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Gender and Ethnicity in Nigeria: Post-Colonial Societal Constructs on Culture and Class

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By
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Background - Women in Nigeria

▶ **Women in pre - colonial Nigeria:**

- ▶ Women in pre-colonial Nigeria, depending on which ethnic group they belonged to, had prescribed and assigned roles within the Nigerian society (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003; Okome, 2002).

▶ **Women in colonial Nigeria:**

- ▶ During the colonial era, many women groups' activities were suppressed. This was largely due to colonial policies and structures that undermined the already existing cultures and societal groups. These policies eliminated many support structures that existed for women's groups (Adu, 2008; Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003; Okome, 2002).

▶ **Women in post - colonial Nigeria:**

- ▶ Post-colonial Nigeria adopted numerous policies of the colonial era, which resulted in undermined and limited roles of women in leadership positions (Bah, 2004; Okome, 2000).

Women in pre-colonial Nigeria

- ▶ Women in pre-colonial Nigeria, depending on which ethnic group they belonged to, had prescribed and assigned roles within the Nigerian society (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003; Okome, 2002).
- ▶ With these prescribed and assigned roles, many women groups in pre-colonial Nigeria sometimes were able to form support groups that assisted women in the society with leadership roles, especially those within the immediate community (Adu, 2008; Okome, 2002).
- ▶ Before the year 1900, the dynamics of culture and the influence of women's ability to occupy leadership positions using different forms of power tactics varied from one society to another (Rojas, 1994).

Women in Colonial Nigeria

- ▶ During the colonial era, many women groups' activities were suppressed. This was largely due to colonial policies and structures that undermined the already existing cultures and societal groups. These policies eliminated many support structures that existed for women's groups (Adu, 2008; Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003; Okome, 2002).
- ▶ The colonial economy oriented in export, undermining the prestige of the traditional occupations of Nigerian women. Colonial policies and statutes were clearly sexist and biased against women occupying roles in leadership and economic position (Okome, n.d).
- ▶ Europeans Colonialists stripped the Nigerian women of all leadership positions and power. The Colonialist debased the ranking of Nigerian women to fall below that of Europeans males, female Europeans, European youths of all ages, Nigerian males of all statutes, and finally the African women and children (Rojas, 1994).

Women in Post-Colonial Nigeria

- ▶ Post-colonial Nigeria adopted numerous policies of the colonial era, which resulted in undermined and limited roles of women in leadership positions (Bah, 2004; Okome, 2000).
- ▶ Many of these biased policies significantly reduced women's social, economic, and political power, especially in the areas of leadership, and decision-making (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003).
- ▶ Nigerian women insisted to maintain their pre-colonial statutes in post-colonial Nigeria.
- ▶ Women carried a systematic struggle to regain power influence and to maintain a voice in the relationship between state and citizens and a voice in the relationship among the people (Oduaran & Okukpon, 1997).

Gender and Ethnicity in Nigeria

21st century Nigerian women in leadership positions have to adapt to changing organizations, and balance their leadership styles based on the general societal expectations from a male-dominated society:

- ▶ **Obstacles are rooted in colonial ruling practices:**
 - ▶ which counter women's progress
 - ▶ are carried over to infiltrate and dominate modern day organizational and social structures based on societal misfits
- ▶ **Gender and ethnicity:**
 - ▶ based on a common or shared cultural value, linguistic trait, or religious practice in a society with more 250 languages and ethnic group
- ▶ **Today's variants are:**
 - ▶ a mixture of colonial deconstruction established prior to European invasion,
 - ▶ post-colonial social structures ingrained or imbedded in the socio-cultural fabric of the Nigerian society
 - ▶ a modern sense of ownership by women to reclaim power.

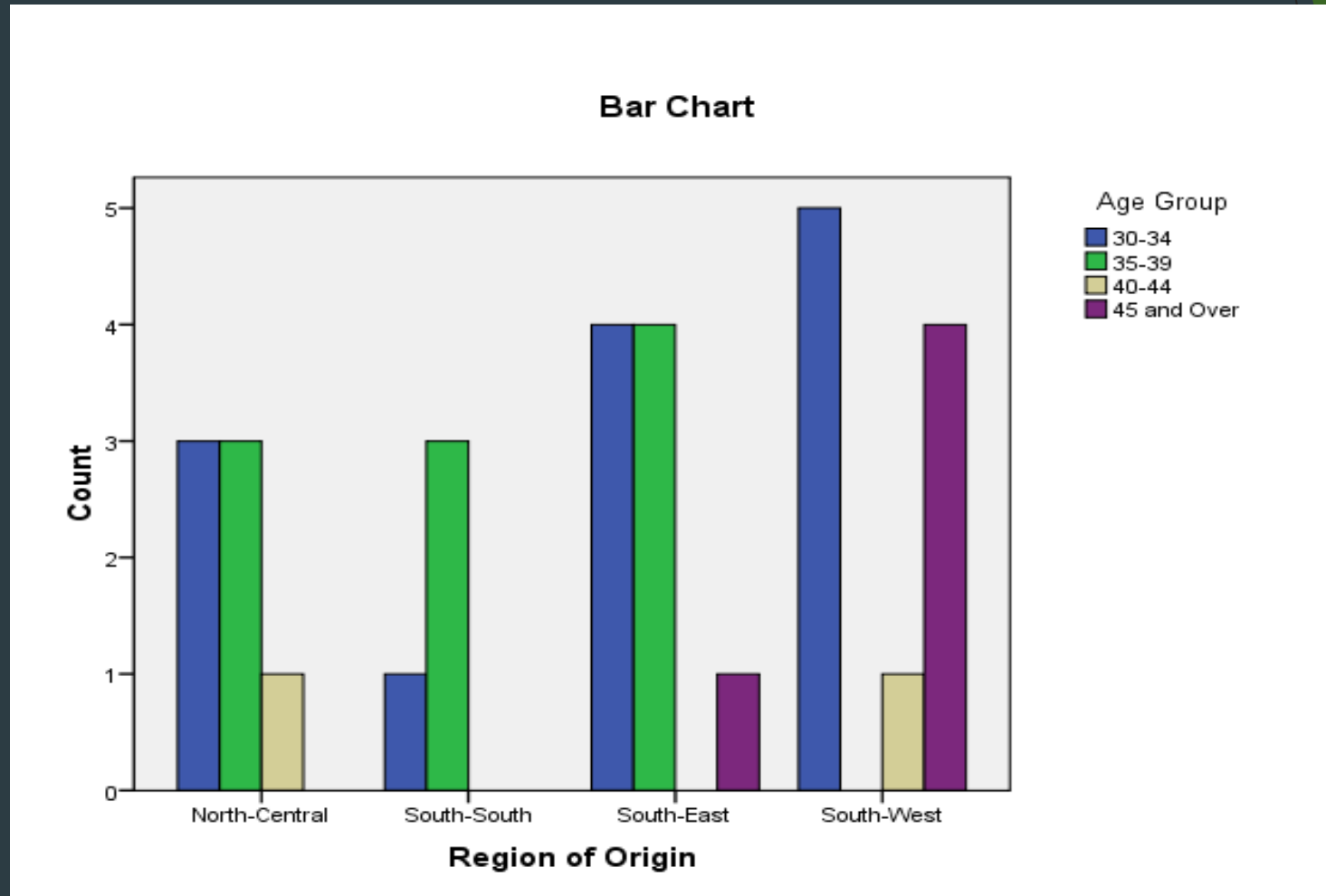
Purpose

- ▶ For this study, the purpose of participant's answers on *gender and ethnicity and the post-colonial societal constructs of culture and class in Nigeria* were examined. This was to understand the dimensions of gender and ethnicity in a place: a post -colonial Nigerian society.
- ▶ This premise is based on certain organizational factors such as:
 - ▶ (1) Leadership and adaptability in post - modern organizations.
 - ▶ (2) Women's capabilities in the 21st century in which they are attaining higher leadership positions amidst the prevalent patriarchal societies in which those organizations are based in.
 - ▶ (3) The number of younger women entering the workforce compared to those in the baby boomer generation.

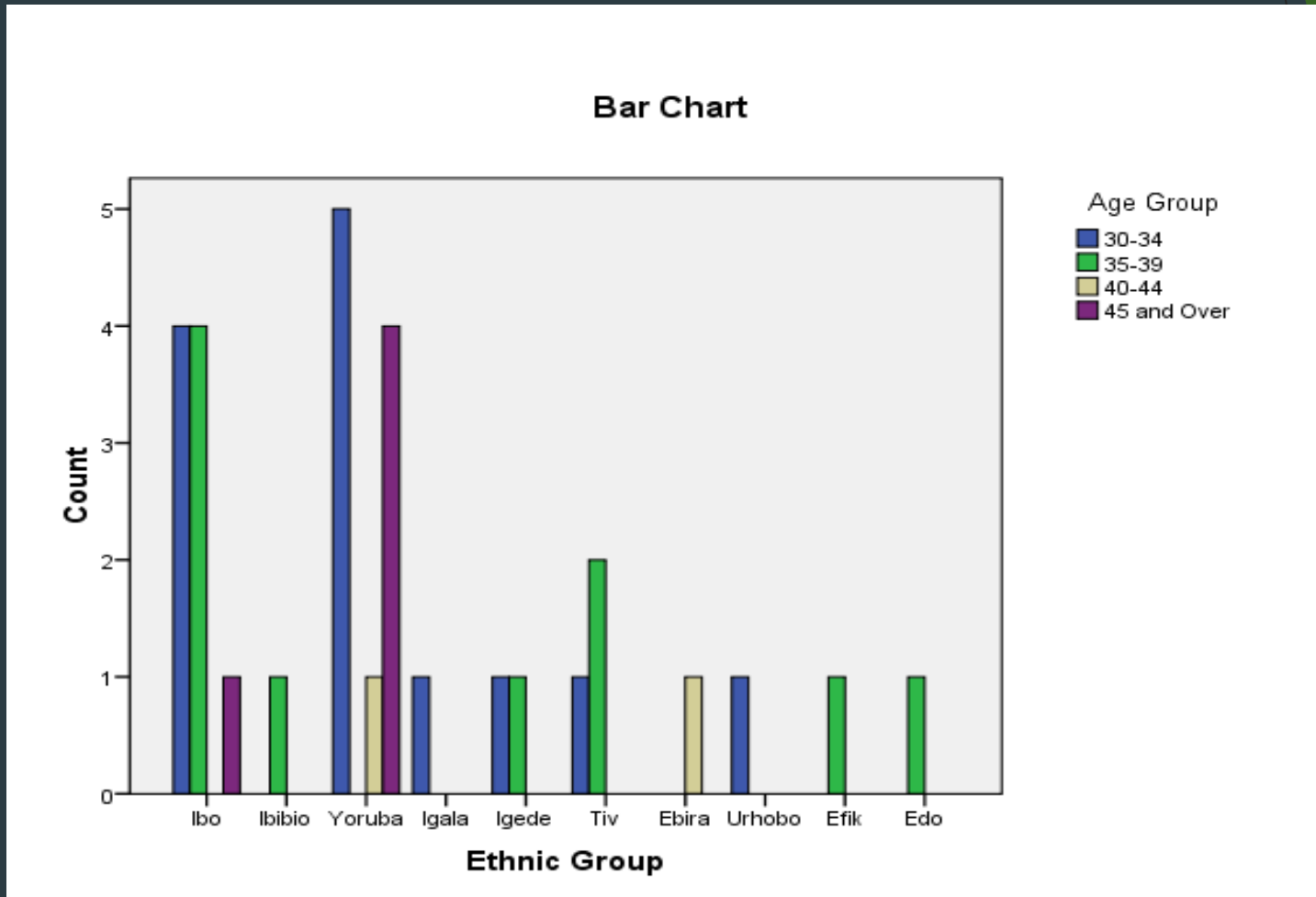
Methods

- ▶ This *phenomenological qualitative* study examined gender and ethnicity and the post-colonial societal constructs of culture and class in Nigeria.
- ▶ About 50 women leaders from different zones and ethnic groups in Nigeria participated in this phenomenological study ranging in age from 30 - 45 years of age.
- ▶ An *open - ended survey questionnaire* consisting of a wide variety of questions was circulated to participants based on an initial study on “the Role of culture on the Leadership Styles of Generation X Women in Nigeria.”
- ▶ The survey questionnaire was disseminated in the initial study to gather participant’s perspective on their *day - to - day lived experiences; whether (or not) culture (both family and national) affected the leadership styles of women in leadership positions.*

Region of Origin / Age



Ethnic Group / Age



Study Example

Historical perspectives: Southern Nigeria / Yoruba land

- ▶ In Southern Nigeria, for instance, there were no formal separate and explicit political institutions and roles.
- ▶ Historically, women occupied many ranks and commanded various roles within the community.
- ▶ In pre - colonial Yoruba land, for example, women were highly regarded for their notable positions of power and for the commercial enterprises they occupied.
- ▶ Women in pre-colonial Yoruba land held numerous economic and social positions of hierarchy within the different groups in the society.

Study Example

Historical perspectives: Southern Nigeria / Yoruba land (Respondent 028)

- ▶ “...Most traditional cultures in Nigeria do allow women in leadership (except in the Muslim north)...”
- ▶ “women featured more prominently in leadership roles in the pre-colonial days in Yoruba land than they did during the colonial period..”
- ▶ “...A lot of damage was actually done to women's rights DURING the time of foreign intervention. For instance, all kings had a woman on their council, who was called the "Iyalode", and she was usually a VERY powerful woman...”
- ▶ “...However, after the colonial period ended, and we started to use foreign styles of leadership, men became more disrespectful towards women, and there has been a lot of imbalance since, in the way women are viewed in leadership in Africa (Nigeria included).”

Women and leadership in Nigeria

- ▶ Women in Nigeria continue to face enormous setbacks regarding development and leadership capabilities (Igunboh, 2005; Manuh, 1998; & Okome, 2000).
- ▶ The socio and economic roles that many women occupy in Nigerian society affects leadership roles, especially in the context of sexual division of labor and in decision-making (Igunboh, 2005; Okome, 2002; & Osiruemu, 2004).
- ▶ Challenged by the progress made by women globally, Nigerian women currently engage in the struggle and advocacy for social, political and economic inclusion.
- ▶ Through various coalitions and efforts, Affirmative Action, CEDAW, Gender and Constitution, women have been addressing the issues of social, political and economic marginalization.

View by peers and colleagues

How do your peers and subordinates (both men and women) treat you as a woman in a leadership position?

- ▶ “As a woman in leadership, I have personally received more support from men. The view is that that because I’m a woman, I am probably not as strong, and should be propped and aided. There’s been more difficulty with the women, and I guess that boils down to uncouth competitiveness. “If she can do it, why can’t I?” (Respondent 009).
- ▶ “They treat me with respect but the women seem to think that I should be more sympathetic when they are late to work and give reasons for been late” (Respondent 003).
- ▶ “As a woman of power within the group, the subordinates always appear loyal to my office where all usually seems well on the peripheral, but the men would always want to exert thier dominiaring attitudes were as the the women would run thier conspiracy sessions all in my absence as a leader” (Respondent 005).
- ▶ “Subordinates (especially the older men) are not very respectful and easy to work with Gen X women in leadership positions” (Respondent 017).
- ▶ “Very well, I have not faced any limitation. I have also not encountered any sexism any conflict from other who belong to the Generation X regarding my management and leadership styles” (Respondent 019).

View by peers and colleagues
How do your peers and subordinates (both men and women) treat you as a woman in a leadership position?

- ▶ “Women are skeptical, confrontational and judgmental. The men are divided, some are very loyal, supportive, cooperative and very helpful. The other men are difficult, rude and impossible” (Respondent 002).
- ▶ “ I am treated with respect because a lot of Nigerian women have made remarkable strides in all spheres of the society coupled with the fact that I bring a lot of positivity to my job “ (Respondent 004).
- ▶ “For the most part, my subordinates treat me with respect. The challenge is sometimes more class-based than age-based. In my experience, subordinates tend to feel that a woman in power is in that position due to elite access to quality education and feelings of resentment sometimes seep into behavior at work” (Respondent 013).
- ▶ “Most men view women leaders as unnecessarily difficult. They believe that these women want to prove that they are no pushover. Women are indifferent to female bosses. Some of them even prefer having a man as their boss, probably because women hardly mentor the younger females like a man would likely do” (Respondent 024).
- ▶ “They treat me with respect but expect me to be less autocratic than male peers. They expect more understanding of issues from me, especially if it has to do with personal issues that affect the work place“ (Respondent 030).

Culture and Class in Nigeria (societal misfits)

- ▶ Many of the *societal misfits* are rooted in colonial ruling practices which counter women's progress and are carried over to infiltrate and dominate modern day social structures based on societal misfits.
- ▶ Other factors affecting women's leadership in Nigeria include *religious practices or mores, limited resources, broken down social support structures.*
- ▶ Furthermore, women are not given full *access to networks*, and they often do not receive the *leadership support* needed for growth.

Culture and Class in Nigeria

(Gender dimensions)

- ▶ *Gender dimensions* are based on *experiences and differences* that assert themselves based on the social, political and economic scenes rooted on traditional frameworks of *ethnicity, culture, norms, values, and class*.
- ▶ Today's variants are a mixture of colonial deconstruction established prior to European invasion, and post-colonial social structures ingrained or imbedded in the socio-cultural fabric of the Nigerian society.

Conclusion

From the research, it was concluded that most traditional cultures in Nigeria do allow women to obtain leadership positions.

The socio and economic roles that many women occupy in Nigerian society affects leadership roles, especially in the context of sexual division of labor and in decision-making).

Insight gained from analyzed data was that women in leadership positions are not treated by peers and subordinates based on societal misfits alone (even though these misfits are present in the society) and many are respected in their various professions and leadership positions.

Despite their escalation in ranks in the Nigerian society, many women in leadership positions (even though they are respected as such), are largely bound by the national and family cultures and / or societal assigned roles and duties which are also a deconstruction of colonial ruling practices carried on in post - colonial Nigerian organizations.

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This presentation later became a part of the published product for the publication below. All references contained in this presentation slides can be found on the reference pages of the book.

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Dr. Remi Alapo received her Doctorate from the University of Phoenix, Arizona in Organizational Management and Leadership in February of 2011. She is currently an independent researcher with Global Management Consulting. Her research interests include international and cross-cultural management issues in Africa and other regions, especially with women's leadership. *Generation X: The Role of Culture on the Leadership Styles of Women in Leadership Positions*

her first book on women and leadership. She is available for consultation to grassroots organizations and to women-owned business organizations looking to improve their management, leadership, and decision-making. Dr. Remi can be contacted on her social media fan page: <https://www.facebook.com/dr.remialapo/>.

Generation X: The Role of Culture on the Leadership Styles of Women in Leadership Positions' goal is to assist organizational leaders to view Generation X women in positions of power from a different perspective. Women leaders are capable of leading a 21st century organization because of their scope of knowledge about growing businesses, and their ability to blend and incorporate new technologies and innovations in the business environment.

Generation X: The Role of Culture on the Leadership Styles of Women in Leadership Positions is relevant to the fields of business, cultural, human relations, leadership, management, and cross-cultural leadership and women studies. The cultural values of women in many societies are grounded in the shared experiences of symbols and norms, which are manifested in beliefs and practices. These play obviously a significant role in the leadership styles and expressions of Generation X women who are in leadership positions. This book will also assist *Generation X women in positions of power* in building highly effective and functioning teams in adapting to global business and environmental trends.



GENERATION X: THE ROLE OF CULTURE ON THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

DR. REMI ALAPO

GENERATION



The Role of Culture on the
Leadership Styles of Women
in Leadership Positions

DR. REMI ALAPO

THANK YOU

Questions

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