

Gender Inequality in Property Inheritance: Cultural Norms, Legal Frameworks, and Women's Rights in Ibadan, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to investigate gender differences in property inheritance customs in Ibadan, Nigeria. Inheritance customs, the impact of cultural norms, and the effectiveness of legal frameworks protecting women's rights are evaluated from the perspectives of men and women. Thirty people were interviewed for qualitative insights, and 195 people in all took part in the quantitative study. The findings show a significant belief that men are more likely than women to inherit property, illuminating long-standing gender biases. The majority of participants stated that many women reported obtaining little to no inheritance in comparison to their male relatives, and that family customs favor male heirs. There is also a clear gap between the law and reality, as evidenced by qualitative responses in which many women express concerns about social repercussions when asserting their rights and by ongoing doubt over the application of legal provisions even when they are widely known. The importance of education in empowering women to manage inheritance processes is emphasized in the paper. In order to advance gender equity and empower women in their communities, this study draws attention to the intricate problems associated with gender inequality in property inheritance and promotes all-encompassing strategies, including public awareness campaigns, legislative changes, and educational initiatives. In order to create a more equal environment for property ownership and inheritance rights, stakeholders may find it helpful to address these interrelated issues.

Keywords: gender biases, inheritance practices, public awareness campaigns, legal reforms, educational initiatives, empowerment, social development, women's rights, cultural norms.

INTRODUCTION

In many countries, property inheritance remains a contentious issue, particularly when it comes to gender inequality. In many cultural contexts, where women often face structural barriers that prevent them from inheriting property from family members, this inequality is particularly evident. Assessing gender disparity in property inheritance is essential to understanding the broader impacts of these disparities on women's social status and economic empowerment. For instance, customary laws in Nigeria have a significant influence on inheritance practices, frequently favoring male heirs and marginalizing women's rights to inherit property (Nwakoby & Ilodigwe, 2022).

The intricate relationships between statutory regulations and deeply ingrained cultural practices are seen in Nigeria's inheritance laws. Although equal rights to inherit property are guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution, these legal protections are regularly compromised by customary practices. Due to prevalent practices that generally grant property rights to male heirs, women who are married under Islamic or customary law frequently find themselves at a disadvantage and have limited options for reclaiming their due portion (International Association of Women Judges [IAWJ], 2023). This problem is even worse in areas where customs control inheritance patterns, which frequently prevents women from inheriting property and other resources that are essential to their financial security and self-reliance (World Bank, 2020).

Nigeria is not the only country in the world where gender inequality in property rights exists. Similar trends can be seen in many nations where women's inheritance rights are restricted by discriminatory legislation and cultural

customs. According to reports, women's property rights are restricted in around 40% of nations, and daughters frequently receive much less than their male counterparts (World Bank, 2020). These injustices reinforce gender-based differences in power and influence within communities by limiting women's ability to fully engage in economic activities and sustaining cycles of poverty (Barker, 2023).

The socio-economic consequences of gender inequality in inheritance are significant. Since control over property is inextricably linked to economic power, denying women inheritance rights also deprives them of opportunities for financial security and independence. Discriminatory inheritance rules in Nigeria have started to be challenged by recent court developments. The Supreme Court's landmark decisions have upheld women's rights to inherit from their departed parents and ruled that customs that exclude women are unlawful (IAWJ, 2023). But in spite of these developments, cultural perceptions of female inheritance are still very strong, requiring ongoing reform and activism to guarantee fair treatment.

Assessing how men and women inherit property differently provides important information about the larger obstacles women face in trying to exercise their rights in patriarchal cultures. A multifaceted strategy that incorporates both legal reforms and cultural change is needed to address these disparities, advance gender equality, and support women's economic empowerment. One crucial human rights problem that requires immediate attention from legislators and the public is the continuous fight for fair inheritance rights. This research, "Assessment of Gender Inequality on Property Inherited from Family at Ibadan," looks at how men and women inherit property differently in the specific location of Ibadan. In addition to adding to the larger conversation on gender inequality in patriarchal societies, this study is especially important because it clarifies the structural obstacles that women encounter when attempting to exercise their inheritance rights.

Objectives of the Study

1. To Quantify Gender Disparities in Property Inheritance
2. To investigate the sociocultural elements influencing inheritance customs
3. To evaluate how legal frameworks affect women's inheritance rights.

Research Questions

1. What are the quantitative differences in property inheritance between male and female heirs in Ibadan, Nigeria?
2. How do sociocultural beliefs and practices influence inheritance customs and the distribution of property among genders in the community?
3. In what ways do existing legal frameworks impact women's ability to assert their rights to inherit property in Ibadan, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bhalotra *et al.* (2019) examine the effects of property rights securitization following land reform in West Bengal, India. Their study reveals significant intra-household gender-differentiated effects, particularly regarding child survival rates. The authors find that higher implementation of tenancy registration programs increased male child survival rates in families without a firstborn son, reflecting intensified son preference linked to land rights. This phenomenon underscores how property rights can reinforce existing gender biases, leading to adverse outcomes for female children (Bhalotra *et al.*, 2019). According to the research, protecting property rights is crucial for economic empowerment, but if it isn't coupled with more extensive social reforms, it may potentially make gender inequality worse.

The World Bank (2020) offers a thorough analysis of gender and property rights in Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the glaring disparities that women encounter when it comes to controlling and owning land and other productive assets. According to the survey, women are much less likely than males to own land or have

proof of ownership, which restricts their access to economic possibilities and prolongs poverty. The authors contend that as women's property rights are associated with higher household wealth and better child welfare, closing these discrepancies is essential to enhancing development outcomes (World Bank, 2020). This body of research supports the idea that expanding women's access to real estate is both an equitable issue and a calculated move to promote economic expansion.

In addition, the Global Land Tool Network (2020) provides a strategic framework for protecting women's property rights and land tenure in a variety of settings. Gender-responsive land governance and legislative frameworks that empower women and girls are key components of the strategy. In order to eliminate systemic hurdles to women's land ownership, the framework promotes inclusive measures that involve both men and women in attaining these rights (Global Land Tool Network, 2020). In order to achieve gender equality in property rights, this viewpoint emphasizes the significance of participatory strategies.

The complexity of gender inequality in property rights is shown by recent research. Securing these rights is crucial for women's economic advancement and empowerment, but in order to overcome ingrained prejudices, it must be combined with more significant social reforms.

By addressing three crucial goals—measuring gender-based disparities in property inheritance, examining the sociocultural factors influencing inheritance customs, and assessing how legal frameworks impact women's inheritance rights—this current study fills a gap in the body of knowledge on gender inequality in property inheritance.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of the research are feminist theory, initially put forth by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949 and then expanded upon by scholars like Judith Butler in 1990, and social justice theory, which was developed by John Rawls in 1971. These theories provide a solid foundation for investigating the systemic barriers that perpetuate the gender gap in property inheritance.

Feminist theory examines how patriarchal structures create and preserve gender disparity, particularly in relation to access to resources such as real estate. During the early feminist movements, feminist theory began with the work of thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir, whose seminal book *The Second Sex* (1949) argues that women's subordination is closely tied to cultural norms that promote male superiority. Recent research emphasizes the need of having a nuanced understanding of gender interactions, and it continues to build upon these foundations. Agarwal (2021), for example, notes that despite advancements in inheritance laws, patriarchal customs that prioritize male heirs still pose serious barriers to women's property ownership.

The primary objective of social justice theory, as most famously articulated by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* (1971), is the equitable distribution of opportunities and resources within society. Rawls advocates for justice principles that ensure everyone has access to basic liberties, such as the right to own property. Understanding this concept is necessary to understand how legal frameworks can either aggravate or alleviate gender disparities in property inheritance. Recent studies have shown that countries with more gender-equitable legal systems have higher rates of female property ownership (Swaminathan *et al.*, 2021). This implies that social justice outcomes can be significantly impacted by legislative improvements.

The integration of social justice theory and feminist theory in this study offers a thorough framework for examining gender disparities in property inheritance. Social Justice Theory highlights the relevance of just legal systems in guaranteeing equal resource distribution, whereas Feminist Theory concentrates on destroying patriarchal structures and cultural practices that disadvantage women. Collectively, these theories demonstrate how economic possibilities, legal frameworks, and cultural norms interact to shape women's inheritance rights.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques, to assess gender differences in property inheritance. A survey given to 200 Ibadan residents makes up the

quantitative component, and in-depth interviews with 30 chosen participants make up the qualitative component. This combination makes it easier to fully comprehend the attitudes, trends, and underlying factors influencing property inheritance customs.

Purposive sampling is used to specifically select participants based on predetermined standards pertinent to the goals of the study. People who live in Ibadan and are familiar with the traditions around property inheritance are among the target group. Both urban and semi-urban regions—more especially, Ibadan North LGA, Ibadan North-East LGA, Ibadan South-West LGA, Egbeda LGA, Lagelu LGA, and Ona-Ara LGA—are represented among the respondents.

Quantitative data was collected using a standardized questionnaire. This decision was supported by the fact that it would guarantee participant replies were consistent, allowing for the collection of comparative data. Effective data analysis employing descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, to properly summarize findings is also made possible by the standardized format. To capture different levels of agreement or disagreement with the claims, the questionnaire included four response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The social and legal factors influencing inheritance practices were investigated through theme analysis of qualitative data from interviews. Throughout the whole research procedure, ethical considerations were given top priority, including obtaining participants' informed consent and protecting the privacy of their answers.

Triangulation was used to improve the findings' validity and reliability by combining information from both quantitative and qualitative sources. Recognizing the impact of the researcher's background on data interpretation, the research positionality was addressed. In order to guarantee precise organization and analysis of the information gathered, a methodical approach to data management was also put into place. A strong framework for comprehending gender disparity in Ibadan property inheritance is offered by this thorough methodology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study assesses gender disparity in property inheritance, with particular attention to the respondents' demographics, attitudes on inheritance traditions, and the impact of legal frameworks. A thorough understanding of the problems at hand can be obtained from the data gathered from 30 qualitative interview participants and 195 quantitative survey respondents.

Results

Distribution of Respondents

As shown in Table 1 (Appendix A), the quantitative survey respondents comprised an equal distribution of males (100) and females (95), with a majority falling within the age group of 31-45 years (68 respondents). The cultural background was predominantly Yoruba (120 respondents), reflecting the demographic makeup of Ibadan. In contrast, the qualitative interviews included an equal number of male and female participants (15 each), with a notable representation from the 46 years and above age group (15 respondents).

Table 4.2 To Measure Inequalities by Gender in Property Inheritance

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.
1	My family has left me some property.	55	50	43	47	2.58	1.14
2	Compared to women, men in my family are more likely to inherit property.	110	80	3	2	3.53	0.58
3	In my neighborhood, women make up a much smaller percentage of property inheritors than men.	110	45	22	18	3.27	0.99

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.
4	I think my family's inheritance customs give preference to male heirs over female descendants.	125	50	10	10	3.49	0.81
5	I am conscious of the laws pertaining to women's property rights.	70	60	30	35	2.85	1.10

Gender Inequality in Property Inheritance

Table 2 highlights key findings regarding perceptions of gender disparities in property inheritance. A significant majority (110 respondents) agreed that men in their families are more likely to inherit property compared to women, yielding a mean score of 3.53. This suggests a strong belief in entrenched gender biases favoring male heirs. Similarly, many respondents (125) felt that family customs preferentially support male heirs, with a mean score of 3.49.

Table 3: To investigate the sociocultural elements influencing inheritance customs

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.
1	In my society, men are expected to inherit property before women due to cultural beliefs.	125	45	13	12	3.45	0.87
2	In my family, women are discouraged from asserting their entitlement to inheritance.	95	80	9	11	3.33	0.81
3	Equal inheritance rights for men and women are supported by social norms in my community.	100	65	17	13	3.29	0.88
4	Male family members dominate conversations around inheritance.	105	75	10	5	3.44	0.71
5	Education, in my opinion, has the power to alter attitudes on women's property rights.	100	80	3	12	3.37	0.80

Sociocultural Influences on Inheritance Customs

Table 3 reveals that 125 respondents believe cultural norms dictate that men should inherit property before women, with a mean score of 3.45. Additionally, 95 respondents noted that women are often discouraged from asserting their inheritance rights. While 100 participants recognized support for equal rights, the findings highlight significant sociocultural barriers that perpetuate gender inequality in inheritance practices.

Table 4: To evaluate how legal frameworks affect women's inheritance rights.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.
1	I'm aware of Nigerian legislation that safeguard women's property rights.	75	75	23	23	3.05	0.99
2	Nigerian legal frameworks successfully provide men and women the same inheritance rights.	50	48	47	50	2.50	1.13
3	Despite current regulations, women have difficulty asserting their inheritance rights.	110	60	12	13	3.37	0.87
4	Inheritance rules have shaped my opinions on gender equality in real estate ownership.	70	65	35	25	2.92	1.02
5	Women who want to assert their inheritance rights have adequate legal backing.	65	50	45	35	2.74	1.10

Legal Frameworks and Women's Rights

Table 4 evaluates the impact of legal frameworks on women's inheritance rights. While awareness of laws protecting these rights was moderate (mean score of 3.05), many respondents expressed that existing legal protections are inadequately enforced. Additionally, a significant number (110) indicated that women struggle to assert their inheritance rights, highlighting critical gaps in legal support and enforcement.

Table 5: Interview Response on Assessment of Gender Inequality on Property Inherited from Family

S/N	Interview Questions	Key Themes/Responses
1	Could you share your own experiences regarding property inheritance within your family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The majority of women indicated they had little to no inheritance. - A number of women were allocated smaller shares in comparison to their male relatives.
2	In your view, how do cultural beliefs influence the decisions regarding property inheritance in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Societal expectations predominantly support the preference for male offspring. - Females are frequently regarded as transient members of their natal families following marriage.
3	Have you ever experienced a situation where gender impacted your or another person's capacity to inherit property? If yes, in what way?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The majority concurred that gender matters a lot. - Men are frequently given preference when it comes to inheritance issues.
4	What obstacles do you think stand in the way of women asserting their right to inherit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns about family conflict and society backlash. - Insufficient support from family and community leaders.
5	How well do you understand Nigerian women's legal rights in terms of property inheritance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness varied; younger individuals were better informed than older ones. - Many women were ignorant of certain legal protections.
6	Do you believe that women's rights to inherit property are sufficiently protected by current laws? Why not?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most participants thought that although laws are in place, they are not properly implemented. - A few people had doubts regarding the efficacy of legal safeguards.
7	Could you give some instances of how inheritance customs in your community have evolved—or remained the same—over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some observed that education was causing younger generations to gradually alter. - Others, especially in rural regions, said there had been no notable changes.
8	What adjustments do you think your community needs to make to better protect women's inheritance rights?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Campaigns for public awareness and legal education initiatives are necessary. - Promoting cultural changes that give equality in inheritance customs first priority.
9	What impact, in your opinion, can education have on attitudes regarding gender and inheritance rights?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is believed that education is essential to altering perceptions of women's rights. - Women who are aware and empowered are more inclined to assert their rights.

The results from the structured questionnaire were supported by the qualitative interviews shown in Table 5. According to the participants, when it comes to inheritance decisions, cultural beliefs primarily favor male kids. In contrast to their male relatives, many women reported receiving little to no inheritance, which is consistent with cultural norms that regard married women as transient members of their birth families. Social norms also prevent women from claiming their inheritance rights because they are afraid of family strife and lack the backing of community leaders. Despite the fact that education could change perceptions of women's rights, a significant awareness gap was revealed by the fact that many participants were unsure of their legal rights. All things considered, these results highlight the necessity of focused efforts to support equitable inheritance practices and empower women.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this research provide important insights into the dependent variable: the gender gap in inheritance practices for property. The statistical data shows that a large portion of respondents thinks that men are more likely to inherit property than women, with an average score of 3.53. This indicates deep rooted gender biases that prefer male heirs, reflecting wider societal norms that give priority to male lineage in matters of inheritance. These conclusions are in line with the work of Bhalotra *et al.* (2019), which illustrates that property rights can strengthen existing gender biases, especially when associated with cultural preferences for male heirs. Likewise, the World Bank (2020) points out how differences in property ownership continue poverty and restrict economic chances for women.

Qualitative interviews further support these conclusions, as several female participants noted that they receive little, or no inheritance compared to their male counterparts. The respondents explained that societal expectations dictate that men should inherit property before women, emphasizing the belief that women are often seen as temporary members of their birth families after marriage. This cultural viewpoint aligns with Agarwal's (2021) claim that patriarchal traditions still favor male heirs, even with progress in inheritance legislation. These practices not only reduce women's rights but also sustain economic inequalities between genders.

The research also looked into the understanding and enforcement of legal systems meant to protect women's inheritance rights. While there is some awareness of these laws (average score 3.05), numerous participants voiced doubts about their enforcement. This correlates with the Global Land Tool Network (2020), which stresses the necessity for land governance that considers gender and for inclusive actions to remove systemic barriers to women's land ownership. Regardless of legal protections, women still encounter difficulties in asserting their rights because of weak enforcement and societal pushback, resonating with findings from Swaminathan *et al.* (2021) that equitable legal frameworks greatly influence female property ownership statistics.

Moreover, the research emphasizes the vital role of education in changing views on gender roles in property ownership. Several respondents acknowledged that education could enable women to assert their rights more effectively, although obstacles persist due to a lack of knowledge about legal procedures. This backs the World Bank's (2020) assertion that enhancing women's access to property is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic action for economic growth and better household wellbeing.

Integrating feminist theory and social justice theory offers a strong lens for understanding these findings. Feminist theory points out how patriarchal systems maintain gender inequalities in inheritance practices, whereas social justice theory highlights the necessity of fair legal systems to tackle these disparities. Together, these theoretical frameworks illuminate the relationship between cultural norms, legal systems, and economic prospects in defining women's inheritance rights.

To sum up, this study adds to the existing body of research by addressing a gap in understanding gender inequality in property inheritance in Ibadan, Nigeria. It underscores the pressing need for comprehensive measures, such as public awareness campaigns, legislative changes, and educational programs, to break down systemic barriers and encourage fairness in property ownership and inheritance rights.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The gender disparity in property inheritance customs in Ibadan, Nigeria, has been thoroughly examined by this study. The research has shed light on the ongoing inequalities that women encounter when it comes to property inheritance by employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The results show that inheritance patterns are greatly influenced by cultural norms and societal expectations, which frequently favor male heirs over female offspring.

According to the data, a significant portion of respondents reflected deeply ingrained gender biases by believing that men are more likely than women to inherit property, and many women reported receiving little to no inheritance in comparison to their male relatives, highlighting the systemic barriers that prevent women from obtaining property rights. The qualitative insights also demonstrated the influence of cultural beliefs in determining these practices, with many participants expressing concerns about family conflict and social backlash when asserting their inheritance rights.

Furthermore, the study discovered that although there is some knowledge of the legal frameworks intended to safeguard women's property rights, these rules are frequently not sufficiently enforced. Participants voiced doubts about the efficacy of legislative safeguards, highlighting the need for more advocacy and knowledge of women's rights in inheritance of property.

To achieve gender equity in property inheritance, this study emphasizes the urgent need for changes in legislative frameworks as well as cultural attitudes. Resolving these problems is essential for promoting more social and economic growth in communities as well as for empowering women.

Recommendations

1. Launch community-based efforts to raise awareness among men and women on the value of gender equality in inheritance rights and to encourage dialogue that questions long-standing customs that favor male heirs.
2. To educate women about their rights, legal education programs should be established, and current laws pertaining to women's inheritance rights should be strengthened and effectively enforced.
3. Develop educational initiatives for youth to shift attitudes on women's roles in society and advance gender equality, emphasizing equal chances in inheritance and property ownership.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age Group, and Location

Category	Male (n)	Female (n)	Total (n)
Returned Quantitative Survey Respondents (195)			
Age Group			
18-30 years	25	22	47
31-45 years	35	33	68
46 years and above	40	40	80
Cultural Background			
Yoruba	60	60	120
Other ethnic groups	40	40	80
Returned Qualitative Interview Respondents (30)			
Age Group			
18-30 years	2	3	5
31-45 years	5	5	10
46 years and above	8	7	15
Location			
Urban Areas			
Ibadan North LGA	Survey	15	15

Category	Male (n)	Female (n)	Total (n)
	Interviews	3	3
Ibadan North-East LGA	Survey	10	10
	Interviews	2	2
Ibadan South-West LGA	Survey	15	15
	Interviews	3	3
Semi-Urban Areas			
Egbeda LGA	Survey	20	20
	Interviews	3	3
Lagelu LGA	Survey	20	20
	Interviews	2	2
Ona-Ara LGA	Survey	20	20
	Interviews	2	2