

Patriarchy and Women Plight in Africa: The Consequences of Living in Passivity

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Abstract: Patriarchy and subjugation of women in many societies in Africa seems to be endogenic with structural origin before the industrial revolution. It appears that this has made it more or less a conventional orthodox order to see women as subordinates or second class citizens, as such, relegating them to the background using language, family and religious structure and by extension, modern social structure. From the pages of anthropological data, patriarchy and gender equality have existed as potential opportunity for whoever was interested in activating them into living phenomenon. Due to the destabilization of the small scale societies by the colonialists and empire builders, patriarchy was activated against gender equality making women to appear as subordinate and commercial article. Having been unconsciously placed in the social structure as opposite of superior, they now live at the mercy of the men in the hierarchy of social structure. Following the industrial and academic revolution concurrently, door for self and group liberation was opened, which until now many societies outside Africa have used to fight women rights abuse and structurally-induced subjugation. However, among the African women, things seem to be in the order of the ancient patriarchy that permanently reduced them to properties of men and the social system without value for their dignity and right for self-determination. The above socially-induced anomaly is what necessitated the present work to x-ray the structurally induced subordination position of women in African society especially in the current historical epoch, relying on the principles of structuration theory by Giddens while capturing the indices of self-victimization, ignorance and unseen reinforcement of the age long social problem. This paper also juxtaposes self-reflection of African women in the light of the debate among feminists.

Keywords: African Women, Living in Passivity, Patriarchy, Social Structure, Women Plight
Anti-gender-equality

Introduction

Patriarchy as a social concept is embedded in the everyday activities of the members of the society, making it a tool of control over the women among the uninformed and unenlightened members the society. Technically speaking, patriarchy is beyond the surface argument of whose responsibility it is, to do certain activities in the family, church and other public settings however, it involves more of inherent feelings and capacity in men to see women as inherent property and subordinate rather than equal being who can only be subordinate by the rules of social ladder, which functions by the ability and inability of the individuals to climb the ladder (Walby, 1997; Engel, 1972). Similarly, patriarchy on the side of the women in most uninformed and unenlightened societies appears in the form of inherent self-deprecation due to observed and unobserved subordinate roles of women beyond the common logic of superordinate and subordinate, which run on the string of social values of achievements and relevance. At worst, women in an uninformed setting, overwhelmed by the dominant influence of patriarchy system tend to surrender their achieved social status to the nearest male counterparts

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in order to live out the inherent understanding of and fear about patriarchy system and its attending social consequences.

Patriarchy, as a micro social institution of its own, has grown beyond other socially induced inequality in the society causing more harm than good especially in the current historical epoch when the door for self-manifestation has been opened for all and sundry (Chafetz, 1998; Acker, 1992). As a concept, patriarchy operate to reinforce the men's ego and inherent desire for domination over others (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Ward, 1993; Sprague & Kobryniewicz, 1999). This ego and desire to dominate others is the inherent instinct in every living thing including human beings and the lower infra sentient beings, which can only be made possible by the help of socially and environmentally undue advantage of one family, specie, group or gender over the other. As a social tool, it operates as the socially accepted strategy developed over the years to help men [even the weakest men] especially, in an uninformed and unenlightened societies of this era, to get women obey the slightest unwholesome order to their (women) detriment provided it made the man appear as the one in charge of the affairs of the current situation.

Although at the macro level of analysis and outlook, patriarchy system seems to be the dominant outlook of gender relation in majority of the human societies ever studied (Walby, 1990, 1997), at the micro social analysis using the available anthropological field data, patriarchy as social institution seems to be weak and unconscious social wave. In most of these societies in the past especially in Africa, there appeared to be indices of gender equality in the responsibilities of the members of the family and the society at large save for the ritualized social functions and conditions, which excluded or compelled the women to appear as the lower citizens of the society before men (Bohannon, 1949; Coker, 1958; Gluckman, 1940). The responsibilities given to women in some of these small scale societies were as good as the position assumed to be occupied by the Queen of England in the present day sociopolitical analysis of the modern England. Almost all the positions of authorities and responsibilities given to the women to give these small scale societies an image of quasi gender equality, gradually fizzled away in the face of colonialists' gender-specific approach to the management of the affairs of the colonized.

In the light of gender specific approach to the management of the social affairs of the colonized, especially in favour of the men in the society as the then reliable man power, the subsequent change in historical epoch of these small scale societies resulted in the total domination of the society by men and relegation of the women to the background. Having been exposed to the understanding of men as more important to the colonial administration and women as permanent housewives and inferior subordinate, men strengthened the absolute patriarchy and institutionalized it. From this point, every member of these small scale societies [that were later merged into countries in different regions of Africa] became the instrument for reinforcing patriarchy. While the men by their postures bully women into understanding that they are in charge, women on their own became generational reinforcement of the understanding by constantly training their males and female wards into the same understanding. By their attitude also, women constantly behaved in the direction of encouraging the elements that subjugated them and uphold the male dominance continuously and unconsciously.

In light of the above excerpt, this paper is interested in the explanation of the phenomenon of patriarchy in the current historical epoch of the African societies through the lens of structuration theory by Anthony Giddens. More importantly, the paper aims at theoretically devising a strategy for liberating the African women from the wave of self-deprecation through a generational transformation of understanding of gender equality and its place in everyday human activities.

Structuration Theory: The Human induced Slavery to Social System

Structuration theory, having its conceptual basis on the concept and schema about structure, is one of the social theories that has attempted to see human behaviour as the product of social system, which man has built consciously and unconsciously (Weber, 1946; Giddens, 1977). Structure in the sociological theoretical parlance, is more of the supporting networks that reinforces and upholds the status quo (Kalberg, 1977b), for the ongoing social system, provided it is serving the interest of the dominating class or group (Vogel, 1983; Stockard, 1999).

Structuration theory as Giddens conceived it, is more of advancing the structuralisms' perspective, which is embedded in the understanding that the social system operates on invisible structure, which had been created and at some point, preceded the individuals living in such structure (Fisher, 2010; Geertz, 1980); however, the individuals living in this structure can either in ignorance or fear continue to reify the structure over their affairs irrespective of the implication of their action (Wallace, 1989; Sanday, 1981; Sacks, 1974). Structuralisms' perspective also observed the tendency of every phenomenon in the social system such as language, family, religion, politics, economy, etc. upholding a structural setting, which in extension foretell the actions and attitudes required towards other phenomenon such as gender and power relation (Sattel, 1976; Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993; West & Fenstermaker, 1993).

According to Giddens, the social structure and human actions are the two sides of the same coin (Giddens, 1977; 1979; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008); with human actions appearing as the fore bearers of the intents of the structure (Heike, 2012; Barbara & Georgiann, 2012). The structure of the social web, which appear first as rules of engagement over certain human activities, continue to be expanded and reinforced by the actions of the members of the society. In most circumstances, these actions or rather activities of men in the society, appear to be unconscious move and reactions of the members of the social system (Giddens, 1980), but latter become a reified order or superimposition on the same people in the social web who have created the situation (Choi & Fuqua, 2003).

In a more distinct conceptual framework, which created a fluid departure for the Giddens' structuration theory from the dominant structuralism paradigm (ie. Duality of structure), Giddens maintained that the social structure has no existence independent of the knowledge that the agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activities (Giddens, 1980). In essence, what people believe, what people do, what people follow, are all the product of their past experience reproduced in form of prevailing order, norms and expected attitude (Green, 2007; Kan, Sullivan & Gershuny, 2011). Using English language grammar as an instance, Giddens explained how the elements of the social system survived by human activities acknowledging these elements. For instance, according to Giddens, the English grammar is automatically reproduced, reinforced and survived

when an individual speaks this language in their daily interactions. Nonetheless, the introduction of the new elements of grammar and disuse of the old elements of the grammar are all subject to the human day-to-day interaction in this language (Giddens, 1979; 1980). In Giddens' structuration theoretical parlance are the concepts of rules and resources, and their applications in daily human activities.

Rules are appropriated with their interpretations in the daily lives of the members of the society. These rules can only be interpreted and applied and even further be extended to unfamiliar circumstances that were not present while the rules were being made by the individuals and groups in the society. Again, the resources, whether material or non-material are put in use by the members of the society of which in the absence of human manipulation and application of these resources, they may be irrelevant and unnoticed as valuable (Giddens, 1980; Burke, 1992; Cooke, 1994).

In the social system, according to Giddens human beings are the agency of reproduction; something that manifest through the daily use of what the structure had offered the members of the society. Of course Giddens was not alone in this understanding even though the theoretical imagination at some point sounds superficial and axiomatic (Archer, 1982; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). In the works of Max Weber [*Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, 1968 & The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, 1947*], which appeared more deductive compared to a number of other classical theorists, human actions were seen to be strongly attached to structural dictates from the social super structure.

The dictate by the social structure are not visible but operates through the same members of the society who at one point or the other feel uncomfortable with the same system (Goldberger & Otis, 1973; Giddens, 1984; Fukuyama, 1999b). Human-agency in the social structure concept as captured in Giddens' structuration theory has not only appeared in the axiomatic and superficial analysis of the society as some scholars (Archer, 1982; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008) claimed against Giddens theoretical orientation; this has appeared in the everyday living of the members of the society via language (Saussure, 1966); kinship relationship (Levi-Strauss, 1963); gender relation (Blumberg, 1984; Bonvillain, 1995; Cahill, 1983; Chafetz, 1990; Chafetz, & Dworkin, 1989); family structure (Blumberg, 1988; Bell, & Newby, 1976; Chafetz, 1980, Chafetz, & Hagan, 1996; Chodorow, 1978); religion, politics and the economy (Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1979; Scaff, 1989; Novak, 1982; 1996).

In Giddens' structuration, theory, the structure and the agent (human beings) cannot be separated as both work in tandem to reinforce each other (Giddens, 1980; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008) however, Giddens did observe that human actions in the social structure are voluntary and by implication vulnerable to change in view of the prevailing circumstance in the hierarchy of human needs for development and improvement.

Pre and Post-Colonial African Women: Potential opportunity for Gender Equality/Patriarchy
Historically, we may not have an encompassing information of the nature of gender relation in all African small scale societies compared to other regions of the world. However, from the pages of cultural and social anthropological empirical work, we can piece together what the situation looks like in the past. Among different small scale societies in the past, there are different ways women were viewed and treated before the culture

contact with the colonialists (Onwuejiogwu, 1975). In most of these small scale societies, there are some evidence of consistency with respect for women in terms of social status and positions (Bohanann, 1949; Bascom, 1952; Gluckman, 1940), while in some societies, there were some evidence of serious relegation of the women to the background (Smith, 1955). In whichever way, the position of women before the colonialists' domination in Africa were not as bad as it was latter presented owing to the empowerment of men against the women by the colonialists, who were more interested in using men for empire building than the general wellbeing of the members of the society.

Among the people of Dahomey [in the present day Benin Republic]¹, women were active part of political activities making them more or less, the major stakeholders in the political and leadership affairs of the kingdom (Bohannan, 1949, Herskovits, 1938; Fage, 1969). According to Bohannan, the political decision among the people as at the time of his study, were reached considering the imputes of the women. This, according to him were extended to the family affairs where, women were not presented or viewed as men's property. In the military affairs of the kingdom, women were unbiasedly recruited into the indigenous army giving them, equal stake with their male counterparts. However, in the current situation as it has to do with gender and politics, Benin republic where the kingdom of Dahomey was located had falling into the degeneration of women marginalization in politics and other human affairs following the crushing of the indigenous system by the French colonialists, which opened the door for religiously influenced domination over women rights.

Taken an instance from one of the major ethnic group in Ghana before the penetration of the colonialists and the empire builders, the Ashanti people of Ghana were formidable force politically and otherwise with the respect for gender equality. Among the Ashanti², the political office of the mother of the king was practically observed with its responsibilities at all levels of leadership (Rattray, 1923, Fage, 1969; Kaberry, 1952). The position of the king's mother at all levels of political and social affairs did not occur in passivity but with some level of robustness that saved the women at all levels from the misconception of the value of women by men in the society. Among the lovedu or Balobedu³ [in present day South Africa], women were observed as sacred as men can be in some domineering positions. For instance, women were made the rain queen; a position, which made some men in certain small scale societies even today to appear unapproachable to women and by implication, place women in the second class citizenship while consulting with such men. Among the lovedu, the rain queen is an independent queen whose existence symbolizes the powerful nature of women in public functions (Krige, 1943; Kaberry, 1952). Nonetheless the leadership of the women did not create misrepresentation of the members of the society as it has to do with gender equality. However, the encroachment of the foreign social and cultural orientation has made the activities that bestowed the women

¹ The Kingdom of Dahomey was an African kingdom that existed from about 1600 until 1894, when the last king, Béhanzin, was defeated by the French, and the country was annexed into the French colonial empire.

² The Ashanti Empire was an Akan empire and kingdom in what is now modern-day Ghana from 1670 to 1957. The Ashanti Empire expanded from Ashanti to include the Brong-Ahafo Region, Central Region, Eastern Region, Greater Accra Region and Western Region of present-day Ghana.

³ Lovedu or Balobedu is a southern African tribe and an ethnic group of the [Northern Sotho](#) group. They were initially known as BaKwebo (wild pigs). The name "bolobedu" means place of tribute, go loba/lobela. Hence BaLobedu are people who receive tribute from others. They have their own kingdom, the Balobedu Kingdom, within the [Limpopo Province](#) of [South Africa](#) with a female ruler, the [Rain Queen](#) Modjadji.

leadership position, an article of religious taboo while the women gradually retreated to the back seat for the domination of men.

In Mende¹ [in the present day Sierra Leone], women were organized prior to the domination of the westernization influence making them, competent and ready for political positions and activities (Smith, 1954; Kaberry, 1952; Little, 1948). According to Little (1948), the women of Mende organized a secret society that even assisted them in manipulating and obtaining political power in the society prior to the intrusion of the foreign cultural elements. Sexual abuse against women were controlled in all ramifications by the women in Mende. This, led to a form of fines and other levels of punishments against men who were found wanting in the rules of societal ethics on sexual relationship even among married couple. In the case of Yoruba women and that of the Nupe², women were economically influential in their somewhat *social logic* that women were depended on, by the men in the society especially at the family level. According to Smith (1954), Coker (1958), Bascom (1952) and Nadel (1935), the Yoruba and Nupe women were such influential that they could determine the direction of the public decisions by the male elders via their (the women) contribution financially to the financial needs of the community as a whole. In the case of Nupe women, they were revered by men as they are typically perceived to be operating with witchcraft power in the witchcraft belief system (Nadel, 1935).

In the ancient Zulu³ system, women were respected and observed as sacred as long as their fertility lasted and were accorded great social status like men after the age of menopause (Gluckman, 1940). While the sacredness during the years of fertility protected them from women abuse, the social status accorded to them during the age of menopause offered them the leverage to live above abuse and domination by men in the same society. Among the Igbo⁴ and Ijo [Ijaw]⁵ women of the present day Nigeria, women were more or less at liberty to influence their social status in terms of marriage and participation in the social affairs of the society (Ottenberg, 1959; Williamson, 1962; Onwuejeogwu, 1969; Mc Call, 1959, Green 1947). Among the Igbo people before the colonialists, the Eze in council do reserve a sit in the cabinet specifically occupied by the women however represented by a symbolic leader known as *Ilumandinate*; this was found in the structure and arrangement of the leadership of the last Eze Nri and with indices of such being in existence for centuries even before the last Eze Nri (Onwejeogwu, 1969). Similarly, among the Ijaw women, the forms of marriage they entered into determined their chances of self-determination (Williamson, 1962).

¹ The Mende people are one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone; their neighbours, the Temne people, have roughly the same population. The Mende and Temne each account for slightly more than 30% of the total population.

² The Yoruba people are one of the ethnic groups of southwestern Nigeria and southern Benin in West Africa. The Yorubas are a distinctive people who are bound together by a common language with various different dialects. ... According to Yoruba mythology, all Yoruba people are descendants of Odua or Oduduwa.

The Nupe, traditionally called the Tapa by the neighbouring Yoruba, are an ethnic group located primarily in the Middle Belt and northern Nigeria, and are the dominant group in Niger State, an important minority in Kwara State and present in Kogi State as well.

³ The Zulu are a Bantu ethnic group of Southern Africa and the largest ethnic group in South Africa, with an estimated 10–12 million people living mainly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Small numbers also live in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique.

⁴ Igboland, also known as Southeastern Nigeria, is the homeland of the Igbo people. It is a non-governmental cultural and common linguistic region in southern Nigeria. Geographically, it is divided by the lower Niger River into two unequal sections – an eastern and a western section.

⁵ Ijaw people (also known by the subgroups "Ijo" or "Izon") are a collection of peoples indigenous to the Niger Delta in Nigeria, inhabiting regions of the states of Ondo, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom and Rivers.

Among the Hausa¹ women, it was not until the spread of purdah² that they became enslaved under marriage and other social circumstances. Purdah according to Smith (1955) and Onwuejeogwu (1969) was introduced by Mansa-Musa of the Songhai³ empire after his visit to Saudi Arabia around 15th century. In the absence of purdah, the Hausa women were as free as other ethnic groups mentioned above before the culture contact with Europe and other nations (Mc Call, 1959; Linton, 1936; Fage, 1969).

The status of women from the structures of the small scale societies, at least from the already presented societies across Africa here, seems to be gender neutral making it more or less an opportunity for women advancement as well as relegation to the background. Whichever one that appears to be the case, has been the outcome of the attitude of the people in the system itself. Take for instance, the affiliate macrocosm of the same societies mentioned above in terms of nations/countries via amalgamation of the small scale societies, are the typical examples of internationally designated women abuse and men domination possibly after the culture contact with the outside world. For instance, in the same Dahomey where women were recruited into military like men and operated in every facet of the society, the report of the Social watch as at 2012 showed that women participation in economic activities were as low as 0.14%, gender equality (0.41%) and empowerment (0.66%) (Social Watch, 2012). The implication of the findings according to Social Watch is that women had falling in the hole of men domination and gender inequality at extreme level.

In Ghana where Ashanti small scale society is located with their traditional living pattern before the encroachment of the British Empire, the entire nation was among the nations with poorest score in terms of gender equality, women empowerment, women participation in economic and political activities. Worst still are the other ethnic groups included in the above ethnographic analysis of the previous small scale societies in the African setting before culture contact. They all fall below average in the analysis of the Social Watch report of 2012.

In the same Benin republic with antecedents of gender equality from the ethnographic information, a study carried out within the framework of the 2008 Empowerment project, reported that sexual harassment was the most common manifestation of sexual abuse; 37% of respondents declared being victims of sexual harassment, followed by rape (20% of respondents) and incest (10% of respondents) (CEDAW, 2012). From 2003 to 2011, the percentage of elected women was consistently low, rising from 7.2% (or 6 out of 83 ministers) to 10% (or 9 out of 83 ministers) between 2007 and 2011 (CEDAW, 2012). The poor representation of women in the political sphere is explained in part according to CEDAW (2012), by the fact that, as stated in the JICA country profile for Benin, "Women's involvement in any activities, whether social, economic or cultural, is subject to men's decision". In most of these countries where these ethnic groups were located before the

¹ The main Hausa-speaking area is northern Nigeria and Niger. Hausa is also widely spoken in northern Ghana, Cameroon, Chad, Sudanese Hausa in Sudan and the Ivory Coast among Fulani, Tuareg, Kanuri, Gur, Shuwa Arab, and other Afro-Asiatic speaking groups.

² Pardah or purdah is the term used primarily in South Asia, to describe in the South Asian context, the global religious and social practice of female seclusion that is associated with Muslim communities. Due to Islamic influence, it is also prevalent among some Hindu communities in the northern part of South Asia.

³ The Songhai Empire was a state that dominated the western Sahel in the 15th and 16th century. At its peak, it was one of the largest states in African history. The state is known by its historiographical name, derived from its leading ethnic group and ruling elite, the Songhai. It is located in the present day Mali.

amalgamation of the small scale societies into nations/country, there has been a dramatic change of the women social status with regard to women participation in social activities, their liberties and dignity.

Patriarchy and Self Victimization among Women in Africa

Patriarchy in its crude definition is the domination of men over women in the society with such indices as institutional domination by men, women subjugation by the social structure and relegation of the dignity of women to the background. More than the crude definition of patriarchy, there are other perspectives that have come into play as far as the concept and phenomenon of patriarchy is concerned. More specifically, in the Hegelian-Marxian concept of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Ball, 1991 in Ritzer, 2011), patriarchy at least in African setting, from the available historical and anthropological data (Ottenberg, 1959; Williamson, 1962; Onwuejeogwu, 1969; Mc Call, 1959, Green 1947; Linton, 1936; Fage, 1969), appeared to be ongoing process of the social relationship aptly defined and sustained by the weaknesses and strengths of one group before another. Nevertheless, the situation in the sociological parlance of social structure and the ongoing system, can be defined as the accepted but not inherent status of women, to serve as the opposite of the strong (weak), head (tail), leader (led) superordinate (subordinate), etc.

While the concept of patriarchy in its crude form focus the searchlight beam on the social institutions and their contribution to the survival of male domination in the society, the Hegelian-Marxian concept of socio-historical movement of the society singles out the problem of epoch-making decision of the members of the society to pursue or not to pursue the needed change especially as regards to gender relation. More importantly in this paper as we were determined to explain, is the impact of social structure on patriarchy system in Africa especially in Giddens' structuration theoretical paradigm.

Patriarchy in Africa has continued to survive for years with the help of social structure upheld and re-enforced by the members of the society. While the men have exploited the opportunity as resources lying potentially for use [as is found in the Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens, 1984; Haralambose & Holborn, 2008)], women have ignorantly or rather, fearfully maintained the same system without the understanding that they are the oxygen for the survival of patriarchy [see Giddens' concept of language and structuration; Giddens, 1984]. Women in their daily activities contribute to the continuation of patriarchy even in the absence of deliberate desire for domination by men.

In the language structure, especially in the indigenous dialects and adages, women are being depicted as the second class human beings compared to the opposite sex, and this is also acceptable and appreciated by most women such that when they want to psychologically submit to difficult tasks, they simply look for the structurally embedded women weaknesses in the local dialects to defray their mind from striving further. From the classical text of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), we found the inherent capacity of language to socialize man into his permanent status in terms of gender in the society. Similarly, Levi Strauss (1963), indicated that language in the kinship system appear so powerful that the members of the society become classified in their relationship with one another in the micro components of the local dialects. This, also, leads to the situation, in which the members of the society become inherently weak or strong towards each other on the line of gender (Nobuhle

Ndimande-Hlongwa & Leonce Rushubirwa, 2014; Atanga, Ellece, Litosseliti & Sunderland 2012). Although the role of language structure here in sustaining patriarchy appear to be general, in the specific, women unconsciously transfer this inherent *anti-gender-equality* in the language to their wards knowing fully well that they are the custodians of child upbringing in the family and society at large (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975; Tichenor, 2005; Cubelli, Daniela, Lorella & Remo, 2011). What these children learn especially the female ones are solely what they were thought and exposed to by their mothers and it is these same female wards that grow to become mothers, who becomes relegated to the background and become properties of men due to inherent emotional weakness. In certain circumstances where the female children try to be actively involved in the social activities with the male counterparts, their mothers do speak into their ears “are you aware that you are a woman who will be married to a man?”. This kind of statement though silent, appear salient to the understand of the *social logic* of gender relation in the mind of the female folk when they gradually start seeing themselves secluded and isolated from active participation in the social activities (Boroditsky, 2009; Buthelezi, 2004; Dirven & Verspoor 1998). For instance, women involvement in political rally and other public functions has not been openly or statutorily frowned at or discouraged by the males in particular rather, it has been maintained and sustained by this form of quiet statements that carries *anti-gender-equality*. Whichever way language became the gun in the hands of the women to shoot themselves in the foot in the problem of patriarchy in Africa, our concern here is to unveil how women participate in using the language structure to maintain patriarchy against themselves.

According to Giddens (1979; 1984), when you speak the English language for instance, you help to sustain the English grammar, when you stop using some words in English grammar, you help to put those words into disuse and by implication, encouraging new entries in the English grammar. There are countless instances in the local dialects across Africa, which are psychologically inducing weaknesses and self-dehumanization among the female folks, that ought to have falling into disuse, to gradually build the courage among the females from childhood to stand out as human beings with dignity and equal rights with men (Feinstein, Feinstein & Sabrow, 2010; Goldstein, 2007; Makoni & Meinhof, 2004; MacWilliam, 1986). However, the ignorance of the women about what they are unconsciously doing continue to level and label the females second class human beings compared to their male counterparts.

In Giddens' theme of rules and resources, the rules guiding a particular social setting cannot be absolutely comprehensive as to involve all behaviour and rules guiding them at the same time; likewise, the resources, which can be lying potentially useable until when human beings put them in use. The rules guiding human behaviour in the family and public setting if in written form in most African society, did not specify the limit of women participation and how women should train their female wards however, these rules have been given strength and sometimes new dimensions by the people applying them. For instance, among the people of Obowo¹ in south eastern Nigeria, women are expected to respect their husbands but not to condole the

¹ Obowo, also spelled Obowu, is a Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria, and is headquartered in Otoko. Other towns in the LGA include Amanze Umuagu, Umungwa, Umulogho, Odenkwume, Okwuohia, Amuzi, Alike, Avutu and Umuokeh. Former Imo State Governor Sam Mbakwe was born in and died in Obowo. Obowo is located about 45 minutes from Owerri. The area is right across the Imo River and is less than 30 minutes from the Umuahia and Ahiara in opposite direction, with the Amanze seven and half (71/2) junction and landmark in-between.

excesses of the husbands. In the case of abuse of the woman, the husband was to be reported to *umu nna*, *umu ada* and the community women association. Strictly speaking, women can only be divorced with the support of the family, *umu nna*, *umu ada* or the community women association on the ground of marital infidelity and abomination specifically identified by the culture for every member of the community. In view of the unwritten code of respect to the husbands, many women in the past and currently have given further interpretations to this unwritten code to the detriment of gender equality and right of women. In extension, some women have interpreted keeping quiet over abuse and maltreatment of women as part of the respect to the husband, to ignore him in some unwholesome acts such as starving the wife and children. For example, men can easily abuse their wives, abandon their wives and children and secretly elope with another woman either married or unmarried with the knowledge of only the wife. Normally, it is the duty of the rightful wife to bring such to the knowledge of the family through the elderly person in the family or other avenues the entire community trusted to handle such matter. However, in this situation, many victims of such abuse and maltreatment have been found to be keeping silent with the impression that properly reporting the matter to the right persons and groups will earn them problem from the husband. However, there have been countless number of men that have been sanctioned by the mentioned avenues over issues of such, and this brought peace to the family and protected the dignity of the women involved.

Other scenarios include wife battering and humiliations from the husband, which the women in most cases in this part of the world keep to themselves or even lose their lives because of such. Contrary to the women fear of what the husband does, men had been reprimanded and fined for maltreating their wives; in some cases, as far as the woman has maintained her marital vows, the husband never find it easy with the family members and even the kinsmen for maltreating his wife. This of course has been one of the instances that women determine their fate as far as this locality is concerned but can do such by understanding and exploiting the unwritten codes guiding their relationship with men.

Every social activity here, save for the traditional religious rituals have, been open for males and females, it is only left for the women at different levels to decide, which activity to participate in. women in this part of the world instead of utilizing this lacuna between the social structure and human action, have resorted to promoting *anti-gender-equality* concepts such as *women ought to be isolated from majorly social activities for their inherent kitchen responsibilities; evidence of future good wife is exhibited in the quietness of the ladies and avoidance of too much social exposure, etc.* Beyond the interpersonal treatment, women participation in political and other social affairs have been the choice of the women and not the determination by men.

The unconscious rules guiding the individual participation in the socio-economic and political affairs of the society in most African settings have operated on the ground of dependency on who may likely interpret and give the rules life of its own. In Giddens' example, it is the daily interaction with the members of the community that give the rules life and expansion for continuity, while the interpretation goes in the favour of who understands and is willing to exploit the rules (Giddens, 1984). From the pages of anthropological documentations, the pseudo patriarchal rules governing the small scale societies in Africa, had operated and continued to operate as a potential opportunity for who cares to activate them in their own favour and because

of passivity and unnecessary fear among the women, men have continued to activate and give most of these rules energy and direction against the manifestation of women in the society.

Resources in Giddens' theoretical orientation is both material and non-material resources. In Durkheimian theoretical parlance, the society runs on the principles of *social facts*¹. The *social facts* according to Durkheim are into material and non-material social facts. In comparative as well as chronological arrangement, the Giddens non material resources stems from the Durkheim's concept of non-material social facts. In Giddens' theoretical legacy, which is guiding the present work, material resources such as land, raw materials, e.t.c. cannot be operational without human beings putting them to use. More importantly, the non-material resources, which lies more invisible cannot also be put to use except by human beings who observe and understand such. There are resources to the disposal of women in Africa before and after the colonialists' intervention. These resources included beauty, which had appealed to the hearts of most powerful kings and heads of authorities; wisdom, which had exposed many women to global leaders and personalities; talents, which have given the entire society a good image before the outside world; leadership opportunities, which have put the decision of women in records across generations, etc. however, these resources in most cases have ended up in presenting the women as men's property and articles of no commercial value.

Many beautiful women across Africa have used their beauty to pursue personal and unwholesome interests that presented women generally in a derogatory manner. Among them, some have decided to use their bodies for adverts and public presentations, which simply depicted them as harlots and sex objects available for men who can buy time and even take them whole sale for private property. Most of the women in this capacity by all indications, would have used their beauty and popularity to project the power of women and relevance in the society². Many who even succeeded in marrying popular leaders at different levels lost conscious of their equal right and dignity with men. The opportunities they have to penetrate the system in introducing and securing status for women, they took for granted or at worst promoted the understanding that women are meant for the kitchen chores (Martin, 2003; Maume, 2011; Penner, & Harold, 2010). After the colonialists' intervention, which to a large extent, relegated the women to the background, women across the African continents have appeared on the national, continental and global stages with one natural endowment or the other but mismanaged such as an opportunity to strike the balance between men and women.

In the absence of international intervention for women in Africa, women in Africa even those with access to political and economic power, still lack the consistent zeal to pursue gender equality and the elimination of patriarchy using indigenous designed approach. Most of the efforts made so far for gender equality in Africa still have the foreign elements, which appeared as alien to the indigenous social institutions and by implication were viewed as derogatory and anti-indigenous culture. This of course reveals the scarcity of indigenous

¹ Social fact. In sociology, social facts are values, cultural norms, and social structures that transcend the individual and can exercise social control. French sociologist Émile Durkheim defined the term, and argued that the discipline of Sociology should be understood as the empirical study of social facts.

² We are not implying that all the beautiful celebrities are prostitutes or appear as such but that most of these celebrities have abused their beauty by using it to project women as sex objects and commercial properties to men who care to buy.

women in the fight against patriarchy and by implication project the continued problem to the effort in neutralizing patriarchy in Africa. Strictly speaking, any approach without the understanding of the indigenous traditional institutions and the involvement of the experienced fellows in these institutions may amount to aimless efforts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The social structure and the human actions are two dual structures that re-enforce each other. While the human beings in the society grow into the structure to survive, the structure itself depends on human beings in the society to continue in existence (Giddens, 1979; 1980). The patriarchy as social construction is dependent on the human actions to survive in existence [especially the women who are the custodians to children upbringing], while at the same time, human beings in the same system depend on the entire system to survive. According to Giddens, even though the social structure affects the way the members of the society behave and operate, there is still the lacuna between the lifeless social structure and the human action [that gives it life], which offers opportunity for self-determination and self-liberation from the unfavourable rules of the social structure; these are what Giddens called *determinism, voluntarism and agency transformation*. In the case of African patriarchy, the condition has existed for years unconsciously from the small scale societies to the present amalgamation of these small scale societies [the present African nation's outlook and posture] but was made more pronounced by the colonialists who awakened the consciousness of male domination among the colonized. This, has continued due to living in passivity among the African women even after the colonial domination, which accelerated gender inequality in the system.

From the structuration theoretical perspective, what appeared to be ceaseless patriarchy among the African societies, did not appear as definite rules compelling everybody to obey them rather, they were the expansion of micro concepts by the members of the society especially the women through their actions and inactions. These micro concepts with the help of the colonialists graduated into principal components of the social structure controlling the fate of the women.

In the Marxian-Hegelian theoretical legacy of thesis¹-antithesis²-synthesis³-thesis⁴, the current situation of women in African societies in terms of gender inequality can be said to be moving from synthesis to thesis. However, caution should be taken to avoid bias and improper approach to the situation.

For transformation to take place [changing the status quo for gender equality], understanding the indigenous traditional social structure should not be ignored. This is necessary in view of the fact that the indigenous social structures will offer more understanding about the inherent opportunities for women liberation. Consequently, the determination and voluntary involvement among the women in the move for gender balance appear to be the starting point for the actualization of the goal of eliminating patriarchy in African continent. This is from the

¹ Gender neutrality before the upset by the colonialists and empire builders

² The crisis of gender inequality inspired by the colonialists who awakened the consciousness of men against the women freedom

³ The enlightenment era on gender equality for African women and their awakened consciousness to pursue their rights and dignity in the society

⁴ Change in the present status quo and the return to gender neutrality

application of the Giddens' theoretical orientation [structuration theory] even though we are aware of the inherent incapability of the women in the present historical epoch in handling the situation absolutely (see Stainback, Kleiner & Skaggs, 2016; Baron, Brian & Newman, 1991; Berrey, 2014; Brink, Van den & Yvonne, 2012).

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