

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INQUIRY INTO WOMEN - MADE BREACHES ON THE EMANCIPATION ROAD: THE IGBO EXAMPLE

Chiamaka Ngozi Oyeka

Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies

University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria

Email:chiamaka.oyeka@yahoo.com

Abstract

Women have over the years bemoaned the secondary position ascribed to them in the society. They see patriarchy as their major challenge to self-actualization, hence, the feminists fight for women emancipation. On the other hand, men see women as their own problem, claiming that women are their own greatest enemies. The concern of this study is to investigate rivalry among women, the reason(s) behind it, and the kind of words / expressions they use in manifesting it, the situations they use such words, the cause of such usage, its effects and the way forward for women towards attaining their goals. The qualitative approach is adopted in this study. Consequently, interviews were used to elicit data from fifty female respondents. Findings reveal envy, jealousy and patriarchy as the major reasons behind friction among women. There are exceptions to rules, as some well nurtured women tend not to be caught in the web of jealousy. The work advocates female solidarity, for without it, women will not make much progress in their moves for self-actualization.

Key Words: patriarchy, emancipation, rivalry, qualitative approach

Introduction

Feminists argue that women are oppressed or disadvantaged by comparison with men. For feminists, the oppression of women is unjustified. Women cry out on the imbalance in the society and how it negatively affects them. In the words of Ike-Nwafor (2008, p.174), “gender inequality encourages stereotyping, limits opportunities and frowns at creativity and individual prospects.” Women have over the years been stereotypically referred to as the weaker sex. Stereotypes are based on assumptions. Assumptions are not always true because they are without proof. These assumptions can hinder personal and professional growth. They can also stifle individual expression and creativity.

Women blame their woes on patriarchy. Ritzer (2012, p. 471) explains that ‘patriarchy is not the unintended and secondary consequence of some other set of factors - be it biology or socialization or sex roles or the class system. It is a primary power arrangement sustained by strong and deliberate intention.’ Continuing, Ritzer notes that through participation in patriarchy, men learn how to hold other human beings in contempt, to see them as nonhuman, and to control them.

Works done in different aspects of language buttress feminists' argument on the oppression of women. It is argued that men packaged language in a way that it favours them more than women. The works of Oha (1998), Onyejekwe (2001), Asiyanbola (2007), Nhlekisana (2009), Balogun (2010) and Oyeka (2016) show that the oppression of women is fostered in Africa through cultural vehicles such as proverbs. Feminists also argue that the dictionary is powerful in reinforcing the expression of men's prejudice against women. For Romaine (1994, p.107), "because it is man which makes the dictionaries and defines meanings, they persistently reserve the positive semantic space for themselves and relegate woman to a negative one". Men are seen as being in charge in every sphere.

Patriarchy has also been fingered to be the brain behind female-on-female hostility. Ezeigbo (1993) avers that women wage war against themselves in the family setup. She draws attention to men as the center of the fight between co-wives and mother/ daughter-in-law in the family. Continuing, Ezeigbo (1993) notes that:

...man introduced polygamy into the marriage institution in order to divide women, sow the seeds of rivalry and jealousy amongst them in order to effectively control them... it is our belief that no matter what useful purpose polygamy may have served or may serve in our cultures, it is the most devastating force that brought in its wake hatred among women; rivalry and other problems that plague women's relationships today... (p. 8).

Here, men are seen as introducing enmity between women through polygamy. In a polygamous setting, women are left to compete for the love of one man. Such competition leads to envy and disputes among the co-wives. A polygamous setting where co-wives are left to compete for their husband's love is viewed as a major divisive strategy for women. When there is rivalry among co-wives, they hardly think of ways to unite in order to fight a common challenge. The disunity among women gives more room for the man to effectively control them.

Based on the above premise, that women are oppressed in the society, feminists aim at gaining and securing the rights of the woman which will add qualitative values to their lives. It equally reassures them that the pursuit of their dreams and purposes will no longer be hindered. Both the oppression from men and the fight for freedom from feminist are done with language as an instrument. Feminist interest in language lies in the part language plays alongside other social practices and institutions in reflecting, creating and sustaining gender divisions in society, and how these divisions reflect societal imbalances along gender lines (Letsholo, 2009).

It is observed that despite the cry for emancipation from women, men see women as posing a challenge to themselves. Men often use the disagreement among women in formal and non- formal settings to make mockery of them in their cry for emancipation. It is common in the society to hear men argue that women are their

own problem, not men. By their argument, men imply that women are their own worst enemies. As highly important as Ezeigbo's (1993) work is, that men use polygamy to set enmity between women, observation shows that in this era of modernity, where people move to cities in search of greener pastures thereby limiting the contacts between co-wives and daughters/ mothers-in-law, there is still friction among women. With the related Christian ethos of one man, one wife, most men now settle for monogamous marriages but same problem persists. The story is same even in situations where some men due to some religious belief or circumstances settle for polygamy and settle their wives in two different locations. Aside the friction among women in the family set-up, women tend to oppress one another in every other sphere of life.

This study sets out to investigate the missing link in women's drive for emancipation. Men's argument that women are their own problem by being antagonistic to each other serves as a pointer to investigating women's relationship among themselves. Most relationships are carried out through language. This work therefore sets out to investigate the reason behind women's friction and abrasion among themselves, the kind of words/ expressions they use, the situations they use such words/ expressions against themselves, the cause(s) of such usage, its effects and the possible remedial measures.

Methodology

The participant observation method was used in this study. The researcher is a woman. She grew up in a patriarchal society. She had at one time or the other witnessed women using derogatory words against themselves both in a formal and in an informal setting.

The researcher also used for data collection, oral face- to -face and telephone interviews. With the aid of two research assistants, fifty women between the ages of seventeen and sixty-five were purposively sampled and interviewed based on the fact that the study is centered on women. It is the women that know the expressions they use for one another, the reasons behind the choice and the way it affects them. The interviewees are from different parts of the Igbo land. They were equally selected without recourse to educational background and occupation. The same set of questions was posed to the participants. The researcher tried to elicit from the interviewees, the expressions women use against one another, the reason(s) behind such usage, its effects and the way out.

Data analysis

Women hostility against their fellow women

Data reveals that women are hostile to themselves for many reasons. The reasons range from the nature of women to be hostile, to be envious, to be jealousy and then to patriarchy. The first category of respondents contends that women are territorial and domineering in nature. Women also see themselves as rivals. This

group constitutes twenty-two percent of the respondents. Consider the following excerpts:

SAMPLE I

INTERVIEWEER: Why are women hostile to their fellow women?

RESPONDENT 1: Women are possessive and domineering by nature and so, whatever environment they occupy is their territory and must be secured/ guarded jealously.

RESPONDENT 2: We would never admit it but we are secretly in competition with each other.

The above sample shows women as being naturally domineering. The second category constituting sixty-eight percent of respondents argue that jealousy and envy are the major reasons behind woman- on- woman friction and consequent hostility. Below are some excerpts:

RESPONDENT 3: Women are hostile to their fellow women because they are jealous. When one is doing better than the other financially, materially and academically, they are always angry and jealous...

RESPONDENT 4: I believe that women hostility towards each other is borne out of envy, the desire to be better than the other woman. The idea/ thought that she deserves to be in the same enviable position as the other person.

Women's hostility under this category is traced to envy and jealousy. Four percent of the respondents take a totally different position, submitting that not every woman is hostile. Below is an excerpt from one of the respondents:

RESPONDENT 5: ...not every woman is hostile. Though might say to be in every woman but just like I was taught, nature and nurture is what makes a person who he/she is. When one allows nature to control her, hostility is inevitable [sic].

The above claim admits a weakness in human nature. It brings to the fore, the role of nurture which is a pointer to a positive change.

Two percent of the respondents point to patriarchy as the force behind women's hostile attitude. The argument is as follows:

RESPONDENT 6: Women are been [sic] told from onset that fellow women are the enemies. This is basically because of Patriarchy. Women have been socialized to think that there isn't any value in their interactions with fellow women. That men should be the epicenter of their lives.

The above argument centers on wrong orientation. For the respondent, men are the brain behind hostility among women.

A respondent representing two percent of the sampled population submits among other reasons that some women deserve a hostile attitude. Below is her submission:

RESPONDENT 7: Many reasons...others are hostile because they themselves are broken people and they feel better hurting others. Others still hostile because the women they are being hostile to deserve it.

Here, the respondent makes it clear that hurting people hurt others. More so, hostility is justified based on the fact that those who receive the hostile attitude deserve it.

The remaining two percent of the respondents give no clue on why women are hostile to themselves.

Manifestations of Friction and Hostility

The second inquiry has to do with the time women show hostility to their fellow women. Respondents argue that hostile attitude could start at any time and in any place. A lady might experience a hostile attitude from her fellow woman at their first meeting, maybe as a result of her beauty or what has been said about her. Sixty-four percent of respondents submit that women show aggression to their fellow women when such women possess what they do not have. Following is an excerpt from a respondent:

SAMPLE 2

INTERVIEWEER: At what time do women show such hostility?

RESPONDENT 8: Women exhibit glaring hostility when they notice some outstanding potentials in other women which may be even unknown to such women. These potentials range from intellectualism to physical appearance, and extends to fashion sense and even simple self-confidence. A sense of rivalry develops and matures into noticeable hostilities.

Success of a fellow woman is here pointed to as a trigger that ignites enmity among women. Twenty-two percent of respondents were not very specific. They posit that aggression might start anytime and in anywhere. The view is as follows:

RESPONDENT 9: Whenever they have the opportunities to cross path with them...in a meetings...village, church...or any social gathering...

From the above excerpt, one can see that hostility can be exhibited even in the most unlikely place-the church.

Ten percent of the respondents observe that hostility sets in whenever some women feel that they are better than others or that other women do not belong to their class. Such 'higher class' group becomes hostile to the 'lower class' to intimidate them into serving them of the higher class.

RESPONDENT 11: Death of husband, marital crisis, childlessness, when caught in adultery.

The above excerpt shows that women show hostility to their fellow women who are passing through some difficult situations.

The remaining four percent argue that women show hostility when some wrong is done to them.

RESPONDENT 12: When some wrong is done to them.

Ways Women Show Hostility

On the ways women show hostility, there are varied answers. Eight percent of respondents submit that women show hostility through body language. Thirty-eight argue that it is through verbal expressions. Forty-four percent posit that it is through both body language and verbal expression. The remaining ten percent submit that hostility is shown through victimization especially in formal settings, gang-ups, physical combat and killings. Consider the excerpt below:

SAMPLE 3

INTERVIEWEER: In what ways do they show hostility to their fellow women?

RESPONDENT 13: Attacking whatever positive idea you have either by their actions... or words (gossip) and even non-verbal poisonous thought.

RESPONDENT 14: ... battering words, aggression, fight, verbal abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse... attitude lets you know they hate you.

RESPONDENT 15: Refusing to give other ladies employment, promotion or treating female house helps with so much disdain.

The above responses show that hostility can manifest in different forms which ranges from a verbal to a physical assault.

Expressions Women Use Against Themselves

Women show verbal hostility to their fellows. The following are some expressions women use against themselves:

SAMPLE 4

INTERVIEWEER: Give examples of expressions women use against themselves.

RESPONDENT 16: Expressions like “Ada is always a girl” can be heard among women who feel their rivals are ever young. Margaret Thatcher is around. Artificial yellow pawpaw (for colour wars). Alariwo of Africa (noise maker). Bend down boutique (fashion wars). Handbag (if they have better marriage than theirs). Mgbeké, village girl...

RESPONDENT 17: Slut, ashawo, ugly, no ass, small boobs... basically men started this first to make women see themselves as competitors and men, the prize. They use the tool to make women feel small so they can prowl on their insecurities... Data gathered under this category are subdivided thus:

Hostile Expressions for Very Successful Women

There are virtually negative expressions from jealous women for every of their fellow women's achievements. The following samples are expressions used for women who excelled in their various fields of endeavours:

1. Is she the only one?
2. She thinks she is loved by everybody.
3. What is she feeling like?
4. Does she think she is better than anybody?
5. It is not that she is better than any of us, she is not so good in that field, she was just lucky.

The above expressions have jealous undertones. The first question shows that the addressed is above the addressee. The second expression implies that the addressee is a lovable character and thereby loved by many. The third and fourth expressions show that the addressee has confidence in herself. In the last expression, hard work is erroneously substituted for luck.

Hostile Expressions for Spinsters

The situation is the same in non-formal settings. It cuts across different categories of women, spinsters and married. For spinsters, many derogatory expressions abound for them as if some women will live their lives and do same for others. Consider the following:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 6. Onochiriobi | (One who occupies the outhouse) |
| 7. Nna ga-alu | (Father will marry) |
| 8. Ogbanhò di | (One who is too choosy in terms of marriage) |
| 9. Akwa rere ure | (Rotten egg) |
| 10. Okuelu/ ashawo | (Harlot) |

The first three expressions center on Igbo tradition. For the Igbo, *agboghò tofee onye mụrụ a jụwa ọ bụ onye na-alu* 'when a woman outgrows, whose daughter is this, the question becomes, whose wife is she? When a woman passes the first stage, fellow women join the entire society in the name calling which by implication show that the lady should be in her husband's house not father's. Some ladies are spinsters based on choice while some others are not lucky enough either in having suitors or good suitors. As feminists argue over the use of title 'Miss', claiming that a lady's marital status is nobody's business, women calling their fellow women by the above hostile/ derogatory names need to be revisited.

Feminists disapprove the objectifying of women. Referring to fellow women as rotten egg as number nine reveals just because she is not married is a great insult on womanhood. Of all the data gathered for the research, *ashawo* 'harlot' appeared severally. Further investigation reveals that it is used for both spinsters and married. Additionally, it is the most provocative expression a woman can use against her

fellow who may not necessarily have anything to do with wayward life style. It is used just to run a person down/hurt such a one's feelings. Such usage is another example of women fighting against themselves verbally.

Hostile Expressions for Women with Peaceful Marriages

The married are not free from the hostile attitude. A peaceful marriage attracts jealousy to the extent that a woman in such a marital venture is indirectly termed lazy. Women often sing the following song when such enters a informal gathering where such women are in charge:

Nwaanyị di ya hụlụ n'anya

(A woman whom the husband loves)

Onye ụjọ ọlụ

(Abstains from work)

E bute akpa layisi o lichaa

(When bag of rice is bought she finishes it)

Onye ụjọ ọlụ

(Abstains from work)

E bute akpa binsi o lichaa

(When a bag of beans is bought, she finishes it)

Onye ụjọ ọlụ

(Abstains from work)

Nwaanyị bịa nje ọlụ ooo!

(Woman come let us go and work)

Anaghị m alụ o na di m hụrụ m n'anya

(I will not work for my husband loves me)

Onye ụjọ ọlụ

(Abstains from work)

The above song is another sample of women using language to paint a wrong picture of themselves. It ties love with laziness which is not so in real life. It presents women loved by their husbands as lazy people, who are only good in consuming the wealth of their husbands, and making no useful contribution.

Hostile Expressions for the Barren

The married without children have their own share in the hostility menu. Below are some unpalatable expressions used for them:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 11. Osisi amighi mkpuru | (Unfruitful tree) |
| 12. Orinwa | (Consumer of child) |
| 13. I bu nwoke ka I bu nwaanyi? | (Are you a man or a woman?) |
| 14. Onye uwa ojoo | (Someone with a bad destiny) |
| 15. Itughi atu ma ya fodu omumu | (You did not take in not to think of putting to bed) |

In most parts of Africa, children are the expectation of every couple. When there is a delay in child birth, some wives fall victim to their fellow women as if they chose barrenness by themselves. The first sentence likens the barren woman to a thing which is a barren tree. Insight from the Holy Bible shows that a barren fig tree was cursed. By implication, the barren woman is cursed. The second expression hurts more, based on the fact that the woman is accused of witchcraft for she eats the child she should carry to full term for delivery. The third expression is in question form. The addressed and the addressee know the answer. There is no way the addressee will answer the question correctly or prove that she is a woman other than by becoming pregnant. The fourth expression is more of a conclusion on the barren woman's destiny that she carries a bad fate. The last expression marks the peak of hostility. Telling a woman that she was never pregnant not to think of putting to bed is an indirect way of demeaning her womanhood.

Hostile Expressions for Widows

The widows who are left to cater alone for the family also encounter hostility from their fellow women. Consider the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 16. Otagburudi | (One who bite the husband to death) |
| 17. Ajo nwaanyi | (Bad woman) |
| 18. Omegburudi | (One who maltreated the husband) |
| 19. Ogeri zutoro nwa ajadu na-agu | (A woman who trained up her children to maturity and desires widowhood) |
| 20. Ajadujadamjadum | (The poorest of the widows) |

The first expression under this category suggests the woman's bad attitude to be behind the husband's death. The case is not always true. Usually, such name calling comes from sisters in law, hence the plea from one of the respondents that some traditions not favourable to women should be abolished. 'Bad woman', which is expression seventeen, could be used by jealous women for any one including a good woman. The purpose of such usage is to run the person down. The matter is worse with widows for it is easier to believe that it is their bad characters that sent their husbands to their graves. One who maltreats the husband as expression

eighteen shows, is not always true for some women. The picture painted in the nineteenth expression suggests that the woman desired widowhood because the major responsibility of the man, which is child training is done. Moreover, the said woman desires free movement or visits from one child's house to another without thinking of a husband he needed to cook for. The intended meaning of the name calling is not always true. Aside training the children, there is need for companionship among couples. The last expression depict that there are different classes of widows. As the name implies, the addressed has no helper, hence, she is the poorest of widows. Such reminder is the climax of hostility.

Hostile Expressions to Show Class

Suffice it to acknowledge that there is a class demarcation among the married, the very rich, average and the poor. Hostile expressions from women to their fellow women show clearly, the classification. Below are some of the expressions:

21. Ndi rijuru afo kwuo okwu I kwuo.
(When the well-fed talk, you talk also)
22. Naani ego isi m kpara ga-egotenwu gi na ezinaulo gi.
(The money I used to make my hair can buy your family)
24. Azu m ji si nri otu oge ka I ga-eji si otu afo.
(You will use the fish I use to prepare a meal to cook for one year)
22. Ego unu o ruru ego iteofe m?
(Your money is it up to my pot of soup)
23. Di m ka di gi jide ego igwe
(My husband has more hard currency than your husband)

The first two expressions show the speaker to be of a higher class in terms of money, and the addressee of a lower class. The hostile expressions here are not just to humiliate the addressee but to make her recognize that the one addressing her is of a higher class and deserves some greater respect or worship from her. The twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth expressions show the addressee to be rich but not as rich as the one addressing her. The one addressing shows clearly that she is richer and should be worshipped. The last expression moved completely from the wealth of the women to their husbands'. For a woman to boast with another person's sweat even if the person is her husband is demeaning to womanhood. The men they boast about are fully aware of their boasts. The boasts serve as an encouragement to the men to maintain their positions as Lords and keep women under subordination.

Hostile Expressions that has to do with Nature/ Stature

Nature and stature have also been identified as sites for hostile expressions.

Examples of such expressions are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| 24. Iteakwu | (Fat person) |
| 25. Ogwuazụ | (Skinny) |
| 26. Afọnsi | (Big stomach) |
| 27. Isi udele | (Ugly head) |
| 28. Ihu enwe | (Ugly face) |
| 29. Qnqalanso | (Short person) |

The above expressions are used to despise the referents based on nature. Hostility here lies in the tone of the addresser. The first expression under this category disparage a fat person while the second, a slim person. Whether women admit it or not, nature or gene has a role to play in human shape. Some women with big stomach as name twenty-six expresses, battle with ill health. Names twenty seven to twenty nine talk about the ugliness of the addressed head, face, and the short height of the addressed. All these were bestowed by nature.

Hostile Expressions for Lazy Women

Sometimes, some expressions are directed towards noticed bad attitude in women. Hostile expressions are used for lazy women. The hostility lies in the tone of the addresser. Consider the following:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 24. Okammanabeedi | (One who is better on the bed) |
| 25. Dimmeerem | (Let my husband do it for me) |
| 26. Orinriagutaoku | (Glutton who does not run an errand) |
| 27. Onyeujooru | (Lazybone) |
| 28. Qnqkittenweefe | (An idle soul who claims to be busy) |

The first name in this category projects the addressee as a lazy bone who is only good on the bed. The second expression depicts the addressee as someone who is completely dependent on the husband. For the third, the addressee is presented as one who is only good in consuming food and too lazy to make a useful contribution. The last two expressions showcase lazy attitudes.

Hostile Expressions for Bad Cooks

Bad cooks are not spared with hostile words. The following are some expressions used on them:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 29. Ajoite | (Bad pot) |
| 30. Ajonri | (Bad food) |

31. Omekitoro gburu ede awii (A notorious one that made porridge of cocoyam)
 32. Oteonugbuinu (One who uses unwashed bitter leaf to prepare soup)

In the first two expressions, *ajọ* 'bad' is used as an adjective to qualify 'pot' and 'food'. The 'pot' represents food. The names simply show the addressee to be a bad cook. The last two names points clearly to the food the addressee cooked badly. Among the Igbo, cocoyam takes a longer time to cook that one does not just make porridge of it. It is only a very bad cook that would do that. Bitter leaf is usually washed very well to get rid of its bitterness before using it to cook soup, if not the soup will not be tasty. The last name by implication shows the addressee to be a very bad cook.

Hostile Expressions for Loquacious Women

Loquaciousness is another area that is not spared with hostile expressions.

The following expressions say more:

33. Ichooku (Parrot)
 34. Ọnonandoafuonwa (One who see the moon from a shade)
 35. Ọkocharakoohuru (One who says everything she saw).
 36. Ọnuezuike (Restless mouth)
 37. Ọnukwube (Let the mouth talk)

A parrot is a bird known for its ability to talk. It does that by mimicking sounds made by other animals such as humans. One will not claim that a parrot has the ability to reason like human beings. Referring to a woman as a parrot is degrading. The second name is also degrading. The moon comes out only at night when the sun has set. For one to stand under the shade to see the moon is an abnormal. The last three names show the highest degree of loquaciousness. The referent keeps no secret but says all hence, she is not trustworthy.

Hostile Expressions for Dirty Women

Dirtiness is abhorred by majority in the society. Women do not spare their fellow women who are dirty; hence the following hostile expressions:

38. O wuru ahu awu abu (One leaves out the vital places in bath)
 39. Atiti bu ude (One who uses dirt as a pomade)
 40. Ezi bida (Bida pig)

The above expressions depict the height of dirtiness. One may ask the need for a bath when the vital places are not washed as the first expression depicts. It is equivalent of not taking bath at all. The second and the last expression show same level of dirt, which is the highest. For one to use dirt as pomade shows that the

person hardly takes a bath. Pigs are known for wallowing in dirt. Bida is a street in Onitsha town of Anambra state known many years back for its dirty environs. To equate one with an already dirty pig which is found in a very dirty environment is just a way of showing that the person is dirt personified.

Hostile Expressions that have to do With Promiscuity

The society frowns at promiscuity especially when it has to do with women. The following expressions are used to address women who live promiscuous life:

41. Akwunaoku (Hot harlot)
42. Nwokejuafọ (She who is never satisfied with man)
43. Ukwuezuike (Restless waist)
44. Ojiukwuachọjị (One who offers kola with her waist)
45. Ọnọnadiachọdi (One who is married to a man and still looks for a husband)

The above expressions are used to attack wayward women. 'Akwuna' harlot is a general name for promiscuous women. The addition of *oku* 'hot' to qualify the harlot shows that the addressee is a harlot that belongs to a special grade. The second and third names under this category are overstatements used for women with very strong libido. The Igbo use kola nuts to show acceptance to their visitors. The fourth name *Ojiukwuachọjị* signifies that the referred indulges in sexual acts without reservations. The last expression shows that the woman in question is already married. Additionally, women sing the following song for their fellow women who are promiscuous:

- Ama m si ukwu wu ego (I did not know that waist (bottom) is money)
Mụ ewere nke m agba Bongo (I use my own to dance Bongo (a special band))
Ama m si ukwu wu ego eee (I did not know that waist (bottom) is money)
Nwanne m ì nùla ee (My relative have you heard)
Ama m si ukwu wu ego (I did not know that waist (bottom) is money)
M ewere nke m enye fusa (I give my own out free of charge)

The above song is satirizes promiscuous women who use their bodies to make money. The first line is more of a question. By it, the satirist expresses surprises that she did not know that the bottom is used to make money. In the second line, the satirist mentions one of the major things the waist is used for, which is dancing, and in this case, Bongo music which is popular. The satirist repeats the earlier question in line one in the third line for emphasis. In the fourth and fifth lines, the satirist asked her listeners whom she referred to as *nwanne m* 'my relatives' if they have heard that bottom is used for money. By asking such question, the satirist implies that such act is unheard of. The last line, which serves as a conclusion states indirectly that the vagina is not meant for money making.

Hostile Expressions that have to do with General Bad Behaviour Found in Women

Women use the following song to summarize generally, bad attitude found in modern women.

Agbala idigango
(Worthless woman)

Na yu biko!
(We hail you!)

Ndi o ji ntu aga ije
(Those that walk on nails (high-heeled shoes))

O ji ntu aga ije azobikwona m okpa
(As you walk on nails do not step on my feet)

Na yu biko!
(We hail you)

Ndi o ji eze akpo nkwu,
(Those that open a drink with teeth)

O ji eze akpo nkwu mana opuna di n'unwo
(She opens a drink with her teeth when there is an opener in the house)

O ja-achọ achọ?
(Will she search for it?)

Na yuu biko
(We hail you)

Ndi o megbulu nne di ha.
(Those who maltreat their mother-in-law)

O megbulu nne di ha ma nne ha no n'unwo
(They maltreat their mother-in-law when their mothers are at home)

O na-enye nni?
(Does she give her food?)

Na yu biko!
(We hail you)

Ndị o megbulu nnwa na-eku
(Those that maltreat baby sitters)

O megbulu nnwa na-eku ma nnwa ya nọ n'unwo
(They maltreat baby sitters when their own child is in the house)

Ọ ja-emegbu ya?
(Will she maltreat him/her?)

Na yu biko!
(We hail you)

Ndị ọ nọ na waya eche di
(Those that are on the street waiting for a husband)

Ọ nọ na waya eche di ma di ya nọ n'unwo
(She is on the street waiting for a husband when her husband is at home)

Ọ na-enye nni?
(Does she give him food?)

The song is satirizes generally, bad behavior found in some women. It implores rhetorical questions to ridicule the worthless woman. The walk on high-heeled shoes gives the impression that the referents are of younger generation. Her bad behavior ranges from using her teeth to open a drink because she had no time to look for an opener in the house to her maltreating her mother-in-law while taking good care of her mother. She is also indicted for maltreating her house help and not taking good care of her husband.

Effects of Hostile Expressions

As regards the effects of hostile expressions on women, ninety -two percent of the respondents argue that such hostile expressions have negative impact on women. The remaining eight percent made no contribution to the query. Of the ninety –two percent that stress the negative impact of hostile expressions on women, three percent observe that though such expressions have negative impact, that it sometimes also have positive effects. Sixty-two percent of the ninety –two –percent of respondents who argue that hostile expressions have negative effect on women lay emphasis on the individual effect while twenty-four percent center on its general effect on womanhood. The remaining six percent state that hostile expressions have effects on women both individually and collectively. Consider the following sample:

SAMPLE 5

INTERVIEWEER: What are the effects of such hostile words/expressions on women?

RESPONDENT 18: It create enmity among women, they will prevent or stop any good thing getting to their fellow women. This enmity could transcend to their children.

RESPONDENT 19: Sometimes, they have negative effects and sometimes they have positive effects too. Negative effects in the sense that it might lead to greater issues. Positive in the sense that it might scrap the whole reason why hostility started in the first place.

Way Forward For Women

The researcher sought the way forward for curbing woman-on-woman friction. Of all the respondents, ninety-four percent stress the need for re-orientation for women, so that they understand the need for team work. While four percent made no contribution on the way forward, two percent put forward, the need to abolish unfavourable customs and traditions that might give room for some women to humiliate their fellow women. The following excerpts represent some of their opinions:

SAMPLE 6

INTERVIEWEER: Give suggestions on ways to curb the hostile attitude for a better society.

RESPONDENT 20: Before you show hostility towards someone try and understand the person first and hostility is not really the way forward if you don't like the person leave the person alone and focus on your personal life cos the more you show hostility to another person the more karma comes back for you and hurt you more...when you show hostility to other women it speaks volumes the kind of person you are so your image also is been [sic] tarnish worse than that of the person your showing hostility too.

RESPONDENT 21: ...women should start supporting their fellow women and stop the comparison. Studies have shown that only women with inferiority complex would want to pull her fellow woman down. Women should learn to accept the fact that we have separate destiny thus we can't always be on the top all the time. We will always meet someone who is better than us in all ramifications...learn from those on top, and not try to bring them down.

DISCUSSION

Top on the list of the reasons behind women's hostility on their fellow women is jealousy. Ojukwu (2014) notes that women sometimes not only constitute obstacles to the progress of their fellow women but also partake in the sabotage of other women's programmes when pressurized by envy and jealousy (p.318)

The above assertion confirms the issue of jealousy among women. Data reveal jealousy takes lead with sixty-eight percent. Stressing the point, respondents argue that such jealousy manifests when a particular woman possesses what others do not possess. The lack ranges from what nature freely bestows like natural beauty, to what hard work delivers like intellectualism, good jobs and self-confidence. Data shows that instead of hard work to reach one's potentials, some women prefer being jealous of others. There is every need for women to work on themselves.

Surprisingly, only two percent of respondents point to patriarchy as the root of hostility among women. Bashir in Ojukwu (2014) comments that:

Women themselves are taught, in the process of being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology so that they tend to be conditioned to derogate their sex and co-operate in their subordination (p. 319).

The above assertion makes it clear that wrong orientation in a patriarchal society poses a major challenge to women. Women need to unlearn such ideologies that set them against one another. Twenty two percent of respondents disclose that it is the nature of women to be hostile but four percent which cannot be considered as insignificant gave an answer to the entire challenge of hostility, by pointing to nurture (refer to respondent 5). Nurture has an important role to play in nature. When a woman is well nurtured, the manifestation of jealousy diminishes if not completely extinguished.

Two percent of respondents who opine that some women deserve hostility are justified in their own eyes. An Igbo adage has it that *nkọ bu ndu, onye a kọrọ onụ bu amamihe ka a mabara ya n'efu* (verbal attack is life, 'anyone who receives a verbal attack receives wisdom free of charge). The maxim is based on the fact that verbal attacks have heavy impact on the attacked, thereby bringing a positive result for him or her, when he or she paid nothing to get the wisdom for the desired change. The statement is true based on one condition: when one receives such an attack for a wrong attitude or behaviour. Based on the data, apart from expressions that have to do with laziness, bad cooking, poor hygiene, promiscuity and other general bad behaviour, the addressees contribute nothing to receive the kind of verbal attacks they did in other circumstances. Times have changed and women need to do same. For instance, harlots no longer conceal their identities as they used to. The younger generation make bold to tell their spouses that they do not know how to cook. This is not to say that the researcher support such negative changes but it is here argued that though some women's behaviours are deviant, women should know that they have a collective target which is to be free from whatever holds them

down from self-actualizing. Based on the target, there is a need to put together every available resources to achieve the set goal or result. Good communication remains one of the best ways to solve a problem. Opeibi (2018, p. 26) notes that ‘positive words with good intentions behind them nurture and encourage growth. Negative words with negative emotions literally rot and destroy’. Helpful words or expressions will go a long way to reconstruct the lives of women with deviant behaviour rather than hostile ones.

Sixty-four percent of respondents argue that women show hostile attitude to their fellow women who possess what they lack. Hostility in this situation does not deliver what one lacks neither does it benefit the entire womanhood. The twenty – two percent who exhibit hostility to show that they occupy a higher position and have all it takes to humiliate other women need to rethink. Personal encounter from two respondents reveal how their superiors maltreated them in different ways. One was denied of a job and the job was later given to a less qualified fellow. The other was humiliated for no just cause with much verbal abuse. Unfortunately, both incidents happened in the University environment. One wonders how women intend to thrive when some delight in humiliating others. The four percent who argue that hostility is shown as a way of revenge need to understand that two wrongs do not make a right. The remaining twenty-two percent who argue that women show hostility whenever they had the opportunity to do so should quickly realize that women emancipation is a team work. Nobody has won a trophy for scoring against himself or herself, hence the need to retrace steps in this position.

Considering the negative effects of hostile expressions, one cannot but see the need for a change. Women have fought for emancipation for some decades with some results. The result will be more overwhelming when the major reason behind women not having a complete freedom from patriarchy is found and the missing link fixed. Data reveal women to be their own major problem. Women need to re-strategise in their fight. There is every need for a harmonious living among women. The place of nurture and reeducation cannot be overemphasized. Opeibi (2018) avers that:

...most scholars, scientists and philosophers have come to agree that all our internal and external worlds...are largely influenced by what we say and how we say what we say, to whom we say it and in what circumstances we say it. This perspective stems from the belief that humans have an awesome capacity to create and re-create their own world and circumstances as creatures with the power to ‘create’ and ‘re-create’ (p.8).

The above quotation should serve as a guiding principle for women. Looking at ‘what is said’, data reveal very discouraging expressions which women use against one another. On ‘how it is said’, data reveal that both verbal and non-verbal

behaviours are used with the aim of hurting another. 'To whom we say it', data reveal that it is said to the well-behaved, bad behaved, the poor, bereaved and spinsters. Women cannot continue to shoot themselves on their legs and continue to look for the people shooting them. The idea of attacking everyone overrules the efficacy of the maxim that 'anyone who receives a verbal attack receives wisdom free of charge'. The aim of the attacks is not to bring wisdom but to humiliate. On the 'circumstances', data reveal that hostility manifests in almost every circumstance. For instance, a woman's first meeting with her fellow woman could attract attacks either as a result of her beauty or what was said about her. If humans have the capacity to create and recreate their world, it is high time women did so. Okpala (2018) advocates that the concept of women emancipation is a welcome idea and therefore should be derived in a dignified manner- through education, economic empowerment or a dint of hard work... (p. 20).

The desired world for women can be created through nurture and unlearning the wrong ideas of 'pull her down syndrome' which some women have internalized over years. Therein lies the missing link. Until women see themselves as a family that needs to live in harmony, their efforts will not yield the desired results. Okome (2015, p.121) quips that 'while there are conditions under which women are legitimately able to exercise power, each and every one cannot perform identically. Personal capacity matters.' Women need to understand and accommodate their fellow women, bearing in mind that we have different capacities.

Verbal hostility which even our forebears engaged have not yielded much result hence the need to re-strategise. Politeness is a powerful instrument that can be used to achieve great results. Anuonye, Ude & Ukaegbu (2018, p.127) note that 'Politeness allows people to perform many inter-personally sensitive actions in a non-threatening or less threatening manner'. Women must learn to be polite, respecting one another's opinions. It should be noted that nature abhors vacuum. If men leave the whole space for women and women are busy attacking one another, men will reclaim their space. It is all about women putting their house in order. An Igbo adage has it that: *A gbara aka na- azo ala, onye ji ji ana-akonye*, which literally means that when two persons engage in a land dispute, the one that has yam will be sowing his yam, thereby fully occupying the space. By extension, if women continue to quarrel among themselves, the men they are crying against will not only continue to occupy more space but will go back to occupy the little space they left earlier for women. The missing link which is women bonding must be in place for women's voices to be heard.

This work is not trying in any way to exonerate men or Patriarchy. The two percent of respondents who claim that men are the reason behind unfriendliness among women cannot be overlooked. One thing is very clear, no one looks up to his/her oppressor to show the way to freedom and that might be the reason why women have for sometime neglected what men say about rivalry among women. Men pointing out the major challenge to women show a little willingness for change, if not for anything, for economic downturn of events globally. Men need

more financial support from women in contemporary times. Women need to see very clearly and utilize the moment. It is here argued that with more cooperation from men and a better understanding and more cordial relationship among women, the cry for women's emancipation stands a better chance of being achieved for a better society.

Conclusion

This study has tried to investigate the missing link in women's cry for freedom from patriarchy using Igbo as an example. Despite the much blames apportioned to men on suppressing women which mostly manifest through inventing and using language that deprecate women, data reveal that women, who in every nook and cranny of the world fight to gain freedom from patriarchy in order to self-actualize and contribute maximally to the running of the society, wage war against themselves through language. Such war it seems will truncate whatever strategies they employ for freedom.

The study does not in any way apportion the whole blame on women; it rather advocates women bonding. The bonding can be achieved through nurturing the younger ones to see their fellow women as sisters and not rivalries. Women should also understand that each individual is unique in her own way and has something to contribute to the welfare of the society. Women who have learnt and imbibed wrong ideas about their fellow women should unlearn it. This can be achieved through organizing seminars for women. Women with deviant behaviours should be corrected in love for what they actually need is assistance and not hostility. Women who are already at the peak of their different professions should use their positions to build rather than humiliate their fellow women. With good cooperation from the men folk, women will achieve their aim for a better society.

References

- Anuonye, D., Ude, C., & Ukaegbu, U. (2018). Politeness Strategies in Conversational Discourse as a Panacea for Emerging Conflict. *IJAAS Interdisciplinary Journal of African & Asian Studies*. 1. (4). 126-137.
- Asiyanbola, A. (2007). A Syntactic and Semiotic Analysis of Some Yoruba Sexist Proverbs in English Translation: Need for Gender Balance. *Nebula* 4. (3).63-78.
- Balogun, O. (2010). Proverbial Oppression of Women in Yoruba African Culture: A Philosophical Overview. *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK) New Series*, 2. (1). 21-36.
- Ezeigbo, T. A. (1993). The Enemy Within: Women against Women in Novels by Selected Nigerian Female Writers. *Ihafa A Journal of African Studies* 1. (1).7-13.

- Ike-Nwafor, G. (2008). Literary Texts as Veritable Sources for Actualizing Gender Equality in the Current Republic. *Journal of Languages and Literature Teaching*.7. (2). 168 -175.
- Letsholo, R. (2009). Patriarchy and Aspects of the Ikalanga Language. In A. Odebunmi, A. Arua and S. Arimi (Eds.). *Language, Gender and Politics – A Festschrift for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf*. (pp. 151 -161). Lagos: Concept.
- Nhlekisana, R. (2009). Language, Gender and Politics. In A. Odebunmi, A. Arua and S. Arimi (Eds.) *Language, Gender and Politics – A Festschrift for Yisa Kehinde Yusuf*.(pp 135 – 149). Lagos: Concept.
- Oha, O. (1998). The Semantics of Female Devaluation in Igbo Proverbs. *African Study Monographs* 19 (2). 87–102.
- Ojukwu, C. (2014). The Politics of Power and the Struggle for Self-Assertion: Tess Onwueme’s *The Reign of Wazobia*, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Hands that Crush Stone* and Julie Okoh’s *Edewede*. In E. A. Adedun and O. B. Nweke (Eds.) *New Perspectives on a Literary Enigma A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Theodora Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo*. (pp. 315-335).Ibadan: University Press.
- Okome, M. (2015). African Women and Power: Labour, Gender and Feminism in the Age of Globalization. In E. B. Ikpe (Ed.). *Women and Power in Africa in the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries*. (pp.110-137). Lagos: Supero Academic.
- Okpala, E. (2018). Socio-Cultural Values Versus Women Libration in Nigerian Prose: A Study of Flora Nwapa’s *Women Are Different*. *IJAAS Interdisciplinary Journal of African & Asian Studies*. 1 (4). 19-33.
- Onyejekwe, M. (2001). Portrayal of Women in Igbo Proverbs. *Nsukka Journal of Africa Language and Linguistics* 2. (1).128-134.
- Opeibi, B. (2018). Reconfiguring Our Words: A Critical Mapping of Discourse in Human Socio-Cyberspace. Inaugural Lecture, University of Lagos. Lagos: University of Lagos Press.
- Oyeka, C. N. (2016). Demystification and Reconstruction of Igbo Sexist Proverbs. *Abraka Humanistic Review*. 7. (1). 143-153.
- Ritzer, G. (2012). *Sociological Theory*. (8th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill
- Romaine, S. (1994). *Language in Society – An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.