Empowering Women, Ensuring Peace: Exploring the Role of ATR in Promoting Gender Equality and Conflict Resolution in Lagos State.

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Abstract

In contemporary Lagos society, as in many other parts of the world, there has been a general acknowledgement that women are important to sustainable development. Based on this they are propelled into leadership roles in an effort to increase women participation at all strata of society both at local and national levels. Consequently, African women can legitimately be said to be seemingly empowered in a patriarchal setting. However, this has not generated the much desired gender equality which would provide an enabling environment to perform optimally. The disadvantaged position women still experience is deeply rooted in religious and cultural traditions. Religion is believed to shape one's perspectives of the world and all forms of engagements as strategies of participation in various societal activities. Therefore, religion can be seen as a relevant tool in capacity building and for a sustainable and enduring society. The methodology adopted by the paper is qualitative with the use of secondary sources such as Books, Journals, Newspapers and Internet sources. This paper, therefore, examines the role played by African Traditional religion towards gender equality, women empowerment and conflict resolution in Lagos. The study reveals that in order to promote peaceful co-existence and sustainable progress in Lagos state the government should incorporate the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) policy to consider the special needs of women during conflict. Women should be granted more empowerment rights which would help bridge the socio-cultural disparities and the unequal access to resources. The **paper recommends increased inclusion of women's participation at all levels of decision making in the state**

and the inculcation of religio-cultural doctrines of African religion that promotes human dignity and communal well-being as a resourceful means of gender equity and conflict resolution.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, African religion, Gender Equality, Peaceful Co-existence.

Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between religion, women empowerment and its effects on the harmonious co-existence of Lagosians which can lead to democratic sustainability of the most prestigious state in Nigeria. The relationship between these three elements in societal development is symbiotic because they are necessary requirements for a holistic human development. In contrast to the West's confidence in human dependence and capacity to solve problems Africans in general have a "deep sense that man is finite, weak and impure or sinful and stands in need of a power not of his own."[1] He believes in a supernatural power he can totally depend on to sustain him through life's journey.[2] The constant communion with this power through religion helps in the healing of many emotional imbalances, illnesses, as well as other physical problems. This is why African indigenous religiosity is not a matter of adherence to a doctrine but it is concerned with supporting fecundity, and sustaining the community.[3] It is believed that religious ethics when positively imbibed can enhance quality of life and character. When one thinks religiously it leads to a paradigm shift which goes beyond conventional limits.[4]

The gender discrimination of women which has fueled the level of violence and hostility in Lagos state has called for multi-faceted approach in managing these conflicts. Despite the enviable level of education and modernization in Lagos state, men continue to have a firm grip on positions of power, leadership, and decision-making. Women still struggle with the issue of gender equity and its retrogressive implications which has greatly retarded the human and economic development of the state. This paper explores the various ways society often appeal to culture and religion to justify gender discrimination and the politics of exclusion, overlooking the African values which encompass pluralism and inclusion. These exploitative

customary mores and traditions negate the African values which place emphasis on complementary roles for both sexes. Consequently, there is the need for a proper reinterpretation of African traditional religious precepts which place emphasis on complementary roles for both sexes.

It is no exaggeration to say that imbibing these religious precepts is an essential step towards developing human capacity to relate peaceful in any society. To ensure peaceful co-existence in a diverse society like Lagos, leaders must make conscious effort to bridge the gap in gender inequality.[5] The focus of this paper is to examine how the **dynamics of** African religion can help promote gender equality and women empowerment.

Theoretical Framework

Gender equality issues have received intellectual discourse in several fields, including those of the Social Sciences. Therefore, several theories provide a valuable framework for conceptualization, which includes the leadership categorization theory. The leadership categorization theory (LCT) proposes that the more leaders match their subordinates' cognitive image (prototype) of an ideal leader, the easier it is for subordinates to "categorize" them as leaders and consequently follow their leadership. In order words, when a leader is perceived as ideal for a specific role by the followers, they easily submit to such leaders and this usually contributes to their leadership success.[6] The LCT theory stems from the ingrained cultural practices and beliefs about the capabilities of both men and women, which play a role from a very early age and are solidified in our social practices. It is believed that, because women and men have traditionally occupied different roles, people might perceive women and men as having different leadership skills to hold key political positions in the society. Consequently, people have a tendency to approve individuals as leaders based on discriminatory parameters such as gender, religious, social, cultural taboos, and restrictions.[7]

Under leadership categorization theory (LCT), gendered modes of leadership are described as either "agentic" or "communal"[8] When women display the traits of the communal orientation, such as being affectionate, helpful, kind, and soft-spoken, they are seen as not being agentic enough and hence not capable of

leadership. But when they display the agentic behaviours such as being aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident, and forceful, as well as self-reliant and individualistic, they are seen as not communal enough, and they tend to be accused of being inauthentic. These tacit prejudices are institutionalized in everyday practices and eventually shape individuals embodied existence within their societies. This lack of authenticity usually causes women to conform to gender stereotype that urge them to refuse leadership positions or take them on with great discomfort and pessimism. One of the central assumptions that have become institutionalized within many societal practices is the notion that women are society's care-givers. This care-giving takes place primarily as unpaid labour within the private sphere[9] It is generally accepted that leadership positions within society typically go beyond care-giving towards roles that require strong direction, control and agency, from which women are often excluded because they are seen as being reserved for men.

Linking this theory to women's quest for equality and leadership, this probably accounts for low participation of women in political and leadership positions, despite overt acknowledgement of equal rights and opportunities. This is based on the belief that women are not born to rule; and that leadership, authority, and responsibility reside in men, while nurture, and dependence are the lot of women. This is probably why, in many world societies, majority (including women) are usually not comfortable with women holding on to leadership roles.[10] For example, in patriarchal societies powers and possessions are passed on from father to son and descent is reckoned along the male line. In traditional African societies, like Nigeria, a woman's place is seen to be in the home space, where she is confined to domestic chores, bearing and rearing of children, whereas the man roams the wild looking for adventure in work and war[11] This distinction of roles and expectations, functions to create and maintain unequal power relations between people of different biological sexes and results in the domination and exploitation of women as a group. In cases where women refuse to conform to these roles they are regarded as deviants[12]

Many African societies, before the advent of colonization, recognized gender boundaries. It was an inclusive governance which saw women playing leadership

roles based on their individual prowess. Those who had ability to lead any sector where not denied leadership and this is why African history is replete with women who were exceptional leaders. This genderless basis for power acquisition promoted a peaceful and harmonious society. However, colonization upset the power balance that existed between the sexes and further assisted men in consolidating their status as the domineering gender. From the foregoing, it means that women are considered for subordinate rather than leadership roles with the man as the dominating gender. Unfortunately, the mindset of Africans is still geared towards the lens of gender in assigning societal roles.[13]

Clarification of Concepts

Women Empowerment

Power has been defined as exercising "control over resources, ideology and self," and critically extends to "socio-political and economic context." The extent of power is dependent on the amount of resources that accrue to a person or group. Ordinarily, empowerment would mean to give someone power, a capacity to do something mental or physical, to devolve or delegate authority to someone or a group.[14] In a broader sense, empowerment could also connote the process of challenging existing power relations and gaining greater control over the resources of power. The concept of empowerment in this context is germane to the understanding of women's agitation for leadership positions in a democratic setting. This is because it involves power. Two critical things gleaned from the concepts of power and empowerment are: 1. those in power are not going to give power away easily. Reason: paraphernalia of power make people to want to retain it. 2. The interest to perpetuate oneself in power through his successor. Empowerment with regards to women does not connote giving away power but involves struggling for it. When applied to women in democratic setting, it would mean a conscious organization to wrestle power from men or plea for it. The underlying result is that women's leadership roles can only be appreciated as consequence of unrelenting agitation.

Gender Equality

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. It is also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes.[15] It

is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making; and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender. Equity is used for example within the education, health and humanitarian sectors referring to the equal distribution of resources based on the needs of different groups of people. UNICEF says gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike."[16] Gender equity puts the focus on fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs for women and men, girls and boys. Women and men are entitled to equal civil and political rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international commitments.[17] On a global scale, achieving gender equality also requires eliminating harmful practices against women and girls, including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence, gender wage gap and other oppression tactics.[18]

African Traditional Religion

ATR is the religion which originated with the African people and their world-view of life. Unlike Christianity and Islam which are imported religions; Africans are born into it and live it on a daily basis and from one generation to the other. It is a religion that links the present to the past and the forefathers to their descendants. ATR refers to the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the African people. Mbiti regard African religion and philosophy as a systematic study of the attitudes of mind and belief that have evolved in the many societies of Africa and affects the way of life of most African people.[19] Similarly, Awolalu says that "when we speak of African traditional religion, we mean the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans.[20] It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans". In summary, ATR can be defined or regarded as the "Religion founded by Africans and for the Africans".

Conflict Resolution

According to Rahim, conflict is an interacting process that shows itself as disagreement, dissonance, or incompatibility inside or between social entities; such

as individuals, groups, organizations, and so on.[21] Conflict arises when individuals pursue goals that are incompatible with one another. However, conflict resolution is an attempt to address the cause of conflict and seeks to build a new and lasting relationship between hostile groups.[22] It is a worldwide trend stimulated by serious inter-community strife such as that witnessed during the war in Bosnia.[23] Conflict resolution provides an opportunity to interact with the parties concerned, with the hope of at least reducing the scope, intensity and effects of conflicts.[24] During formal and informal meetings, conflict resolution exercises permit a reassessment of views and claims as a basis for finding options to crisis and to divergent points of view.[25]

Interrogating Women Empowerment in Lagos State in the context of Gender Equality.

Lagos state which is the political and economic nerve of Nigeria [26] has a population size of 16.536 million[27] with a women population of 4.39 million[28] and the Yoruba people as the dominant culture. Women play active role in the economy of the state based on the Yoruba cultural belief that women were expected to be economically active and largely independent of husbands[29] This propels their dominance in the business sector with most of them as traders. Sudarkasa posits that "in Yoruba society, the world of the market is primarily a woman's world" where gender power relations privilege women in the market context.[30] It must be stated that majority of these traders are on the individual self-sustainability level without any economic empowerment from the state.[31] The values Lagos women traders attach to their self- employment, its performance, and the income it brings (regardless of whether it is at survivalist or accumulative levels) help to add contextual meanings to economic pedigree of the state. A reflection on the large number of Lagos women involved in trading should naturally construe that the institutional rhetoric of successive government in Lagos state on women empowerment would have factored them in as a priority given their enormous contributions. The market women should be the primary target for any government aiming to improve gender equality from the economic sphere considering the large number of women involved in grass root trading. However, this is not the case despite promises to empower the poor and especially women engaged in economic activities.

The 'empowerment' spoken of has often come to mean a few hand-outs to some cronies. The measures put in place by government for women to access loans are often stringent making the scheme hostile rather than alleviate their poverty. This demonstrates that most of the efforts by government to improve the economic condition of women in Lagos state, have not had any real positive impact on the lives of many. This naturally results in both physical and psychological suffering for them. The dismal performance in job creation, human capital development, and poverty alleviation projects, has resulted in the migration of women to other parts of Africa and Europe in search of greener pastures. The deplorable economic conditions have forced many shops to close up with increased number of women entering into the labour market to seek greener pastures leading to sexual exploitation. These shows the gendered nature of the so-called poverty alleviation scheme of the Lagos state government and the untold hardship it has unleashed on women both physically and psychologically. The performance of the government though improving can still be considered dismal.

Role of ATR in promoting Gender Equality

Gender discrimination is prevalent in the vast majority of institutionalized religions, where it is left undisturbed or tackled. It is no gainsaying that the male domination of religion limit women's role within a religion, and the ability to be office holders. Perhaps the greatest problem is that most women especially in Africa do not challenge the fundamental gender roles that subordinate them to males and gives power primarily to men. If religion and women's rights is accepted as clashing and mutually exclusive, without conscious efforts at resolving the conflict for peaceful co-existence, then it is inevitable that gender equality will not be fully realized.

In recent times the status of women in African religion is constantly evolving to a more prestigious stance. Women are conscious of the need to play not just complementary roles alone but also become crusaders of a new religious heritage befitting the new world order. The emerging religiosity of modern society does not view institutionalized religion and religiosity as identical. A growing number of women in every religious community are in search of a tolerant creed to further human understanding beyond an exclusionary, intolerant institutional religiosity.

Women through the doctrinal precepts of ATR which are majorly favorable to them are demanding for a paradigm shift through several ways: firstly, female practitioners are more emboldened in demanding equal recognition from their male counterparts on the premise of divine provision. The recognition given to women by the Supreme Being since inception of the world means that they hold a valuable status which men are expected to respect. Female suzerainty at the creation of the world is attested to in *Odu Osa Meji* where it is said that *Olodumare* gave woman (*Odu*) control on the condition that she use her enormous powers with care and discretion. *Olodumare* also compelled that whatever may happen men should always incorporate women in all their endeavors.[32] The divine superiority of women is also reinforced in *Odu Irete* through the cosmogonical marriage of *Orunmilla* to *Odu* who is believed to hold the knowledge of the oracles and divination. It is *Odu* who gave *Orunmilla* the '*Awo*', which is the secret power to control the '*Ase*'. This is the basic reason why women are included in all ritual cults even those described as strictly masculine cults have at least one powerful female member. A classic example of this is the Egungun cult where the Alaagba and Iya Agon (male and female titles) share equal status of authority. The realization that women are fundamental to their success and if sidelined can be a hindrance to their progress both physically and spiritually is a germane tool employed for gender advocacy and equality.

In African Religious sphere, the realm of ritual has proven versatile for displaying to large extent favorable feminine gender construction**.** Spiritual responsibilities are not always biologically determined rather it becomes a space for showcasing spiritual endowment and competence by both sexes. Olajubu emphasizes that "African gender relations are usually marked by mutual respect and complementary relations" This is demonstrated in women's spirituality as it manifests in their leadership roles, healing practices, spirit possession, fertility rites, goddess worship and divination practices.[33] This simply means that women in African religion enjoy a degree of religious independence compared with Christianity and Islam. Hence, ATR is not an advocate of female subjugation but rather stipulates that men must recognize their invaluable influence.

The dual personality ascribed to women in ATR is a compelling factor for gender equality which has yielded much results. Africans believe that women can be both cool and hot at the same time. Her outward calm nature is never mistaken for cowardice rather it serves as a covering for an inner masculine aggressiveness which is only displayed when threatened or provoked hence the Yoruba adage "*esu lobirin*" meaning "women are tricksters like Esu". This unpredictable and contradictory nature makes men wary of them at all times. This belief is corroborated by *Odu Ifa Osetura*:

Akere finu sogbon
Ni oruko ti an pe Ifa iran
Ija gidigidi ko kan agba
Eniti Olorun ba ni agba
Baba lama pe
Adifa fun Osetura ti o ma ti kere
Gba agba lowo olodunmerinlogun
The small one whose mind is full of wisdom
Is the name we call Ifa iran
Violent scuffles has nothing to do with old age
He who the god's ordain as elder we call father
Ifa divination was performed for Osetura
Who performed a fatherly role despite his small age[34]

The *Odu* reiterates that if women are not given honor and respect then they can be angry and destroy the world. If a woman intends to capture power from a man she can use 201 tricks that are intrinsic to all females and an additional 50 tricks after which man's power will be theirs if they desire it.[35] The lives of all males are said to be in the hands of women. If a husband is to succeed it depends on the wife. The success of the family also depends on her. The *Odu* also warns that men should not devalue women. The socio-cultural pattern of the people also corroborates this from the home front in terms of husband and wife relations. In African society a woman after long years of marriage becomes the bedrock of the home. This is in recognition of her endurance and tenacity at holding the home intact despite all odds. At this stage She metamorphosis from ordinary wife (*iyawo*) to *iya wa* (our mother) and addressed personally by all members of the family including the

husband as *ma'ami* (my mother). The strong will and enduring nature of women probably informed reason why they were included in governance in pre-colonial era and despite marginalization still hold prominent offices especially at the market place till date

Motherhood and secretive nature of women are important factors that naturally compel unique status on women in African society. The natural fear that men have for women when it comes to the negotiating power of motherhood and secrecy has in most times provided a platform for not just gender equity but also female superiority.[36] Africans perceive a fundamental difference characteristically between male and females in the ability to conceal or reveal secrets. For example the Yoruba stress this distinction in the adage "Inu *obirin jin*" this simply means "women are more secretive than men". This belief is buttressed by the Odu Ifa *Ogbe Iwori*. This describes how a king lost his life for revealing the mysteries of the *Oro* cult to his wife and warns men that revealing secret will bring destruction. The inscrutable secretive nature of women commands respect for them and validates their possession of the *ase*. It is believed that the concentration of the vital force (*ase*) in women creates extraordinary potential that can manifest itself in both positive and negative ways. It manifests positively when used in invoking blessing. For example, it is believed that the power of a mother to evoke blessings or curses upon her children by the virtue of motherhood is a very potent force. This is why Africans regard mothers as a "god". This belief is typified in the Yoruba adage "orisa bi iya kosi" therefore children are expected to accord their mothers the same respect giving to the gods. Her mystical powers can also be used negatively when operating as a witch. This mystical power is greatly dreaded in African society thereby evoking much respect for them from their male counterparts. It is believed that when angered they unleash their wrath of destruction on their victims resulting in all forms of maladies. Their wrath can only be placated after sacrifices of appeasement are made unto them.[37] The secretive nature of women is a primary manifestation of feminine power in ATR.

From the above it is obvious that African women in ATR are not expected to be treated with indignation by being subjected to male superiority as a form of subjugation but rather as a means of protection. ATR presents a complementary

status for both sexes.[38] This is aptly expressed in the adage *owo ni afin we owo koto mo* meaning the use of both hands are required for a proper cleansing of the hands. This is also expressed in the cosmogonical plans of the Supreme Being for both sexes. It is said that the male and female were created as helpmates and therefore must recognize and appreciate the worth of each other.[39] The belief that women should be seen and not heard is not in tandem with ATR religious view it is a byproduct of colonial influence.[40] Consequently, it is only when women assume the right to define for themselves the parameters of their own identity in retrospect to their religious doctrines and stop accepting unconditionally and without question what is presented as tradition then will they be able to effectively assume equal status with men. What African women are agitating for presently is the opportunity to use, to the full extent, their God-given capabilities to nurture and enrich African religion and culture.

ATR, Gender Equality and conflict resolution in Lagos State.

The improved status of women today is as a result of the reinterpretation of religious and cultural laws which was manipulated to suit the dominant positions held by men in the society.[41] The reinterpretation of these laws by majorly African scholars, feminists and human rights activist such as Bolanle Awe (1992); Oyeronke Oyewumi (1999); Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1992); Sophie Oluwole (1993) has provided the enabling environment for better gender negotiations both at the home front and in public space. The benefits of these on the status of women is apparently visible in Lagos state when compared to other states in Nigeria. The Mega city of Lagos being the hub of civilization and religious activities in Nigeria provides ample opportunities for the actualization of gender equality to which women have taken adequate advantage.[42]

The exposure to civilization and modernization for both genders has stifled harmful cultural practices which place women at a disadvantaged position such as early marriage which truncates their education, inheritance laws which denies females of any inheritance, Widowhood practices that deny women social and economic rights, Female genital mutilations and the preference of male above female children. The continued invocation of culture, sexuality and religion in order to treat women unequally is under constant well-grounded criticism by

human rights activists, and feminist movements who have identified them as discriminative and demeaning.[43] Lagos state holds the highest record of girl-child and women in education.[44] The high level of educational awareness in the state provide equal status for both sexes to pursue their educational ambition without the inhibition of gender discrimination still operating in rural areas. This has resulted in more women being employed in public sector of the state, holding managerial positions while a large number are now into professions so far dominated by men, and more women are becoming self-employed.[45] This has helped in no small measure to promote good human relations (based on mutual respect) and to promote peaceful coexistence in the state.

In the same vein the religious ideals of African religion provides a safe haven for the preservation of cultural practices that promotes dignity of women. For example, customs and beliefs relating to traditional view of sex and sexuality have continued to endure against European permissive expression of sexuality which has distorted the traditional role of sex in contemporary times. **For instance, African religion forbids the arbitrary use of sex and sexuality. This is basically because sex is regarded as a spiritual act confined to married couples and expressed purposefully for procreation. This belief still holds sway despite the high level of literacy and Westernization in the state making marriage a priority for Lagosians.** The consciousness that marriage confers a status of respect on a woman is prevalent in the minds of Lagosians; this is why despite the high level of educated women many of them count it a big achievement to be married[46] The sanctity of sex and sexuality enforced in the state has helped to curb the level of sexual immorality and abuse against women. This makes Lagos a prime example of how traditional culture continues to impact on aspects of sexuality despite modernization. Consequently, discrimination against women on the basis of gender is condemned in ATR. This has helped to promote conflict resolution with regards to status of women as mere objects of sexual gratification in an age where sexuality and its relevance as being so distorted.

Also, the high demand for gender equality within the state has lowered the cultural belief that women are domestic servitudes of their spouse. In rural areas women are responsible for most tasks involved in producing food for families, including

obtaining water and firewood, often across long distances. In urban centers like Lagos though women still experience unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities and financial resources however, the percentage is quite minimal compared to the rural areas. In homes where the men abandon their responsibilities, a high record of domestic violence has been reported.[47] It is a known fact that the prevalence of extreme poverty in Nigeria and other West African countries functions as a major push factor for domestic and civil unrest.[48] In order to prevent the prevailing occurrence of such conflicts the government must ensure equal access to employment and other amenities within the state.[49] The cry of feminist groups and organizations, for the most part, concerns how the crises of women's empowerment can be resolved, since there is the strong conviction that the resolution of the problem will lead to improved development and peaceful co-existence in societies.[50]

Despite the improved status of women in Lagos state tension in gender relations still persist even as government adopted internal gender equality mechanisms or complied with legislated quotas, women still struggle against discriminatory attitudes and behavior, as well as threats and intimidation, aimed at preserving male-dominated power structures. It is obvious that institutional and legislative change has not necessarily spurred permanent shifts in organizational culture or gender norms which inhibit women. Men still enjoy higher status in the sense that they are overrepresented in leadership positions resulting in women having to organize against the constant threat of marginalization through local and international support to address these inequities.[51]

From ATR's perspective gender-based agitations leading to conflict resolution can be resolved when an inclusive system of governance is operated as ordained by the Supreme Being. According to God's creative plan interdependency and mutual sustenance mark African gender relations.[52] This is evident in God's relations with the divinities who function as ministers in his theocratic system of governance. Powers were distributes equally to both male and female divinities, each one manning his or her portfolio of responsibility. The conduct and interaction of goddesses in African religious narratives provide models for female roles at the religious and social levels.[53] For example, goddesses are closely connected to the

governance of some African communities. Osun, the goddesses of cool waters in Osogbo, Nigeria, is closely connected with the sovereignty of the town and the king. Osun is recognized as the owner of the land on which Osogbo stands. Appreciation for her care is demonstrated yearly in an elaborate festival that attracts devotees from within and outside Nigeria[54] Consequently, in Africa religious cosmological accounts lies model for sustainable gender-based relations from which Lagos state can model.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper discussed gender equality and women empowerment in the context of ATR and how this can facilitate peaceful coexistence in Lagos state. It attempted to give an exposé of the challenges women face due to their subordinate status in society despite the fact that women and men are viewed as equal citizens. Unfortunately, this is not reflected in the public sphere where men benefit more and women are denied the applicability of substantive gender equality in the societies. African cosmological accounts often submit that God, the Supreme Being, created the world, and the first humans as male and female though the exact methods of creation may differ from one locality to another.[55] African cosmologies and rituals space display a generally positive attitude to the world and the place of humans within it thereby giving both sexes secular and religious power based on the individual's worth. This was the premise upon which power was allotted in pre-colonial era where women enjoyed a fair degree of equality. A good understanding of African religious traditions is essential for a renegotiation of gender equality in Lagos where the status of women is far better compared to other states in Nigeria. Lagos Women are continually defying the limitations that society has historically placed on them through nationalist and feminist agendas in order to further their rights as individuals. The study recommends a need for cultural shift on stereo-typed traditions that deny women the opportunity to explore their God-given talents. This will serve as one of the many mediums of advocacy for gender equity commitments in the socio-political agenda of the state. Understanding gender relations from *Ifa* perspective which instructs a harmonious and mutual cooperation between the genders may well be the potential driving force for the much needed social change. It is believed this will bring about enduring peace and holistic progress within the state. Also, there is the need for the

government adopt international humanitarian and human right law in the protection of women this is germane in conflict resolution. Women must be encouraged and supported by relevant state agencies and traditional authorities because of the invaluable roles they play in society.

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