Patriarchy and Institutionalised Sexism in the Nigerian University System: The Case of the University of Port Harcourt

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Abstract

As observed in some quarters, discrimination against women is a profound but subtle sickness that is inveterate in the subconscious of both men and women, as well as in the structure of our society. This makes it one of the hardest sources of inequality to obliterate, since it affects the women folk from within and outside. It is not strange to observe that men are usually very uncomfortable in accepting the authority of women at home and in the workplace because it is a patriarchal society where everything starts and ends with men. Ordinarily, one would suppose that the ascriptive role of women would be limited to the family and other spheres, but not extended to the university system, which serves as a model in contemporary society. Data available on the university system in general in Nigeria, and in particular on the University of Port Harcourt, irresistibly point to the fact that gender discrimination is the order of the day. Men were, and are, appointed to important positions where crucial decisions impinging on the life of everybody are taken. Even if the population of women in the system is insignificant compared to that of men, the few qualified women who could be considered for appointment to certain positions are sidelined. The only reason for this gender discrimination that we refer to as institutionalised sexism is the patriarchal culture and ideology that equally influences the way women are treated in the larger society. Thus, this article focuses on the analysis of the impact of patriarchy on gender discrimination in a system that orchestrates equality of sexes and achieved, rather than ascribed, status.

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Résumé

Comme observé dans certains milieux, la discrimination contre les femmes est une maladie profonde mais subtile, qui est invétérée dans le subconscient aussi bien des hommes que des femmes, de même que dans la structure de notre société. Ceci en fait une des sources d'inégalité les plus dures à enlever puisqu'elle affecte les femmes de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur. Il n'est pas étrange d'observer que les hommes sont généralement très inconfortables en acceptant l'autorité des femmes à la maison et sur le lieu de travail parce que c'est une société patriarcale où tout commence et se termine avec les hommes. Ordinairement, on pourrait supposer que le rôle dévolu aux femmes se limite aux sphères familiales et autres, mais ne s'étend pas au système universitaire, qui sert de modèle dans la société contemporaine. Les données disponibles sur le système universitaire en général, au Nigeria, et en particulier sur l'Université de Port Harcourt montrent irrésistiblement que la discrimination sexuelle est à l'ordre du jour. Des hommes ont été, et sont, nommés aux postes importants où des décisions cruciales affectant la vie de tous, sont prises. Même si la population de femmes du système est insignifiante comparée à celle des hommes, les quelques femmes qualifiées qui pourraient être considérées pour les nominations à certains postes sont mises sur la touche. La seule raison de cette discrimination sexuelle que nous appelons sexisme institutionnalisé, c'est la culture et l'idéologie patriarcales qui influencent également la façon dont les femmes sont traitées dans la société au sens large. Ainsi, cet article se concentre sur l'analyse de l'impact du patriarcat sur la discrimination sexuelle dans un système qui orchestre l'égalité des sexes et un statut réalisé plutôt qu'attribué.

Introduction

An indubitable fact of life is that contemporary human society is dominated by the male gender. Kinikanwo A. Anele (2006:125) lends credence to this assertion thus: 'The world as presently constituted is patriarchally structured and therefore male-dominated. Gender inequality is a striking feature of this global structure. Inequality between the sexes manifests in different ways, including education'. The nature and degree of male dominance varies from one society to another, globally. However, the implications have far-reaching impact on the relationship between both sexes. For example, men are being accused of marginalising and socially excluding women.

Nigeria is a peripheral capitalist country that ordinarily should exhibit most of the features of the capitalist West, such as rationalisation,

organisation of the public bureaucracy in line with the Weberian ideal typical bureaucracy, and application of the sense of industrialism. This is characterised by cultural rationalisation, the universal application of scientific methods to problem solving, a division of labour, time discipline and deferred gratification, and bureaucracy and administration by rules, *inter alia* (Marshall 1998:311).

We are not oblivious of the seeming exception to the kernel of industrial society as provided by the example of Japan, wherein ascriptive elements still persist in the industrial culture, which is said 'to be compatible with a high rate of technological advance, aided organisational functioning, and prevented industrial unrest' (Marshall 1998:310). In any case, as Max Weber (cited in Marshall *op. cit.*) rightly opined, as a general rule, industrial or modern societies 'tend over time to base the allocation of people to positions on their achievements, especially their education and technical competence, rather than on traditional ascriptive characteristics, such as family connections, race, or gender'.

Nigerian universities epitomise public bureaucracy. In the majority of cases, officials of bureaucracy are not elected but appointed. Weber was right in his postulation that bureaucracy implies rationality cum calculability which 'involves mass democracy, a levelling process by which all become formally equal before the law, so that arbitrary treatment diminishes' (Marshall *op. cit.* p. 49).

Practical experience shows that the Weberian ideal typical bureaucracy cannot be exactly replicated. Nevertheless, bureaucratic organisations follow Weber's prescription to a reasonable extent. The Nigerian university system has exhibited different aspects of the ideal type of bureaucracy. Thus, an emerging reality is that it seems Nigerian universities, as exemplified by the University of Port Harcourt, extol sexism, as well as ascription and institutionalised discrimination in the appointment of staff to important administrative positions. Usually, women are disadvantaged, as marked inequality is raised to a high pedestal.

Regrettably, research on themes such as agriculture, law, rural women, family planning and women's education is common (CIDA 1988; Oppong 1984; Ityavyar and Obiajunwa 1992) compared to the paucity of research on the vexed issue of patriarchy and its negative impact on the female gender. It appears that research attention has been completely taken away from the invidiousness of patriarchy in the university system generally regarded as a citadel of learning, centre of excellence, and purveyor of modern civilisation. Lack of funding may be the major reason for this neglect.

The present work focuses on the gender sensitivity of the administration of the University of Port Harcourt. Specifically, it examines the extent to which successive vice-chancellors of the university have considered women in appointing people to important administrative positions. It is the intent of this article to establish a relationship between the attitude of the vice-chancellors towards the appointment of women to administrative positions and the cultural phenomenon of patriarchy.

Patriarchy and Sexism: An Overview

As posited by many feminist writers and corroborated by daily experience, we live in a patriarchal world; in a society where men have much of the power in the families, tend to be employed in better-paid and higher status jobs compared to women, and 'tend to monopolise positions of political power' (Haralambos *et al.* 2000:13). Anthony Giddens and Mitchell Duneier (2000:185, 195, 206) defined patriarchy in line with the above view. According to them, patriarchy refers to male dominance in a society. They further argued that, 'there are no known societies that are not patriarchal, although the degree and character of inequalities between the sexes varies considerably cross-culturally'. We concur with this opinion.

Radical feminism equally avers that society is dominated and ruled by men. From this theoretical prism, women are seen to be exploited by men due, mainly, to the fact that they embark on unpaid labour for the selfish aggrandisement of men. This is actualised through the sexual division of labour that assigned the role of childcare and housework to women and by being denied access to positions of power (Haralambos *et al.*, *op. cit*. p. 136). Indeed, whereas men are conceived as constituting the ruling class, women are seen as the ruled, dominated and subject class.

We differ from the radical feminist position that men and women constitute separate social classes. Social class is an economic category and cannot be reduced to mere sex, since social class cuts across the sexes. Anthony Giddens (1973:88) lends credence to this. In his reappraisal of the Marxian standpoint on social classes he asserted that, 'classes only come into existence when a surplus product is generated, such that a division of labour is possible between those who produce and those who do not; and such that the latter are placed in an exploitative relation vis-à-vis the former'.

Kate Millett's (1970) discourse on patriarchy emphasised the basis of the phenomenon in society. For her, eight factors are capable of perpetuating patriarchy. They include: (i) biology, (ii) ideology, (iii) sociological factors,

(iv) class and subordination, (v) education, (vi) myth and religion, (vii) psychology, and (viii) physical force (culled from Haralambos *op. cit.*, p. 146). Implicit in Millett's analysis of patriarchy is her recognition of the multi-factoral approach for better appreciation of the subject matter.

Aspects of Gordon Marshall's (1998:485) treatment of patriarchy agree with Millett's view. The latter's literal conception of patriarchy is that it is 'rule of the father'. Tracing it to its origin, he posited that the term was originally used to describe social systems based on the authority of male heads of household. This agrees with the view that patriarchy is the structuring of society on the basis of family units, where fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of their families. Arising from this duty to members of their families, they (men) exercise authority over them. Therefore, it becomes logical to uphold the view that matriarchy as constituting a stage of cultural development is presently discredited; or simply put, a strictly matriarchal society never existed (this position is a rebuttal to the intellectual edifice of Engels, 1948). Margaret Mead (1973) was vehement in her assertion on the inadmissibility of the claim that women rule some societies. As she put it, 'All the claims so glibly made about societies ruled by women are nonsense. We have no reason to believe that they ever existed… men everywhere have been in charge of running the show… men have been the leaders in public affairs and the final authorities at home'. It is important to note here that Chinweizu (1990) constitutes a very strong critique of Mead's position.

The necessary implication of patriarchy as adumbrated herein is that patriarchy and sexism are likened to two sides of the same coin. Sex *per se* is not the problem but the use made of it by society that borders on gender. In differentiating the two, Anthony Giddens and Mitchell Duneier (2000:179) opined thus: 'while sex refers to physical differences of the body, gender concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females'.

Sexism refers to unfair and unwarranted discrimination of people based on the biological phenomenon of sex. As it is obvious, sexism is decipherable in both the individual and institutional spheres. What is common to the two levels is that sexism functions in such a way that it preserves and reinforces inequality between men and women, such as differential sexual access to education and privileged occupational positions in Nigerian universities and other sectors.

Brief Exposition of the Theoretical Foundation of Patriarchy and Institutionalised Sexism

Different theoretical approaches have evolved to explain the phenomenon of patriarchy. Dennis A. Ityavyar and Stella N. Obiajunwa (1992:11-32) identified some of them and they include: conservatism, modernisation feminism, critical feminism, Marxism, socialist or radical feminism, and Marxist feminism. It is their contention that no one theory can effectively capture the nuances of gender studies in the world. According to them:

> For in as much as the socio-economic conditions of Nigerian women differ from those of other societies, especially those of advanced capitalism, no one feminist theory should be expected to guide a meaningful analysis of the condition of women in both places. The unique historical constellation of the socio-economy of Africa and the indelible imprint of that history on their women suggests that imported feminist theories will be irrelevant and invalid in studying Nigerian women (Ityavyar and Obiajunwa 1992).

Though the above assertion on the difference between the advanced capitalist countries and the developing nations cannot be rebutted, the authors failed to realise (or emphasise) that women, globally, share one thing in common: they are commonly exploited by men. For this reason, some of the feminist theories can reasonably be said to be aspatial. We found succour in, and adopted, the theory of patriarchy propounded by Sylvia Walby (1990).

She believes in the indispensability of patriarchy in the understanding of gender inequality. In operationalising patriarchy, she identified the following six patriarchal structures that guarantee male dominance over women: paid work, patriarchal relations within the household, patriarchal culture, sexuality, male violence towards women, and the state. Of particular interest in Walby's analysis is her recognition of the dynamic nature of patriarchy. It changed from private patriarchy in the nineteenth century to public patriarchy in the twentieth century. Differentiating one from the other, she posited that private patriarchy is characterised by the dominance of women by an individual patriarch – the male head of household. Here, the head of a household personally exercises control over women,

> individually and directly in the relatively private sphere of the home… the man in his position as husband or father who is the direct oppressor and beneficiary, individually and directly, of the subordination of women. (Walby *op. cit.*)

However, with the effluxion of time and ravaging impact of capitalism, private patriarchy has metamorphosed into public patriarchy which, according to her,

> is a form in which women have access to both public and private arenas. They are not barred from the public arenas, but are nonetheless subordinated within them. (Walby *op. cit*.)

Expounding Walby's analysis of public patriarchy, Haralambos *et al*. (2000) suggested that there is a tendency to quarantine women 'into certain jobs which are lower paid and are given a lower status than men's jobs'. As it were, the dominant structures of public patriarchy become the apparatuses of the state and employment. Thus, women are subordinated in public bureaucracy such as the university system. Such subordination could be likened to the phenomenon of institutionalised discrimination which, according to Gordon Marshall (1998:318), 'can result from the majority simply adhering unthinkingly to the existing organisational rules or social norms'.

The Patriarchal Nature of the Appointment of Staff to Strategic Positions at the University of Port Harcourt

As a general rule, the staff of bureaucratic organisations is recruited through appointment rather than election. Though bureaucracy is seen as 'a body of administrative officials, and the procedures and tasks involved in a particular system of administration' (Marshall 1998:48), Max Weber not only discussed it within the context of rationalisation but also related it to democracy and dominion. Dominion here refers to the legitimate and institutionalised cum impersonal exercise of power, in consonance with rational rules.

Using the Weberian ideal type construct as a point of departure, Stanislav Andreski (1984), cited in Gordon Marshall (*op. cit*.), identified four meanings of bureaucracy thus:

(i) the set of people who perform the administrative functions in the manner described by Weber;
(ii) the network of relationships in which they are enmeshed;
(iii) the amount of power they wield as a body; and
(iv) the various kinds of malfunctioning of the administrative machine.

As posited by Stanislav Andreski, the concept of bureaucracy should be reserved for the third meaning above, that is: 'the condition when the power of the administrators is greater than that of any other group of

leaders or holders of authority'. The views of Max Weber and Stanislav Andreski on power relation in a bureaucracy are in tandem. It is against the backdrop of power exercisable by the occupants of certain positions in the university system that we examine herein the gender sensitivity of appointments to very important positions.

The positions of authority under reference here include: members of the governing council, principal officers (Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Registrar, Bursar, and Librarian), members of the Senate, Provost of the College of Health Sciences, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments, BoardMembers, Directors of academic departments, and members of committees.

The Governing Council which represents primarily the Visitor to the University (the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for all Federal Universities; and State Governors for State Universities) is the highest body in the hierarchy of university administration. Its major concern is with broad policies and decisions on university governance. Every council comprises external and internal members. The former which encompasses the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council are usually appointed by the Visitor. On the other hand, the latter who represent different interests or groups are appointed and/or elected from members of staff of the university.

A lot of intrigues, politics and politicking are involved in the choice of external members of the Council. Politicians and high-ranking bureaucrats eventually decide those to be appointed. It is submitted that the staff of a university do not have a hand in the choice of external members. Nevertheless, the university chooses internal members from its staff. At the University of Port Harcourt, four members are elected from the Senate, two from the Congregation, and one from the Convocation. Although the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellors are from the university, they are usually regarded as part of the external members because the Vice-Chancellor is an appointee of the Visitor; he and his deputies often do the Government's bidding. There is evidence to suggest that the history of the Governing Council in this university is that of male domination, as the table below shows.

As could be gleaned from Table 1, there were more internal members than external members between 1983-1989 (62%), 1994-1996 (62%), the reconstituted Council of 2000-2005 (62%), and 2005- to date (62%).

Table 1: Membership of the Governing Council by Sex
since the Inception of the University

	Vice-Chancellor/tenure of Council under him.	COUNCIL MEMBERS				
		No.	Sex		Internal members	External members
			M	F		
1.	Prof. Donald E.U. Ekong (1978-1984)	15	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	6 (40%)	9 (60%)
2.	Prof. S.J.S Cookey (1983-1989)	16	15 (94%)	1 (6%)	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)
3.	Prof. K.A. Harrison (1989-1992)	18	17 (94%)	1 (6%)	8 (44%)	10 (56%)
4.	Prof. N.M. Gadzama (1993-1994)	13	11 (85%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	10 (77%)
5.	Prof. A.T. Salau (1994-1994)	13	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	8 (62%)	5 (38%)
6.	Prof. N.D. Briggs (1995-1996)	13	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	8 (62%)	5 (38%)
7.	Prof. Theo Vincent (1996-1999)	13	11 (85%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	10 (77%)
8.	Prof. N.D. Briggs (2000-2005)	20	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)	12 (60%)
		13	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	8 (62%)	5 (38%)
9.	Prof. Don. M. Baridam (2005-to date)	13	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	8 (62%)	5 (38%)

Source: Council Unit, the University of Port Harcourt: during the tenure of Prof. N.D. Briggs, between 2000-2005, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council was changed and the Council dissolved. A new Council was constituted and membership reduced from 20 to 13.

While the composition of the Council during these periods could be described as salutary, its sex composition leaves much to be desired as it is a quick reminder of gender oppression that is characteristic of the larger society. Except thrice when two females served in each Council, it seems to be a convention that one woman must serve at a time. Interestingly, both the Visitor and the university community seem to be in agreement that women should not participate at that level of university governance. This 'wonderful' coincidence may not be far from the fact that the Visitor is a male and key role players in the university are males. Thus, they seem to be guarding very seriously their dominance over women. As a matter of fact, the opinion of Kate Millett (1970) in her book 'Sexual Politics' aptly captures the above. Just as Max Weber posited that bureaucracy is founded on dominion or exercise of power which is legitimised and institutionalised, Millett was quite persuasive in her argument that political relationships are organised on the basis of patriarchy, a system in which 'male shall dominate female'. It is her belief that patriarchy is the 'most pervasive ideology of our culture, its most fundamental concept of power' (cited in Haralambos *et al.* 2000:145).

Table 2: Principal Officers of the University and their Sex

S/N	Vice-Chancellors/ duration	Sex	Deputy Vice-Chancellors/ duration	Sex	Registrar/ duration	Sex	Bursar/ duration	Sex	Librarian/ duration	Sex
1.	Prof. D.E.U. Ekong 1976-1982	M	Prof. E.J. Alagoa 1980/81-1982	M	Mr. M.E. Akpe 1976-1985	M	Mr. M.S.N. Mbajiogu 1976-1981	M	Mr. G.B. Affia 1976-1997	M
2.	Prof. S.J.S. Cookey 1982-1990	M	Prof.F.O.Onofeghara 1982-1986 Prof. A. O. Evwaraye 1986-1990	M M	Chief Okogbule Wonodi 1986-1994	M	Mr. P.M. Igoni 1981-1983	M	Dr. N.P. Obokoh 1997/98-2003	M
3.	Prof. K.A. Harrison 1990-1993	M	Prof. A.T. Salau 1991-1994	M	Chief Emman Acheru 1994-2000	M	Mr. S.B. Deeyor 1983-1997	M	Prof.E.O.Ayalogu (Acting) 2003-2005	M
4.	Prof. N.M. Gadzama (Acting) 1993-1994	M	Prof. A.T. Salau	M	Dr.Chris Tamuno 2000-2005	F	Mr. M.N. Ekeh (Acting/Substantive) 1997-2006	M	Mr. J.O. Aina 2005-Date	M
5.	Prof. A.T. Salau (Acting) 1994-1995	M	—		Mr. M.N. Onyige 2005-Date	M	Mr. M.A. Roman 2006-Date	M		
6.	Prof. N.D. Briggs (Acting) 1995-1996	M	—							
7.	Prof. Theo Vincent 1996-1999	M	Prof. E.O. Anosike (Admin.)1997-2000	M						
8.	Prof. N.D. Briggs (Acting) 1999-2000	M	Prof. J.D. Okoh (Academic) 1998 Prof. J.D. Okoh (Academic) 2002	M M						

Table 2 (Contd.): Principal Officers of the University and their Sex

S/N	Vice-Chancellors/ duration	Sex	Deputy Vice-Chancellors/ duration	Sex	Registrar/ duration	Sex	Bursar/ duration	Sex	Librarian/ duration	Sex
9.	Prof. N.D Briggs (Substantive) 2000-2005	M	Prof. A.C.I.Anusiem (Admin.) 2000-2003	M						
			Prof. M.O.C Anikpo (Admin.) 2003-2005	M						
			Prof. J.O. Enaowho (Academic) 2002-2004	M						
10.	Prof. D.M. Baridam 2005-Date	M	Prof. E.O. Ayalogu (Admin.) 2005-Date	M						
			Prof. S.W.E. Ibodje (Academic)2005-2007	M						
			Prof. B.J.O. Efiuvwevwere (Academic)2007-Date	M						

Source: Field Work.

NB: From the 1980/81 session when the pioneer Deputy Vice-Chancellor was appointed, only one position existed. However, in 1997 the position was separated into two, hence the positions of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Social exclusion and marginalisation meted out to women in the university system are even more glaring when we consider the appointment of principal officers as shown in Table 2.

The Vice-Chancellor is the Chief Executive of the University (this does not in any way derogate from the fact that much of the work of the university is done through committees). Indeed, the day-to-day administration of the university is the primary responsibility of the principal officers. Data at our disposal show that since the inception of this University in 1975, no woman has been appointed Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (both Administration and Academic), Bursar, or Librarian. It is only the Registrar's position that a female once occupied between 2000-2005, that is, a single tenure.

Prior to this time, the Visitor appointed whoever he wanted to the position of Vice-Chancellor; such a person could be in the employment of the very university or from another university altogether. Members of the university community were rarely consulted before a Vice-Chancellor would be foisted on them. There were certain developments, such as the quest for university autonomy and increased democratisation of university administration which were orchestrated by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of recent, and which made academic and senior non-teaching staff to participate preliminarily in choosing candidates for the politically (and even materially) plum position of the Vice-Chancellor. No woman has ever shown interest in the race for the Vice-Chancellorship. The reasons for this lackadaisical attitude towards this exalted public office include ascribed status for women, prejudice against women, minority status of women due to their numerical strength (numerical minority) as shown in Table 3 below, and male chauvinism. All these are oiled and lubricated by the patriarchal ideology and culture, which are the bases of gender discrimination.

Table 3 is quite revealing. Of a total number of 948 academic staff in the 2006/2007 academic session, males constitute 84 per cent whereas females are 16 per cent. The total number of both teaching and non-teaching staff is 4,212. Out of this, males are 69 per cent and women 31 per cent. Thus, this table is a reflection of the gendered staff position in other universities in the country. The imbalance in gender staffing is not unconnected with the century-old discrimination against women in education in Africa.

Table 3: Actual Staff Positions by Salary Grade Level, 2006/2007

Gradelevel	Teaching staff		Other academic staff		Senior teaching staff		Senior non-teaching staff		Admin. staff sec.admin. staff		Juniorstaff		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
VC&EX. VCs	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
HATISS 15	116	9	2	0	0	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	123	12
HATISS 14	45	5	0	0	0	0	15	8	0	0	0	0	60	13
HATISS 13	305	52	2	0	13	6	59	36	2	1	0	0	381	95
HATISS 12	0	0	0	0	9	0	3	12	4	3	0	0	16	15
HATISS 11	204	51	3	3	12	1	53	19	0	6	0	0	272	80
HATISS 10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HATISS 09	169	21	1	1	11	1	94	20	0	11	0	0	275	54
HATISS 08	77	12	1	2	8	1	146	52	40	36	0	0	272	103
HATISS 07	21	11	0	10	9	5	287	114	12	11	0	0	329	151
HATISS 06	0	0	0	0	0	2	120	37	2	0	0	0	122	39
HATISS 05	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	181	84	181	84
HATISS 04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	187	125	187	125
HATISS 03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	509	399	509	399
HATISS 02	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	142	114	142	114
HATISS 01	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	27	30	27
TOTAL	939	161	9	16	62	16	782	301	60	68	1049	749	2901	1311
	Total academic =1125				Total senior non-academic =1289						Total junior =1798		Grand total =4212	

Source: Bursary Department, University of Port Harcourt.

According to Kinikanwo A. Anele (2006:141-145), factors militating against women in education include: a culture which favours sons and not daughters, gender bias socialisation, division of labour which imposes the duty of providing for the family on daughters, pregnancy, early marriage, poverty which makes most parents choose to send only their sons to school, paucity of the national budget for education, unfriendly schooling environment, and religion.

It is for similar reasons that we do not have a single female Vice-Chancellor in the 27 federal universities and 31 state universities in the country today (www.nuc.edu.ng), though in the past, Professors Grace Alele Williams, Jadesola Akande and Laraba Gambo had been appointed Vice-Chancellors. The result of research by Theresa M. Nmadu and Sebastian S. Maimako (2006:34-46) corroborates our position here. According to them, the university power structure in North Central Nigeria shows that the positions of Pro-Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and Deans in five universities (ATBU, BSU, NSU, NIABJ, NIJOS) were exclusive preserve for men.

Vice-Chancellors themselves nominate and present professors to the Senate for purposes of electing people for Deputy Vice-Chancellorship. Since the establishment of the university, no Vice-Chancellor has ever nominated a female professor for the positions. The consistency in the choice of males for these positions could not be said to be inadvertent as it is reasonable to suppose that Vice-Chancellors do not want female professors closer to the corridors of institutional powers for fear that they (females) may undermine the authority of the Vice-Chancellors.

The undeclared war against women clinging on to institutional power is glaringly reflected in several appointments and elections made in the university. Deans are usually elected by their respective faculties for a two-year tenure. A dean who is interested could re-contest for another tenure. An exception to the above is the Dean, Student Affairs, who is appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. It is submitted that no female has occupied the office of Dean, Student Affairs since this university came into being. Data at our disposal show that no female has been elected Provost of the College of Health Sciences or Dean of the eleven faculties, except the School of Graduate Studies whose Dean is appointed by the Vice-Chancellor; the incumbent is the only female Dean in the university. Of about 62 Heads of Departments in the university, males comprise about 87 per cent whereas females make up about 10 per cent (records obtained from College of Health Sciences; Attendance Registrar of 341st Meeting of Senate held May 7, 2008; www.uniport.edu.ng, accessed Tuesday, 17 June 2008, slightly differed from each other).

Granted that the Vice-Chancellor appoints Heads of Departments based on the recommendation of the Deans of Faculties, who consider seniority of staff, practical experience shows that the Chief Executive is at liberty to modify whatever recommendations he may get. So far, there is no record of any Vice-Chancellor having modified Deans' recommendations in favour of females, but they do in favour of males. This is reflected in the asymmetrical gendered composition of the present Senate with 174 members (90% males and 10% females).

Males equally preponderate in the appointment of Directors and Acting Directors of academic departments of the university. Out of 23 subsisting departments, only one is headed by a female. The same holds true for the membership of the Board of Governors. For instance, there are only 3 females on a 13-member Board of Governors of the College of Continuing Education. Also, there are 3 females in the 15-member 24th Convocation Ceremony Committee.

An irresistible question at this point is why is it that males are more favoured in appointment to positions of authority in the university than females? Though, numerically, males are more than females, how come the few qualified females available are systematically sidelined? Put differently, could it be a mere coincidence that successive Vice-Chancellors and Visitors to both federal and state universities in Nigeria would systematically appoint more males to positions of authority than females? We submit that the culture of the larger society, which is a critical environment in which the universities operate, has a serious impact on the relationship between males and females at the University of Port Harcourt. As we are aware, our society is patriarchal. It is the same patriarchal culture and ideology that influence the appointment of staff to important positions within the bureaucracy. Thus, patriarchy should be properly seen in the light of gender and family, gender and public office, and male-female relationship. It is in this context we can appreciate the beauty of Mary Daly's (1978) assertion that, 'males and males only are the originators, planners, controllers, and legitimators of patriarchy' (authors like Josephine Effah *et al.* [1995] and Adewale Maja-Pearce [1999] share a similar view).

Conclusion

We set out to examine the impact of patriarchal culture and ideology on the university system, on the appointment of both sexes to important positions where crucial decisions are made. It was painfully observed that the world as presently constituted is dominated by the male gender. As is obvious, the environment in which an organisation is situated does impact on its *modus operandi*, hence Nigerian universities cannot be an exception.

At the University of Port Harcourt like other universities in the country, the spheres of important decision-making include the Governing Council (chaired by the Pro-Chancellor), the Senate (chaired by the Vice-Chancellor), Committee of Deans (chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, who himself is not a Dean), Faculty Board (chaired by the Dean), and Departmental Board (chaired by the Head of Department). The university has institutes and other departments headed by Directors. There are committees through which the university carries out some of its functions. In all these positions, it is quite apparent that the sexes are unwarrantedly disproportionately represented, both in appointments made externally and internally. Of course, an irresistible conclusion is that patriarchy as a well-oiled socio-cultural machine has influenced the choice of men rather than women. Men subconsciously do not feel quite comfortable being bossed by women.

Most people rarely give serious thought to the 'gender war' in the universities due mainly to the assumed equality of opportunities and privileges for both sexes. There is the *a priori* temptation to the effect that, since the university is a citadel of learning and a centre of excellence, it is assumed that what is taught or preached approximates what is practised. Behind the façade of equality of status of sexes, and putting into practice the organising principles of ideal typical bureaucracy, is an inveterate and renewed animus against leadership by the female gender. Adaobi Whyte (2002:6) acknowledged this fact when she said that one of the socio-psychological problems confronting women managers is 'non-acceptance of the authority of women managers by male subordinates'.

The 'gender war' in our ivory tower (universities) has far-reaching implications. It is torpedoing the university system as well as aspects of the Millennium Development Goals, especially those on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, and promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (UNDP, Nigeria 2006). Institutional gender discrimination also runs counter to the intendment of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It has equally unprecedentedly conscientised the female gender to an extent at which they are aggregating and forming groups. For instance, there is the University of Port Harcourt Women Association (UPWA) for all senior female staff and the wives of male senior staff.

To be able to curb the inchoate gender cleavages in the university system as a result of discrimination against the females, deliberate policies must be espoused to ensure that the few qualified women are given equal opportunities like their male counterparts. For instance, there is nothing

wrong in ceding one of the Deputy Vice-Chancellorship positions to the females anytime a male is the Vice-Chancellor and vice versa.

Note

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