

Excursions into Gender & Sexuality

THIS IS A PLACEHOLDER. IF YOU WANT TO HAVE AN ACTUAL STATEMENT HERE, YOU HAVE
TO MAKE SOME CHOICES USING BOOK'S METADATA MODAL.

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Excursions into
Gender & Sexuality

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TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST
FUND

BOOK DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) is mandated to establish and nurture the Higher Education Book Development Project in Nigeria. Book scarcity has reached a crisis proportion in the country as evident not only in the quantity of books available but also in the quality of locally produced books. Given the seriousness of the paucity of reading and learning materials in Nigeria's higher educational institutions, the TETFUND Book Development Project is designed to reactivate and nurture research and the publication of academic books and journals in hard and e-forms in Nigerian higher educational institutions, thereby empowering tertiary institutions in Nigeria to benefit from and contribute to knowledge production and nationally and globally. Advancements in science and technology, especially ICT and the influence of globalization have profoundly transformed the context, and the scope of knowledge production that Nigerian higher educational institutions should be assisted to fully participate in and contribute to the global system of generating and disseminating knowledge. The uniqueness of the present intervention lies in the fact that through it, TETFund will assist Nigerian higher educational institutions to restore and sustain the capacity for academic publishing.

The promotion of indigenous authorship and the resuscitation of local publishing of books are critical instruments in addressing the dearth of textbooks, including basic tests and specialized textbooks in various disciplines in Nigeria's higher educational institutions. Restoring the culture of indigenous authorship and the production of indigenous books would ensure the availability of books that address local needs and reflect familiar realities and experiences.

The book production component is one of the three areas of intervention of the TETFund Book project. The others are the revitalization of academic publishing and the support of academic journals. This first phase of the book production intervention is directed at the production of peer-reviewed basic textbooks written by Nigerian academics for universities, polytechnics and colleges of education and specialized books in various subject areas as well as the publication of books of high-quality PhD theses from Nigerian Universities that have successfully gone through a rigorous assessment process. This would contribute to solving the problem of paucity of books in Nigeria's higher educational institutions.

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Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria.

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PREFACE

The present collection of chapters is an integral part of both gender and feminist studies that took inspiration from the “International Gender Conference (IGC 2012) on the Theme “Gender and Development: Issues and Challenges” at the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia 2012. No fewer than three contributors to this book were at the conference. Generally, gender and feminist studies writers have been products of the same moods and touch on similar questions and challenges of the female sex. There are differences between the two terms though. In gender, professional writers have concentrated on what the society has merely created and therefore, a misfit to be allowed to exist on the personage of the (fe)male sex. Both sexes have been wrongly assigned duties and responsibilities by their societies. Deliberate efforts, such as what the writers here have done, must be encouraged to achieve conscientisation so that all attempts that dissuade communities from realities of (fe)male life can be remedied.

In checking the realities of the (fe)male life, there is the need to recognise that the female has not only been sinned against, but she too has been a sinner and this represents a notable advancement in the process of self-examination. The female has truly been invaded, and it is continually being strafed with cultural missiles from society. Is it not for the female to invent cultural missiles, and anti-missiles too, as a measure of self-defence? It is “commitment” for gender feminists which is the unifying theme of the book, which we have entitled *Excursions into Gender and Sexuality*.

The concept of feminist studies, on the other hand, has been argued to harp on total freedom of the female sex from the clutches of the male sex that has usurped her space and time. Sex regeneration is always the casual discussion among gatherings of feminist purists in creatively advancing the same news in different stances from gender studies. The feminist class fights back to redeem its image often to antagonise the male class for the damages done to the female sex. Revenge syndrome is born here, and excessively so.

Three top scoring points for this book we might here explain: first, the chapters, in this collection, are particularly from Nigeria and Malaysia. There is also rich information on Tunisia, Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran. Many books are not usually fortunate to have the pull of resources from more than one country. Each chapter interrogates issues that are peculiar to its continent and negotiates ease of livelihood for the feminine gender. The relationship between the ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ sexes cannot be ignored, especially in Africa and Malaysia, where the gap has grown against the gory background of marginalisation and the blind acceptance of the pitiable position of the female sex. Gender and feminist discourses have discussed three sets of female sex: first, man-haters, second, those who feebly accept their downgraded lot, and third, those who mediate between the two extremes.

For over the last two decades, gender and feminist studies have developed against the same stunting, dwarfing background in every place and space of Nigeria and Malaysia. Feminist gender has been contending a rejection of the sense of an inferior class of the female and a strive for reputable recognition. It seeks to give the female a sense of self as

an effectual, rational, worthy, and impacting human being (Alkali, 2014; Chukwuma, 1994, ix). No area of the lives of man and woman is yet to be touched by the religious, political, social, expansionist and/or unrepentant needs of patriarchy: from that of the docile woman, driven by patriarchal enslavement to obey her man at all times without question. But these can be reconciled.

The second significance of this book lies in its stress on a new difference between the two terms (gender and feminism). They have always been problematic and mixed up. When asked specifically about feminism on why it has stagnated, the famous radical Trigiani, who is a feminist, responded that she was considering her next paper, *From Gender Vertigo to Gender Peace* (not 'From Feminist Vertigo to Feminist Peace'). In any case, this contradiction(?) doubly suggests reverse gear from excessive opposition to a peaceful approach, presupposing every need to read gender and feminism differently from rascality. The world must understand that feminism, particularly, is now *not* all about radicalism.

This book, therefore, de-emphasises gender and feminist studies as "chilly politeness" or "persistent antagonism" (to use Lennox's words) to achieve more results. As the "vigorous debate" rages on, Baym underscores the fact that even liberal feminism a perspective should see women as humans who, simply, should not be treated for second-class fiddle. Gender and feminism are not some hair-splitting logical exactness. The world must look for what causes disharmony between the sexes.

For centuries, the feminist world has known patriarchal torment that included being forcibly stripped, punched and kicked, shaved, violated, enduring second-class patronage, spat upon, hateful psychological defeat in barrenness sometimes with many twists shackling woman's integrity, watching womanhood being dragged to the mud, and something more, women have no choice but to believe that they have been under attack and have to necessarily reclaim their integrity, and rightly too. The sex is strained and has formed opposition. Sex war is declared in the postcolonial materials in fiction! In consequence, female writings and activities have unsurprisingly excessively lashed out at the male class.

Presently, the world has no problem admitting that patriarchy is the religion of the planet. The world too, has no problem accepting that finger-pointing from the female class is self-defence, especially against pornography of violence (i.e., rape). Thus, a new path for succeeding female writers, critics, and teachers has been provided so that female writers, critics, and teachers together, with their repetitions, modifications, and individual signatures will redefine the relationship between the sexes as espoused in the chapters of this book.

The chapters speak for themselves on a variety of related social issues, so there is no need for an elaborate introduction. The chapters on gender and feminism range in time over the last ten years and interestingly over the faces of Nigeria and Malaysia.

Gender and feminism have now achieved significant audiences in Nigeria and Malaysia, and even beyond. It is for this reason of myriad audiences that the chapters

included here are not arranged based on any scheme. It might be possible to arrange them under such subject headings as 'political comment', 'literary comment', or simply under such subject headings as 'understanding gender and feminism', 'gender and economy', 'gender and society'. But such ordering is arbitrary and not particularly helpful, since the remarks one chapter makes about, for example, 'literature' or 'gender' may not necessarily follow in another chapter's argument because there are country variations.

This country variation brings us to the third scoring point for this book. The symbiosis between Nigeria and Malaysia is made possible because of the intervention of a sponsoring agency in Nigeria, the then Education Tax Fund (ETF), now Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). Because of this, many Nigerians are studying abroad, especially in Malaysia. Two Nigerian contributors here (Ibrahim Abdullahi from Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State and Muhammad Alkali from Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State) owe their success to TETFund scholarship.

As academics, the two have always looked forward to any opportunity to interact with colleagues in their fields. The TETFund offered them that opportunity. They are pleased to say that the TETFund scholarship is one of the best things that happened to their lives in their academic careers. While Muhammad Alkali completed his PhD programme in 2014, Ibrahim Abdullahi completed his Master's programme in 2020. The scholarship particularly offered them wonderful opportunities to deeply understand the concepts of gender and feminism toward peace between the sexes. The TETFund marked an unforgettable milestone in their academic trajectory.

Specifically, Muhammad Alkali's TETFund-supported thesis, "Interrogating Nego-feminism in Six Nigerian Novels" mediates conflicting areas between the sexes in a way that is usually overlooked. It provides techniques for reconciling the sexes, particularly the female sex which for centuries has been debased, used and abused. Nego-feminism knows how to negotiate between the sexes to detonate patriarchal mines. It chooses its steps carefully. Obioma Nnaemeka, who coined the term Nego-feminism, speaks to the tensions and aspirations of the female sex. She speaks of this as the feminism of compromise, which "knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines" (378). Working within the framework of Nego-feminism Theory, the thesis analysed the relationships between gender, feminism, culture, conflict, and violence in such a way as Hoelzer (2022) "(takes) it beyond compassion and pity/to the awful real" to achieve affect\empathy in the fragmented environments of the world. Hoelzer mainly discusses the concept of trauma as equally evident in Nego-feminism discussions. He stresses that trauma is an unimaginable, excessive extreme that goes beyond the capacity to imagine it. It provides for the imagination of those not experiencing it" (LaCapra 133 qt. in Hoelzer 2022).

In addition to giving Alkali an excellent opportunity to acquire knowledge and enhance his research techniques, the TETFund scholarship presented training prospects to refine his analytical abilities and instilled the confidence necessary for him to excel as a prominent global scholar. presently, he has improved his writing style and is capable of expressing himself with greater brevity and precision. Moreover, the scholarship allowed him to familiarise himself with literature on peace-building and stay updated on the latest developments in academic writing. This has led to his winning another scholarship, the TETFund Bookmanuscript Development. It has led to the birth of this book, *Excursions into Gender and Sexuality*.

We are grateful to TETFund.

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CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING GENDER

1.0 Introduction

Gender is a universal concept used in relation to human beings. There are basically two types of gender in this world – man and woman. However, it seems there are thousand and one of unsolved issues regarding gender. The challenge of gender is like the proverbial chicken and egg issue. Who comes first: the chicken? Or the egg? It is common for man to have conflict with woman. For instance, even to write ‘man who has conflict with woman’ is also an issue because there is a critique that the woman always has conflict with man, not vice versa. Both sexes are actually with each other. For example, we need both man and woman to initiate a family. They have to cooperate to succeed; not blaming and suppressing one another.

The efforts of all gender writers are geared towards sharing knowledge and experience through the lenses of gender theories. Consequently, what can we contribute in our work to develop gender sensitive policy and programme, to avoid gender blind action as well as to train our family, office mates, communities and etc that man and woman are meant to be together for well-being of mankind, but, in many conditions, they need to be treated differently.

There are many ways to group gender theories and one of them is non-feminist and feminist theories group. This Chapter is discussing the concept of gender from four perspectives of theory - biology, psychology, sociology and religion. Usually, scholars will consider religion as part of social aspect of human being. In this Chapter, religion will be used as a focus point to discuss and understand the concept of gender (Figure 1), and these four theoretical perspectives is so called ‘non-feminist theory’.

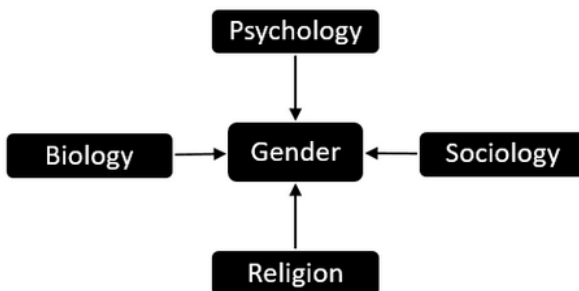


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework to Understand Gender

This Chapter traces the evolution of gender theories from the natural perspective (biological), to ‘sex war’ (psychological), and into gender role (socialisation). In that process, this Chapter discusses the role of religion in defining gender and gender role. Table 1 gives an example of how the so-called non-feminist and feminist groups of theory are sub-grouped. The discussion traces theories in these two groups divided into Chapter 1 for non-feminist group and Chapter 2 for the feminist group of theory, while Chapter 3 focuses on the development of social role as a construct.

Table 1: Non-Feminist and Feminist Group of Theory

Non-Feminist	Feminist
1. Theories of God and Nature:	
a. Religious Theories	1. Liberal Feminism
b. Biological Nature Theories	a. Patriarchy Theory by Filmer
2. “Sex War” theories	b. Feminist Liberalism by Wollstonecraft (1972) and Locke (1689) against Filmer
a. Theories by Sigmund Freud (Penis Envy and Womb Envy)	2. Feminist Socialism
b. Dominance rooted in sexual antagonism.	a. Marx Theory
c. Maintaining dominance through violence	b. Engels Theory
d. Theory of selfish gene	3. Radical Feminist
	- critique of heterosexuality is a centre of theory (concern with patriarchy and reject all ‘male’ values)

Sources: i. L. Lindsey, L. (1990). *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 10-12;

ii. Bruni, A., Gherardi, S., & Poggio, B. (2004). Doing Gender, Doing Entrepreneurship: An Ethnographic Account of Intertwined Practices *Gender, Work and Organization*, 11(4), 406-429

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1.1 Biological Perspective

“Is it a boy or a girl?” This is one of the most important questions that around 80% of parents ask about their newborn children (Intons-Peterson M; Reddel M, 1984). A new born baby has his/her sexual identity which is defined by biological roles played by men and women in reproduction (Buss, 1985; Trivers, 1972) - whether one has a vagina (girl) or a penis (boy) or a hermaphrodite that has both penis and vagina. According to

biological theories have to be pregnant for nine months before giving birth to baby(ies) and breast feed the baby(ies). These two main roles in reproduction biologically cannot be performed by a man. In addition, producing sperm for a woman to get pregnant is biologically a special role by a man.

Being male or female is a sexual identity for an individual. Each baby is treated differently during its first day in this world according to his or her sexual identity. For example, parents dress baby girls in pink and boys in blue, they give them gender-differentiated names and gender differentiated toys, and expect them to act in differentiated ways.

1.2 Psychological Perspective

Based on sexual identity, one is called male or female, but based on gender, a male is called man and female is called woman. The concept of gender identity is one belief that shows how to react, behave, dress, etc. as perceived by the environment according to their sexual identity. Gender identity is, therefore, a fundamental aspect of life until it is very difficult to change (Swaab D.; et al., 1990). Psychological theories tend to emphasise intra-psychic processes governing gender development (Pickren, et al. 2012; Kohlberg, 1966; and Freud, 1905/1930).

Conflict in gender identity may arise when one's 'perception of their sexual identity' (gender identity) is against his/her sexual identity (biological sexual identity). For example, if one with penis (male) differently perceives that he is a female and one with vagina perceives that she is a male, his or her action will accordingly determine what s/he perceives than what s/he really is. This perception may be caused by biological defects as explained in Itoh et al. (2015) that a male may have an extra Y or X chromosome to become XYY (too masculine male) or XXY (male with more feminine attributes physically or emotionally). This defect may be worse by the influence of the environment such as a transsexual community and the practise of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual).

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory (late-19th-century) explains male superiority. To him, boys come to realise their perceived superiority over girls during childhood upon discovering the physical disparity in their genitals. Conversely, girls associate their absence of a penis with feelings of inferiority (Penis Envy). The sense of inferiority leads them to idealise and yearn for their fathers, resulting in behaviours such as masochistic tendencies, passivity, jealousy, and vanity, which Freud regards as feminine traits.

Freud's notions faced opposition from other developmental theorists. Eric Erikson (1950) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1966 cited in Pickren, et al. 2012) proposed alternative theories suggesting that all d that all individuals start off reliant on caregivers and gradually develop into self-reliant and self-governing individuals. Nevertheless, these

theories still exhibited a bias toward males since independence has historically been associated with masculinity compared to females.

In Allen (2020), the evaluation of Nancy Chodorow's 1978 Object-relations Theory does not display a bias towards either sex. She posits as favouring neither sex. She proposes that children's development is influenced by their interactions with their primary caregivers, who are typically mothers and serve as role models. Mothers tend to identify more closely with girls, facilitating the development of strong interpersonal relationships and nurturing dependency traits. In contrast, mothers encourage boys towards independence, helping their adaptation to male-dominated work environment, but potentially leaving them less accustomed to emotional connections. Chodorow's theory highlights both strengths and weaknesses inherent in the development of males and females, without assigning superiority to either sex.

During the 1980s, psychologists like Carol Gilligan put forth the idea that women operate based on an ethic of relatedness and care, which is not inherently inferior to men but rather represents a distinct difference. In 2016, Steenbergen et al. argue that Daniel Stern's Developmental Theory (122-3) proposes that humans lack connections to others and gradually develop intricate interpersonal bonds as they grow, while contemporary gender studies focus less on establishing superiority between males and females (354–359). Equality and/or equity are/is now stressed.

1.3 Sociological Perspective

The word woman was developed from the word woo-man. Sociologically, woman is to be wooed by man and not vice versa. Gender is a social construction of what is masculinity and femininity (Lindsey, 2010). Basically, sexual identity plays an important role in human being's attitude. This sexual identity develops a belief in man and woman of how to behave and what role to play. Based on their sexual identity, one finds a similar model to follow in terms of how to socialise and be accepted socially. This phenomenon is seen among peer groups that perpetuate gender-type play and interaction. Young ladies' group will easily be influenced by a beauty conscious and fashionable group of other young ladies, while young men's group will easily be influenced by a group with masculine hobbies like cycling and jungle tracking or shuffle and tectonic dance group. The general consensus seems to be that gender is socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Shortly, if boys and girls are different, they are not just born, but also made that way (Thorne, 1993).



1.4 Religious Perspective

Apparently, there are always many good values defined by the society on gender identity as well as gender roles. These are usually based on religion for good values and morale definition for the believers. Morale is a systematic value, which is always being defined properly through religion.

1.5 Conclusion

Following Allen (2020), it is safe to submit that influence studies suggest children's behaviour as patterned after those of their elders in the society. The elders are the role models. It is true that while there are female daughters who see their mothers as caregivers and consequently take a liking of the behaviour of the mother-figures, there are others who choose the fathers owing to the same trait of caregiving. The same thing applies to the sons. Personalities, therefore, influence the behaviour of the children. This is instructive to parents to be mindful of good behaviours before their children who will certainly take after them as they grow. Any healthy society, therefore, is a product of its elders.

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7

CHAPTER TWO: GENDER
CONSTRUCT
IN AFRICA

2.0 The African Thinking

Two things should be made clear from the onset. 'Feminist gender' are two loaded terms I use closely by each other and interchangeably because I follow the repackaging of Hamersley and Atkinson (1983:1) who interpret the term 'ethnography' in a convenient liberal manner, undisturbed about what constitutes its examples; no hard-and-fast distinction between ethnographer and other qualitative researchers are made since essentially all qualitative researchers are, for example, participant observers. Or like Butler, who breaks the supposed links between 'sex and gender' so that gender and desire can be 'flexible, free floating and not caused by other stable factors' (see, Murphy 2018). I also make no deliberate distinction between gender and feminism (which, in truth, the dividing line is thin) since their objective is to achieve both woman and human dignity and more so as arising new ideas and answers to emerging feminist or gender questions are converging at a very fluid and flexible ground that is leading to harmonious livelihood between the sexes.

Secondly, feminism and/or gender is no longer the concern of the female class only. Men are hugely trying everywhere across the world to reread the misery of male-dominant and female-submissive dynamics. Perhaps, they do this because it has been realised that since creation days, men have ungraciously succeeded through social constructs in turning the world to their advantage over and above women; it has been a patriarchal world. If this proposition is true, men seem to have realised that they need to undo what they did to the female world. Man, since ages has devastatingly dealt with the female world. Everything appears in his advantage. It is in this respect that the conception of the term feminism has attained various statuses by both sexes and therefore, not easy to define in an instant. Although most feminists have accepted the fact of a need for adequate definition, it is having been very impossible as there has been less consensus on a single definition of feminism. The basic orientation is continuously that feminism has come to mean various things for various people, even if it is gradually heading towards a new direction, a direction of new hope, new resolution, new idea, where concrete results seem promising. We shall discuss this in some detail later.

Because of the several connotations, it should be necessary at the outset of this Chapter also to indicate very briefly how feminism is looked at in this book. In the years past and recent, it has been largely realised that belittling women have repercussions of unimaginable largeness. For this reason, feminism has risen to radical positions but happily, is increasingly settling for non-confrontational redress which opposes both masculinity and femininity. Feminism today is gradually becoming a gender course that deals with sexual difference without constituting an opposition to either of the sexes since it is both the concern of the two sexes. Women regain their opportunities without recourse to oppositional feminism, while at the same time not seen as underdogs.

Corollary, there are emerging qualifications of feminism, many adjectivals to feminism like 'New Feminism' (Alkali & Kehinde, 2016 & 2010; Allen, 2006) (not Natasha Walter's *The New Feminism*, 1998 which is man-hating), and 'True Feminism' (Steady, 1985:8), which basically are indicative of the fact that all has not been well with the practice of the concept. As a result of this, many writers do not even want to be addressed to the chemistry of feminism; they distance themselves from being called feminists.

Nigeria's male feminist writer, Abubakar Gimba, for example, is dangerously suspicious of anyone calling him a feminist. In an interview with Ode (2000:1), he pointedly asked the world not to bring him close to the arithmetic of feminism. The reason is not far-fetched. Several nuances of meaning, applications, and engaging debate have arisen by women scholars and feminists from all over the world on the concept. People shy away from the term feminism because it has sadly come to be associated with radicalism, lesbianism, pornography, etc. It is a paradox of exercise of unlimited freedom. Female feminists themselves are not left out in this distancing with feminism. Esther Chioma Uwandu) says the Nigerian female feminist, Buchi Emecheta, wearily and warily describes her connection with feminism thus,

Being a woman, and African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes ... I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small 'f' (Emecheta 175 cited in Uwandu, 2018).

Following the above, Nwapa said that if feminism is about 'possibilities' and 'choices', "I will go all out and say that I am a feminist with a big 'f' " (Flora Nwapa cited in Obioma Nnaemeka, 1995: 83).

There is thus absolute confusion between the big 'F' and the small 'f'. Others have pointed to the big 'F' as rebellious, injurious, and disrespectful, while the small 'f' is the subtle feminism. Contributing on the small 'f', the Ghanaian female writer, Ama Ata Aidoo explains that African women are not and cannot be,

...acting today as daughters and grand-daughters of women who always refused to keep quiet'. In consequence, she insists, I really refuse to be told I am learning feminism from abroad...

(Aidoo, 1986: 183).

These have only rightly pointed to a signification that feminism needs to be reworked and renamed for more fruitful results.

2.1 Naming and Misnaming in Feminism

Naming and misnaming have followed the concept of feminism through and through. And name has ontological significance to mankind. To name a concept called feminism is to attach some serious definition to it. If we say the name is feminism and feminism is the name, it must be found somewhere the ontological significance. Inscribing it to

women's struggle would not only thwart the illusion of sexism as a business of both male and female but also encourage individuation, sectionalism, parochialism, and selfishness in a world that is increasingly becoming a global village for mankind.

Writing on Black women's concerns, as an example, Myra K. McMurtry discusses Maya Angelou's autobiography which points at the dangers of misnaming, especially for a Black person,

Every person I knew had a hellish horror of being "called out of his name". It was a dangerous practice to call [Negroes] anything that could be loosely construed as insulting because of the centuries of there having been called niggers, jigs, dinges, blackbirds, crows, boots, and spooks

(Angelou 1993:91 cited in McMurtry (2022: 111).

Furthermore, a significant number of African cosmologies demonstrate the profound importance of names. Therefore, in Black Africa, Malaysia, and numerous other cultures, an individual's name carries a sacred significance. Ruth Finnegan in her work, *Oral Literature in Africa* highlights that names possess a 'greater literary interest than might at first appear' (470). Names hold a unique position in many global communities, as individuals often embody the image conveyed in by the meaning of their names. For example, most Nupe names in Nigeria are loaded with meanings. Names like Bannachi, Balikali, Badoko, Bakatsa, etc. significantly carry prefixes, a Nupe respectful allusion to the person being addressed. The 'Ba' prefix is a shortcut in many respects; for Baba as father – an elder who lives in London, for example, will be respectfully called Balondon i.e. Londoner, the owner (as in owner of a horse - Badoko or who lives in Katcha - Bakatcha), etc. In the Holy Qur'an also, Allah gives ontological names to His attributes. He has ninety-nine (99) special names. He is personally or properly called Allah. He is Arrahman – The Most Beneficent, Arraheem – The Most Merciful, Al-Malik - The Sovereign Lord, Al-Quddos - The Holy, As-Salaam - The Source of Peace, Al-Mu'min - Guardian of Faith, Al-Muhaimin - The Protector - Al-Azeez - The Mighty, Al-Jabbaar - The Compeller, Al-Mutakabbir - The Majestic, Al-Khaaliq - The Creator, Al-Bari' - The Maker, Al-Musawwir - The Fashioner, Al-Ghaffaar - The Great Forgiver, Al-Qahhaar - The Subduer, Al-Wahhaab - The Bestower, Al-Razzaaq - The Sustainer, Al-Fattaah - The Opener, etc. these are names always suiting a particular intent and mission of man in the world so that man can call out to Him for assistance. In 'How Naming and Defining Shape Gender Relations', Van Leeuwen et al. (1993) singled out naming as crucial in gender politics,

Naming and defining are two of the most powerful acts of human speech. When something is named, it takes on a fuller reality. It can be talked about. It has presence (Van Leeuwen et al. 1993: 345).

Therefore, I attempt to project the naming of feminism in its proper terms — aspirations, struggles, and occupation — to reflect their indisputable goal in the face of a forced identity emanating from activities of feminist theories and interpretations. Naming and defining it correctly can assist us in appreciating the spiritual relevance and

significance of their creative production or strength. Feminism, then, is here reintegrated into world cultures so as to destroy the false images given to it by insensitivity, excessiveness, and outright stubbornness, heading simply towards human destruction.

2.2 Colonial and Postcolonial Literary Dialogues

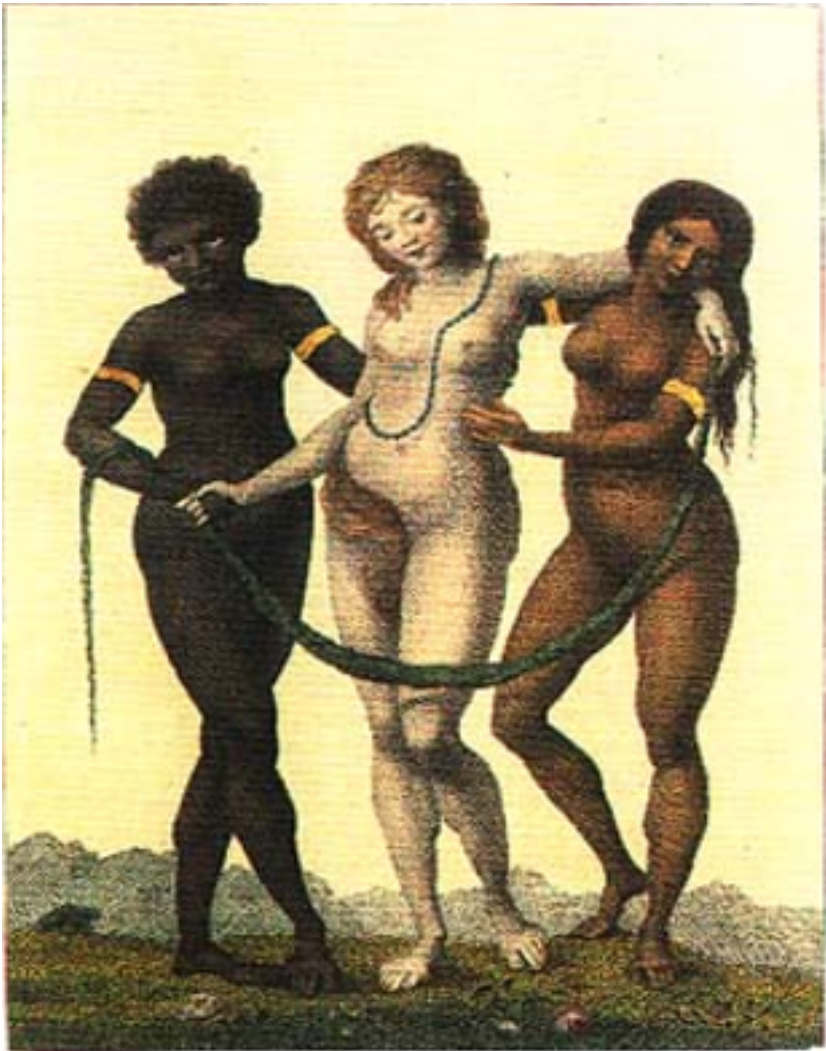


Figure 8 (Aug 25, 1777) "Europe Supported by Africa and America," in Studman, 619

Europe Supported by Africa & America

By William Blake

Engravings for J. G. Stedman, Narrative, of a five years' expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild coast of South America; from the year 1772, to 1777. Published in London, 1796.

Women's current challenges to building egalitarian societies are related to aspects of equity, peace, compromise, and complementarity, which is emerging from centuries of assault and banter and exploitation of various kinds. This was carried through to the period of political or structural integration within capitalism. I talk of colonisation. Changes in socio-political arrangement of societies and economy still made women a relegated class in the new system. Whether through the challenges and concerns faced by white, black, or coloured women, the story remains the same. Men and women need then to harness women's innate capabilities in a manner that aligns with their current and future requirements, without subjecting them to harmful ideologies. Each literary creation possesses its own distinct existence, emerging from a unique history, specific experiences, and cultural traditions. Consequently, every work will invariably resonate with elements that are relevant to its developmental context. The Nigerian Chinua Achebe in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* writes,

every literature must seek the things that belong unto its peace, it must, in other words, speak of a particular place, evolve out of the necessities of its history, past and current, and aspirations and destiny of its people (7).

It is noteworthy that while white women may not have been the primary perpetrators of enslavement towards black or coloured females during the era of slavery, they still played a role in the operation within slaveholding societies, albeit from a secondary position. They were then to be sympathised with for this historical substance of plural implications of subjugating same sex (both deceived and 'willing'), because they were (un)knowingly used to aid and abet injuries to womankind as they use mistresses' position which strengthened patriarchy in the colonial administration. Consider Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the 21 Scenes, or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* and also Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. They give insight into the cold-blooded wars that existed between black slave women and white slave mistresses.

The graphic illustration of the three women above (for which I am grateful to the website on 'colonial and post-colonial dialogues' in the same way as Chinua Achebe is grateful to William Butler Yeats for his poem, '*The Second Coming*', where Achebe culled the title of his famous novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) from which we use to exemplify

Achebe's sheer wickedness on women emancipation) is a visionary Blake engraving, which gives to the world an unending dialogue between the colonized and the colonizer. While it appears (albeit evasively) to be a harmonious relationship among three equal sisters with Europe in a limp balance holding the rope that connects the three continents, it is not difficult to see beyond that. The other hand conspicuously clenches the hand of the African sister in sisterly equality. It is mused that this is a striking innovation in the concept of the connection between continents, exemplifying Blake's abolitionist viewpoint (source: David Hart's engraving above); the bond between the three women is only, perhaps, representative of the economics of objective; tobacco business, it is observed. I interpret this to be the on-going onslaught; a damaging consequence left over by, and which was started by, Europe, and things have perfectly fallen apart, (Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, 1958) as the centre can no longer hold for women. By implication, white women in relish preserved their mistress places under insensitive colonial rule.

Further, the engraving predicts in the limping white sister that there would be no white sister without a black or coloured sister, and/or no Europe without Africa. If this assumption is true, the West must answer the questions of the underdevelopment of the continent, and the injuries of the black sister. The engraving poses to ask, where lies the moral conscience of this exploitative paradigm? Africans have been grappling with the realities of women's liberation for development, transforming their own lives in a struggle to replace and reshape masculinity, while at the same time holding women responsible for their complacency.

Therefore, historically, traditionally, and because of the cultural values of various women's fight for respect for human dignity, it would only be fair to look at feminism holistically and not parochially. This feminism would then be the effort where the two sexes look at each other as bedmates in complementation, leading further to a harmonious global village.

2.3 Brief History

The world has been populated by the mythic pact of women as underdogs, which needless to say, needs a reorientation, further leading to the philosophy of equity and/or equality between the sexes on social, economic, and political equality mixes. Feminism is an activism for women's rights and interests that negates the notion that women are supposedly materials for confinement in the home, as public life is a special reserve for men. At every opportunity, there is a need to reshape the social construct of women. Often, the woman had to seek for her right rudely to better her lot. This is not a new thing in the world.

Women began to come together to claim their rights for ages. Evidence of organised riots by women is traceable to the earliest century, the 3rd Century BC, when, in Rome, women organised themselves against Consul Marcus Porcius Cato. They successfully

blocked all entrances to the Forum on Capitoline Hill. They opposed attempt to repeal laws that delimit women's use of expensive goods. Cato in holding against women strongly observed that 'If they are victorious now, what will they not attempt? As soon as they begin to be your equals, they will have become your superiors.'

For most of recorded history, only a few voices were heard against the inferiority jinx of women. Then, the first feminist philosopher, Christine de Pisan in late 14th and early 15th Century France, shames the devil by challenging prevailing attitudes toward women with a bold call for female education. Then, in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* glaringly told the world that women were men's match, challenging the notion that women exist only to please men.

Discussions of feminism are always incomplete without mentioning the interwar years when Virginia Woolf was already a very significant feminist personage in London literary society. She was an English feminist, novelist, essayist, publisher, and writer of short stories. A foremost modernist literary figure of the twentieth century, she is most memorable for her novel, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), with its famous dictum, 'A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'. Her other famous novels in chronology include *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928), and the book-length essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which were lectures she gave at women's colleges at Cambridge University. Recognised for her creation of a fictional female counterpart to William Shakespeare named Judith, Virginia Woolf employed this character, sometimes sarcastic manner, to convey her message. Woolf emerged as a pioneering and influential author in the 20th century. In certain novels she departed from traditional plot and structure, instead utilising stream-of-consciousness narrative to highlight the psychological dimensions of her characters. Her works explore themes such as class hierarchy, gender relations, and the repercussions of war. In her *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), she can be read as contributing to gender as the dignity of both sexes.

Different though the sexes are, they inter-mix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is very opposite of what it is above ... Ch.4.

Virginia Woolf's past, present, and future are a subject of extensive feminist discourse and debate, particularly concerning the sexual abuse inflicted upon her at the hands of her half-brother, who after the invalid state of her mother, half-brother, George Duckworth, became not only the father of the house but also her lover too. He would night after night visit his sister out of very questionable consolation. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's pacifist political beliefs; aligned with the Bloomsbury Group, sparked contentious debates and controversy. From her *Three Guineas* (1931),

Therefore, if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or "our" country, let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct that I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts, or to protect either myself or my country.

"For," the outsider will say, "in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world." - Ch. 3.

Regardless of the polemic, or because of it, Woolf's extensive novels, diaries, critical reviews, letters, essays, and short stories have become a subject of significant scholarly debate in feminism well into the 21st Century (Geoffrey M. Boynton 580). The ethos of the Bloomsburiana group fostered a liberal approach towards sexuality. In 1922, Woolf crossed paths with Vita Sackville-West, a writer and gardener, and after some initial uncertainty, they embarked on a sexual relationship (the beginnings of lesbianism, you might add) (Boynton 580). But their affair eventually came to an end, and despite this, the two women maintained their friendship until Woolf's passing.

Some thirty years later, 1969 to be precise, there arose the dire need for women to come together and claim their own. This was harnessed by both Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt. The idea got strengthened by Vivian Gornik's article, "The Next Great Moment in History Is Theirs", *Village Voice*. The essay invited women to reassess women's plight and damn the devil by indicating interest for the formation of women's group on women's plight. In an effrontery, the essay also included contact address and phone number for the formation. This bold step succeeded in raising interests from a large number of prospective members.

Then New York Radical Feminists (NYRF) was formed with the objective of undoing men's observable consciousness in dominating women in order to strengthen their masculine ego, but also held women culpable as they accepted their lot, their complacency (NYRF, 1969). People rose to challenge this phenomenon of possession of historical substance of a plural implications of subjugation, both coerced and 'willing' and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) implicates feminism as a site for political struggle in its 'power-structured relationships'. The personal was actually political, she stresses. In the same 1970, Shulamith Firestone, building on 1969 call founded the NYRF.

In her work *The Dialectic of Sex*, Firestone introduces a new trend in feminism observing that love is, unfortunately, a strong factor that disadvantages women by wrongly or rightly in their socio-economic and political struggles. This perspective informs on how love can dynamically initiate intimate bonds between women and the men they love, who simultaneously act as their oppressors! A problem is thus caused; what is the approach to managing a relationship with the man you love, because you must love? This observation introduces a throw of spanner into the engine. It points to reassessment of strategy. Could this be what has given impetus to feminisms in different continents?

It was not until the 20th century that Africa, Asia, and Latin America got to hear of European and American feminism. When it began to gather momentum, tensions between women from developing and developed nations started to surface in international conferences, notably during the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, where these conflicts became particularly evident, especially concerning Africa. Sadly, it transpired to be something entirely

different; it turned out to reconsider the conception of feminism by arriving at a new perspective. Protests were staged by women from the Third World outside the venue as they held the belief that the agenda had been completely taken over by Americans and Europeans. The demonstrators had anticipated that the Conference would address the issue of how underdevelopment hindered women's progress. However, the Conference organisers opted on matters related to abortion and contraception. Women of the Third World couldn't connect contraception and abortion to their ailing children, who were perishing due to thirst, starvation, and armed conflict, as expressed by Azizah al-Hibri, a law professor and specialist researcher on the rights of Muslim women. And these continental issues led to continental possibilities in feminism, such as African feminism, Indian feminism, etc. More theories and approaches have been born.

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CHAPTER THREE: PATRIARCHY
AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN
GBAGYILAND

3.0 Introduction

In Gbagyi culture, gender inequality is shaped and perpetuated by patriarchal practices, depriving women of agency over their sexuality. This is evident in the case of Gbagyi people in Niger State, Nigeria, customs hold greater influence than dominance, legal systems, and even religion. Over time, customary practices have become intertwined with religion and are now believed by the community to be mandated by their adopted deities. The study examined patriarchy and the role it plays in influencing inequality. Efforts were undertaken to emphasise the process through which patriarchy is nurtured during socialisation, commencing within the family and extending its influence to various domains of society such as education, religion, politics, and economy. Lastly, light is shed on patriarch practices that lead to the control of female subordination. The location of the study is Niger State. The units of analysis were selected because of their rural nature and strict adherence to the traditions of the Gbagyi people. Instruments adopted for the study are oral tradition and non-participant observation based on some incidental events of the socio-economic life of some villages of Gbagyiland were employed for the study. The villages studied were purposively selected due to the researcher's proximity to them. Primary and secondary data were used for the study. Whereas primary data were elicited through ethnography (oral tradition, observation), secondary data were got from documentary records. The main argument in this paper is that patriarchy leads to gender inequality and subordination of women and recommends that women should be seen as partners and not as second-class citizens relegated to the background.

Culture has continued to impact negatively on feminine sexuality despite attempts to mitigate its influence by challenging the existing norms. Radical feminism provides insight into the intricate relationship between femininity, sexual equality, and culture within the traditional Gbagyi society. Radical feminists contend that cultural practices confine women, resulting in their subjugation due to the patriarchal structure of the society ' "Culture" encompasses a wide range of elements, referring to customs, institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people or group' (Tylor, 1871).

3.1 Concept of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the systematic subjugation of women by men (Sanit, 2009) stemming from men's aspiration to control women and upheld through their access to resources that enable such control (Nnorom, 2006). It is a set of symbols and ideas that make up a culture embodied by everything including ideas about the nature of things, including men, women and humanity. It is furthermore, described as a system of male authority

which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions and its structure, a major feature of the African society.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Sex role and radical feminist theories are used for this article because of how they complement each other in determining how roles change at home and at work. Oakley (1972) stressed the point that house chores as a part of feminine gender role is one of the basic occupations exclusively feminine and to be performed by housewives. Oakley emphasised that the refusal to acknowledge housework as work is both a cause and a reflection of the lower status of women in society. She distinguished between men and women. Gender refers to the cultural norms which may be attached to the sexes. Most societies prescribe different activities and characteristics for male and female that may come to be perceived as natural by the people concerned. In this way the family's range of biological differences between males and females are heightened and compounded by culturally prescribed gender role differences.

Radical feminists see patriarchy as a societal structure in which men monopolise all social roles while relegating women to subordinate positions. They argue that this enduring social system has persisted due to its universal and long-standing nature, which serves as its primary psychological tool (Charvet, 1982). The radical feminists assert that the primary avenue for women's subjugation lies in the realm of sexuality prompting them to advocate for women to reclaim autonomy over their bodies from men. They contend that the true oppressor of women is the patriarchal system, which cannot be reformed but must be completely dismantled. To radical feminists, it is not only the legal and political structures of patriarchy that must be overturned but also its cultural and social structures, including the family, academy, and the church. By focusing on biological origins of women's oppression, radical feminists analyse how gender (femininity and masculinity) and sexuality has been utilised to subordinate women to men. The post-modernists assert that women subordination results from the cultural construction of who a man is or a woman is. They argue that the use of word and language affect the psyche on the definition of men and women. They emphasised the effectiveness of the capacity of language in shaping thoughts and desires. Thus, their conception of why women are oppressed has been criticised for neglecting the social context of power relations and failing to recognise the systematic oppressions of gender, class and race (Walby, 1992). In summary, sex role and radical feminist theories have offered satisfactory theoretical explanations for the study of women in relation to socio-cultural activities in Gbagyiland.

3.3 Methodology

The locations of the study are Ijah-Gbagyi, Garam, Egwa and Gwada all in Niger State, Nigeria. They were selected because of their rural nature and strict adherence to the traditions of the Gbagyi people. Instruments adopted for the study are oral tradition and non-participant observation based on some incidental events of socio-economic life of some (Ijah-Gbagyi, Garam, Egwa and Gwada) villages of Gbagyiland were employed for the study. The villages studied were purposively selected due to the researcher's proximity to them. the methodology adopted is survey based on informant interview. Primary and secondary data were used for the study. Whereas primary data were elicited through ethnography (through oral tradition), secondary data were got from documentary records.

3.4 Cultural Factors that Influence Patriarchy

3.4.1 The Family

From an early age, the family, as a social institution, becomes a core-foundation for the perpetuation of patriarchal practices by instilling in the youth the acceptance of distinct gender roles. In the context of Gbagyi traditions, the process of socialisation explicitly distinguishes between the upbringing of girls and boys, beginning from a very young age. In Gbagyi culture, boys are raised to perceive themselves as providers, protectors, and leaders of their households, while girls are taught to be compliant, submissive wives, and submissive wives, and caretakers of the home. This distinct socialisation is rooted in the perception of women as objects rather than equal human beings within the society (Charvet, 1982). To this, a Gbagyi elder statesman Yohanna, (2015) said 'a male child in the community is collectively groomed to be a household manager by inculcating traits of boldness, dominion and leadership over his father's property as well as his future matrimonial home. He fetches corn from the barn for his mother through the instruction of his father to make him know that his mother is subject to his father and so shall it be in his relationship with his wife'. Furthermore, he said 'as soon as a young man is of age, he is given a portion of land for farming. His ability to till the farm successfully, would determine the extent he was ready to not only farm but also be able to feed a woman he would marry'. The findings of McDowell and Pringle's study (1992) support the notion that women are consistently defined in relation to men and are depicted as dependent on, and subordinate to, them. Consequently, women are socialised to adopt these characteristics, which position them in a state of dependency on men. Such qualities encompass passivity, gentleness, submission and a constant desire to please men.

Within Gbagyi culture, when a girl enters puberty, the process of socialisation focuses on moulding her into a pleasing and submissive wife for her future husband. Additionally, her sexuality is explicitly shaped, teaching her how to utilise it for the advantage of men. These cultural teachings contribute to a dependence syndrome, leading many African women to rely heavily on their husbands for support. Consequently, in the event of a husband's passing, women often seek to remarry swiftly to find another pillar of support to lean on.

Within the family structure, there exists a preference for male children over female children. In fact, males inherently hold authority and dominance over females by virtue of their birth, regardless of their birth order. Even if the male child is not the eldest within the family, he automatically assumes the role of the household. The discrimination against the female child is exacerbated by the expectation that she will eventually marry and become part of another family, while the male child is responsible for upholding the family name by bringing new members into the family (Human Rights Monitor, 2001). Due to the belief that girls are more likely to marry and leave the family, some parents exhibit a preference for educating the boys over girls. This preference is reinforced by the toys parents choose for their children, which play a role in the socialisation process. For example, girls are often given kitchen utensils or toys associated with domestic tasks by female siblings, while boys receive toys such as farm instruments or those that require physical or mental exertion from male siblings. Consequently, girls are socialised to fulfil roles as wives and mothers, being encouraged to exhibit traits of gentleness, emotional sensitivity, and maternal instincts. Additionally, parents, particularly fathers, may reprimand boys who cry easily, show shyness, or avoid fights, associating such behaviour with girls.

At puberty, relations play an active role in ensuring that the girl child understands her sexuality and the implications it brings upon her life. Instructions are vaguely given to the girl-child at puberty without further explanations. As a result, confusion sets in as girls begin to treat their counterparts with suspicion without full information on why they should do so. She grows up with confusion as she is taught the merits of a good wife to the man she has been taught and told to be wary of.

The Gbagyi culture expresses tolerance towards male sexual conduct while disproving of female sexual behaviour (International Centre for Human Rights, 1996). The culture has freedom for males to engage in sexual exploration before marriage, whereas females are expected to maintain virginity until marriage. Failure to do so could potentially harm the family's reputation, as the prospective son-in-law may refuse to pay bride price. The influence of patriarchal practices, initially instilled within the family during socialisation process, extends beyond familial boundaries and permeates other social institutions such as religion, marriage, economy, education, and politics.

3.4.2 Marriage

Marriage in Gbagyi culture holds deep reverence, and a married woman is accorded with utmost respect. In fact, the heart desire of an average Gbagyi woman is marriage. In marriage, it does not matter the number of wives the husband wants and have with extra-marital affairs as a bonus. When such a scenario happens, however, the wife is blamed for failing to satisfy her husband or for failing to live up to expectations as a wife while the older women try to make it look like a norm as they try to make young women accept the frivolities of men's unfaithfulness.

On the other hand, a married woman that engages in an extramarital affair is labelled as 'loose and lousy.' She is sent to her parents for some disciplinary action on her or she risks being divorced. In addition, it is expected that married women adopt a submissive and sexually passive role towards their husbands. Men take the lead in initiating sexual activity and also establish the terms and conditions for such encounters. Similarly, Messer (2004) anticipates that women fulfil the sexual desires of their husbands. Consequently, when a husband expresses the desire for sexual intimacy, the wife is expected to comply as it is considered an obligation within the marriage agreement. To corroborate this assertion, Zhayinyikwo (2015) narrated a story about a young virgin woman forced by elders of the village to yield to her husband's sexual demand because "she did not own herself". Friends and relations who helped to arrange firewood, pots, foodstuff, soup ingredients and other kitchen utensils accompanied the woman to the husband's house. According to Zhayinyiko,

On the day that her (bride) best friend finally left, the husband went in to her in the night she ran out and hid in a local mill hut (Tagwowyi). Subsequently, she ran to her parents who drove her back to the husband's house. The next time she bolted out of the room where the husband had gone to her, he raised alarm and shouted for help that his wife had run out. Elders asked him the matter and he just muttered 'she doesn't agree'. The elders made children to chase and get her. They were escorted to their room, pushed and locked inside while the man was asked 'to deal with her mercilessly' for punishing him. Although there were shouts of resistance, the woman later succumbed because she was overpowered by the man. Zhayinyiko concluded by saying there is nothing wrong with the sexual demands made by the man to his wife, the 'minus' to it is that the woman was not prepared for it (sex) by either her family or the husband or both' (Interview with Zhayinyikwo on February 8, 2015).

3.4.3 Religion

Religion is generally used as an instrument to perpetuate patriarchy and patriarchal attitudes are found in the various religious belief systems that exist in Gbagyi land resulting in women being relegated to a subordinate role in the Church, the family as

well as in the community. According to Haralambos (1980), the inferior status of the female was traced to the Holy Bible when she tasted the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. In Islam, especially through the Sharia Law, many restrictions are placed on the rights of women. The Sharia Law attaches importance to paternalistic interpretations to women's appropriate roles and socio-political arrangements of the society (Makama, 2013). These practices have bolstered traditional customs that grant men control not just over women's sexuality, but also other aspects of her life including leadership in religious matters (Human Rights Monitor, 2001; Yohanna, 2012). For example, apart from the narratives of the holy books of the Bible and Quran, women are generally treated merely as second-class citizens meant mainly for the fulfillment of the desire of man. Yohanna narrated the belief shared by the community when he said,

You know Shekwoyi (God) created man before man and the woman was 'carved' out from man; this means she cannot stand on her own because she is a part of a man. That is why women are weak and not as strong and tough like men. That is why they are not allowed to perform certain religious rites neither are they and children allowed to set their eyes on certain masquerades who serve as intermediaries between man and God (Interview with Baba Yohanna on 14/2/2015) Such patriarchal attitudes have seen women being forced to be submissive to males. Women are portrayed as weaker sex for giving in to the temptation that led to their fall into sin (Gen. Chapter 3). This has made men to treat women as people who have to be kept under constant supervision lest they err. The case got worse when God, according to Gen 3:16, declared that ...Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you' (NKJV Bible, 2001). In addition, Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:18 admonished women to be submissive to their husbands' which men had taken for granted to exploit and dominate women in all ramifications. In the Gbagyi tradition women could not atone or stand in the gap for their husbands for certain rituals. It was also common that women are prohibited from seeing eye to eye with certain masquerades or 'gods'.

3.4.4 Education

The Gbagyi people are great farmers and depend largely on human labour for farming. Therefore, not many go to school and in homes where opportunities avail, boys and not girls are given the chance. The socialisation process ingrains the notion that girls should remain at home, responsible for caring for younger siblings through tasks such as bathing, cooking, and transporting agricultural goods to surplus market or their homes. In Nigeria, the educational system is structured in a way that reinforces existing gender disparities between girls and boys. Specifically, the textbooks used in schools predominantly depict boys as physically skilled, resilient, mentally sharp, and adventurous. Conversely, girls are portrayed as gentle, delicate, and associated with domestic chores. Even the uniforms designated for girls and boys differ, with girls'

uniforms being ill-suited for active play or activities like tree climbing that are advantageous to boys. To this, a middle-aged woman said,

it is not too long that women 'freely' started going to school. During our time, our parents asked us to stay back so we can go help our mothers carry our junior brothers and sisters or farm produce to and from farm (Ataknu'nyibwa, 8/2/2015).

In collaboration with the last interviewee, an old woman said,

I am able to read not because my father sent me to school, after all, my father had even died long ago, but because I married my husband who was close to the white woman who had settled in the village in order to preach the word of God. As she desired to speak the language (Gbagyi) so my husband too started to learn how to read and write and so he started to teach me. Since we abandoned traditional religion and became Christians we would go to the white woman's lodge and she would teach us alphabets and after sometime, we began to read the Bible in Hausa and Gbagyi. Apart from that, there was no formal school or schooling for women of my age then (Shaanyisimyi, 3/3/2015).

Secondly, the educational system in Nigeria disregards the fact that children already bring pre-existing inequalities with them when they enter school. The system lacks sensitivity and awareness towards gender, promoting male role-models, male-authored textbooks, and theories that reinforce the idea of women being academically subordinate. This perpetuates the notion that women should occupy a secondary position in academia.

Thirdly, in the school environment, the girl child becomes a victim of her own sexuality. Male teachers often subject her to sexual advances in exchange for money, grades, or other material benefits. Non-compliance may result in violence. Unfortunately, girls from impoverished backgrounds find these offers irresistible. However, it is the girl who ultimately bears the consequences when she becomes pregnant or contracts sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Adding to her burden, society stigmatises her as 'loose' (Chirimuuta, 2006) while the male perpetrator who seduced her faces no consequences or labels.

In Nigeria and Niger State for example, the enrolment ratio for girls declines with the level of education. For instance, in junior secondary school, the enrolment ratio for girls is only 18.93% in 2005 (NGMDGR, 2006) and will be shunned by prospective partners. Since marriage is a sacred institution in the Gbagyi culture, it is society's expectation that every woman should be married. Furthermore, parents really get worried when their daughters do not get married to the extent of consulting Ashan (gods) in order to break the curse as it is believed. As a result, education fails to offer total liberation to Gbagyi women. This perspective stems from a patriarchal mindset that considers investing in the education of girls as a financial waste, as they are expected to marry into another family and benefit them (Human Rights Monitor, 2001). Education serves as a means through which women can liberate themselves from the influence of male dominated cultural norms. However, a careful examination of

educated women demonstrates that education alone does not guarantee emancipation. This is because even educated women are compelled to conform to cultural expectations, as deviating from these norms could result in being stigmatised (Chirimuuta, 2006).

3.4.5 Economy

The traditional Gbagyi society believed that a woman is an economic asset belonging to the man she is married. She was rather a means of generating income to her husband since he used her to transport any farm produce to the market he wanted to dispose of. Although, she could engage in some petty trading like making and selling of locust beans (nyise), local drink (eye), the income was used to sustain her home because the husband was not duty-bound to provide soup ingredients. She uses her income to also take care of her as well as the children's clothing. To this Belowyi, an 87-year-old woman said,

an average Gbagyi woman should count herself lucky if the husband provides food regularly for the household. Therefore, the question of soup should not even arise from her. She has to provide soup for every meal prepared by her. Nobody needs tell her to do something to generate income for the upkeep of the household. This, she does by plaiting hair, fetching water or packing sand for building projects for a fee in addition to the above petty businesses.

The limited participation of women in educational institutions results in a smaller female representation in the corporate world, posing a significant development challenge to women's empowerment. However, even for those who manage to enter this realm, they soon discover that men hold the reins of the economy. Patriarchal attitudes persist within the corporate world, resulting in a scarcity of women in leadership positions. Many women who have received an education often find themselves confined to less demanding roles such as secretarial or clerical positions. In specific instances, such as in public ministries and organisations in Niger State, there is a notable imbalance with more males than females occupying ministerial positions (Establishment Office, Government House, 2009). Furthermore, women often find themselves occupying less demanding roles, such as positions in Ministries of Gender, Culture or Education. Until recently, it was uncommon to see women in more challenging and influential positions like permanent secretaries or commissioners. Additionally, when women are selected as leaders, they are often subjected to higher scrutiny and are required to demonstrate their abilities to a greater extent compared to their male counterparts.

Within the corporate sector, women frequently become targets of sexual harassment or violence from their superiors. This unfortunate situation arises from the perception of women primarily as sexual objects rather than human beings (Charvet, 1982). In certain instances, women may find themselves compelled to provide sexual favours to their superiors in order to be considered for promotion.

As in other places, the majority of Gbagyi women are found in rural areas where they “toil on land they do not own, to produce what they do not control and at the end of the marriage, through divorce or death they can be sent away empty handed” (Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere at the 3rd World Conference on Women, 1984). These women face discrimination as they are denied the rights and privileges to own land based on customary practices and laws, which traditionally designated men as the sole landowners within the cultural context (Human Rights Monitor, 2001). This situation as a result forces rural women to be dependent on males through the cycle of marriage and reproduction (Human Rights Monitor, 2001).

3.4.6 Politics

Politics is often depicted as a cultural endeavour, demanding qualities that only a few women find appealing. Women who choose to engage in politics face the challenge of having to prove themselves, demonstrating their resilience in order to withstand the pressure stemming from patriarchal attitudes that portray women as weak and unsuitable for public office. Additionally, in the political realm, women are more readily accepted and unquestioned when occupying roles such as cooks, guest entertainers, singers, and dancers. To this, a woman in her 60s said, ‘politics is a man’s business so a woman is not expected to ‘interfere’ in men’s business.’

3.5 Patriarchal Practices Leading to Male Control of Female Sexuality

As a consequence of the patrilineal and patriarchal nature of African culture, male dominance prevails over female sexuality (Khumalo and Garbus, 2009). This is depicted in the payment of *agbepyi*, *yezhiyifa* and arranged marriage.

3.5.1 Gbepyi Payment

In Gbagyi culture, the payment of *gbepyi* establishes the father’s ownership of children, subsequently inherit the father’s surname and citizenship. Additionally, married women are unable to transmit their citizenship rights to their children. These practices stem from Gbagyi laws that align with cultural customs deeply rooted in a patriarchal system, where women occupy subordinate positions. Simultaneously, *gbepyi* grants men certain rights while stripping women of their freedoms and rights, reducing them to the status of acquired property. This situation becomes more problematic when the *gbepyi* payment is set at a high price, as it can lead to abuse if the wife fails to comply with her husband’s expectations, despite having been ‘purchased’. Consequently, *gbepyi*, being an integral part of Gbagyi society’s patriarchal nature, perpetuates inequality and widens the gender gap, leaving women in a subordinate position.

3.5.2 Arranged Marriages

Arranged marriages are familiar within the Gbagyi tradition. These can be based on religion such as in the traditional and Islamic religions where young girls are married off to older male members of the sects based on beliefs (Kadandani, 2014). These girls cannot deny getting married to the men who in some cases are old enough to be their father for fear of being cut off from their families.

In some cases, some fathers marry off their daughters to older wealthy men in Islam. Furthermore, in order to appease angry spirits following offence committed by the family members of the girl, a young girl (a virgin) is given to the wronged family as a wife. In all these cases, consent is not sought from the wronged women concerned but they are forced to comply with cultural traditions.

3.5.3 Rape

The lack of agency women has over their sexuality is further manifested through instances of male relatives perpetrating sexual violence against young girls (Human Right Monitor 2001). Women are not 'raped' in Gbagyi society because it is believed that they are the property of men. On the other hand, an unmarried girl cannot claim to be raped because the rapist did not follow her to her father's house. She is rather accused of being wayward and promiscuous. Married women on the other hand cannot refuse their husbands sexual advances even when not convenient and in cases where they suspect their husbands of being unfaithful, women are unable to assert their preference for safe sex since men maintain control over the sexual encounter (Meursing and Sibindi, 1995).

3.6 Conclusion and Recommendations

The young should be socialised that men and women are equal because biological differences do not mean that the other sex is inferior. The family is a major social institution and if re-socialisation starts in the family, it will permeate into other social institutions. In addition, laws should be made and policies amended to accommodate women, to grant them same sexual freedom that their male counterparts enjoy. The patriarchal structure of our society has played a significant role in establishing and perpetuating gender inequality, allowing for male dominance and the subordination of women. This unfortunate reality has been sustained by the process of socialisation. To rectify this situation, it is crucial to undertake a process of re-socialisation. All individuals involved in mass education or public speaking should make a conscious effort to highlight the profound gap that culture has created between men and women. Encouraging lectures and seminars that address the impact of culture can be instrumental in this endeavour. Moreover, involving men in these discussions can have significant impact.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognise patriarchy as a social construct rather than a biological one. Women should be encouraged to understand how cultural norms have confined them, as many have come to accept the existing power dynamics and male dominance. Emphasising gender equality to the younger generation is crucial, as it is necessary to instil the understanding that biological differences do not imply inferiority of either sex. Given that the family is a key social institution, initiating re-socialisation within families can help permeate these values into other social spheres.

Additionally, it is vital to enact laws and amend policies that accommodate women and grant them the same sexual freedoms enjoyed by their male counterparts. By creating an inclusive legal and policy framework, women can be empowered and their rights upheld.

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CHAPTER FOUR: EVOLUTION OF FEMINIST GENDER THEORIES

4.0 Introduction

For quite some time now, there has been impressive fiction in English, in Africa, the ethics of female-submissive dynamics was being seriously debated, the traditional privilege given men was being eroded. A strong consensus headed by Western feminists holds apologists of patriarchy to be morally, intellectually, and socially inferior, and saw patriarchs' ostensible inferiority as a justification for exploitation of male ego, hence, what can be termed another form of domination. Increasingly, there is a noticeable shift of position that is stemming the tide, and various theories are used to explain the discovery today that the overheated challenge of assumptions by either the (fe)male ego is no longer the issue.

Conflicts are not avoidable and in fact, healthy for people and organisations to move to higher levels (see Bao, Y. et al., 2016; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001; DeChurch and Marks, 2001; Alper, Tjosvold, and Law, 2000; Khun and Poole, 2000; Rahim and Bonoma, 1979), but should not degenerate to break down of harmony; they must be managed through strategies that limit inhibiting negativities. Many African novels have used many theories and approaches to show case how it is about time people tone down the rhetoric of anti-masculinity, stressing that the option is in anti-masculinity and anti-femininity.

4.1 Nigerian Experience in Capturing Gender Issues: Suppression

The deliberate murder of women's rights and privileges everywhere across the nation of Nigeria and the flirt of dangerous women who do not know their true feminine duties but therefore, insist on women as dangerous second-class materials to men haunt women's opportunities. These are always brought together in a hugely imaginative exploration in literary texts, in literary criticisms, in journalism, in vision fiction (filming) and in various groups of discussions amongst western educated women in Nigeria. In this category is Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* (2007) which steps up the social construct of blaming women for their inability to procreate in the family life. Such women suffer untold psychological hardship. Ironically, Okoye in her novel challenges men on grounds that they equally need to be tested for virility. This, she believes is significant in considering the virility of women in marriages. When men are tested medically, it would justify whether it is women that are at fault.

Regretfully however, the matter is further compounded by mother-in-law syndrome. They, who are women themselves, always insist in having grandchildren in the family thereby torturing the gentle life of the new bride. But this is simply courtesy of patriarchal society, which has blinded these women, and therefore, a second wife is

suggested for men. This, precisely, is what happens in Ije and Dozie's case in Okoye's *Behind the Clouds*. It is this same crisis that befalls Beatrice as she gives in to the antics of the false prophet, Apostle Joseph, to make her pregnant so that she could gain security in her home. Today, the seeds of the prophets, herbalists, and 'babalawos' (as they are called in Nigeria) are used in women. Incidentally, she cannot refuse this crazy remedy because her security in her home would be on the line.

Buchi Emecheta's *the Bride Price* (1976) is, as well, a heart-touching tale of childlessness that tortures the mother of the protagonist, Aku-nna. At just 13 years of age, she notices her village women spite her mother through song for her barrenness. In order to escape from this, the mother relocates to her village to recharge her fertility. Sadly, the mother recollects her plight going from one native doctor to even joining the Cherubim and Seraphim sect and returned to their hometown, Ibuza, with the intention of appeasing their Oboshi river deity in order to receive blessing of offspring (2).

Mrs Osaigbovo in Grace Okafor's *He Wants to Marry Me Again* (1996) is in stiff opposition with, unfortunately, her mother-in-law in her patriarchal trance over Mrs Osaigbovo's inability to give the grandmother a grandchild. The husband, Mr Osaigbovo, further complicates the challenge by being hedonistic with girls and his wife lives by comparison!

The soldier husband succeeds in ruining the marriage by up-staging a housemaid, Odion, as co-wife. When peace turns to pieces in the home, Mrs Osaigbovo had to fall back on furthering her education. As a late starter, a personalised adult education class with her children as her teachers, she endures and her brother pays her school fees for formal examination. She rose from that scratch to acquire university education. She was no longer suppressed.

4.2 Power and Gender

To understand power and gender as it affects women empowerment is to firstly understand the theory of power itself. Power consideration shows the powerlessness of people, in our case, women; and how that they might emerge out of the doldrums. Hence, this section will facilitate a deeper comprehension of states characterised by practices of disempowerment, powerlessness, and the various methods employed by individuals and communities to assert control over their lives and surroundings.

4.3 Theories of Power: A Brief History

Doubtless, this section makes no pretence to having adequately made a comprehensive examination of the available body of literature concerning power theories. What it does is a beginning with the history of the thought about power in the social sciences in general and narrows it down to gender aspects by relating only to the most prominent theories as they grow. It exploits relevant elements conducive to formulating a theory of

empowerment, including the examination of women's empowerment or its negation within a patriarchal society. The modern thought on power can be agreed to have begun with Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* in the early 16th century, of the following century, precisely the mid-17th century. These constitute the timeless masterpieces of political literature yesterday, today and perhaps, for a long time to come. As Stewart Clegg puts it, these two contrasting books form the foundation for the two primary streams of thought on power that have persisted from their inception until now. Machiavelli embodies the decentralised and strategic perspective on organisation and power, while Hobbes emphasises centralisation. From this perspective, Machiavelli views power as a means rather a resource, seeking strategic advantages, such as military considerations in relation to his 'objective' and the objectification of women who are consistently positioned as the 'other'. On the other hand, Hobbes represents a causal approach to power as hegemony. In Hobbes framework, power is, therefore, centralised and focussed on sovereignty. In this regard, Machiavelli perceives power as a tool rather than a possession and strives to gain strategic advantages, such as leveraging military factors, in relation to his goal and the objectification that takes place, in our case, the women who are objectified, who are the 'other' (in the object position always).

So, in Hobbes' fundamental proposition, we can observe the existence of a complete political community, the society or a state. This possesses continuity of time and place, from which the power stems. Machiavelli asserts that total power is an esteemed and ultimate objective because, it is the end that has been solely achieved, importantly, it is rare. It won't be a wonder that it is difficult for women to achieve, because it is the final arbiter of unbalancing gender constructs.

In the mid-twentieth century, we see Hobbes' views on centralised power as the language and image of the world order. This power, it should not be forgotten, is heavily concentrated on the male, transcending to the homes of women naturally. The primary tradition of inquiry in the social sciences aimed for and continues to pursue precision and logic, focusing on the methods of observing, measuring, and quantifying power. Power was portrayed as a manifestation of will a dominant force that shapes the actions of others. However, in the 1970s, Machiavelli's contingent and strategic experienced resurgence in France, leading to the rediscovery of power across various fields of study. Figures like Karl Marx, contributed to an enhanced understanding of power in the social sciences, while Alfred Adler, inspired by Marx, initiated discussions on power within the realm of psychology. Friedrich Nietzsche also influenced philosophical perspectives on power. This section will not go into details as it has been done severally by other writers. The reader is encouraged to seek them, if only to sustain the understanding of power politics vis-à-vis gender considerations.

The social sciences began to recognise the significance of power politics during the Second World War. During that time, Max Weber (1947) emerged as a prominent figure in understanding power dynamics. While building upon Hobbesian principles, Max Weber introduced a fresh perspective on organisational thinking, particularly focusing

on bureaucracy in institutions. Authority and rule play crucial roles in power, enabling individuals in a particular social position to enforce their will despite resistance. Even when women attempt to resist men in their homes, it is often the men who ultimately prevail. Weber's interest lies in power as a means of domination, driven by authoritarian or economic interests. He conducted historical research to explore the sources of legitimate power, identifying three key types of legitimisations: traditional, charismatic, and the rational-legal (see Weber, 1947).

Conversely, while Weber studied the legitimisation of power, new theories sought to investigate the legitimisation of it (see Merton, 1957). Weber is critiqued for his idealisation of the bureaucratic organisation. It was discovered that Weber's organisational power of the bureaucracy hinged on mechanisation and routine of human life is wrong, and indeed, a threat to the freedom of the human spirit. Clegg's book *Frameworks of Power* faults Weber's prediction that organisational form as a power instrument only sabotages human freedom. Similarly, while Weber sees power in the context of the organisation and its structures, Dahl sees it through the boundaries of an actual community, but hinged in understanding of the ruling elites, which came to the fore after the Second World War (Wright C. Mills, 1956; Floyd Hunter, 1953). According to his theory of *Community Power*, power is vested in a concrete individual in the community of people, while the 'others' are prevented from doing what they prefer to do.

Power makes the followership to have no choice than to abide by the dictates of the power holders. Dahl's definition is still relevant today. Women would want to be free in the same shape of men, but are undermined by the society, they cannot. Where they do, they are laughed at and in so other cases, Charlotte Raven (2010) calls such freedoms, 'guilty pleasures', what Tasker and Dianne (2010) call "marked limits." To this day, most writers dealing with organisational behaviour make do with Dahl's definition of power is based on the premise that power is the ability to make someone do something that s/he would not have done.

In 1962, Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz presented an alternative model in response to Dahl's perspective. They named it 'the two faces of power'. Their model raises skepticism about true democratic and transparent nature of the decision-making process, which Dahl advocated. Bachrach and Baratz primarily focus on examining the relationship between the overt face of power – the way decisions are made – and which encompasses the decision-making procedures, which involves the capacity of decision-making altogether. They highlight the utilisation of biased tactics, known as mobilising bias, to suppress discussions on specific issues and thus influence the determination of what is deemed (un)important. They based their findings on the organisation of what is 'important' and accepted and 'unimportant' and thrown out (i.e. the non-decision-making process involves determining what issues or conflicts remain excluded, as they do not reach beyond the public display of power. This display is often limited to specific

rituals, beliefs, or values that favour the interests of a certain group(s) over others (Stewart Clegg, 1989).

Bachrach and Baratz's approach was, in turn, further developed by Steven Lukes in 1974. He adds a third dimension to the 'overt and covert' dimension, which he calls 'the latent' dimension. The overt dimension of power pertains to explicit political preferences that are evident in public political activities, while the covert dimension involves political preferences that manifest through complaints regarding non-issues. However, there is a third dimension that concerns the relations between political preferences and *genuine interests*. To Lukes, power can be measured by the ability to manipulate people's perceptions and implanting interest that are contrary to their own well-being. This latent dimension is particularly challenging to identity, as those influenced by it may struggle to recognise its presence. Lukes argues that the analysis of power should encompass not only open decisions (as addressed by Dahl's overt face) but also the entire political agenda. This expanded analysis aims to assess its alignment with the true interests of different groups.

The writings of Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1979, 1980, 1996) have broadened the discussion on the notion of power, encompassing various disciplines within the social sciences and the humanities. Foucault's influence has led to a shift away from the empirical task of identifying power holders and pinpointing power structures, rendering it less significant. His approach systematically challenges the belief in a structured and hierarchical power system, and regulating power. Now the question is, how do all these lead into gender and power? Let us begin with Sigmund Freud, often tagged 'the criminal Freud' for his anti-feminist aspects.

4.4 Criminal Freud

Mythopoeia rules by the day, yesterday, today, and tomorrow all over the world in matters of fetishism, superstition, voodooism, and women as second-class materials. The woman conveniently became the underdog. And the man was provided with arguments for his 'superior' sex over her. And it became too frequent to contend with questions like: Is not the male stronger than the female biologically? Is not the he-goat the one that is after the she-goat, or the cock the hen? Health experts have not helped either in easing off this male chauvinism. They have nearly irrefutably argued that societal blunder has made men to enjoy sex than women, since every sex is predicated on men's orgasm and many women, as only "About one woman in three reaches an orgasm while the man is through sting in her vagina, either before he ejaculates, simultaneously with his orgasm, or very soon after" (Llewellyn-Jones 55). In consequence, Llewellyn-Jones, a gynaecologist, frantically appeals to men to delay their orgasm so as not to be selfish in the game. Further, Sigmund Freud in 1914, we are always reminded, is instructive in arguments for the 'superior' sex. Isabelle Alfandary re-presents what Freud postulation that after a little girl sees,

Her lack of a penis as being a punishment personal to herself and has realised that the sexual character is a universal one, she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser in so important a respect, and, at least, in holding that opinion, insists on being like a man (Alfandary 25).

But this carelessness has been well and energetically put by some feminist critics that the Freudian phallic theory is a culprit of feminism. In consequence, Freud deserves to be dismissed and I hereby do so.

Freudianism has been successfully carried into the novel industry in Nigeria. Nigeria's first class story teller, Achebe, who is a first-generation writer in Africa, is most guilty in his classic novel, *Things Fall Apart*. 'No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women) he was not really a man', Ch. 7. In his *Arrow of God*, he would create characters that would arrogate to themselves some incredible power just because of the thing that dangles between their legs. He made a character, Ezeulu, to arrogate to himself the ownership of his son, Oduche.

In fit of temper, Ezeulu shouts down his bed mate who only correctly asks why her son was the one chosen to go to Christian missionary school as sacrifice to the white man. 'How does it concern you what I do with my sons (4)' was Ezeulu's response, a very appalling statement in feminism, if you ask me. Ownership of children, I believe, is a cooperative venture. Achebe fails to understand this concept and merely fuels the dissipated issue of ownership of children. When his attention was drawn to his lack of addressing female issues appropriately, he deliberately responds that issues of 'fundamental theme' would be disposed of first (see, Achebe, 1964:8). To him, therefore, the 'subject position' of women is not an issue. With people like him, women must continue to bear with the corrupted gender roles, perhaps, for eternity? But we digress.

The presence of a penis in men, which is absent in women, does not in any way indicate any form of superiority of men over women. Mythopoeia has implanted this bomb logic in societies so much so that everyone believes superiority of men over women because of the thing that dangles between their legs. To dispel this, would it be any wonder if a counter approach is named? Correspondingly, 'womb envy' rose to challenge the concept of 'penis envy'?

Stephanie Buck in 2017 analyses that the psychologist Sigmund Freud's 'penis envy' came under severe attack by the matchmaking 'womb envy' theorists who argue that it is men that are in apparent jealousy of women's pregnancy, vagina, breastfeeding, parturition, childbearing and nurturing. Karen Horney, Buck says, is Freud's first attacker. Her strong base is in her exemplary self where her father favoured her brother over her. Where then is the male versus female preference? she questions. Most often, she openly rejects Freud's theory on 'penis envy' arguing justifiably, that men's envy regarding women's wombs was an apparent possibility because men are always concerned about success and carrying on their names. Men's inability to perform women's natural roles pushes them to outdo women unreservedly in areas like

workplace, elected office, etc. Men even insist that a man must not be a woman. This statement by implication justifies envy. Why the insistence if not for the inherent envy, unexpressed anxiety? This shoulder-to-shoulder matchmaking analyses the intuition that compels men's notice of their subordination to women. Consequently, men's failure on women's natural roles further leads them to guilty pleasures of masturbation. Not surprising, this matchmaking is taken into the novel industry in Africa.

Because the woman's second position is emphasised too easily and therefore, lost in anonymity to the benefit and enhancement of the household, supporters of 'womb envy' theory, in highly but justifiable anger, disgust and total disillusionment, rewrite the woman's history by creating, for example in African novel industry, female characters who excessively tower over their men in mental and material achievements. Works in this category include Buchi Emecheta's *The Second Class Citizen*, Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*, wherein there is role reversal as men are regarded (in apparent revenge, it would appear) no more than instruments for procreation, and her *Efuru* wherein men are total nonentities; I refer to two of Efuru's husbands here. There is also, Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* who goes further than anger by noting a morality conclusion on wrongful blame of women for inability to procreate, while not at the same time testing the man's wasteful seeds.

By another implication, this matchmaking in the novel industry is a revelation of the fact universality practice of the theory. There is no world of difference between the western and African practice of men's subordination to women, or vice versa. Why is it then, that it is the woman that is blamed? It has always been a story of unbalanced assessment, judgement, and acceptance of the norm. This, by the instrument of an ought needs to be checked. Women are likely to face relief when such reversal games are pushed forward; 'womb envy' is a good match for 'penis envy'.

4.5 Gender Power

First, the term 'patriarchy' should be understood. To the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it is '[t]he predominance of men in positions of power and influence in society, with cultural values and norms being seen as favouring men'. Thus, patriarchy is deeply rooted and flourishes based on the logic that men possess greater capacities, centrality, and importance than women, thereby justifying their social, economic, and political dominance over society. It actively promotes the exclusion of women from decision-making processes and marginalises them when it comes to resource allocation.

Within patriarchal societies, lineage is frequently traced through the male lineage, and men exclusively hold positions of authority. Women, on the other hand, are limited to a supportive role in decision-making processes by providing relevant information. The term patriarchy encompasses the dominance of male hegemony in the majority of societies. In certain societies where lineage and kinship are predominantly determined by the male lineage, there can still be variations in the extent of male dominance,

particularly concerning significant matters such as decision-making within households, economic matters, and land ownership (Florence Stratton 14). But if you watch this observation carefully, what has been given to women is still on the back seat. Their powers are in the home only.

The functions of patriarchy are further distinguished in a critical manner based on factors including age, class, sex orientation, and race. For example, Achebe's novels reveal that societies are ruled by a group of elders in the Igbo societies, just as women serve on information power only. Rulership is distanced from women.

Kamene Okonjo and Zulu Sofola's works shift attention to another section of women in regional Nigeria. They (Kamene Okonjo and Zulu Sofola's works) shift similar information power of women among Yorubas from the West of Nigeria but also importantly add recognition of the ascension of women to the seat of total power itself, unlike the Igbo communities. Memorable stories of 'Moremi' are rich in people's ears. Sofola goes further by crossing the boundary to the Hausa city states in the North, where, for example, Queen Amina of Zazzau, held an exceptional position as the supreme ruler of the Hausas in the Zazzau Kingdom (this is, however, reported to be larger than life; see Ndagi, Abdullahi. *Nupe The Origin*). Renowned for her exceptional military strategy, she successfully engaged in numerous battles, achieving victories within the remarkable span of 1588 and 1589. Today, the famous Zaria city wall is known to have been built by her as a military strategy. The wall is still standing as an edifice today. Chukwu (2005) re-presents Adelaide Maame Akua Boadi who sees total power in women in matters of spirits and divinities which can be (fe)male. She observes that although

... Nigerian societies are patriarchal; women also have very strong informal roles and a whole spectrum of recognisable titles that run somewhat parallel to the male-dominated political structure ... These parallels may be viewed in the ways in which divinities are presented within most cultures in Africa. Ancestral spirits and the divinities of most societies can be male or female. However, the earth and water deities in Nigeria are mostly female (see, Chukwu 13).

Hoppe (2016) believes that in contradiction to Achebe who relegates women to the background, Ifi Amadiume in *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* sees power sharing formula among the Igbo men and women because women certainly had independent economic power. Boadi (2005) in 'Engaging Patriarchy: Pentecostal Gender Ideology and Practices in Nigeria' uses the culture of the Igbos noticeable in proverbiums, folklores, folksongs, riddles, and jokes, etc. to point to patriarchal dominance over women even when African myths do not differentiate between human beings (p.174). Societal norms are built on the expectation that women are to be compliant, and they are complacent indeed. But Boadi wants it to be strongly noted that,

While most Igbo women had their own socially accepted way of addressing pertinent societal issues. Igbo political institutions, according to Judith Van Allen,

embraced every adult — female or male — who chose to be present at the village assembly. Since status was ascribed rather than achieved, there were virtually ‘no limits to women’s political power’ (174-75).

Building on the concept of this book chapter, Boadi reiterates the fact of religion in empowering women and liberating them from the constraints of patriarchy (179). Despite advancements in society, patriarchy remains prevalent even in contemporary times. Escalated by colonialism, which weakened the traditional structures that once acknowledged the power of women in Hausa city states and the Yoruba Kingdom, patriarchy persists, shaping various aspects of communal African societies, including life philosophies. Belief systems, rituals, taboos, cooperative norms, and more importantly, in Islamic religious practices enable them to live a more fulfilling life and make substantial contributions to their society.

Gimba, I had observed in the beginning is a male feminist writer whose empowerment efforts for women have no parallel among male writers of Northern Nigeria. He has had to project the correct Islamic woman in full agreeable control of her world, the world of complementarity with her bedmate, her husband; not the injurious equality seeker. His novels have consistently stressed the need for women’s emancipation. His *Sacred Apples* is a case in point. This sacred impetus serves as a vital form of resistance and a survival mechanism within a patriarchal society. Particularly for African women, this impetus generates alternative models that challenge the patriarchal monopoly over literary subjects. African women’s heightened sensitivity to historical, spiritual, cultural, and sociological values and realities within in their societies enables them to create distinct literary perspectives. The spiritual space nurtured within the community has also influenced the creativity of accomplished Nigerian writers, offering the promise of unity, collaboration, and the increase in both the quantity and quality of literature within their societies.

To comprehensively explore the involvement of African and Nigerian male and female feminist writers with spirituality as a means of creative empowerment, it is crucial to delve into gender issues within African societies, cosmologies, literature, languages. Nigerian feminists, by reclaiming what has always been intrinsic to women through creative empowerment, offer compelling evidence of the interconnectedness between community, religion, gender, creativity. By reconnecting with African roots and origins, it becomes evident that there are no inherent traditional principles that justify discrimination against women, or confine them solely to the physical realm. Despite cultural complexities that simultaneously recognise the importance of women in society while marginalising them, the future of African women holds the potential for development and freedom. Within certain African societies, there are openings and opportunities that enable African women to negotiate for their rights and challenge the existing disparities. I talk of Obioma Nnaemeka’s Nego-feminism.

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10

CHAPTER FIVE: GENDER ROLES IN ASIA

5.0 Introduction: Gender Role

While the primary focus of gender development theories has traditionally revolved around early childhood development (Miller, 2016; West, 2015; Kohlberg, 1966 cited in Pickren et al. 2012, and Freud, 1916/1963), or have centred on adults (Deaux & Major, 1987), sociological theories centre on socio-structural factors in the development and functioning of gender theories (Epstein, 1988; Eagly, 1987; Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980). The acquisition of gender roles through social processes is commonly referred to as socialisation.

Children acquire knowledge about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for their sex through observation of others. This process involves observing the behaviours of caregivers and peers. When children deviate from societal expectations of gender roles, they may experience feelings of shame instigated by caregivers or peers. As a result, gender role usually becomes an internal guide for behaviour early in childhood. As many studies investigate, gender identity shaped by environment and society can be affected by gender roles. This bidirectional relationship plays a memorable role in human being life.

5.1 Social Cognitive Theory – Combined Perspective

Social Cognitive Theory is a new improved theory, which, as developed by Bandura, describes both aspects of psychological and sociological perspectives (see Rural Health Information Hub 2018). The social cognitive theory of gender role development indicates psychological and socio-structural determinants within a unified conceptual framework (Bandura, 1986, 1997). According to him most of the stereotypic attributes and roles linked to gender arise more from cultural design than from biological features (Bandura, 1986; Epstein, 1997). Sociological theories emphasise the social construction of gender roles mainly at the institutional level (Lorber, 1994).

Social cognitive theory recognises the significant impact of evolutionary factors on human adaptation and development. However, it rejects the notion that social behaviour is solely determined by biological evolution, disregarding the influence of social and technological advancements that create new environmental pressures for adaptation (Bandura, 1999). This theory encompasses various unique human characteristics (Bandura, 1986). The ability to symbolise is a vital capacity that enables individuals to comprehend their surroundings, shape their environment, and effectively influence all aspects of life.

Social cognitive theory posits that gender development is influenced by environmental factors and socially non-situated intra-psychic processes. It explains gender development through the concept of triadic reciprocal causation. According to this model, personal factors such as cognitive, affective, and biological events, along with

behaviour patterns and environmental events all interact and mutually influence each other in bidirectional manner (Bandura,1986).

The concept of bidirectional causation in social cognitive theory does not imply that all interacting factors have equal strength. Instead, it suggests that the rate at which individuals acquire knowledge or skills varies depending on the mode of influence. For instance, learning through direct experience (Bandura, 1986). Modelling, one of the key concepts in Bandura's social cognitive theory, is considered a potent method for transmitting values, attitudes, and behavioural patterns (Bandura, 1986; Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978).

Modelling is widely recognised as a highly influential and effective method of transmitting values, attitudes, and patterns of thought and behaviour (Bandura, 1986; Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978). This form of learning known as abstract modelling allows individuals to grasp underlying rules and structures beyond specific content or details. By extracting these rules, observers can generate new behavioural patterns that align with the structural properties. However, modelling goes beyond mere imitation or mimicry of specific actions, as social cognitive theory distinguishes it from simple replication. Modelling serves various purposes in gender development, including the function of vicarious acquisition. Observational learning in this context is influenced by four core processes:

5.1.1 Attention Processes

This observation and extraction of information from modelled activities are influenced by various factors, determining what is selectively observed at a given level. These factors include cognitive abilities, preconceived notions, and personal preferences of observers. Additionally, the remarkable, appealing, and functional aspects of modelled activities also play a role in shaping exploration within social and environmental contexts. The models themselves serve as examples of activities that are considered suitable for each of the two sexes. By observing the distinct performances of male and female models' children acquire gender stereotypes and roles. Consequently, both sexes learn about the roles associated with males and females through the process of observing models (Bussey & Bandura, 1984, 1992).

Additionally, once children can distinguish between the sexes, they exhibit a preference for paying more attention to models of the same sex rather than those of the opposite sex (Bussey & Bandura, 1984). This preference owes to the fact that observers tend to focus more on and acquire a greater understanding of modelled behaviour that they perceive as personally relevant (Kanfer, Duerfeldt, Martin, & Dorsey, 1971). As society places greater emphasis on adherence to gender roles for boys throughout their lives compared to girls, boys tend to show a higher degree of attention toward models of

the same sex (Slaby & Prey, 1975). But when children are simultaneously exposed to male and female models and must choose which one to pay attention to, they exhibit a selective focus on same sex models, resulting in increased learning about, and attention to, those models (Bussey & Bandura, 1984).

5.1.2 Cognitive Representational Processes

If a person does not remember modelled events, they won't be significantly influenced by them. To retain these events in memory, there is an active process of transforming and organising information, shaping it into rules and behavioural patterns. Additionally, preconceived notions and emotional states have a fundamental impact. Symbolic representation and engaging in these modelled activities not only improve skill acquisition but also boost the individual confidence in successfully performing those activities (Kazdin, 1979).

5.1.3 Behavioural Production Processes

In this conceptual state, the translation of symbols into suitable actions takes place. The mechanism responsible for this translation involves transformative and generative operations. As a result, individuals can generate numerous variations of the skill.

5.1.4 Motivational Processes

Individuals do not necessarily put into action everything they acquire through learning. The execution of behaviour learned through observation is influenced by three types of motivators: direct, vicarious, and self-evaluative. It is evident that individuals are more inclined to adopt modelled behaviour styles if they lead to desirable outcomes, as opposed to situations where no such outcomes are achieved (Bandura & Barab, 1971). People are motivated by the success of others who share similarities with them, but they are deterred from engaging in behaviours that they have witnessed resulting in negative consequences. Additionally, the evaluative responses individuals generate towards their own actions play a role in determining which observationally learned activities they are most likely to pursue. They tend to express satisfaction with behaviours that align with their personal preferences and reject those that they personally disapprove of.

5.2 Gender Role Conflict

Gender role conflict, as defined by Garnets and Pleck in 1979, refers to the adverse effects caused by societal gender expectations. It manifests as a psychological condition in which gender roles result in negative consequences, such as detrimental psychological states or impacts on individuals and others. This conflict ultimately hampers an individual's ability to fulfill their full human potential or limits other possibilities.

Additionally, sex role strain, also identified by Garnets and Pleck in 1979, refers to an internal psychological process that can lead to poor psychological adjustment, particularly a diminished sense of self-esteem.

5.2.1 Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura

When a society imposes strict gender roles, it gives rise to issues of gender stereotypes. According to Steffen's (1984) perspective, gender stereotypes emerge from the assignment of women and men to specific social roles. One key differentiation revolves around the contrast between homemaking and working outside the home (Eagly and Steffen 1984, 1986; Hoffman and Hurst 1990). For instance, women are commonly expected to fulfill caregiving responsibilities within the household, such as cooking, cleaning, nurturing children, and doing laundry. However, if a man in a household takes on tasks traditionally associated with women, such as washing clothes, cooking for the family, and nurturing the children, society may perceive both the man and the women in that family in specific ways. The society might label such a wife as "queen controlled," suggesting that she dominates her husband, while the husband may be seen as weak or cowardly. When society rigidly enforces gender roles and deviating from these roles leads to social punishment, such as being labeled a cowardly husband, queen-controlled wife, or other derogatory terms, gender stereotypes become a detriment to the overall well-being of society.

5.2.2 Work-Family-Gender Role Conflict

Masculinity, as defined by traditional gender roles, is associated with power and control in emotional situations, the workplace, and sexual relationships. Desirable male traits include competitiveness, independence, assertiveness, ambition, confidence, toughness, anger, and, in extreme cases, violence. Men are expected to avoid characteristics typically associated with femininity, such as emotional expressiveness, vulnerability (weakness, helplessness, insecurity, worry), and intimacy, especially when it comes to displaying affection towards other males.

Traditional femininity, on the other hand, is characterised by nurturing behaviour, being supportive, and prioritising relationships. Women are expected to be emotionally expressive, dependent, passive, cooperative, warm, and accepting of subordinate positions in marriage and employment. Traits like competitiveness, assertiveness, anger, and violence are considered incompatible with femininity and are generally not deemed acceptable for women.

These gender role differences have existed throughout history. Evolutionary theorists attribute them to physiological characteristics that were believed to enhance survival of the species. In primitive societies, men took on roles such as hunting and protecting their families due to their physical strength. Women, with their ability to

bear and nurse children, naturally assumed nurturing roles and also engaged in less physically demanding tasks like gathering and preparing food. These gender-based labour roles persisted into the era of recorded human history, as people formed early civilized societies and settled in cities.

During the industrial movement in the 1800s, a clear division of labour emerged, separating public and private domains. Men started leaving home to work, while women primarily remained within the household. Previously, both men and women engaged in respected and productive activities on their homesteads. However, as men ventured into the public sphere and earned money that could be exchanged for goods and services, they gained economic independence, power, and influence. In contrast, women's work was not easily transferable or valued in the same way. Consequently, women were reduced to a perception of fragility and emotional vulnerability that was deemed appropriate only for domestic tasks and child-rearing.

5.2.3 Rights for Equality and Equity Among Iranian Women

Authors have put forth the argument that Iranian women have experienced a continuous decline in their economic and social standing since the process of Islamisation. One thing that remains evident is the presence of significant gender asymmetry. In the realm of social theory, the concept of gender has attained a level of analysis akin to class and ethnicity. Across different cultures, the cultural perceptions of male and female as two complementary yet mutually exclusive categories, in which all individuals are classified, form a gender system that aligns biological sex with cultural norms and societal hierarchies. While the specific meanings attached to these concepts may vary, a gender system is always intricately intertwined with political and economic factors within a given society. Consequently, the cultural construction of sex into gender and the inherent asymmetry found in gender systems worldwide are seen as interconnected with the overall organisation of social structures. This raises a fundamental question: What factors contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality?

Gender distinctions are not arbitrary or innate but rather socially constructed and perpetuated through institutional mechanisms. The main driver of gender inequalities is the relative lack of economic power that women experience. This extends to areas such as marriage, parenthood, and sexuality, which have been thoroughly examined by various researchers. The gendered division of labour, both in society as a whole and within households, reinforces the disadvantages faced by women and contributes to the stability of the gender system. This situation is maintained through legal and ideological means. Even in societies that claim to uphold social equality, the definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" are legally and culturally established, resulting in differential access to political power, economic resources, and distinct cultural portrayals of men and women. These inequalities are learned and internalised, and the failure to acknowledge the disadvantages faced by marginalised groups perpetuates the cycle.

Many governments do not actively prioritise the improvement of women's status and opportunities, and there is a lack of widespread autonomous women's organisations dedicated to safeguarding and advancing women's interests and rights. In certain countries and social groups, high fertility rates restrict women's roles and choices, further reinforcing gender inequality. The legal system, educational system, and labour market all contribute to the construction and perpetuation of gender inequality and the ongoing disadvantages faced by women.

Sarah Rosenfield's research in 1989 demonstrated that women perform 66% more domestic work compared to men, sleep half an hour less per night, and effectively work an extra month each year. It is evident that these increased workloads and reduced time for rest and relaxation significantly contribute to stress and pose obstacles to women's mental health.

5.2.4 Multiple Gender Roles

Women who choose or are able to prioritise staying at home for child-rearing face more significant challenges in the event of divorce. These women often rely on marriage as their primary source of financial security. Unfortunately, society tends to undervalue domestic skills such as childcare and housecleaning, resulting in poor financial compensation for these roles. Consequently, women who have never been employed and subsequently go through a divorce often have limited options for securing sufficient income (Alkali & Zumilah, 2012).

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CHAPTER SIX: GENDER ISSUE IN
INCOME POVERTY AND WELL-
BEING AMONG VULNERABLE
GROUP IN MALAYSIA BY SEX
DIFFERENCES

6.0 Introduction

The process of economic transformation has had social consequences, leading to an increase in poverty rates among vulnerable groups such as the elderly, single mothers, and the disabled. Various studies have examined the relationship between income poverty and well-being and have found that a low income does not always correspond to a lack of human well-being, and conversely, a high income does not guarantee high levels of well-being. Therefore, measuring poverty solely based on income or purchasing power does not necessarily reflect the level of well-being. This chapter focuses on exploring the sex differences among households with vulnerable members. The objectives are to investigate the relationship between income poverty and well-being and to determine the impact of socioeconomic variables in explaining well-being.

Data for this chapter is derived from an Official Poverty Line Survey conducted in four Malaysian cities, representing different regions in Peninsular Malaysia. The sample consists of 281 vulnerable households, conveniently selected, with 202 headed by males and 79 headed by females. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, median, and standard deviation, as well as multiple stepwise regression analysis, are utilised to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The results from the regression analyses demonstrate significant differences in the contribution of socioeconomic variables to well-being based on sex. It is evident that sex differences in well-being exist, but the direction and magnitude of these differences are influenced by social and cultural backgrounds. These findings will be valuable in assisting government and policymakers in prioritising plans and policies for designing poverty eradication programs that aim not only to alleviate income poverty but also to improve overall life satisfaction.

Although the incidence of poverty in Malaysia has declined from 52.4 percent in 1970 to 3.8 percent in 2009, new forms of poverty have emerged, and inequalities, particularly among different sexes, persist. The dynamic nature of economic transformation has led to an increase in poverty rates, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as the elderly, single mothers, and the disabled. Therefore, strategies for poverty eradication must be gender-sensitive, pro-poor, participatory, and tailored to address the diverse nature of poverty groups, as highlighted by Nair (2003).

Different approaches have been employed to study and understand poverty, including indicators such as income, consumption, material ownership, household durables, and economic well-being. Studies focusing on well-being as a means to understand poverty have revealed that income poverty alone does not adequately capture the multifaceted nature of poverty experienced by individuals. It gives focus on the gender issues by sex differences, among households that have vulnerable members. The objectives for this Chapter are,

to investigate the relationship between income poverty and well-being by sex, and to determine the effects of socio-economic variables in explaining well-being by sex.

6.1 Literature Review

6.1.1 Income Poverty versus Well-Being

Poverty refers to a situation where individuals or families lack sufficient resources to meet their basic needs, including food, clothing, housing, and healthcare (Laily & Low-Income, 2010). In the context of income poverty, a household is considered to be in poverty if its income falls below a predetermined income threshold (Rojas, 2008). The World Bank defines poverty as a state of significant deprivation of well-being. According to the economic perspective on well-being, higher levels of income are generally associated with higher levels of well-being (Fuentes & Rojas, 2001). As income increases, more needs can be met, leading to an improved standard of well-being. In a study comparing income and well-being, Bleiweis, Diana, and Alexandra (2020) highlight that woman, especially women of color in the United States, are more likely to experience poverty than men, emphasising the need for targeted and comprehensive solutions to ensure their long-term economic security. However, Rojas (2005) found that there are discrepancies between the information provided by objective socioeconomic indicators and one's perception of their socioeconomic condition. There is no obvious indication that poor households as categorised by the objective definition recognises themselves as poor, whilst the households that feel poor are classified as being non-poor by the objective measure.

6.1.2 Vulnerable Group, Income Poverty and Well-Being

Rojas (2008) in Mexico examined the incidence of income poverty and experiential poverty (assessed through life satisfaction). The study found that 11.5% of individuals were income-poor but not experientially poor, while 11.2% were non-income-poor but experientially poor. This suggests that the experience of poverty can differ from the mere absence or presence of income poverty.

Focusing on disabled individuals in Canada, Uppal (2006) observed that happiness or well-being was negatively correlated with the severity of disability. Interestingly, per capita family income did not have a significant effect on happiness or well-being.

These studies highlight that well-being and poverty cannot be solely determined by income levels. Factors such as personal experiences, life satisfaction, and individual circumstances play crucial roles in shaping one's well-being, irrespective of income status.

6.1.3 Gender Perspectives in Income Poverty and Well-Being

Households headed by female have been found to be among the poorest of the poor because they are likely to be economically disadvantaged (UNESCAP, 2000). According to the BRIGDE report (2001) there is a concerning trend of increasing poverty among women, particularly in relation to the rising rates of female-headed households. In 2002, rural households headed by the elderly and female recorded an incidence of poverty of 28.6% and 25.7% respectively (EPU Malaysia, 2003).

Research suggests that there is a tendency for men to report slightly higher levels of happiness compared to women. However, the evidence regarding gender differences in happiness is not entirely consistent. According to Annette Svanberg-Miller (2004), studies conducted in Australia have identified gender differences in subjective well-being, but these differences are generally small in magnitude. The specific nature of these differences is influenced by various factors, including social and cultural backgrounds, as well as how well-being is perceived and understood within each gender. It's important to recognise that the extent and direction of gender differences in happiness may vary across different societies and contexts.

6.2 Methodology

6.2.1 The Data and Instrument

The data for this study was obtained from an Official Poverty Line Survey (OPLS), which was funded by the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) and conducted in the year 2008. The survey was carried out in four Malaysian cities, representing each region in Peninsular Malaysia. The sampling technique employed in the survey was multistage random sampling, which involved selecting areas at regional, state, district, and sub-district levels. The samples were conveniently selected for participation in the survey.

The data collection process involved the use of a questionnaire comprising various sections, covering aspects such as the head of the household and family profile, social and economic background, socio-economic status perception, and well-being. A total of 604 completed questionnaire forms were collected.

However, for the purposes of this particular chapter, only 281 respondents were included in the analysis. The sample selection was based on households that met at least one of the following criteria: being income poor, having an elderly person, being headed by a single mother, and/or having a disabled person. Out of the 281 vulnerable households, 202 were headed by males, while 79 were headed by females.

6.2.2 Variables Definition Measurement

6.2.2.1 Dependent Variable

Well-being (WB) is the dependent variable with 16-items question using overall life satisfaction scale. These questions were based on a scale of 1-10, where 1 means 'completely dissatisfied' and 10 means 'completely satisfied'. The questions asked were: 'On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the following areas in your life now?' The composite score for overall well-being, calculated based on the responses from the respondents, is considered a continuous variable.

6.2.2.2 Independent Variable

Socio-demographic variables in this Chapter are stratum, sex, ethnic, age, marital status, education, household size, house ownership, employment status, and perceived health feeling (PHF). Age, household size and PHF are treated as continuous and the rest of the variables are in categorical. Stratum refers to urban (1) and rural (0), while sex would be male (1) and female (2). Ethnicity refers to Malay, Chinese, Indian and others, and is treated as dummy variables. Marital status is categorised as widowed/divorced (1) and married (0). For educational attainment, it is categorised into three groups: no formal schooling, primary school and secondary and higher. This variable is later treated as dummy variables. Job status has three categories which are active in employment (AIE), active self-employed (ASE) and out of employment (OOE), and is treated as dummy variables. The house ownership is divided into three groups: owner, rented and others, and also is treated as dummy variables. Perceived health feeling (PHF) refers to the subjective evaluation of given health situations. It is measured as a mean of score of 12-items questions asked related to the frequency of feeling felt whether never, rarely, sometimes, frequent or always.

Economic variables are,

- i. household percapita income that is calculated by dividing the total household income with household size, and
- ii. perception of socio-economic status (PSES) which include questions on poverty perception, perception on economic well-being and perception on satisfaction of material needs of respondent's current household situation. A total score for the three statements is calculated to get the score for PSES. Both economic variables are measured as continuous variables.

6.2.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study is conducted using the SPSS version 16.0 program. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, mean, median, and standard

deviation, are employed to examine the distribution of respondents in relation to their socio-economic factors. These descriptive statistics provide a summary of the characteristics and variation in the data.

In addition to descriptive statistics, several statistical techniques are utilised to explore the relationships between independent and dependent variables. The Chi-Square test is employed to examine the associations between categorical variables. The Pearson product-moment correlation is utilised to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables.

Furthermore, multiple stepwise regression analysis is conducted to predict the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. This regression analysis allows for the identification of significant predictors and the estimation of their impact on the dependent variable. The stepwise approach helps in selecting the most relevant predictors based on their statistical significance.

By employing these statistical methods, the study aims to uncover patterns, associations, and predictive factors related to the variables of interest and provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between socio-economic factors and overall well-being.

6.3 Results and Discussion

6.3.1 Profile Respondents

A total of 281 vulnerable households were analysed for this Chapter, 202 males headed (MHH) and 79 females headed (FHH). For MHH, about 47% were income poor (IP), 33% were elderly (EP) and about 18% were both (IP+EP). As for the FHH, single mother (SM), EP, both (EP+SM) and SM+disabled person (DP) has the same percentage, about 20%, then, followed by SM+IP (19%), and IP (9%).

Over two-third of MHH and FHH lived in rural areas (Table 1). Malay MHH (76.2%) and FHH (83.5%) were the highest ethnic in this Chapter, followed by Indian and Chinese. The proportion for married MHH was higher (94%), whilst widowed/divorced FHH was 88.23%. The findings for crosstab analysis for marital status by sex was found to be significantly different [Pearson χ^2 (1, $N = 278$) = 0.018, $p = 0.012$, $\Phi = 0.814$], the pattern of relationships revealed that FHH had more proportion of widowed/divorced compares to MHH. For the education background, primary schooled (47.5%) was the highest for MHH, whilst FHH, the proportion was almost equal for three categories (no formal schooling, primary & secondary and higher). The findings for crosstab analysis for education background by sex was found to be significantly different [Pearson χ^2 (2, $N = 277$) = 23.39, $p = 0.0001$, Contingency Coef. = 0.279], the pattern of relationships revealed that MHH were more educated than FHH. About 42% MHH were still active in employment, compared to about two-third (66%) of FHH were out of employment,

MHH were 2 times more likely to be in employment than FHH [Pearson c2 (2, N = 281) = 32.84, p = 0.0001, Contingency Coef. = 0.342]. As for house ownership, the majority of MHH and FHH were owners with about 68% and 81% respectively.

The mean age for both MHH and FHH were about the same. As for the size of the household, there is a significant difference between MHH and FHH with t(DF=279) = 3.607, p < 0.01, with MHH (mean = 5) having a higher mean compared to FHH (mean = 4). Mean household income for MHH (RM873.45) was higher than FHH (RM748.14). This happened because 66% of FHH were out of employment compared to MHH (42%) who were still employed. MHH scored higher for perceived health feeling (PHF) compared to FHH. As for the perceived socio-economic status (PSES), MHH scored a higher mean compared to FHH.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Profile by Sex

Socio-Demographic Profile		Overall	Male	Female	t-Test /
		HH	HH		Chi-Sqr
		Freq	Freq	Freq	p-
		(%)	(%)	(%)	value
		(n=281)	(n=202)	(n=79)	
Stratum	Urban	93	66	27	0.810
	Rural	(33.1)	(32.7)	(34.2)	
		188	136	52	
		(66.9)	(67.3)	(65.8)	
Ethnic		220	154		
	Malay	(78.3)	(76.2)	66	0.522
	Chinese	27 (9.6)	21	(83.5)	
	Indian	32	(10.4)	6 (7.6)	
	Others	(11.4)	25	7 (8.9)	
		2 (0.7)	(12.4)	-	
			2 (1.0)		
		(n=278)	(n=201)	(n=77)	0.0001
Marital Status	Married	198			c2 =
	Widowed/Divorced	(71.2)	189	9 (11.7)	0.018, DF
		80	(94.0)	68	= 1
		(28.8)	12 (6.0)	(88.3)	Phi =
					0.814

		(n=277)	(n=202)	(n=75)	
Education Background	No formal	39			0.0001
	Primary (14.1)				c2 = 23.39,
	(1 - 6 yrs)	123	16 (7.9)	23 (30.7)	DF = 2
	Secondary (44.4)		96 (47.5)	27 (36.0)	Contingency
	&abv (37yrs)	115	90 (44.6)	25 (33.3)	Coef.= 0.279
		(41.5)			
Job Status	Active in				
	Employment				
	(AIE)	100			0.0001
	Active (35.6)		84 (41.6)	16 (20.3)	c2 = 32.84,
	Self	71	60 (29.7)	11 (13.9)	DF = 2
	Employed (25.3)		58 (28.7)	52 (65.8)	Contingency
	(ASE)	110			Coef.= 0.342
	Out of (39.1)				
	Employment				
	(OOE)				
House Ownership		261			
	Owner (71.5)		137 (67.8)	64 (81.0)	
	Rented	23 (8.2)	17 (8.4)	6 (7.6)	0.057
	Others	57	48 (23.8)	9 (11.4)	
		(20.3)			
Age Head of HH		(n=279)	(n=200)	(n=79)	
		57.48 ± 13.21	57.38 ± 13.33	57.75 ± 13.01	0.833
HH Size		4.73 ± 2.24	5.02 ± 2.10	3.97 ± 2.42	0.0001
					t-stat = 3.607
					DF = 279
HH Income		838.22 ± 610.37	873.45±576.58	748.14±685.01	0.122
Perceived Health Feeling (PHF)	Health	3.82 ± 0.59	3.85 ± 0.62	3.72 ± 0.49	0.095
	Mean Score (1 – 5)				
Perceived Socio-economic Status (PSES)		8.14 ± 1.76	8.25 ± 1.79	7.84 ± 1.67	0.075
	Sum Score (3 – 12)				

6.3.2 Well-Being Distribution

Table 2 shows the distribution of well-being (WB) in 10 equal groups (deciles). Overall, 41.6% in bottom 40 percent (mean=5.25), 38.4% in middle 40 percent (mean=6.89) and 19.9% in top 20 percent (mean=8.41). 44.1% MHH were in the bottom 40 percent, followed by middle 40 percent (36.6%) and top 20 percent (19.3%). For FHH, the highest was middle 40 percent (43%), followed by bottom 40 percent (35.4%) and top 20 percent (21.5%). The means WB for FHH in bottom 40 is slightly lower compared to MHH. For middle 40 percent is the same for both. However, for top 20 percent, mean WB for FHH is slightly higher than MHH. These findings were almost in line with earlier study conducted by Annette Svanberg-Miller (2004).

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to assess whether the WB (bottom 40%, middle 40% and top 20%) was related to the sex. The finding of crosstabs analysis for both was found to be significantly nodifferent [Pearson c2 (2, N = 281) = 1.748, p = 0.415].

Table 2: Sample Distribution across Deciles for Well-Being (WB) by Sex

		Male HH		Female HH		Overall
		Decile	Frequency n / % within	Frequency n / % within	Frequency	
Bottom 40%		1	20 89 / 44.1%	10 28 / 35.4%	30	
		2	23 Mean	5 Mean	28	
		3	23 = 5.31 S.D.	6 = 5.06 S.D.	29	
		4	23 = 0.92	7 = 1.11	30	
Middle 40%		5	20 74 / 36.6%	7 34 / 43.0%	27	
		6	17 Mean	10 Mean	27	
		7	18 = 6.89 S.D.	9 = 6.89 S.D.	27	
		8	19 = 0.40	8 = 0.39	27	

			339 /		17 /		56 /
	9	22	19.3%		7	21.5%	29 19.9%
Top			Mean			Mean	Mean
20%			= 8.37			= 8.50	= 8.41
	10	17	S.D. =		10	S.D. =	27 S.D. =
			0.61			0.52	0.58
Total	202	71.9%		79	28.1%	281	100%

Pearsonc2 = 1.748 DF = 2 p-value = 0.415 Contingency Coef. = 0.079

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.74.

6.3.3 Household Income and Well-Being

Table 3 provides a comparison of well-being (WB) across different household income (HHI) groups and also shows a relationship between both variables by sex. Overall, as we move from lower to higher HHIgroup more households are located in the bottom and middle 40 percent categories. About 34% of the total households who are in the bottom 40 percent of HHI are in bottom and middle 40 percent of WB, while for those household who are in the top 20 percent HHI, only 7.5% in the top 20 percent WB. However, there still exist households in the bottom 40 percent of HHI who have high WB (6.8%), also, household in the top 20 percent of HHI who have low WB (5.0%).

As for FHH, most of the households are in the bottom and middle 40 percent between both variables. 45.6% of the total households who are in the bottom 40 percent of HHI are in bottom and middle 40 percent of WB, while for those household who are in the top 20 percent HHI, only 8.9% in the top 20 percent WB. However, there still exist households in the bottom 40 percent of HHI who have high WB (8.9%), also, household in the top 20 percent of HHI who have low WB (2.5%).

Meanwhile, the trend for MHH is a bit different compared to FHH. Most of the households are in the middle 40 percent of HHI and both bottom and middle 40 percent of WB. About 35.1% of the total households who are in the middle 40 percent of HHI are in bottom and middle 40 percent of WB, while for those household who are in the top 20 percent HHI, only 6.9% in the top 20 percent WB. However, there still exist households in the bottom 40 percent of HHI who have high WB (5.9%), also, household in the top 20 percent of HHI who have low WB (5.9%).

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to assess whether the HHICategories is related to the different level of WB by sex differences. The findings from crosstabs analyses for all groups are found to be significantly different and we can conclude that level of well-being is significantly dependent on household income's categories.

Table 3: Household Income (HHI) and Well-Being (WB) in % of Total by Sex

HH Income	Well-Being						Over Bott
	Male Headed			Female Headed			
	Bottom	Middle	Top	Bottom	Middle	Top	
	40%	40%	20%	40%	40%	20%	
Bottom 40%	20.8	8.9	5.9	20.3	25.3	8.9	20.6
Middle 40%	17.3	17.8	6.4	12.7	16.5	3.8	16.0
Top 20%	5.9	9.9	6.9	2.5	1.3	8.9	5.0
Total	100			100			100
Pearsonc2		14.80		16.40			18.7
DF		4		4			4
p-value		0.005		0.003			0.00
Contingency Coef.		0.261		0.415			0.25

6.3.4 Factors Affecting Well-Being by Sex

Table 4 is the results of the regression analysis performed between the socio-demographic and economic variables on WB by sex differences using correlation and multiple regression analysis on all variables simultaneously. For MHH, six independent variables are significantly correlated; Malays (+), Chinese (-), Indian (-), HHPCI (+), PSES (+), and PHF (+). There are relatively negligible and moderate relationships between these variables and WB with a Pearson correlation between 0.162 to 0.490. As for FHH, there are only five independent variables that are significantly correlated; widowed/divorced (-), Malay (+), Chinese (-), owned house (+), and HHPCI (+). There are relatively negligible and moderate relationships between these variables and WB with Pearson correlation between 0.069 to 0.484.

Table 4: Explanatory Power of Socio-Demographic and Socio-Economic Indicators on Well-Being by Sex– Correlation and Multiple Stepwise Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Male Headed HH				Female Headed HH			
	Pearson	Unstd.	Std.	Sig. value	Pearson	Unstd.	Std.	Sig. value
	Corr.	Coef.	Coef.		Corr.	Coef.	Coef.	
	R	B	Beta		r	B	Beta	
(Constant)		2.052				6.481		
Socio-								

demographic

Indicators:

Stratum (Urban=1)	0.077	-0.505	-0.174	0.007	0.013	n.s.
HHH Age (yrs)	0.074	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-0.122	n.s.
Marital Status: (Widow/Divorced=1)	-0.048	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-0.306**	-1.233
Ethnic: (Malays=1)	0.261**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.332**	n.s.
(Chinese=1)	-0.225**	-0.921	-0.207	0.001	-0.484**	-2.480
(Indian=1)	-0.162*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.017	n.s.
HHH Job Status:						
Active in Empl. (AIE=1)	0.012	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-0.103	-0.699
Active Self Empl. (ASE=1)	0.016	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-0.055	n.s.
HHH Education (Sec.&above=1)	0.063	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.109	n.s.
Size of HH (#)	-0.067	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.136	n.s.
House Ownership:						
(Own=1)	0.113	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	0.207**	n.s.
(Rented=1)	0.099	0.576	0.118	0.046	-0.152	n.s.

Socio-economic

Indicators:

Per Capita Income (HHPCI)	0.284**	0.001	0.153	0.014	0.069**	n.s.
Perceived Socio- economic Status (PSES)	0.490**	0.284	0.371	0.000	0.421	0.191
Perceived Health Feeling (PHF)	0.413**	0.541	0.247	0.000	0.095	n.s.
R / R Square / Adj. R Square	0.610 / 0.372 / 0.353					0.642 / 0.4
F Statistic / Sig. value	19.058 / 0.0001					/ 0.0001

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Multiple stepwise regression analysis performs by sex results in few indicators being significant. Result shows that for MHH, there are six (6) indicators that are significant, with explanatory power of about 37%. Well-being of vulnerable household who headed by male is positively affected by PSES, PHF, HHPCI and those who lived in rented house, and negatively affected by those lived in urban and ethnic Chinese. The largest beta coefficient is 0.371 (PSES), follow by 0.247 (PHF), 0.207 (Chinese), 0.174 (Urban), 0.153 (HHPCI) and 0.118 (Rented),

Again, when multiple stepwise analyses are performed on FHH, there are only four (4) indicators that are significant, with explanatory power of about 41%, higher than MHH. Well-being of vulnerable household who headed by female is positively affected by PSES only and negatively affected by widowed/divorced FHH, ethnic Chinese and those who are employed. The largest beta coefficient is 0.444 (Chinese), follow by 0.288 (widowed/divorced), 0.214 (PSES) and 0.190 (AIE).

6.4 Conclusion

The findings from this Chapter would enhance our understanding of WB by examining its' relationship with income poverty and the determinants of WB using the socio-economic variables, with focus on the gender issues by sex among vulnerable households.

Firstly, from the chi-square tests performed on the socio-demographic variables by sex, we can conclude that marital status, education background and job status are significantly dependent on sex with low to high relationship. Also, the size of household headed by male is significantly higher than the female. Secondly, we can conclude that overall, majority of the vulnerable household are moderately satisfied with their well-being. Also, from the chi-square test conducted, there is no significant dependency in level of well-being on sex. Next, the level of well-being is significantly dependent on household income's categories for both male and female. The association between both variables is higher for FHH (0.415) compared to MHH (0.261). The observation that there are individuals who are considered poor based on relative income poverty measures but do not perceive themselves as such, while others who perceive themselves as poor have higher incomes by objective measures, highlights the complexity of poverty and well-being assessments.

Finally, findings on the relationship between WB and socio-demographic and economic variables using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients show that all indicators have relatively negligible to moderate with mixed (positive and negative) relationship with WB for both sexes. The significantly correlated indicators are Malays (+), Chinese (-), Indian (-), HHPCI (+), PSES (+) and PHF (+) for MHH, and widowed/divorced (-), Malay (+), Chinese (-), owned house (+) and HHPCI (+) for FHH. Further investigation to identify the best set of socioeconomic indicators that would predict WB, finds that six (6) indicators are significant for MHH, which are PSES

(+), PHF (+), HHPCI (+), rented house (+), live in urban (-) and ethnic Chinese (-) with an explanatory power of 37% variance in WB. For FHH, four (4) indicators are significant which are PSES (+), widowed/divorced (-), ethnic Chinese (-) and those who are employed (-) with an explanatory power of 41% variance in WB. Multiple regressions show large differences in the contribution of socio-economic variables to well-being by sex, indicating that sex differences in well-being do exist. However, the direction and effect size of these differences appears to be affected by social and culture background.

These findings hold significance for government officials and policymakers as they aid in determining priorities and developing policies for poverty eradication programs. The focus should extend beyond solely lifting individuals out of income poverty and also strive to create conditions that lead to a satisfying and fulfilling life, particularly for vulnerable households. By considering the multifaceted nature of poverty and addressing the various factors that contribute to well-being, policymakers can design more effective strategies to improve the lives of those experiencing poverty.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: GENDER
INEQUALITY AT PLAY:
STIGMATISATION OF AND
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST
SINGLE (WO)MEN

7.0 Introduction

In March 2010, two prominent researchers from Texas Tech University and University of Missouri conducted a study on ever-single women, which drew significant attention due to its controversial title and limited abstract provided in the initial press release. The title, "I'm a Loser, I'm Not Married, Let's All Just Look at Me," sparked widespread discussion and debate on online platforms, attracting mainly women (and a small number of men) who were themselves singles. Many expressed their anger and frustration towards what they perceived as yet another article that appeared to undermine single women. Several months later, the article was finally published with a clearer title: "I'm a Loser, I'm Not Married, Let's All Just Look at Me": Ever-Single Women's Perceptions of Their Social Environment" (Sharp & Ganong, 2011). The revelation that the controversial title originated from one of the respondent's (out of 32 of them) self-perception as an ever-single woman led to further questions and discussions. People began to wonder why the topic became the subject of heated debate. Are single women particularly sensitive about their marital status? Does being single carry additional implications, such as unequal treatment towards unmarried individuals? It raises the question of why only single women are often labeled as "losers." Logically speaking, shouldn't single men also be considered "losers"? Furthermore, why is there a lack of studies exploring single men's thoughts and perceptions about their singlehood? According to Levitt (2010), the reason behind this is the perception that single men are seen as cool and free to live their lives outside the institution of marriage. Wait! Doesn't that ring a bell? Isn't there a double standard here? That is the whole gist of this Chapter.

Other Chapters in this book discuss feminist and non-feminist gender theories that were introduced to address the issues of gender inequality and equity in society. This Chapter attempts to examine the notion that despite the many years since the introduction of the United Nation's convention, plans of action and guidelines, women all over the world are still at a disadvantaged. Even with the ever-growing number of single men and women. Singles are still being marginalised. On hand is the issue of being stigmatised against because of their sex, age, and marital status. While the discussion is more focused on women and scantily touches on the single men, this does not diminish the interest on gender issues and relationships, as literatures confirm that great majority of stigmas and discrimination involve women: singles or otherwise (Ntoimoa & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2014; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Sharifah Zarah, 2005; & Falk, 2001). Thus, 'she' is very much the appropriate pronoun when victim of marital stigmas is discussed, just as in many other types of gender violence and discrimination. Because women's discrimination and disadvantages are closely related to the privileges of men, Price (2000) believes that any discussion on women is actually done in

comparison to the situation of men and will not diminish the value of gender comparison studies (see also Khan, Nashi, et al. 2015).

The discussion on the struggles for gender equality and ending discrimination against women sets the context for examining the phenomenon of stigmatisation against single women, including those who are widowed, divorced, or never-married. Various theories are introduced to shed light on the stigmatisation process and how it can ultimately result in discrimination. The concept of stigma is defined, highlighting its negative implications for individuals who deviate from societal norms, particularly in the context of marital status. This aims to demonstrate the pervasive nature of issues and the challenges faced by single women in various aspects of their lives.

7.1 The Long Struggle towards Gender Equality

The issues of gender equality and equity have a long history of discussion and advocacy even prior to the initiation of United Nations conferences that specifically addressed the importance of recognising women's contributions in both public and private spheres. Efforts towards achieving gender equality have been ongoing and have gained significant momentum over time. hooks (2000) posit that feminist uprising began to occur in 1960s. To her, one of the most influential figures in the discussion of gender equality and women's rights is Betty Friedan, whose book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). In her book, Friedan addressed what she called "the problem that has no name," referring to the dissatisfaction and unfulfilment experienced by many women during that time.

"*The Feminine Mystique*" played a pivotal role in sparking the second wave of feminism in the United States and beyond. Friedan challenged the prevailing societal norms and expectations that confined women to traditional roles as wives and mothers, arguing that women should have the opportunity to pursue their own aspirations and find fulfilment beyond the confines of domestic life.

Friedan's book shed light on the notion that many women felt trapped and unfulfilled despite conforming to society's expectations. It ignited a broader conversation about gender roles, women's rights, and the need for gender equality. Friedan's work inspired women to question their own experiences and played a significant role in mobilising the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Through "*The Feminine Mystique*," Friedan helped to articulate the frustrations and aspirations of countless women and provided a powerful critique of the prevailing social and cultural norms. Her work contributed to the growing awareness of the need for gender equality and the recognition of women's rights as fundamental human rights. Friedan's impact continues to be felt in the ongoing pursuit of gender equality and the advancement of women's rights worldwide.

It addressed the way sexist discrimination affected highly educated white women with class privilege. However, Tuana (2004) hails Simone de Beauvoir's '*The Second Sex*'

written in 1953 as the most influential book on feminist approaches. Haas (2010) believes that Elizabeth Cade Stanton preceded Friedan and de Beauvoir by holding the first Women's Right Congress in New York in 1848 on the rights to vote. Many events took place after that, all in the spirit of ensuring the betterment of women, and indirectly the improvement of family life that includes the men. Because of these events, the issues of women, and women's contribution, are accepted as legitimate and important enough to be discussed and included in international forum.

The inaugural event that marked a significant milestone in addressing the unequal treatment of women and establishing international public policy to promote gender equality was the First International Conference on Women, also known as the Conference of the International Women's Year (IWY), held in Mexico City in 1975. Allen, Galley, and Persinger (1995) note that most significantly, IWY was the beginning of the merger of two previously distinct agendas: the women's agenda, and the inclusion of women's social issues into the political agenda of the U.N. Thus, the acceptance of the need for women's and ultimately, gender issues to be discussed at the uppermost internationally-recognised institution.

In the aftermath of that significant year, the United Nations embarked on numerous initiatives to address gender imbalances. The introduction of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Copenhagen in 1980 brought great joy to women worldwide. CEDAW, as defined by the United Nations (1995), identifies discrimination against women as,

...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, **irrespective of their marital status**, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or other fields.

(emphasis added)

However, it appears that many of the signatories of CEDAW have overlooked a particular group with a distinct characteristic: singles, including those who are divorced, widowed, or never-married. This includes individuals who have chosen to remain unmarried or those who find themselves in this situation due to circumstances beyond their control. Surprisingly, when the amendment was made to Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution in Malaysia to include the term 'gender' in discussions on discrimination, no consideration was given to addressing discrimination based on marital status. Regrettably, this oversight still persists today. The prevailing belief is that marriage is the ideal situation for everyone, without taking into account the diverse circumstances and preferences of individuals. Despite accepting variations in personal preferences such as favourite colours and food choices, society tends to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to marriage. This raises the question: Is this fair? Some argue that marriage can be perceived as a form of submission and a relationship based on power dynamics, rather than a true partnership of equals.

Throughout history, various forms and degrees of male dominance over females have been evident. Ancient civilisations such as the Romans, Greeks, and Babylonians have documented instances of male dominance, particularly in the role of the father, which was supported by societal norms (Berns, 2001). According to Garbarino (1992), gender inequality arises from a society's deep-rooted adherence to patriarchy, which promotes the belief that men are superior to women. This dominance can be manifested in different ways, including explicit acts such as rape and physical abuse, as well as through formal policies and regulations. During civil wars for example, women are targeted with gang rape to show dominance of men from the other side who execute ethnic cleansing. Men (and other women) of the same side, on the other hand, marginalise these rape victims who are seen as disgracing their families. One only needs to google the experiences of thousands of women in war torn countries such as the Balkans including Bosnia, in Afghanistan, Liberia and Congo to see such treatments, even in the present day of the so-called women's emancipation and the brouhaha of international human rights. Women are thus stigmatised and abused by friends and foes alike, regardless of the fact that the heinous acts are forced upon these defenceless women, by arrogant men. Subtle forms of dominance can also be observed through jokes and derogatory remarks that undermine the capabilities and worth of women, relegating them to traditional roles as reproductive agents and portraying them as inferior workers. These perceptions overshadow women's achievements in other areas of life. The deeply ingrained patriarchal norms, beliefs, and cultural values that favor men are challenging to overcome, even when addressing the experiences of single and never-married women. In everyday life, these dynamics manifest in overt acts of discrimination and degrading treatment towards never-married women. The stigmatisation of women, particularly singles and never-married individuals, is widely accepted and rarely challenged (Rozita & Zaharah, 2009). This raises the question of why such stigmatisation persists without significant scrutiny.

7.2 Some Theoretical Outlook

To get a clearer picture of why, let us look at some theoretical perspectives. Theories are not ends in themselves, but actually an aid to understanding or a lens meant to focus on certain things and enable minimisation of the others (Bahr & Bahr, 2001). Sociological perspective tries to answer the question of why gender inequality happens. The comprehension of women's experiences and addressing the persistence of gender injustice are crucial aspects, as highlighted by Allen and Walker (1992). To gain insight into gender-related concerns such as the stigmatisation and discrimination faced by women in general, including single and never-married individuals, theoretical frameworks such as Power, Gender Socialisation, and feminist theories can be employed. These theories collectively shed light on the occurrence of inequality in daily situations, stemming from the patriarchal perspective that portrays women as the weaker gender.

In Gender Socialisation Theory, socialisation process and social structure are significant factors that influence women and men's personalities, attitudes, behavioural styles and responds. Gender expectations based upon cultural and religious values are reflected in the portrayal of women in the media, as well as direct teachings in schools and families. Thus, one grows up learning how to do gender and fulfil the appropriate gendered roles (Coltrane, 1997).

According to proponents of the Power Perspective, human societies are primarily masculine and have been constructed based on the assumption that women are undervalued. Women are generally regarded as having lower status compared to men, and societies tend to be patriarchal due to the traditional roles of women in childbirth and child-rearing. Smith (2002) suggests that individuals belonging to the dominant group, often men, who hold positions of power in society and the workforce, control the financial aspects and have a vested interest in maintaining their hegemony over these positions. To uphold their power, they tend to exclude candidates who differ from them in terms of age, gender identity, and marital status. Consequently, this reinforces women's lack of agency within the family, workplace, and society as a whole. Hillmert (2010) believes that the concept of accumulation of inequality – gradually collecting or amassing unequal treatment in life – is useful in this Chapter to dissect how the never-married women are discriminated earlier on in life, through their work experiences and if these disadvantages are not minimised by having interventions, it will influence their later life well-being. In this case, mid-life events and experiences of late life outcomes have proven the notion that later life is a period of profound change and adaptation, but the seeds of many these changes may have been planted decades earlier (Ferraro & Shippee, 2009). It works just like how wealth is accumulated over time with good investments. The same applies to women's later life, as the life pathways will ultimately affect the outcome. With numerous and various types of stigmatisation and discrimination at work and at home and proven income gap between men and women, married or otherwise (Phua & McNally, 2008; De Paulo, 2006) single women's well-being in later life could definitely be compromised from their earlier days.

Feminist theories are highly relevant to our current discussion, as they offer valuable insights into women's issues (Lay, 2007). They emphasise that mainstream social and political ideologies have historically reinforced and legitimised women's subordinate position in society. From a radical feminist perspective, families are viewed as gendered institutions that mirror the existing gender hierarchy in society. The family is considered a significant agent in the socialisation of gender roles. Within this framework, proponents of feminist theory argue that power imbalances exist between men and women within families, and meaningful changes can only occur when families transition towards a more egalitarian structure. Feminists critique the sexist arrangements that portray men as primarily instrumental in daily life, as they believe such limitations on gender roles are detrimental to both men and women, as well as families and society as a whole (Anderson & Taylor, 2007). The liberal approach of the

feminist theory views women's liberation/empowerment as could be fully achieved without any major alterations to the economic and political structures of contemporary capitalist democracies and patriarchal societies. This is against the radical or socialist approaches that fight for total makeover of the structures as society is seen as utterly male-oriented.

According to hooks (2000), women face daily marginalisation and discrimination, as they are pushed to the margins of society. This forms the foundation of the feminist theory, which aims to understand and address the subordination of women to men. Acker (1987) emphasises that feminist theoretical frameworks primarily examine the origins of women's subordination, how and why it persists, and the potential for change, as well as envisioning a world without it. Modern feminist thought has consistently asserted that all women experience oppression, which implies a complete lack of choices. However, in reality, many women do possess some choices, albeit often limited. As a result, terms such as exploitation and discrimination better describe the experiences of modern women, as opposed to strict oppression. In a patriarchal society, sexism is structured in a way that imposes restrictions on women's behaviour in certain areas, while allowing freedom from limitations in other spheres. The absence of extreme restrictions may cause many women to overlook the areas in which they are exploited, leading them to believe that no women face discrimination (hooks, 2000). Within the feminist infrastructure, Steinem (1994) criticises earlier feminist theory as it has failed to recognise women beyond the family age as a centre of activism. Feminist theory seems to have been designed for those women just starting out in life and work spheres, and leaving younger female babies and older women as non-important entities. However, gerontologists and feminist gerontologists (Calasanti, 2009; Calasanti, 2008; Allen & Walker, 2009; Twigg, 2004; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001) have, in recent years, discussed ageing and the aged using the feminist lens. When examining the field of aging and the experiences of the elderly, the feminist perspective offers valuable insights into understanding why singles, particularly never-married women of a certain age, face stereotypes and stigmatisation compared to their male counterparts of the same age. Feminist analysis highlights the influence of gender norms and societal expectations that shape perceptions of aging and marital status. In many societies, women have traditionally been expected to prioritise marriage and family, and those who deviate from this norm may encounter social judgment and negative stereotypes. This differential treatment based on gender can be attributed to deeply ingrained patriarchal beliefs and the reinforcement of gender roles. Feminist perspectives help shed light on the underlying power dynamics and social constructs that contribute to the relative stereotyping and stigmatisation faced by never-married women in the context of aging.

7.3 Marital Status and Ageing

Historically, human cultures have regarded aging as a positive, natural process of gaining experiences and wisdom, accomplishments and privilege that ultimately resulted with an honoured place in society (MacGregor, 2003). However, the industrialisation and modernisation eras demanded people to have mobility and agility to adapt to constant changes of ever-developing technology, and along with these changes, many societies transformed from highly respecting their elders, to the obvious celebration of the young (Nelson, 2004). Thus, the birth of 'ageism' where ageing is generally seen as a burden to the family and society, and old people are discriminated against. Today, ageism in various ways is faced daily by older adults the world over (Sokolovsky, 1999).



Photo credit: tostado photo.com

Besides that, certain cultural expectations are placed on adults, including the need to be married off by certain age (Connidis, 2001). In any culture, marriage remains an extremely important social institution. It is pertinent to note at this juncture that this

Chapter is in no way reflecting any objection to idea of marriage and fostering the family of creation lifestyle. The survival of mankind depends on the ability to procreate; thus one needs to get married to have offspring (some eyebrows are raised at this point because to some people marriage is not a prerequisite to having children. Let us agree to debate that in another forum). As a Muslim author, the notion of marriage is welcomed wholeheartedly and, in most cases, can actually be considered as compulsory for Muslims. However, there are always exceptions to such cases where under certain circumstances, marriage is even considered as *haram* in Islam. Having that as the underlying foundation, the Chapter is actually an attempt to advocate respect and common courtesy to all, regardless of their marital status. Isn't that not one of the important tenets of any religion? The need to have common courtesy and respect for others, especially to those older than us? Even for those who are singles.

Thus, why is it so hard to accept singlehood? Generally, singlehood is seen as a failure to conform to that particular 'normal' patriarchal cultural expectation of marriage and seen causing disharmony due to the inability to adhere to the universal 'ideology of marriage and family' (DePaulo & Morris, 2005, p. 57). What more when occurrences of singlehood involve women, as opposed to men. In discussing the ideology of marriage and family, most people assume that *everyone wants to get married*, and in the United States and elsewhere, most people do get married. At least 90 percent of people will get married over the course of a life time with half getting a divorce from the first marriage in the United States. The obvious assumption is that partnership or marriage is good (DePaulo & Morris, 2005) and staying in a bad marriage is still better than getting a divorce and being single again (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). This can be seen if cases of abusive relationship in marriage are scrutinised. That said, evidences around the world are showing that currently, many people: men and women are staying single (never-married, divorced or widowed) and delaying marriages (Tey, 2007; Jones, 2007; Jones, 2005). Singlehood has become an increasing phenomenon throughout the world (Morris, Sinclair & DePaulo, 2007) as the mean age of first marriage continues to increase annually. For Malaysians, it used to 23.8 years old in 1970, but by 2015, it is estimated to be at 33 or no marriage at all.

In discussing singlehood, sociologist Peter Stein proposes the 'typology of singlehood' to distinguish between the groups of people who stay single as temporary or stable (permanent) situation, voluntarily or involuntarily. The typology could explain why some studies found singles to be happy and contented, while some others remained unhappily single. For those voluntarily choosing to stay singles, the world of singlehood is seen as a blessed, enjoyable and fun with so many things to be shared with the rest (McCulley, 2004). And for those who involuntarily staying single and lacking faith in religion and fate, singlehood could be a trying time indeed; fills with unhappy, lonely moments and affects the overall well-being (DePaulo, 2006).



■ Fabulous Feline: Known around Times Square as New York's fabulous feline, 11-month-old tiger cat Bibi relaxes in her special-built carriage as her owner, Miss Dorinda Ford, takes her for a pleasure ride. The Texas-born spinster lives alone with Bibi in a Harlem apartment.

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Lo and behold: the future of *every* single woman

(Photo credit:blogs.riverfronttimes.com)

Tallentire (2006) believes that marital status fractures women into identities that are deeply structured by the relations of power and privilege, creating some fundamental distinctions between the married and the never-married women. While there is relative paucity of research on single women globally, research on the never-married or ever-single women is relatively new. Researchers have just started to conduct empirical

studies especially on the life experiences and their identities. Research has also been focused on the negative perceptions towards and the discrimination against the singles (Craig, 2005; DePaulo, 2006; &Ord, 2008). All that and plus the imminent feeling of aloneness as portrayed by the above picture of an elderly single woman who has only a cat for company. The journalist openly called her a 'spinster' in the caption, which would not be so kindly received in the present day. The image pushes the author to imagine Miss Ford's life as a lonely elderly person, up to the point that she had ample time to groom her cat, and take it with her everywhere using a special carrier just like a substitute for her own child. This kind of images tend to make one forget about the existence of fictive family, the warmth of the extended family of origin and numerous friends that Miss Ford may have. Just as *all* married women are considered happy, *all* singles are seen as definitely miserable beings.

Many books on family issues have forgotten to include the existence of single never-married women (and men) despite their increasing number all over the world, because the phenomenon is still viewed as 'deviant' (Allen & Pickett, 1987). It is not accepted as the normal human life cycle (Haber, 2006). Singlehood is the complete contradictory to the universal, normative ideal picture of a family life. However, Judith Stacey, a sociologist said it spot on "My strong objection is to the notion that there's one kind of relationship that's best for everyone". Some researchers who discuss the well-being of the never-married are noticeably sceptical of how the never-married could possibly be happy (Hawkins & Booth, 2007). Forget about the enormous occurrences of divorces, separation and publicly humiliating court cases that undoubtedly signify the unhappiness levels of the married people. This selective forgetfulness is enhanced by most writers who see the unmarried stage in older age as the 'transition' to a stage of singlehood (Connidis, 2001). This can be considered quite irrational, as the fact is that people are born single and only transited to the marriage state by a certain age. On the other hand, there are family theorists/gerontologists who view singlehood as an important life pathway. Rather than treating marriage as a normative component of human development, they view it from the life course perspectives where variables such as marriage, home leaving and childbearing can be put together and/or able to stand on its own as an individual life course variable (White, 2001; Allen & Pickett, 1987). With the present trend of delaying or non-marriage, probably this is the way discussions should be undertaken in the future. With that kind of perspective, there is hope that the end of stigmatisation and discrimination of singles is somewhere near the horizon. But for now, what exactly is stigma and why does it continue to exist? The next section provides some answers to that.

7.4 Stigma Defined

Stigma typically refers to negative beliefs associated with a particular group of people who are perceived as deviating from societal norms (Kamen, 2010). Stigmas are not

based on an individual's personal character but rather on shared characteristics or traits that are acquired through actions or have limited potential for change. These traits can encompass various aspects such as race, gender, marital status, disability, or body size. Stigma can be seen as an invisible form of disapproval that serves to separate "insiders" from "outsiders" and establish boundaries for inclusion within a given group (Falk, 2001, p.17). Stigmatisation can be manifested through the usage of terms in languages. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis posits that surroundings can only be understood via the language used (Eliason, 2005). This concept constructs the belief that individuals who do not speak the same language and unable to understand the nuances of that specific language do not live in the same world.

Stigma is not a new concept, and throughout history, people have experienced stigmatisation, which often leads to discrimination (Falk, 2001). Individuals associated with stigmatised traits may internalise the belief that they are unworthy or undesirable, leading to compromised self-esteem (Bell & Yans, 2008). Stigma can also result in reduced self-satisfaction and potentially contribute to depression (Rusch, Corrigan, Powell, Rajah, Olschewski, & Wilkins, 2009). In the case of singles and the never-married, societal pressure to conform and enter into marriage is prevalent (Wulf, 2000). Psychological distress can arise when individuals do not meet the expected timeline for marriage, as they may feel like they don't fit into accepted societal norms. As a result, stigmatisation can lead to ostracism, belittlement, and disempowerment (Bell & Yan, 2008). Through stigmatisation, social norms and moral standards are developed and upheld by society. Stigmatised individuals are often judged and looked down upon due to their differences or their specific circumstances (Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2009). Stigma can be perpetuated through various means, including media portrayals. For example, popular television series like *Sex and the City* often depict single women as being solely focused on finding a husband. Moreover, stigma can be conveyed through language, derogatory terms, and discriminatory actions directed at others. For example, all older adults are judged to be lacking in mental and physical activities because of the ageing process, despite the fact that there are some very healthy and mentally alert older people. The term ageism conceptualises these beliefs of older adults. Being an unmarried woman is also connected to negative meanings, because she is single or that she is seen as not being whole because she does not have a partner. It is important to recognise that the statements you mentioned reflect societal stereotypes and prejudices, rather than accurate representations of single women. Stereotyping single women as pitiful, unwanted, or sad is an unfair generalisation that overlooks the diverse experiences, choices, and strengths of individuals. Similarly, labelling all single women as "old spinsters" who are cold and lonely perpetuates ageism and further reinforces negative assumptions. It is crucial to challenge these stereotypes and recognise that individuals' worth and happiness are not determined solely by their marital status. People lead fulfilling and meaningful lives in various ways, regardless of their relationship status.

It traces back to ancient times in human history. Unmarried women, including widows and divorcees, were perceived as immoral troublemakers in the 17th century and older women were often accused of witchcraft (Norton, 1984). Consequently, these women were marginalised and even faced execution for not having husbands (Chambers-Schiller, 1984). By the 19th century, women began to be recognised as distinct individuals separate from men (Marinovitch, 1988). Towards the late 19th century, women themselves started considering remaining single as a viable option due to increased work opportunities. Nevertheless, marriage continued to be widely regarded as the socially acceptable state for adult women. Although there has been significant progress since the era of witch trials, these beliefs still persist and will be further examined in the following section.

7.5 Stigmatisation and Discrimination of Single (Wo)men

Singlism refers to the phenomenon identified by DePaulo and Morris (2005), which involves the stigmatisation and discrimination faced by individuals who have never been married, regardless of gender. This form of discrimination occurs in a society where the dominant ideology emphasises marriage and family, and it permeates various aspects of daily life, including thoughts, interactions, laws, and social policies that favor couples over singles (Sharp & Ganong, 2011; DePaulo, 2006; DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Unfortunately, these incidents often go unnoticed and are not recognised as instances of stigma and discrimination. Despite the increasing number of single individuals worldwide, studies consistently demonstrate that being single is still viewed as a negative status (DePaulo & Morris, 2006) were traditionally,

... singleness has operated as a marginalised status while heterosexual couples have occupied a privileged position that confers upon its inhabitants a range of social, economic and symbolic rewards

(Budgeon, 2008, p. 301).

The researchers believe that singlism is prevalent in both America and Malaysia due to the strong emphasis on marriage and family as societal norms (Calasanti, 2008; DePaulo & Morris, 2005). This cultural influence is particularly evident in Asian societies, where religious and traditional values have shaped expectations for women to be submissive, reserved, and obedient to men (Adler, 1994, p.2). Asian women are often socialised to be passive, soft-spoken, and conform to proper conduct (Mi, 1984). In Malaysia, Malay women are specifically raised to be submissive and traditionally regarded as second-class citizens, while Malay men are typically viewed differently (Badriyah, 1988). However, it is important to note that societal expectations of marriage and motherhood are prevalent in patriarchal societies, considering them crucial stages in a woman's life (Maeda, 2006). This perception is particularly strong among Muslims in Malaysia, as Islamic teachings promote marriage (Rozita & Zaharah, 2009). Consequently, never-married women are negatively labelled as 'anak dara lanjut usia' or

'anak dara tua' in Malaysia, which translates to 'old virgin' or the equivalent of spinsters. Similarly, in the United States, never-married women are referred to as 'old maids', 'spinsters', or 'losers', while in Japan, they are called 'leftover' or 'parasite singles'. Notably, there is a lack of equivalent demeaning terms for men in similar situations, highlighting the manifestation of gender inequality through derogatory language.

Various experimental studies have examined stereotypes and stigmatisation of single individuals (Maeda, 2006; DePaulo, 2006; Etaugh & Birdoes, 1991). These studies have consistently found that singles are harshly judged by both single and married men and women. They are often perceived as socially immature, maladjusted, irresponsible, unhappy, and lonely compared to their married counterparts. Surveys and quasi-experimental studies conducted by Bell and Yans (2008) demonstrated that single women were evaluated as less attractive, morally and emotionally unstable, and less responsible and dependable than their married peers. Single women also face interpersonal discrimination and differential treatment. Therefore, it is important to recognise that stigmatisation can lead to discrimination (Bell & Yans, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2009). In another study by Morris, Sinclair, and DePaulo (2007), housing discrimination faced by single individuals was examined, involving rental agents and undergraduate participants. The questions asked were,

1. Whether participants prefer leasing properties to married couples versus singles when presented with equally qualified applicants including in terms of race, age, income and occupation; and
2. Whether participants perceive discrimination against single as legitimate.
3. The overall findings validate the presence of stigmatisation and discrimination against single individuals. Both undergraduate participants and rental agents displayed a strong preference for leasing to married couples rather than single women, single men, cohabiting couples, or opposite-sex friends. The underlying assumption behind this preference is that singles are more likely to be financially irresponsible, immature, and prone to rental payment delinquency compared to married couples.
4. Regarding question (ii), even among single participants themselves, there was limited objection to the stereotyping and discrimination against singles, possibly due to a lack of awareness regarding the stigmatisation. Morris et al. (2007) suggest that people are generally more accepting of stigmatisation and discrimination based on marital status. This acceptance stems from the perception that marital status is controllable or changeable, unlike factors such as race and sex, although this may not be true for all singles who desire to marry but are unable to do so. Consequently, participants deemed discrimination against singles as more legitimate compared to discrimination against individuals based on factors like race or weight. The researchers concluded that the perceptions and treatment of married and single individuals reflect the prevailing ideology of marriage and family, whereby married adults are considered more valuable, important, and deserving, irrespective of other personal accomplishments, including professional achievements.

5. In Malaysia, instances of stigmatisation and discrimination against never-married individuals are widespread but often go unrecognised. For instance, similar to many other countries, various tax exemptions are provided exclusively to married individuals, particularly those with children (DePaulo, 2006). In contrast, very limited initiatives are offered to singles who also contribute to the advancement of the country. A thorough examination of the Malaysian tax form confirms this practice. This disparity exists despite the fact that many never-married women bear the primary caregiving and financial responsibilities for their elderly parents and grandparents (Rozita & Zaharah, 2009; Connidis, 2001; Simon, 1987). These individuals could greatly benefit from additional tax rebates for medical expenses, currently set at only RM5000 annually, considering that even a minor operation can quickly exhaust that amount. The existing taxation framework indicates an underlying belief that singles are independent entities who do not support anyone else in the family, besides their parents. This belief persists despite Malaysians' strong sense of close-knit extended family traditions and the responsibility of caring for both the family of origin and the family created through marriage. Personal communications with various agencies and scrutiny of their official websites also revealed additional instances that exemplify these underlying beliefs,

6. Adoption of children can be done through the National Registration Department [Registration of Adoption Act 1952 (ACT 253)] or through the Court [Adoption Act 1952 (ACT 257)]. A married couple can easily adopt a child if they are eligible, but a widow or widower or an unmarried or divorced person who fulfils the strict requirements still need to get a special consent from the Ministers of Health, and Welfare, (The Malaysian Bar, 2012) now known as the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development. In good faith to ensure safety and welfare of a child, unintentionally the singles are judged on a different platform than the married ones. They could be judged as not mature enough as marriage is seen as a pathway to adulthood, despite the fact that they are competent enough in other spheres: mentally, psychologically, spiritually and financially stable and may have extensive family network;

i. While single mothers received many assistances from the Government including renting and buying a flat in the Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory (DBKL)'s People's Housing Projects (PPR), the never-married ones find it almost impossible to do so. This is simply because to be eligible for consideration, one has to be married with children, be above 21 years old and whose household income is below RM2,000 (Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur, 2012; Fazleena, 2011). With price of properties soaring in the Klang Valley, many singles are forking out extra money renting or buying houses from private developers as they are deemed ineligible to get government-funded housing because of their marital status;

ii. Even though a single (wo)man has fulfilled other requirements, s/he is not eligible to get a domestic help for herself (or himself) as the Immigration Department of Malaysia has a standing rule that the maid's employer must be married with children under 15 years old or have parents who are sick/ill (Immigration

Department of Malaysia, 2012). Thus, singles can only legally secure domestic help for their sickly parents, but not for themselves. One need not wonder why there are so many cases of illegal immigrant domestic helpers in this Country; and

iii. Public servants in Malaysia are given housing allowances according to their grades. In lieu of that, they can choose to stay in Government's quarters. In Putrajaya, Government quarters come in various forms: from landed property (bungalows to terrace houses) to apartments and flats. Generally, the Management and Professional group and above are given the landed properties which have three, four, five or more rooms according to their eligibility. However, an officer of the Government from the Management and Professional group who is not married will not be given a landed property and only be eligible for the apartments that are designated for the supporting staff. To be eligible for landed properties, one needs a valid reason for example by having a disabled parent living with her/him. This is the norm and non-negotiable, despite the fact that the officer's substantial amount of housing allowance which is the same amount as his/her married friends' is deducted from his/her salary monthly, or the fact that there are vacancies in the landed housing areas (Personal Communication, 2012). Shouldn't the amount be deducted appropriately according to the type of housing, then?

The instances discussed above demonstrate how the pervasive ideology of marriage and family is deeply ingrained in everyday life, often without conscious awareness. This incorporation comes at the expense of singles and never-married individuals. However, with the global trend of delaying marriage and an increase in non-marital relationships, the stigmas and discrimination associated with singleness are starting to be challenged. Questions are being raised about the fairness and justice of these practices. Is it fair to judge someone's worth based on their marital status? Does being single make someone any less of a human being?

These inquiries prompt a reconsideration of societal norms and values surrounding marriage and relationships. It is essential to recognise that individuals have diverse life paths and choices, and their worth should not be determined solely by their marital status. People's value as human beings should be based on their character, achievements, and contributions to society, rather than their relationship status.

As the global landscape continues to evolve, it becomes increasingly important to question and challenge the stigmas and discrimination faced by single and never-married individuals. Promoting inclusivity, respect, and equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of their relationship status, is crucial in fostering a more just and equitable society.

While the main issues of this Chapter are in the stigmas of and discrimination against singles, it is also profoundly important to realise that sometimes, these stigmas and discrimination happen because of the singles themselves: the way they act and the way they behave. Some single women mopped around looking for their life partners, and cannot accept fate and the bright side of being single, sometimes envied by many

among their married friends. Singles especially women are no angels, that is a given. Just like not all married people are bad hats either. But, central in this argument is the need to uphold righteousness over wrong, helping the oppressed, and being noble keeper of deference towards other beings in this world. The idealistic dream is for a world where people value others and hold them as precious, respect one another's differences and work with the differences for the good of all. Aren't diversities interesting? Whatever our lifestyle, religion, and culture are, what better challenge is there than to be able to live peacefully and happily together?

7.5.1 The Importance of Awareness

Looking at the record, many milestones have been achieved for women the world over since the inception of CEDAW. This is particularly true when we talk about the overt and obvious discrimination and violence against women. Yet, numerous covert and subtle stigmas and discrimination still prevail. These include stigmas and discrimination against the singles and the never-married. Flying solo in a married world is hard, with all the perks attached to the married status. Ask any single and they will tell you all kinds of stories of how they are (mis)treated daily. In every other step that they take, there will be someone who reminds them that they are different, some with good intention while some purely just out of spite.

It is particularly challenging for those who did not choose to be in the minority. While marriage is widely celebrated and embraced, there should be room for accommodating singlehood as well. It is only fair for singles to be treated with respect and accorded the same rights as the rest of the population. With the increasing number of singles and never-married women, it becomes crucial to listen to their voices and understand their experiences.

Instead of viewing singles as problematic or in need of fixing, it is important to recognise that some of these individuals are content and fulfilled in their single status. Research suggests that they can be happy, not lonely, and even psychologically healthier compared to those in troubled marriages. Being single can offer them a sense of freedom and self-actualization, as exemplified in movies like the Oscar-winning film "The Best Years of Our Lives" from the 1940s.

Rather than pitying or marginalizing singles and the never-married, it is essential to acknowledge their contributions to the country and society. Promoting and nurturing stigmas and discrimination against them, both overtly and subtly, only creates a disconnection between this group and their families, communities, and governments.

The increasing number of aging single women, who often have longer lifespans than men, highlights the need for further research to better understand this demographic. It is important to consider the specific needs of individuals in this group, especially never-married women, to provide adequate infrastructure for aging in place and ensure readily available support and caregiving elements. This requires the involvement of the state,

society, families, and individuals themselves in designing development policies that safeguard their well-being, particularly in later stages of life, considering their gender, age, and marital status.

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CHAPTER EIGHT: BALANCING
ACTS BETWEEN THE POWERFUL
AND THE POWERLESS: COPING
WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT
AMONG MALAYSIAN PUBLIC
EMPLOYEES

8.0 Introduction

In 2015, in Kosovo, Kamberi & Besim (2015: 580-92) discuss the Kosovo angle of sexual harassment of the working-class women, which is not too different from the Malaysian experience. But in Malaysia particularly, someone at the office whistles when you walk by, makes lewd gestures, and loves sending you emails with highly inappropriate words and adult pictures attached. Words uttered are like those spoken between lovers, or else they are unwelcome comments on your body parts. To show your open-mindedness, you paste a smile on your face and keep the irritation at bay. “Take it like a sport”, you say to yourself. “It’s only a joke” smiling blankly, you keep on pacifying yourself. You have just started working and do not want to make a scene by complaining about the treatment you have to face daily. But the ‘jokes’ become rowdier and more frequent, more physical and psychologically taxing. It comes up to the point that you feel demeaned, threatened and do not feel like going to work in the morning. You keep wondering what have you done to deserve this, what should you do? What can you do to stop this, preferably without much drama?

According to findings from a major survey in the United States of America, if you have faced the above situation, most probably you,

1. are a woman, specifically a single woman or a divorcee between the ages of 20-44;
2. have a non-conventional job;
3. work in predominantly male environment or have a male as an immediate supervisor;
4. have attended college and some graduate school; and
5. have been working for fewer than 15 years.

The above scenario is quite close to any working woman’s heart: either because she has either experienced it herself, seen it, read about it or it happened to her friends, her sisters or her relatives at one time or the other. The Kosovo Police in its yearly “National Studies” release of the **“2019 Research on Sexual Harassment and Assault”** disturbingly reports that “81% of women and 43% of men reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment and/or assault in their lifetime”. Also, at least one in two women would experience some sexually harassing behaviour during her working life (Fitzgerald & Schullman, 1993). This Chapter deals with another manifestation of the unequal gender relationship that is translated via sexual harassment at the workplace. Whitehead (1981) believes that gender relations are socially constituted and actually the product of historically specific forms and relations between men and women in the family and society. These historically specific forms differ from one person to another, from culture to culture, including when it touches on sexual harassment. The Chapter describes what victims of sexual harassment face in the public workplaces in Malaysia and what they did

to maintain equilibrium caused by sexual harassment. It is very important for us to understand what sexual harassment actually is, why it happens and what are some ways to cope should you or your loved ones face it. This is because studies have shown that with increased participation rates of women in the workplace, incidences of sexual harassment towards women would be unavoidable.

Here are some facts: Sexual harassment is considered very rampant with many countries around the world legislating sexual harassment as a serious misconduct (Levesque, 2000). Just google sexual harassment and you would get the extensiveness of the discussion on it. Sexual harassment has gained recognition as a significant issue in discussions concerning gender relations over the past two decades (Wilson, 2000). Numerous researchers consider workplace sexual harassment to be a grave concern (refer to Dine & Watt, 1995; Sabitha, 1999; Dorfman, Cobb, & Cox, 2000; Zarizana & Cecilia, 2001), possibly the most prevalent occupational hazard. Some experts perceive sexual harassment as an extension of societal sexism (Murrell, Olson, & Frieze, 1995), equating it to other forms of violent sexual assault like rape (Gutek & Koss, 1993). Such behaviour infringes upon the well-being of workers, leading to adverse emotional, social, and physical effects. Research also indicates that sexually harassed employees experience increased absenteeism, negative work attitudes, and decreased productivity.

Reflecting the severe detrimental impacts of sexual harassment, supported by evidence from various countries, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action recognises it as a form of violence against women. The United Nations urges member states to proactively combat this type of violence, aligning with the principles outlined in Articles 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which state...

Everyone has a right to life, liberty and security of person and no one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In Malaysia, the act of sexual harassment violates Article 8(2) in the Federal Constitution that reads "there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender ...". It should be clearly noted that harassers and harassees come in both sexes, and sexual harassment happens between sexes and within sexes. However, great majority of situation involves *one or more male harassers and a lower-rank female harassee* (Foulis & McCabe, 1997; Welsh & Gruber, 1999). And it can happen anywhere, not only at the workplace. Most researchers believe that sexual harassment is about power. Is sexual harassment really about showing dominance over the other? If yes, with the current spectacular rise of women to the top of the management ladder and in more powerful positions in the future, would it be possible that one day soon literature may show a surprising turn: women become the major perpetrators of sexual harassment? Then, 'he' would be the best pronoun in describing the victims of sexual harassment and for the good of mankind, let us try to avoid that by getting a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and peek into what is sexual harassment.

8.1 Defining Sexual Harassment



One of the problems in defining sexual harassment is the vagueness of the construct of sexual harassment itself. This is because perception and belief are learned everyday by members of a certain group, and becomes the norms acceptable to all members within

that group (Bandura, 1977). Due to various differences in past experiences and upbringing, Barry (2002) in support of Bandura, points that it is important to be aware that an event perceived as threatening by one person maybe a challenge to another, and perceived by a third person as quite normal. Personalities, cultures and socialisation (Roziah, 1994) frame one's belief and provides the framework for society to work; either inhibiting or fostering certain acts. Because of cultural expectations, victims of sexual harassment may be forced to act against their wishes, in order to maintain the status quo of the work environment.

Because of the above arguments, there has been no standard definition of sexual harassment *per se*. What is universally agreed upon by most countries and researchers is that sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcomed sexual conduct which often leads to a hostile and intimidating environment. Fitzgerald et al. (1995) characterise sexual harassment psychologically as “unwanted sex-related behaviour at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being” (p. 128). Sexual harassment may be divided into two categories, namely sexual coercion (direct consequences to the victim's employment) and sexual annoyance (has no direct link to any job benefit). As in any other gender related violence, researchers agree with Lengnick-Hall's (1995) view that sexual harassment should be perceived through ‘the eye of the beholder’ or the reasonable woman standard (Wagner, 1992). This standard is used in a number of courts in the United States of America which is a reflection of judicial recognition of the fact that men and women tend to view gender violence including sexual harassment, in very different ways.

Research have proven how a trivial and harmless incidence viewed by a reasonable man be seen as quite serious by a reasonable woman (Kanekar & Dhir, 1993). Because of the cultural differences, discussions on sexual harassment should take into consideration the types of actions to be considered as sexual harassment. The United States' Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) considers rape and sexual assault, wage discrimination and unlawful termination as part of the whole spectrum of sexual harassment. In contrast, Malaysia currently has no exclusive act for sexual harassment but in the process of incorporating that into the Employment Act 1955, but has specific clauses for rape and sexual assault in the Penal Code. In addition, wage discrimination and unlawful termination fall under the jurisdiction of the Employment Act 1955, and the Industrial Relations Act 1957.

8.2 Theorising Sexual Harassment

In trying to understand gender and social interactions, one needs a focus of analysis. Thus, let us see some theories that have been used in discussing sexual harassment at the workplace. Power, Structural, Individual and Gender Ideology theories are some of the most quoted ones. In the Structural Theory, the proponents believe that the differences in men's and women's attitudes/behaviours are the product of their different and

unequal roles in the workplace. Features of the organisation and the office environment/organisational climate predominantly occupied by male officers, emphasises the existence of opportunities to commit sexual harassment as it is found to be rampant among male towards female workers. Another area touches by the Structural Perspective's proponents in discussing sexual harassment incidences is that victims are new entrants of the workplaces and majority of victims concentrated at the lower levels of the organisations. Most victims are young women, relatively powerless and have comparatively limited knowledge of the workplace's culture and networks (Trafford, 1993; Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999).



Power Theory proponents believe that the majority group members who occupy the positions of power at work continuously try to maintain their dominance. This is easily done by eliminating people who have different traits than them, including the opposite sex. The theory assumes that women are often excluded from the formal and informal power structure, thus reinforcing their powerlessness at the workplace (Smith, 2002). Women who manage to join this power structure, on the other hand, try to ignore the powerless ones as to maintain their acceptance within the group. This also done as studies have shown many women considered other women as their competitor, thus, should not be helped (Vincent & Seymour, 1995). Hence, the inception of the 'Queen Bee' concept.

The Individual Theory addresses organisational decision as images develop among people, become shared as a result of similar experiences, or are simply a function of organisation-wide images. Organisations is said to exert influence on decisions by introducing standard practices, establishes communication channels, and provide extensive socialisation to members (Miner, 2002). In sexual harassment, this could explain why most victims choose to report harassment only when it becomes too severe for them. Standard practices, communicating channels and extensive socialisation of what the 'right' decisions to take overcome individual standards. The underreporting is an attempt to guarantee the status quo of the standard that has been agreed by many within the organisations.

The common theme in all these theories is that sexual harassment is seen as a manifestation of the power imbalances between men and women. Gardner (1980) believes that not only men want to rule, they also take measures to legitimise their reign. Despite modernisation, there is not much change in people's expectation towards both sexes: the gendered expectations for boys and girls. Thus, Gender Ideology Theory posits that gender typed individuals are uncomfortable with and avoid situations requiring cross gender behaviours. Sociological explanations of sexual harassment center around the patriarchal norms and stereotypes that grant men dominant status in society. These explanations highlight how gender roles serve as status characteristics that give men the power to engage in the harassment of women. In this context, societal norms and expectations reinforce and perpetuate unequal power dynamics, enabling men to exert control and authority over women, including through acts of sexual harassment. By examining the influence of these patriarchal norms and gender roles, sociologists seek to understand the underlying structural factors that contribute to the occurrence of sexual harassment. Smart (1987) justifies sexual harassment by men as normal and desirable for them as their roles accorded them the sexual predator roles. Simply put, males are supposed to be masculine and born to harass and females must be in feminine modes and are supposed to be submissive.

8.3 Scrutinising Sexual Harassment

In order to understand the experiences of sexual harassment: to examine how women cope and the factors influencing their choices of coping strategy, a study was conducted as a partial requirement for a Master's of Science in Human Development (herewith refers to as the Study). It is pertinent to share the portraits of the Study and of the respondents to enable a better understanding of the whole story of negotiating the balance when sexual harassment occurs. A total number of 16 female Malay administrators in the Administrative and Diplomatic Service participated in this qualitative study using the case study correlate. Respondents were recruited via the snowballing technique. All of the respondents have basic degrees in various fields with seven (7) having Master's degrees. At the time of the interviews in 2005, the youngest participant was 25 and the eldest 36 years old with eight (8) already married, and the rest were still single. The Study is retrospective in nature, where respondents were asked to relay their previous experiences. The harassment period ranges from a few months to four (4) years. At the time of the interviews, some respondents were still facing harassment. For others, they were recalling experiences they had faced with the incidences taking place within the last five (5) years of the interview. In-depth interviews were undertaken with the respondents, with triangulation done with observation, interviews with family members and close friends. To compliment those, comprehensive document reviews were done on related official documents, besides interviews with key informants from the Public Service Department of Malaysia and several relevant non-governmental organisations. Analysis for the coping strategies under discussion here was conducted by using the framework of coping as mentioned by other researchers as a guide, while adhering to the basic paradigm of qualitative research method where the data dictates findings. The findings were presented thematically. Let us see what we could learn from the stories of these Malay women on how they coped, which forms part of the whole findings.

8.4 Coping with Sexual Harassment

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984:178), coping can be defined as the ongoing cognitive and behavioural efforts individuals make to manage specific external and/or internal demands that they perceive as overwhelming or surpassing their personal resources. Coping mechanisms are the mind's way of responding to challenging or threatening situations. Psychologists consider coping to be a crucial element that influences an individual's potential for overall well-being. Ineffective coping strategies are identified as the primary cause of stress and, ultimately, mental disorders (Barry, 2002). The subsequent discussion will focus on coping and the various coping patterns adopted by the participants in the study.

8.4.1 Avoidance

The most used coping strategy is by avoiding the harassers. Like their sisters around the world, Malaysian women live in a patriarchal society with every aspect of their life is measured from a male worldview since they were young (Maznah, 2000). Foulis and McCabe (1997) reported that only 1-7 percent of victims made official complaints. These Malay respondents, maybe because of the way they were brought up, typically prefer to minimise negative behaviours and be blamed for the incidences (Levy & Paludi, 1995; Cecilia, Zanariah, & Maria, 2003). More importantly, the utmost important reason was because they feared repercussion since the harassers were of higher positions (Ragins & Scandura, 1995). Avoidance, however, is not without a cost to the organisation. Johnson and Indvick (2001) found that victims of poor behaviour from bosses, including sexual harassment, believe that they lost,

- 30 percent work time avoiding the harasser;
- 53 percent work time worrying about the incidents/future interactions;
- 37 percent less commitment to the organisation;
- 22 percent decrease their effort in work;
- 10 percent less time spent at work; with
- 46 percent contemplating changing job to avoid harasser; and
- 12 percent actually changing jobs.

With many among the respondents in the present study employing the avoidance strategy, it can safely be concluded that a considerable amount of their time at work was wasted unnecessarily to avoid the harassers. This directly affects their productivity and ultimately, affecting the quality of services provided to the public. A national survey reported that during a two-year period from May 1985 through May 1987, sexual harassment costs the U.S. Federal Government an estimated USD12.267 million. The modest estimation is derived by calculating the cost of replacing employees who leave their jobs, of paying sick leaves, and of reduced individual and work group productivity; excluding personal cost and anguish. Moskal (1989) found considerable decreased work effectiveness, increased stress, and related health problem, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover rate as a result of sexual harassment. In totality, Moskal concluded that a typical Fortune 500 company losses USD6.7 million annually because of harassment, excluding the lawsuit cost. One can only imagine the total cost of sexual harassment in Malaysia, as underreporting is rampant, and the mechanism of putting the Ringgit sign to these incidences is yet to be put in place.

8.4.2 Social Coping

Researchers (Gutek & Koss, 1993; Fitzgerald et al., 1998) found that reliance on social support from friends, colleagues, and family members to be the next frequently used

strategy, and is supported in the present study. In a widely discussed paper, Brown, Bhrolchain, and Harris (1975) found that the presence of one close, confiding relationship has a strikingly high protective effect against neurosis when an individual is faced with serious adversity. However, many of the respondents prefer not to let their family know about the harassment. Some victims are too scared to tell their family about the incidences of sexual harassment. This is consistent with findings from other research (Consumer's Association of Penang, 1988; Rubin & Borgers, 1990; Collinson & Collinson, 1992; du Judicibus & McCabe, 2001; Wasti & Cortina, 2002) where society put the blame on victims of sexual violence (who are mostly women) for wearing certain sexy clothes, for behaving in certain ways, for smiling intimately, and various other reasons. In terms of the Malay respondents, another significant support came in the form of faith and religion. Half of the respondents in the present study turned to religion when they were harassed. This is because religion teaches human beings a system of moral values which guide their everyday relations with fellow human beings; providing a legitimate forum of a shared meanings and social practises (Wazir, 1998).

Source: <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/delhi>

8.4.3 Confrontation



Another strategy, confrontation involves opposition to the harassers. However, due to its status as being fairly assertive in nature, many of the respondents prefer to confront

their harassers politely; that is more towards negotiating with them to stop. In the present study, only four (4) respondents admitted to confronting their harassers aggressively. For Respondent 5, she did it because he was of the same standing within the Service, having no power over her service record. Thus, when things got out of hand and after numerous times asking him to stop, she told him pointedly and repeatedly that he was crazy. For Respondent 5, the continuous torture made her stood her ground, regardless of what he would do. His non-stop sexual chatters made her lose her patience and strike back despite knowing the fact that he could well put a dent in her career and reputation. It is a well-known fact that subordinates in the public sector is expected to follow instructions without much ado. The boss did in fact picture her as a good worker but emotionally immature to other bosses. He proceeded to give her a bad review for the year.

8.4.4 Advocacy-Seeking

Even in the United States, most evidence suggests that few victims ever file formal sexual harassment complaints (Fitzgerald et. al, 1988). Thus, advocacy-seeking is the last strategy normally used in sexual harassment primarily because of fears of the individual or the organisational retaliation. The track record of sexual harassment complaint in both the private and public sectors in Malaysia has documented how the victims were further victimised by the system, both the judicial and the administrative sides. In the Study, Respondents 10 and 15 related their experiences about reporting cases of sexual harassment to their superiors. The reports were ignored. The case of Respondent 16 was even forwarded to the knowledge of the PSD, but justice was not seen to be executed as no action was taken against the harasser. Unfortunately, these track records of victimising the harasees would make many more victims shy away from making formal complaints in the future, regardless of the Guideline as introduced by the PSD on sexual harassment. Unless proven by a test case, many would decline to report. This was the point forwarded by Respondent 10 who admitted that even though she was not the type to complain, she would do so if the reporting mechanism is put in place. Thus, this Study reveals how majority in a group of young educated female administrators decided against reporting because lack of proper reporting mechanism and because they were apprehensive of the outcomes.

In Malaysian public workplaces, victims of sexual harassment have a grievance channel with the introduction of sexual harassment Guideline issued by the PSD in 2005. It was lauded as much-awaited and could be considered a comprehensive guideline. However, the authors are sceptical of the inclusion of a clause on the impact of reports on alleged perpetrators who committed sexual harassment “*dengan suci hati*” or unintentionally. The Clause provides that, “(iii) *seandainya aduan yang dikemukakan adalah palsu, atau PYDM (Pegawai Yang Disyaki Menganggu) melakukan sesuatu perbuatan “gangguan seksual” dengan suci hati, maka aduan terhadap PYDM*” (Emphasis added)

(Clause 11 (b) (iii), page 22, Circular 22/2005. PSD, Government of Malaysia).

Research has shown that by a certain age, human learn to respect each other's personal space. By a certain age, too, most individuals grasp that the very persons who understand distancing for its implications to others are also the ones most likely to violate these codes for their personal gain (Schefflen & Aschraft, 1976). Furthermore, many research in Malaysia and worldwide found that sexual harassment victims refuse to report the incidences, much less to fabricate a single incidence as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment cases are normally underreported with only five (5) percent of cases went public (Fitzgerald & Schullman, 1992). It has been proven that in many cases, the victims only reported when all other venues have been exhausted and the harassment deemed too severe (Gutek & Koss, 1993; Wilson, 2000). Thus, in many countries, intent of harassers is irrelevant to the case and any sexual harassment case should be scrutinised using the reasonable woman perspective. Hence, such an inclusion of "*dengan suci hati*" or unintentionally committing sexual harassment could become the push factor to the victims to report sexual harassment. The clause could be used by the harassers to sidestep valid allegation of sexual harassment. It would, therefore, defeat the main purpose of the Guideline which is to protect the victims of sexual harassment. From the findings, several coping patterns emerged,

§ most respondents have avoided their harassers, and many preferred to keep quiet, only taking other assertive strategies as the harassment becoming more severe, and only considered officially reporting the incidents deemed too severe for them;

§ the more powerful the harassers were, the more these respondents preferred not to assertively confront them, what more to report the incidences;

§ the longer the respondents were in the Service, equipped with knowledge and certain amount of empowerment; they were more assertive in handling the incidents and used more assertive types of coping;

§ respondents' upbringing, educational background, cultural expectation, previous experiences, and work environment contributed to the types of strategies used. However, the utmost concern in choosing a coping strategy is the effect it could cause to their professional and private lives;

§ going for professional help or seeing psychologists was not an option to these respondents; either because they believed the psychologists would not be able to help, or could be because the stigma still attached to the notion that only psychologically unbalanced people need to see psychologists; and most respondents, except for three, have since left their place of work. It could signify the last resort to cope for the respondents without having to report the harassment and face more repercussions. This poses the question of how much the Government have lost in terms levels of productivity, in terms of expertise in specific fields, further hidden costs in training new staff to acquire the same level of expertise as the previous officer, and definitely the retraining cost of respondents at the new offices.

In summarising the patterns of coping strategies among the respondents, the researchers adapted the well-received criteria as put forward by Knapp et al. (1997), and Malamut and Offermann (2001), which is similar to the ones suggested by various researchers. Knapp et al. divide coping into four (4) categories that is: avoidance-denial, social coping, confrontation and advocacy seeking. For the purpose of this Study, another type of coping strategy, labelled 'going along', is added. It should be noted that the classification of cases into the four (4) categories is based on the highest level of coping strategies employed by the respondents over a certain period of time: some even lasted for years. A respondent, like Respondent 16 started by avoiding the harasser but toward the end, decided to seek help by officially reporting the harassment. Her experience is then classified as advocacy-seeking. Another aspect that should be stressed on is the fact that these respondents may have used a single strategy at one time, or simultaneously used a combination of strategies deemed best suited and most effective to them at that particular time. Table 1 shows the summary of the coping strategies employed by the respondents.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents' Coping Strategies

Respondent/Coping Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Avoidance-Denial	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Social Coping												
i. Friends	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
ii. Family	x											
iii. Religion		x	x	x	x			x	x	x		
Confrontation												
i. Personally												
Politely	x	x		x	x	x		x	x			x
Aggressively		x		x	x							
ii. Via Others				x	x				x			
"Going Along"											x	x
Advocacy												
i. Within own office												
ii. PSD Off												

Note: "X" denotes choices of coping strategies

This Chapter supports previous findings on sexual harassment that the most used coping strategy is avoidance-denial (Gutek, 1985; Gruber, 1989; Foulis & McCabe, 1997;

Weiner & Gutek, 1999; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2000; Malamut & Offermann, 2001; Sabitha, 2003) with all the respondents using this type of coping. Wasti and Cortina (2002) believe that the concern for harmony influences women's decision to keep quiet. However, Perry, Kulik, & Schmidtke (1997) conclude passive responds to sexual harassment are problematic for various reasons. Among others, organisational authorities are unaware that such behaviour occurred and cannot take steps to stop it. Secondly, the harasser is not disciplined and therefore, does not learn that the behaviour is not appropriate. Thus, sexual harassment is most likely to escalate.

Central in the discussion of sexual harassment is power differential between the harassers and the respondents. Gutek and Morasch (1982:56) firmly believe that sexual harassment is "an exercise of power by one person over another at the workplace". This view is shared by many in this field (McKinnon, 1994; Mizrahi, 2004). Wilson (2000) believes that women do not report the sexual harassment incidents because they feel powerless, hence so many cases go unreported.

In the Study, 14 cases were of higher-ranking male officers sexually harassing their much younger and junior female officers, normally under their supervision. The other two cases involved a higher-ranking female harasser and the same-rank harasser. Respondent 5 admitted that she lashed back openly at her harasser because of their similar standing in the Service and he had no direct power over her. Most respondents said since the harassers were their bosses, making reports could make the situation worse. This is consistent with findings of research in the 'whistle blowing' culture where victims are scared of reporting because of the repercussions (Perry et. al, 1997).

8.5 Empowerment Revisited

The above discussion has shown how some women in the Malaysian public service coped with sexual harassment. What can be deduced is that at the end of the day, each person is on her/his own when it comes to decision about sexual harassment. Some have shown how they coped effectively, and some ineffectively until ultimately, they chose to ask for transfers to protect themselves. Due to the intricateness of the social and gendered relationship among the key players involved in any instances of sexual harassment, most of these women preferred to keep mum and refused to report the occurrences. By doing that, they were actually practising the doctrine of condonation by not stopping the harassers and indirectly, allowing for more sexual harassment incidences to take place to themselves and to other women.

Contrary to the title of this Chapter that hints on the existence of the powerful and the powerless, victims of sexual harassment should stand up for their rights for a safe and secure working environment. Their employers must make the necessary arrangement to ensure that, simply because sexual harassment comes with a heavy cost to the organisation and ultimately to the nation. Most importantly, victims must be empowered because everything starts with them. Empowerment is the ability to choose

one's own path of life without any pressure, including a personal strengthening and enhancement of life chances, and collective participation in efforts to achieve equality of opportunity. The notion of women being 'powerless' is really outdated and obsolete in this age, especially when sexual harassment involves people with tertiary education. With all the advancements and achievements of women worldwide, it is high time women prove that they need to be respected as fellow human beings to men, as equal partners in developing the country, and as the significant others to men. Each woman has some levels of power within herself, she just needs to find a transformative way to use it, without hesitation. In order to do so, all women should be aware of their rights as human beings, as individuals, as workers and members of society. Unless and until that is instilled in every woman, sexual harassment and other gender related violence towards women will not be eradicated. Everyone must teach the younger generation and educate the older ones the virtue of respecting each other, regardless of sex. After all, as Tun Mahathir Mohamed (2000) accurately said it "...each of us have the responsibility to take care of the women, because who are women? They are our mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, granddaughters..." If everyone thinks like that, there is hope for us all to have a more equal relationship based on respect and love to make this world a better place for all. So, the next time your rear is groped, scream your heart out and let the perpetrator know it is totally unacceptable! Together, victims of sexual harassment can put a stop to that.

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14

CHAPTER NINE: GENDER IN
MUSLIM SOCIETIES

9.0 Introduction

The challenge is simple. There is no observable difference between men and women regarding the compulsory levels in Islam. Neither men nor women have any excuse for not performing the five pillars of Islam to fulfil the basic requirements of Muslims. Instead of the negative perception of Islam and Muslims regarding gender equality and equity issues, there are some pieces of evidence that *Syara's* law is gender sensitive. For example, additional regulation in Hajj (the fifth pillars) for women stipulates that she must have accompaniment in order to travel around (*mahram or husband or trusted female friends or female friends within the family*) for her safety and self-honour. If a woman does not have any company, then she doesn't need to perform Hajj. In addition, the way for women to dress during Hajj is more lenient than men's. For men, they have to dress only in seamless fabrics during the ihram (duration of performing the Hajj ritual (*manasik*) period. The concept of dress in Islam is *aurah* (parts of the body that have to be covered depending on whom s/he will meet). The *aurah* of man and woman is different and the *aurah* in *ihram* is as if s/he will meet fe/males whom are non-family members (*ajnabi*) as well as perform prayer and Hajj ritual (*manasik*). Islam has clear guidelines for what man and woman's roles in certain areas like marriage and divorce (*munakahat*), maintenance (*nafkah*) how to dress up (*aurah*), how to socialise (*mahram, fitnah*), how to distribute estate (*farraid*), respect to elders and parents, and especially respecting mother over father), etc. The issue of *mahram* and *aurah* is the issue of gender equity as clearly explained by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) in his last sermon,

...O' People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under a trust from God and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste....

Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon

Gender equity is the fair treatment of men and women (*adil*). For example, to give a shirt as a gift for two close friends. One friend is XS and the other is XXXL in size. The XS size of friend's favourite colour is yellow and the other one is blue. The XXXL size of shirt is more expensive than XS size and blue colour is more expensive than yellow colour. Equity in this case means they get the shirts according to their sizes and favourite colours even though the XXXL size of one friend is more expensive. If somehow, we want to be equal in this case as fairness for both friends and choose XS size of blue shirt for both (we perceive that this is equal and fair), but the XXXL size of one friend will

not fit him/her. The XS size of the other friend would not be his/her favourite colour which is yellow.

However, there are areas with no difference between men and women (gender equality). For example, the right to learn and receive knowledge, to gain and pool wealth, etc. have absolute gender equality. More specifically, there are no differences at all between man and woman on the six pillars of faith (belief in Allah, the angels, messengers, the four books – Al Qur'an, The Gospel, The Torah, and Psalms, Judgement Day i.e., hereafter, and Allah's provision bestowed on man). Also, there are no differences between man and woman on *ihsan* or *akhlak* (doing good or good attitude). All Muslims have to have faith in all the five faith pillars and in fact, compulsorily perform them. This is gender equality as ordained by the religion.

9.1 Emergent Misunderstanding of Gender Equity and Equality

There is a great misunderstanding, however. Gender equity and equality questions in Muslim countries are seen as suppression against women. This has been the cold war between defenders and attackers of the religion of Islam. The cold war is not new. It has been on for long. on various scores. "Cold War literary studies has been steadily gaining momentum in recent years" (Binti Ahmad 2022: p. 309). In many Muslim countries, the legal status and social positions of women are often seen as unfavourable within the common perception. The prescribed role of women in Islamic theology and law is frequently cited as a significant factor contributing to their negative status. This limited perspective portrays women primarily as wives and mothers, emphasising gender segregation as a defining characteristic.

For example, many believe that in Islam, men's role as economic providers relegates women's status to that of marriage and reproduction. Barren women and spinsters are wrongly perceived as having low status in Islam. Another point raised by critics is that men, but not women, have the unilateral right to divorce and practice polygamy. Furthermore, women may be expected to seek permission or be accompanied by their guardian or trusted companions when working or travelling, which is believed to uphold family honour and maintain a positive reputation. Most of the time, all negative consequences or shameful endings in a family rest squarely on the women's family members.

Muslim societies are often characterised by higher average fertility rates, higher average mortality rates, and rapid population growth. The age of marriage has a significant impact on fertility levels. In recent years, an average of 34% of all brides in Muslim countries have been under the age of 20. Additionally, the average number of children per woman in Muslim nations is reported to be six. These factors contribute to the higher fertility rates and population growth observed in many Muslim societies.

Interestingly, it is observed that unmarried women contribute less to social and moral disturbances. Consequently, early marriage and childbearing might be seen as a means of social control. However, it is important to note that Muslim countries in the Middle East and South Asia also exhibit significant gender disparities in literacy and education, as well as low rates of female labour force participation. This suggests a correlation between high fertility rates, low literacy rates, and limited female participation in the labour force, all of which are associated with the lower status of women. These patterns are often attributed to the influence of Islamic law and norms prevalent in these societies.

These assertions need to be critically examined as they oversimplify the complex dynamics at play. The perception of women solely as wives and mothers is not exclusive to Islamic theology but can be found in other religious and symbolic systems as well. Orthodox Jewish law, for instance, shares similarities with Islamic law in areas such as marriage and divorce.

Furthermore, the demographic patterns mentioned, including high fertility rates, are not unique to Muslim countries. Sub-Saharan African countries, for example, also experience high fertility rates. Similarly, the issue of early marriage is not limited to Muslim societies, as instances of child marriage can be found in various regions worldwide.

Moreover, social issues such as high maternal mortality rates and gender imbalances in sex ratios are not confined to Muslim areas. Female infanticide, for instance, has been documented in non-Muslim regions like northern India and rural China. The low status of women is influenced more by patriarchal kinship structures than by religion itself. Regions in West and South Asia, characterised by strong patriarchal systems, often exhibit significant gender disparities in healthcare access and food availability, leading to higher mortality rates among women.

It is crucial to recognise that adherence to Islamic principles and the application of Islamic legal codes vary across different Muslim countries. Countries like Tunisia and Turkey, for instance, have formal secular states, while Iran has direct clerical rule. Women's legal and social positions also differ significantly, as seen in variations in fertility rates, education, and employment among females. Tunisia, for example, has widespread contraceptive use and a higher average age of marriage, while Turkey shows considerable female participation in high-status occupations.

Moreover, gender relations in Muslim societies are influenced by various factors such as state ideology, economic development, industrialisation, urbanisation, and integration into the global system. Governments motivated by ideologies like Marxism and socialism, as seen in Afghanistan and South Yemen, have taken steps to reduce gender inequality and enhance women's rights. Similarly, Muslim-majority regions outside the core Muslim world, such as Soviet Central Asia and Bosnia Herzegovina, have made progress in socioeconomic indicators.

To attribute gender subordination solely to Islam is methodologically flawed, as it exaggerates the influence of religion and portrays it as unchanging. While it is true that gender inequality in its most severe forms may claim religious justification, it is essential to consider the complexities of societal changes and challenges to traditional patriarchal structures that contribute to the rise of fundamentalist movements.

It is worth noting that gender disparities and discrimination against women are not specific to Islam, and they cannot be solely attributed to the religion. However, in countries like Iran, Pakistan, and Egypt, the reintroduction of Islamic legislation, including family law, has been justified using religious arguments.

The struggle for gender equality faces significant obstacles in societies where religion holds a privileged position and a broader discourse of equality is lacking. In countries like Iran, tensions arise between ideological purity, societal changes, cultural prescriptions, and economic imperatives. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the gender system in Muslim societies has both continuities and breaks with the past, influenced by factors such as education, employment disparities, and evolving cultural and ideological contexts.

In conclusion, the status of women in Muslim societies is shaped by a complex interplay of structures, ideology, institutions, and historical trends. While some gender inequalities may have religious justifications, it is necessary to consider a range of factors including socioeconomic development, state ideology, and cultural dynamics to gain a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics in these societies.

On average, women constitute 31% of the student population in higher education across various levels. In Iran, there are 40 universities listed in the Statistical Yearbook, including one all-male seminary and one all-female seminary. However, the only institutions where women's enrolment equals or exceeds that of men are the public health and medical schools. Admission to university remains highly competitive for both men and women, and it has remained difficult since the Revolution.

The fields with the largest number of female university students are health and medicine, teacher training, humanities, and the natural sciences. Engineering, on the other hand, is more popular among male students. Officially, reasons cited for the gender disparities in certain fields include limited university capacity, perceived lack of job prospects for women in those fields, and the idea that women are deemed too emotional for law faculties.

To be eligible for government scholarships to study abroad, women must be married and accompanied by their husbands. It is important to note that in the summer of 1989, quotas for women in many disciplines were removed. However, the female population is stratified, with some women having access to high school and university education while others do not. Under strict Islamic rule, all women can be considered second-class citizens, but the experience of gender inequality varies among women of different social classes. Women's choices and opportunities are significantly influenced by their position in the social class structure.

In developing countries like Iran, access to education is largely determined by social class and family income. However, when the female share of the literate or educated population is disproportionately low, gender bias becomes a significant explanatory factor. Rural women, in particular, are often overlooked or assumed to be homemakers in tabulations and census data. The Iranian census, for example, categorises 11 million Iranian women as homemakers, thus disregarding their educational and occupational roles.

9.2 Implication of Gender Gap

Gender differences, stemming from the social construction of biological sex distinctions, represent significant divisions within societies. These differences create boundaries among various groups of people that determine the distribution of power, authority, and resources.

However, gender differences are not the only divisions of this nature. They exist within a broader framework of socially constructed distinctions, including class, ethnicity, religion, and age. These intersecting factors contribute to the specific dynamics of gender differences within a particular time and place. Due to the interplay of gender with other social forces, as well as influences such as state policies, economic development, and global communication, gender systems are not rigid and unchanging. While gender systems may be shaped by ideological beliefs, enshrined in laws, supported by customs, and reinforced through socialisation and institutional structures, they are not impervious to modification, change, and resistance. Modern societies are too diverse for a single gender system to remain unchallenged. Economic imperatives and the increasing number of educated women who reject traditional roles can pose challenges to a strictly defined gender system, as seen in Iran with the growth of educated women who resist being confined to domestic roles.

Furthermore, there is an inherent contradiction in Iran's gender ideology. On one hand, it associates womanhood with family life, marriage, and childrearing, but on the other hand, it does not deny women access to education, employment opportunities, voting rights, and the ability to participate in parliament. In contemporary Iran, women can be found in educational institutions, workplaces, government offices, and even factories, while adhering to veiling practices. Although ideologies of gender difference and practices of gender inequality exist, they are subject to challenges posed by economic development and demographic changes, such as the increase in the educated female population. As universal schooling expands in Iran, the gender system will face further scrutiny and resistance.

For theorists who argue that women's economic dependence on men is the root cause of their disadvantaged and undervalued status, the restructuring of labour force opportunities and rewards is a crucial goal. Numerous studies have shown that women generally fare better in paid employment than in unpaid family roles and that women's

economic empowerment is linked to their ability to participate in the workforce. However, unfair practices and biases persist, including lower wages for women even when accounting for training and job continuity, the devaluation of traditionally female-dominated work, and the prevalence of poor working conditions. Nevertheless, the long-term consequence of women's increased labour force participation is the gradual erosion of gender inequality and gender ideology, leading to heightened awareness and consciousness among women. Employment serves as a prerequisite for women's empowerment.

The census data discussed in this chapter regarding women in contemporary Iran indicate that, despite limitations and restrictions, there are opportunities for women's advancement. Nonetheless, there is room for improvement within the confines of the Islamic system as it has developed in Iran.

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The Holy Qur'an.

15

CHAPTER TEN: WOMEN
CHARACTERS IN SME DECISION IN
MALAYSIA

10.0 Introduction

The tractable truth about Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), according to The World Bank Finance (2022), is that SMEs play a leading role in the economies of most countries of the world, especially in developing countries. SMEs are traceably responsible for the majority of businesses across the world and therefore, are important contributors in job creation, an economic development strategy for the world. SMEs “represent about 90% of businesses and more than 50% of employment worldwide” (The World Bank, 2022). By definition, individuals who enter into new ventures are known as entrepreneurs (Ahmad and Seymour, 2008) and McClelland (1961) defines entrepreneurs as someone who exercises some form of control over the means of production. An entrepreneur produces more than can be consumed to sell (or exchange) it for household income (McClelland 1961: p. 65). It comprises four interrelated components: individual, organisation, environment, and new venture process (Gartner, 1985). In Malaysia, a Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) is defined as a non-public listed company in the main board or country. It is non-subsidiary to public-listed companies in Malaysia as in other countries. It is, therefore, non-subsidiary to large firms like Multi-National Companies (MNCs), Government-Linked Company (GLCs), Syarikat Menteri Kewangan di Perbadankan (MKDs) or State-owned Enterprises. It must be locally incorporated under Companies Act 1965; or registered under Registration of Company Act (1956) or Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act 2012; or registered under respective authorities in Sabah or Sarawak; or registered under statutory bodies for professional service providers.

In the Malaysian experience, SMEs in the manufacturing sector must not exceed a sales turnover of RM50 million or have full-time employees not exceeding 200 workers. For services and other sectors, sales turnover must not exceed RM20 million or full-time employees not exceeding 75 (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2013). In 2011, there were 645, 136 SMEs established, which was 97.3% from overall business establishments in Malaysia. From this number, 77% of 645, 136 represent micro-enterprises, 20% were small-enterprises and 3% were medium-enterprises (SME Corporation, 2014). Malaysian Government actively promotes the involvement of individuals in SMEs because it catalyses the development of the national economy. SME is the backbone of national economies with, in Malaysia, a share of 97% of the business sector (PEMANDU, 2013).

According to SME Corporation (2015), SMEs contributed 35.0% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014, which was expected to increase to 41% by the year 2020 (PEMANDU, 2013). It also contributed 57.5% to employment opportunities and 19% to exports. Specifically, the Malaysian Government is gender sensitive as it intensifies women’s involvement in SMEs to improve their economic status and household income. It also reduces the unemployment and poverty rates through job

creation (SME Corporation, 2015; Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, 2015; OECD, 2012). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is Europe-based. Estimations indicated there were 10 million self-employed women. In the United States, there is a notable presence of self-employed women who play a vital role in the economy. Approximately 6.4 million self-employed women contribute to job creation by providing employment opportunities for around 9.2 million individuals. These women also generate substantial sales through their entrepreneurial ventures. Their active participation in self-employment demonstrates their valuable contributions to the economic landscape of the country.

10.1 Background of Women SMEs in Malaysia

Women's involvement in SMEs is 19.7% of the overall 645, 136 SMEs registered in Malaysia in 2010 (SME Corporation, 2014). From 127, 091 SMEs run by women either 51% possession of equity shows that women are the owners, or they have 10% possession equity as the CEO. Further, 91.7% of women-owned SMEs involved are in the service sector, 6.9% in manufacturing, and little involvement is recorded in the construction, agriculture, mining, and quarrying sectors (SME Corporation, 2015). Women's involvement as entrepreneurs is seen as the mechanism for them to be autonomous, take full control, and break and rise above the 'glass ceiling' (OECD, 2012).

Women entrepreneurs are driven by different sets of motivation as they get involved in SME activities. They tend to incorporate psychological motivations ahead of financial motivations (material needs) in comparison to men who are more financially driven (Kepuladze, 2010). According to Ismail et al. (2012), their study reveals that women entrepreneurs in Sintok are motivated to engage in entrepreneurship due to various "pull factors." These factors include the desire for independence, the aspiration to gain recognition from society, the urge to pursue their ventures, and a relatively lower emphasis on material needs as a driving force. These findings suggest that women in Sintok are driven by intrinsic motivations and personal aspirations, rather than purely materialistic goals when venturing into entrepreneurship.

Records show that 76% of men venture into SMEs ultimately with the motivation to build wealth, while 77% of women are into SMEs due to their appealing culture; a new venture (Cohoon, Wadhwa and Mitchell, 2009). But Manolova et al., (2012) state that men focus on their SME because of a strong drive for financial success. This makes them risk-takers in their drive for business expansion, while women are driven by a complex series of motivations, such as the desire for self-realisation and recognition. This makes them not to be risk-takers like men. They fear the possibility of failure (De Jong, 2013).

According to Chan et al. (2009), their analysis of 531 youth entrepreneurs in Klang Valley highlights certain personality traits, socio-economic backgrounds, and business characteristics. In male youth entrepreneurs, important traits include perseverance, determination, the ability to take calculated risks, initiative, and responsibility. These

entrepreneurs are goal-oriented, focused on identifying and capitalising on opportunities, and possess an internal locus of control. They actively engage in the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of new goods, services, markets, and organisational processes through their entrepreneurial endeavors, demonstrating value creation through the establishment of their enterprises.

On the other hand, Hoe et al. (2012) explore the characteristics of successful women entrepreneurs and find that they possess traits such as strong interest and passion, a desire for self-development, distinctiveness from others, self-analysis to address weaknesses, the ability to build positive relationships with employees, customers, and suppliers, self-confidence, faith, perseverance, hard work, risk-taking, effective communication, good leadership skills (trustworthiness, fairness, honesty, responsibility, motivation), team spirit, and flexibility/open-mindedness.

Similarly, Hassan et al. (2014) identifies success-related characteristics among women entrepreneurs in rural areas of the Northern region of Malaysia (Kedah, Penang, and Perlis). This region exhibits high levels of confidence, determination, and vision, as well as attributes such as risk-taking, exploration, initiative, creativity, innovation, social networking, and strategic thinking.

These studies collectively emphasise the importance of specific traits and characteristics in both male and female entrepreneurs, highlighting factors such as perseverance, determination, risk-taking, initiative, creativity, and effective communication as influential elements in entrepreneurial success across different contexts.

10.2 Gender Gap in SME Ownership

The European Union (EU) recognises that women entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in promoting both gender equality and economic growth. However, despite women's progress in labour markets, a significant gender gap persists in entrepreneurship. In 2012, women accounted for only 31% of self-employed individuals in Europe, and out of all working women, only 10% were self-employed. This indicates a disparity between the proportion of women in the overall population and their representation in business ownership.

In the case of Malaysia, women constitute 50% of the total population, but their participation in owning business enterprises is significantly lower. According to Alam et al. (2012), only 15% of women in Malaysia are business owners. This highlights the underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurial activities compared to their overall population share.

These statistics demonstrate the existing gender gaps in entrepreneurship, both in Europe and Malaysia. Efforts are needed to address the barriers and challenges that hinder women's participation in business ownership, as promoting women's entrepreneurship can contribute to fostering gender equality and driving economic

growth. Women's involvement in SMEs dictates slow progress over 7 years. In 2003, it was reported that 82,911 SMEs were owned by women from overall 518, 996 registered SMEs in Malaysia (Bank Negara Malaysia, 2005). This represents only 15.98 % of women's participation in comparison to 84% of men's participation in SMEs. Meanwhile, in 2010, 127, 091 or 19.7 % of SMEs were owned by women from the total of 645, 136 registered, in comparison to men that represent 80.3% of SME ownership (SME Corporation, 2015). This clearly shows men-owned SMEs outnumber women-owned SMEs with high percentage discrepancy. Yet interestingly, data from TEKUN indicates that women entrepreneurs were loaned more than men. 51% out of 285, 227 loans were given to women entrepreneurs in 2013 (MWCFD, 2014). This invites further questions on why women's participation in SMEs still lags behind men in Malaysia.

10.3 Government Programme for Women SMEs

The importance of SMEs to Malaysian economic growth is noticeable in 35.0% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014, i.e. there was 57.5 % to employment and 19 % to Malaysian exports (MOF, 2015; SME Corporation, 2015). Due to this contribution, the Malaysian Government and its agencies introduced several programmes to boost SME participation, particularly by women on how to improve their economics status as well as their household income. Objectively, the programmes were expected to reduce unemployment and poverty rate in Malaysia following to Vision 2020 and Economic Planning Policy (MOF, 2015; SME Corporation, 2012). In response to this, the Government provided a total of RM5.10 billion to the Ministries and their respective agencies to carry out courses and initiatives for women in order to increase their involvement in SMEs. SME Integrated Plan of Action or SMEIPA reported that 23 programmes were implemented in collaboration with private sectors to assist over 65,000 SMEs in building finance management and human capital development. In total, 2014 witnessed 139 development programmes under SMEIPA. These programmes focus on human capital development (35 programmes), market access (33 programmes), access to finance (30 programmes), innovation and technology adoption (28 programmes) and infrastructure (13 programmes). It benefited 503, 704 SME recipients (SME Report, 2015). There were also programmes specifically designed to attract more women involvement in SMEs and assist new women entrepreneurs, such as the Women Entrepreneurs Incubator Program (I-KeuNITA) under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWCFD). It aimed to provide intensive skill training and entrepreneurial assistance to low-income women to increase their monthly income through entrepreneurial activity. It was targeted to develop 4,000 women entrepreneurs and from 2009 to 2013, 5,300 women entrepreneurs were successfully developed from an income of more than RM3,500 a month. Consequently, from the period of January 2013 to June 2014, another 1, 645 women entrepreneurs were successfully developed.

Another programme to assist women in SME was Tabung Ekonomi Kumpulan Usaha Niaga (TEKUN). It provided loans to assist new entrepreneurs and until March 2014, TEKUN distributed a total of RM2.98 billion to 347, 225 borrowers across Malaysia. From this number, 183, 218 loans worth RM 1.44 billion were tailored to women entrepreneurs. As at 2013, TEKUN gave loans to 285, 227 entrepreneurs; 146, 200 (51%) to women and 139, 027 (49%) to men. Small and Medium Enterprises Corporation (SME Corp) also introduced several loans such Soft Loan Scheme for Small and Medium Enterprises (SLSME), with 79 women-owned enterprises. It was an approved loan amounting to RM40.25 million. In addition, 82 women-owned enterprises loans were approved, amounting to RM4 million under the Enrichment and Enhancement program or E², and another 84 women-owned SMEs were given financial assistance amounting to RM19.98 million under the Business Accelerator program. To stimulate more women-owned SMEs into various ventures, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development provided support for women entrepreneurs with the introduction of the Women Exporters Development Programme (WEDP) under the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MARTRADE) and the Women Global Entrepreneurs Development Programme with the partnership with MARTRADE (MWFC, 2014)

There are other initiatives given by other agencies and ministries such as PUNB (Perbadanan Nasional Berhad), Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry, MARA (Majlis Amanah Rakyat) under the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and Tabung Ekonomi Belia (SME Corporation, 2014). Specifically for entrepreneurs in ICT (Information and communication technology) and multimedia new ventures, MDeC and their partners; MaGIC (Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre), StartupMalaysia.org, MyNEF (New Entrepreneurship Foundation, Cradle and TeAM (Technopreneur Association of Malaysia) launched MSC Malaysia for Start-ups programme to renew venturing into SMEs to utilise multimedia and digital technologies to produce and enhance global products and services (MDeC, 2015).

But in spite the numerous support programmes and incentives provided with the aim of strengthening women participation in SMEs, women still lag behind men, and the other unanswered question re-emerges; why? Why does the challenge still exist? Could it be that the programmes provided were not compatible with the women's needs? The next section presents the theory and concept which might be useful in explaining the difference between women characters as they venture into SMEs.

10.4 Entrepreneur's Trait Differences between Men and Women: The Emergent Theories

10.4.1 Social Role Theory

The Social Role Theory acknowledges the historical division of labour between women and men, where women have traditionally been associated with household responsibilities, while men have been associated with responsibilities outside the home (Eagly, 1987). Eagly's explanation is rooted in gender and sexuality development, which is influenced by the process of socialisation. According to her Social Role Theory, there exists a sexual division of labour and societal expectations based on stereotypes of gender and sex roles. Eagly distinguishes between two dimensions of gender-stereotyped characteristics: communal and agentic dimensions. The communal role is characterised by attributes such as nurturance and emotional expressiveness, which are commonly associated with domestic activities and, therefore, associated with women.

On the other hand, the agentic role describes attributes like assertiveness and independence in public activities, which are associated with men. Behaviour is heavily influenced by gender and sex roles when cultural norms endorse specific stereotypes for each gender (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000). Thus, Eagly explains that gender and sex roles are based on the assumption that certain individuals are socially identified as males or females based on their expected roles. Consequently, the theory predicts that males and females will develop different skills and attitudes that shape their behaviour and character. Gender stereotypes are described across four dimensions: traits, role behaviours, physical characteristics, and occupations. For example, men are often perceived as aggressive and competitive, while women are often generalised as passive and cooperative. Traditional gender roles dictate that men are the primary financial providers for families, while women are seen as caretakers. Physical characteristics and occupations have also been categorised as (in)consistent with masculine or feminine roles. As a result, each gender is expected to possess characteristics that align with their respective sex role. This helps explain the behavioural differences between men and women in various organisational and familial roles.

In a business, for example, men behave differently than women in relation to assertiveness tendencies and helpfulness. Men, often, have roles of executive and managerial powers, whereas women are more found in clerical positions (Eagly, p. 11). Thus, entrepreneurship is often associated with a traditional male-type career (Thebaud, 2010; Gupta et al., 2008). This can be seen by men who are normally linked to masculine needs for economic success, autonomy, and achievement. Meanwhile, women are expected to be fulfilled on catering for family needs and family life quality. They are perceived on a level of interpersonal relationships, security, and environment (Kepuladze, 2010). Consequently, according to this stereotype, it is not surprising to see those men out-number women in participation into SMEs.

Being a woman carries feminine stereotypical roles, family responsibilities and cultural traditions. This is always gender-based for women in SMEs. This is due to the

demanding situation of women starting and growing their enterprises and simultaneously needing to juggle work and family responsibilities. However, even if such cultural constraints are not present, the lack of child-care services can obstruct a woman's ability to grow her business. Thus, even after legal barriers to business ownership are addressed, many women business owners still encounter the challenge of not only in time management but also of cultural acceptance (Women Able, 2010). This is not peculiar to Malaysia alone. In a study of business students in the United States, India, and Turkey, Gupta et al. (2008) report how respondents in all three contexts strongly associate entrepreneurship with stereotypically masculine characteristics. Their result supports the hypothesis that entrepreneurship is associated with stereotypically masculine characteristics and not associated with traditionally feminine characteristics. Men score higher in entrepreneurial intention compared to women when no stereotypical information about entrepreneurship is presented, suggesting that underlying societal stereotypes associating entrepreneurship with masculine characteristics may influence people's intentions. Furdas & Kohn (2010) on the propensity to start a business between men and women specify that women's personality characteristics are less favourable to a business start-up than men's and women and men score differently in 'soft' personality traits; such as risk aversion, openness to change, persuasiveness, and need for achievement (Furdas & Kohn, 2010).

Sweida & Reichrad (2013) on the association of high-growth entrepreneurship (HGE) with women's entrepreneurial self-efficacy associate HGE negatively impacting on women's intention and self-efficacy, thereby limiting their behaviour in the entrepreneurial arena. The study identifies decreasing masculine stereotype-related barriers with HGE. They consequently suggest that by increasing women's HGE self-efficacy, it should be possible to increase women's intention to engage in high-growth venture creation.

The next section discusses the difference in individual entrepreneurial orientation and its relation to the lower involvement of SMEs among women.

10.4.2 Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

The ability of an individual to take risks, be innovative, and be proactive is a vital component of entrepreneurs (Aloulou and Fayolle, 2005). According to Muchiri & McMurray (2015), these three dimensions are the basis of opportunity seeking and effective use of resources that serve as a strategy for an individual to embark on entrepreneurship (Muchiri & McMurray, 2015). Individual entrepreneurial orientation is key to helping entrepreneurs overcome resource or knowledge constraints in entrepreneurial decisions (Fang et al., 2009). Lumpkin & Dess (1996) see entrepreneurial orientation (EO) as a concept that explains process, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new venture. Aloulou & Fayolle (2005) describe EO as the strategic orientation of small businesses to perform their strategic analysis with opportunity-

based and resource-based views. They propose that EO comes with three main components: innovation (action to gain competitive advantage), proactivity (competing aggressively as being first mover) and risk propensity (ability to take risks to be proactive to offer innovative products and services that change market boundaries and behaviour) (Iakovleva, 2013). The focus on these activities serves as a benchmark in opportunity-seeking and effective use of resources. It is also referred to as the strategy-making process as individuals embark on entrepreneurship in order to create a competitive advantage (Muchiri and McMurray, 2015). Indeed, studies suggest that entrepreneurs who have strong EO have better likelihood for success (Taylor, 2013).

However, Ayub et al., (2013) investigated gender effects on entrepreneurial orientation and value innovation in 120 young entrepreneurs in Pakistan. They find dissimilar scores of EO between men and women. Women are likely to have lower EO propensity than men with their lower score in innovativeness and autonomy. Moreover, women take fewer risks and are less aggressive in business than men. In another study, Recio et al. (2014) analysed gender differences in EO. They intended to capture the profile of the individual entrepreneur in the pre-stage company from a sample of students from the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos who attended extracurricular seminars on "Entrepreneurship and Leadership". The result finds significant differences in EO based on gender and sexuality. Specifically, the feminine gender is more risk-averse and is considered less innovative. However, concerning proactivism, the feminine gender has more attributes relating to responsibility, discipline, and independence, while masculinity is prone to initiative and leadership positions.

In other aspects, women who start their entrepreneurial activity have smaller amounts of capital, smaller equity, and higher proportions of bank loans. Besides, having less risk propensity in comparison to men that makes them to target the existing market and use known technology (Kariv, 2012: p. 52).

10.4.3 Risk Propensity

Committing a large portion of the firm's resources to undertake uncertain outcomes, taking bold steps such as entering unknown markets, etc. are risk propensities. These risks vary from individuals and contexts (Taylor, 2013). Venturing into SMEs, entrepreneurs invest in products and services that may (not) produce profits; therefore, individual with high-risk propensity will have the ability to generate value in the environment that full of uncertainty (York and Venkataraman, 2010). El-Annan (2013) claims that entrepreneurs who associate the generation of new concepts and turn it into reality through the process of innovation, succeed in risk management. They become good\successful risk-takers. El-Annan further states that risk-takers perceive entrepreneurial actions and opportunities as more attractive and possible than those who avoid risks. Moreover, to venture into entrepreneurship is a decision that assumes risks (Yan, 2010).

Differences in attitudes of men and women about intentions to start a business are often used to explain this gendered landscape of women's participation in SMEs. Women are often believed to be more averse towards taking risks than men. It is found that women, to some extent, are more likely to avoid risks than men i.e. (53% to 46%) agree that one should not start a business if there is a risk of failure. Koellinger et al. (2013) on a survey of 17 countries, submit that the lower rate of women's participation in entrepreneurial activities is primarily because women lack confidence in their entrepreneurial skills and exhibit higher fear of failure than men. Another empirical investigation on the contribution of personality traits to the gender gap in entrepreneurship from individuals in 36 countries suggest that a group of personality traits or Individual Entrepreneurial Aptitude (IEA) has a positive effect on entrepreneurship venture among women and men. However, in comparison to men, women are considerably low on IEA, which leads to significant gender gap in entrepreneurship. The lower level of IEA is mainly due to women's lower levels of competitiveness and risk tolerance (Bonte & Jarosch, 2011). Fossen (2012) investigates the role played by gender differences in the degree of risk aversion and submits the decomposition of the gender differential in the entry rate into self-employment. Only about 2 % of the gaps owes to women's higher level of risk aversion. Meanwhile, the largest part of the higher exit rate of women out of self-employment is explained by their higher level of risk aversion.

10.4.4 Innovativeness

Innovation is individual's tendency to creatively initiate and support new ideas, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in new products, services, or technological processes, or exploitation of new markets (Taylor, 2013). De Jong and den Hartog (2010) categorise innovative behaviour into 4 dimensions: the ability of an individual to explore, generate, champion, and implement ideas. Entrepreneur is assumed as an innovator based on the paradigm which put the entrepreneur as a person who involves in the identification of opportunities and employs the innovation tool for developing successful new business (El-Annan, 2013). Innovative behaviour is important to entrepreneurs because it stimulates creation of new concepts, ideas, and as well as products for competitive advantage as they make the entrance into market. To allow entry, development, and success of new enterprises, entrepreneurs should embrace and lead innovative behaviour following market demand. Lai et al. (2010) investigate the effect of innovation on the success of women's ventures. Among 120 women, entrepreneurs indicate that most women entrepreneurs believe innovation is a vital aspect of a successful venture. Lai et al. (2010) states that women entrepreneurs need innovative behaviour and thinking in order to be more competitive and offer unique products for market acceptance. It suggests that innovation needs to be an integral part of a business practice in order to develop the right attitude, confidence, and belief in

innovation. In yet another study by Huysentruyt (2014), innovative behaviour and innovation are important to women in two specific areas. First, innovation allows stimulation into new ventures, community development, and penetration to the global market through opportunities for invention. Second, innovation allows the entrance of new ventures with the offerings of products or services that no one else provides at that particular time. Additionally, social entrepreneurs make women entrepreneurs more sensitive towards social demands resulting in the creation of job opportunities that help the community upgrade its economic status (GEM, 2012: p. 32)

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring (GEM) report, women entrepreneurs in Asian countries like China, Malaysia, and Thailand exhibit the lowest levels of innovation compared to men, with only 17% of women entrepreneurs engaging in innovative activities, while men stand at 22%. In contrast, women entrepreneurs in the United States demonstrate the highest levels of innovation, at 36%. These women introduce new products or services to customers, often with limited or no competition. Furthermore, innovation levels among U.S. women are slightly higher than those among men, reaching 33%. Developed countries in Europe also display high levels of innovation among women entrepreneurs, standing at 32%, equal to their male counterparts (GEM, 2012).

This difference in innovation levels could be attributed to the fact that women entrepreneurs in general tend to start their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in industries such as retail, education, and other service sectors. These industries are often perceived as making a lesser economic contribution compared to industries dominated by men, such as high technology and manufacturing, which are considered more crucial for economic development and growth (OECD, 2004). This probably leads to gender influence in getting access to innovation resources such as finance, extension, and support services. Ighomereho et al. (2013) indicate that women in Lagos (Nigeria) face no difficulties in getting support for innovation in terms of extension and support but instead have difficulties in financial support. Other experimental studies in the UK and US confirm the above findings that gender status is generally a disadvantage to women entrepreneurs in their search for support. As a result, it builds negative perceptions of the viability and investment-worthiness for support of innovative ideas.

10.4.5 Proactiveness

The consensus among scholars is that entrepreneurial activities stem from the intentions of individuals and the actions they take over time. These intentions play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour, including the establishment of new ventures and engagement in self-employment. Given that entrepreneurship involves addressing and resolving challenges and problems, individuals who possess a preference for actively making changes to their environment are more likely to become entrepreneurs compared to those who do not exhibit such characteristics. These

proactive individuals are characterised by their inclination toward opportunity-seeking behaviour and a forward-looking perspective. They are described as being proactive in their approach to entrepreneurship. Proactiveness entails actively seeking out opportunities and taking a proactive stance in anticipating future demands by introducing new products and services that go beyond existing competition (Cools and Van den Broeck, 2008). It can be in the mode of taking initiatives and pursuing new business opportunities in emerging markets or to improve existing competitive positions (Campos et al., 2013). Being proactive is important in new venture because by being the first mover, entrepreneurs are not only able to innovate but can earn huge profits and get advance track in establishing brands by exploiting market (Taylor, 2013).

However, Ilhaamie et al., (2014) highlights that inability to be the first mover in order to explore for opportunities for obtaining financial loans, enhancing knowledge in industry, building networking and inability to catch up with stiff competition in the market are among barriers to Malaysian women entrepreneurs to success and sustain in entrepreneurial activity. This may cause fewer women involvement into SMEs in Malaysia.

Based on this discussion, there is the need to recommend ways out in order to attract more women involvement into SMEs, particularly in Malaysia.

10.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

As summary, there are differences between men and women in approach to entrepreneurship, especially in Malaysia, where men are still being stereotyped and considered as the dominant gender (Hin et al., 2012). According to the OECD (2004), mainstream research, policies, and programs focused on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have often been biased towards men and fail to adequately address the unique needs and requirements of women entrepreneurs and potential women entrepreneurs. This suggests that existing initiatives have predominantly catered to male entrepreneurs, overlooking the specific challenges and opportunities faced by women in the entrepreneurial sphere. The OECD recognises the importance of recognising and addressing these gender-specific considerations to promote gender equality and create a supportive environment for women in entrepreneurship. Women and men have different needs according to their characters and what is expected out of them according to their roles in the society. Therefore, it is highly recommended to comprehend their characters prior to a design the framework and incentives programmes for them in order to ensure the compatibility of programmes offered with their needs.

Women entrepreneurs need frameworks, policies, and programmes that cater for unique characters and orientation according to women's roles. For example, as the greatest challenge among women involvement into SMEs is work-family balance, an initiative on childcare might be helpful to propose in a designed framework for women in SMEs. The initiative by UK Department for Business Innovation and Skill can be set

as an example. They have programmes that include childcare and caring responsibility in their key recommendations for Women's enterprise support. This support includes childcare and caring allowances and more access to holistic childcare facilities in order to assist women involvement into SMEs. A framework for training programmes specifically on character building needs to be designed by the government and its respective agencies prior to any incentives programme given to women intended to involve in SMEs. The training programmes should incorporate the development of the right characters and attitude for women in various ventures and their sustainability in SMEs. They need to be trained in order to develop crucial characters of entrepreneurs such as being innovative, risk-taking, and proactive. This is important as according to Hoe et al., (2012) women who are innovative portray right attitude towards entrepreneurial activity. This consequently will lead these women to be proactive in exploring opportunities to pursue marketing for globalisation thereby boosting their income and national economy.

Secondly, their innovation and risk-taking propensity helps them to develop ability to embark on blue ocean strategies as they set their own pace by creating unique products and making it available at the uncontested market space with irrelevant competitors and create new value for customer.

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16

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GENDERED
DISCOURSE ON TEENAGE
MARRIAGE FROM ISLAMIC
FEMINISM

“A fool thinks himself to be wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool.”

William Shakespeare

11.0 Introduction

Whether gender or genre, the journey is set in the Nigerian novel seeing woman as minor. In consequence, regenerating girl-child education, the craze for women in key positions, the crave for women in offices shoulder to shoulder and number to number (what Nigerians call bumper-to-bumper) have, perhaps, presupposed a cause-effect syndrome in the polity – real and imagined in fiction. The theorist, B.F. Skinner is strongly desirable here with his Stimulus-Response Theory (S-R), as much as William Shakespeare would say, “If you prick us do, we not bleed? If you tickle us do, we not laugh? If you poison us do, we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?” The paper hazards the questions of revenge game by women since undoubtedly, it is claimed, they have, it would appear, been put thoroughly through mythopoeia on the second class pedestal as appendages to men, instead of as harmonious sexes. But, are women truly streamlined? And are they not? Can they be mainstreamed? And can they not? Mainstreaming gender issues has been at the centre of gender and feminism and various attempts have been made to ease off the generated sexual tensions. At proposition here is the Islamic answer to the generated tensions. This is not a comparative approach, but if we have provided a schema with which to base arising conflicts in gender issues, we shall have done a contribution on woman as human.

Very easily, this topic can be dismissed by serious feminists generally but more so by female feminists who are strongly of the opinion that men on women (issues) are unacceptable since there is likely observable bias in men. ‘What do they know about women, anyway?’ it is often asked. Men on women are under serious threat by female feminists as incompetent interpreters of women’s issues. Real women interpreters here include author-reader, actor-spectator and critic females. It can also be noted that even insensitive women-to-women issues are rejected by this proposition. This exclusivist screening is alluded to by Ziemmerman on images of lesbians. To her base point, it is important to note how you see me and how I see myself. In this lesbian logic, “there is an important dialectic between how the lesbian articulates herself and how she is articulated and objectified by others” (Ziemmerman 459-75). Which is to say that context, or the specific female issue at stake by women and its reception is the final arbiter of meaning, and its integrity is absolute. Which brings us back to confirm the aggressive position on the insistence of women as only interpreters of female issues. It is warned that real gendered feminists should be wary of traditional disregard by men and their contempt for women’s writings and women’s modes of existence, which is a reality of male power. Thus, by this same position, real women writers and critics are under obligation to inscribe the experiences of women under patriarchal domination. But we

can make space for men on women because there is a battery of evidence to prove that men can be used to undo what they did in the patriarchal world. This paper may throw enough light on its relevance in its effort to discuss early marriages plotted in Nigerian novels.

11.1 Problem Statement

When Buchi Emecheta stresses in her feminist novel *The Joys of Motherhood*, asking God when He will create a full woman who is not attached to man, it interprets to the reading public as a challenge to God. Philosophically, the created is short-sighted at the doings and powers of the Creator. It needs to be researched, then, to find out if aligning woman to the back seat is the doing of either the Creator or the created. Many things have been taken for granted as being religious, which in actual sense is only misogynic. The blame should be appropriately placed. Aspects of gender are plotted severally in the Nigerian novel, and Abubakar Gimbar's novel, *Sacred Apples* would be used to verify the authenticity or otherwise of answers to the questions of early marriages. Of import is, when a woman, Emecheta, raises the question, Gimba, a man, responds. What is the answer? How tolerable is the answer?

11.2 Conceptual Definition

The two terms, gender and feminism, have always been conveniently used by writers to suit them. In this Chapter, they are used interchangeably because essentially, they serve the same purpose; they ease off socially constructed impressions of women. In achieving the dreams of these interchangeable terms, traditional realist literature subtly places the reader within the confines of that particular ideology, shaping their subjectivity in the process. However, if a writer/text aims to challenge the prevailing ideology by subverting it, as a feminist writer or text might, they must employ strategies within the realm of discourse that effectively expose the embedded ideology. In the realm of writing, the patriarchal ideology ingrained in the narrative is undermined by these two concepts. Gender and feminism, in this context, naturally open up the possibilities for circularity and multiple perspectives, enabling feminists to explore not only gender but also issues of class, race, age, sexuality, and the insistence on presenting an alternative portrayal of female subjectivity. Gender and/or feminism here relate to human/woman relief of association between the sexes.

Islamic feminism is the interpretive woman's position in Islam based on her enviable status, maximally enjoying her freedom, contrary to efforts that draw her to the backseat. These efforts are easily identifiable as unIslamic as Islam has never drawn them to the patriarchal trance. Islamic feminism is particularly characterised by cooperative, supportive behaviour among its adherents.

11.3 Objective

The objective of this paper is twofold: to highlight how gender has been wrongly used to allude to the Islamic view point in Nigerian novels and, how Gimba, a male writer is seen in his bid to rewrite the long-standing history, a pathbreaking stride to read Islam in the patriarchal world of Northern Nigeria through his novel craft. All his novels are usually set in Northern Nigeria which is predominantly Muslim occupation. Even with his fictional North in a fictional country, it is easy to see Gimba alluding to Northern Nigeria. Is Gimba's information valid? If it is, is it tolerable by women since hardliner feminists like Ziemmerman would prefer evidence by women only?

11.4 Feminist Theory

We make bold to note that our novelist of choice, Abubakar Gimba, a male writer, may not have claimed feminism for his works, but yet, he may have advanced himself for feminist ideology. We have provided enough reason, in our thinking, for selecting a male novelist for the feminist formula in both the preliminaries and methodology, but we are doubly faced with the challenge of assigning novelists to theories. It is always dangerous to hazard author classification, but we do not think it would be far from wrong to assign Gimba somewhere in feminist writings. Gimba denies being classified as a feminist (see, Sunday Ode 1) and it won't be a surprise if he is tingled by it and burns in consequence. But history would merely repeat itself, should he do that as he would not be the first, neither is he likely to be the last. I remember Delacroix was addressed with a formula and he vigorously disclaimed it. He, in an over-heat, objected to his being called a Romanticist writer (see, Jaques Barzun, 1961). In a similar stance, Joseph Conrad (1908) hit it hard on one of his reviewers, "There is even one abandoned creature, who calls me a neo-Platonist. What on earth is that?" Conrad (1908) in Edward (1962). It is no news having an unfriendly relationship between writers and their critics. Suffice it to mention that the emergence of feminism has a startling analysis. Gimba must realise that women's issues occur in multiple circularities. He would have to reason with Virginia Woolf who says it is for a writer to say one thing to stand for twenty. Feminism and gender, then, can be read into any text that has female character(s). It is very possible to read feminism and gender in texts that have no female characters at all. I remember Bertolt Brecht's technique here. But why are writers shying away from being called feminists?

Even female writers distance themselves from being associated with feminism. And, is it, for example, wrong to be a feminist in Islam? These and more attract the attention of this paper in investigating feminism to mainstream women.

Female feminists like the Nigerian Buchi Emecheta note that if by writing through an African woman's eyes she would be branded a feminist, which she detests, she would

wish to point to the signification of her being an African feminist instead; importantly, an African feminist with a small 'f' (Emecheta 175). People have signified the big 'F' as rebellious, injurious and disrespectful to womanhood. This is the more reason why the Ghanaian female writer, Ama Ata Aidoo explains African women's distance response (response theory) with Western feminism by underlying that they (African women) cannot be '...acting today as daughters and grand-daughters of women who always refused to keep quiet' (Ama Ata Aidoo 183).

Feminist theory shoots from feminism as a discourse that addresses the vicissitudes of misogyny, false universalism, and gender asymmetry of mainstream womanhood. The discourse surrounding feminism has evolved into a more diverse, nuanced, intricate, and captivating dialogue, shedding its initial dismissal as mere youthful idealism or at best, an archival curiosity. Over time, it has progressed from women expressing themselves boldly yet crudely that is now fast settling on a note of complementarity of the sexes. This evolution is seen in the emergence of new terms such as "Proper feminism," "Modified feminism," "True feminism," "New feminism," "Nego-feminism," "Islamic feminism," and others, all aimed at reshaping the perception of women away from confrontational approaches.

In contemporary times, feminism has moved beyond mere fixation on grievances. Lennox emphasises the importance of recognising that the focus of conflicts within feminism lies not in feminism itself, but rather in feminist theory, which has mistakenly positioned itself as the study of feminist discord, both in theory and in practice. While attempting to mediate that discord, she adds, it has, of necessity, succeeded in exacerbating it; an intolerable act of provocation that has taken underhand advantage of a need for negotiation and give the world a breathing space. Islamic feminism steps in to douse the tension. It asks the world to have a rethink on questions of womanhood. It submits that womanhood cannot truly be on the backseat neither can she be a frontliner of confrontation, which only exacerbate the already heightened mixes. The woman in Islam is conducted with solidarity, sympathy, and respect, a vehicle capable of moving present feminists past the positions where women are presently mired; moving her past feminist discord. Her situation garbed by misogyny would only simply need to be undressed as this paper proffers for vigorous debate in its novel plotting.

Finding itself in the misogynist world, feminist critics have become correctly alarmed by the practice of a discredit, excluding women from civilisation as they were and still extremely damaged or at least significantly threatened by the patriarchal world with its pseudo explanations that pathologises women's capacity aspirations. In consequence of this, Anne Snitow warns that "when basic rights are under attack, liberalism feels necessary again" (27). So women became crude, unfortunately, feeling that they have never known a time when their fundamental rights have not been threatened and therefore, tread the path of rascality. This introduces Skinner's response theory into our discourse.

11.5 B.F. Skinner's Stimulus-Response (S-R) Theory

Building on the concept of arrant feminism through Skinner's theory, Harriet Walker in *Independent* 2012 observes that women have laboured too long in the hands of patriarchy and in revolting against its people have distanced themselves from feminism. She asks as an example, "how did we kick things off? With a naked lady, of course". It all started with the actress, Lara Pulver, whom several complaints trailed after she did a braless appearance.

B.F. Skinner's response theory (Stimulus-Response, S-R theory) can explain to us why women themselves are running away from being addressed as feminists. The application of Skinner's argument to women's revolt against patriarchal persecution is consistent with his broader theory of behaviour. Like Skinner's overall work, it revolves around a framework of rewards and punishments, which shape and reinforce specific behaviours as either desirable or undesirable. Individuals tend to repeat actions that result in pleasure and avoid actions that lead to pain. This process is known as conditioning, which can be equated to the development of habits, such as a writing habit or a particular writing style, in our context.

11.5.1 Behaviourism

Skinner's theory of Behaviourism plays a significant role in his perspective on women's issues. According to this theory, individuals determine what is right or wrong based on their conditioned experiences of pleasure and pain. If an action elicits a painful response, it is likely to be avoided, while actions associated with pleasurable responses or rewards are deemed good. In this way, human behaviour is entirely influenced by the pleasure-pain connection. Habits are formed through the repetition of actions that are rewarded in some way. The application of this theory to women's issues suggests that the development of behavioural patterns and responses is equally applicable in understanding and addressing the challenges faced by women.

11.5.2 Features

As soon as writers begin to write on women issues, the interest of the concerned (women and men) is piqued. The result is that writers and critics, when they write acceptable aspects about women, are rewarded by the readership and critics. As a result, word/phrase usages, sentences and general ideologies are remembered and the nonsense unacceptable position(s) (that get(s) unattractive attention) are forgotten in the end, it is hoped.

11.5.3 Benefits

Skinner's theory is known for its simplicity and practicality, which is considered one of its primary advantages. It suggests that individuals are highly responsive to rewards, particularly when consistently provided, and they tend to develop habits based on actions that have been positively reinforced. This straightforwardness of the theory facilitates conducting research and comprehending patterns of writing behaviour. According to this perspective, humans are essentially animals that respond to external stimuli in a predictable manner. Chances are that with a new projection of the positive acceptable woman, the world order would eventually change against the woman as the underdog.

11.5.4 Problems/Effects

Skinner's theory has faced criticism from various quarters. One common critique is that his perspective reduces human beings to mechanistic entities or mere products of external stimuli, disregarding the complexities of human thoughts and motivations. Critics, including Chomsky, argue that Skinner's approach oversimplifies the intricate nature of human behaviour and fails to account for the multifaceted reasons and ideas that influence human actions. They contend that factors such as cognition, emotions, and social context play significant roles in shaping human behaviour, which cannot be adequately explained solely through Skinner's theory of rewards and punishments.

11.6 Methodology

In organising this thought, the methodology would be content analysis of *Sacred Apples* where gender statements are contrastively matched with the provisions of the Muslim Holy Book, the Qur'an. Feminism which has generated into various gender aspects which, in the beginning, is a revenge game by a revenge people in a revenge time is increasingly becoming the business of not only women but also a strong concern of men. And a question shoots, when will the revenge game stop? How? And by who? This paper's methodology is to use representative men's works to undo what men did. This has relevance for future literary practice to faithfully imitate the approach of Gimba in removing the gender chaffs from the grains. Correct gender efforts can engender correct crafting of the correct social realities. The implication is that there will be obvious behaviour pattern dissociating itself from social constructs to the best practice of the religion that has occupied the region, nay the nation in particular and Africa and the world in general.

It is, perhaps, unquestionable that by this practice, man who is and remains the enemy of woman is the centre point. The patriarchal world favours him. Women have been streamlined, marginalised, criminalised. Men are in advantage over women to the

point of making them appendages to men. This is, perhaps, the singular reason why the Nigerian female feminist, Buchi Emecheta in 1979, went out of her way, we suppose, to challenge God on when He will create a full-grown woman who is not going to be anyone's appendage. Such unguarded statement, in our thinking, only reflects a revenge game that is over shot by several metres.

In the design of this paper, it suspects whether it is not impossible in the patriarchal world to use the same men to undo what they did. Can't this even be a softer feminist method of achieving the dream project of womanhood; mainstreaming them? If women must not be streamlined and appropriately streamed, men ought to be saddled with the responsibility of coming in shoulder to shoulder in mainstreaming women issues.

The take-off point is that we finally settled to engage in mainstreaming women because we, like other teeming men and women, have a strong stake. Our people are involved: our mothers, who were at extreme pains when we screamed into this world, our bed mates - our wives, and our daughters. Why should we want to streamline these people? This feminist morphology can be exploited through the novel industry, we think. So, distracting curious eyes may grant men on women issues as they are less off-putting, we hope.

We will invoke 'gender' a lot but our micro-point of reference will mostly be the Islamic experience. But Islamic experience is a more or less typical example of what is going on generally on the continent of Africa in particular, and the larger world, so that rhetoric has its impeccable practical justification. Our main emphasis would be Islamic feminism, that is, the framework of Islamic methodology in Nigerian novel plots.

11.7 Teenage Marriage

If we use Gimba's *Sacred Apples* in reacting to gender misogyny by pointing out Islamic poetics, it would only intentionally pull together a pool of ideological issues. In a gendered society, women are often denied the full range of rights and privileges that are considered appropriate for all human beings. Liberal feminists argue that, universally, women receive fewer opportunities and benefits compared to men, regardless of cultural context. If we want to understand what a society values, we can examine what it offers or denies to women. This does not mean that women are completely devoid of power, pleasure, property, or prestige anywhere and at all times, as that would be an extreme and unsustainable situation. Moreover, the extent of deprivations experienced by women can vary within and across cultures, leading to divisions and conflicts within feminist movements. It is important to acknowledge these disparities among women without subscribing to an illiberal view that only the most marginalised women can be considered "real" women. Arguments to the contrary are just mystification. This is precisely what Islamic feminism seeks to free women from but misunderstood as it would appear. In Islam, the woman is at total advantage, what is

seen as controlled freedom is only justifying mystification taken for Islam as it shall soon be demonstrated.

Second, in using *Sacred Apples*, we follow Skinner's response theory to react to unacceptable practices against women. In doing this, we return to the observation that such a feminist text should possess reactionary techniques, even if revolutionary to intolerable gendered contexts. Serious fiction with subversive techniques, Bakhtin tells us, counters the status-quo but offers alternative. This alternative is in Islamic poetics. Given the existence of discord within feminist movements, feminists have neither the option nor the luxury of overlooking it. Feminism (un)fortunately comes into conflict with many ideologies on women. We differ profoundly and intractably with other ideologies in our resolve that Islam is the answer to the challenges facing the woman. This Islamic discord undercuts any idea against all (wo)men while sharing a singular essence, serving in a capacity of human dignity. Let us exemplify.

Sacred Apples (54) works to convert the simplicity of female subjectivity into a complexity that surprises the readership. It addresses and resolves the contentious debates surrounding teenage marriages, polygamy, purdah, girl-child education, veil, etc. It makes several references to the Holy Book of Muslims, the Qur'an. This fact of Islamic value seems beneath to engage discord on early marriages, as an example of focus. Gimba uses Ya-Shareef, the older brother of the female protagonist in the novel, to simultaneously embrace and decline the challenge; it is the technique of doing and undoing at the same time. Thus, the technique involves performing and reversing actions concurrently, known as the doubling technique. His sister, who holds strong feminist beliefs, becomes concerned about the physical harm caused by early marriages. Ya-Shareef acknowledges her point and promptly contrasts it with the importance of the moral well-being of society. He questions the comparative impact of the moral health of the practice versus the physical health of a limited number of individuals within that society. Which of these two aspects inflicts greater harm? Ya-Shareef further points out that opponents of early marriages conveniently overlook this aspect. He emphasises that the moral well-being of society carries significant weight compared to the physical health of a few individuals. While he acknowledges that early marriages alone cannot resolve the increasing trend of sexual misconduct, he suggests that it has the potential to slow down its rapid escalation. Given the strong correlation between societal disintegration and this growth, it seems plausible that early marriage could act as a deterrent to this dangerous issue. Surprisingly, the sister remains silent. As a radical feminist, one might expect a reaction from her, as being steadfast in one's beliefs often carries its own value, demonstrating the lack of civilized behaviour among many elites despite their education. However, she demonstrates wisdom by choosing to remain quiet.

Continuing with his contrasting approach, Ya-Shareef acknowledges that it cannot be denied that some married women may choose to engage in extramarital affairs. However, even with this possibility, he emphasises that the number of such individuals

is not as significant as the number of unmarried women engaging in similar behaviour across societies worldwide. This observation serves as a stark comparison to Carolina Överlien's alarming findings in 2003, where she highlights the increasing number of young girls, often referred to rhetorically as either innocent or active individuals, who frequent bars and clubs and engage in casual sexual encounters without heeding advice from others, as they assert their control over their own lives and decisions.

11.8 A Woman's Surname

A woman is prone to carrying and loosing surname instantly during moments of death or divorce. Such circumstances change her plight. Thus, is it mythopoeia that asks her to carry her husband's surname? When a woman divorces her husband or is divorced ten times or more, or loses her husbands to death, she inevitably loses her surname by that same number of times. Gimba discusses surname (74) with ingenuity and verve.

'Call them by their father's names ...', Gimba refers to the Qur'anic verse. The reason is quite simple. It is hardly disputable that losing one's father's name to one's husband is '[a]small step in marital compromise, but a great leap towards marital subservience ...'. This being as it is, if a name denotes indenture, or ownership, would it not be more promising and more fulfilling to align with one's own father instead? It seems to us indeed, that it would be better to be owned (if it must come to ownership) by our fathers than by our husbands.

11.9 Conclusion

Men's superiority over women can only be through social constructs than by religious dictates. In this observation, there is relief as the Qur'an states that women are no less equal to men. Men's superiority, Gimba amplifies the Qur'anic position, is merely in 'a degree above women', a degree of responsibility, not of superiority' (305). It is the man's responsibility to fend for the family in protection, food, shelter, etc.

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