

# Gender Inequality: An Ethnolinguistic Analysis of Salon Conversation among Yoruba Women in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Ibadan, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This paper interrogates *women-talk* in selected salons in parts of Ibadan North Local Government Area, Nigeria through the Ethnolinguistic framework to determine perspectives towards gender equity/inequality in a bid to propose way forward, and within the salon space and hair value.

The research is largely quantitative and data collection on observatory participant basis. Secondary data on gender equity was also obtained through literature. True equity lies in achieving the intended societal impact of gender equity which is for the individual to be genuinely liberated and free to function optimally. The different postures and perspectives of the Yoruba woman present with issues in terms of gender equity and desires that should not be overlooked in the design of policies meant to liberate them within their respective contexts. Gender equity needs to be clearly defined within the context of peoples and their cultures.

**Keywords:** Gender Inequality, Salon, Yoruba women, South West Nigeria

## I. Introduction

The wave of the social construct, gender equity, has not swept swiftly across the globe at a speed envisaged by originators of the legacy in view of differences in culture and governance. Some societies particularly within Africa still present with inequalities after a century and a half milestone struggles against it. Attempts by multicultural nations like Nigeria to eradicate inequalities and implant sustainable development has met with great challenges in view of excessive inequalities in the economic, power/leadership, educational, ethno-religious domains.

Gender inequality is a social construct regarding what society accords to females and males while equality means persons are provided with the same resources and opportunities; and equity can be defined as recognition of differences amongst persons and the allocation of equivalent resources and opportunities for each to achieve equal outcome.

Much scholarship exists on gender equity/equality as it is a prerequisite for sustainable development, a benchmark for national and institutional advancement as well as being fundamental to solving problems. Equity or fairness serves the interest of all and sundry in every area and facet of life regardless of an individual's biological make up which is not by his or her own making but by birth. In simple terms gender equity means fairness in access to opportunities and resources regardless of gender. Everyone has a level playing ground and access to all resources and opportunities. Nations are today interested in ensuring a culture that is gender sensitive in all aspects of operations.

This paper, through ethnolinguistic analysis of *women-talk*, in selected hairdressing salons within the Ibadan North Local Government Area in south western Nigeria, especially as regards family life and homes, reveals disconnect between the talks and the quest for equity. This study therefore examines the following research questions: What are the perspectives of women towards gender equality/inequality, how can women be educated on gender equity and inequality and what is the role of the salon space and hair in women talk?

Some of the 18 grievances listed by Stanton in her 'Declaration of Sentiments'; considered to be areas of life where women are treated unjustly, seem to be controversial in some cultures. Such 'injustices' against women, include husbands having legal power over their wives and being responsible for them, whereby women are robbed of their self-confidence and self-respect, and being made totally dependent on men. Many nations are yet to catch the vision of this movement, whereby a society is more egalitarian, making living the legacy is non-uniform.

Nigeria being a multicultural society, records great diversity in attitude to gender equity and inequality. There are several shades of acceptance of the gender equity legacy. This is due to the socio-cultural values, role of religion in the lives of the people, and the degree of literacy, especially among the female gender. The objectives of this work are to examine the perspectives of women towards gender equity/inequality, to determine how women can be educated on gender equity/inequality and to identify the role of the salon space and hair in women talk.

Although the Nigerian Constitution makes provision for gender equality, the reality is that religious and cultural norms and values are very deep seated in the minds of the people. Thus, the women themselves are diversified in their understanding/acceptance of gender equity values and principles. The following are provisions made for gender equity in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Both sexes are simply couched under the terms, citizen and sex, in the document.

15. (2) Accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited.

17. (1) The State social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality and Justice.

(2) In furtherance of the social order-

(a) every citizen shall have equality of rights, ....

(3) The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that-

(a) all citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment;

(b) there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, or on any other ground whatsoever;

(c) children, young persons and the age are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect;

According to the World Bank data on development indicators, Nigeria's gender equality is at 0.33333% (Trading Economics (2020)) which sets her way below expectation. Despite the provisions, women in Nigeria are still marginalized. They suffer injustices on account of cultural and religious norms, illiteracy and poverty levels.

UN Women opines that 'work still needs to be done in Nigeria to achieve gender equality' (UN Women (undated)). It notes also that in 2020 December, only 46.7% of indicators required to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were available, with gaps in key areas, such as lack of financial remuneration for care and domestic work, key labour market indicators (i.e., gaps in gender pay and in information and communication technology skills). One major problem is lack of comparable methodologies for monitoring regularly: sexual harassment, women's access to assets, correlation between gender and poverty. There is the need to close these gaps in Nigeria to achieve gender related SDG commitments.

The place of hair dressing salons in national development, over decades, has been trivialized in developing nations. The resounding successes of hairdressers like C.J. Walker and M. Joyner in the of the African American civil rights ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madam\\_C.\\_J.\\_Walker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madam_C._J._Walker)) are instructive considering the role of the hair dressing salon. Their successes indicate the hairdressing space as one of awareness and activism. Interrogating salon discourses for realistic dispositions in Ibadan, reveals the lacuna (i.e., level of awareness and comprehension) in social development especially in the area of gender equity whereas such spaces may serve as venue for promoting the comprehension of gender equity through advocacy therein.

### **Salon: Structure and Value**

Group action thrives on shared ideologies and thoughts, so, such arena as the salon provide room for interaction among people who share industrialized and urban centers. Universities/ Tertiary institutions, churches, mosques, and other places where large masses of people gather within the same space with opportunity to express oneself freely, and on a regular basis, foster social movements, formation of associations and unions by like minds on ideologies, with the intent to address social matters (economic, cultural, political, religious and educational).

The salon, like the 18th Century coffeehouses in the Western worlds, is equally a free space, perfect for rubbing minds and initiating social movement. The salon is a place where women discuss freely without inhibitions or fear of being watched or monitored by spouses/family members who may hold different views on both personal and social matters. It thus serves as an ideal place to crop views and positions of the clients on variety of issues, from which inferences may be drawn after an examination of their dialogues. People of different religious, cultural and social backgrounds gather to discuss freely without inhibitions. In this instance, the female salons provided such free space to determine their positions or worldviews on gender equality. Furthermore, the opportunity to interact on a regular basis promotes creation of relationships and associations among the same group of women. Discussions in such spaces can easily be channeled to engage social matters leading to collective action towards development of the women folk, particularly in terms of gender issues, cultural values, hair and beauty as well as civil rights in terms of gender stereotypes. It is important to note that formation of relationships and interactions has skyrocketed on account of the digital world. Relationships formed in salons can also generate and spread ideas culminating in a change of opinion through such media.

As noted earlier, black beauty salons and beauticians such as that of Madam C. J. Walker in the United States in the late nineteenth Century, had an unspoken presence in the political battlefield of civil rights in the early twentieth century. Her hair company was instrumental to the development and empowerment of many black women even the course of the black people’s emancipation. Her company donated funds to construct the Colored YMCA building in Indianapolis, Indiana, and supported the black through funding of colleges and universities. Beauticians played a central role in the civil rights movement since the salon itself unofficially became a “center of communication and influence” in the struggle for justice in South America. Much of her proceeds went into support for Civil Right movements.

More recently, the salon largely became a place for beautification of the body and by extension, the mind of the clients. Women in the hairdressing salons socialize freely and interact without any inhibition as they see a commonality in their gender and purpose. They share thoughts and express views on personal, domestic cultural and national issues spontaneously especially as their spouses do not accompany them there. It is a space for sublime brainstorming to find solutions and can thus be viewed philosophically as a place for revamping destiny, not just of an individual but the nation at large, especially because there, inconsistent views on equity may be corrected to promote and improve the status of women.

The hairdressing salon is thus selected for data collection because it represents the space for freedom of expression, mind-framing and release of stress. It is a place where matters of national development, sustainable development goals, adornment of hair (symbolic to or representative of the manifestation of glory and shaping of life or future of the individual) are discussed. The organogram in the salon is basically top-down, starting with salon owner, manager, stylists and technician, receptionist and salon assistants. Usually, the owner is a business professional, whose primary interest is customer service, human resources, and financing of the place. The Manager is directly responsible to the owner, gives orientation to all staff about the operations and functions of the salon, ensures quality performance and service by staff, maintain cleanliness and customer satisfaction, assesses personnel, requisitions, supplies, and collaborates with the owner to inculcate discipline. Stylists directly interact with customers, take their requests and ensure good service. They often hold conversations with clients when at work. Salon assistants basically are responsible for getting clients ready for services, the general cleaning, laundry, retail sales and sterilizing equipment. They are responsible to any other member of staff in the salon. Requisitions in the salon include shampooing, scientific scalp treatment, manicuring, massaging, waving, weaving/other forms of hair dressing, as well as retail sale of hair and body accessories.

A large spectrum of women folk is thus available for reorientation and redirection in worldviews based on superior argument or enlightenment by those more exposed and educated. The traditional hairdressing salon is different from the modern one in a number of ways presented in tabular form below:

**Traditional versus Modern Structure of the Salon**

Structure	Environment	Style varieties	Conversation/ Discourses	Wide spectrum of society clientele (Un) Educated	Number of persons in space
Traditional	Restricted to backyard or home corridors. Lack of freedom under the view of men and other family members.	Braids, weave, threading	Largely traditional (food, <i>aso-ebi</i> ‘uniform attire’ ceremonies, children(-less), in-laws, market days, divorce	House wives/traders Grade II teacher	2,3
Modern	Unrestricted, free space, separate building (far) away from client’s home, has reception and lounge or relaxing area, equipped with TV, Video players, radio, hair dryers, mirrors, hair relaxers, extensions and accessories available for	Perming, Jerry curls braiding with or without extensions, hair pressing, weaving (traditional and modern), wet waves, dread locking, manicure,	wide spectrum: discussions about personal, neighbourhood, State National, International, social, political, religious matters; new materials or dress styles, latest food, hairstyle, attitude of men/ spouses, the ‘other woman’, cost of living, parties attended, <i>aso-ebi</i> ‘uniform attire’,	Professors, Lawyers, Bankers, Medical Doctors, Nurses, Pastors Cleaners, Teachers (pry/high school) Lecturers, Market women, Seamstresses	5,8,10 or more

	purchase, snacks and drinks available for purchase etc.	pedicure, facials etc.	children' behavior, in-laws, divorce, tithing in church, fake pastors etc.		
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The traditional structure is less viable for enlightenment as there is limited number of people interacting and those involved are usually of the same household, sharing same religious and cultural values and of limited exposure. Despite the structure of both the types of salons, they equally serve as spaces for interactions and deliberations.

**Socio-cultural Context and significance of Hair**

The social interpretations of hair vary with cultures, but the definition is universal. Hair is an appendage of the skin. Young (2011, p.1) says “Hair is an extension of the nervous system, it can be correctly seen as exteriorized nerves, a type of highly evolved 'feelers' or 'antennae' that transmit vast amounts of important information to the brain stem, the limbic system, and the neocortex.” Pergament (1999, p.42) noted that Hair plays significant role in many cultures in the development of social constructs and that one of the past uses of hair is social control. Pergament (1999, p. 44) also noted that hair is an indicator of group identity, gender and sexual signifier; an object of intense elaboration and preoccupation in every society. The styles and ceremonies that attend hair care, and the adornment, express powerful messages about beliefs, lifestyles and commitments.

Social constructs about the body could be developed based on the hair in many cultures as there are symbolic and religious meanings centred around the hair – (hair-grooming rituals, social taboos, taking of hair as means of social control). Sociology is the study of the development, structure and functioning of the human society and any social movement may be described as struggle for social/welfare rights; a group action to the more powerful and advantaged. Sometimes it is premised on the desire to carry out, resist, or undo some social change. Thompson (2009, p.1) observed that all women relate well on hair matters e.g., colour shape, texture, style etc.... She also noted that hairstyles provide information on status, whether married or not, age, religion, ethnic identity and wealth.

In the Yoruba culture hair is significant in human life because it is an extension of the head, the destiny controller and human consciousness; so, adornment of the hair equates adornment of an individual’s future. The ‘Ori’ ‘head’ holds one’s destiny and the Yoruba also believe that the essence of an individual is in one’s hair and nails. They have strong belief in *Olorun Olodumare* ‘God’ and the importance of having *Ori ire-* ‘good luck’ in life. According to Sofola (1973, p.105), “One’s Ori can be good or bad” so, a fortunate person is called *Olori-re*”. Hair is thus symbolic of good fortune or bright and promising destiny.

Culture preservation through documentation of the traditional hair styles is a social movement which may be considered in terms of religious and cultural values and of ‘inequalities’. For instance, culturally and religion wise, the men are considered ‘head’ of the woman in the home and this is reflected culturally not just among the Yoruba but Nigeria in general being a patriarchal society.

Adiji et al. (2015, p. 25) notes that in Nigeria, much care and attention is given to head hair. For example, the traditional hair styles and even the modern, continue to undergo change demonstrating pliability of culture to accommodate innovations thus allowing a change in the outlook to life in terms of gender stereotypes or equity and equality. This is a form of everyday resistance to social norms, established by dominant culture even if the women are not fully conscious of it. Hairstyles have evolved from natural matting and adornment to styling with extensions like weaves, application of chemicals to straighten out the hair or make it curly as in Perms and Jerry curls respectively, to create hair waves. Manning (2010, p.35) observed that ‘Head hair is similar to style of dress ... it too is easily manipulated, changed, and given meaning. ... The influence of popular culture ... assigning meaning to different ... hairstyles, ... color, and length fluctuates.’ In the 1960s, hair represented a social symbol, as “Afro” hairstyles of prominent African-Americans signified radical activism. Dugger (2017, p.3) in *lensculture* states that hairstyles have been ‘influenced by social/cultural patterns, historical events and globalization ... from being purely decorative to conveying deeper, more symbolic understandings, revealing social status, age and tribal/family traditions.’ Akinlolu (2017) documented initiatives by non-African black celebrities to promote black hair. He noted that culture is undergoing change and that the African culture which poses inner conflict for Africans themselves is now being adopted by celebrities in the developed countries given its uniqueness. Our hair or lifestyle should be embraced as it is worth emulating.

Constructing a ‘Declaration of Sentiments’ to suit or that best works for the Yoruba or on a larger scale the African woman should be considered. Women have demonstrated capacity to adapt to new cultures and lifestyles. This is observable through the evolution of hairstyles. By extension she, like all humans can adapt and imbibe principles that underlie equity and fairness.

Chand in *hercampus* observed that “Recently, I’ve realized how political hair really is.” Mejiuni (2013, p. 44) notes that ‘Hair is a symbolic marker and ... Hair maintenance practices act as powerful cultural signifiers, which – through repetition and reiteration – decisively construct identities (McCracken 1995). Which are ‘intimately connected to discourses of gender and sex(uality).’ The

significance of hair, its place and nature of care cum styles in culture and evolution of homo sapiens in terms of change of attitude to stereotypes be it in terms of equity and equality cannot be underestimated.

## II. Methodology and framework

The framework and theory adopted here is Ethnography of communication. It is a qualitative research method by which communication acts/codes may be discerned. The framework is adopted to help us decode social and cultural practices including belief systems of the individuals in the particular culture and community (in this case the Yoruba), particularly those important to them.

The milieu for data elicitation is the salon as they often stream with women and are replete with discourses on women's affairs, thoughts, experiences, and desires. Also, the status of gender policies, issues and more, can readily be made through an examination of discourses held therein. This paper, thus, interrogates salon female discourses of Yoruba women around the University of Ibadan and Bodija axis of Ibadan North Local Government Area for realistic dispositions with a view to determining the native Yoruba woman's desires through ethnolinguistic analysis. It explores the woman's perspectives on equity/inequality including viz-a-viz ethics of gender equity within the peculiar socio-cultural setting. The choice of salons is informed by the fact that they are situated around areas where both educated and un-educated people reside, in order to have a range of opinions.

Data was elicited largely from 11 selected salons by observatory participant basis and then subjected to linguistic ethnography to determine the desires and worldview of Yoruba women in University of Ibadan-Agbowo-Bodija axis. The salons are *Praise Salon* (Abdulsalam PG Hall, UI), *Oyinx Beauty salon* (behind Agbowo shopping complex, Agbowo, Ibadan), *Always Smile* (behind Agbowo shopping complex, Agbowo, Ibadan), *Excel salon* (Adenuga Street, Kongi, Bodija, Ibadan), *DOC cosmetics and hairs* (Transformer, Barika Second Gate UI), *PEP Hair Beauty Palace* (Barika-Water, Opposite UI second gate), *Sara's salon* (Bodija Market Ibadan), *Rehoboth* (Bodija market Ibadan), *Make Me –Unisex salon* (Adebajo Street, Kongi, Bodija, Ibadan), *Zeneet salon* (Kara, Bodija market Ibadan) and *Iya Bolu salon* (behind Agbowo shopping Complex, UI). The discourses were scrutinized for details about equality and inversely inequality particularly in light of gender issues especially within the home domain.

### Salon Conversation Analysis

Thoughts and opinions in discourses held in salons often follow a wide range of topics such as marriage/home, business, children, social life (relationships with siblings, spouse, in-laws, friends, neighbours), personal aspirations, religion, medicine etc. as the profile of customers differ, e.g., professionals (Medical Doctors, teachers, traders, seamstresses, etc.), among students, housewives, spinsters, married, divorcees, single parents, widows, all with different educational and religious backgrounds. Some of the issues discussed at salons visited are Gender equity, equality, inequality, in light of education, finances, relationship in marriage, and unemployment.

Ethnolinguistic analysis of selected conversations that held at selected salons are presented below.

#### Data 1

**Speaker A:** "Nígbà wo ni gbèdèké fún sísan owó ilé iwé?"

**'When is deadline for payment of school fees?'**

**Speaker B:** "Mí ò mò, mo gbó pé ọ̀sọ̀sẹ̀ ni owó nàà máa ń fí two-thousand-naira tabi two thousand five hundred lé sí fún late registration"

**'I'm not sure, I understand there's an increase of N2,000 or N2,500 every week for late registration.'**

**Speaker A:** "Ó nira diẹ fún mi láti rí owó nàà san"

**'I'm having a hard time getting the money.'**

**Speaker B:** "Eeya, pèlè, mo rò pé o ti san án ni"

**'Eeya, sorry about that, thought you have paid.'**

**Speaker A:** "Rára o, mi ò tì ní owo yẹn báyi"

**'No, I don't have it yet.'**

**Speaker B:** "Kílódé? Ó yẹ kí ọ̀kọ̀ rẹ̀ ti fí ráńsẹ̀, sèbí òun ni ó ń rán ọ̀ wá sí school?"

**'Haha, your husband must have sent it. Sebi he is the one sponsoring you?'**

**Speaker A:** “Ọkọ mi kẹ, hmm. Ọrò ọjọ miiran niyen. Ọkọ mi báwo? Jẹ kí n sọ pé kò fi ọwọ sí ilé iwé yí Èmi fúnra mi ni mo ní tiraka láti san owó ilé iwé mi. Kí í kúkú ẹ pé kò ní owó gidí lówọ kò kàn fẹ láti ràn mí lówọ ni. Ó n ẹ̀ròyẹ pé oun á san owó school àwọn ọmọ, fi owó ounjẹ sílẹ̀, san owó ilé àti àwọn nnkan yoókù kí oun tún máa san owó school tẹmi”

**‘My husband, hmmm, he’s a story for another day o, husband for where? Let’s just say he is not interested in this; I struggle to pay my fees myself. It’s not that he doesn’t earn good money, he just won’t help me with it. He complains about having to pay the children’s school fees, give money for our feeding, pay the house rent and all and so he can’t be doing all that as well as paying my own school fees**

**Speaker B:** “Ọkúnrin àti wahàlà wọn. Ọrò rẹ yé mi.”

**‘Men and their wahala, I understand your plight sha.’**

**Speaker A:** Lóòtò

‘Really?’

**Speaker B:** “Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni. Ó yé mi. èmi náà tí ni irú irírí bẹ̀ẹ̀ nígbà kan rí tẹmi tí ẹ̀ tún bani nínú

jẹ gidí, ọkọ mi kò fẹ́ kí n tẹ̀sìwájú lénú ẹ̀kọ́ níwòn bí ó ti jẹ pé iwé ẹ̀rì girámà ló fi darapò mó ọmọ Olóógún, tí kò sì ní ànfààní láti tẹ̀sìwájú; mo bẹ̀bẹ̀ fún iránlówọ̀ sùgbón ó kò jálẹ̀. Kò san owó ilé iwé mi, ó sì rí i dájú pé ẹ̀nikẹ̀ni kò ràn mí lówọ̀, mo padà jámi lóri rẹ̀ ni. Lẹ̀yìn ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ ẹ̀bẹ̀, ó gbà, mo sì padà sí ilé iwé, sùgbón lẹ̀yìn ẹ̀yí ni ó saláisi nínú ijàmbá ọ̀kọ̀ ọ̀fufú, mo bá tún pa iwé tí kí n ráyè sí ẹ̀ láti tọ̀jú àwọn ọmọ mi”

**‘Of course, I do, I was in the same shoes sometimes back but mine was so pathetic, my husband didn’t want me get another degree since he joined the army with his secondary school certificate and didn’t have the chance to further his education, I started on my own but when I couldn’t continue, I had to ask him for help and he refused. He would not pay my fees and he made sure no family member did. I had to drop out. After so many pleas, he later agreed and I started again but few months after, he died in a plane crash so I had to drop out again to work to be able to take care of my children.’**

**Speaker A:** “Ìyẹn ni pé ẹ̀ kí í ẹ̀ se akẹ̀kọ̀ ní ọ̀gbà yí?”

**‘So, you’re not a student here?’**

**Speaker B:** “Rára o, mì í ẹ̀ se student níbí, mo kàn wá nítorí ọ̀rẹ̀ mi ni.

**‘No, I’m not, I came here because she’s my friend.’**

**Speaker A:** “Hnmmm, ó dáa, ẹ̀ pẹ̀lẹ̀ tí ọ̀kọ̀ yín”

**‘Hnmmm, interesting. I’m so sorry about your loss.’**

**Speaker B:** “È ẹ̀ se ó. Àjẹ̀jẹ̀ ni ayé”

**‘Thanks. Life is strange.’**

**Topics/Issues: Gender equity, equality, inequality, Education, finances, relationship in marriage, unemployment.**

Speaker	Domestic situation	Social status	Desires	Other Issues
A	Dependent on spouse, Displeasure in marriage, Financial challenges	Dis-empowered B.A. Degree holder, Married, Mother, Christian	Empowerment Happy marriage	Spouse dominance
B	Civil servant, domestic issues, financial challenges, similar to that of Speaker A	B.A. Degree holder, Drop-out Postgraduate student, Widow, Mother, Teacher Christian, experiencing same predicament as husband before his death	To further education, better financial status, To be depend on/ support from spouse	Desire for equality by spouse before demise

### III. Discussion and Analysis

Data 1 reveals both speakers have had their share of neglect by their respective spouses. They both feel the man should be responsible for more, if not all expenses in the family inclusive of their personal expenses in the form of school fees even when they may have other means of raising money. Speaker B's dreams were completely dashed by the demise of her husband because all the family responsibility shifted to her. If they both understood the objectives of gender equity/equality, then the pain associated with denial on the part of the man would not exist, especially as speaker B now finds herself in the same situation as her husband was before he died. There is inequality i.e., imbalance and unfairness in both marriages. The situation of both speakers and their respective spouses present much imbalance as well as unfairness and inequality.

#### Data 2

**Speaker 1:** "Ó dára kí a máa gbòrán sí ọkọ wa lẹnu ò, tí ó bá sọ pé kí o má síṣẹ, ó gbòdò ní iṣẹ tí ó dára lówó, ó sì ní idí tí ó fi sọ bẹe

**'It is good to be obedient to one's husband o, so if he says you should not work then he must have very good income or reason why he has said so.'**

"Kò dè dára kí ènìyàn máa gbáralé ọkọ rẹ jù. Kò dára kí èyàn fi gbogbo ara gbáralé ọkọ rẹ"

**Speaker 2:** "Ko de da ki eyan maa depend ju lori oko e"

**"it's not good to completely depend on one's Husband."**

**Topics/issues: Gender equity, equality and inequality, finances, relationship in marriage.**

Speaker	Domestic situation	Social status	Desires	Other Issues
1	Dependent on spouse, Total subservience, financially alright	Hairdresser, Married, Mother, Moslem	Total obedience to spouse, happy marriage	Spouse dominance
2	Empowered	Seamstress, Married, Mother, Christian.	Gender equity and equality	

#### Data 3

**Speaker X:** "È jòwó, ẹ bá mi tún ẹrọ yíi ṣe, ó ti gbóná jù."

**'Please adjust this dryer for me, it's too hot.'**

**Speaker Y:** "Ó dára, mo n bọ... aago yín n dún"

**'Okay, I'm coming...your phone is ringing.'**

**Speaker X:** "Ta ló tún n pè mí, ẹ jòwó, ẹ fi sílẹ ẹ jẹ kí fòonù mi gbaná sára dáadáa."

**'Who is calling me again, please leave it and let my phone charge.'**

**Speaker Y:** "Ìpè láti orílẹ̀-èdè miiran ni, ó ti dáké"

**'It's an international number, it has stopped ringing.'**

**Speaker X:** "Ah. Ọkọ mi ló gbòdò jẹ, yòò pè padà"

**'Oh, that must be my husband, he'll call back.'**

**Speaker Y:** "Ọkọ yín tí rẹlú Òyìnbo ni?"

**'Your husband travelled out?'**

**Speaker X:** "Ó dà bẹẹ, Òkè Òkun ló n gbé."

**'Sort of, he lives abroad.'**

**Speaker Y:** "Lóótó! Ọgbón wo lẹ n dá sí i?"

**‘Oh really! So how do you cope?’**

**Speaker X:** “Dá sí kí ni?”

**‘Cope with what?’**

**Speaker Y:** “Pé wọn ò sí lárówó to nàà ni, nítorí mi ò rò pé ara mi gba kí ọkọ mi máa gbé ní òkè òkun”

**That he is not around now, because I don’t think I can cope with my husband living abroad.’**

**Speaker X:** “Nnkan tí kálùkú n fẹ yàtò, èmi ò fẹ sisé, nítorí nàà, ó dára bí òun bá wà ní ilú Òyínbó tó n fí owó ránṣẹ sí èmi, èmi nàà a máa lọ bèè wò léékòòkan, mo mò pé iwọ fẹràn iṣé idí niyí tí iwọ

fí n se irun tí èmi sì n sanwó rẹ.”

**‘My sister we want different things, I don’t want to work so it’s okay by me if he’s abroad**

**and he sends me money for my upkeep fine, after all I travel to see him sometimes, I guess you want to work and that explains why you’re here making my hair and I’m here paying you.’**

**Topics/issues: Gender equity, equality, inequality, Education, finances, relationship in marriage, Unemployment, acculturation**

Speaker	Domestic situation	Social status	Desires	Other Issues
X	Total dependent on spouse, happy marriage, but infidelity?	M.A. Degree holder, Married, Nominal Christian	Freedom, individuality, Carefree marriage relationship, accepts inequality	Lack of virtue, Influence of acculturation
Y	Financially empowered,	OND holder, Mother, Hairdresser, Christian	Closely knit family, gender equality and equity	Religious influence Virtuous, acculturation

#### IV. Discussion and Analysis

The conversation between the respective speakers reflects their thoughts and worldview. Speaker 1 approves of total obedience to and dependence on the man. Speaker 2 is undecided, but realizes the dangers involved in total dependence on the man. In other words, she expects some level of independence. She recognizes the need for gender equity though not completely so since she still believes a woman should be dependent on the man to some extent. Speaker X does not mind being dependent on the man while speaker Y finds it unacceptable to live alone and bear other costs. Also, there is inequality as there is no parity or balance in speaker X’s relationship. She recognizes this and is satisfied with the situation. Speaker Y recognizes the imbalance and is displeased by it.

#### Data 4

**Speaker I:** “Àwọn ọmọ isin yi kò ní ibòwòfún; ẹ wò ọmọ kùnrin yẹn, àbúrò ọkọ mi ni o, òun tilẹ̀ ni àbíkẹ̀yìn ilé wọn, ó sì n lá orúkọ mọ mi lóri enígberaga.”

**‘Children of these days are just too disrespectful; you can imagine that boy, he is my husband’s brother o and in fact the last born of their house, calling me by my name, no respect.’**

**Speaker J:** “Bí ó ti wa ní ibi gbogbo niyẹn ọre, gbogbo àwọn ọmọdẹ wònyí, tiẹ̀ tilẹ̀ tún mọ níwòn, tẹ̀mí burú diẹ̀, àwọn àbúrò ọkọ mi ọkùnrin, orúkọ ní àwọn mètẹ̀tẹ̀tẹ̀ máa n lá mọ mi lóri, èyí tó burú jù ni pé tí wọn bá wá sí ilé mi tí mo fún wọn ní ounjẹ tán, wọn á máa retí kí n fọ abọ́ tí wọn fi jeun.”

**‘My dear it’s like that everywhere o, all these small children, your own case is even better, mine is worse, my husband’s younger brothers, all three of them call me by my name, the worst case is that when they come to my house and I feed them, they expect me to clean the plates they used.’**

**Speaker I:** “Ìyẹn nàà dára; mi ò lè gba iyẹn, kò ẹ́ ẹ́ ẹ́, wọn rò pé ọmọdẹ̀ ni iwọ nàà ni, tí ó fí nira fún wọn láti bọ̀wò fún ọ.”

**‘That is interesting; I cannot take that. It’s possible they think you’re young too and find it hard to respect you.’**



**Speaker J:** “Àgbọn tó máa n dùn mí jù niyẹn, ẹgbẹ ni ẹmi àti ọkọ mi, mi ò wọ idí tí wọn kò fi lẹ bọwọ fún mi bí wọn ti n ẹ fún ẹgbọn wọn.”

**‘That’s the most painful part, my husband and I are age mates so I don’t see why they can respect their brother and disrespect me.’**

**Speaker I:** Ọrẹ mi, mo bá ẹ kédùn o. mo mọ ohun tí o n là kojá

**‘My sister, I share in your pain o, I understand your plight.’**

**Speaker J:** Bẹẹ ni, ẹyin náà mọ ọn lára.

**‘Of course, you share in my pain.’**

**Topics/issues: Gender equity, Education, relationship in marriage.**

Speaker	Domestic situation	Social status	Desires	Other Issues
I	Displeasure in marriage,	Lecturer Ph.D. holder, Married, Mother, Christian	Equity, Happy marriage	Spouse insensitivity to lack of equity
J	Displeasure in marriage,	Civil servant- Teacher B.A. Degree holder, Mother, Christian,	Equity, Happy marriage	Spouse insensitivity to lack of equity

## V. Discussion and Analysis

Both women though educated and enlightened are influenced by Yoruba cultural background. They expect some level of respect from in-laws, especially as they are younger than their respective husbands. They are not affected by acculturation to accept the situation where the addressee and the addressed are called by their first names. Regardless of the patriarchal society in which they exist, such behavior is unacceptable to them. The degree of acculturation is not adequate to erase the Yoruba culture which stipulates that junior ones are expected to accord their seniors, respect. The caveat overlooked here is that wives are also expected to respect their in-laws even if one day old, in the Yoruba tradition, especially in the case of speaker J who is of the same age with her spouse. The situation reflects the African posture of seniority which is not based on gender.

According to Maria Rojas (1994: 1) “women held ... complementary ... position to men in indigenous pre-colonial Nigerian society, which based power on seniority rather than gender”. The women in this discourse, thus desire the tradition African Yoruba cultural values of respect for the elder. There is inequality in the homes as both women frown at the being slighted. They are spited by the behaviors of their respective junior in-laws. This is a reflection of acculturation with Western civilization. Regardless of their acculturation, they still accept headship and leadership of their spouses. They thus embody cultural norms of different societies.

### Data 5

Obinrin kan gbà láti gba işe alábojúto lábé idarí ọkọ rẹ. Gégé bí oníroyìn, ọkọ obinrin yi ki í sába gbélé, ẹyi ni ó sì sọ obinrin yi di alábojúto ilé àti àwọn ohun iní rẹ. Bí ó tilẹ jẹ pé kò nífẹẹ sí ipò alábojúto yi. Ó máa n rí ara rẹ bí eni tí kò lálúyọ gégé bí obinrin. Ó máa n rí ara rẹ bí eni tí ó wà ní igbékùn, níwọn bí ọkọ rẹ kò ti gbà á láyẹ láti ẹ işe inú rẹ gégé bí Olúkòni. Tí a bá fi ojú bí ó ti ye kí ó jẹ wòó, a lẹ ka titomokunrin atomobinrin tó fi mọ omọ-omọ tí wọn tí lámilaaka, tí wọn sì ti di ọgbòntarigi, akòşemọşé sí aşeyorí nlá fún eni tí kò kàwé tabí ní irírí ikòşemọşé kankan. Àlúyọ nlá ní aşeyorí rẹ nínú ojúşe alábojúto ò bá ti jẹ nigbà tí a bá n sọ nipa ojúşe obinrin láisi ọkọ rẹ níwọn bí iyen ti tètè kú. Şùgbón nínú èrò tirẹ, orisun igbé-ayé ibanújé àti àbámọ ni ikú ọkọ rẹ jẹ fún un. Níwọn bí kò ti ni ànfàání láti di akòşemọşé olúkòni, ó rò pé òun kò lálúyọ.

**A woman had to pick up the job manager on her husband’s instruction. Her husband was always away from home being a journalist and so she became manager of his home and landed properties. She was however not interested in the managerial position. She did not feel accomplished or fulfilled as a woman as she felt imprisoned, not allowed to do what she loved – teaching. By any standards, raising male and female children and grandchildren who became successful professionals would be considered great achievement for an uneducated person without any professional experience. Her success in the managerial work may have been significant achievement in terms of ‘women’s work’ especially without her husband because he died early. But from her perspective her husband’s death was for her a source of lifetime of sadness and regret. Also, she never became a trained teacher so she felt unaccomplished.**

**Topics/issues: Gender equity, equality, Education, relationship in marriage**

	Domestic situation	Social status	Desires	Other Issues
Woman	Displeasure in marriage	Uneducated Housewife, Married, Mother, Christian, Husband's Estate Manager, financially empowered	Be a teacher and career woman  Personal fulfilment and Happiness	Desire for equity and equality before demise of spouse. Wealthy but sad and unfulfilled. Full of regrets

**VI. Discussion and Analysis**

The woman single handedly more or less raised her children who turned out to be professionals. She had to manage her husband's Estate at his request. She had to travel much. She was not happy with the managerial work as she desired equity and equality. She did not feel accomplished or fulfilled as a woman as she could not pursue her personal desires, even though raising professionals is considered significant achievement in terms of 'women's work' especially without her husband because he died early. But from her perspective her husband's death was for her, a thing of lifetime sadness and regret. Also, she never became a trained teacher and so felt unaccomplished. Her condition presents a situation of inequality.

**VII. Findings**

Initiatives to promote gender equality, a yardstick for institutional advancement and key to solving problems are gradually being introduced in Nigeria, particularly as a prerequisite for sustainable development. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Abuja came up with a National Gender Policy Strategic framework for Nigeria in 2006, inclusive of the implementation plan. Regardless, as at March 2022, Pro-equality bills by the National Assembly are still being rejected as documented by Adetayo in Aljazeera ([Nigerian women protest parliament rejection of pro-equality bills | Muhammadu Buhari News | Al Jazeera.](#)) The situation has not changed even a year after.

Gender policy initiatives in Nigeria, at the national level are through the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2006), in order to build a non- discriminatory society, help all social groups reach their full potentials, regardless of sex or circumstance, entrench fundamental human rights amongst a host of others. At corporate levels, gender equality documents are designed to entrench same values in the respective organization or institutions. For instance, there is the University of Ibadan Gender Mainstreaming Office and draft document, Ekiti State University (EKSU) has its Strategic Gender Mainstreaming plan, and the corporate sector in Nigeria has initiatives in place. Gender mainstreaming in Nigeria also aims at reexamining the highly patriarchal situation where men dominate all spheres of women's lives.

The ethnolinguistic analysis of the *women-talk* in selected hairdressing salons reveals a disconnect between the talks and their quest for equity especially within the home domain. It was observed that females expected to subscribe to the idea of gender equity often do not wish to embrace its attendant challenges and therefore reject its aims. There is dissonance, as their quest and conversation negate desire to be empowered through the policies in place. Women who should benefit from gender policies canvassing parity, are the also frustrating the efforts as a result of inadequate commitment and understanding of the gender equity and equality policies. The conversations examined here largely reflect desire for independence, employment, care, respect and dependence on the man in some cases.

Thus, walking the talk, in the sense of promoting gender equality initiatives has been very slow in Nigeria. Gender disparity is observed in many homes as women are considered subordinate at both the community and household levels and male children favored over the female. Some women would rather have their male colleagues assigned more (and) challenging duties or overtime working hours. In fact, some women are sad when their spouses are unemployed not for the sake of equality but for their desire that he should be responsible for all expenses in the house. They do not appreciate the concepts of equity and equality. There is a disconnect between the desires of women and gender policy on leadership roles and financial responsibilities, particularly withing the home domain, thus creating much inequalities in the society.

Religion and cultural norms are also taking toll on the implementation and success of gender equality policies in Nigeria. The dictates of the Holy Books in Nigeria reign dominant in the mindset and worldview of most women and even men. Culturally, Nigeria is a patriarchal society coupled with religious dictates that the man is the head of the home and the women are to be submissive to their husbands and as such, quite many women and men too, agree with these religious dictates cum cultural norms. They concede greater authority and privileges to men than women. The men are expected to occupy leadership positions and should provide for the family, and even handle all the capital projects of the family. Others take it for granted that the chauffeur role is essentially that of the man on all outings. Synchronizing these precepts, beliefs and gender equality creates much confusion and complexities withing the society, making implementation of gender policies very difficult and social development hindered. As

noted earlier, Trading Economics (2020) data on Gender Equality development in Nigeria's is at less than one percent. Also, women parity bills still being dismissed so indicative of marginalization women are still much. Women still suffer injustices largely on account of cultural and religious norms, illiteracy, and poverty levels. In view of differences in acculturation by the polity, women and men inclusive, there is great need for customization of gender equality policies to accommodate the peculiarities of different societies and cultures.

Davidson (2006) in his article on 'Enhancing Women Empowerment through Information and Communication Technologies', and discussing Conceptual Background on status of gender equality and situation of women in Nigeria, noted that Nigeria falls short of the desired result based on Patriarchy, Livelihoods, Gender Roles and Division of Labour, Constitutional Rights, Economy:

On Patriarchy, he noted that

Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of women's lives (Aina, 1998). Women are in a subordinate position (particularly at the community and household levels), and male children are preferred over the female (World Bank, 2005:6). ... the social relations and activities of Nigerian women and men are governed by patriarchal systems of socialization and cultural practices which favour the interests of men above those of women.... .... men employed within the informal sector are located in the upper levels and are predominantly engaged in higher income-generating activities. (Gender Situation Assessment and Analysis (GSAA, 2006, p. 41)

On Livelihoods and Economy, he provided proof of sharp contrast between income and livelihood opportunities between women and men in Nigeria. For instance, the fact that of the 70% of the population estimated to be living below poverty line, over 65% are projected to be women; the fact that only 11% women compared with 30% men are in the industrial sector; that women constitute 87% of service sector characterized by intense labour; that 76% of civil servants are men while 24% are women and that only 14% of women manage to secure management level work positions is adequate proof that gender inequalities abound in the overall society. (Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Nig., GSAA 2006). (p. 41)

He notes also writing on Gender Roles and Division of Labour that

Gender-based norms ... ascribe women ... responsibility of ... tasks related to household management (i.e., domestic tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly, etc.), which does not diminish when women engage in paid employment. This dual burden prevents women from pursuing their careers as well as attaining management and decision-making positions at the same pace and rate as their male colleagues in virtually all sectors and spheres. (GSAA, 2006, p. 41)

Davison highlighted that fact that Nigeria, though commitment to the principle of non-discrimination and constitutional rights as indicated in the 1999 Constitution, she 'falls short of the desired result of giving males and females equal opportunities to advance socially, physically, educationally, politically and economically.' There exist more than enough evidences that gender relation in the negative remain pervasive in Nigeria. There is gender-based division of labour, there is disparity between males and females access to leadership positions and resources and there are gender biases in rights and entitlements. (NCAA, 2006).

## VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations

Change or progress is marked by the degree of impact in the desired direction and positive notches in the level of development. The postures and perspectives of and on the African woman vary in terms of gender equity. Although initiatives to achieve gender equity/equality and empower women (captured in Goal 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)), eradicate poverty, and violence against women and girls and thereby change the plight of the 21st century woman, are already underway, female liberation needs to be clearly defined within the African context in view of the peculiarities. Conflict often arises as regarding the desires of women. Views identified in the analyses reveal that the intended societal impact of gender equity is yet to be achieved. As noted earlier societal change /progress is marked or determined by the degree of desired impact on development. Therefore, documentation of discourses amongst women for remarkable changes in their attitudes, perspectives and commitment towards gender equity in the society requires more attention.

In ensuring social transformation through the National Gender Policy designed, women should be co-opted for sustainability. Since salons are located in almost every nook and cranny of the society including the educational institutions, markets and residential domains, they would readily serve as viable gender mainstreaming public spaces for advocacy and policy implementation. With some training, salon owners can serve as instructors for women empowerment. The salons would thus serve as spaces for female enlightenment on the sociology and politics of the hair towards eradication of inequalities and advocacy for equity. Mejiuni (2013, p.186) asserts that

Socialization, informal learning and hidden power (exerted through cultural institutions and emotional relationships) matter. Feminist educators and other scholars/activists in Nigeria need to pay more attention to how cultural instruments and institutions, and other educative influences and agencies, impact the lives of women.

Special programmes and talks on power dynamics in relations to the sexes not just in the domestic sphere but the community at large, may be organized in such free spaces to enhance the confidence of the women, have their intellect aroused and further develop their capacity to make choices already displayed in their independent choices of different hair styles. Their choices are reflections of their minds, the desire to be attractive and confident in themselves. Their respective state of mind is strengthened by feelings of looking good based on the beautified hair. This enhances carriage, charisma and in effect ability to interact with and convince others better, be it their spouses or themselves inclusive. The condition of the hair can actually influence changes in attitude or behavior. Yoruba women have acculturated foreign cultures by coming up with ingenious hair styles, reflecting a mesh of both foreign and traditional styles. Overcoming discrimination and stigmas associated with natural black hair coupled with the innovations that have surfaced through acculturation gives hope that Yoruba women can readily join social movements against inequality. As noted earlier, salons could serve as centres for collecting and collating gender disaggregated data to assess progress on the implementation of the National Gender Policy.

Woman power is crucial to national development. It has much to contribute to policy-making as women interact more often with children, who are regarded as the future of any nation. They can thus impact the society greatly. Their protest or constructive criticism readily galvanize nations forward. This work is limited to Yoruba women in one Local Government Area of Ibadan: Ibadan North. The scope of study can be extended to other Local Government Areas within Ibadan such as Ibadan South West, Ibadan South East, Ibadan North West, Ibadan North East to obtain broader views of Yoruba women in Ibadan.

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