Review

Patriarchy and its violations of human rights of women in Nigeria

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The intendment in this exercise is to invigorate the debate on the violations of women’s human rights in Nigeria. Emphasis will be placed on cultural practices and general norms and practices that work against women’s human rights. The first major battle will be to create greater awareness that women’s human rights are real rights. That when these rights are violated, because of the inter-dependent nature of human rights, the rights of the child, aged and even that of the men are equally seriously affected.

Key words: Patriarch, customary law, and human rights.

INTRODUCTION

The practical, concrete social reality is that all the human rights of women are violated in one form or the other in Nigeria on grounds of masculine sexist cultural and traditional beliefs and practices despite the fact that Nigeria is signatory to numerous international human rights instruments on the human rights of women1.

It is also true that the combination of the English Common Law the customary Laws and Islamic Law has not helped matters with respect to the women’s status. Instead, they have been subjected to varying experiences of exploitation, oppression, subjugation, degradation, devaluation, dehumanization and depersonalization under the multifaceted multidimensional legal system.

The problem and complexity of the plurality and or heterogeneity of laws relating to family system, marriage, property, succession and others in Nigeria are yet to be brought to the standard of the universally accepted human rights law. Professor A. O. Obilade has expressed the aforementioned position thus:

The unique problem with any law which deals with aspect of family privacy is the strength of customs and customary Law combined with traditional altitudes. It is therefore, in this area that the law has found it most difficult to effect meaningful assistance to women (Obilade (1993).

Before taking a position, we shall be looking at the various customary Laws, traditional and socio-cultural institutions and practices as well as discriminatory statutory laws and sexual violence and abuses against women in Nigeria. This is because the human rights of women are being flagrantly violated on the basis of the patriarchal and sexist historical, cultural, social, economic and political construction and or worldview designs.

Josephine Effah et al. (1995) have objectively acknowledged this fact in the following words:

The rights of women and the girl child which are

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supposed to be integral, inalienable and indivisible parts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) continues to be violated in Nigeria in very many ways.

CUSTOMARY LAWS: CUSTOMS, TRADITIONS AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

The geo-political entity called Nigeria which is the most populous nation in the African continent (Okafor 1994), is an abode of complex phenomena, a nation of nations exhibiting high level of cultural diversity, religious divergence and ethno-linguistic heterogeneity. “Covering an area of 938,121 square kilometres with an estimated population of over 100 million of which 49% are said to be women.” (Akua 1998) Nigeria is constituted by over 400 ethnic groups. The most numerous ethnic groups include: Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, Edo, Ibibio, Nupe, Igalan, Idoma, Ijaw and Kanuri while the smallest nationalities include Ogoni, Efik and Eko (in the South) and Katab, Shua Arab and Bassa (in the North) (Edwin, 2001).

Given the aforementioned background, women in Nigeria are subjected to various historical experiences, and violations of their rights vary from one area to another. For instance, women in Southern Nigeria have different experience from those of the North where Islam is the religion combined with local structures of power, notably, Feudalism, Oligarchy and Tribalism. There is also cultural specificity like in the Northern part of Nigeria with Islam as the Faith of the majority. This produces the living Law - the rules that in reality, govern women’s lives and determine the space within which they strategize for survival.

The fact still remains that in spite of the presumptions, efforts aimed at national integration and unity as well as democratization process, there is tremendous and staggering diversity in practices across the country, women are invariably unaware of this diversity and believe therefore, that the only way of being, of fulfilling their life potentials, are those definitions imposed on them in the particular context. According to Cassandra Balchin, “women too frequently believe that these hugely varied customary Laws are natural and therefore immutable” (Cassavandra, 1996).

It is observed that in Nigeria where you have Christianity and Islam as the two major foreign religions and where the African Traditional Religion is fast diminishing in importance, customary and traditional practices that are unregulated or even directly contradict, religions tenets like Female Genital mutilation (FGM) do not deter communities from adhering to practices that more than anything serve to maintain patriarchal control over women (Cassavandra, 1996).

A historical account of the evolution of the Nigerian Legal system indicates that the High Courts were used to give judicial backing to customary and traditional laws and practices that were oppressive, exploitative and depriving of rights of the women in such matters as property ownership, marriage and divorce, matters affecting the status of women, including the status of widows and children, child custody, legitimacy and adoption and interest succession and administration of intestate estates (Viviana and Anika, 1997). For instance section 18 (1) of High Court Laws of Anambra State 1987 provides thus:

The court shall observe and enforce the observance of customary Law and shall not deprive any person of the benefit thereto except when such customary Law is repugnant to natural justice or incompatible either directly or by implication with any written Law from time to time in force in the state.

The various High courts at one time or the other had observed and enforced patriarchal and sexist oppressive, harmful and discriminatory customs and traditions such as women as inheritable property or objects as held in Suberu v. Summonu and women and children as articles of trade as held in Chawere v. Aihemu and Johnson. In the latter case, the court said “unless this payment known as bride price is paid, the marriage is not legal and the children cannot be claimed by the father. This is particularly important because Nigeria is predominately a patrilieal and patriarchal society.”

The courts have also been used to declare certain customs and traditions as being repugnant to equity and public morality as in Edet v. Essien and In Mojekwu v. Mojekwu and Muojekwu v. Eijkem. The Court of Appeal held the customs and traditions of Uli-Ekpe and Nrachi ceremony as being violations of section 42(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 and Articles 2 and 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and repugnant to public policy, and morality, natural justice, equity and good conscience. We shall discuss the patriarchal and sexist construction under the following sub headings:

THE PATRIARCHAL FAMILY SYSTEM

The patriarchal family system in Nigeria constitutes cultural impediment to gender equality as well as to the promotion, protection and enjoyment of fundamental freedom and human rights of the female homo sapiens. The phenomenon of family itself is a very complicating, complex and dynamic character which makes it difficult to

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2 (1957) 2 F.S.C. 33 - 34
4 (1932) 11 N. L. R. 47.
have a univocal definition. This definitional difficulty has been acknowledged by Bromley (1992) who has said that the word family is “not easy to define with any degree of accuracy.” Commenting on the concept of family in a Keynote Address, Hon. Justice Uche Omo said:

If the concept is difficult to define in English Law, it is impossible to define in our Nigerian context because, inter alia, of the nature of the family as a social institution and the tenacity of kinship ties among Nigerians (Uche, 1992).

The above definitional cross roads and difficulty notwithstanding, some attempts have been made to unravel the myths, and abstractions of the definitional uncertainty. Therefore, “the term family has both an extended and restricted meaning” (Ogba, 1999). It is from the point of view of the conjugal (nuclear) family and extended family systems which at moment exists in Nigeria that we will be looking at the phenomenon under consideration.

According to Bromley, family, “in one sense is all blood relations who are descended from a common ancestor” and in another sense “all the members of a household, including husband and wife, children, servants and even lodgers” (Bromley, 1992). For Green, family refers to a group of closely related people known by a common name consisting usually of a man, his wives and children (Green, 1941). This restricted definition refers to the conjugal family or (nuclear) family system of the Western World. In the case of Adeseye v. Taiwo,7 the court held that the property of a man who died intestate is inherited by his children to the exclusion of all other relations. The same view was followed in L. E. D.B v. Sumonı6. From these cases, it follows that the family does not include other relatives.

Also in Chnwe v. Mazi9 the Supreme Court considered the meaning of family. In his lead judgment, Oputa J.S.C held that; “A man’s family normally consists of the man, his wife (under monogamous marriage) or wives (if it is marriage under the Customary Law) and the children born to him by such wife and wives”.

In Nigeria like most other African societies, the name family goes beyond the nuclear family to include blood relatives. This is what Uche Omo J. conveyed in the words below:

In our society, what began as a simple domestic unit (the nuclear family — husband, wife and children) has rapidly grown into a more complex social unit (the extended family embracing grandparents to distant cousins) (Uche, 1992 p. 10.)

Our major concern here is not with which definition that is all embracing or comprehensive or precise but the patriarchal and sexist nature of all forms of family system in terms of marriage, births, status of the female members and its role in the promotion of gender inequality and sexual apartheid.

The family structure in Nigeria is the basic social unit where all forms of sexual prejudices and discriminations are initiated, nurtured and practised. The family organization is a patriarchal one in which the male overshadows the female in respect of authoritative decision-making, asset management and ownership in most cases. Sons are preferred and valued more than the daughters. Josephine Effah and her colleagues posit that “it is here that boys are trained to grow up to be men like their fathers and girls to be woman like their mothers” (Effah, 1995 p33). In the patriarchal family, Husband/Father is the oppressor and dictator as the presumptuous head of the family and reduces wife/wives (mother) and, children to slaves. No wonder Effah concluded thus: Customarily, a woman and her children are property of a man - the head of the family whose responsibility is to provide for them” (Effah, 1995 p33). In a seminar paper, Orgmore E Kanu asserted that, “it is here that the politics of masculinity is at play. Men are put on top as heads of the family and male children are made to feel superior to female children (Kanu, 2000). The unfortunate thing is that the man is the head of the family even where he has no head to head the family.

Within the patriarchal and sexist family system in Nigeria, we have gender role stereotypes, double—standard, biases, prejudice, preferential treatment and parochial sentiments that are transferred from generation to generation through preferential primary socialization. In nearly all the ethnic nationalities (groups) in Nigeria, girls are socialized to identify with family and private sphere while boys are brought up to act in public sphere. In the family, children are taught that they are unequal because of the difference in their genitalia (Kanu, 2000). In the patriarchal family system, the culture of violence and coercion is jealously promoted. The boys or males mentality are conditioned through the introduction of toys. While toys like soldiers, guns and heavy-duty weapons, vehicles and equipments are bought for boys, the parents will buy doll-baby and cooking utensils for the girls. Within the family, men beat their wives and rape them martially to depict their headship. The male children learn how to beat their female counterparts who experience beating from fathers and mothers alike. According to Odey (1990), “Under the patriarchal family, a woman is seen as article or commodity of trade which in same societies is purchased by the highest bidder”.

Differential socialization and gender role stereotyping within the patriarchal and sexist family in Nigeria is a violation of female members’ rights as provided in section 17 (1) and 2 (a) and section 42 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as well as Articles 16

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7 (1956) IFSC. 84.
9 (1989) INWLR (p. 97) 254 at 259.
(1)(d) of CEDAW.

MALE CHILD PREFERENCE

Male child preference in Nigeria is a product of patriarchal socio-cultural construction and ideology aimed at the devaluation and degradation of the female child and consequently the womanhood. There is nothing biological or natural about the practice. Odey Ering describes it thus: “This refers to the practice where only male children are most valued in the society. A woman is not considered a full-fledged mother until she has given birth to a male child. It is not only an expression of sexism but also male dominance in our patriarchal society” (Odey, 1990).

The Nigerian society is a male dominated one. The male child preference manifests in the areas of succession rights. Under the Native Law and Custom, the general rule (with few exceptions) is that an unmarried woman has no rights whatever to succession to her father’s Estate (FIDA, 1993). The reason for this is that she rightly belongs to the husband’s family and has often been inherited at the death of the husband.

In most Nigerian societies like among the Ibibios, Anangs, Igbos and in most Northern states of Nigeria, and except in few ethnic nationalities like Yorubas, Efiks, Ijaws and Umon people, the general rule is that a woman cannot be head of the family. A female child in Igbo land cannot be head of the family (FIDA, 1993).

But in Yoruba land through Judicial decisions and or judicial notice, both right to succession and right to headship by women have been upheld. Thus, in Mariana Lopez & Ors. v. Domingo Lopez & Ors10 Corbo C. J. rejected the denial of rights of daughters and held that “…daughters have the same rights as sons in the lands of their fathers.” In Lewis v. Bankole11 Osborne C. J. held that he saw no reason why “on grounds of sex a Lagos woman should not be capable of managing the domestic concerns of a family compound and concluded that “There is nothing inequitable in this recognition of women’s rights.” Also in Coker v. Coker & Ors12, Andre v. Agbabi Ors13 in Ricardo v. Abal,14 in Sule & Ors v. Ajisebiri & Ors15 and in Folami v. Cole16 the principle of preference with respect to male homo sapiens as to succession and headship of family to the exclusion of female homo sapiens were rejected. In Ricardo v. Abal, Tew J. held that all the children of the owner were entitled to property irrespective of sex. Also in Folami v. Cole, the Court of Appeal held that on the death of the Dawodu recognized as the head of the family, the eldest surviving child, of the founder, whether male or female succeeds to the headship of the family.17

Although in Igbo land and other areas male child preference exists, with agitations and condemnation by Human Rights organizations, World Conferences, the existence of Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and Convention on the Rights of a Child as well as the constitutional provisions, the courts are beginning to declare these practices as repugnant to natural justice equity and good conscience as in Mojekwu v. Imojekwu18. The son preference is a violation of section 17 (1) (a) and section 42 of the Constitution of Nigeria, 1999. It also contravenes the convention on the Rights of the Child which provides thus:

All rights must be granted to each child without exception. The state must protect the child without exception. The state must project the child against all forms of discriminations (Development Initiatives, 1998).

The son preference brings about different socialization processes of the children and unequal rights and duties in marriage which are basically discriminatory. Other consequences of male child preference include (1) Higher rates of mortality among young girls, (2) nutritional taboos or deprivations and (3) gender disparities in education and health care (Kanu, 2001). The psychological and health consequences range from girls growing up with low self-esteem, having internalized feeling of inferiority and worthlessness. In short, “this gender discrimination undermines the right of the female or girl child’s right to food, education and health care as well as lower her self-esteem, status and self worth.”19

WIDOWHOOD RITES:

This refers to the customary and traditional restriction and or isolation of a woman at the death of the husband and subjection to the type of cloth to put on or shaving of her hairs and other humiliating and degrading rites and rituals. The Widowhood Rite is an expression of male dominance and oppression of the Patriarchal order. The performance of widowhood rites cuts across ethnic groups and social classes. The Christian religion and Islamic religions even fix the period which they often referred to as the mourning period for the departed beloved husband by the woman (wife) but specified no period of mourning for the man (husband) in respect of departed wife.

10 (1908) 1 NLR 82 at p. 101 – 102.
11 (1938) 14 NLR 83 at p. 86.
12 (1931) 10 N. L. R. 79 at 81.
13 (1926) N. L. R., 58.
14 (1937) 13 N. L. R. 146 at 147.
17 (1997) 7 NWLR (Pg 512) p. 283.
According to Hon. Justice Amina Augie, it is the area of widowhood rites that women have their fundamental rights to human dignity, liberty and freedom from discrimination most violated (Bassey, 2001). This practice is very common in most Nigerian societies. In the Efik areas, it is called “Mbukposi” and in Igbo area it is called “Igba Mkpi(e)”. The widows' hairs are shaved, compelled by circumstances to put on black cloth for six months to one year and not allowed to go to places like market and Church. They are made to look unkempt with untidy hair. At times she is forced to drink the water used in washing her husband’s corpse or to take oath in order to prove her innocence.

Also, among the Nupe, the widow is not allowed to wash, plait the hair or leave the compound for 40 days after the husband’s death and where men are required to do this, it is only for four days. In Edo and Delta States and in most states in South and South-East zones, the widow is subjected to taking oath to deny involvement with or participation in her husband’s death and in some cases she is required to drink or wash with the water used in washing the corpse. In the Igbo states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states, the woman shaves all her hair on the death of the husband and goes in rags for one year or put black clothes. This practice is primitive and idiotic because this does not reveal how the woman feels about the departed one except, the intention to make her unattractive for other men for a period of time. In some cases one is made to sleep on the bare floor and eat with broken plates. On the death of wife the husband is not subjected to any of this sadistic and dehumanizing experiences.

In some other cultures, it is feared that the dead wife might come at night to share the marital bed with the husband. To avoid this, another woman is arranged to make her unattractive for other men for a period of time. These rites constitute double jeopardy to the woman and also heartless violations of the woman’s right to dignity and bodily integrity. They are repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience, yet they are practised before the eyes of the law and law practitioners.

Although due to ignorance and false consciousness, women have been able to go to court in respect of these violations, the recent case of Onwo v. Oko (Igwe, 2014) is a step in the right direction, in this case, the plaintiff, a widow, sought to enforce her fundamental right to dignity against the physical brutalization and humanization she was subjected to in order to compel her to undergo widowhood rites which was against her wish. The respondents had shaved her hair, assaulted her property in conformity with the tradition of the community of the dead husband. Unfortunately the trial judge dismissed the application on the ground that fundamental rights are not enforced against individuals. On appeal against the dismissal, the Court of Appeal ordered a retrial and said that the above did not apply in this case. Widowhood practices contravenes section 34 of the Nigerian constitution, 1999 and runs counter to criminal law provision of trial by ordeal and as such is criminal offence.

It is submitted that the courts should be able to stand above all these degrading and dehumanizing cultural values and make unequivocal pronouncements in repugnancy of these primitive, archaic, anachronistic, sadistic tragic rites that violate natural law, equity and good conscience.

WIDOWHOOD INHERITANCE

Widowhood inheritance is a common feature of a patriarchal society which violates the reproductive and sexual rights to choose. It is technically referred to as “Liverate Marriage”. Accordingly to Gaye and Njie, “Liverate is the practice of inheriting widows by brothers, nephews, etc. of diseased man (Odey, 2002). This is practised in most Nigerian societies although the rate has reduced as a result of civilization, harsh and deplorable economic conditions where men now run away from further responsibilities. The reason usually given is that it is to guarantee that the widow and children are not deprived of a father, and that life continues even after the dead partner. Apart from the African religion practitioners, Christians and Moslems practise widowhood inheritance even where the Holy Koran does not sanction it. Chapter 4 of the Holy Koran (Surat An-Nisa) verse 19 states that believers are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Another verse, 527 posit:

“...among many nations, including Arabs in the days of ignorance, a step son or a brother took possession of a dead man’s widow or widows along with this goods and chattels. This shameful custom is forbidden (Karibi and Whyte, 1992).”

It is unfortunate that this custom was practised in the 20th century in Nigeria and it is still being practised in this 21st Century and has at one time or the other enjoyed judicial backing. Customarily, the general rule is that a wife is her husband’s property to be inherited on his death. Early writers and even High Court Judges have accepted and

20 Oyo Oyajobi, “Gender Discrimination”, op. cit.
23 (1996) 6 NWLR (p. 456) 584 CA.
24 Amiz Gaye; Mahen Njie “Family Law in the Gambia” op. cit.
25 Amie Craye, Njie, op. cit p. 21.
referred to this view and modern authors have echoed them. For instance, G.B.A. Coker has not only asserted that among the Yoruba, wives are their husbands' property but has added that widows are their husbands' immovable property. This definition is a patriarchal and sexist violation of the right of freedom of movement and denial of right to choose.

The High Court decisions in Re Agboriya, Aileru v. Anibi, and in Suberu v. Summon held that the Customary Law Marriage in Nigeria. According to Ekanem Bassey, culturally, the bride price is the most important aspect of marriage rites in Efik land. It serves firstly as a mark of formal validation of a marriage; secondly, payment and collection of the bride price is seen a evidence of consent by both families to the marriage and not merely the two individuals; thirdly, as a mark of appreciation to the bride's family for training the bride in all wifely virtues (F. I. D. A., 1993). One could also add a fourth reason which is common in Igbo areas for ownership of the woman and children.

The above views support the general notion that “a wife is her husband's property to be inherited on his death.” This depersonalizing and degrading of the female sapiens in the name of bride price has been given judicial backing. Thus, in Chawere v. Aihemu, the Court held that mere living together does not constitute marriage. The custom of bride price is a patriarchal socio-cultural construction and order which maintains the superiority of man (husband) over woman (wife). It negates the principle of equality and equity. Section 2 of Western Region’s Marriage Divorce and Custody of Children Act 1956 defines Bride Price as “a customary gift made by a husband to or in respect of a woman at or before marriage.” The limitation of Dowry Law 1956 which applies to the Eastern States defines as “any gift or payment, in money, natural produce, brass rods, cowries or in any kind of property whatsoever, to a parent or guardian of a female person on account of marriage of that person which is intended or has taken place”.

Although the Customary Law does not fix the quantum of bride price, it varies from one ethnic group to another and in some cases from one family to another. At times, the price increases with the level of education or the lady's social background, or the physique or beauty. In the East, the limitation of Dowry Law 1956 fixes it at Sixty Naira (N60.00). In the Western Nigerian that is, Lagos and other Yoruba states the Law fixes Bride Price at Twenty Naira (N20.00). These provisions are honoured more in its breach than in its observance.

Regarding the legal significance of pride price, some writers say it gives the husband right to his wife for domestic services like cooking, washing of clothes for the man. It transfers ownership of the children to be born during marital life from the girl's family to the family of the man. Even if the woman had gotten children from another man, those children belong to the man who paid the pride price. Although this custom has been disapproved by superior courts as in Edet v. Essien as being repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience, the practice is still very common in Igbo land and Delta State communities and is backed by the customary courts' judgments.

Whatever might be the basis of rationalization and justification of bride price, it seems that bride price is a glorified slave trade. It is an instrument for the promotion of modern day slavery and servitude. It is more or less the patriarchal cultural and traditional tool for reducing women (wives) to domestic servants (marital slavery and servitude). Its practice makes nonsense of the equality principle of the UN. Convention on Consent to Marriage and Registration of Marriage, General Assembly Resolution 1763 A (XVII) of 7 November, 1962 which

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26 G. B. A. Coker, Family, op. cit.
27 (1949) 19 N.L.R. 38
28 (1949) 19 N.L.R. 38
29 (1952) 20 N.L.R. 46
30 (1957) 2 F.S.C. p 33 - 4
31 (2014) 9 NWLR (pt. 1412), 393.
32 Ekanem Bassey, op. cit p. 38 - 39
36 Section 3 (1) (a).
39 (1932) 11 N. L. R. 47.
says that “women are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.”

A critical and anti-sexist look at bride price will reveal that it brings womanhood to a level of article of trade. O.O. Omorogbe argues that:

“Under many Customary Laws the wife is for all practical purposes a chattel” (Lucy, 1969) and since the wife is her husband’s property, some customary laws allow him to dispose of her property as he pleases (IRRRA, 1991). According to IRRRA (International Reproductive Rights Research Group), “the bride price is basically a commercial transaction with the woman being the item in consideration (IRRRA, 1991).” The bride price must be returned at the termination of marriage very much as defective goods are returned for refund. “This terrible accommodation emphasizes the woman as a commodity, instead of being seen as a partner.”40 In his own contribution, Jodesola Akande argues that:

*The introduction of commodity concept, led to the tremendous rise in bride price,. it has been turned into a commercial operation. A daughter has become a source of monetary gain. This has led to disastrous consequences*.41

Bride price is a violation of section 34 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria that is, “the right to dignity of human person.” It reduces the female human person to article of trade. It is the monetary consideration for purposes of transferring the property in human person to the purchaser (the husband).

In some cases the price in terms of monetary value of the woman reduces depending on the number of children given birth to and the duration of marriage. For instance, the Marriage, Divorce and Custody of Children Adoptive Byelaws Order of 1958 provides the quantum of bride price recoverable thus: (a) Where the marriage has not been consummated Seventy Naira (N70.00) is recoverable; (b) Where the marriage has lasted less than one year, the purchaser is entitled to Sixty Naira (N60.00); (c) Where the marriage has lasted for more than one year but less than five years, what is recoverable is Fifty Naira (N50.00); and (d) Where it existed for more than five years Forty Naira (N40.00).

Also section 7 (2) of the Tiv Native Law Authority Declaration of Native Custom indicates that the duration of marriage, the number of children born during the marriage, the degree of blame on the husband and wife may be put into consideration when assessing the proportion of bride price to be refunded to the husband. Thus, in *Okaludo v. Omama*,42 the husband claimed for the refund of N120.00. Out of this amount, only N44.00 was paid as bride price in respect of the wife. The judge ordered the refund of N20.00 because of the duration of the marriage.

The consequences include perpetual subjugation of wife to husband, justification of marital rape, wife battery, restriction of freedom of movement and right to association through the instrumentality of purdah system as well as the rationalization of physical, mental and verbal abuse.

**GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPES**

This is another feature of the Nigerian patriarchal scheme which promotes discrimination and segregation in terms of duties, functions and roles on the basis of sex. According to HERA Fact Sheet, gender refers to “sets of relationships, attributes, roles, beliefs and attitudes that define what being a woman or a man is within the society."43"

Gender role stereotypes can be described as sexual division of labour brought about through societal socialization process. It is the assignment of status, role, duties, privileges and entitlements on the basis sex. It is important to point out that there is nothing natural and biological about gender role stereotype but a product of patriarchal social, economic, political and cultural construction. Both in schools, churches mosques and in the families, female children and women are taught to be humble, loyal, loving, and submissive to husbands and male partners. Boys are trained and prepared for masculinity and girls for femininity through the use of toys.

In Nigeria, the Education Curricula promote gender stereotypes and double standards. “Males are encouraged from primary and secondary schools to do handicraft such as wood and metal works, while females are encouraged to learn Home Economics like needle work and cockery.44 Women are confined to domestic and private spheres while men are prepared for public life affairs. Gender role stereotype is an impediment to gender equality and equity as well as an instrument for promotion of degradation, devaluation, marginalization and disempowerment of the women.

**CONCLUSION**

Women’s human rights are human rights properly so called. These rights matter, in content and context. They matter even much more because each time a woman’s right(s) is violated it compels the fear of impunity.

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41 (1961) W. N. L. R. 149.
43 Article 1: Definition of the Child.
Moreso, for mothers particularly, each time these rights are violated, the child’s rights are on a greater measure threatened. For us in Nigeria much more effort should be geared towards promotion as there is so much ignorance in this area, mostly, based on culture, religion and indolence.

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