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**"No Ladies at the Bar": Equality in Gender as a Basis for Complementarity and Not
Oppositionality**

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Abstract

Purpose: Various authors have copiously discussed gender issues. However, these discussions have often resulted in antagonistic positions that put the male and female genders at loggerheads. This situation requires urgent interventions, as the effect seems to inhibit or prolong the journey to achieving equality for the female gender in a male-dominated, patriarchal world. This paper seeks to clarify controversial gender issues and engages the "well-worn" discourse on gender equality. This paper fills the existing gap in literature due to the dearth of emphasis on complementarity in gender discourse. It will encourage the gender discourse to more accurately contextualize the complementarity of gender rather than propagate the idiosyncrasies that encourage discrimination and oppositionality as captioned by the title of the paper.

Methodology: Theories of egalitarianism and complementarianism propounded and promoted by Biblical feminist from the 1970s and 1980s served as the framework for this work. The paper adopted a library-based legal research methodology by reviewing existing literature on gender discourse while primarily adopting qualitative methods using social media recruiting techniques via google forms. The study used a quantitative approach to gather its primary data through a structured questionnaire that included both closed-ended questions, where respondents had to select from pre-provided answers, and open-ended questions, which allowed respondents to provide multiple answers. With the use of SPSS, the data was analyzed at the univariate level using descriptive statistics and displayed as frequency tables and charts.

Findings: Findings gleaned from the responses of 210 participants from differently oriented societies namely Nigeria (patriarchal), Equatorial Guinea, and some dominant tribes of Ghana (matriarchal) on their perception of the impact of the equality discourse on coexistence with the opposite gender further substantiated that the equality mantra has inadvertently propagated the concept of oppositionality with dire consequences on mutually beneficial relationships between both genders in every facet of life

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The paper proposes a more suitable theory that promotes equality without jeopardizing the diversity, inclusion and synergy required for both genders to co-exist harmoniously for the attainment of sustainable development in any society.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Oppositionality, Complementarity*

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INTRODUCTION

The phrase “No Ladies at the Bar” is commonly used in the legal profession. It captures the widely spread perception that some professions are originally for the male gender. This perception is fundamentally erroneous and detrimental to the female psyche in many ways. It is worthy of note that the same profession refers to female lawyers as “gentlemen in skirts”. While on the surface, it may appear complimentary for a woman to be rated as a man, it may be presumptuous on the part of male lawyers to think that being rated as a man should make a woman feel complimented. If such subtle and reverse discrimination could be so flagrant in the justice sector, then it should not be surprising that significant progress is yet to be recorded in the global quest for gender parity, diversity, inclusiveness and complementarity.

Throughout history, women have been dominated by men, and this was emphasized in Tennyson's 1847 poem, *The Princess*,

“Man to command, and woman to obey”

A woman's right is denied from childhood with restricted access to education, being forced to marry and subjected to violence. The legal profession was not an exemption to the cultural biases against women, as female lawyers fought their inclusion into the legal profession against the systemic exclusion of women in the legal profession before the mid-19th century. In a fair society, everyone regardless of gender should be accorded equal opportunity to survive and thrive (Gender Discrimination Causes Inequality).

Notwithstanding the proliferation of articles on gender, there remains a dearth of study with emphasis on complementarity of gender roles with specific reference to a profession. This article fills the gap by providing an in-depth examination of gender discrimination within the legal profession. This article will be helpful to women to be more confident in their role, policymakers, and future researchers by helping them navigate the gender discourse within the specific contexts, particularly since the article has used the gender nuances within the legal profession as an illustrative work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Stereotypes and Norms

One critical aspect of gender equality is the role of stereotypes and norms in perpetuating inequality. Studies have highlighted the persistence of gendered stereotypes and norms in various societal domains, including learning institutions, the workplace, and the home. (Gender Stereotypes and Norms). These stereotypes often lead to unequal opportunities and treatment for individuals based on their gender, reinforcing gender disparities. The stereotypes often come in subtle forms such as clichés, sayings, or even usage of parlance that is commonly accepted among a particular group of people. Because repetition strengthens memory, these sayings further reinforce the dogma that promotes disparity inadvertently.

Gender discrimination in educational and professional settings has been a subject of extensive research. Studies have shown that girls and boys may face differential treatment, expectations, and opportunities in schools (Gender Discriminations in Schools and Workplaces). This discrimination can impact educational outcomes and career choices, ultimately contributing to gender inequality in the workforce. Women continue to face disparities in terms of pay, career progression, and leadership positions (Thelma and Ngulube, 2024). Gender equality is not only a matter of social justice but also has economic implications (Gender Equality: Antecedents and Consequences). Studies have suggested that gender equality can contribute to economic growth by increasing the labor force participation of women and reducing inefficiencies

resulting from gender-based discrimination (Igbal et al., 2022). Moreover, achieving gender equality is closely tied to broader societal advancement goals. Efforts to promote gender equality have included bystander interventions, policy measures, and a recognition of the economic and societal benefits of gender equality (Hunt 2024).

Gender Complementarity

Gender complementarity refers to a normative pattern of resemblance and difference between the two genders that ought to be noted and valued. These distinctions in function do not imply variations in worth, significance, or quality. Neither sex is inferior to the other. Complementarians see both sexes as complementary, enhancing each other's strengths. In God's eyes and according to His plan, men and women are equally valuable. Complementarianism values the qualities and significance of both genders while attempting to maintain the biblical distinctions between men's and women's duties (Grudem, 2002). Respect for both sexes and harmony in the home, workplace, community, and country are the outcomes of real complementarianism.

According to the theological perspective of complementarianism, which is shared by Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Men and women have distinct but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family, life, religious leadership, and society at large (Kassian, 2012). Around the world, there are several beliefs regarding gender complementarity. The first of them is that both sexes are equal in terms of personhood. The only difference is in roles, not worth. Men and women have distinct but equal roles in marriage, family life, the church, and other contexts. These supporters essentially hold that God is both sexes to reflect complimentary realities about Jesus.

According to complementarians, women were created to highlight the church's relationship to Christ in a manner that men cannot, and men were created to highlight the relationship between Christ and the church (and the LORD God and Christ) in a manner that women cannot. This approach does not oppress any sex; rather, it recognizes and supports each sex's distinctive characteristics. So does our Creator the complementarianism's foundation. The idea of distinct but complementary roles holds that although men and women are different in their roles, they are both equal in value and personality. The distinct roles differ from society to society. For instance, in Africa, men are expected to provide for the needs at home while women are expected to manage the resources provided. This has evolved overtime to feature more working women. However, the lack of appreciation of the complementarity discourse has made it somewhat sacrilegious for husbands of such working women to seat at home and manage the resources. In Western climes this may not be totally out of place. Also, parents frequently assign tasks according to their preferences or strength, while most men focus on discipline, women focus on family nutrition. Complementarity believes that both spouses should respect, love, and give selflessly to one another. Each person's voice is valued, and decisions are made jointly in wholesome partnerships.

People have generally misinterpreted and/or misused the complementarian view notion. It's critical to define the complementarian idea.

Complementarianism is not Egalitarianism

It is important to recognize the distinction between egalitarianism and complementarianism. According to its definition, egalitarianism is "a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people" or "a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs"(Merriam Webster Dictionary). The idea that equality entails

role-interchangeability, which was initially promoted and made popular in evangelical circles in the 1970s and 1980s by "Biblical Feminists," led to the necessity for such a term." (Kassian, M.). From the biblical point of view, Egalitarianism believes that there are no gender distinctions anymore (Galatians 3:28). Egalitarianism sees gender distinctions because of the Fall and Christ's redemption as removing those distinctions, bringing unity. Complementarianism avoids confusion by viewing gender differences because of Creation and a return to those divisions via Christ's salvation. Genesis 1:26-27, which states that God created both male and female humans in His likeness, is where the complementarian viewpoint begins. They hold that Eve was created by God expressly to be Adam's companion: "A man cannot function well in solitude." I'll get him a suitable assistant. Therefore, God's created order includes both genders (What is Complementarism).

Since the United Nations' 1975 "Decade for Women" declaration, feminists and campaigners have carried on the fight for gender equality as a means of eradicating gender disparities or opposition or discrimination. However, new and alarming difficulties appear to be emerging, even though current situations that lead to discrimination against women remain unsolved. Women are nurturers by nature, and this should be promoted. Accepting complementarity will promote both sexes' complete and unrestricted expression in our society. In addition to being socially constructed, women are naturally good at managing their families and keeping the house clean. Even though they might be able to perform well in the economy, the job, and government (Olonade, et. al, 2021), Their household responsibilities should not be dismissed as unimportant and relegated to the backyard. When they are eligible for a social or political position, they ought to be acknowledged as deserving of it. The appreciation of the obvious inequality in physical strength and physical abilities of each gender strengthens the ideology of complementarianism in practical ways. For example, traditionally, most women strive more in fields like health, social work, human resources, administration and education, than in industries like mining and construction where physical exertion may be required. (ILO, 2020). However, with technological advancement and the use of artificial intelligence, women now function in these formerly male dominated fields. Although the inequality becomes obvious again when women in such fields are put in the family way and may need to be excused from some activities for the sake of the unborn child and their own health. This paper advocates that the physiological and domestic inequalities are not to be eroded. Instead, the concept of complementarity proposes that women need to embrace their uniqueness, and the society must be ready to regard motherhood as a wholesome contribution to societal development.

Gender Oppositionality

It is believed that heterosexual couples deal with gender oppositionality daily. It is predicated on the idea that men and women are distinct persons who frequently work against each other. These distinctions are social constructs that are ingrained based on how a given community views physical differences as well as the presumptive preferences, aptitudes, and proclivities of men and women. In contrast to the unchangeable traits of sex, gender differences are commonly acknowledged in historical and comparative social assessments as variations that alter over time and between cultures as societies develop and change (The gender perspective). Oppositionality, according to Robert Lous Stevenson, stems from encouraging the sexes to pursue distinct virtues, despise different vices, and hold each other to different standards of success (Paglia, and Carnille, 1992). According to Camille Paglia, oppositionality has its roots in nature. According to gender oppositionality, men who are large, powerful, and tough control women, whereas women are weak, delicate, subservient, extremely emotional, easily confused, and lacking in or incapable of having rational faculties (Duderija, 2017).

Gender oppositionality and gender discrimination are terms that are frequently used interchangeably. Any exclusion or restriction based on gender that prevents girls, boys, women, and/or men from acknowledging, enjoying, or expressing their full and equal human rights is considered gender discrimination (How gender discrimination impacts boys and girls). Gender discrimination is prohibited under almost every human rights treaty, national and local laws (Human Rights and Gender). Article 1 of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) defines "discrimination against women" as any sex-based distinction, exclusion, or restriction that has the intent or effect of preventing or undermining women's recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field, regardless of their marital status

In Nigeria, Sections 15(2) and 42(1) prohibit sex-based discrimination. Section 17 of the Constitution outlines the elimination of demographically derived disparities as a fundamental objective of state policy. Section 17(3)(e), focuses on gender-based disparity and states that the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring that "there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, or on any other ground whatsoever." However, Section 26 of the Constitution, which deals with citizenship, expressly allows a Nigerian man to grant his foreign-born wife his citizenship, but it makes no mention of a comparable route to citizenship for a foreign-born spouse of a Nigerian woman. (Legal Information Institute).

No Ladies at the Bar

The legal profession is seen as a male, aggressive, and somewhat masculine profession (Chaddha). In the United States, women were prohibited from attending law schools and state bar associations until the middle of the 19th century. Arabella Mansfield was admitted to the Iowa State Bar in 1869. However, female applicants were turned away from membership in some States. Myra Bradwell, for instance, was denied admission by Illinois State in 1872. She appealed this decision all the way to the Supreme Court, arguing that it violated her rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court in rejecting her appeal held that "The natural and proper timidity and delicacy which belong to the female sex evidently unfit it for the practice of law," (Chapter 5, Sage Pub. 2006). Similar restrictions were present around the world, with nations such as the United Kingdom and others in Europe and Africa postponing the admittance of women to the profession until the latter part of the 20th century. In Britain, the colonial master of Nigeria, under the Solicitors Act 1843 women were not seen as persons capable of becoming lawyers just because of their gender (Ine-Ebi). Though, this was successfully challenged in *Edwards v A.G of Canada* ((1930) AC 124), where the Privy Council overruled the interpretation of 'person' to exclude women (*Bebb v The Law Society* (1914) 1CH 286), a decision that marked the women's entry into the legal profession.

A study carried out by the American Bar Association revealed that female lawyers leave the profession because of their inability to access business development opportunities for advancement. Similarly, the results of the gender disparity study carried out in Nigeria in 2023 by the International Bar Association and the LexisNexis Rule of Law Foundation, revealed that Female students represent half the law student numbers at many schools across the country, yet only five of the 128 Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) branches are led by women, and only four out of 37 attorneys general (Natasha, 2023). The long-aged practices and customs of the legal profession have continued till date. The fact that women in the legal field are evaluated based on their attire and given advice on what not to wear is much worse, such as not wearing daggling earring or fixing long hair. Addressing every female lawyer or female legal

practitioner as men on skirt, the addressing of female judges, magistrates, female heads of the customary courts, as his lordship, his worship, his honour respectively, addressing of female judges or justices as learned brothers all based on the slogan that there are no women at the bar, (as well as the bench) is the height of discrimination of the female gender as well as subordination of the women folk. Like most traditional African societies, the Nigerian society is inherently patriarchal, with the attendant entrenched male domination entwined into the social fabric and institutions at all levels of leadership (Durant, 2004), and the irony besetting Nigeria's continuous struggle for the eradication of gender-based discrimination and gender equality is that the profession that ought to have taken the lead has let its very own down by failing to lead by example in manner its organizations are run (Rhode, 2021). Female lawyers in Nigeria face challenges such as sexual harassment, rigidity in the workplace, and wrong perception in their abilities to perform well in a patriarchal culture (Natasha, 2023), in fact there are law firms who do not engage females at all. Also, until very recently when changes were made in a few jurisdictions, female judges are addressed as "my lord" rather than "my lady" in court proceedings.

METHODOLOGY

The study that informed this article was an empirical one and was conducted in 2024. Both primary and secondary data were collected and used for data analysis. Secondary data were gathered through scholarly journal articles, books, law magazines, reliable internet sources and other official documents. The research adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey. By taking a snapshot of a population at a specific moment in time, the cross-sectional design enables inferences about phenomena across a large population. The study collected its primary data through quantitative method via structured questionnaire, the questionnaire contained both open-ended questions which gave the respondents the opportunity to provide different responses and closed-ended questions where the respondents choose from the already provided answers. To achieve wide coverage, the questionnaire was distributed online via google forms, the process of conducting the research online research is much faster and reaches a larger audience. When compared with face-to-face questionnaire administration or other approaches, the online google forms provided anonymity which puts respondents at ease and encourages them to answer truthfully. Online questionnaire responses are automatically entered into spreadsheets, databases, or other software programs, eliminating the possibility of human error and allowing for automatic data validation, in contrast to methods like in-person and telephone questionnaires that require the interviewer to process respondent responses. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics at the univariate level with the aid of SPSS, data were presented in frequency tables and charts. Throughout the conduct of this study, the author adhered strictly to social research ethics. In the conduct of this research, the respondent's rights and integrity were respected. Participation was voluntary and respondents were also not exposed to any form of harm. Moreover, they were informed of their right to withdraw participation whenever they deemed fit.

RESULTS

The distribution of the respondents according to their gender shows that (71.4%) of the respondents are female, while only 28.6% of the respondents were male, this implies that majority (71.4%) of the respondents are female.

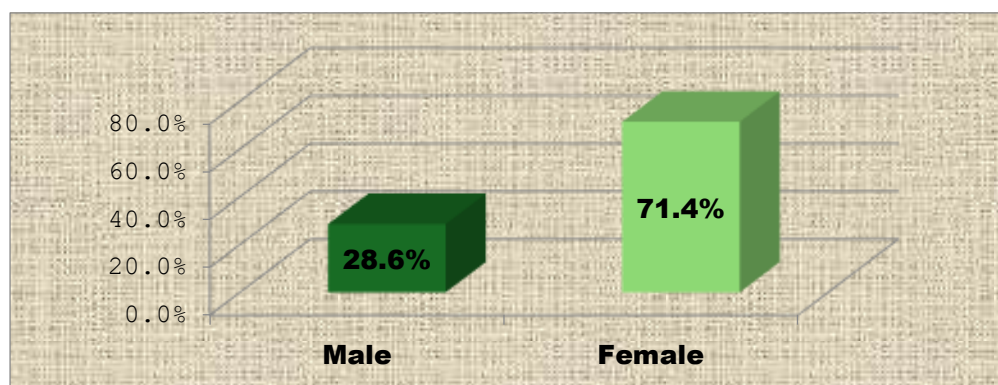


Figure 1: A Bar Chart Showing Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1: Respondents Opinion on Which Sex is more represented at their Workplace

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	110	52.4%
Female	94	44.8%
Both	3	1.4%
Even/Equal	3	1.4%
Total	210	100%
What gender has a higher representation in your parliament or legislative house?		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	202	96.2%
Female	08	3.8%
Total	210	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 above presents respondents opinion on which sex is more represented in their workplace, the result shows that 52.4% of the respondents opined that male is more represented in workplace, 44.8% of the respondents said that female is more represented in their workplace, 1.4% of the respondents opined that male and female are evenly represented at their place of work, this shows that majority (52.4%) of the respondents opined that male are represented in their workplace. The distribution of the respondents according to the gender that has a higher representation in their parliament or legislative house shows that 96.2% of the respondents said male has a higher representation in their parliament or legislative house, 3.8% of the respondents said that female has a higher representation at their parliament or legislative house, this implies that majority (96.2%) stated that male has a higher representation at their parliament or legislative house.

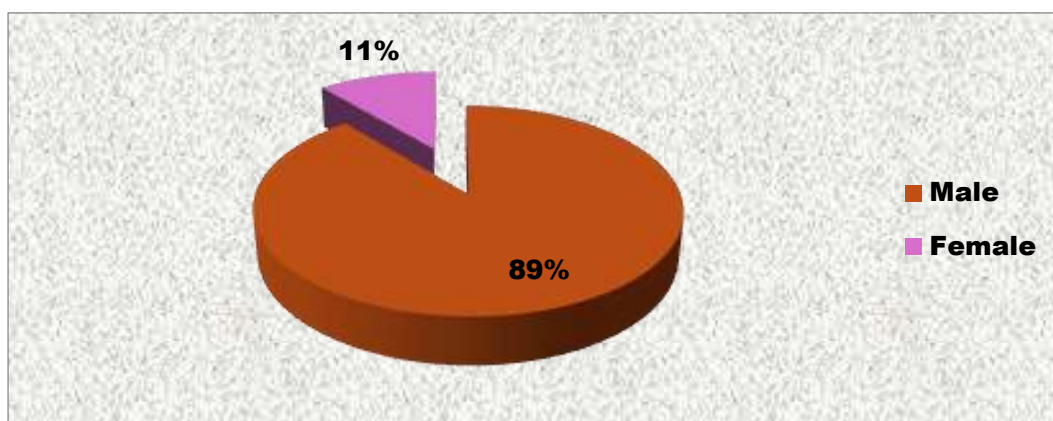


Figure 2: Respondents' Opinion on Which Gender Has a Higher Representation among the Leaders at Their Place of Worship

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Figure 2 above presents respondents opinion on which gender has a higher representation among leaders at their place of worship, the data shows that 89% of the respondents opined that male has a higher representation among leaders at their place of worship, while 11% of the respondents said that female has a higher representation among leaders at their place of worship, this shows that majority (89%) of the respondents opined that male has a higher representation among leaders at their place of worship.

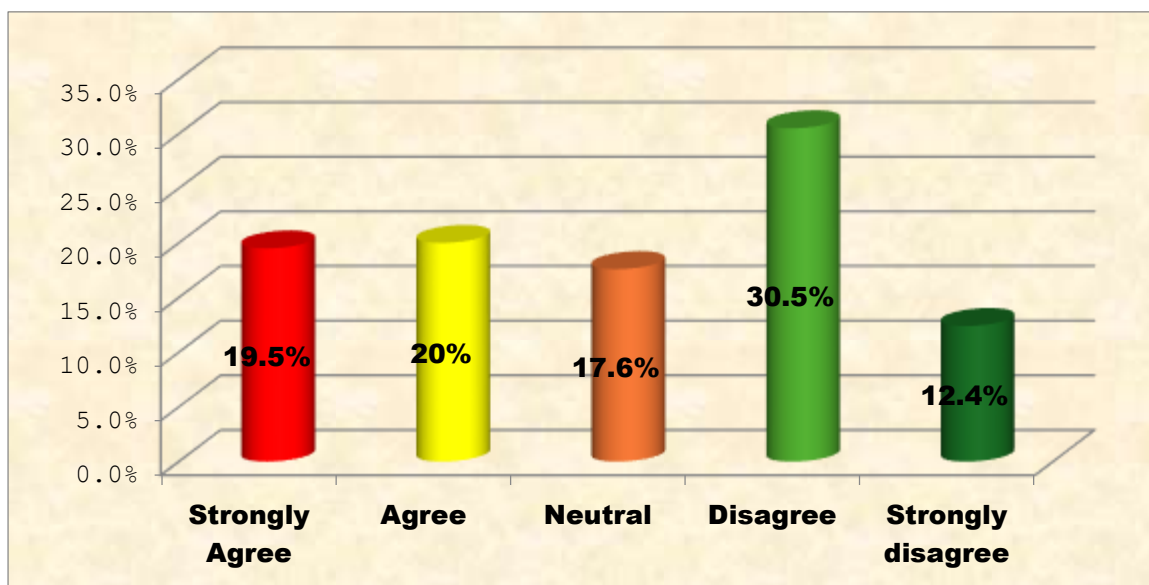


Figure 3: Respondents opinion on the assertion that “a husband is superior to his wife, and the wife should obey him in everything”

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 3 above presents respondents' opinion on the assertion that “a husband is superior to his wife, and the wife should obey him in everything”, the result shows that 19.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to the above assertion, 20% of the respondents agreed that “a husband is superior to his wife, and the wife should obey him in everything”, 17.6% of the respondents were neutral to the assertion, 30.5% of the respondents disagree, while 12.4% of the respondents strongly disagree to the assertion, this shows that higher percentage (30.5%)

of the respondents disagree that “a husband is superior to his wife, and the wife should obey him in everything”.

Table 2: Respondents’ Opinion on Whether “Outside Marriage, Is Every Man the Head of Every Woman”

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
True	13	6.2%
False	197	93.8%
Total	210	100%
In your country, does a woman have equal right to inherit her father’s property?		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	152	72.7%
No	10	10%
Maybe	36	17.2%
Total	210	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 above presents respondents opinion on whether “outside marriage, is every man the head of every woman”, the result shows that 6.2% of the respondents said it is true, that “outside marriage every man the head of every woman”, 93.8% of the respondents said it is false that “outside marriage, is every man the head of every woman”, this shows that majority (93.8%) of the respondents said it is false that “outside marriage, every man the head of every woman”.

The results from the second half of Table 2 reveals that most women in Nigeria and Ghana do not have equal right to inherit their father’s property as the men.

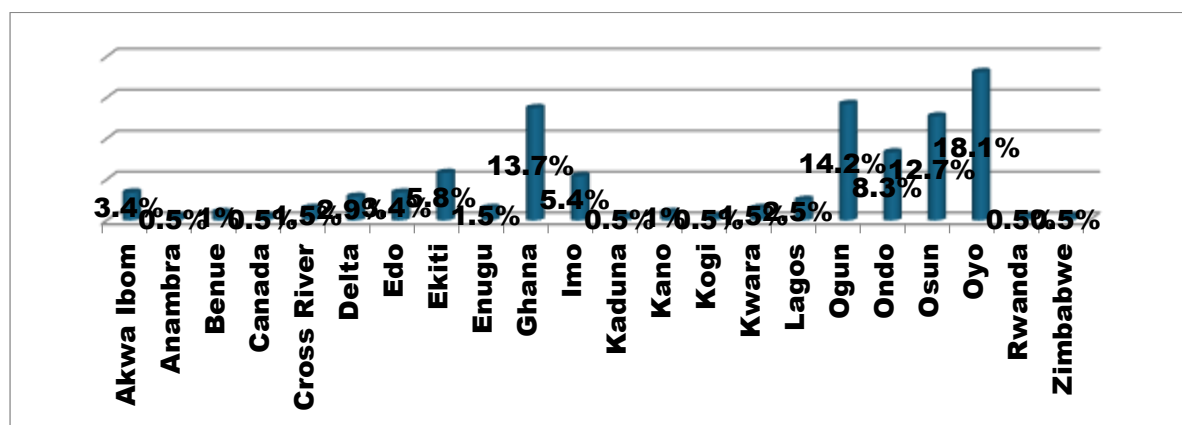


Figure 4: A Bar Showing Respondents State

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 4 above shows that 3.4% of the respondents are from Akwa Ibom state, 0.5% of the respondents are from Anambra, 1% of the respondents are from Benue state, 0.5% of the respondents are from Canada, 1.5% of the respondents are from Cross state, 2.9% of the respondents are from Delta state, 3.4% of the respondents are from Edo state, 5.8% of the respondents are from Ekiti state, 1.5% of the respondents are from Enugu state, 13.7% of the respondents are from Ghana, 5.4% of the respondents are from Imo state, 1% of the respondents are from Kano state, 0.5% of the respondents are from Kogi state, 1.5% of the respondents are from Kwara state, 2.5% of the respondents are from Lagos state, 14.2% of the respondents are from Ogun state, 8.3% of the respondents are from Ondo state, 12.7% of the respondents are from Osun state, 18.1% of the respondents are from Oyo state, 0.5% of the respondents are from Rwanda, and 0.5% of the respondents are from Zimbabwe.

Osun state, 18.1% of the respondents are from Oyo state, 0.5% of the respondents are from Rwanda while another 0.5% of the respondents are from Zimbabwe. This shows that higher percentage (18.1%) of the respondent are from Oyo state, Nigeria.

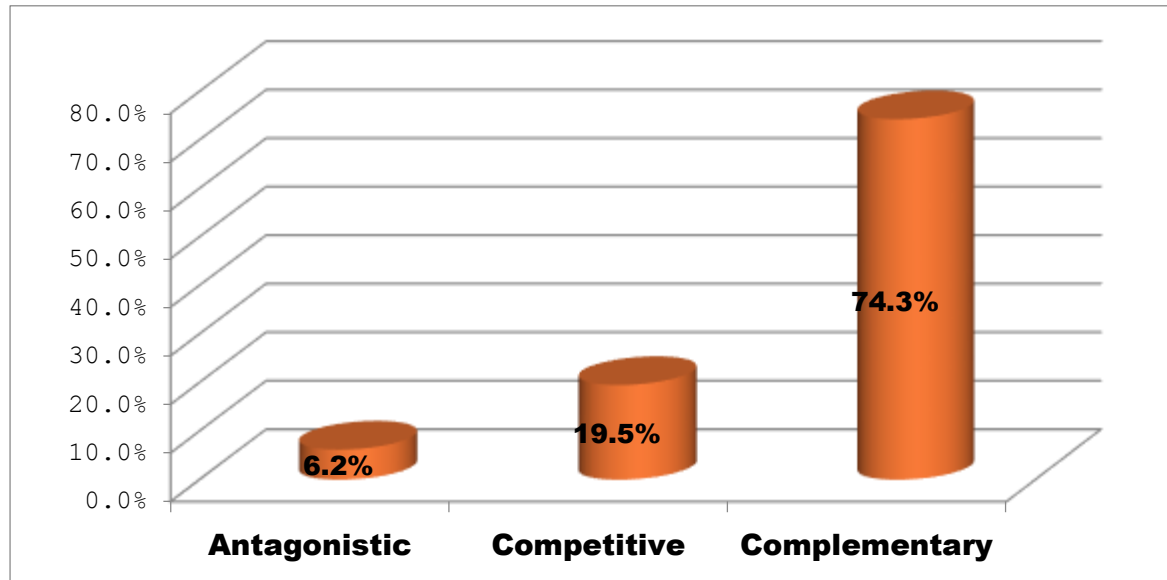


Figure 5: Respondents Opinion on Whether Both Sexes are Antagonistic, Competitive in Function or Complementary?

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 5 above shows respondents opinion on whether both sexes are antagonistic, competitive in function or complimentary, the result shows that 6.2% of the respondents opined that both sexes are antagonistic in future, 19.5% of the respondents said that both sexes are competitive in function, while 74.3% of the respondents said that both gender complementary in function, which shows that majority (74.3%) of the respondents are complementary in nature.

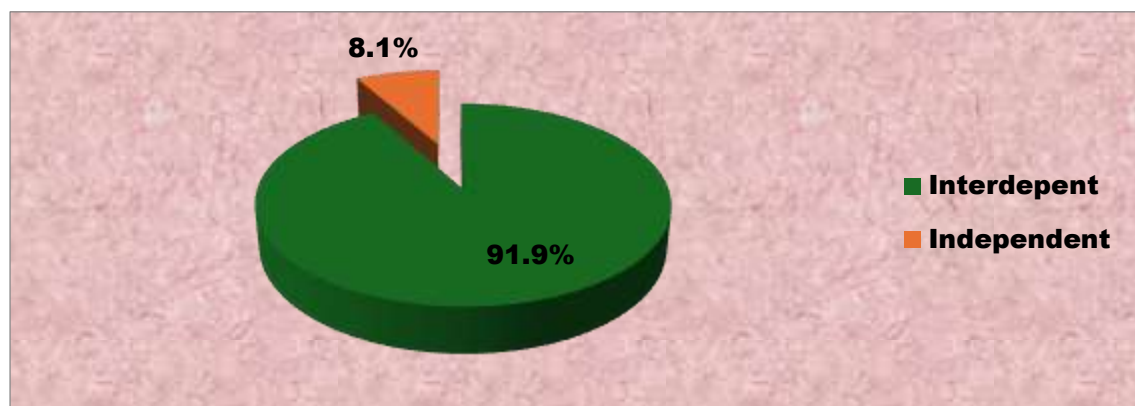


Figure 6: Respondents Opinion on Whether Male and Female are Interdependent or Independent of Each Other

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 6 above presents respondents opinion on whether male and female are interdependent or independent on each other, the result shows that 8.1% of the respondents said that male and female interdependent of each other, while 91.9% of the respondents said that male and female

are independent of each other, this implies that majority (91.9%) of the respondents opined that majority of the respondents are independent of each other.

Table 3: Respondents' Opinion on Which of These Three Assertions Best Describes the Prevailing Relationship between Both Sexes

Three assertions	Frequency	Percentage
Both sexes are equal	19	9%
Both sexes are opposing and competing	56	26.7%
Both sexes are complementary	135	64.3%
Total	210	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4: Respondents Opinion on Whether the Saying “No Ladies at the Bar” is Gender Discriminatory in the Legal Profession

Three assertions	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	95	45.2%
No	81	38.6%
No response	34	16.2%
Total	210	100%
What the saying means to respondents who said yes, it is discriminatory		
It portrays the legal profession as being masculine in nature. It relegates women. It means ladies/women do not have the capacity to perform the role of lawyers. It is highly discriminatory It is a misleading saying on the basis of equality to render one of the sexes as invisible. It means women are not fully represented. It is just an appellation and not functionality or capacity. It tends to connote that courage is for men alone. It means discrimination against ladies at the legal profession. It is discriminatory, it pulls women to the back and trying to stop them from having a say. It means male are superior to female. It reveals chauvinism because the statement typically assumes that the legal profession belongs to the male. It is very discriminatory in the legal profession. It is discriminatory and misogynistic. It means men don't want the female to get upper hand in the legal system. The female gender is not mostly considered in the affairs of excising law. Yes, it is not recognizing the distinct female gender Yes it is derogatory This statement is “Gender Bias”, I believe ladies should be allowed to prove their superiority at the bar. It sounds like ladies are not wanted in the highest ranks in the legal community. I think it's discriminatory legally. To me it places a limit on what the female gender can do. Ladies are often seen as inferior, as a result of our patriarchy system and the statement is a typical representation. There's less or no regard for female lawyers It is both discriminating and demeaning. Shutting women out is robbing society of a wholesome perspective in matters relating to our everyday lives. No woman at the topmost positions in the legal profession. E.g. CJF It means ladies are not to be reckoned with in the legal profession		
What the saying means to respondents who said No.		
It is not discriminatory in anyway. The saying indicate both sexes are equal. It is meant to restate equality of legal practitioners and as learned friends. It is not discriminatory, a lawyer is a lawyer, no one is treated differently as a lawyer. It means no gender bias in the legal profession It means women are not disadvantaged by her gender The legal profession was deemed too tough for ladies before, but this not true today. No, it is way to compliment the female who have passed through what male passed through therefore we see the female as male in the legal profession. I have never felt it is gender discriminatory. I rather believe it's a cliché to encourage the women in greater participation since historically, the profession had been dominated by men. It's important for a woman to possess some attributes common to men in order to succeed at some levels of the profession. We are all one at the bar irrespective of gender. It is not discriminatory; it puts both sexes on the same level of professional status. It's not discriminatory. It's just a way of promoting gender equality. No. Both male and female have the same opportunities in the legal profession. It's not gender discrimination, it's just semantics. I do not think it is gender discriminatory. The legal profession is a noble and honourable profession. Gentlemen as referred to here is not about gender but about the characteristics/attitude any member of this noble profession should exhibit. It is not because the legal profession considers everybody as one. It means gender is not a factor in determining performance in the legal profession.		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 above presents respondents opinion on whether the saying “No ladies at the Bar” is gender discriminatory in the legal profession, the result shows that 45.2% of the respondent said yes, that the saying “No ladies at the Bar” is gender discriminatory, in the legal profession, 38.65 of the respondents said no, that the saying “No ladies at the Bar” is not gender

discriminatory, in the legal profession, while 16.2% of the respondents did not respond to the question, this shows that higher percentage of the respondents, said yes, that the saying “No ladies at the Bar” is gender discriminatory, in the legal profession.

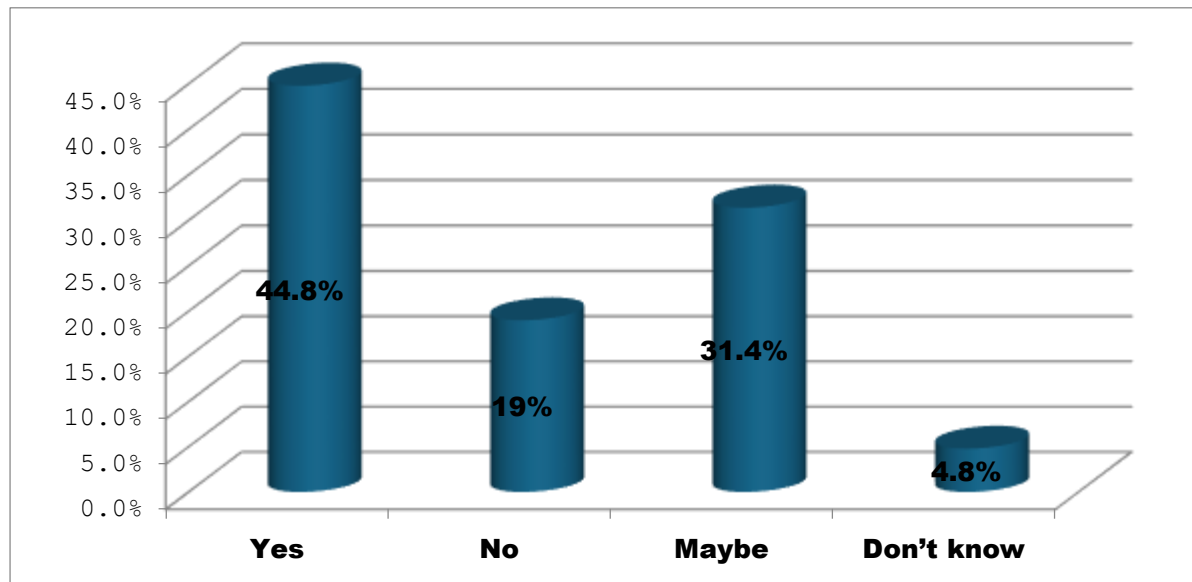


Figure 7: A Bar Chart Showing Respondents Opinion If They Have Any Saying/Phrase in Their Culture, Profession or Religion That is Suggestive of Gender Role

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 7 above presents a bar chart showing respondents opinion on whether they have any saying/phrase in their culture, profession or religion that is suggestive of gender role, the result shows that 44.8% said yes, 19% of the respondents said no, 31.4% of the respondents said maybe, , while 4.8% of the respondents said they don't know if they have a saying/phrase in their culture, profession or religion that is suggestive of gender role, this shows that higher percentage (44.8%) of the respondents said yes, that they have a saying/phrase in their culture, profession or religion that is suggestive of gender role.

Table 5: Respondents Opinion on Saying/Phrases in Their Culture, Profession or Religion That is Suggestive of Gender Role

Phrases that suggest gender roles
A woman belongs in the kitchen
Christianity says wives be submissive
It is believed in my culture that a man is the head of the wife and the home. Therefore the man has a role to provide for his wife and family.
The woman is subordinate to the man, so she has to take more domestic roles like cooking, cleaning, taking care of the home.
Yes, man is the head of the house because the Word of God makes him so
What is a man doing in the kitchen.
Yes, a woman cannot be ordained as a Pastor
There are no women at the bar
<i>Okunrin ni oko obinrin</i> meaning men will always lord it over women.
The male child is the head of the family no matter the position of birth, he has the overall say for the family
Yes in my Culture.
There is a belief that women are to sell garden eggs not gun powder that women should always be in the kitchen
A woman has no religion
Yes! “Women don’t sell gun powder “
Husband/Man is the head of the family
Women are to sell garden eggs not gun powder

Source: Field Survey, 2024

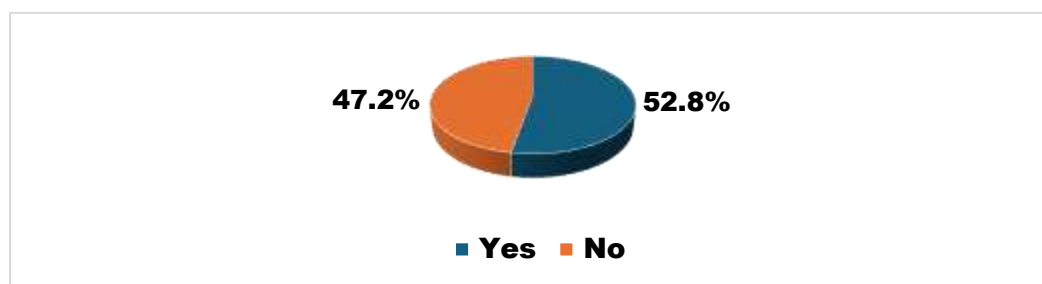


Figure 8: A Pie Chart Showing Respondents’ Opinion on Whether They Have Ever Found Themselves in Any Situation Where Their Gender Put Them at a Disadvantage

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 8 above presents respondents opinion on whether they have ever found themselves in any situation where their gender put them at a disadvantage position, the result shows that 52.8% of the respondents said yes, that their gender has put them at a disadvantage position, while 47.2% of the respondents said no, that their gender has not put them at a disadvantage

position, this shows that majority (52.8%) of the respondents said their they gender has put them a disadvantage position.

Table 6: Respondents’ Opinion on Situations That Put Them at a Disadvantage Position

Categories of situation that put them at a disadvantage position by FEMALE respondents
<p><u>Job Position/Employment/Labour workforce/Promotions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Due to childbearing, I lost some years in my careers 2. I lost a job when I was pregnant because I took maternity leave 3. HRs prefer to employ male than female in most jobs 4. In offshore jobs male are preferred over the female 5. Male are promoted more than the female in the same jobs and same circumstances 6. People have more confidence in male colleagues than female colleagues 7. Some positions are only reserved for the male <p><u>Marriage/Culture/Religion/Patriarchy system</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In marriages and relationship women are relegated and treated as inferior 2. All house chores are reserved for the female 3. In my culture female are not allowed to own or inherit properties 4. Some landlords don’t rent apartment to single ladies 5. Females are not allowed to own a landed property or to build in some cultures 6. In religious places, women are not given opportunities. 7. Yes, in my culture all properties goes to the male child?
Categories of situation that put them at a disadvantage position by MALE respondent
<p><u>Favouritism</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male in position favour women over male, even when the male are more competent 2. Females are usually given more opportunities and privileges than male simply because they are female 3. Female get more favour and acceptance at workplace than male. 4. Law enforcement agents are more likely to arrest male than females even in the same circumstances 5. Some interventions are meant for the females alone, without considering male.

Source: *Field Survey 2024*

Table 6 above shows various situations in which male and female gender feels they were at a disadvantage position just because of their gender, the result shows that the female gender feels they are more in disadvantage positions in some job position, employment and promotions because they felts males are preferred in some jobs than female, male are more likely to be promoted than the female, some positions are reserved solely for men and that some HRs prefers to employ male than females. With regards to marriage, culture, religion and patriarchy system, which is tied to culture, the female respondents felt that they are at a disadvantaged position because African culture, marriage, religion, relationship and patriarchy system put the female at the disadvantage position.

On the contrary, the male respondents felt that they in a disadvantage position whenever a male is in a position, because male in position favour women over their follow male, even when the

male is more competent than their female counterparts, females are usually given more opportunities and privileges just because they are female, law enforcement agents who are mostly male are more likely to arrest male than female even. In addition, the male respondents feel they are in disadvantage positions because some interventions are meant solely for female.

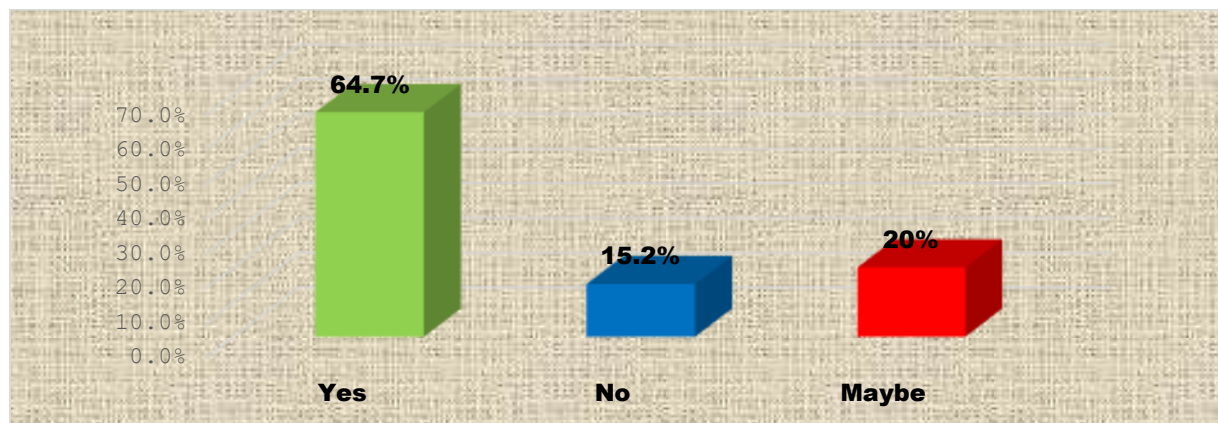


Figure 9: Respondents Opinion on Whether Males Have Distinct Roles, Function and Capabilities Than Female

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 9 presents respondents opinion on whether male have distinct roles, functions, capabilities from female, the result shows that 64.7% of the respondents said yes, that male have distinct roles, functions and capabilities than female, 15.2% of the respondents said no, that male does not have distinct roles, functions and capabilities from female, while 20% of the respondents said maybe male have distinct roles, function and capabilities than female, this shows that majority (64.7%) of the respondents said yes, that male have distinct roles, function and capabilities than female.

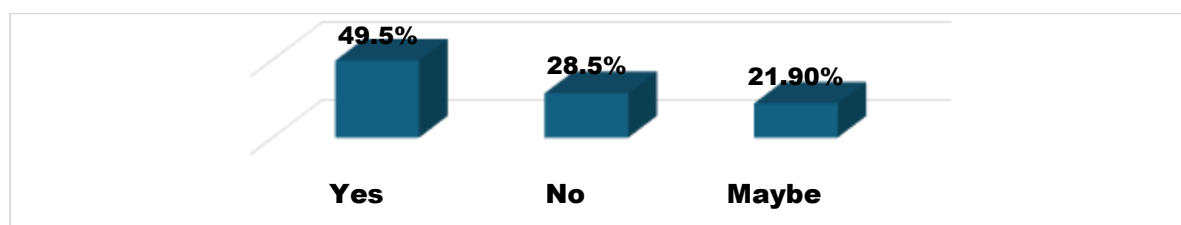


Figure 10: Respondents Opinion on Whether in Their Understanding They Think That Swapping Roles Can Have Adverse Effect on a Community

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 10 above presents respondents opinion on whether in their understanding they think that swapping roles can have adverse effect on a community, the result shows that 49.5% of the respondents said yes, 28.5% of the respondents said no, while 21.9% of the respondents said maybe, that swapping gender roles could have adverse effect on a community, this shows that higher percentage (49.5%) of the respondents said yes, that swapping gender roles could have adverse effect on a community.

Discussions

The study revealed male are more represented in workplace than their female counterparts, there are several cultural and religious barriers inhibiting women from being fully represented in the workplace, cultural norms expect women to give birth and nurture the children and take

care of the home front, while male are expected to work. It is obvious that Nigerian customary laws and practices, such as child marriage, deprive girls of education and opportunities, hindering their participation in the workplace and in the society generally. Majority (96.2%) of the respondents stated that male has a higher representation at their parliament or legislative house. There is no doubt that Nigeria political space is male dominated, this could be because of the patriarchy cultural system. The above findings are in tandem with the assertions of Iruke (2024), when she opined that since 1999, no Nigerian woman has been elected president, vice-president, or governor.

Additionally, the number of seats occupied by women Senators, in each legislative session, has never gone above nine out of 109 seats. This low level of representation reflects the challenge that women still face in Nigeria and across African countries. Even though women's interest in politics has increased recently, it has not translated into representation in Nigerian politics. The highest amount of women representation in the Senate was achieved in 2007 with only nine women clinching seats out of the 109 available seats, while 2011 saw the highest number of women at the house of representatives with 26 out of 360 seats won by women (Iruke 2024; Eke, 2022) So far, Nigeria has witnessed 27 women Deputy Governors across its various administrations. Only one woman, Virginia Etiaba, has been governor in Nigeria, however she was not elected– thus meaning that no woman has been elected Governor till date (Iruke 2024; Adetayo, 2024).

In Nigeria and most African countries, women's access to positions of leadership in religions is a highly contested issue, reliable data on actual female leadership are, however, scarce. Although, it is a factual that female religious leaders in Africa are quite few. Moreover, from the religious books of Christianity, Islam and from the tenets of African traditional religious, men are usually the leader's different religion in Africa.

Higher percentage (30.5%) of the respondents disagree that “a husband is superior to his wife, and the wife should obey him in everything”. The study further revealed that majority (93.8%) of the respondents said it is false that “outside marriage, every man the head of every woman”. With regards to whether both sexes are antagonistic, competitive in function or complimentary, the majority (74.3%) of the respondents are complementary in nature. It is worthy to note that male and female have essential characteristics of complementarity, first both have equal dignity, secondly, both are significantly different and thirdly, both have synergetic relationship, which further suggests that both male and female are more complementary than competitive. On whether male and female are interdependent or independent on each other, majority (91.9%) of the respondents opined that majority of the respondents are independent of each other.

The saying “No ladies at the Bar” is gender discriminatory in the legal profession, higher percentage of the respondents (45.2%), affirmed this, this is because the saying portrays the legal profession as being masculine in nature; the saying relegates women; it means women do not have the capacity to perform the role of lawyers; it means male are superior to female; it reveals chauvinism because the statement typically assumes that the legal profession belongs to the male; it is derogatory; the statement is “Gender Bias”; it means ladies are not to be reckoned with in the legal profession. Among other respondents who argued to the contrary that the saying ‘No ladies at the Bar’ is not discriminatory, argued that the saying indicate both sexes are equal; it is meant to restate equality of legal practitioners and as learned friends; it means no gender bias in the legal profession; it means women are not disadvantage by her gender; it's not gender discrimination, it's just semantics.

There are some saying/phrases in the respondents' culture, profession or religion that are suggestive of gender role, this was affirmed by higher percentage (44.8%) of the respondents said yes, that they have a saying/phrase in their culture, profession or religion that is suggestive of gender role. Such saying and phrases includes but not limited to: a woman belongs in the kitchen; woman is subordinate to the man, so she has to take more domestic roles like cooking, cleaning, taking care of the home; Yes, man is the head of the house because the Word of God makes him so; the male child is the head of the family no matter the position of birth, he has the overall say for the family. Majority (52.8%) of the respondents have found themselves in disadvantage position because of their gender, the notable situations that put female in disadvantage respondents includes marriages, relationship, religion, culture, patriarchy system, employment opportunities and promotion. The study revealed various situations in which male and female gender feels they were at a disadvantage position just because of their gender, the result shows that the female gender feels they are more in disadvantage positions in some job position, employment and promotions because they felts males are preferred in some jobs than female, male are more likely to be promoted than the female, some positions are reserved solely for men and that some HRs prefers to employ male than females. With regards to marriage, culture, religion and patriarchy system, which is tied to culture, the female respondents felt that they are at a disadvantaged position because African culture, marriage, religion, relationship and patriarchy system put the female at the disadvantage position.

On the contrary, the male respondents felt that they are in a disadvantage position whenever a male is in a position, because male in position favour women over their fellow male, even when the male is more competent than their female counterparts, females are usually given more opportunities and privileges just because they are female, law enforcement agents who are mostly male are more likely to arrest male than female even. In addition, the male respondents feel they are in disadvantage positions because some interventions are meant solely for female. For instance, most private establishments, including law firms, do not give paternity leave to their male workers, while some men feel the need, particularly when their spouse stay longer in hospital after delivery due to some health complications, and they must manage the older child (children) as well as the newborn and the mother. Men are of the opinion that the women's rights campaign has unfairly elevated women's right above men's right. This findings from male respondents further corroborates that the complementarity discourse which this paper emphasizes is the way forward as previous attempts to advocate for gender equality have obviously and inadvertently tilted the balance against the male gender. The study revealed that majority (64.7%) of the respondents said yes, that male have distinct roles, function and capabilities than female. With regards to whether swapping roles can have adverse effect on a community, higher percentage (49.5%) of the respondents said yes, that swapping gender roles could have adverse effect on a community, this findings suggests that gender roles should not be swapped, it is noteworthy that from infant both male and female are socialized based on gender roles, hence swapping roles on adult stage will be detrimental to the society at this stage.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the domestication and review of CEDAW in Nigeria, there are still cultural and religious biases, hindering the female gender from unleashing their full potentials in legal profession, political space, religious domain, the workplace and other spheres in Nigeria and other African countries.

Despite increase efforts to address gender disparities not only in the legal profession and other sectors in Nigeria, however, more still needs to be done to increase gender parity across all

sectors in Nigeria. Male and female have different biological, psychological and physiological characteristics and should be treated as such, they should rather complement each other than compete. Without prejudice to the increase advocacy in the elimination of all discrimination against women, gender equity and justice, there are still some religious norms, patriarchal cultural practices, organizational norms that suggests that male are superior to female. The study therefore suggests such phrases as “No Ladies at the Bar or Gentlemen in skirts”, should be eliminated in the legal profession.

The thirty-five (35%) affirmative action of the National Gender Policy (NGP) should be implemented across elective political positions, appointment public service positions in Nigeria, as that will enhance women participation in politics in Nigeria. At present, Nigeria and Africa have a much lower percentage of women in leadership positions than the rest of the world. For example, women in Nigeria's National Assembly hold less than 10% of the seats, which is much less than the global average of roughly 26%. Implementing the NGP will go a long way to emancipate women from under representation not only in politics but also liberate women from the long overdue patriarchal practice which is male dominated across all sectors of the society.

Just like Justice Kekere-Ekun, the second female Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) in Nigeria was sworn in on 30th of September 2024, following her confirmation by the Senate, other women should also be appointed as ministers, directors, managers, commissioners to ensure that women are not underrepresented in politics and other sectors in Africa.

All laws, cultural norms, practices and rites that encourage discrimination against women should be eliminated, and religious leaders across all religions in Africa should preach gender equity, male and female should complement each other rather than compete with other.

The findings from this paper uniquely strengthen global advocacy for gender parity by placing emphasis on complementarianism and gender diversity as the basis for which women should aspire to engage in male-dominated spheres. This approach strongly encourages women to embrace their distinct attributes as advantageous. When such subtle phrases as “no ladies at bar, gentlemen in skirts” are totally eradicated from professional parlance, it will go a long way to liberate women from the perceived need to behave like or compete with men to excel in their chosen fields.

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