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## **Patriarchy, Cultural Prejudices and Spousal Violence in the Ancient City of Benin of Southern Nigeria**

By Oghoadena Clementina Osezua<sup>1</sup> and Henry N. Agholor<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the persistence of patriarchy and traditional cultural practices which have adverse effects on women's rights and health as well as the growing incidence of spousal violence in Benin City, arising from obvious internal and external factors of social changes. Extant literature has documented shifts in family roles and general social transformations in many first world nations as a result of modernization. Efforts to capture such changes within the African space is very minimal as of now. This paper attempts to explore the Benin society of Southern Nigeria, against the backdrop of the cascading effects of human trafficking and international migration that has largely impacted on the contemporary social structure of the ancient West African city. It addresses the nature of patriarchy in relation to Benin society, discusses some of the customs and traditions that have put women in positions of inferiority. This paper concludes that patriarchy, and other cultural prejudices have the potentialities of further deepening the incidences of spousal abuse and family disorganization if efforts are not made to abolish all harmful cultural practices and enforce the legal provisions which protect women's rights and general wellbeing.

*Keywords:* Patriarchy; Cultural practices; Spousal Violence; Gender; Benin; Edo State; Nigeria

### **Introduction**

In a seemingly playful disposition with a hysterical mien, President Muhammed Buhari of Nigeria made a statement which many considered sexist, in faraway Germany while responding to the comments made by his wife, Aisha, that she might not support him if he ran for the Nigerian election in 2019. In response, he declared, "I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen and my living rooms and the other room" (<https://punchng.com/wife-belongs-kitchen-buhari/> Punch, Oct 14, 2016). This statement, and many more attributes of the Nigerian social structure gave credence to Aina 's (1998) description of Nigeria, as being essentially patriarchal. In Nigeria, women and female children are consistently associated with the kitchen, where food is prepared, re-affirming traditional gender

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roles (Uzuegbunam, 2013). Historically within the African continent, Nigeria is the most populous country with women constituting about half of the present Nigerian population (Fapohunda, 2016). Nigerian women are essentially defined by their relationships within the family and the social dynamics associated with the various ethnic groups (Ebila 2015). Hence Falola (2019), argued that the mental image of a Nigerian woman regardless of the ethnic group, usually conjures up a picture a mother or wife, who is usually docile and always ready to give up her dreams for the good of her husband and children. This picture, however, does not portray Nigerian women as lazy, slouchy or ineffective, but rather it is a relative characterization that is created through a male gaze. However, a cursory examination of the Nigerian woman across the various ethnic groups demonstrates that though women are generally marginalized in patriarchal societies, the nuances associated with such marginalization in different social cultural context must be given some academic attention. Indeed, researches are replete about the marginalized woman in Nigeria; it is nonetheless of scholarly value to identify the variations in the forms of marginalization or discriminatory practices which women in this geographical region are confronted with, since the experiences of women are different based on a plethora of factors among which include age, class, educational attainment, religion, geographical region among other variables. For instance, Yoruba women in the Southwest of Nigeria have been described in the literature as very industrious even though they are considered inferior to men (Nnaemeka and Korieh 2000). Moreover, several scholars like Ogundipe -Leslie (1985) Kolawole (1997); Aina (1998); Oyewunmi, (1999) have examined Yoruba women in diverse socio-economic and political contexts providing a robust understanding of this social group. These scholars have even examined Yoruba women's experiences in these various contexts across time, providing very lucid accounts of their lives. Correspondingly, Igbo women in Southeastern Nigeria have also been given high profile attention in research by eminent scholars going back to Ifi Amadiumen in 1978, 1998, and 2000; Nnaemeka, (1996) Nkiru Nezeogwu (2006) and many others. The early visibility of Igbo women in academic writing is evident in a prior observation by Leith Ross (1939) who described Igbo women as relatively independent, ambitious and very hardworking. A crucial factor which may explain the character of Igbo women may be the egalitarian traditional social structures that are operational in many Igbo societies. In contrast, women in Northern Nigeria have been significantly impacted by the dominant Islamic religion which promotes subservience and complete deference in thoughts and action to the husband (Aina, 1998).

Yet, not much is known about other socio-cultural groups which when combined, have a higher population compared to the three major ethnic groups. Therefore, it is imperative to explore Benin society with respect to the dearth of literature of other ethnic groups. Moreover, the information about women in Benin city will be an important contribution to knowledge from a marginal socio-ethnic group, but with notable historical relevance with respect to its location (centrality in terms of geography), rich cultural heritage, and strategic commercial contact and economic transactions with the Portuguese, which contributed immensely to the greatness of the Benin Kingdom of West Africa. Invariably, family arrangements are usually affected when there are social changes, and such changes could have both positive or negative consequences (Solomon 2014). Akanle and Adesina (2018) opined that there is an obvious dearth in the literature, documenting the effects of these changes within Nigeria. In addition, with primordial but pervasive social institutions in the wake of human trafficking, international migration fueled by globalization and economic forces in the region, have impacted on the status of women in the region (Osezua, 2012, 2013). Growing evidence that the changes mediated by social

transformations such as the forces of modernization and globalization—which may be positive or even tumultuous—indicates the need to examine the variants of patriarchy in Benin. The pervasive cultural discriminatory practices and spousal violence are a potential outcome of changing family structures occasioned by these social changes. These constitute the major focus of this article.

### **Benin: A Classical Patriarchal Society**

Early anthropologists have employed the term “patriarchal” to denote the rule of the father (Filcher and Scott, 2007). This definition, however, has obscured the power dynamics inherent in the patriarchal structure itself, where men rule. Radical feminists Kate Millet (1970) and Shulamith Firestone (1971) argued that there is also a “sex class” where men rule as the dominant sex and women are subordinate. More recent scholars have defined patriarchy as a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions (Asiyanbola, 2005). Patriarchy is therefore perceived as oppressive and discriminatory. Walby’s (1970) definition of patriarchy which takes into cognizance the multiple structures of patriarchal organization, provides a useful portrayal of Benin patriarchal society. In sync with Walby’s (1970) assertion Ferriera, (2007) argued that patriarchy is inherently oppressive in all areas of society, including social, economic, political and cultural; discriminatory in its control of access to power, management of resources and benefits, and in manipulation of public and private power structures.

The geographical space known as Benin City occupies the forest belt between the Yoruba of the Southwest and the Igbo of the Southeast (Yakubu, 2014). They are ruled by a highly revered monarch referred to as the Oba, who is seen as the finest representation of perfection. The Oba has significant influence over his subjects. Curnow (1991) a social anthropologist, in her study of Benin society, demonstrated in her field research the centrality of the Benin monarch in the affairs of the kingdom. Consequently, the male prestige structure is intrinsically associated with their relationships to the palace, the jurisdictional sphere of influence of the Oba, the monarch of the kingdom. Also, being a Benin Chief is regarded as the highest honor possible and a recognition of a man’s distinction from common men.

Historically, Benin women have occupied subservient and inferior positions except for the Queen Mother (*Iyoba*) who is given relative prominence, while other women paled into insignificance in prestige. The socio-political system of Benin is built on a firm patriarchal tradition (Bradbury, 1954; Omorodion, 2009). Hence, Bradbury (1954) revealed that the Oba had a retinue of wives and concubines which served as a royal reserve from which such women are given as gifts to loyal chiefs or for services rendered to the monarch. Women were generally seen as commodities to satisfy the cravings of males within a marriage arrangement that has a master /slave-like relationship (Osezua, 2012, Yakubu, 2014).

Despite the hostile environment which is averse to the women being able to fully thrive, women have defied the odds and have excelled in the society. A very good illustration of how antagonistic the patriarchal Benin culture was to women is the story of a faceless woman who achieved wealth by dint of hard work. She was murdered by the, then Oba Ewuare, the same monarch who honored Emotan, a female trader, for her spiritual and financial support, which led to his ascension on the throne (Yakubu, 2014). In pre-colonial Benin society, marriage was sacrosanct and divorce highly frowned at, except for those of noble birth (Bradbury, 1954, Osezua, 2010). Within marriage, if wives defaulted in adhering to the sanctity of marriage in

terms of sexual purity in thoughts and behavior, she was expected to make confessions in this regard (Erhabon & Ikelegbe, 2014). The critical indicators of patriarchy are the institutionalization of primogeniture, the excessive sexual restrictions placed on women's chastity, gender segregated utensils, among other practices—except for women of royal heritage. Also, polygynous marriages are highly prevalent as the number of wives a man has is seen as status booster (Curnow, 1999; Osezua, 2010).

Categorizing traditional Benin social structure as a classical patriarchal arrangement has been substantiated with several empirical findings. For example, Curnow, a highly notable chronicler of Benin history affirmed this arrangement in his explicit in the description of women. The law of inheritance has no provision for female children to inherit property. Primogeniture is still the order of the day. Women are generally conceived as an inversion of the ideal (Curnow, 1990). Female children when birthed are derogatorily referred to as “half current”, a vernacular terminology used to depict the perceived notion of less virility required to birth girls, and a direct cultural allusion to her inferior status (Osezua, 2016). These social contexts provide a backdrop against which women are marginalized and discriminated against, and they have become a fertile ground in which gender-based violence includes trafficking of girl-children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, spousal violence, female genital mutilation and widowhood practices are prevalent (Osezua, 2012, 2013, 2016). This article explores some of the discriminatory cultural practices, which the authors consider cultural prejudices, in light of how they have been reinforced by classical patriarchy in Benin. They are prejudices by placing women at extreme disadvantage in relation to men.

### **Female Genital Mutilation**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is gender-based violence. FGM has been a global problem and it remains common in many parts of the world including Nigeria (Carr, 1997). The World Health Organization (2008), has grouped the health consequences of FGM into long and short term impacts. Such short-term impacts include acute pain, excessive bleeding, shock, vaginal infection and vulva disfigurement due to careless operations. In addition, long term impacts include painful sexual intercourse, infection of the reproductive tract leading to infertility, as well as the possibility of spreading HIV/AIDS, following the use of unsterilized instruments.

As a result of its high population, Nigeria has the highest absolute number of FGM prevalence of FGM in the world, accounting for about one-quarter of the estimated 115-130 million circumcised women worldwide (Okeke, 2012). According to Afolayan and Oguntoye (2008), the age at which FGM is carried out varies from one society to another. FGM is a deeply entrenched cultural practice. Many scholars believe that it violates civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of women (Obi and Igbinalolor, 2018). FGM is still rampant in Benin City despite long contact with western civilization (Osifo & Evbuomwan, 2009). A hospital-based study has revealed that out of those interviewed, 67 percent still strongly believe in FGM as a beneficial cultural practice while almost half (47 percent) of mothers interviewed admitted that they had been circumcised. (Osifo and Evbuomwan 2009). Other scholars have suggested that FGM is part of the societal norms handed down by significant others and any attempt to discontinue the practice is met with societal pressure and risk of isolation (Babatunde, 1998; Rahman 2000, Mohammed 2000).

FGM also contributes to the creation of tribal identity, especially in a multi-tribal country like Nigeria (Anuforo, 2004; Caldwell *et al* 1997). Some scholars, including Myra *et al* (1985) and

Fremeyer & Johnson (2007) have explained that the practice of FGM is essentially patriarchal as its objective is to ensure the virginity of young girls before marriage and chastity of the woman throughout her married life to bring about family honor. In the same vein, Gruenbaum (2001) has affirmed that FGM is intentional patriarchal action whose goal is the oppression of women. This is very true: for FGM to thrive there is a system that feeds it, a cultural practice within the societal structure. Hence, Osifo and Evbuouman (2009) noted that despite the level of awareness of the debilitating effects of FGM in girls' and women's health and general well-being in Benin City, the incidence of FGM is not declining. As well, there are many people who do not patronize hospitals in the rural areas, and who are not well captured in research related to FGM in Benin City.

### **Primogeniture and Inheritance Rights**

The pre-colonial period was characterized by primogeniture, hereditary titles, succession rights to property, and ritual duties passed to the eldest son (Oghi, 2014). On hereditary titles, only the eldest male children whose mothers were married to their deceased fathers had the right to inherit or succeed their fathers, subject to satisfactory performance of the necessary rites. In traditional Benin society, only males have access to the land and to inherit property. This unequal power and wealth distribution lead to domination and discrimination against women by men (Omodjohwoefe, 2011). In post-colonial Benin, there are significant vestiges of these hereditary and property rights which still privilege men (Omorodion, 2009). Osezua, (2013) opined that these notions are changing gradually with contemporary education and migration. Some of the long-standing barriers to wealth accumulation are eroding fast. For instance, Omorodion (2009) maintained that women now bypass the lineage systems and secure land from the open market. In the same vein, the concept of "land-lady" as against landlord is fast becoming a normative order in many parts of the city especially with high male migration to Europe and America, leaving wives behind (Ikuomola, 2015). Also, the current rates of human trafficking have created wealth in the hands of women with low educational attainment, who can now access critical economic resources like landed property (Osezua, 2011, 2013, 2017)

Female children traditionally do not access hereditary titles as these are the exclusively the preserve of the eldest surviving sons of the last incumbent. This has not changed. Despite the extraordinary achievement of some women in Benin City, they cannot be made "chiefs" or elected as part of the cabinet of the traditional Benin monarch, *Oba*. The best a woman can do is to be honored and decorated with coral beads. The principle of primogeniture is sustained, although there is a rotational form of succession practiced regarding some titles. The doctrine of automatic primogenitary succession to kingship prevails as the mode of succession to the throne of the Oba of Benin.

### **Widowhood Practices**

Widowhood practices are also a debasing cultural practice against womanhood that are rampant in most patriarchal societies. They persist despite the influence of westernization, including Christianity, in the region. The attitude of the people of Benin to the death of a man, depends on the degree to which the deceased has fulfilled his social destiny. The widow of a deceased is customarily summoned in the event of a premature death (when it is perceived that the deceased has not fulfilled his social destiny) and the deceased's widow is interrogated in

order to ascertain complicity that could have warranted his early passage. To prove her innocence, she is compelled to go through certain obnoxious widowhood practices: she must shave her hair, sleep on the floor with the corpse for days, drink the water used in bathing the deceased, and swear by his forehead (Okogie, 1990). If the widow dies, having been exposed to harrowing widowhood rites, her death is attributed to guilt. She is then found culpable of her husband's death even in her own death. Ebohon (1990) opined that a woman must be made to swear different oaths in Benin, the most crucial being the oath taken to absolve the widow from the death of her husband. Refusal to undergo this widowhood rite results in the disowning of her children by the deceased's family, and the loss of her children's claim to their inheritance (Erhabon & Ikelegbe, 2014).

It is most disturbing that it is mainly women who insist that these rites be performed, indicating their complicity with patriarchy. Obviously, there are no degrading traditional rites for a widower; rather, his welfare is the paramount concern of both family and friends. In some parts of Edo State, custom and tradition demand that a widower should not sleep alone but with another woman of his choice until his wife is interred, so that the spirit of the dead wife may not come and disturb his peaceful sleep (Isibor, 2008).

### **Prostitution and Trafficking of Women**

Scholars have generated volumes of work on both prostitution and female trafficking in Nigeria (Aghatise, 2002, Onyeonouru, 2003, Okonofua *et al*, 2002, Skogeth, 2006, Osezua, 2010, 2013, 2016). The majority of such studies focus on Benin City due to the prevalence of the phenomenon, the rigid patriarchal nature of the region, and discriminatory cultural practices against women. From the literature, Benin City is the sex capital of Nigeria (UNICRI/UNODC 2003; Onyeonoru, 2003; Osezua, 2013). While trafficking is seen as a migration issue, a coercive and deceptive component is the financial gains from prostitution and trafficking that have made it a lucrative business that young women explore for economic empowerment. The traditional religious belief system has also been associated with prostitution and trafficking as it relates to the *Binis* (Osezua, 2016a). Hence there is the use of charms, traditionally referred to as *juju* by women who are trafficked, to keep them in a web of secrecy so that those involved in the clandestine trafficking syndicate groups are not disclosed. This is one of the peculiarities associated with sex trafficking in this region (Aghatise, 2002, Skogeth, 2006, Osezua, 2014, 2016b). While Benin City has been ingloriously tagged the sex-trafficking epicenter, (Onyeonoru, 2003; UNESCO, 2004; Osezua, 2013), it doubles as also the hub of Pentecostalism in Nigeria (Osezua, 2016). Prostitution and trafficking of women have been criminalized, but this has not solved the problem in the region. Young women are sometimes lured by traffickers and in many other instances, young girls and women offer themselves to traffickers for what they hope are better opportunities overseas (Osezua, 2012). Also, family members are sometimes used as recruitment agents, with promises of good jobs and a better life in Europe, as baits to seduce those who are unwitting. Often, they are trafficked to Italy, Spain, Germany, Netherlands and France (Otoide, 2000). It has been estimated that as many as 80% of Nigerian young women trafficked into Italy for prostitution are indigenes of Edo State from Benin City, Nigeria (Aghatise, 2002, 2004). This problem has engendered the signing into law by the National Assembly in 2003 of the Trafficking in Persons (prohibition) Act. It also culminated in the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of the Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to arrest and prosecutes traffickers as well as rehabilitate those trafficked, after deportation. In

addition, other security agencies such as the Nigerian Police Force and Nigeria Immigration Service have human trafficking units with the mandates to arrest traffickers and their agents and transfer cases to NAPTIP for prosecution. There are also many non-governmental organizations (NGOS) working in the area of assistance and rehabilitation of deported trafficked persons. In spite of these initiatives the problem of sex trafficking in the region has not yet abated (Attoh, 2010).

### **Patriarchy and Spousal Violence: The Nexus**

Considerable attention has been given to the issue of spousal violence in Nigeria (Tejuoso 2005; Aihie 2009; Abama and Kwaja 2009; Alo, Odusina and Babatunde 2012; Etuk, Nwagbara and Archibong 2012; Owoaje and Olaolorun 2012; Okunola, and Ojo 2012; Obi and Ozumba 2007; Bamiwuye and Odimegwu 2014; Alokun 2013; Adebayo and Kolawole 2013; Uzuegbunam 2013). These scholars have explored the prevalence, perspectives, patterns, economic, and health implications of spousal violence on women in Nigeria. Indeed, spousal violence, as a social malady, cuts across boundaries of race, culture, religion and people. It is not exclusively a woman's problem as has been established by some scholars. Men can be victims of spousal violence too, although the percentages are far less.

Undoubtedly, an important clarification should be noted about the use of the term "spousal violence". This is because violence against women in general is often seen as domestic violence, or intimate partner violence. In the same vein, the term "violence" is also often substituted with the term "abuse". Alokun (2013) referred to domestic violence as spousal abuse, domestic abuse, battering, family violence, violence against women, and intimate partner violence. As an abusive behaviour, it can be perpetrated by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family and cohabitation. For the purpose of this study, the authors will use the term "spousal violence" and will focus on such violence as it affects women.

Spousal abuse or violence is an historical social phenomenon (Okereke, 2002) that is deeply entrenched in many cultures of many societies. Hence, Hart (2010) observed the complexity associated with its definition but opined that it connotes violence perpetrated by men and women. Spousal violence is any behavior within a relationship that causes physical, sexual and psychological harm, including any act of physical aggression, sexual coercion and psychological abuse (Alo, Odusina & Babatunde, 2012). Spousal violence as seen by Owoaje & Olaolorun (2012) is reportedly associated with gender inequality and all social norms supportive of traditional gender roles, power imbalances, and patriarchal male dominance. Uzuegbunam (2013) has noted that culturally, women are perceived as profane creatures that deserve no respect and as such should be treated as subordinate to men.

Spousal violence can take a variety of forms which include physical assault such as hitting, slapping, kicking, and beatings; psychological abuse, such as constant belittling, intimidation, and humiliation; and coercion, including for sex (Owoaje & Olaolorun, 2012; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). It frequently includes controlling behaviors such as isolating a woman from family and friends, monitoring her movements, and restricting her access to resources (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). Shouting at a partner was found to be the most common form of abuse (Obi & Ozumba, 2007).

Men with more traditional and rigid and misogynistic gender-role attitudes are more likely to practice intimate partner violence (Flood & Pease, 2009). Ine (2012) emphasized that



the problem of violence against women in Nigeria is mainly rooted in the traditional patriarchal values of the society. As discussed above, in traditional Nigerian society men were regarded as superior to women, and husbands had a right to chastise their wives since women were subordinate to men within the family. Customs and traditions such as the payment of “bride price,” continue, whereby men participate in the outright purchase of their wives’ sexual favors and reproductive capacity, thereby feeding the entitlement syndrome of such men to dictate the terms of sex without due recourse for their spouses. Likewise, practices such as widow inheritance by a man from his brother’s widow, exposes women to abuse. In many societies, women do not have basic control over what happens to their bodies as far as cultural practices are concerned. In many developing societies, women are unable to depend on the government to protect them from physical violence in the home, with sometimes fatal consequences.

In Nigeria, the story of Titilayo Arowolo, a 27-year-old mother of one, who was gruesomely murdered by her husband on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2011 at their residence in Nigeria commercial nerve center, Lagos, jolted many to the grim reality of spousal violence and its devastating consequences ( <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/02/wife-murder-evidence-sent-arowolo-hangmans-noose/>; The Vanguard, 2012). The public uproar for justice that greeted the murder was unprecedented and expedited the prosecution and public execution of the perpetrator. Social media was harnessed to deploy a massive campaign against the perpetrator, and this heightened the degree of awareness that generated the public outcry for justice. What is remarkable about the murder, as far as this paper is concerned, is that the perpetrator, the spouse of a young woman with financial and social promise as a banker, had no job.

Shortly before this incident, a hospital-based study was conducted at the University of Benin, Benin City in which a survey included a total of 400 respondents. Findings revealed that over 53.3 percent of the study sample reported that they had experienced domestic violence, at least a year before the study commenced in 2010, while 41.5percent (166) admitted they suffered from physical violence which included being slapped, 33.3 percent (133), pushed or shoved, 104 (26 percent), hit with a fist , 60 (15%) and/or being dragged and kicked 48 (12percent). A total of 29 (7.3) reported that sharp objects were used against them while 4 (1.0%) reported being shocked or burnt (Ogboghodo& Omuemu, 2016). Other measures of spousal violence were examined, including sexual violence and emotional violence. A total of 108 (26.8 percent) reported that they had sexual intimacy with their spouse out of fear, while the 15.3 percent stated that there were forced against their will. A total of 74 (18.5 percent) agreed that they were emotionally abused, as their spouses ignored them and treated them with indifference. In all, about four-fifths of the study sample admitted that they had suffered at least three identified indicators of violence (Ogboghodo & Omuemo 2016).

In another hospital-based study conducted recently at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, a total sample of 360 respondents were drawn from those who attended the clinic periodically, to examine the incidence of intimate partner violence. Findings indicate a growing incidence of spousal abuse in the region (Oseyemwen et al 2018). The study showed that 80 percent of the respondents reported that they had been victims of at least one form of spousal violence. There was a higher incidence of sexual violence reported (56 percent) when compared to physical and psychological abuse which ranked 46.6 percent and 31.9 percent respectively. Another significant finding is that employed women were more likely to suffer from spousal violence than women who were not employed (Oseyemwen et al, 2019). Presently, findings suggest that the region has a higher prevalence of spousal violence than those reported by *Silva et al* (2015). In Southwestern Nigeria, only 18 percent are reported with the National

Demographic Health Survey (NDHS, 2008), also reporting a low incidence in Southeastern Nigeria (Oseyewmen et al, 2019). These findings are rather disturbing considering that this same region has been tagged the hub of human trafficking, another, form of gender-based violence. Furthermore, understandably, these hospital-based studies, lack depth and cannot explore adequately, the dynamics and experiences of the victims of spousal violence in the area. Also, more educationally enlightened women will patronize hospitals such as teaching hospitals, which are secondary health providers for antenatal care, than those who are uneducated and have limited access to critical economic resources. The implication is that one can comfortably affirm that the incidence of spousal violence is not only highly underreported, but needs to be understood more in-depth contextually, especially at it occurs across the various socio-economic categories in the region.

### **Social Change in Patriarchal Benin**

There is no doubt that Benin is undergoing a change in the wake of international migration, westernization and modernity, summarily referred to as the forces of globalization. Some of these changes are affecting family structures and therefore gender relations are also undergoing a trajectory of change. Women who were traditionally subservient and significantly dependent can now access critical resources with relative ease, and in many instances are becoming breadwinners. These factors affect patriarchal structures (Omadjowefe, 2011, Abanihe, 2014). Similarly, Akanle and Adesina's 2019 study of selected female breadwinners in Lagos, opined that many males remain immobile culturally, and are ensconced within traditional gender roles even when women are the breadwinners. This has led to renegotiation and reconstruction of patriarchal boundaries in some instances, which could result in ambivalent consequences. Findings suggest that these social changes resulting in financial empowerment for women, to the extent that they become primary earners, may be potent triggers for family violence and instability especially in some rigid patriarchal arrangements (Akanle and Adesina, 2019).

Undoubtedly, patriarchal attitudes, ideas and the gender bias in the society underpin women's subordination and thereby represent obstacles to social and economic developments. Gendered power inequalities are reflected in gender violence either within or outside the family (Oyekanmi, 2004). Empirical researches are needed to ascertain more succinctly, the nature of family transformations, gender relations, and degrees of family cohesion given changes in the socio-cultural milieu engendered by modernity and other social-economic forces, including globalization, migration/ human trafficking. A lot needs to be learnt from women, who have been silenced by cultural restrictions, including those involved in the international sex trade. More so, it is also important to document the trajectories of spousal violence and track the associated factors that have led to the changes in the types of violence women are susceptible to. The vested confidence in the monarch of Benin, should be harnessed to obliterate harmful cultural practices, creating much-needed awareness, to mobilize for action against unhealthy and discriminatory cultural practices. Efforts must be made to partner with traditional institutions to create greater awareness of gender equality and human rights, which are crucial for the liberation of women in any society.

In conclusion, because patriarchy is often very resistant to change, been influenced and sustained by deeply entrenched discriminatory cultural practices, and social change mediated by modernity resulting from globalization, westernization, international migration or even religion,

is in on a higher trajectory, the female gender is potentially going to be at risk in this inevitable dilemma. The extent to which this situation would impact on the safety, rights, and total wellbeing of the female gender, taken into account the variations in the degree of patriarchal strongholds across diverse social groups in Nigeria, is definitely a critical area where more research engagement are desirable.

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