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Preferences in Sexism in Selected Governmental and Institutional Documents in Nigeria

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Abstract

Sexism refers to attitudes, beliefs, or practices that differentiate or discriminate based on sex or gender. Often resulting in unequal access to resources, opportunities, or rights. For a long time now, women have faced and are still facing discrimination, marginalization, victimization, humiliation and much more in the society. They have been oppressed, belittled, underrepresented and dominated through language use. The saying "give them an inch and they take a mile" is one among the languages used to oppress and demean women. The English Language is ingrained with sexist expressions which favours one gender against the other. The study examined sexism in select official documents in Nigeria to identify the manifestation of sexist language. The aim of this study is to identify the manifestation of sexist language in select official documents in Nigeria. The data derived from the survey were analysed within the framework of Appraisal Theory. Data were collected through observation method. A qualitative approach was adopted. Results revealed that select official documents in Nigeria

are intertwined with sexist words and expressions such as chairman, clergymen, gentleman of the bar, my lord, Sir, used for both genders. The most predominantly is the use of the word "chairman". In addition, the masculine term 'he', 'him', 'his' used for both genders in the Nigerian constitution is sexist and male dominated making women appear invincible in language use. The researchers call for a review of the constitution and other official documents to amend the existing sexist expressions. It is also recommended that gender - inclusive language should be used to neutralise the already identified sexist expressions.
Keywords: Sexism, Discrimination, Official, Documents, Expressions

Introduction

For a long time now, women have been discriminated against, belittled, humiliated, degraded, marginalized, stereotyped, biased, oppressed, exploited to mention but a few all because of their gender. Women were often denied the rights and benefits granted to men. This has perpetuated societal inequality. The male on the other hand, exhibits a behaviour that depicts or portrays males as superior to females. Still in this present dispensation such behaviour or discrimination is yet being practised in Nigerian society and this is called sexism. Sexism refers to attitudes, beliefs, or practices that differentiate or discriminate based on sex or gender, often resulting in unequal access to resources, opportunities, or rights. Some of these attitudes, beliefs, or practices often believing men or women are inherently better at certain tasks thereby judging individuals unfairly due to their sex.

There is this common belief in the society that the men are always superior to the women in every field mostly in professions and in leadership, that is why most governors are male, all presidents are male, most commercial drivers are male, most palm wine tappers are male, which individuals are permitted to break the cola nut, the male, all these measures tend to hamper, dissuade or even deny the

women the opportunities to explore their full potentials and assist in building the nation. Teachers, as well as parents, who are also important agents of socialisation, tend to regard boys as more creative than girls, thereby, creating more personality and behavioural pattern. During the farming period in school, males were the ones to cultivate ridges while the female ones gather and pack grasses teachers should explain where it is stated that females cannot make ridges. A woman is regarded as second or minor to a man, and she is expected to perform all domestic chores. Back in history and even recently in some parts of the country (Nigeria) women were denied the opportunity to attend school instead, the male ones do because the society places more value on the male than the female.

For instance, in Abakaliki axis, most of their female ones are denied the right to education because the male ones see them as inferior beings who are only good for a wife material and child bearing purpose and most of the time they end up being a workaholic human. In our contemporary Nigerian society, there are still some cultural groups who still prefer male children to female. The boys are regarded as heirs of the family while the girls are not, because they would be married out. As a result, some of them are denied education especially the university education and would be married off after secondary school education so as to have less load and then concentrate on the boys. Such is sexism and does not promote the girl child proper development.

Also certain careers like politics are seen as male - domain. In some cultural communities, ladies who engage in politics are seen as wild and anti - cultural set of women, who cannot be controlled by their husbands. They see them as ones who would not be able to be controlled by the male- folks, no wonder there are still few women in Nigeria occupying top political offices like the presidency, governorship and many other top political positions. Few women who are still striving to fight gender discrimination

are still seen as those challenging men under the umbrella of "women liberation". Moreover, in Nigeria, it has been observed that women in some tribes are discriminated against when it comes to inheritance of property. Nigeria being a political society, the right of inheritance is chiefly by male descent. In most parts of Igbo land, women are excluded from inheriting the property of their father. In Yoruba land, wives' rights and interests are compromised. It is a well settled rule of native law and custom of Yoruba that a wife could not inherit her husband's property. All these and more are discriminations meted on the female gender. It is obvious from the foregoing that discrimination against women could be derived essentially from cultural patterns that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family and society.

Women have been marginalized, oppressed, victimized and dominated through language use. The saying, "give them an inch and they take a mile" is the language used to oppress the female gender. This phrase originated from 17th century English proverb, " give him an inch and he'll take an ell" (an all equals 45 inches) implies that certain group like women will exploit generosity or concessions, and such are used to dismiss women's demand for equality or rights, The question is "are women not human beings? Do women have interest? If so, they also must be treated equal. Sexism in language is one of the social problems pervading the Nigerian society. It is the use of language which devalues members of one sex, almost invariably women, and thus Fosters gender inequality. The English language reflects the power that men have historically held in many areas of life. Sexist expression is ingrained in the language people speak all over the world and English being one of the most popular languages in the world is not an exception. Some English words show the lower status of women, for instance, the word 'governor' and 'governess'. Governor is a ruler of a country, city and associates with power and high social status as well as honour and dignity, while governess is a woman employed to teach young children in their

home. Because of the gender differentiation, these two words have dramatically different meanings, the masculine one belongs to high social class but the feminine one marks with 'ess' belongs to a lower social class. So many sexist language are in use in the society which degrades and portray women as inferior beings, such expressions as; "you throw like a girl"

"Gentlemen don't cry", "Women are emotional", "don't be a girl", 'women belong in the kitchen', 'boys will be boys', implying women are incapable and lack courage. Sexism in language exist in some official documents used in Nigeria. For instance, the ambiguous use of male terms to refer to both men and women "his", "him", etc., the use of such sexist expression like" gentlemen of the bar" to refer to both male and female judge. It is discriminatory to mention that the pronoun "she" was once mentioned in the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Several Linguistic items perpetuate sexism in language thereby, rendering women invisible. Words like; 'chairman', 'mankind', 'his lordship' 'layman', 'manpower', 'early man', 'man-made', 'businessman', 'policeman', 'pressmen', 'spokesman', 'watchman', 'sportsmen', 'clergyman', 'fisherman', etc.

When official documents only use masculine pronouns or terms to refer to individuals, it sends a message that women are not considered equal or important enough to be included in the language. This can have a negative impact on women's sense of self-worth and their ability to fully participate in society. Despite efforts to promote gender equality, sexism persist in various forms within the country including direct sexism, indirect sexism, institutional sexism, internalized sexism, interpersonal sexism, systemic sexism, cultural sexism etc. However, it has been established that English is a gendered or sexist language. In western countries these days it is common for people to use gender inclusive language. Early in (2013), the state of Washington in the United States signed a bill into law banning sexist language forms

like "freshman and fireman", in the US Washington is the first state to officially remove gender biased language from the law. However, Nigeria users of English may have not adopted this change in gender inclusive English to the same degree as in the west. Remembering that the choice of language has an impact on the connotations of any message, we are expected to rise up to the challenge and embrace the change of inclusive language.

In order to address sexism in official documents in Nigeria, it is essential for policymakers, lawmakers, and other stakeholders to actively work towards promoting gender equality and challenging traditional gender norms and stereotypes. This can be achieved through the adoption of gender-sensitive language in official documents, the implementation of laws and policies that promote gender equality, and the inclusion of women's voices and perspectives in decision-making processes. To this extent, sexism has served through the ages because it embodies privileges that men are unwilling to surrender. Sexism will not die out unless people are sensitized and reoriented from childhood into anti-sexism. Through the ages, men have been and still are largely actively in control of public life and political system in many countries including Nigeria. Although feminist tend to be the only people fighting against sexism, this ideology needs to be changed. People need to become sociological in their thinking and realize this is a problem that we all should be working to fix. Many of us have never really taken the time to think about the effect of the language we use. How it can affect us or our position within the society. The challenge to us, individuals, is to remedy this kind of problem in modern English. Both genders must be given exactly the same respect and equal right instead of treating some people as superior being to others. All along, we are one and the same because we are all created by God.

There is limited work that addresses the presence of Sexism in official documents in Nigeria, hence, the present study aims at

identifying the presence or manifestation of sexist language in these official documents: the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Notification of Appointment (Gen.69C), A brochure from ENUGU State Judiciary marking the Opening Ceremony of her 2017/2018 Legal Year, National Environmental Regulation 2009, Claimant final address in the National Industrial Court of Nigeria, Lagos judicial division.

The purpose of this study is to identify the manifestation of sexist language in select official documents in Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the various ways sexist language manifest in some official documents in Nigeria
2. To examine how women in Nigeria feel and experience sexist language in official documents.

This article will be of paramount importance to both genders as it will give room for gender accommodation and full representation of women in leadership, government, professions and other parastatals in the society. It will also be beneficial to organizations in other to eliminate the use of masculine and feminine terms like 'chairman' and 'chairlady', 'businessman and businesswoman', 'salesman and saleswoman or salesgirl', 'countryman or countrywoman' etc, which occurs almost in minutes of meetings, and other pamphlets used in most official gathering, thereby, replacing such terms with gender inclusive terms like: 'chairperson' or 'chair', ' businessperson or business manager', ' salesperson or sales clerk' 'residents or compatriots', and others.

The article addresses the questions:

1. In what ways does sexist language manifest in the selected official documents in Nigeria?
2. How do women in Nigeria feel and experience sexism in official documents?

Statement of the Problem

It is an effort targeted at making language gender neutral or gender inclusive. Almost all languages (though to a varying degree) are to an extent run into this gender bias, with the English Language coming tops among the languages which could be described as the most guilty perpetrators of sexism in language, since the language seems to showcase every trace of sexism. Despite all efforts to promote gender equality, sexism persist in various forms within the country including the language and content of official documents. The use of exclusive or sexist language can be deliberate or unconscious. Because these documents are used to inform public policy, organisational regulations, and other procedures. They unintentionally perpetuate gender bias through the use of sexist language. Therefore, this work addressed the manifestation of sexism in select official documents in Nigeria as well as substitute gender exclusive language for inclusive one.

Review of the Related Literature

Sexism refers to the belief or attitude that one gender is superior to another and resulting in discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person's gender. It is gender discrimination that is particularly documented as affecting women and girls and it includes the belief that the males are intrinsically superior to females. It is perpetuated by systems of patriarchy -male dominated social structure leading to the oppression of women.

According to Nnaemeka, (2004), sexism is a system of oppression that uses gender as a basis for discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. It is an ideology that perpetuates the superiority of one gender over the other, and it is often used to justify and maintain the dominant position of men over women. Nnaemeka's definition of sexism highlights the power dynamics involved in gender relations and the ways in which sexism perpetuates inequality and discrimination against women. According to Nnaemeka, sexism can take many forms, including: gender stereotypes and biases,

discrimination and marginalization, exclusion and invisibilisation, violence and harassment, economic and political disempowerment. Mmadunagu (2009) concurring with Nnaemeka states that sexism is a deliberate and systematic effort to suppress, marginalize, and subordinate women, while elevating men to a position of power and dominance. It is a pervasive and insidious ideology that permeates all aspects of life, including culture, religion, education, politics, and economics." Mmadunagu's definition highlights the intentional and systemic nature of sexism, emphasizing its impact on women's lives and opportunities. Mmadunagu (2009) further explains that sexism is not just about individual attitudes or behaviours, but also about institutional and structural practices that perpetuate gender inequality. She identifies three key aspects of sexism:

1. Ideological sexism: perpetuating negative stereotypes and biases against women
2. Institutional sexism: discriminatory policies and practices in institutions
3. Individual sexism: personal attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequality

Okon (2017) argues that sexism is a system of oppression that perpetuates unequal power relations between men and women, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and limiting the potential of individuals based on their gender. He argued that sexism is not only meted out to women but also affects men stressing that men are also victims of sexism, as they are socialized to conform to rigid gender roles, leading to:

1. Toxic masculinity
2. Emotional suppression
3. Increased stress and anxiety
4. Decreased emotional intelligence

Okon contends that sexism perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes and expectations, limiting the potential of both women and men. He posits that traditional gender roles can be damaging to men. Strictly emphasizes that sexism is a system of oppression that

affects all genders, and that men's experiences of sexism should not be ignored or minimized. Okon's definition of sexism identified some key elements:

a. System of oppression: Sexism is a structural issue, perpetuating unequal power relations between genders.
b. Unequal power relations: Sexism reinforces dominance of one gender over the other, typically men over women.
c. Harmful gender stereotypes: Sexism perpetuates limiting and damaging gender based expectations.
d. Limiting potential: Sexism restricts individuals' abilities and opportunities based on their gender.
e. Affects both genders: Sexism has an impact on both women and men, although differently.

Okon's definition highlights sexism as a deep-rooted, systemic issue perpetuating gender inequality, affecting individuals and society as a whole. From his point of view it is certain that sexism affect both male and female genders and not just the female.

From the foregoing, one may conclude that sexism is unfair treatment arising mainly from social cultural traits and beliefs that a particular gender is of more prestigious than the other thereby humiliating the other sex mainly the female gender.

Sexism on Language Use

One of the features of English is that lexical items used to describe females are often marked to distinguish them from those used to describe males. In English, a more obvious form of marking called overt marking often occurs through the addition of the suffix -ess. So, for unmarked items such as 'manager' and 'actor', we have the marked terms 'manageress' and 'actress'. The '-ess' depicting female inferiority. Sexist language is considered to be any language that is supposed to include all people, sexist language excludes a gender, intentionally or unintentionally. Cameron (1985) defines sexist language as a language that contains a lexicon and a grammatical structure that excludes, insults or

trivialises women. One of the features of English is that lexical items used to describe females are often marked to distinguish them from those used to describe males as 'bachelor' and 'spinster' all designate an unmarried adult.

'Spinster' marked for females, seems to have acquired the insulting meaning of 'old maid' referring to someone who is unable to find a husband; by implication they are too ugly or too fussy. **'Bachelor',** marked for males, by contrast, has the positive connotations of freedom and independence and still having all the choice of marrying or not. All the terms for male have retained their original positive meanings while female terms have frequently undergone a dramatic downhill slide, ending more often than not with sexually debased meanings. The female form is always a derivative of the male form. This is one obvious evidence of sexism in language use. A man can be a doctor, but a woman must often be a woman doctor. We are surprised when a professor or an engineer turns out to be a woman, or when a secretary or a model turns out to be a man. Sexist language is especially common in situations that describe jobs common assumptions include that all doctors are men, all nurses are women, all coaches are men, or all teachers are women. Most people would agree that these assumptions are largely untrue today, though the language used often perpetuates the stereotypes. Many feminists have examined the representation of women in language and have, according to Cameron, concluded –that our language is sexist.

Sexism in Nigeria: Causes and Effects

Sexism in Nigeria is a complex issue with multiple causes, including: Socialization, Gender roles and stereotypes are learned from childhood, perpetuating sexism. Economic factors: Women's economic dependence and limited opportunities perpetuate power imbalances. Cultural and traditional norms: Deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs and practices perpetuate gender inequality. Religious interpretations: Misinterpretation of religious texts can

justify gender discrimination. Colonial legacy: Historical influence of colonialism and Western values reinforced patriarchal systems. Social norms and attitudes: Widespread acceptance of gender-based violence and discrimination.

1. Socialisation

During the process of human civilization which is also called socialisation, language formed and changed as time went by. Though, one of the most important causes of language sexism is the socialisation. Socialisation begins at birth it shapes people to behave in appropriate ways. Much of people's behaviour is the result of socialisation. People and individual form groups of hierarchical. Males taking the position of power and relegating females to lesser roles.

2. Socio-Economic Cause

Sexism is prevalent in the different attitudes of men and women. The primary social cause of differing attitudes towards men and women lies in the division of labour. Early in the human history, women were dominant in economic life; women had a higher social status than men. During the process of human civilization, when human society entered patriarchal, men took advantage of their physical strength and took upper hand in the economy and became more and more important in social economy. The social status of men gradually took over that of women.

3. Cultural and Traditional Norm

In Nigeria, some cultural and traditional norms that perpetuate gender inequality include:

(I) Patriarchal inheritance: Women often excluded from inheriting property or land. (ii) Bride price: Payment of a bride price reinforces women's status as commodities. (iii) Polygamy: Allows men to have multiple wives, reinforcing male dominance. (iv) Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Perpetuates harmful practices against women's bodies.

4. Religious Interpretation

Misinterpretation of religious texts can justify gender discrimination. Religious books have affirmed that the men are the head. The Head of every woman is the man and the Head of every man is Christ and the Head of Christ is God. (I Corinthians 11:3). There is no need for controversy here or to debunk the fact. Yet, the truth remains that this Bible reference and many more had been used and still being in use by many Bible teachers and others to portray women as inferior beings who must be submissive and obedient to every man's talk whether to her interest or not. Some men would even make it categorically clear "you are a woman, so keep shut" telling the woman that she is not capable or has the right to make decisions in the family after all he is the head. But the Bible said this in other to give honour, dignity and authority to the man and not for the man to use it as a weapon over the woman after all, the head of every woman is the man and the head of every man is Christ ..., Christ who is the head of man was so humble that he washed the feet of his disciples.

5. Colonial Legacy

Colonial legacy is among the causes of sexism in Nigeria. The colonial era imposed Western patriarchal values, laws, and social norms on Nigerian societies, which already had their own gender dynamics. This led to; Imposition of Western gender roles, colonialism introduced Western gender roles to many colonized societies, including Nigeria. Western colonial powers imposed their own gender ideologies, which emphasized: Patriarchy: Male dominance and authority over women. Gendered division of labour: Women were expected to focus on domestic work, while men engaged in public sphere activities.

In summary, Oamen (2019) embarked on the research: A critical analysis of Sexism in National Open University of Nigeria Monthly Bulletin. This paper investigates expression of sexism in a Nigeria's academic workplace media discourse. Ikpe (2004) is a

research on "Sexism and Gender Roles in Nigerian Culture: A Study of Igbo Society". This study examines the persistence of sexism and traditional gender roles in Igbo culture, Nigeria. Sexism in language by Maduka (2020) investigates sexism in English language using works of two female writers in other to analyse how English is replete with patriarchal imposed limitations. The research was based on feminist critical discourse analysis as the theoretical framework of the study. Udenze (2023) investigated on Sexism in some official documents in Nigeria: implications for gender equality. She examined the lexical and grammatical forms of Sexism in official documents such as the national dailies, legal report and the Nigerian constitution with a view to provide alternatives usages to those expressions. The present work is set to sensitize language users against the use of sexist language. Hence, this study seeks other alternative usages to 'de-sex' sexist expressions or languages.

Theoretical Framework

Appraisal Theory

Appraisal Theory, developed by J.R. Martin and Peter White, is a linguistic framework that examines how language evaluates and positions people, objects, and events. This theory explores the ways in which language conveys attitudes, judgments, and values, shaping social relationships and interactions.

The theory developed by Martin and their colleagues in the 1990s and 2000s provides for analysis of those meanings by which texts convey positive or negative assessments, by which the intensity or directness of such attitudinal utterances is strengthened or weakened and by which speakers or writers engage dialogically with prior speakers or with potential respondents to the current proposition. Martin grouped the meaning making resource as the " Language of Evaluation" on the ground that they are all means by which the speaker's or writer's personal, evaluative involvement in the text is revealed as they adopt stances either toward phenomena (the entities, happenings, or states of affairs being construed by the

text) or toward metaphenomena (propositions about these entities, happenings and states of affairs).

Early work on the appraisal theory largely focused on evaluative meaning in English, with this literature noting that no assumptions should be made as to whether the evaluative categories proposed for English necessary operate in other languages.

The view of language adopted by the architects of the appraisal theory is that of the systemic functional linguistic theory of Halliday and his associates. (Halliday, 1994). Accordingly they hold that the meaning - making can usefully be divided into three broad modes, or what Halliday terms "metafunctions": (1) "ideational" meaning by which language construes the world of experience, (2) "interpersonal" meaning by which speakers or writers enact social roles, personas, and relationships, and (3) "textual" meaning by which these ideational and interpersonal meanings are organized into coherent texts appropriate for a given communicative setting.

In interpersonal meaning "tenor" is the register variable which is most relevant to our discussion. Halliday (1985b) characterizes tenor as follows: Tenor refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the [communicative] participants, their statuses and roles: what kinds of role relationship obtain, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech roles they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved. (Halliday 1985b 9:12)

Research Methodology

The article adopted qualitative research design. The data derived from the survey were analysed in a qualitative way. The article is designed to identify sexism in language of select official documents used in Nigeria so as to provide alternative usages to

such sexist languages or expressions. The article adopted purposive sampling technique, in order to generate data that will be suitable for this work from the required documents listed.

Data Analysis

In what ways does sexist language manifest in the selected official documents in Nigeria?

Extract 1

(2) The President or Deputy President of the Senate or the Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives shall vacate **his** office

(a) if **he** ceases to be a member of the Senate or of the House of Representatives, as the case may be, otherwise than by reason of a dissolution of the Senate or the House of Representatives; or

(b) When the House of which **he** was a member first sits after any dissolution of that House; or

(c) If **he** is removed from office by a resolution of the Senate or of the House of Representatives, as the case may be, by the votes of not less than two-thirds majority of the members of that House. (Section 50 (2) Nigerian constitution 1999)

Section 50 subsection (2) of the 1999 Nigerian constitution uses the pronoun "his and he" to refer to a senator or member of the house of representative assuming a male member as the default. Which means any senator or member of the house of representative "must" be a man. Thereby excluding the face of a woman in this part of political seat. We need to value the women through our use of terms or language. To make the language more inclusive, it could be rephrased to use "such a person" to explicitly include both male and female members.

Extract 2

27. Citizenship by naturalisation

(1) Subject to the provisions of section 28 of this Constitution, any person who is qualified in accordance with the provisions of this

section may apply to the President for the same of a certificate of naturalisation.

(2)No person shall be qualified to apply for the grant of a certificate or naturalisation, unless **he** satisfies the President that:

(a) **he** is a person of full age and capacity;

(b) **he** is a person of good character;

(c) **he** has shown a clear intention of **his** desire to be domiciled in Nigeria;

(d) **he** is, in the opinion of the Governor of the State where **he** is or **he** proposes to be resident, acceptable to the local community in which **he** is to live permanently, and has been assimilated into the way of life of Nigerians in that part of the Federation;

(e) **he** is a person who has made or is capable of making useful contribution to the advancement, progress and wellbeing of Nigeria;

(f) **he** has taken the Oath of Allegiance prescribed in the Seventh Schedule to this

Constitution; and

[Seventh Schedule]

(g) **he** has, immediately preceding the date of **his** application, either (i) resided in Nigeria for a continuous period of fifteen years; or (ii) resided in Nigeria continuously for a period of twelve months, and during the period of twenty years immediately preceding that period of twelve months has resided in Nigeria for periods amounting in the aggregate to not less than fifteen years. (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 27).

It is obvious from extract 6 that the use of the highlighted masculine expressions makes it categorically clear that it's only males who has the right to become a citizen of Nigeria by naturalization and no provision for the female ones. In fact, every individual in Nigeria as is evident from the extract above is considered male. This ought not to be so. This present article urges that these language be used instead of "he or his" such as: individual, applicant and or person by this everyone's face will be

equally represented and by this we avoid any form of judgement from people.

How do women in Nigeria feel and experience sexism in official documents?

Extract 1

In the Nigerian constitution, it is unfortunate and discriminatory to state that the pronoun "she" was once mentioned in the constitution while almost every page of the constitution is ingrained with either the pronoun he, his or him respectively. (Pg. 26, 27, 44,102,104, 106, 108, 117, 119, 121, 122, 123, 129, 132, 133 etc.) One would ask "what is the state of the women in the country?" "Are women not human beings?" "Do they have rights?" "Why the use of all these sexist language which evokes negative feelings on the women. “Do women deserve all these?” If not, they also must be treated equal, the society need to value women in language use, show women the sense of belongingness and not exclusion, marginalization and dominance.

Extract 2

My lord the instant case is a classic case of unfair and unlawful termination of employment by an employer -the defendant...(1) **My lord** in order to determine whether the claimant clocked 15years in the service of the defendant, the court would have to consider the entry/resumption date and effective date of termination ...(5) **My lord** in the face of the above quoted testimony, it begs the question how the defendant came to the erroneous conclusion (as contained in paragraph 4.04 of its final address)...(7) **My lord** the defendant has clearly confirmed that the claimant had attained 15 years of continuous service and congratulated the claimant...(8) (Claimant final address in the National Industrial Court of Nigeria, Lagos judicial division).

In the extract above, all most all the pages of this address captures the phrase "my lord" addressed to a female judge by name Hon.

Justice Elizabeth Orji as though, she is a man thereby, hides the image of women. The term Lord literally means, "A Ruler, a Sovereign or a Master, one possessing supreme power. It is a prestigious title that evokes privilege, exclusivity, and power. "Lord" is masculine, "lady" is a feminine noun, lady is the female equivalent of a Lord and as such the researchers advise that more general term for Lord or lady be used instead. These includes: Your Majesty", "Your Royal Highness" "Your grace" or simply "Your Highness owing to the context. This aids in adding more value to the women and as well accommodate them just like several female judges are these days agitating that they be referred to as "gentlemen on skirt" instead of "gentlemen" and this is needful because everyone wants to be identified in language.

Remedies are: Conduct gender audits and analysis to identify and address sexism in Nigerian constitution and other official documents. Secondly Involve women in policy making processes and ensure representation. Lastly, provide training on gender equality and sensitivity for officials.

From the foregoing, it is clear that women in Nigeria feel and experience sexism in official documents in the following ways:

1. Exclusion: Feeling excluded or marginalized due to masculine language or assumptions.
2. Invisibility: Being ignored or overlooked in policy-making processes.
3. Discrimination: Facing unequal treatment or opportunities due to gender-biased language.
4. Lack of representation: Not seeing themselves represented in official documents.
5. Powerlessness: Feeling powerless to challenge or change sexist language
6. The glorified man: It makes women feel the fact that men are always dignified while the woman is seen as the subordinate.

Conclusion

The use of sexist language undermines gender equality in Nigerian society. There are simple ways to avoid marginalizing people through language. This is the battle we all should work hand in hand in order to curb the phenomenon. In addition, writers, teachers, policy and law makers, politicians, newscasters, etc. and the general public should take care to use gender -inclusive language that will pave way for gender equality in Nigeria.

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