

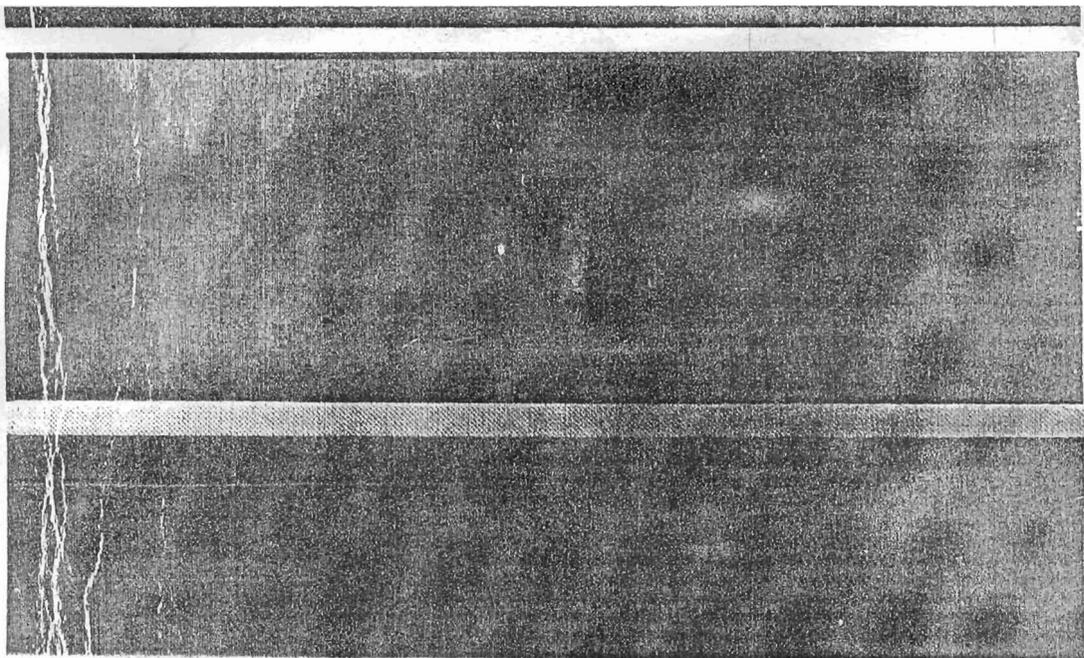
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The Nigerian Male: Changing Gender Roles and Relationships.

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Abstract

Talcott Parsons (1955) emphasized that gender-role specialisation is in the interest of system maintenance. Parents tend to socialize their children to assume the gender-roles so that the smooth running of the family is maintained. However, with urbanization and socio-economic changes, women are now in jobs and professions traditionally viewed as "the preserves" of men. The opportunity for more women taking leadership role in the community at large has widened.

The present study was designed to throw some light on the attitude of Nigerians towards the changing gender roles. Are there changes in perception that could possibly be a source of conflict, which could disrupt the family system.

To determine this, a masculine values inventory was administered on men in 250 households in Ile-Ife, using a systematic random sampling technique. Attitude to marriage and inter-relationship between husbands and wives, work, family and economic responsibilities were explored. The findings revealed the ambivalent attitude of men towards the changing gender roles and relationships, highlighting the need for carefully designed public awareness and education programmes, directed at the male population as decisive partners in progress.

Introduction

Traditionally there have been patterns of what females and males are supposed to be like and what there are supposed to do (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). These gender related norms are being perpetuated through socialization processes as parent prepare their children to fit the part that society wants them to play as they reach adulthood. The gender-role stereotypes are reinforced through the design promotions of toys (Chafetz, 1978; Kutner and Levinson, 1976). Henning and Jardin (1977) have even explained the differences in boys' and girls' childhood games may prevent girls from developing certain skills, attitudes and work styles that are so important later for achievement in the business world. Thus, from the word go,

there is a difference in the way boys and girls are raised. When a girl announces that she wants to be a nurse when she grows up, she is encouraged, but if she announces that she wants to be a brain surgeon when she grows up, encouragement may not be quickly forthcoming. This traditional gender-role specialization has limited the job options available to women in various societies. To compound the problem within the Nigeria context, there are some customs, which further tend to impose some limitations on the girls chances of advancement. For instance, some women are kept in purdahs to limit interactions with unrelated males. Some ethnic groups practise child marriage whereby girls of school age are given to men in marriage to prevent pre-marital pregnancy. Also among the Hausa and some southern ethnic groups, female education is discouraged. In case of Hausa – Fulani, according to Trevor (1975), an educated woman is considered a marriage risks. Muckenhirn (1966) found out in series of interviews that there is parents' preference for male education to that of girls because:

(i) Parents expect more from boys than girls.

(ii) A girl would get married and no longer be a member of her own family but that of her husband, as such all the educational benefits will accrue to the husband not to the girl's family.

However, with urbanization some remarkable changes have begun to take place as women are now in jobs/professions traditionally viewed as the "preserves" of men. Even in the north education of female children is on the increase, widening the opportunity horizons for more and more women to take leadership role in the community at large. This does not imply, however, that such women enjoy societal support. Many end up separated or divorced, perhaps due to the difficulties of combining the different roles. For example, a high degree of Type E Stress in the modern Nigerian women had been observed (Oladimeji, 1992). Scanzoni (1970) observed that working wives have more power in marital decision-making because they tend to use their resources as a way of obtaining more bargaining leverage. But what are the view of the modern married Nigerian men towards the changes in the women's role and their implications? Would the men be supportive of their women in prestigious professions, and to what extent? Would they even mind if their wives earn more than they earn?

There is little doubt that many men in Nigeria are so scared about possible competition that they intentionally marry women with very low educational status. Some even insist that their

wives should not work outside the home however, as they begin to move up in their various careers, they realize that their wives are not able, socially, to cope with their newly attained status. Some have been known to take on newly and highly qualified women at that stage while other resort to sending their wives to school. It is thus necessary to know from these men what they feel are the characteristics of the "ideal" wife. What are the things they expect from their wives' companionship, friendship, equality, partial or total/slavish submission, etc?

The findings from the present study will not only throw some light on Nigerian men's attitudes towards the changing gender-roles, but it would also correct or confirm some notions about men's fear/phobia for highly educated women. Moreover, the findings of such studies will give an insight into areas of incompatibility in contemporary marriages with the hope that better matches would be made when the women now know what most men want in their women.

A study of this nature, which has practical relevance to the Nigerian society, is timely at this stage, when one considers the broken homes/marriages. Also, while studies of this nature have been undertaken in the developed countries. (Locksley, 1980; Smith, 1985; Homstrom, 1972, Scanzoni & Scanzoni, 1988) no much study has been undertaken to find out whether "wife-working" has any clear-cut effect positive/negative on husband's estimate of happiness or marriage fulfillment.

Theoretical Framework

It has been observed that no significant change can be made in women's role without having an immediate effect on men and their roles (Steinmann & Fox, 1974). This study can be explained by the structural functionalist theory of social relations. Of particular relevance is the work of Talcott Parsons (1955), which emphasized that gender-role specialization is in the interest of system maintenance. He explained that the roles of spouses in any marriage are complementary. **Men tend to perform their roles as breadwinners, father and husbands,** Shirking such could disrupt the system. If the husband attends to his occupation and the wife attends to her role as the family's centre of nurturance, there is less chance for competitiveness to develop. From this functionalist perspective, serious conflict and system disruption could occur if a woman chooses to be active and achievement-oriented as her husband in occupational pursuits.

Within this perspective, parents socialize their children to assume the gender-roles so that **the smooth running of the**

family is maintained. As such, in the family the men would tend to support their wives in:

- (i) Activities that do not interfere with their own work;
- (ii) Jobs that do not compete with theirs;
- (iii) Professions that are not time consuming as to conflict with their wifely and motherly roles.

Against this background, what would be the views of men as regards the changing roles of women? Do they perceive these changes as possible sources of conflict that could disrupt the family system? Specially, what would be the men's views on?

- (i) Marriage and interrelationship between husbands and wives, that is, the possible factors that could enhance companionship in the home;
- (ii) Work, fatherhood and family responsibilities;
- (iii) The desirable economic arrangements in the modern family and in terms of expenses within the home. How can these be shared out to maintain the status quo.

Method

Participants

The relevant socio-demographic data is set out on table 1, of the 182 men sampled, 8.2% were below 20 years in age, while 87.57% were between ages 20-50. Only 6.1% were 51 years and above.

In terms of education, only 6.6% has just a primary education. 17% read up to secondary school, 15.4% went to a tertiary institution like polytechnics; teacher-training colleges etc. 42.3% had university level, while others constituted 18.7%. 1.1% were unemployed, 11% turned out to be students, while 5.6% did not indicate their occupation. Of the remaining, 29.7% were civil servants, while 33.5% were either teaching in the secondary schools or lecturers in the university. 14.8% were self-employed and 4.4% were either farmers or traders. 60.4% of the study populations were Christians with 9.9% being Muslims. One person (0.5%) said he was traditional, while 29.1% declared various other religions.

25.3% have never been married. 50% were married monogamous, 14.8% married polygamous. 3.3% were divorced or separated. Of the married ones 52.2% live together with their wives, while 4.4% said to that question.

Instruments/Measures

Steinmann & Fox (1974) Masculine Values Inventory was used. This was adapted to take into account the social-cultural environment of the Nigerian male. The modified inventory

consist of 50 statements, each of which expresses a particular value or value of judgment relating to men's activities and satisfactions. The respondent indicates the strength of his agreement or disagreement to each statement on a five-point scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly disagree", with the midpoint of "not sure". The statements are sometimes stated positively, sometimes negatively to avoid a respondent being able to adopt one position by always agreeing or disagreeing.

Six major areas of male-female relationship were explored. The answer would reveal, hopefully, how a man feels about himself and his roles. The first (A) group of 10 statements (group a) were concerned with personal characteristics and social behaviour of men. A second (B) group of 16 items (group b) concerns the inter-relationships between husbands and wives. A third (C) group of 9 items (group c) explores ideas about fatherhood, while the fourth (D) group of 9 items (group d) concerns the inter-relationships of work and family responsibility of men. The fifth (E) group of 7 items (group e) explores a man's need for self-realization. Finally, (F) a group of 4 items dealt with economic arrangements in the modern family. This paper is concerned with sections B, D, F, that is the interrelationships between husbands and wives; the interrelationship between work and family responsibilities for men and the economic arrangements in the modern family.

Procedure

A multi-stage sampling technique was used. First, a grid was placed on the map of Ife, a major metropolitan cultural and educational centre in Osun State, Nigeria, with a 1975 estimated population of 176,000 (Oladimeji, 1984). From the squares, the unsettled areas were left out, and two squares were randomly selected. The selected squares were divided into blocks a (block being a polygonal or rectangular piece of land bounded by identifiable). There were fifteen blocks in all. The households in the selected boxes were listed and from the list, using systematic random sampling technique, 250 households were selected. The unit of analysis was the head of household. Out of these, only 182 cooperated and completed the questionnaires. The sample cut across indigenes in the town. Interview was done by research assistants who had been trained for the job, to ensure some standardization. The interview was done in February - March 1996.

Data Analysis

Frequency tables were used to show the distributions of the response variables.

Results

A. Marriage and inter-relationship between husbands and wives

Table 2 shows the analysis of the results on the related 17 items. The modern Nigerian man does not believe that marriage and children should come first in a man's life. Only 27.4% agreed to such proposal, while 56.55 disagreed (item 25). Nevertheless, 74.8% agreed that a man needs the responsibility of marriage to develop fully while only 13.1% disagreed (item 13). However, only 30.2% agreed that a man should get married even if the woman does not measure up to all his hopes (item 17). 53.3% would not get married if they had to give up what they really believe into get along with another person (item 34). It is not surprising, that 59.9% agreed strongly that a husband's opinion should not be more important than his wife's (item 23). While 62.6% agreed that the arrangement of a home should be done by the woman (item 46), only 35.1% agreed that the decision to use contraceptives should be made primarily by the woman (item 45). The percentages of agreeable are even lower (30.3%) when it comes to having a baby or not for only few men believed that it should come from the woman. (Item 48). However, 43.4% agreed that a woman should be allowed to join a social club or political party of her choice, while 39.8% would not allow it (item 44).

A large percentage (58.3%) of the sampled population believed that husbands should be more educated than their wives (item 37). Only 24.1% disagreed, while 17.1% were not sure. However, only 21.1% agreed strongly that if a woman is as smart as her husband, the marriage would not work (item 27). In fact, 77.5% agreed strongly that an educated wife is usually an asset to the husband and the family (item 35).

That the modern Nigerian man believes that his wife should work outside the home is obvious from the fact that only 18.6% agreed that an ambitious and responsible husband does not like his wife to work (item 2). Gladly, 64.8% agreed that keeping women in Purdah should be discouraged, while only 16.4% were not sure (item 41). 57.7% of the men would allow their wives to go into any profession they like (item 49). However, only 33.2% agreed strongly that a woman should be able to decide whether to accept an offer of a new job even when it means moving to a different town. 56% definitely disagreed

that the women should make the decision alone, while only 7.7% were not sure (item 50).

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Age	Below 20	20 - 25yrs	26 - 30yrs	31 - 35yrs	36 - 40yrs	41 - 45yrs	46 - 50yrs	51 and	Total
Number	15	20	29	36	31	19	11	11	182
%	8.2	11	21.4	19.8	17.0	10.4	6.1	6.1	100

Religion	Muslim	Christian	Traditional	Others	Total
Number	18	110	1	53	182
%	9.9	60.4	0.5	29.2	100

Educational Level	Primary	Secondary	Higher (Poly, NCE)	University	Others	Total
Number	12	31	28	77	34	182
%	6.6	17.0	15.4	42.3	18.7	100

Occupational	Un-employed	Student	Teaching	Trading/ Farming	Self-employed	Civil Servant	Not Indicated	Total
Number	2	20	61	8	27	54	10	182
%	1.1	11	33.5	4.4	14.8	29.7	5.6	100

Marital Status	Never been married	Married Monogamous	Married polygamous	Divorced/ Separated	Others	Total
Number	46	91	27	6	12	182
%	25.3	50	14.8	3.3	6.6	100

Table 2: Inter-relationships Between Husbands And Wives (B)

Item No.	Item Description		Strongly Agree	Agree Some what	Not Sure	Dis-agree Some what	Strongly Disagree
2	An ambitious and responsible husband does not like his wife to work.	No.	15	19	27	28	93
		%	8.2	10.4	14.8	15.4	51.1
13	A man needs the responsibility of marriage to fully develop.	No.	94	42	22	13	11
		%	51.7	23.1	12.1	7.1	6.0
17	A man should get married even if the woman does not measure up to all his hopes	No.	25	30	19	27	81
		%	13.7	16.8	10.4	14.8	44.5
22	A husband's opinion should be more important than his wife's opinion	No.	70	39	28	23	22
		%	38.5	21.4	15.4	12.6	12.1
23	If we disagree, I should give in to my wife more often than I would expect her to give in to me.	No.	31	46	33	39	33
		%	17	25.1	18.6	21.3	18.0
25	Marriage and children should come first in a man's life.	No.	30	20	31	26	75
		%	16.4	11	17	14.3	41.2
27	If a woman is as smart as her husband, the marriage will not work.	No.	27	17	34	24	80
		%	14.8	9.3	18.7	13.2	44
34	I would not get married if I had to give up what I really believe in to get along with another person	No.	61	36	32	15	29
		%	33.5	19.8	17.6	8.2	15.9
35	An educated wife is usually an asset to the wife and family.	No.	97	44	18	17	6
		%	53.3	24.2	9.9	9.3	3.3
37	A husband should be more educated than his wife	No.	70	36	32	15	29
		%	38.5	19.8	17.6	8.2	15.9

Table 2: Contd.

41	Keeping women in purdah should be discouraged.	No.	70	36	32	15	29
		%	38.5	19.8	17.6	8.2	15.9
44	A woman should be allowed to join a social club or political party of her choice.	No.	40	39	27	24	52
		%	22	21.4	14.8	13.2	26.6
45	The decision to use contraceptives should be made primarily by the woman.	No.	37	27	27	34	57
		%	20.3	14.8	14.8	18.7	31.3
46	The woman should do the arrangement of the home.	No.	73	41	11	31	26
		%	40.1	22.5	6.0	17.0	14.3
48	Deciding whether or not to have a baby should come from the woman	No.	22	15	24	39	82
		%	12.1	18.2	13.2	21.4	45.1
49	A woman should be allowed to go into any profession she likes	No.	76	29	17	29	31
		%	41.8	15.9	9.3	15.9	17.0
50	A woman should be allowed to accept a new job even if it means moving to a different town.	No.	43	23	14	35	67
		%	22.6	12.6	7.2	19.2	36.8

Table 3: Work and family Responsibilities

Item No.	Item Description		Strongly Agree	Agree Some what	Not Sure	Disagree Some what	Strongly Disagree
3	A father's place is in the home when he is not at work	No	82	44	23	15	18
		%	45.1	24.2	12.6	8.2	9.9
7	My main interest is to raise normal, well-behaved children.	No	145	21	8	4	4
		%	79.7	11.5	4.4	2.2	2.2
13	A man needs the responsibility of marriage to fully develop.	No	94	42	22	13	11
		%	51.7	23.1	12.1	7.1	6.0

Table 3: Contd.

14	When a man has a conflict between what he wants to do for himself and what he has to do as a husband, his ambitions should come first.	No %	81 44.5	56 30.8	17 9.3	15 8.2	13 7.1
19	The needs of a family come before a man's personal ambitions.	No %	78 42.9	28 15.4	34 18.7	20 11	22 12.1
25	Marriage and children should come first in a man's life.	No %	30 16.4	20 11	31 17.0	26 14.3	75 41.2
29	I am sure that what a man gains from marriage makes up for sacrifices	No %	69 37.9	52 28.6	39 21.4	11 6.0	11 6.0
38	Both the husband and wife should share caring and treating of sick children.	No %	111 61.0	40 22	15 8.2	9 5	7 3.8
40	A husband should help the wife with domestic chores.	No %	84 46.2	57 31.3	17 9.3	9 5	15 8.2

Table 4: Economic Arrangements

36	A husband should earn more than his wife	No %	63 31.6	37 20.3	35 19.2	25 13.7	22 12.1
42	A father should be solely responsible for the school fees and maintenance of children	No %	71 39.0	26 14.3	10 5.5	35 19.2	40 22
43	A woman's salary should be paid solely to her	No %	48 26.4	16 8.8	20 11	43 23.6	55 30.2
47	The husband should discuss major decisions about finance with his wife	No %	94 51.7	49 26.9	21 11.5	7 3.9	11 6.0

B. Work Family and Economic Responsibilities.

For the study population, work responsibilities come first. 75.3% agreed strongly or somewhat that when a man has a conflict between what he wants to do for himself and what he has to do as a husband, his ambitious should come first (item 14). Despite the priority given to work, most of the man agreed (69.3%) that a father's place is in the home when he is not at work (item 3). 83% agreed that caring and treating children should be shared by both the husband and wife (item 38). In fact 77.5% agreed that a husband should help the with domestic chores (item 40).

When it comes to economic arrangements, shown on Table 4, 78.6% agreed strongly or somewhat that the husband should discuss major decisions about finances with his wife, while only 9.9% disagreed (item 47). 54.9% believed that a husband should earn more than his wife (item 36). About the same percentage (53.3%) agreed that a father should be solely responsible for the school-fees and maintenance of the children (item 42). However, only 45.2% agreed that a woman's salary should belong exclusively to her (item 43).

Discussion

The findings in the present study reveal an ambivalent attitude of men towards the changing gender roles and relations. With urbanization and widening opportunities women are now in jobs/professions traditionally viewed as the "preserves" of men. This trend may seem to imply that such women enjoy societal support, especially of their spouses. From the findings, in this study one can affirm that the modern Nigerian man believes that his wife should work outside the home. Over half the population of men studied even agreed that a woman can go into any profession she lives, However, about the same number disagreed that a woman should be able to decide whether to accept an offer of a new job even when it means moving to a different town. This is in line with findings in some earlier studies. For example, Odebiyi (1990) observed traces of the traditional gender role patterns in the male physician. Majority of the male doctors did not want their wives to be physicians and even felt that certain areas of medical specialities were not for women as they were to difficult to combine with wifely and motherly roles. Without doubt, outside demands will definitely affect the amount of time a woman spends in the house. However, as Odebiyi (1985) pointed out, it will positively affect the total amount of money that accrues to

the family, the woman's feeling of self-fulfilment and even the provision of quality care the children.

The observed ambivalence in male, attitude is in line with findings even in other developing countries. Sinha (1988), for example, observed that despite the fact that women now take to various kinds of professions, a corresponding attitudinal change in Indian males has yet to come about. They like their wives to take up jobs but do not want them to change at all as far their role and status at home is concerned. Since women's traditional responsibilities must not be neglected, women employment become a frequent source of familial conflict and marital adjustment.

The present study clearly shows that men value achievement for themselves. A large percentage of the sampled population believes that a husband should be more educated than his wife. His work ambitions come first. The majority agreed that an educated wife is usually an asset to the husband and family. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that they find female achievement drives threaten to their highly internalized cultural values and norms. More than a third of them would not allow a woman to join a social club or a political party of her choice. The woman can only arrange the home and take care of the children along with her paid job. Scanzoni (1970) observed that working wives tend to have more power in marital decision-making because they tend to use their resources as a way of obtaining more bargaining leverage. This may not apply to the population in this study. Even decisions concerning a woman's body are not hers to make. Only about a third of men agreed that the decision to use contraceptives should be made primarily by the woman. The percentage was even lower when it comes to having a baby.

It has been severally observed that no significant change can be made in women's without having an immediate effect on men and their roles (e.g. Steinman & Fox, 1974). The finding in this study can be explained by the structural-functionalism theory of social relations. Of particular relevance is the work of Talcott Parsons (1955), which emphasized that gender-role specialization is in the interest of system maintenance. He explained that the roles of spouses in any marriage are complementary. If the husband attends to his occupation and the wife attends to her role as the family's center of nurturance, there is less chance for competitiveness to develop. From this functionalist perspective, serious conflict and system disruption could occur if a woman chooses to be as active and achievement oriented as her husband in occupation pursuits.

Within this perspective, parents socialize their children to assume the traditional gender-role so as that the smooth running of the system (family) is maintained. As such, in the family the men would tend to support their wives in:

- (i) Activities that do not interfere with their work;
- (ii) Jobs that do not compete with theirs;
- (iii) Professions that are not time-consuming as to conflict with their and motherly roles;
- (iv) The men would tend to perform their roles as bread winners fathers, husbands and shacking such could disrupt the system.

Conclusion

Various health, economic and social strategies are being proposed for the advancement of women, taking into consideration the diversity of issues involved. However, a major factor is to change the societal norms and attitudes toward the women and their role. In Nigeria historical, cultural and religious teachings having established the role of women as being wives and mothers and the husbands as providers and protector5s. With industrialization and economic growth it is hoped that educated and informed men can facilitate positive changes. The finding in this study highlights the need for a carefully designed public awareness and education campaign, directed at the male population as decisive partners in progress.

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