing the Creation of a Biological Underclass" in P.Voydanoff (ed.), *Families and Communities in Partnerships*. New York: University Press of America.

- Serres, D. (2014). "Why Patriarchy Persists and How We Can Change It." Retrieved from: <https://organizingchange.org/>
- Sikweyiya, Y. Addo-Lartey, A.A., Alangea, D.O., Dako-Gyeke, P. Chirwa, E.D. Coker-Appiah, D. Adanu, R.M., and Jewkes, R. (2020). Patriarchy and Gender-Inequitable Attitudes as Drivers of Intimate Partner Violence against Women in the Central Region of Ghana. *BMC Public Health* 20, 682.
- Stacey, J. (1993). "Untangling Feminist Theory" in D. Richardson and V. Robinson (eds.), *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice*, 49-73. Macmillan: London.
- Tjaden, P. and Thoennes, N. (1998). *Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence against Women: Findings from the National Violence against Women Survey*. Washington, DC: Department of Justice.
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Ukpokolo, F.C. (2005). "Gender Politics and African Culture: Concepts, Issues and Practices" in Oguntomisin G.O. and Edo V.O. (eds.), *African Culture and Civilization*, p.122. Ibadan: GSP University of Ibadan.
- UNDP (2005), Human Development Report. United Nations Development Programmes. Retrieved from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>
- Usman, E. (2017). "Woman Commits Suicide Over Argument with her Husband." Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/>
- Vijayakumar, L. (2015). Suicide in Women. *Indian J Psychiatry*, 57(2), 233-238.
- Walby, S. (1992), "Post-Modernism? Theorising Social Complexity" in M. Barret, and A. Phillips, (Eds.), *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, 18-33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weir, N.A.C. (1933). "Intelligence reports: Ado district Ekiti division (Ondo prof 1,392A vol II)." National Archives Ibadan 525-528.
- WHO (2019). *Responding to the Challenge of Drug use among Women in Nigeria*. Retrieved from: <https://www.afro.who.int/news/>
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1792). *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. New York: Oxford Press.