The Masculinity and Superiority of African Men: A Philosophical Understanding of Gender

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Abstract:
It has been apparent and to an extent erroneously seen that the male gender (Masculinity), especially in Africa often takes undue advantage of the female folk (feminine) on their bodies, dignity, freedom, and rights. In African Traditional Societies and beyond, several debates have been ongoing on the need for the female folk to capture their freedom without taking into cognizance the major rationale behind this supremacy. Without a doubt, African men take advantage of women in African society mainly because of the supremacy that the society accords African men as a result of the patriarchal cultural practice that is traditionally inherent within the African people. This Patriarchy has, directly and indirectly, affected the economy, the general well-being, and also the power structure in African society. The influence that traditional male stereotypes have on the perpetuation of gender Superiority against the feminine gender remains a point of concern. This paper attempts an examination of the masculinity and Superiority of African Men in the Light of a Philosophical Understanding of Gender Issues. It seeks at submitting that gender roles remain necessary, evaluating the understanding of gender and sex for Africans and there is a need to merge superiority with women's freedom and dignity as amalgamate for the improvement of African society, so that the feminine folk will live as their human dignity necessitate. The method of historical and critical analysis and reflective argumentation were implemented towards achieving this essay.

Keywords: Superiority, Gender, Africa, Culture, Role.

Introduction
Presently, Human society appears to face what one might describe as a gender crisis, especially, in the field of affectivity and sexuality. In many educational institutions today, curricula that “allegedly convey a neutral conception of the person and life are being planned and implemented, which, reflects ‘an anthropology’ opposed to ‘faith’ and ‘right reason.” This current mentality is characterized by challenges emerging from varying forms of ideology that are given the generic nomenclature, ‘gender theory,’ which denies the differences and reciprocity in the nature of men and women, presenting them instead as merely the product of historical and cultural conditioning. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual; this is supposedly on its own a crisis on gender. In so far as the equality of the human person irrespective of gender and roles are to be emphasized, the pursuit of sameness is bizarre. Therefore, a positive approach to gender issues must consider the totality of the person and insist on the integration of the biological, social, and spiritual elements of human anthropology.
Conversations regarding male dominance, oppression, and subjugation of the female gender have been given several attentions in the recent time. When we analyze male stereotypes, in the context of gender equality, it is important to recognize that they do not operate in isolation. Male stereotypes, or masculinities, function as an aspect of a larger structure (Connell, 2005). This structure is gender. Gender denotes the social phenomenon of distinguishing males and females based on a set of identity traits. The gendering of the sexes produces and sustains socially constructed differences (Hughes & Paxton, 2014). However, much attention has not been placed on the discussion of masculine superiority in light of the reality obtainable within Africa’s patriarchal culture. This will have a review of the historical African perspective of gender especially, the harmful aspect that is derogatory to human dignity irrespective of gender and retaining the healthy aspects that promote roles and human dignity in general.

African Understanding of Gender: Masculinity and Feminine

In the African perspective, there is a lack of separation between sex and gender, taking the two as synonymous where being born male means being born a man and being born female means being born a woman. In the European view, gender and sex are different and while nothing can be done about sex, something and enormously something can be done to gender. This is why Simone de Beauvoir in Singh, a subscriber to the Eurocentric view, says, one is not born a woman but becomes one (Singh, 1997). In an African life-world, many factors in life cannot be known, controlled, or predicated (Jenkins, 2009). Humans are at the mercy of the forces of life. This is quite in contrast with the Eurocentric view which subscribes to the scientific approach where there is belief in changing own destiny. This is because, Eurocentrically, gender is learned and therefore can be unlearnt. In the African view, there is not this separateness between nature and humans, and gender like sex is natural, fixed, and uninterchangeable. The two, Europe and Africa, are, therefore, not mutually accommodative of each other as regards the relationships between gender and sex.

On the other hand, when the Eurocentric view talks of removing gender segregation, it does not make much sense in the traditional African circles, where sex segregation locates its males and females separately and this gender segregation is tolerated and divinely ordained. Same social status or enjoyment of same/equal rights conflicts with the African view which maintains a social stratification with men on top and women on the bottom stratum. Afrocentrism thus denounces gender theories, warning at the blur distinction between males and females.

Historical Background to the Gender Roles in African Culture

The word ‘culture’ has been defined severally by scholars; however, it has been commonly defined as the way of life of a people and it includes their customs, tradition, beliefs, behaviour, way of dressing, modes of speech or language, without neglecting their works of arts as well as their attitudes to life among other things. Culture varies from one society to another and it is dynamic (Abidi, 2010).

The Igbo (Africa-Nigerian tribe) cultural system was that which shared roles for men and women, that is, each gender to its own role. Most people who studied the place of women in the Igbo traditional society appear to observe it in the negative. They typically see women as solely second class to men, who have little or virtually nothing to contribute in the largely patriarchal Igbo society. They strongly maintain that “women are to be seen but not to be heard (Nnadi, 2013).” Some of them derived such outright negative perceptions about the place of Igbo women from the novel, Things Fall Apart. They rather highlight the patrilineal nature of the Igbo society, drawing more strength from the manliness and suppressive nature of Okonkwo to his wives, who is eventually the protagonist of the novel. But, Achebe evidently highlighted the indispensable values and roles of women in the
Igbo culture. The Igbo culture holds that the feminine gender by nature is sanctioned with the chief responsibility of reproduction. The female body is formed and fashioned by Chineke to carry pregnancy, give birth, breastfeed, and nurture babies. The important role of women in the Igbo traditional culture is to bear children. Achebe describes the birth of a child “as a woman’s crowning glory (Achebe, 1959).” They are greatly valued and respected for the biological role of giving childbirth. Prior to the introduction of Western education, which was facilitated by the Western missionaries and their agents of colonialism, traditional educational method has been a way of life among the Igbo.

And in the traditional Igbo educational scheme, mothers are nursery and primary teachers to their children. In as much as, children are said to belong to their fathers in the Igbo culture, though some parts of Igbo trace matrilineal descent (Agha, 2003). It is the principal responsibility of their mothers to educate them. In the dominantly religious Igbo culture, women are also imperative parts and parcels of the religion. They play diverse roles. They could function as deity, religious personalities, and adherents. But more importantly, they do not just belong to the Igbo traditional religion as ordinary members; some of them belong to the group of authorities that play leading roles in the religious culture of the Igbo. It is described in Africa traditional religious milieu as “sacred specialists” (Parrinder, 1976). Specifically in Igbo land traditional religious culture, it is called the “ritual symbolic persons” (Ifesieh, 1989). They are medicine women, priestesses, mediums, rainmakers, diviners, etc. They share this position with their male counterparts.

The due proprietors of the kitchen and domestic chores in traditional Igbo culture are the women, and that is what the Igbo means when they say, Usoekwunwe (Mother’s kitchen). That is not in any way to suppose that their roles are limited to the kitchen, but the culture conceded them with that right and responsibility over other category of persons. They double also as caregivers. They care for their children and husbands. Igbo women are known to be more caring than the men, as Achebe remarks that “Nwoye’s mother was very kind to him and treated him as one of her children” (Achebe, 1959). They are very hospitable, accommodating, and emotional, and have stronger bonds with their children.

No man can raise a legitimate family in the Igbo custom without a woman. Before it becomes a family, there shall be one or more women who shall be foundational in the establishment of the household, this implies the economic role of women Igbo-African society. The more wives the more support the man gets in his family. Men who want to be rich and influential marry two or more wives in order to raise many children who will support in farm work and other economic activities. Igbo women also contribute to the economic well-being of their families by engaging in honest means of livelihood. Women in the African culture (Igbo) serve as bridge builders. They connect one family, kinship, and community to another through marital relationships. The Igbo would always say, “Ogobuikwu (in-law is kinsman).

Similarly, two positions of thought appear interesting and deserving of attention. The first is that of Nkiru Nzegwu (2004). Her thesis is that the metaphysical conceptions of gender affect theoretical analysis and erode the cultural specificity and historicity of societies. Using the Igbo society as an instance, she decried the attempt to universalize certain characteristics of the female gender in a manner that ignores differences in conceptual categories. Her work, basically a critique of Martha Nussbaum’s(1995) thesis of emotional universality of the female gender, proceeded with two basic arguments meant to show how the Igbos construe femininity, as distinct from the purported attempt to subsume non-Western conceptions under the Western and the subsequent reference to such as universally true of the female gender.

The first argument rejects the definition of women as the negative image of men. Patriarchy according to her is propelled by a masculine ideology which sees the woman as inferior irrespective of status or social class. Under the cultural logic of the Onitsha (Igbo) society, however, nwanyi, the singular of umunwanyi, meaning “offsprings who are female,” do not
accommodate the idea of patriarchy. The reason for this, according to her, is that gender identity in its flexibility is tied to social roles irrespective of sex. Igbo females, therefore, owing to their multiple social roles do not have a single gender identity. This blurring of the sexual divide does not mean that gender cannot be physiologically differentiated. To this end, a female in Western thought can be equated with an *agbala* in Igbo thought. The idea of an *agbala* unlike that of the woman in Western feminist thought, however, tends to be devoid of rigidly defined social roles.

The lineage system is another means through which the flexibility of identity is demonstrated. *Umuada* (lineage daughters) are different from *okpala* (lineage sons) and *inyemedi* (lineage wives). The *umuada*, however, differs from the *inyemedi*. While the former, by privilege of lineage is seen as a husband, the latter is viewed as a wife. As daughters of a lineage, the *umuada* is expected to perform duties appertaining to that of a husband in her relation with the *inyemedi* who are equally expected to play the role of wives.

On this basis, the *okpala* have as much rights over the *inyemedi* as do the *umuada*, thereby creating no room for any form of discrimination. The *inyemedi* are submissive to them equally. Interestingly, a member of the *umuada* in one lineage could become an *inyemedi* elsewhere by getting married into another lineage. This then confers a dual role on her, for as she earns respect from the *inyemedi* in her own clan, she shows the same both to the *okpala* and *umuada* of the lineage into which she is married. She is, thus, construed socially as both a husband and a wife owing to her shifting identities. Nkiru's argument regarding the status of the *nwanyi* and the *agbala* did not tell us much, for unlike the second argument, she fails to concretely back up her definitions of those terms with cultural practices capable of validating them. We shall, therefore, not dissipate much effort on it. The idea that the female switch identities, unlike the male, cannot but have an assumption (or a series of them) underlying it if we are to avoid the conclusion that the practice is irrational and devoid of any logical basis. Nkiru comfortably ignored the need to highlight these assumptions. Still, the task of hazarding a guess becomes very simple in this matter. The Igbos consider wives to be inferior to their husbands, and the reverence demanded of the wife is such that it must extend to every member of the husband's lineage irrespective of gender. The only way a woman can avoid the subordinate role, it would seem, is to eschew marriage altogether.

Nevertheless, in Yoruba-African culture like other African cultures is a patriarchal society. A patriarchal society is defined as that “…which is characterized by male super ordination and female subordination” (Ubrurhe, 1999). Men show superiority over women. The consensus among writers is that the Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature (Dogo, 2014). It is a society where gender roles are distinct and evident, and gender relations are informed by the dynamics of patriarchal society is, therefore, one which strengthens the ‘masculinity feminine dichotomy’ by favouring and perpetuating male domination; and as such, in all areas of the society, structures are manipulated to maintain and foster the domination of women by men (Dogo, 2014).

In the Yoruba society, there are clear gender roles and rights from birth, a child is cast in the roles ascribed to the sexes by the society, and these roles confine sexes to appropriate manner of behaviour and areas of life endeavour. This is why feminists believe that sex as a concept is biological while gender is cultural and sociological. In the Yoruba society is associated with sex from birth. From birth, the male child is preferred to the female, and that is why when a child is born in Yoruba land, the first question is often, ‘Is it a boy or a girl (Olabode, 2009)?’ and even throughout childhood and adolescence, boys and girls are treated differently
and assigned different roles. Although Oyewumi in her studies of the Oyo-Yoruba society argues that there is no concept of gender in the Yoruba culture. She bases her claim on the fact that the Yoruba language has no gender markers. She further observes that the Yoruba language has no word for ‘woman’. For her, just one word in the language, ‘obinrin’, denotes female, while ‘okunrin’ denotes male. ‘Obinrin’ according to her does not derive from ‘okunrin’, the way that ‘woman’ derives from ‘man’ (Oyewumi, 1997). For her, ‘obinrin’ is not in any way inferior to ‘okunrin’, and there are no markers in Yoruba language that distinguish names, occupations, professions, statuses and so on in terms of gender (Oyewumi, 1997). Yoruba language for her has no gender-specific words for son, daughter, brother, or sister.

The Trend of Feminism

Feminism has continued to advance and open new frontiers, maintaining a dominant status in the genre of issues in the political and academic arena over the last few decades. This growth in status has opened an array of perspectives from which the feminine condition can be more aptly appraised and improved. One such perspective is African feminism.

Feminism refers to the right of women to have political, social, and economic equality with men. It is a discourse that involves various movements, theories, and philosophies, which are concerned with the issue of gender difference and advocacy of equality for women, and campaigns for women’s rights and interests. The phrase, “women’s Liberation” was first used in the United States in 1964, first appeared in print in 1966 (Sarachild, 1978), and gradually gathered momentum as used in a wide range of orientations and ideologies.

Feminists have divided the movement’s history into three “Waves.” The first wave refers to a period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and twentieth century in the United Kingdom and the United States. Originally, it focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriages and ownership of married women and their children by their husbands. Second-wave feminism refers to a period beginning in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. It was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism and was largely concerned with issues like ending women’s discrimination in various facets of life. Very popular in the second wave is the slogan, “The Personal is Political,” which was coined by activist Carol Hamisch (Echols, 1989). A term that saw women’s cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and that encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and reflective of the sexiest power structure. Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, due to perceived failures of the second wave and also as a response against initiatives created by the second wave. It seeks to avoid what it views as the second wave’s essentialist definitions of femininity which they feel over-emphasize the experiences of upper-middle-class white women.

There are various ideologies associated with the feminist movement. For instance, socialist feminism sees women's oppression from the Marxist perspective of exploitation, oppression, and labour. They see women as being held down as a result of their unequal standing in both the workplace and the household. Women's oppression is seen as a part of a larger pattern that affects everyone involved in the capitalist system. The disappearance of class oppression is expected to terminate gender oppression (Barbara, 1976). This orientation has been criticized as trivializing gender discrimination by subsuming it under the category of class oppression (Connolly et al, 1968).

Liberal Feminism asserts the equality of men and women through political and legal reforms. It is an individualistic form of feminism, which focuses on women’s ability to show and maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Liberal feminism uses the personal interactions between men and women as the place from which to transform society. To them, important issues include reproductive and abortion rights, sexual harassment, voting, education, equal pay for equal work, affordable
children and healthcare, and the bringing to the fore of sexual and domestic violence against women (Hooks, 1984).

Generally, those who canvass a separate approach to feminism, especially the African variant, fall under two categories. On the one hand, are those who see “Western feminism as a calculated attempt to overlook or ignore the plight of black women as a result of their racist inclinations.” On the other hand, are those who feel that the failure of what is termed Western feminism to capture the challenges of the black woman stems largely from its inability, not unwillingness, to grasp the historical nature of such challenges and the implications therefrom. Since there exists a plethora of pieces of literature categorizable under both headings, we shall limit ourselves to a few which in our opinion capture the kernel of this separatist project. When white reformers made synonymous the impact of sexism on their lives, they were not revealing an awareness of or sensitivity to the slave’s lot; they were simply appropriating the horror of the slave experience to enhance their own cause.

To further buttress her point, she made a reference to the outrage expressed by white feminists when they were made to grant black men voting rights while leaving white women disenfranchised. To the white feminists, racial hierarchy should have been made the criterion for voting rights instead of sexual hierarchy. A white women’s rights advocate, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, seems to have driven the point home when she protested (Hooks, 1998):

If Saxon men have legislated this for their own mothers, wives, and daughters, what can we hope for in the hands of Chinese, Indians, and Africans…I protest against the enfranchisement of another man of any race or clime until the daughters of Jefferson, Hammock, and Adams are crowned with their rights.

Stanton’s disgust stems from what she sees as the oddity of a black man being enfranchised ahead of a white woman. If a white woman in her estimation occupies a superior position in the social ladder to a black man by virtue of her skin, she cannot possibly see a black woman as her equal.

Hooks went further to cite other instances of white women’s discrimination against their female counterparts in the areas of education, employment, etc. Although Hook did not reach a separatist conclusion in spite of her misgivings, Black feminists like Elizabeth Spelman are of the view that the reality of the black woman’s burden, which comprises dealing with sexism and racism, is not merely additive. In other words, the struggle for gender equality is not one to be merely added up with the challenges of racism which equally confronts the black woman (Spelman, 1995). Added together, the black woman’s experience assumes a complex dimension which additive analysis does not adequately describe. To say, therefore, that black women suffer the same fate as those of white women on the one hand and black men on the other is to trivialize a fundamental difference.

An additive analysis treats the oppression of a black woman in a sexist and racist society as if it were a further burden than her oppression in a sexist but non-racist. When, in fact, it is a different burden...“the effect of multiple oppression is not merely arithmetic” (Hooks, 1998).”

The problem with this type of argument in spite of the many truths it asserts is that in articulating the broad and diverse nature of the challenges of the black woman, it seeks a remedy to it under the narrow theme of feminism and narrower still, black feminism. Despite efforts at integration, racial prejudice cannot be said to be a thing of the past in Western society, a situation that makes the argument of Hooks and Spelman relevant. In repudiating additive analysis however, this way of articulating black feminism pretends that the black woman experiences racism in a way that the black man does not, while suffering sexual prejudice in a manner the white woman does not, thus isolated in her struggle. To this end, the remedy to her situation lies in alienating herself in the process of liberation. This method can hardly be productive. The gender-neutral nature of racism makes it a general problem to which all blacks
must continue to seek an end. Surprisingly, Spelman did not see the logic in putting an end to a more general problem as an equal partner in the quest to abolish sexism. This in itself is not a denial of the fact that she bears a double burden. To isolate the black woman from every group that has one challenge on the other in common with her hardly does any credit to her cause. It is this realization that made Hooks (1998) to conclude:

If women want a feminist resolution...then we must assume responsibility for drawing women together in political solidarity. That means we must assume responsibility for all the forces that divide women. Racism is one such force.

Without first seeking an end to racism, bridging the gap between whites (of whatever sex) and blacks (male or female), such a struggle is likely to remain an exercise in futility. A pointer to this is that whereas a few gains have been made over the last few years as a result of efforts to integrate, latent forms of racism have ensured that there is still a gulf between black and white females in the same way it obtains with the male. Whereas feminism has gained marginally by having more women in offices, corporate and political, many black women are still on the lower rung of the ladder serving as nannies and home cleaners for more white females who have made it into offices. Spelman seems to be saying that though the black woman is united in plight with her white counterpart on gender issues, the latter remains a foe on racial grounds. And if gender discrimination is not restricted to white men alone, it follows that the black man, though united in his racial plight with the black woman, becomes a foe on gender grounds. This approach multiplies the struggle of the black woman while reducing her capacity to make allies. Efforts at bridging the sexual gap must, therefore, be preceded by closing the racial gap. It is worth saying also that, in fighting racism, the black woman does so on the basis of her race, not gender. It is not hers alone to fight. Racism, both in intent and effect, portends grave consequences not only to the black woman but also to the black man.

There are those who, as earlier alluded to, crave a different way of theorizing black feminism owing to what they consider the inability of Western feminist scholars to understand neither the differences in the historical and cultural meaning of concepts nor the large difference in experiences.

Some African Cultural Practices that are Harmful to Women

It is important to note that there are cultural practices in the African traditional are oppressive to the female gender, and some of these practices will be highlighted briefly.

Virgintity Testing

Virgintity testing is practiced mostly in KwaZulu Natal and the Eastern Cape. Virgintity testing is the practice and process of inspecting the genitalia of girls and women to determine if they are sexually chaste. It is based on the false assumption that a woman’s hymen can be torn only as a result of sexual intercourse (The use of tampons can break the hymen). It is a very controversial practice, both because of the implications for the girls tested and because it is not necessarily accurate.

Widows’ Rituals

Widowhood is a clearly defined social role for women that are associated with prescribed institutionalized cultural and religious norms and the concomitant social sanctions if a deviation from the defined social role occurs. However, an altogether different set of norms applies to men upon the death of their wives (The Commission on Gender Equality, 2007). The widow’s status declines drastically. If widows remarry, they rarely do so of their own free will. In some communities, they are forced into new conjugal relationships with a male relative or be forbidden to remarry, even if they wish to do so.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a disfigurement that includes the cutting of the clitoris. It also includes changing the form of the labia or elongating them, as practiced by Tsonga
and Sotho communities. In some African communities, FGM marks an important rite of passage into womanhood, while others believe it guarantees virginity, curbs female sexual desires, prevents promiscuity, promotes hygiene, and increases fertility. Acts such as this, suppress the inherent right of the female and prevents them from expressing their sexual gift to the fullest.

In African Marriage, Men are Polygamous while Women are Monogamous

In the traditional African culture, men are believed to be polygamous and thereby, can marry as many wives as they wish to marry, and can still keep concubines. While women are meant to merely be faithful to their husbands since their bride price was paid (appears like a bought commodity). In some communities, in Igbo society, particularly, Ezza, if a woman who is married sleeps with another man other than the husband, she must come in public and confess to the community the sexual act and some rituals of sanctification will be done before she can be affirmed worthy to go close to the husband. Still, the men are allowed to express their sexual desires as much as they wish to so far they do it respectfully.

Philosophical Review of Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a very influential phenomenon that has constantly evolved in almost every facet of academic discourse including in the study of philosophy. As a discipline, philosophy: “studies man and things that surround him both visible and invisible” (Ani, 2011).” Philosophy, however, concerns with all of reality including human cultures in so far as they exist or are conceivable by the intellect in the environment. The subjugation of women to men’s control has a philosophical history. The Greeks were the first to compile the status of women into academic discourse. Through their promotions of patriarchal thoughts which vehemently influence their conception about women, the Greeks define the right and nature of women and put them in a position of alterity which initiates the marginalization process. They use various derogatory expressions at their disposal to posit the status of women. Outside the Greek cultural theories, one of the most recognized accounts of gender inequality is expressed in the Hebrew-Christian account also known as the Adamic period. This Hebrew-Christian account holds that: -

Lord God took the dust of the ground and formed a man. He breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being. Having made a man, the Lord God said to himself that it was not good that the man should be alone. “I will make him a helper fit for him.” Therefore, the Lord God caused the man to sleep deeply. While he had a deep sleep, God took one of his ribs and closed the place with flesh. With the rib that God had taken from the man, he made a woman and gave her to the man (Aguzie & Umunakwe, 2019).

From this account, Adam is blamed and punished for his failure to control his wife, Eve who actually violates the order given to them in the first garden on earth. This Christian account is categorical on the position of women in relation to men. In accordance with divine will and purpose, women were instructed to be subordinate, submissive, obedient, and loyal to their husbands who are heads, masters, bosses, mentors, and leaders. Interestingly, scholars who subscribe to this Christian account do not know that it has sociological and philosophical significance. Ritzer argues that “when God instructed the first man and woman to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, both man and woman were given authority and power, individually and collectively, to subdue and have dominion over the earth with all its Living and non-living creatures. In this context, both man and the woman were held responsible and accountable to God” (Ritzer, 1999).

In the history of philosophy, though some scholars believe in equality before the law of all human beings some still preach gender inequality. Those who champion gender inequality throughout history make shocking contributions thereby making gender inequality discourse and its practical realization, a
continuing ideal of humanity established, fostered, and sustained by scholars whose goal was to establish what they considered as two distinct categories of human beings. In the ancient period, for example, Plato through creation theory proposed a theory which in disguise supports gender inequality. In citing Grimshaw on Plato’s creation theory, Akande states:

According to this theory, all souls were originally implanted in male bodies and given volition, sensation, and emotion. They were all males and were equal; to continue to be male. Souls had to conquer their emotions and develop their intellects. All those who failed to master their irrational and emotional instincts were deemed incapable of reason, and they were to be reborn as women (Akande, 2011).

Woman according to Plato is an undeveloped man. This forms the basis of this argument that women should be confined to private life while men should be in charge of the state administrations. Thomas Aquinas who represents the medieval era has a similar view to that of Plato because women according to him are the products of environmental pollution. Aquinas argues that women are less intelligent than men; men have perfect reason and stronger virtue than women. Amaku writes: “Aquinas’s belief that man is superior to woman is manifest from his definition of a woman. He agrees with Aristotle that woman is defective and a misbegotten male... The superiority of man over woman, in the judgment of Aquinas, is not a question of humiliating women, or inferiorizing them; it is due to the natural necessity of order (Amaku, 2009). To Thomas Hobbes, men are gifted with higher wisdom and valour than women have. The aim of this greater wisdom according to Hobbes is to keep monarchies from collapsing.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The preceding has been able to make a purposeful presentation of how gender inequality and gender roles are seen in the African perspective using some African cultures as a compass, which exposed the superiority of masculinity over femininity. The paper exposed the fact that the traditional African view of gender is different from that of the Europeans since Africans did not really make the distinction of sex from gender, unlike their European counterparts.

In as much as gender roles are made distinct in African culture, male domination was also evident. Hence, this Patriarchal system is not only exclusive to Africans, it can virtually be perceived in almost all the cultures in the world, and was seen in the brief philosophical reflection in this paper. Yet, evolvement, improvement, and upgrading of the human status quo remain important. Gender equality is not the same as gender sameness, a clear difference of these must be taken note of as gender fairness and egalitarianism are advocated for the betterment of society.

Whatever the cultural dimensions, women have proven that they have important roles to play in the advancement of the social environment. Africa includes human societies that have realized that the growth and development of any nation depend on the eradication of gender inequality.

References


