

WOMEN ROLES IN PRECOLONIAL AND COMTEMPORARY TIMES A CASE STUDY OF YOURUBA LAND

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ABSTRACT

Women hold a key position in the family. Their roles go beyond just bearing children. They are generally regarded as important educators of children. Women in the pre-colonial era are agriculturist, they play active roles in planting of crops, harvesting, processing into finished goods and also took part in sales of the produce. However, through this enormous role, they contributed to the dietary staple of the family and national economy. In the precolonial era women are seen as child bearers because of their unique biological make up, which enable them to suckle children, they are relegated to the realm of marriage, motherhood and domesticity. Women constituted the majority of illiterate in Nigeria as they are denied education, as families prefer to train male children in school who will carry on the family name and not females who will be married to another family. In this contemporary time, women are educated, hold key positions in various spheres of life such as ministers, commissioners, senators, captains of industries, members of parliament, CEO of corporate organizations both national and international and the latest being the appointment of Eng. Mrs. Ogunfayo as the first female deputy rector of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. In conclusion, women have contributed much in political, social and economic activities in the society. Every aspect of the society benefitted when women are involved greatly. All country can reach its potential as long as women potential to participate are not denied.

Key word: Roles, Women, Precolonial, Contemporary Times

INTRODUCTION

Woman is a female human. Marjorie K.M (2009) studied the lives of Yoruba women between 1820- 1960 and opposed the stereotype that continues to inform popular perception of African women as subjugated to male power and authority and relegated to the realm of marriage, motherhood and domesticity. For better understanding of this topic there is the need for us to know the major concepts involved. Role is the function or position that somebody has or is expected to have in an organization, in society or in a relationship (Oxford Advanced Dictionary 2000). It is instructive to note that the traditional role of women is changing in the face of global change in social, economic, political and technological dimensions. Women are now in high positions in most African societies such as ministers, commissioners, senators, captain of industry, members of parliament, CEO of corporate organizations both national and international and the latest being the appointment of Eng. Mrs. Ogunfayo as the first female deputy rector of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. Hence, this study is carried out to enable us compare the roles of women in pre-colonial Yoruba society and in this contemporary time.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study is to compare the roles of women in precolonial Yoruba society to this present time.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PRECOLONIAL ERA AND COMTEMPORARY TIME

VARIABLES	PRECOLONIAL ERA	CONTEMPORARY TIME
<p>1. Marriage</p>	<p>Marriage is the union of two or more people that creates a family tie and carries legal and or social rights and responsibilities. Obiageli E. etal (2009) defines marriage as a union of man and woman to become husband and wife. An anonymous author defines marriage as just a fancy word of adopting an over grown male child who cannot be handle by his parent any more.</p> <p>In the pre-colonial era an intermediary (Alarena in yoruba parlance) is set up to investigate a particular family for chronic and acute diseases before a daughter is giving into marriage. Also in the precolonial Nigeria society, women and children were regarded as economic assets, polygyny were encouraged and more children meant more power within the society.</p>	<p>Obiageli E, Laraba ,B. Fatima ,B. etal (2009) States that the factors to consider when choosing marriage partner are physical appearance, compatibility, age, character , background, love, health, economic securities, blood group and parental consent.</p> <p>In this contemporary times people do not see their spouses and children as economic asset but rather sees women as better half of themselves (men).</p>
<p>2. Change of Name</p>	<p>At the point of marriage, women drop their father’s name to take that of their husbands. This view has been taken to such extreme that according to Kaber(2003) and Molynex (2002),women have often be left out in major decision concerning development and planning as (cited in Agbebi,2006), thus underrating the part which women can play in the society and as such women are said to be facing he problem of oppressions, discrimination and subordination in all facet of their lives. Walby (1990), in theorizing patriarchy, sees it as a social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. She saw the domination from private and public perspectives. The private patriarchy is domination of women which occurs within the household at the hands of an individual patriarch (man), while public patriarch is more collective in nature. In this form women are involved in public realm such as in politics, labour market but remain segregated from wealth, power and status</p>	<p>In this contemporary time we have women that bears their maiden name alongside their husbands’ name for example Mrs. Iyabo Obasanjo Bello.</p>
<p>3. Parenting / Child Bearing</p>	<p>This is the process of raising and educating a child from birth until adulthood. According to (Oxford Advance Dictionary 2017) Parent are father, mother or guidance of a child or children. It can also be defined as a person who acts as a parent in rearing a child: a step parent or adoptive parent. Lasswell& Lasswell ,(1987) . Women are given the task of caring for the children they bear because of their unique capability to bear and nurse</p>	<p>In this contemporary time women can surmount problems arising from childlessness by doing legal adoption of children, this provides opportunity for childless women to play mothering roles. Aside this, women (teacher or lecturer) are regarded as in loco parentis, a doctrine describing a relationship similar to that of a parent to a child. Claassen C, J. (1976). Black (1979) literally translated it as” in</p>

	<p>children. Haralambo and Holborn (2000) argues that gender roles are culturally, rather than biologically determined. This theory has helped to curtail women by burden of culture. This is so because cultural conception and the traditional roles spelt out by the society's culture for women are that of domestic affairs such as child rearing and home making. The implication of this according to Akintola and Taiwo (2004), is that, women should not have any ambition from outside home, because, culturally her father, and later on her husband will provide for her in economic terms.</p> <p>There were however opportunities for women to surmount problems arising from childlessness through fostering children of relatives, provides opportunity for childless women to play mothering roles.</p>	<p>the place of the parent". It refers to an individual who assumes parental status and responsibility for another individual without formally adopting the child.</p> <p>Ten Keys to Successful Parenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time with your children. Be a good listener. • Involve your children in what you do, cooking chores and so on • Do not pamper them, let them bear the consequences of their actions sometimes. Let them look for solution on their own. • Separate the deed from the doer. Love him or her and show it. • Be kind and firm at the sometime. • Parent with the end in mind. i.e. Keep in mind how you want your child to be as an adult. • Be constituent, follow through: Your child will get to respect you more if you mean what you say. • Look for positives- Always be looking for what they did right, not what they did wrong. Use action not words, show examples of how things should be done. • Pray for them often, refuse to curse them by all means
<p>4. Occupation</p>	<p>Yoruba women took active part in agriculture as many of them had farms, grew varieties of crop, participated in harvesting, processing for final consumption, storage and sale, and even belong to farmer's guide in their respective settlements. Rural women manage mostly agricultural work and petty trading. According to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (1997) rural women gets only token cash gift from their husbands in return for services rendered on the farm throughout the year. Great farmer as they are, Nigeria women do not own land and depend on men to acquire farmland. In some parts of Nigeria, only women produce food like Berom of Plateau State, men do not take part in most agricultural work, the task is left for women but the food is enjoyed by all members of the family (FMWA1997). It was the confirmation of this truism that Azikwe(1997) wrote that Women are the primary food producers in African and in other Third World Countries of the World, and therefore play an indispensable role in the economy.</p>	<p>: In this modern era, women are seen to play multiple roles. The theory of welby (1990) has been criticized in the fact that things are changing now in many countries, including Nigeria with women becoming more successful in different areas of life. It is not uncommon to find women in every aspect of paid employment. Women are also found in service Industry which some people think are an extension of domestic work, example includes nursing, teaching, fashion industry, secretarial work and other such related jobs. Women are now in high positions in most African societies such as ministers, commissioners, senators, captain of industry, members of parliament, CEO of corporate organizations both national and international and the latest being the appointment of Eng. Mrs. Ogunfayo as the first female deputy rector of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. Also nowadays, we have women driving commercial vehicles and doing auto-mechanics in Lagos</p>

	<p>Araoye & Salaudeen (2005), revealed in their research that some economic activities were forbidden for women in their communities, such as metal work, auto-mechanics, commercial driving, hunting, palm wine tapping which were considered to be physically strenuous. They labored as weavers, traders or dyers. Animal husbandry was another sector of agriculture that were dominated by the women. No doubt the Yoruba women were main keepers of livestock, unlike the Fulani society where men were herders, women among the Yoruba's rears domestic animals such as duck, pig, cattle, sheep, cats, and goats, all kept to provide meat for consumption or use as sacrifices. It is also probable that through such role they could have contributed enormously to the improvement of dietary pattern of the region.</p>	<p>Nigeria. Lampe (1998) demonstrates that women are intelligent like men and that they only differ from men, where they are biologically made to give birth to children and suckle them, and men do not share the structural fitness for a reproductive function but that does not make women inferior to men intellectually. He further opines that, like men women have hands and brains. There is no reason why the ability of a woman to use her hands and brain should be inferior to that of a man, if she chooses to apply them.</p> <p>The increase in families with two working parents and time limitation has led to the convenience revolution with prepackaged processed products forming the basis of the majority of the meals prepared in the home. The tendency to "eat out" has also risen (St-onge, Keller & Heymsfield, 2003) this was demonstrated in Finland where approximately one third of the population consumes one meal per day outside the home (Finished National Nutrition Surveillance System, 2009)</p>
<p>5. Domestic work</p>	<p>According to Haralambo and Holborn (2000) Men and women perform those task for which they are biologically fitted for. He saw it as both practical and convenient that women should concentrate on domestic and family responsibilities while men work outside the home because they are in general bigger and stronger than women. This, to him is an exclusionary strategy to prevent women from taking part in public life.</p>	<p>A Woman's job is to look after the home and family, nowadays women have increased participation in labour market, both men and women now contributes to household income. (Lewis, 2012)</p>
<p>6. Education</p>	<p>In the past, women constituted the majority of illiterate in Nigeria., women lag behind men in access to education. For instance, a report of Federal Office of Statistics (1995) indicates that only 7.6% of women are interview in the Northern part of Nigeria had some primary education whereas in the southern part of Nigeria, at least 25.9% had. The report further reveals that, in the case of primary school enrolments, only 12 % of female children of school age are registered in primary school. In the South 44% of girls are in primary school FOS (1995). According to FOS (1995). Report says by the time the girls have reached the stage of secondary school only about 4.2% of them in Northern Nigeria and 3.7% Southern Nigeria are allowed to continue. Most Communities see women role as being domestic and child</p>	<p>Nowadays the role of women (mothers) especially goes beyond just bearing children. Mothers are generally acknowledged as important educators of children. For this reason, raising some balanced children in a disorganized society is in their hands because women are generally closer to their children than anyone else. Provision of textbooks should not be limited to recommended school text. Women should buy books for leisure and recreation reading for their wards as Parent no longer give books as gifts to their children, instead they buy gifts such as computer game, handset etc. The desire of people is what affects their lifestyle (Obviagele, 2007)</p>

	bearing in particular. As a result of this, many families prefer to train male children in school and not female who will be married into another family.	
7. Role model	According to Robertson, (1987) Characteristics of female and male are learned in the family environment early in life and then reinforce in school, mass media work place and in other specific agencies. Nutt (1979) as coated in Bojuwoye and Imuokohome (1986) opines that, one way a woman is kept in her place is through lesson she has been taught about her roles and abilities when she was a child. Pilcher (2002) supports the above assertion by saying that children are taught to conform to their feminine or masculine role as appropriate through the application of positive and negative sanctions.	Odunfunwa& Dosumu (2006) Opines that people learn to play the role appropriate to the status the society confers on them, socialization into this role does not stop when people leave home or school, instead they continue to act out the role attached to their status throughout their adult lives. It should be noted that from the above that despite the powerful impact of socialization , a large number of women are rebelling towards their cultural conditioning through different forms of movement, this is because some of the activities they are exposed to right from early childhood serves as barrier to their inability to effectively contributes to societal and national development.
8. Property	In the precolonial times women do not owns property, they generally had access to land which they could cultivate however, and the right to dispose of the land was vested in the head of the family. Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (1997)	In this contemporary time women that are hardworking can own property
9. Authority	In pre-colonial time, according to Johnson (1956) in several Yoruba towns there were women official headed by the Iyalode. They participated in the decision making process and settle disputes in their wards and compounds. Thus, women assisted in maintain law and order. Peace and harmony in traditional Yoruba society. A few women official constituted part of the membership of secret societies mainly responsible for executive and judiciary function in several Yoruba societies especially among the Ijebus. (Ayantuga, 1965) In Ondo, the Lobun assisted in the appointment of new Osemawe, settles quarrels among the male chiefs and officiated in the opening of new market . The Obas wives (Aya Oba or Olori) were also influential in the state affairs.	According to (Oxford Advance Dictionary 2017), authority means the power to enforce rules or give orders. For example Dr. J.C Okafor doubles as the examination chairperson of the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro and the authority figure , Head of Department, Nutrition and Dietetics and a host of others too

CONCLUSSION

Women have contributed much in political, social and economic activities in the society. Every aspect of the society benefitted when women are involved greatly. All countries can reach its potential as long as women potential to

participate are not denied. Development will be a mirage without involving women, for they are very productive and full of initiatives. An adage says behind every successful man is a woman. Women means

W- Wonderful mother

O- Outstanding wife

M- Marvelous daughter

A-Amiable friend

N-Nicest gift from God to man

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Women should participate fully in politics as the Country democratizes so that they can forge ahead to champion their course of being partners with their men counterparts.
- Women nowadays should be more committed in rearing their children and see to the all-round development of their children.
- A working mother should establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.

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