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The Subordinate Role of Women in the Private and Public Spheres

Given the observations in Chapter Two, one can infer that the determination of men to exclude women from politics, that Longwe (2000), and Ibrahim and Salihu (2004) had observed, is traceable to what most men (and women) assume to be the roles of women in the public and private spheres of life, opinions which they derive from their own understanding of women's nature, from their upbringing, and from religious injunctions. We recollect that Denzer, cited in Mama (1996), had observed that, 'Nigerian and British attitudes concerning female roles had much in common' (p. 14). The point that Denzer made was that colonialism, with its patriarchal nature, met unequal relations of power among men and women in Nigeria that it then worked with, and that fed into it.

The British colonialists brought their own conception of human nature and women's nature, which had roots in theories of 'human nature' and 'women's nature', particularly 17th century patriarchalism, to Nigeria. There were obviously other influences on the colonialists from within Britain and other European countries, especially the ideas of philosophers such as Plato, John Locke and Hegel (Fashina 1998). Fashina indicated that patriarchalists justified the domination of women by men through reference to a theory of human nature derived from the scriptures. John Locke, in spite of his view that human beings were born 'free' and 'equal', still took the position that the subjugation of wives to husbands had a ground in human nature. Hegel was of the view that if the state were to be ruled by women, it would be placed in jeopardy because women were guides, not by universality and reason, but by feelings and lack of abstract reason; that women were good wives, but not good public lawyers and judges. Fashina concluded that from essentialist premises, the philosophers drew conclusions validating views that women were, by nature, inferior to men. No doubt, this was the frame of reference for the British colonialists who took over our country, and who fused their attitudes with existing ones and also wrote their beliefs (which were essentially patriarchal and Christian) into laws.

Concerning the influence of Islam, although Islam was said to have been present in Hausaland in the northern part Nigeria before the jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804, Pereira observed that, 'the narrowing of women's roles to those connected with domestic life began as a consequence of the reinterpretation of Islam that followed the Shehu's jihad' (Perreira 2005:79). She noted that prior to the jihad, women in Hausaland were visible and active in the public sphere; and that although Uthman Dan Fodio's 'position was relatively liberal and supportive of women's education, his proponents interpreted Islam more narrowly than he did'. While making the case for women's education, Uthman Dan Fodio spoke to the subordination and maltreatment of women, and the need for women to know as much about business transactions and economic regulations as they did about religious rites. Fafunwa (1974) recorded Uthman Dan Fodio as having said:

They treat their wives and daughters like household implements which are used until they are broken and then thrown on to the rubbish heap. Alas! How can they abandon their wives and daughters in the perpetual darkness of ignorance while they daily impart their knowledge to their students. This is nothing but error because they are instructing their students in this manner out of sheer egotism and hypocrisy (p. 56).

Fafunwa (1974) further recorded that Uthman Dan Fodio said:

if anyone says that a woman is generally ignorant of these matters [for example matters relating to business transactions] my reply is that it is incumbent upon her to endeavour to know these [commercial regulations] as it is binding upon her to know about other matters pertaining to her religion like ablutions, fasting and praying (p. 56).

Forty-four years after the end of formal colonialism, with Christianity and Islam being omnipresent in the polity and competing for the souls and hearts of Nigerians, in the face of glaring economic changes that have affected many women and men, and also in the context of the existence of formal International Declarations of equality of all persons, of all races, gender, religion, etc, we asked female and male respondents, and religious leaders to talk about the roles of women, and what the roles of women ought to be, in the private and public spheres of life. Their responses are reproduced in the section that follows.

The Roles of Women in the Private Sphere

Literate women in formal work in Ibadan and Lokoja identified more than two roles for women in the private sphere of life. In the two locations, many women said the roles of women are: to be home makers (home managers/pillar of home/maintain peaceful homes); to care for and nurse children; care for the husband and, cook. Others are: to be partner to and complement husband;

support husband in all his life endeavours; assist and advise husband; be the husband's helpmate, and be role model for children. The other roles that women in Ibadan identified are: give moral support to husband; give spiritual support to the family; and, be role model in society. The additional roles that women in Lokoja identified in their words are: be a wife and mother; stay in the kitchen; bear children; be a breadwinner; be a teacher and disciplinarian; manage resources; mould God-fearing children; and, be seen and not heard. It is important to our discussion to look more closely at the exact responses of some of the women. Adetutu said, 'The roles are the same as that of the men – lead by example, cater and care for the home. I do not believe in gender discrimination'. Aanwo said, '...partner to the husband, mother to the children, co-breadwinner to the family'. Aanu said:

Women are expected to be good home keepers, manage your home, children, even your husband properly so that the society can be better off than what we have now because the society is the reflection of the homes we have in this country.

While Ruth believed it is to 'be submissive and loving', Omolade said the role of women in the private sphere is

supposed to be that of moulding God-fearing children who will grow as physically, socially and spiritually capable men and women, who can stand the test of time and also whose husbands will refer to as backbones in any successes they might attain.

Adedigba said: 'To cook, rear children, fetch water, keep the home clean and perform all kinds of dirty jobs at home. They are just to be seen, not to be heard and should also be breadwinning'. And Hauwa affirmed:

In the homes, the men expect the women to do all the house chores and take care of the children and nothing more. But, as a woman, I feel she should do more than just that, by contributing to the welfare of the house.

Female students in Ibadan and Lokoja considered the following to be the roles of women in the private sphere of life, and I present them in the order in which they were frequently mentioned: care of home/family; care of children; care of husband and, cooking. Female students in Ibadan mentioned other allied roles that they thought women should attend to. They included: women should give moral support to their husbands by being their partners and mothers; women should be counsellors and role models to kids; they should be decent and transparent; teach children morals and fear of God; and, attend to the management of the home. The female students in Lokoja identified other roles too. Some said women should be submissive to their husbands. They also added roles like: entertain guests; wash; fetch firewood and water; and, advise the husband. We take some of the responses of the female students. Ademidun said: 'To accept the submissive role of the wife and perform the duties subsumed

under it, i.e., cooking and taking care of the kids'. Toun submitted: 'A woman is expected to keep the home front. She is expected to be a mother to her husband and children; she is to be the soft yet strong figure in the home'. Folarin said: 'To be a good wife and a caring mother. Also, to take proper care of home and be submissive to her husband and give him due respect irrespective of her status'. Jumai said, '...the confidant and chief assistant of the breadwinner, the manager of the home'.

The roles that semi-literate women in the informal economy identified for women in the private sphere are: tidy the environment/home, clean, be neat; care for/feed the children and give moral and financial support and advice to husband and be of good behaviour. The care of children, support of husband and to care for and feed the family topped the list. Compared to women in Lokoja, more women in Ibadan emphasized care of husband. Oreoluwa's response was different from the responses of the other women: 'No difference between men and women in what to do, especially education of children and feeding the family'. Women in Lokoja identified other roles for women in the private sphere. They are: to cook; make sure the home is peaceful; be tolerant and friendly; wash clothes and respect husband and his family. Taibat said:

The roles are many. Without a woman, a man can't do it alone. The men can only have sex with females but the bulk of the job is for the women. The woman takes care of the family, husband, look after the house. She supports the family, too, both morally and financially.

Riskat saw a woman's role in the private sphere thus: 'Take care of children, bath and feed them on time and watch their character, so they don't bring shame on us later, so that the children will not suffer the same fate as we are suffering'. As for Hassana:

If you want to stay long in your husband's house, you will respect your husband and his family. Wake up early by about five or five-thirty. Prepare good breakfast and boil water for your husband's bath. When you know what your husband likes, do what he likes and obey him.

Morenike believed that 'to care for the home/family is the responsibility of a woman'. Nkechi said, 'Take care of the home. Woman work dey finish? Woman work no dey finish' (does a woman's work ever end? A woman's work is endless).

Agun said, 'Take care of the children, feed them irrespective of whether their father provides or not. Most especially girls, you have to keep advising them on how to live their lives'.

Female apprentices in Ibadan identified the following roles for women in the private sphere: be neat, tidy the house, see to the smooth running of the house; take care/control of the children; care for/support/encourage husband; cook; support the family; care for relations and be hardworking; and the unmarried

should take care of their parents, and tidy the home. The female apprentices in Lokoja also identified care of the home, care of children, cooking and care of husband as the roles that women should play in the private domain. They added some other roles – women should plan with husband for care of home, bear children, be prayerful and, respect their husbands. Specifically, Otolorin said, ‘the children’s wellbeing should be a woman’s priority and the house should be tidy’; while Tomiwa submitted, ‘Take care of the children, tidy up the house and don’t allow housemaid¹ to prepare food for your husband’. Iyanu said: ‘Take care of the husband and the children and tidy up the home. The unmarried should take care of her parents and tidy up the house’. Inunkan urged women ‘to take over after the man. They are supposed to control the children, cook for the children, shop, clean the house’; while Chinedu said, ‘Women are more at advantage at home, take care of the home, give birth and plan with your husband on how to take care of the home’. Salamotu argued:

If you want your husband to love you, make sure you’re neat, not dirty. Take good care of the children, cook for him, so he won’t take another wife. Welcome a husband well and wash his clothes.

Towoju said, ‘Women who have children should take care of the children. Take care of the house; respect their husbands, cook for their husbands at the right time and they should not go home late’. And, Tinuola affirmed, ‘Women should submit to their husbands. They should be responsible and women should take care of their children’.

In Ibadan and Lokoja, men who work in formal settings expect women to take charge of the private sphere, although they expressed this in different ways. In Ibadan, the men said: care for/see to the welfare of household/home; they are home-builders; take charge of domestic affairs and work for progress of family. The other roles that the men identified are: manage home/domestic economy; care for/be mothers to the children and mother to/adviser to husband and to love husband. The men in Lokoja said women should cook; they are housekeepers; give birth/procreate and bring up children as responsible citizens. While men in Ibadan couched women’s roles in flattering language, although they said exactly what men in Lokoja said, the men in Lokoja did not mask the tasks. We recall that all the respondents in Ibadan had at least BA/BSc degrees and three possessed Masters degrees. In Ibadan, one man said women should play similar roles with men and in Lokoja two men said women should complement their husbands’ effort/work hand-in-hand with men.

Many male students in Ibadan and Lokoja identified cooking, child-rearing, education/training of children and housekeeping/cleaning the home/care of the home as the roles that women should play in private. The other roles that both sets of students identified are: building a home together with the husband/complementing the efforts of husband; and, assisting the husband in decision making at home. In Ibadan, a student said the woman is expected to be subordinate

to the man at home, while a few said women should care for/support their husbands and manage the resources at home. One student in Lokoja said women should be there when needed; another said women should be helpmates to their husbands; and yet another grudgingly accepted that women are breadwinners. Mejabi said: 'They are home-builders, in some cases breadwinners, and their contributions to the growth of the society could sometimes be impressive'.

Summary and Discussions

Most of the female and male respondents in this study gave the traditional view of the expected roles of women in the private sphere of life – to bear children; care for the children and husband; care for the home and cook; and, manage the resources at home. A few thought women's roles should be that of being partners with men, or to complement men's roles. Two women, one each in formal work and the informal economy, were of the view that the roles of women are the same with those of men in the private sphere.

Among women in formal work and the informal economy, there were a few references to women as breadwinners or co-breadwinners, while there was just one grudging acknowledgement of women as breadwinners among male students.

Although subordination/submission to husband was not mentioned frequently by women in formal work and women in informal economy as a role that women are expected to play, it was implied in the responses that they gave. Hassana's response is a good example, and it highlights what many women strive to do.

The few surprises were the young women and men, that is, the female students, female apprentices and male students, most of whom were unmarried. Although submission to husband was not a typical response, a number of this group of respondents said women should be submissive to their husbands and, the expectations were strident, especially among female students.

The Roles of Women in the Public Sphere

Many women in formal work in Ibadan and Lokoja said women should: take their jobs seriously; be diligent dutiful, hardworking, responsible and obedient at work. Many said women should be dedicated to community development; impact positively on their communities; help the needy; and, encourage peace within their communities. They also said women should lead by good examples. Two women said women should be team players. One of them, Adetutu, had earlier indicated that women's roles at home should be the same as men's roles. The other roles that a few women in Ibadan identified are that: women should hold a job/pursue a career, which is the ultimate; care for and love all; be accountable to the electorate and listen; counsel the young ones; be more involved in governance and speak against law/legislation that is unfavourable to women. In Lokoja, some other roles that women identified are that: women should contribute their own quota to governance; interested women should participate in politics

like men; women should contribute to spiritual development of society; assist in governance and support government in implementing programmes for women. Others said women should have endurance and speak boldly, no matter the circumstance. Here are examples of what the women said: Aanwo indicated that a woman should play her role 'as a taxpaying member of the community, a member of the community that could lead, mobilize and guide in all spheres – community, workplace and governance'. Omolade said of a woman's role in public:

Expected to be a woman who will help to make the society better rather than add to its woes and evil. A woman dedicated to her job – who deserves the salary she earns and who is ready to affect others positively.

Adedigba cynically indicated women's roles in the public sphere as:

an addendum to men and a peace-maker who is always seen as wise in communication in the community. She is to perform jobs that are not taxing but still profit making.

Esther opined that a woman's role in the public sphere should be that of 'a mother to the nation, a builder of the nation, a symbol of beauty, an example in honesty, faithfulness, hard work and in reliability to the men folk'. And Hauwa added:

In the public place, women are always given the second position, it should not be so. Since we attend the same school, pay the same fees and do a lot of things that men do, we are expected to be given roles just like our male counterpart.

Female students in Ibadan identified the public roles of women as: to contribute own quota to the economy; be peace-makers and role models; love; possess team spirit; be dedicated, dutiful and diligent at work; vote; temper the raging dispositions of men; be fearless and, constructively critique government policies. Others are that women are to be transparent and accountable in governance; and, should be confident, not feel inferior. We take a few of the responses. Modupe averred: 'The role of a peace-maker, a builder, a temper [sic] of the raging dispositions of men, adviser (because they think more deeply than men) supporter and an inspirer'. Toun had this to say:

In the community, a beneficial contributor. In her workplace, smart, attractive, i.e. both in words and appearance, the soft yet alluring edge in the company. In governance, a supporting future with hindsight.

Ajoke said: 'Not to be too prominent or authoritative. To take lower position like deputy and vice position', while Chigozie said women in the public sphere, should be able to project our image in their day-to-day activities. They should try to build the confidence in themselves that they can always handle any position in the society.

Damilola's position was that women's role in the public domain should be that of being 'career women, professionals, managers, politicians, role models'. Female students in Lokoja considered the roles of women in the public sphere as: to hold leadership positions at any level of governance; nation-builders; to vote and be candidates in elections; be vigilant to, and prevent bribery and corruption; be respectful and diligent at work; encourage good governance; support and implement programmes initiated by men; be involved in commerce; and, participate in politics. Specifically, Jumai said: 'Women are needed to support the motion[s] of men, and help in executing them'. It is worthy of note that this is consistent with her position about women's roles in the private sphere. Comfort said:

to be involved in commercial activities, i.e., trading. To be involved in any development planning programme. To contribute meaningfully to the national wellbeing by participating in politics.

Medaiyese believed that 'women should participate in governance and should be ready to endure hardship there in. It is time for us to come out'. But Pelumi said: 'She should be respectful. She should be submissive', while Olaore argued:

Women are great influencer[s], they mould and make a community, they provide encouragement in the workplace and make good governance.

The roles that women in the informal economy in the two locations identified as expected of women in the public sphere are: face their work/work hard; be at peace with others, be gentle, humble and care for all; women who occupy public offices should care for other women; and, women should participate in politics if they are interested, so they can move Nigeria forward. The other roles are that: women should care for and make the work environment neat; women should contribute positively wherever they are; and also, be good examples to their peers and persons who are younger than they are. Others said women should respect themselves; be modest in speech and dressing; be kind and honest; while Moji said, 'Women should support their husbands who are in power'. Other women, while stating the expected roles of women in the public domain, actually made demands on women who hold public offices that they should: give loan[s] to women for business; allow banned goods to be brought into the country; and, create jobs for the masses. Rukayat in Ibadan said women are expected to,

take care of the work environment and be there on time so as not to lose customers. It's only men that have roles to play in the community. I don't poke my nose into the affairs of the community except I am called upon to do so. Women in governance should take care of us because we are the salt of life.

Taibat, also in Ibadan, said 'Women know what to do in governance, women can look after everybody because they are not callous like men. In the workplace, a

woman should be gentle in nature to everybody. In the community, a woman should be hardworking and make some moves on how to move the community forward'. Bolaji said: '...co-discuss public issues, women should campaign, vote for people and contest elections'. Morenike in Lokoja believed women should 'perform the role of secretaries'. For Agun, 'Women should be able to advise women that are lazy, to get busy. They can help other women by providing sheds for them to display their wares and sell, so as to stop laziness'. Hassana said:

Know how to relate with people, don't try to hurt anybody. Ask for forgiveness when you have done wrong. Care for others. Try to be nice. Not all women have the power to contest elections. If you know you can do it, go ahead. Women should vote and campaign for contestants.

The roles that female apprentices in Ibadan and Lokoja identified for and expect that women play in the public sphere are that: they should work hard and ensure that their workplace is clean and runs smoothly; they should be patient, responsible, good, truthful and should not engage in gossiping; they should love and care for all, advise others, and partake in community discussions/work/care. Others are that: women who are in Government should care for women and others, and they should not embezzle money like men. Three women thought women should not partake in politics or try to lead. The reason, according to one of them is that a woman does not have good brain. Six women were very specific that women should participate in politics/contest elections. Again, we take the exact words of a few of the women. Otolorin in Ibadan said, 'In the workplace, a woman should face her work and be truthful to her master or mistress. In governance, a woman should take care of the womenfolk and she should not embezzle money like men'. Olonade said:

Live with love. Have the spirit of unity. If our husbands are not in and they call us we can partake in community discussions. But, of course, a woman should partake in community discussions. If men come with their experience, women come with their experiences and views too.

As for Ope,

a woman does not have good brain so she ought to ask her husband for assistance before taking any decision. She should be able to assist the husband financially and she should support community services.

Koripamo said, 'Women are not supposed to participate in politics. Women should respect themselves, not gossiping and not prying'. Salamotu submitted, 'Be sure to be in your workplace. Participate in community activities. Shouldn't try to be governor and president and member, National Assembly'. But Elizabeth said, 'Women ought to partake in group activities, if they pool opinion, maybe

the work of the country will move faster. Women should work hard, women can contest elections and can campaign'. Tinuola averred that, 'Women in Government should be able to do things that will favour women. In the workplace they should be responsible and face their work'.

Many men in formal work expected that women would display exemplary character – diligence/dedication to duty; honesty/integrity/high moral standards and, be responsible; and lead by example in the public sphere. A few thought that women should be role models in governance, and peace-makers in the community and workplace. A few also thought women should allow the 'motherly touch' to be reflected in their work, and they should be tidy, both in the community and workplace. Again, a few felt women should partake in community development projects. While one man felt women should complement men's efforts, two felt women should play supporting roles to men. One man said women should partake in politics, so as to cater for women, and another, clearly tongue-in-cheek, said women should partake in women's liberation. The man has an MA in Sociology, and had indicated somewhere in his questionnaire that he did not believe in the equality of men and women. While one man said women should be at par with men in public, another said women should play equal roles with men at the workplace. Here are a few examples of how the men presented their views. Abayomi said, 'a participant, initiator as well as contributor to community development,' and Adeoti affirmed, 'In the public sphere women should be shoulder to shoulder with men for the development of the society'. Joseph said, 'Women should be active in the community as role models. In the workplace, the motherly touch should be there while, in government, they should be active politicians so as to cater for the female gender'. According to Ogazi, 'In the public sphere, they are to be seen and not heard, often treated as second class citizens', while Haliru said, 'Women in public sphere are expected to be role models who are not corrupt'. Alonge said, 'to maintain peace, humility and tidiness in the community and workplace', while Audu thought that 'At the community level, they are expected to complement the men's efforts in community development. At the workplace and in governance, they are expected to play equal roles'.

Unlike the views of male students about women's roles in the private sphere, there was no convergence of opinion in respect of roles that they expect women to play in the public sphere. In Ibadan and Lokoja, male students said women should: take part in politics and contribute own quota to nation-building. In Ibadan, the students said: educated women should take up leadership positions at the workplace and occupy political offices, and aspire to any position compatible with their capabilities. Still in Ibadan, other students said that in the public sphere: women should be subordinate to men; they should teach younger ones to respect their husbands; they should work/govern but not to the detriment of the home; they should ensure children are of good manners; and they should be

obedient to their bosses and be more flexible than men. The students in Lokoja said women should be peacemakers; be dedicated to work; assist their male counterparts at work and, do anything men can do. Again, we present the exact words of the male students. Akin said: 'In the public sphere, they are supposed to be obedient to their bosses and be more flexible than men'. Fijabi asserted: 'In public, teach younger women to respect their husbands, engage in activities and join associations for the betterment of community, seek election into offices that will allow proper blending with domestic responsibilities'. Yisa said,

In the community, they should be seen to be playing a leading role among committee of women. In the workplace, they should be able to contribute their own quota towards the achievement of the organizational goal; and in governance, they should be encouraged to contest election, they should also be appointed as ministers, special adviser etc; their ability has never been in doubt.

For Olanipekun, 'In the public, women are expected to do anything men can do'. While Daniska said a woman is expected to 'partake in the schedule of responsibilities assigned to her in workplace and govern well, if given a chance', Sunkami believed that 'in the public sphere they are expected to perform same role as men do', while Daniel said, 'In the public sphere, their expected roles include taking part in all endeavours channelled towards development and nation-building'.

Summary and Discussions

Most of the female and male respondents appeared to take the fact of women's presence in public life for granted. They all expected women to work hard. Women in formal work, women in the informal economy and male workers expected women to display exemplary character to affect children and society positively. Women in the informal economy and men in formal work expected women to imbue performance with relationship of care – 'motherly touch', 'feelings', and 'breast will move'. However, male students expressed concern that public life should not hinder women's domestic responsibilities.

There were just a few respondents in all six categories that thought women should play equal roles with men in the public sphere. While many respondents implicitly or explicitly acknowledged that women had roles to play in the economy, the community, governance and in politics, a handful of female students, female apprentices and male students explicitly said women should play subordinate roles to men in public. Some of the male students in fact said they expected women to: be more flexible than men; teach younger ones to respect their husbands; and, be subordinate to men.

These observations are beginning to tie up with the responses in respect of women's civic-political participation. We recollect that an overwhelming majority of women would vote for women, but some with provisos. Essentially too, we

note that many men would vote for women, some of them with provisos too. For both male and female respondents, the provisos were that women should possess sterling qualities. This ties up with many women and men expecting that women partake in public life either as equals with men, or better than men, in the sense of imbuing performance with care, attentiveness and responsiveness.

The calls that women play subordinate roles to men in the public sphere; that women help secure men's position (that is 'teach young ones to respect husband'); and that women do not shirk domestic responsibilities, reflect resistance to women's participation in public life, and this ties up with responses that say: women should not partake in politics.

The question now is: why do we have these responses in respect of the roles of women that have tied up, almost neatly, with responses to the participation of women in politics? The focus will be, not on the typical responses, but on the atypical ones that we have observed to be strident – the views that women should play subordinate roles to men, and the view that women should play their roles in public life fairly differently from how men have been conducting themselves in public.

Factors that Influence Women and Men's Views of the Roles of Women in the Private and Public Spheres of Life

The factors that many women in formal work in both Ibadan and Lokoja identified as influences on their views of the roles of women in the private and public spheres of life are: experience; family background/upbringing; and, personal understanding. In order of frequency of occurrence, religion came fourth on the list. Other factors are: exposure; educational background; current trend in the world; and, a combination of all the factors already listed. One woman, Banke, a lawyer, holds a typical view of the roles of women in the private sphere, but the factors that influence her views are not exactly typical. According to her:

My educational background and Christian background. As a Christian, men and women are equal before God. What a man can do, a woman can do better. Also, my educational background, a lawyer can aspire to any level in life, whether you're a man or woman.

Noimot, the only one that advocates an activist role for women in public said, 'My experience, my view and my upbringing. Women are no longer persons to be relegated to the background and their voices should be heard'. Lanke, one of the few women who made it clear that interested women should participate in politics, identified the factor that informed her view as, 'In my personal understanding, women should participate in politics. It's a way of competing with men'. Kunbi, Theresa, Ruth and Tiwa who hold regular views of the roles

of women in the private and public spheres affirmed women when they gave factors that influence their view of women's roles in both spheres. Kunbi said, 'Involvement of women in any assignment increases decency and decency increases development'. Theresa on her part said, 'They are uncompromised when they are holding a post. Women always want the best in whatever they do, they are bold, and they show men that they are capable. The religious bodies always preach truthfulness and hard work'. Ruth expressed her views thus:

I like to work hard and also want to be recognized for my hard work. My own mother was not educated but she was very hardworking and very industrious. Women should quietly make their impact to be felt in their chosen career.

And Tiwa was of the view that:

When a woman is given a chance and support to work, they move the nation better than their counterpart who believe in bribery and corruption. You can never corrupt or bribe a woman while performing her duty.

Only female students in Ibadan were asked to indicate the factors that influence their views of the roles of women in the private and public spheres. Many of the female students responded to the question by deepening the views they had earlier expressed. Ademidun said: 'They're laid down conventions, there's no reason for you to shirk your duties'. Modupe asserted: 'My upbringing (I'm a Christian) also my own personal understanding and opinion of a woman's role'. Toun said, 'Everything you can think of that influence the views of a person my personal understanding, my background, the society etc'.. Ajoke affirmed:

Family, friends and society as a whole. You are scolded by relatives if you can't cook, if you are not tidy enough, and when you express view contrary to societal expectation of women, some friends both male and female respond negatively.

And, Folarin said:

Firstly, my mother's way of life has greatly influenced my view of the expected roles of women in making the home. While in public, people like Prof. (Mrs.) ... has tremendously changed my view about women's role outside the home. A woman has to be fearless, diligent, hardworking and contribute greatly to the development of her community

The name of the female Professor has been intentionally left out of Folarin's response. I had an interview with the Professor (Prof. W), and Folarin's response just confirmed the Professor's concern that female students should work hard, and make their marks, in spite of the limitations that the structure of society imposes on women. Good enough, Folarin made it clear that she got her view of women's roles in private, especially that of being submissive, from her mother.

The factors that women in the informal economy cited as most frequently influencing their views of women's roles in the private and public spheres are: experience and upbringing. Personal understanding was frequently cited by respondents in Ibadan, but rarely mentioned by those in Lokoja. The position of respondents' religion/what the religious leaders preach were not mentioned as frequently as experience and upbringing for respondents in both locations. A few other respondents in Lokoja cited at least two other factors – what they like/what their minds tell them is right; and, 'the way things are'. We give the examples of the responses of some women whose views we had earlier cited in respect of the roles of women in public and/or private, and women whose views we had not cited at all. Hassana said, 'religion and what I like'. Morenike said, 'My own personal experience is that women are more at home than men. Moreso, they are more important in the home than men', while Nkechi said, 'my upbringing and, na so e be';² and Agun said, 'I got all these from my own experience'. Margaret revealed, 'I come from a large family. When there is a matter for discussion; they call the women to add their voice. Women live at home, so they should add their voice. Women ought to claim their rights'. Abereoran said, 'Religion. Women should honour their husbands as head of the house,' While Caroline said, 'My upbringing. This is because I notice that in a community, women always take care of situations and put things in order'.

Most of the female apprentices cited their upbringing; personal experience/understanding/own thinking; and, experience of others, as influencing their views of women's roles in the private and public spheres. Only six women, three each from Ibadan and Lokoja, cited religion as being responsible for the views they hold. We should remember that hard work was one of the roles that many of the women expected of women in public life. Those who specified hard work cited their upbringing, personal experience/understanding/own thinking as influencing their views. Again, we listen to the female apprentices: Olonade said, 'Where I lived in Lagos, they taught us how to live with others. Our religion says love is important, so we also abide by that'. Ope who said women do not have good brain, attributed her view to her personal understanding. Koripamo, who said women are not supposed to participate in politics also attributed her view to her upbringing and experience. Inunkan who said in public, women should go to work and can contest elections said it was about her own experience. She said: 'Own experience. If you're ready, you can be what you want, if you put your interest. There are men and women lawyers, doctors'. Chinedu said, 'In the Qu'ran, a woman is a teacher who teaches the child. This is from my personal understanding and from religious teaching'. Salamotu who said women should not try to take the top jobs added, 'When men alone discuss, it may not be taken seriously, but if women partake, it will be taken seriously. Woman cannot hold a man, because man is the head of the family. It is not allowed. If you want to

follow Bible or the Qu'ran, it is not allowed for a woman to hold a man'. Salamotu apparently believes that women should take part in discussions, but should not take leadership positions. Zainab, who is of the opinion that an educated woman should work in the office and the artisan should open her shop, attributed her view to her personal understanding and stated that, 'A woman should not depend entirely on a man to get her needs'. Tinuola, who believes that in the private arena, women should submit to their husbands and that women in government should do things that favour other women, attributed her views to her upbringing and personal experience.

When men in formal work were asked to state what factors influenced their views of the roles of women in the private and public spheres, they used the opportunity to deepen their views on the roles of women in both spheres. They identified factors such as: normal life expectations; religion; tradition; social experiences/societal expectations; personal philosophy of life; the nature of women; and, the constitution. Others were: age of respondent; and, the fact that respondent is married/is a family man/has observed or interacted with women over time. Some respondents did not give factor(s) but just deepened their earlier responses with their belief that: what men can do, women can do better, and that there ought to be equal rights granted to all. We again take specific examples of the opinions of the men. Ola, married, legal practitioner, and whose age range is between 40 and 50 said:

I see women as having more important roles to play at home than in public. As the custodian of the home where future generations are raised, that stable is more important for the society or community than their contributions to public affairs.

Okanlawon, single, aged between 30 and 40, and a Masters degree holder said, 'I believe everybody, no matter the gender, should access equal right cum equal avenue to exercise their ability/ies'. Adeoti, also single and aged between 30 and 40 said, 'Women's nature is very warm and caring. Therefore they can nurture home. For a woman to be relevant in the community, workplace or in governance, she must have had qualitative education'. We recall that Adeoti was the one who said women should be at par with men in the development of the community. Koyejo said, 'Being a married man, I can see them performing these functions at home'. Ogazi said, 'The ratio of women holding positions considered important to that of the men is embarrassingly low. This becomes glaring if we dare take a statistics of this ratio'. We note that even Ogazi, who is clearly critical of the treatment of women in public, appeared to have conceded to societal expectations of the role of women in the private arena. Oyeyipo indicated that, 'At my age and my experience, I know what women are supposed to do, and the roles they ought to play in the society'. Audu, a Masters degree holder and above 50 submitted:

traditionally, women are expected to complement the efforts of men in day-to-day activities. However, with the advent of modern education, women have come to play dominant roles both at family, community and governmental levels, depending upon their educational background and exposure

The factors that male students in Ibadan and Lokoja cited as responsible for their views on the roles of women in the public and private spheres include: their experiences/homes/families; their own thinking and observation of society; religion and what they read in and or hear from the media and other publications. The students in Ibadan cited additional influences such as: formal education; cultural heritage; careful observation of (married) women; societal values and the emotional/biological/psychological make-up of women. Students in Lokoja also cited the nature of women and their own personal beliefs about women's roles as being responsible for their views of women's roles in the public and private spheres. Again, we take some examples. For Akin, 'It is as a result of their emotional, biological and psychological make-up (not as "hard" as men)'. Fijabi argued:

I believe that women, apart from having a responsibility in home building, should have the privilege of extending such quality of leadership into the larger society. Since the success of families, put together, is invariably the success of the larger society/nation.

Yisa said: 'As said earlier, women's ability has never been in doubt because of their cool headedness. This is seen in the leadership role they play, e.g. NAFDAC Director General'. Olanipekun believed that 'because man has no time for any domestic work, all that responsibility is left for a woman. But in public, there is no work that men are doing that women cannot do'. But for Daniska, it was that, 'from the scripture, I learnt that God exalted women to serve as supporting tools to men and from then it has been, and so shall be forever'. Sunkanmi said, 'To shoulder responsibility takes only desire, assistance, talent and zeal, not by sex. And also one's capability is responsible sometime'. And, finally, Daniel submitted:

I have always had the impression that every human being (irrespective of sex) has equal potentials. Hence, I believe that the role of women should not be just cooking and cleaning but also participation in all spheres of life.

In the next section, we examine the views of religious leaders on the roles of women in the private and public domains.

Religious Leaders on Roles of Women in the Private and Public Spheres of Life

Islam

Male Muslim Leader - Lokoja

Male Muslim Leader (MML): Women, as Islam puts it, are potential assets. Women, according to Islam are highly respected and accorded opportunities to excel in any field of human endeavour. During a war, Al Salmiah, the first nurse on earth (not Nightingale as some people are claiming), was at the war front with the Muslims fighting to defend and protect their faith, the life of their followers as well as non-Muslims who may be in their midst, as well as their properties. This woman organized a mobile clinic where the wounded were taken and given first aid treatment before going into any major health centre.

Women have their roles to play in their own right as prescribed for them by Almighty Allah and exemplified by the Holy Prophet Mohammed. Women have been given two roles in any given society. One is domestic and one is outward bound. The domestic, like the Prophet has said, is that the woman is the queen of the house, the husband is her guest. The prophet explains further about how she is the queen of the house. He said she stays at home to take care of the children, take care of the properties of the man or of the family while the man is out to go and fend for that family. The woman is also a potential social worker as Islam sees her before we even go to the other extreme. A social worker in the sense that the woman has to produce a lot of things that will be of benefit to the society. She will be in the house, prepare/produce things such as woven materials and food and then take them outside. Food is essential, for there are bachelors here and there; those who cannot afford to marry. For Islam said if you cannot marry, then go fasting.

Feminine responsibility is there, and masculine responsibility is there, and that is why Allah is telling you, you are the queen of the house, stay there and take care of the domestic home, go out and fetch me water, go out and carry the wood, go and do this, so that you are not tired.

Olutoyin Mejiuni (OM): Hypothetically, if war suddenly breaks out in Lokoja...

MML: May Allah forbid it.

OM: And there are many women around. Women who are confident, strong and you have drafted all the men to war, and three quarters of them are gone, and you can still draft the women to war ...

MML: To go and take care of the wounded.

- OM: Would you say we can be defeated, you women just stay back?
- MML: Okay, I will tell you one instance. The issue of courage, the issue of boldness, was exemplified during the war of the Tartars when the Turkish people, in their war with the Mongols because of the Turkish deviation from the path of the Almighty Allah. Allah now reduced their power, so the Mongols attacked them. But there was a lady who was standing, she courageously went and confronted the soldiers, but that was out of Allah's infinite assistance, grace. With that, she was able to defeat those people. That was exceptional.
- OM: We could have more women like that.
- MML: But that is exceptional, fundamentally that is not their job except if, by circumstance, they have been compelled, they have been forced to go into it.
- OM: That is why people are saying the circumstances are pretty different now.
- MML: Yes, okay look at what is happening now to our female soldiers. How many of them are going to the war front?
- OM: I think the point you're making is that women have their roles, let them stick by them. I think you also believe that women can complement the efforts of men
- MML: Yes, that is what we are saying.
- OM: But I think also there is the belief that women are too weak for some of the things that we are calling them to do.
- MML: Yes, and which is outside their divine job.
- OM: Some contradict this position by saying the job of fetching water, the job of giving birth to a child, the job of taking care of the house, going up and down, is such a big job that women exert energy, much more than men do. It is said that what men do is just sit around for people to nurse them more or less; and when men go to war, they don't go and fight with their hands anymore. They use guns. And if you teach anybody to use a gun and strategize, she will be effective.
- MML: Madam, what I want you to understand is, if you look at the nature of a woman primarily she should take care of her kids at home. They give birth and bring them up and because this is lacking in our society now; that is why we have this widespread immorality throughout the world. Because women are now taking up the job of the men and this is a major reason why God, in his infinite mercy, has assigned to the women their primary assignment. They can complement the men in certain aspects of life. Likewise the masculine gender, too, can do the same to the feminine; but one thing is, it is the man's responsibility to go out and fend for what will take care of the family.

- OM: Are you suggesting that a woman should hang around the house and not go out to work?
- MML: Even if they work, they are not responsible for taking care of the family. They can work.
- OM: They can work but should not contribute to the financial upkeep of the family?
- MML: If they do, that is their own wish. That is out of volition. They are not compelled to do so. It is compulsory for the men to take care of the house in totality.
- OM: If I may ask, what kind of feedback do you get from Muslims when you talk in terms of keeping the home the way you have just said it. I imagine, for example, in Nigeria of today where a man earns a salary that is not enough for him to pay rent and pay school fees, that you're saying a woman should only out of volition contribute to upkeep. I thought it should be normal for a husband and wife to just complement one another's efforts, and for a man to accept and appreciate the fact that the wife is doing something.
- MML: They appreciate, but it is not compulsory for her.
- OM: So, a woman can just sit back and say since Allah says the man should make all the provisions, then I shouldn't bother.
- MML: She can do it if she will be contented with whatever I bring.
- OM: I was going to say I hope the frustration that comes from the burden of providing or trying to provide everything for the family doesn't get manifested in other ways.
- MML: If I may come in here, Madam, there is one thing that is very much obvious – taste and choice. They are very important and what Islam says is that the husband and wife should live in accordance with the means of the husband, so that where, for example, I am on grade level 4 and my wife happens to be on level 15, you know there is salary variation, I will try to spend money on my responsibilities. That is why I have said often in this country that the so-called minimum wage is nonsense. However, Islam put in place a minimum wage which will be enough for a family, for the relation and for miscellaneous expenses, and have enough to keep for any eventuality, that is what the Prophet called the minimum wage, not the small money that they are giving out.
- A woman can complement my effort willingly and I will appreciate it, in addition to the great reward that awaits her in keeping the family. Because it is not her responsibility, that is why she gets double reward. Because she has taken it up to assist her husband and build the home, Allah in his mercy will now bless that family. The Prophet says if your wife takes a

pair of trouser to wash, Allah reduces some of her minor things. Even when she is cooking for you to eat there is rewarding, but it is not compulsory for her to do it. I have been told that I should provide.

OM: What would being wife to a husband mean if she does not have to cook and wash his clothing ...?

MML: Islamically?

OM: Yes.

MML: The primary objective of marriage is to legalize the cohabitation between the two. It is the duty of the husband to now take up the responsibility of feeding the wife. They also say a wife should obey the husband. If she does that, she gains virtuous rewards. The wife is a garment to the husband and the husband is also a garment to the wife, to give comfort to one another, this is the way Islam looks at marriage.

Female Muslim Leader – Lokoja

Female Muslim Leader (FML): Women should be role models at home and outside. They have to be helpful to others. If you're at home and you don't go out to work, then you do all the household chores. If you go out to work, and therefore share in providing for the home, then the man should help with some of the chores. Actually they do. Not all of them ignore women and look on as women do all the work in the home – take care of children, cook. Usually, also, there are others at home with you, apart from the husband, who help.

This is where gender equity comes in. Culture says man is breadwinner, women are caregivers. Can't a man be a caregiver and a woman breadwinner as women actually are? We have designed certain roles to please ourselves. Abu plays ball because he is a boy while Amina does all the household chores – cooks, sweeps, washes plates, fetches water and firewood – because she's a girl. You know when two hands wash each other, they wash better. We need to push whatever is bad in our culture aside, so we can move.

Of course, a woman should be submissive to the husband if she wants to be blessed and have a happy home. Even, the issue of a man cooking depends on how you as a wife behaves in the home. If you please your man, and you have treated him the way he should be treated, you don't even need to tell him to help you, before he does it, and before you break down. I know of a well-respected medical doctor whose wife is a pharmacist. I visited them once, and the man was cooking while the wife was caring for the baby in the sitting room. On another occasion, the man was washing the nappies. They told me that when neighbours pass by and see the man doing household chores, they call the man 'women

wrapper'. But you see they are living happily, and that should be our focus. Let's forget about our negative cultural practices and stop interpreting the Holy Book into culture. We should live the life that will make both men and women happy, and make their children happy too. By so doing, the children will also learn about how to live well from us and they will be happy.

Female Muslim Leader – Ibadan

Female Muslim Leader (FML): At home, women should be honest with their partners, ensure peace in their homes. They should take care of husbands, children and extended members of the family. She's minister of internal affairs. They should know the dos and don'ts of their husbands, bring up children in the fear of the Almighty God, children that will serve their Creator, useful to parents, and that will be of assistance to fellow human beings. Men should be above the women in terms of who heads the house.

Olotoyin Mejiuni (OM): How do you reconcile sex role socialization with the Qur'anic injunction that says women don't have to do household chores, although if they do, they will receive Allah's blessings?

FML: Ours is not a purely Islamic state. Culture interchanges with Qur'anic injunctions. The purpose of the injunction was to allow women concentrate on care of children, children who will fear their Creator and not become miscreants. Women who are housewives work. It is just that they don't go out to offices. They have always worked. Men are to provide every comfort so that women's minds can be focused on how to raise children. When children come back from school, they come back into the warm hands of their mothers who will feed them and go through their assignments. In addition, the woman will be ready to receive the husband back from work. She will ask about his joys, the setbacks/troubles and share with him. It is only when a man is able to provide all the needs – clothings, housing, feeding – that he is to marry. In Islam, the message is clearly spelt out. But because our culture is in conflict with the injunctions, problems arise.

It is not that the woman would sit down and fold her arms. She sits at the table with the husband when he returns from work and talks to him. Qur'an says before your husband comes from work, go to the bathroom, wash yourself and put on a sweet smelling perfume and be ready to receive him. So, if the man finds beauty in you, he wouldn't look elsewhere. The man should do everything for you – provide accommodation for you, buy your clothing, be able to feed you, but you also have a duty to perform. You should ensure he takes his meals regularly. Seek out his

dirty clothing for a laundry man. Mend his loose buttons. Since raising children is enough work, if the economy can take it...

Christianity

Female Christian Leader – Lokoja

Female Christian Leader (FCL): As a woman clergy, I tell women that they have to show exemplary character where they are in terms of their outlook, what they say, the way they behave and dress. They are to dress neatly and moderately, although individuals have different ideas about how to dress. I preach decency, neatness, hard work and I encourage my women to be diligent. Diligent in the sense that although the book of Proverbs 22 vs 29 refers to diligent man, it is not talking to men alone. It is talking to men and women. If you have a duty to perform, you must prove yourself to be a hardworking person, and must be seen to be a hardworking person. Do your work at the right time, and don't go late to work. If you are in the private sector, open your business on time and let people who work with you learn good deeds from you. If you operate a restaurant or you plait hair or you are a dressmaker, do it well. I have seen women who have built bungalows from plaiting hair. What some highly-placed government officials earn is meagre compared with what some of the women in the informal sector make. I am a deputy director in the Ministry of Education, but I don't make as much money as my dressmaker per day. She told me the other day that their association had decided to charge 500 naira per *iro* and *buba* and I shouted. For those artisans, what they earn also depend on how diligent they are.

I preach to my people, to women, to love. They need to love. Love originated from Jesus Christ. John 3 vs 16 says: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, which is Jesus Christ to the world, to die for their sins'. When we preach love and a hungry person comes to you, and you tell the person the Lord will feed you, that is not sufficient. You have to support love with your good works, actions. Jesus volunteered to die, so we should love our neighbours as our-selves. Even in terms of counselling, we should counsel our children and our husbands. If you want your husband to live long, you have to be friendly. If you see him moody after returning from work, ask him what the problem is, cheer him up, pray with him and advise him. That is showing our husband love by our deeds. I also tell husbands to love their wives because it is not good for these things to be one-sided.

Olutoyin Mejiuni (OM): Should women bear the burden of housework and again give in to sexual overtures at night?

FCL: As I tell my people, it was in those days that you say the duty of a woman is to stay at home and take care of children. Women need to work, to support the family, and it is then the husband's mind will be at rest, and he will be happy and loving too. It is the duty of the woman actually to get up early in the morning, bathe the children and take them to school. But a loving husband will prefer to take the children to school so the wife can cater for herself, shop for the food that they need in the family. Some husbands don't even like house helps cooking for them. At a seminar, women asked the question of what will happen when after a day of hard work, they are tired, and the man is demanding for sex. It is our duty as wives to submit in totality. We have to submit in all aspects. A loving husband will know when the wife needs rest, and a loving wife too will know this is the time the husband is aroused for sex, and would want to satisfy the husband, otherwise something else will happen. Even if you're tired. God gives life and strength, and because he has said we should be submissive, you have to give in. Ephesians 4 vs 22 says wives should be submissive. Because if you resist, some men will not argue with you, they will just use that as an excuse to move out, and that is another problem. He can move out and contact gonorrhoea or AIDS, which is the problem we are battling with now. At times too, the woman is aroused. That is why we should give and take. If a woman is sick or tired, the husband should understand, although there are some who will not just understand. In fact, some men know they have the HIV/AIDS and they still go on having sex with their wives so that the source of the disease is not obvious.

In a matter of life and death, however, we teach women to dodge sex if it will cause them death. I am a member of the State Action Committee on AIDS. A woman who knows that her husband goes around with women got in touch with me about her health problems. I took her to the hospital to have her take the HIV/AIDS test. She was uncomfortable until the results came out and they were negative. We asked that the man should come around for the same tests but he refused. At some point, he told the wife that he would go for the test in an area where he is not well known. We told the woman to dodge sex until he takes the test and until it is no longer possible to continue to dodge. God said a woman should be submissive, but did not say a woman should die through her husband's deeds. In the churches, we preach submission, obedience, and faithfulness. That is the role that the Church can play.

Male Christian Leader – Ibadan

Male Christian Leader (MCL): Without women, there can be no marriage. One of God's institutions is the institution of marriage. A woman forms

marriage partnership with a man and a family is born. When you talk about things relating to family, marriage and how to take care of their husband and their children, you're influencing them through those teachings to know how to conduct themselves at home, in their work places and the society. You talk to women about things that relate to their assignment. Life is all about responsibilities. Women have their responsibilities in life, and a man has too. Even in marriage, there is the responsibility of the man and the responsibility of the woman. For example, the Bible says husband, love your wife. That is responsibility. The wife, submit to your husband. That is the woman's responsibility. So a woman has roles to play. Even in churches, there is the role of women.

OM: Are there specific roles prescribed by the Bible?

MCL: You will not say prescribed by the Bible; but by the make-up of women, there are things that they are fit to do. For example, a woman will do well in taking care, in decorating the house of God. A man cannot be good in doing that. Women do the decoration of the church. There are men too but you can't see many men getting involved. You know women by their make-up have flair for certain things. That is the way God made them. So, there is the way God has made man too. When it comes to decorating and sweeping, a woman will fare better. When it comes to cooking, although some men compete with women now, but indeed, there is no way you can compare a woman's cooking with a man's. A man can try. Maybe some men because of where they were brought up they are exposed to it; but naturally, a man can't be good in doing domestic work.

OM: You have just alluded to where some men were brought up, so maybe the point is about where people were brought up, it is not actually natural.

MCL: It is not natural, some people were brought in an environment where they have to do something.

OM: So they cook.

MCL: A ha, they cook.

OM: Can we extend this to many aspects of women's lives that, perhaps because we have brought women up to sweep, so they are better sweepers, better decorators of the church, they are ... because we have brought them up to do so. Which means in societies where men are brought up to sweep...

MCL: No, not necessarily. It is their make-up, the way God has created them. So they can easily ... you see women have the flair for doing some things. It is God that made both man and woman, so there is the aspect of capability and ability. That is what a man has capacity for, a woman does not have capacity for the same. For example, the kind of weight a man can carry, a woman cannot carry the same. I cannot watch my wife carrying some load because I know she does not have the stamina for it.

But the man, by the way God has created man, they are built with energy to do certain things. So if a woman wants to compete with a man, that woman will just be suffering. These days they say what a man can do, a woman can do. Not all. It is not scriptural. God did not make them to be competing. God said 'I will make him an helpmate'. A woman plays the role of an helpmate. By the time a woman is competing with a man, she will not be playing the roles God has created her for. He said I will make him an helpmate. A woman plays a supportive role.

OM: I think your position is pretty clear about women's roles in the home, what about their roles in the public?

MCL: There are many things. There are openings for women now in educational circles. Women are knowledgeable, so they can play the roles that men can play in the society because they are trained for it. There are trained doctors, nurses, lawyers. It doesn't mean the brain of a woman is inferior to that of a man. It is the same brain cells. God is the one that created it. A woman can be trained intellectually to know how to handle some things, so in the society she can play some prominent roles. She can vie for positions as long as she knows that she is competent.

OM: So, what this means is that if a female member of your Church tells you that she is vying for the position of Governor of this State, you will tell her to kneel down, so you can pray for her.

MCL: I will not discourage her, but I will want her to be sure that she is led, she is convinced. Whatever a person wants to do, it is good to seek God's clearance. I will ask her to find out whether it is the will of God. If she has cleared this, she will not get there and start misbehaving. She will not join them and become corrupt. Whatever position you are in, you're to use it for the well-being of people, not for self aggrandizement. It should not be what you can get out of it, but what you can give.

As far as spiritual things are concerned, there is no feminine gender. There is no female holy spirit, and no male holy spirit. It is the same Holy Spirit. If someone seeks the assistance of God, the Holy Spirit can help. The only thing is we don't announce on the pulpit. We don't use the pulpit for that kind of a thing. It is a personal decision, and if the person comes for counselling, I owe the person the duty to counsel her, so as to be sure she will try not to compromise her stance, and then, it should not affect her family. That is why some marriages are scattered because some people don't plan. What you will do that will scatter your home, you better don't engage in it. What you will do that will make you not to be committed to serve God, you better don't commit yourself to it.

OM: You have said that in spiritual matters there is no feminine gender. Does it mean that you have female pastors in Winners' Chapel?

MCL: There are some who are ordained, who have visions and have ministries of their own.

OM: Within or outside the Church?

MCL: They are part of the Church, but maybe they just felt that God want them to do certain assignments and they want to be ordained. But we do not have a female pastor over a Church. Not because it is wrong, but in our set-up here a person may have problems. In advanced countries this may be acceptable. When you're talking about religion, you have to consider our culture too. If not, one would have problems. There are some things that are not acceptable culturally. If you want to reach out to people, you may not be accepted. That is why Paul said, 'I become like the Jews in order to win the Jews'. If you want to win people, you have to become like them.

OM: What you are saying is that patriarchy still persists.

MCL: Yes it does. If you then give female pastors to people who believe strongly that men should be the ones in charge, people may have problems with them. They will have problems because their perspective affect their reasoning and vice versa, and so they may not submit willingly to the woman as leader.

OM: I know that one church in Ilorin and another in Lokoja have female leaders. I have interviewed the woman in Lokoja and she does not appear to have any problem leading the church.

MCL: Yes, it varies from place to place. There are some who may accept it. Someone has to be wise. Like Paul said, 'I became weak so that I will win the weak'. It is not that we are compromising; it is just wisdom to reach out to people. There is nothing wrong with women leading the church, but one has to study the environment first and be sure this person is acceptable. Even here, some of the pastors' wives preach on invitation. For example, a woman who is a pastor's wife, and who is ordained too, will be good in speaking to other pastors' wives, and will be good in speaking to children, depending on the role they want to play. It is not that women don't feature in our services. They feature, but what we are saying is that when you now say a woman should be the overall head of the church, there may be problems in some places. Over the years, some people have become matured and people respect and accept them as individuals.

Female Christian Leader – Ibadan

Female Christian Leader (FCL): A woman is a builder, and a pillar. When we are talking about the structure of the home, a woman has to be there. If you look at some of the people that we have out there, armed robbers and

419, all sorts, they are traceable to the homes, to broken homes. That is why I tell women that even if they are not going to do anything else, they should stay with their husbands because of their children. A woman does not die. So women should know that they are in a family to make an impact. When a mother tells the child that she believes in the child and that the child is the best, that is how the child will turn out – the best. You see, so many women, because of career, because of competition with men, they neglect their families. Look, women are too much to be competing with men.

Every man knows he can't do without a woman. Competing with a man is lack of sense and inability to know your worth. A woman who is going to impact on society and the people around must believe in herself. The problem we have as women is that tradition, religions and even women fight women. If you have a female boss, it's a problem. So there are so many things that make women feel very inadequate. One of the reasons I run the school of ministries is to put dignity in womanhood, to let women know that we are not an accident that is about to happen. If you look at the scriptures very well, God did not ask Adam before he created the woman. He looked at the man and thought he should make somebody that will add colour to his life. A woman is like the icing sugar on the cake. Women should assure their children that they believe in them, but they must believe in themselves first because it is what you have that you can give.

Olutoyin Mejiuni (OM): When you say tradition and culture fights us, what do you mean?

FCL: In some cultures, it is a woman that works, the man sits at home. In some cultures, the woman must not talk and they refer to Paul. The reason Paul told the Corinthian women not to talk was because they did not have manners. They were not reliable. They were not responsible. But when you see a woman that is in her place, and is submissive; surely, she has a place in destiny.

OM: I can see you're placing some of the injunctions in the Bible in context...

FCL: In fact, Paul was not biased against women. Jesus was not biased against women. As a matter of fact, Jesus gave the first woman who met him after his resurrection three solid ministries – the Prophetic, the Preaching and the Apostolic Ministries. Look at Jesus' Ministry very well. There was nowhere in the scriptures where he refused a woman. Jesus' message to us is that he has come to restore dignity to womanhood. It is important that women know this because, you see, many women think the beauty of their womanhood is to usurp the man. No. The beauty of a woman is actually in submission. When a woman is submissive, her beauty comes

out, even if the man is not seeing it as submission, so long as the heavens see that you're submissive. Female achievers usually forget that the beauty of their achievement is having a cover over their heads, and the cover is their husbands. The beauty of a woman is in submitting to the authority of a husband even if the authority is a dummy. I am talking from a biblical angle. Someone who is talking from a secular perspective may not say what I am saying. But the Bible is a standard; there is nothing you can do against the truth.

OM: Let me ask you, the Bible says women submit to men and also, men love your wives, I've been wondering, of whom does the Bible require the biggest sacrifice?

FCL: That is in first Peter. As a matter of fact, love is stronger than submission, because Jesus loved us and died for us, and there is no woman that you love that will not submit. When we realize Jesus' love, we do not have a choice but to submit. When a man truly shows love to his wife, submission becomes very easy. Culture and tradition are factors here, even religion. In some churches, you see men have to sit somewhere and women in another place. You see, people turn the scriptures upside down.

In public, we shouldn't usurp authority. Look at Pilate's wife. She was in charge but she didn't have to come out so everybody will know that she is in charge. It was Pilate's wife that told him, come, be careful, I had a dream. Why is it that God went through the woman and not to the man directly? Because of that, Pilate washed his hands clean of the blood of the innocent man. The woman took her place in the society without really making noise.

OM: What about women vying for political offices...

FCL: Let me quickly say something. Some people say that when the Bible says a woman should submit, that means that she should not preach. You are only to submit to your husband. I can't be submissive to every man. As a woman, you can still be the head of the Church. For instance, by the Grace of God, I am a woman of God; I run a ministry and some men work for me. That is my privileged position. I have authority over the men around me. That does not reduce the fact that in their various homes they are husbands and their wives still have to submit to them, and I submit to my husband. If a woman is going to maximize her potentials and bring the best out of herself, she must learn submission. You must learn to stay under authority. The woman should be contented with her position as a woman and be able to influence things.

OM: I think I understand what you're saying, but I think there are contradictions here about women and dignity and about submission.

FCL: There are no contradictions. Look at Mary and Joseph. They were in courtship. They were to get married, and, the angel told Mary she was going to be pregnant. If the woman did not feel secured, she would have thought she is losing everything because Joseph would not marry her again. But she celebrated. She was excited. She said from this day henceforth, all generations will call me blessed. She believed in herself. A woman is ugly if she is not submissive. Submission, not to everybody, but to your man. Know your worth, believe in yourself. You can be humble, but you don't have to be stupid.

A Yoruba Traditional Religion – The Worship of Sango

A Female Traditional Religious Leader – Ibadan

Female Traditional Religious Leader (FTRL): In public and private, Sango wants women to be respected. He wants our children to be useful. If the children go to school, he would want that they indeed acquire knowledge. He would like that they are sound mentally. When the children are not doing well, Sango can be asked to give guidance.

Discussions

It is interesting that the positions of most of the respondents in this study tally with the position of the religious leaders on the roles of women in the home and in public affairs. It is therefore possible to conclude that many of the respondents in this study take cues from their religious leaders, both consciously and unconsciously. Almost all the respondents cited their experiences, upbringing, religion and what they think as influences on their views about the roles of women in the public and private spheres. Female students, women in the informal economy and female apprentices also alluded to 'the way things are'. A handful of literate respondents referred to culture, tradition and socialization.

What many women in formal work did in this section was essentially to affirm women, and the affirmations were in favour of women's participation in politics. Interestingly, they had tacitly accepted the roles ascribed to women in the private sphere. The only literate woman, Adetutu, who said the roles of women are the same with those of men in the private sphere said of the influences on her view:

I come from a family with three brothers and no sisters – each child has always been treated as an individual, given choices and allowed to fly or falter, based on his/her choices, so I see people as individuals, and not as male or female.

In the section of the questionnaire where respondents were asked to comment freely on the issues that were raised in the questionnaire, Adetutu provided

more insight into her background, and clearly, it had shaped her perspective on women's roles. Hear her:

I have the impression that this questionnaire sees the male as different "specie" from the female. I could not possibly disagree more with this, as may have been seen from my responses, ingrained by my mother, who happens to be her mother's only daughter, and was even about 70 years ago, treated no differently from her brothers, some of whom she trained – one is a professor, one a lawyer and a third excelled so much, he obtained a masters degree outside Nigeria. She, however, also insists that I should enjoy cooking and housework, just like my brothers, two of whom cook very well!

Adetutu also urged me to form a relationship with Christ if I do not have it yet. We recall that I had mentioned that Adetutu takes her religion seriously, and one has to acknowledge that religion does not appear to have disempowered her. Adetutu's testimony is particularly interesting and instructive because while many female respondents cited their upbringing, a handful of the male respondents said they came to conclusions about the roles of women from 'careful observation of married women' and 'observation and interaction with married women over time'. We note that upbringing is socialization/informal learning while '(careful) observation' and 'interaction ... over time' are some of the ways in which informal learning takes place. At least two male students said they came to the conclusions from what they read in books, and what the media disseminate. In this respect, Oloruntimehin (1998) had observed that the family, religion, schools and the mass media teach children and adults to learn and accept their expected and 'proper' roles in society. And, whenever men, women and children behave contrary to their expected roles, they are treated as deviants and punished.

Ajoke, a female student, supported Oloruntimehin's position. In her response in relation to the roles women should play in the public sphere, she said, it is: 'Not to be too prominent or authoritative. To take lower position like deputy and vice position'. When we asked her what influenced her belief, she said one is scolded for not learning particular skills (cooking and cleaning) and invites negative responses for expressing views that deviate from societal expectations of women's roles.

So, while Adetutu did not experience sex-role socialization and sexual division of labour, Ajoke did, and she is aware of the punishment that results from deviation from the norm. Suffice it to say, Adetutu's experience is not the norm, at least not with the responses in this study. And, it is not the typical experience of growing up for many Nigerian women.

Notes

1. Housemaid is household help.
2. 'Na so e bi' translates to: that is the way it is.